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'A Raid on the Inarticulate': Exploring Authenticity, *Ereignis* and
Dwelling in Martin Heidegger and T.S. Eliot

Dominic Heath Griffiths

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Abstract

This thesis explores, thematically and chronologically, the substantial concordance between the work of Martin Heidegger and T.S. Eliot. The introduction traces Eliot's ideas of the 'objective correlative' and 'situatedness' to a familiarity with German Idealism. Heidegger shared this familiarity, suggesting a reason for the similarity of their thought.

Chapter one explores the 'authenticity' developed in *Being and Time*, as well as associated themes like temporality, the 'they' (*Das Man*), inauthenticity, idle talk and angst, and applies them to interpreting Eliot's poem, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. Both texts depict a bleak Modernist view of the early twentieth-century Western human condition, characterized as a dispiriting nihilism and homelessness.

Chapter two traces the chronological development of *Ereignis* in Heidegger's thinking, showing the term's two discernible but related meanings: first our nature as the 'site of the open' where Being can manifest, and second individual 'Events' of 'appropriation and revelation'. The world is always happening as 'event', but only through our appropriation by the *Ereignis* event can we become aware of this. Heidegger finds poetry, the essential example of language as the 'house of Being', to be the purest manifestation of *Ereignis*, taking as his examples Hölderlin and Rilke. A detailed analysis of Eliot's late work *Four Quartets* reveals how *Ereignis*, both as an ineluctable *and* an epiphanic condition of human existence, is central to his poetry, confirming, in Heidegger's words, 'what poets are for in a destitute time', namely to re-found and restore the wonder of the world and existence itself. This restoration results from what Eliot calls 'raid[s] on the inarticulate', the poet's continual striving to enact that openness to Being through which human language and the human world continually come to be.

The final chapter shows how both Eliot and Heidegger value a genuine relationship with place as enabling human flourishing. Both distrust technological materialism, which destroys our sense of the world as dwelling place, and both are essentially committed to a genuinely authentic life, not the angstful authenticity of *Being and Time*, but a richer belonging which affirms our relationship with the earth, each other and our gods.

For my father, who taught me to think for the sake of dwelling.

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations	vii
Works by Thomas Stearns Eliot (26 September 1888 – 4 January 1965)	vii
Works by Martin Heidegger (26 September 1889 – 26 May 1976).....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Eliot’s ‘objective correlative’	7
German Idealism and F. H. Bradley.....	10
F.H. Bradley’s <i>Ethical Studies</i>	12
F.H. Bradley’s <i>Appearance and Reality</i>	13
T.S. Eliot’s ‘situatedness’	15
From context to comparison	17
Chapter One: Authenticity	20
Section I: Dasein and the ‘they’ (<i>Das Man</i>)	22
Reckoning with time	24
Rejecting the self	26
Finding the others	28
Losing the others	29
Finding yourself.....	35
Section II: <i>Prufrock and Other Observations</i>	38
Idle talk (<i>Gerede</i>)	48
Angst.....	52
Chapter Two: <i>Ereignis</i>	57
Section I: The early ‘early’ Heidegger	61
On the way to <i>Ereignis</i>	61
The first encounter with <i>Ereignis</i>	65
War Emergency Lectures (1919)	67
The next step on the way: <i>Ereignis</i> unfolds	73
Heidegger’s critique of and debt to Jaspers’s ‘limit-situation’	75
The ‘early’ Heidegger.....	81
<i>Being and Time</i>	81
<i>Augenblick</i>	81
The ‘middle’ Heidegger.....	85
<i>The Contributions’</i> contribution to <i>Ereignis</i>	85
<i>Das Ereignis</i>	90
One <i>Ereignis</i> or two?	91
The ‘later’ Heidegger	99
Hölderlin the holy poet.....	99
Heidegger on Heraclitus (a brief diversion)	103

‘The Principle of Identity’	107
Section II: T.S. Eliot’s <i>Ereignis</i>	111
The heart of light	114
The first movement of ‘Burnt Norton’	116
‘The lotos rose’	121
The second movement of ‘Burnt Norton’	125
Waiting for the Event	130
Chapter Three: Dwelling	133
Section I: Dwelling	136
Freedom	138
Dwelling and building	141
Thinking	144
The fourfold	146
The plight of dwelling	151
Enframing and technology, or: How not to dwell	152
The ‘supreme danger’	156
The ‘saving power’	157
Section II: <i>Four Quartets</i>	163
‘Burnt Norton’	164
‘East Coker’	171
‘The Dry Salvages’	177
‘Little Gidding’	186
Conclusion	192
Selected Bibliography	197
Primary Sources	197
T.S. Eliot	197
Martin Heidegger	198
Secondary Sources	200

Abbreviations

Works by Thomas Stearns Eliot (26 September 1888 – 4 January 1965)

LS	‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’
PL	‘Preludes’
AW	‘Ash-Wednesday’
WL	‘The Waste Land’
BN	‘Burnt Norton – Four Quartets’
EC	‘East Coker – Four Quartets’
DS	‘The Dry Salvages – Four Quartets’
LG	‘Little Gidding – Four Quartets’ all in <i>The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot</i> (London: Faber and Faber, 1969).
CC	<i>To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings</i> (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).
EAM	<i>Essays Ancient and Modern</i> (London: Faber and Faber, 1947).
IMH	<i>Invention of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917</i> , edited by C. Ricks (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1998).
KE	<i>Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley</i> (London: Faber and Faber, 1964).
NTD	<i>Notes Towards a Definition of Culture</i> (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).
OPP	<i>On Poetry and Poets</i> (London: Faber and Faber, 1957).
SE	<i>T.S. Eliot: Selected Essays 1917-1932</i> (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932).
SPE	<i>Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot</i> , edited by F. Kermode (San Diego: Harcourt, 1975).
SW	<i>The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry & Criticism</i> (London: Methuen, 1960).
TC	‘A Commentary’ in <i>The Criterion</i> . Vol. 12. (London: Faber and Faber, 1967).
UPC	<i>The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England</i> (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).

Works by Martin Heidegger (26 September 1889 – 26 May 1976)

LH	‘Letter on Humanism’
QCT	‘The Question Concerning Technology’ all in <i>Basic Writings</i> , edited by D.F. Krell, translated by F.A. Capuzzi & J. Glenn Gray (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).
AWP	‘The Age of the World Picture’
WA	‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ all in <i>Off the Beaten Track</i> , edited and translated by J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
DA	‘A Dialogue on Language’
NL	‘The Nature of Language’
TWL	‘The Way to Language’ all in <i>On the Way to Language</i> , translated by P.D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
KJ	‘Comments on Karl Jaspers’s Psychology of Worldviews’
LHP	‘Letter on Humanism’

OT	‘On the Essence of Truth’
PM	‘Postscript to ‘What is Metaphysics’
QB	‘On the Question of Being’
WM	‘Introduction to ‘What is Metaphysics?’ all in <i>Pathmarks</i> , edited by W. McNeill, translated by J. van Buren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
BDT	‘Building Dwelling Thinking’
OWA	‘The Origin of the Work of Art’
PMD	‘. . . Poetically Man Dwells . . .’
TP	‘The Thinker as Poet’
TT	‘The Thing’
WAP	‘What Are Poets For?’ all in <i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i> , translated by A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 2001).
BT	<i>Being and Time</i> , translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Malden: Blackwell, 1962). Referenced according to English pagination.
CP	<i>Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)</i> , translated by P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).
CPC	<i>Country Path Conversations</i> , translated by B. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
CT	<i>The Concept of Time</i> , translated by W. McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).
DT	<i>Discourse on Thinking</i> , translated by J.M. Anderson and E.H. Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).
EHP	<i>Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry</i> , translated by K. Hoeller (New York: Humanity Books, 2000).
FCM	<i>The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude</i> , translated by W. McNeill and N. Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).
FS	<i>Four Seminars</i> , translated by A. Mitchell and F. Raffoul (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).
GA	<i>Martin Heidegger: Gesamtausgabe</i> , edited by F.-W. von Herrman (Frankfurt-on-Main: Klostermann, 1977 and onwards). Numerals refer to volume numbers from the collected works.
HCT	<i>History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena</i> , translated by T. Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).
HH	<i>Holderlin’s Hymn: ‘The Ister’</i> , translated by W. McNeill and J. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
HPS	<i>Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit</i> , translated by P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).
ID	<i>Identity and Difference</i> , translated by J. Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
IM	<i>Introduction to Metaphysics</i> , translated by G. Fried and R. Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).
IP	<i>Introduction to Philosophy: Thinking and Poetizing</i> , translated by P.J. Braunstein (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).
IPT	<i>Introduction to Philosophy: Thinking and Poetizing</i> , translated by P.J. Braunstein (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).
KPM	<i>Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics</i> , translated by R. Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

- N *Nietzsche Volumes 3&4; The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics, Nihilism*, edited by D.F. Krell, translated by J. Stambaugh, D.F. Krell and F.A. Capuzzi (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).
- OGS “Only a God Can Save Us’: *Der Spiegel’s* Interview with Martin Heidegger’. In *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, edited by R. Wolin, translated by M.P. Alter and J.D. Caputo, 91-116 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).
- QTT *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by W. Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).
- TB *On Time and Being*, translated by J. Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
- TDP *Towards the Definition of Philosophy: With a Transcript of the Lecture Course ‘On the Nature of the University and Academic Study’*, translated by T. Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002).
- WCT *What Is Called Thinking*, translated by J. Glenn Gray (New York: HarperCollins, 2004).

Introduction

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) occupy central positions in twentieth-century literature and philosophy.¹ For both, great poetry is, arguably, the highest form of human endeavour. Eliot abandoned a possible career as a minor but talented philosopher at Harvard University in favour of the uncertain struggle to attain recognition as a poet in London. This he achieved beyond measure; his poetry and critical prose have become firmly established in the canon of great Western literature. Heidegger dabbled a little in poetry, but it is his philosophical insights into the relationship between language and poetry, and the philosophical dialogues he maintained with Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), Paul Celan (1920-1970), Georg Trakl (1887-1914) and especially Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) that demonstrate his high regard for poetry. Hölderlin's phrase 'poetically man dwells' (PMD: 211; HH: 137) is arguably the cornerstone of Heidegger's later philosophy.

This shared concern for poetry is one of the many ideas Heidegger and Eliot have in common. It has its roots in their thorough immersion in, and mastery of the history of philosophy, their disillusionment with modernity, and that they lived through the same tumultuous period of history. Though neither directly influenced the other, a fruitful and largely unexplored dialogue between Eliot and Heidegger is possible, in terms of the complementary dynamic in their work, and this thesis is an exploration of some aspects of this complementarity.

Eliot and Heidegger never met one another, although Eliot, in 1932, writes the following in his journal *The Criterion*:

It is greatly to the credit of the intellectuals of post-War Germany, living in a country which has been more politics-ridden than any other of Western Europe, and in an atmosphere which one might suppose most discouraging to dispassionate thought, that they have been able to produce so much that is first rate. It is a pity that work of this kind finds little appreciation in England; the spring comes slowly up our way, and modern Germany is only known by some of its novels and by a few books of topical interest. Writers of more permanent importance than Spengler are unknown. Such names as those of Heidegger in philosophy and Heim in theology are known to only a handful; Friedrich Gundolf and Max Scheler are slightly known to some of our readers. (TC: 73)

This passage suggests that Eliot had not only heard of Heidegger but was also aware of his growing reputation in international philosophy circles. Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) writes

¹ Both were born on the same day, 26 September, one year apart.

that as early as 1919, when Heidegger was only a *Privatdozent* (instructor) at the University of Freiburg, his reputation as a teacher was already travelling across Germany 'like the rumour of the hidden king'.² With the publication of *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*), in 1927 in Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) *Jahrbuch*, Heidegger established his international reputation as a philosopher and solidified his early academic career.³ As a trained professional philosopher, Eliot was thus attuned to significant philosophical developments on the continent. He also played an important role, as an intellectual, in the denazification of the Germans after the Second World War. As the most prominent 'North American literary man of the time' he addressed the German intelligentsia on radio and in print in the 1940s 'on the coherence of European culture and on the theme of the importance of the German contribution to its unity'.⁴ The three talks he delivered, collectively titled *Die Einheit der Europäischen Kultur*, (The Unity of European Culture) were published in Berlin in 1946. The text was never published in England or America, but can be found as an appendix to *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (NTD: 110-124).

Eliot's early professional training in philosophy took place at Harvard University (then called Harvard College) from 1906 until 1910, under the tutelage of scholars like of George Santayana (1863-1952), Irving Babbitt (1865-1933) and Josiah Royce (1855-1916); according to Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), until the Harvard school of philosophy lost the services of men such as these it was the best in the world.⁵ Eliot wrote his PhD thesis on the philosophy of Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924) and completed it in 1916.⁶

Aside from their deep appreciation of poetry and their training as professional philosophers, the intellectual lives of Eliot and Heidegger share other points of

² J. van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumour of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 3.

³ J.D. Caputo, 'Heidegger' in *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, ed. by S. Critchley and W.R. Schroeder (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 225.

⁴ J.X. Cooper, *T.S. Eliot and the Ideology of Four Quartets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 42. Whether Heidegger ever heard Eliot on the radio or came across his publication I have not been able to determine. See also L. Surette, *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia: Literary Modernism and Politics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 251-263 for a general discussion of Eliot's response to the Second World War.

⁵ M. Jain, *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: the Harvard Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 62.

⁶ However, he never returned to Harvard for his oral defence and was thus never officially awarded the degree. The text is published as *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H Bradley* (KE). Commentators have speculated that Eliot never returned because he was determined to avoid the pressure of his family's expectation that he become a respectable professor at Harvard, rather than a poet in London. (e.g. see C. Seymour-Jones, *Painted Shadow: the Life of Vivienne Eliot* (London: Robinson, 2001), 103).

intersection. These include an interest in mysticism and Eastern thought,⁷ a disillusionment with the modern world and a similar response to this disillusionment. Both Heidegger and Eliot placed importance on the redemptive nature of art, especially poetry, in the face of the growing threat of material nihilism. Both developed strong critiques of technology and humanism, and asserted the importance of encouraging and maintaining homogenous communities. And both searched for a 'saving power'. Eliot found it in a return to traditional Christian society, and Heidegger in a quest to restore a way of holistic dwelling that the modern world has lost.

Many of these themes will be touched on and explored through an interpretive Heideggerian appropriation some of the poems of T.S. Eliot. As the thesis will show, multiple concerns which occupy Heidegger's thinking resonate in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. The philosophy and poetry together generate a dialogue which is mutually beneficial to our understanding of both thinker and poet, and deepens our insights into their world. This thesis will also show a clear development in the thinking of both Heidegger and Eliot, charting the journey they undergo. Thus a chronological complementarity evident within the thematic unity is also explored.

This thesis has three chapters, each with its own substantial introduction. What follows here is a brief overview of my argument's overall development. The first chapter, titled 'Authenticity', offers an interpretation of Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915) through the lens of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. The poem exemplifies many of the themes of Heidegger's great book, enacting a distilled, poetic account of the existential challenges of realizing an authentic life. Prufrock, the protagonist of the poem, epitomizes the tension of the individual seemingly trapped in the world of the 'they', *das Man*, and the struggle to achieve a sense of an individual authentic self. The first section of this chapter is mainly exegetical, and offers a close reading of themes from *Being and Time* such as temporality, authenticity, inauthenticity, and the 'they'. The second section integrates these themes, as well as 'idle talk' and angst, with Eliot's poem. *Being and Time* offers a compelling interpretive framework for 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and, juxtaposed, these two texts offer an uncannily similar depiction of the fate of the twentieth-century modern individual.

⁷ See J.D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (Oberlin: Oberlin Printing, 1978), P. Murray, *T.S. Eliot and Mysticism: The Secret History of Four Quartets* (London: MacMillan Academic, 1991) and C.M. Kearns, *T.S. Eliot and Indic Tradition: A Study in Poetry and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

The second chapter, titled *Ereignis*, also has two sections. The first charts the development of the term 'Ereignis' ('Event', or 'event of appropriation') in Heidegger's thought. This breaks down into four roughly demarcated stages. The first stage I call the early 'early' Heidegger, meaning the pre-*Being and Time* period of his work, opening the chapter with a close reading of Heidegger's earliest extant lectures, the 1919 lecture course (published in English as *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*), in the notes of which the term *Ereignis* first appears. This part of my chapter also examines Heidegger's 1920 draft review of Jaspers's book *Psychology of Worldviews* in which the term 'limit-situation' is used. Given the close time proximity of these two texts, Heidegger's *Ereignis* arguably owes a conceptual debt to Jaspers's 'limit-situation', a possibility that I briefly explore. From here the chapter moves to the 'early' Heidegger, of 1927 and *Being and Time*, and discusses the term 'Augenblick', 'moment of vision', as a suggestive alternative to the notion of *Ereignis* encountered in the pre-*Being and Time* lectures. Next, I consider the 'middle' Heidegger, focussing on two texts, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, (1936-1938) and volume 71 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, titled *Das Ereignis* (1941-1942), the latter still unavailable in English translation. Both texts, considered sketches, have a hermetic quality that makes them challenging to access. Their focus is *Ereignis*, which now begins to assume a central role in Heidegger's thinking. To conclude this first section of chapter two, I consider the later Heidegger's development of *Ereignis*, paying particular attention to his Hölderlin essays (published from 1936 onwards) and *The Principle of Identity* (1957).

The second section of chapter two discusses the meaning of *Ereignis* as 'Event' in terms of important moments and images from Eliot's poetry, described variously as 'the bewildering minute' (SPE: 13) and looking into 'the heart of light' (WL: 62). The mystical occurrences these phrases refer to have important phenomenological and existential dimensions which suggest the fruitfulness of interpreting them as instances of 'events of appropriation'. Though, as the previous section shows, Heidegger's *Ereignis* undergoes many transformations, it retains a consistent core meaning which is articulated most fully in poetic language. Thus an interesting and unexplored dialogue opens up when the *Ereignis* 'event' is interpreted through poetry. My discussion of Eliot's own depiction of the 'Event' focusses largely on the first two movements of 'Burnt Norton', from *Four Quartets* (1943). These movements go to the heart of Heidegger's *Ereignis*, and illuminate it in a way impossible for purely philosophical language. Heidegger reminds us often in his later thinking 'what poets are for', and I believe that Eliot's poetry is an exemplary testament to this. Eliot, like Heidegger, is attuned to the significant way in which an event can irrupt

and transform an individual's life, and crystallizes this experience in poetic language. This crystallizing, which Heidegger argues only poetry can achieve, is the specific vocation of the poet. True poetry is always a 'raid on the inarticulate' as Eliot puts it (EC, fifth movement l.8), the unflagging enactment of that openness to Being that is our essential nature, through which our world and language continually come to be.

The third chapter, like the preceding two, follows a two-fold structure. The focus now is fully on the 'later' Heidegger and 'later' Eliot, meaning the post-conversion Eliot (he converted to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927). The chapter title is 'Dwelling', the central idea of Heidegger's later philosophy and a theme, I argue, that illuminates important concerns in *Four Quartets*. The chapter's first section is a close reading of dwelling, teasing out the topics that make up this complex notion, such as freedom and the relationship between building, thinking and dwelling and the fourfold, Heidegger's hopeful alternative vision for humankind. I also discuss what, in Heidegger's view, plagues and distorts our realization of this holistic vision, namely the modern attitude of technological enframing and its pernicious effect on the way we perceive and use the earth and each other. Eliot's own similar insights into this dangerous technological dependence are briefly alluded to.

The second section of chapter three is an interpretation of *Four Quartets* in the spirit of the 'later' Heidegger. Each quartet is placed briefly in context and then themes which relate to dwelling are drawn out, through close reading. The role of narrative is explored, and how it shapes our understanding of place and dwelling. The model of the fourfold structures much of the discussion, revealing how dwelling is the central concern of the poem. *Four Quartets* establishes an ontological topology through its grounding of the individual in his or her place. It is an understanding of this nearness to place which Heidegger's reflections on dwelling provide.

There are some important shared questions of Eliot and Heidegger scholarship that I do not address in this thesis. The first is the question of anti-Semitism, a theme left alone for the time being, as an issue requiring more discussion than this thesis has space for. There are already many books on this issue and it would require further careful study to do justice to it.⁸ However, I think this thesis provides a solid opening for that opportunity. I also do not give detailed attention to Heidegger's Nazism, without which an exploration

⁸ For Eliot, see A. Julius's definitive *T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form* (New York: Thomas & Hudson, 2003) and B. Cheyette, 'Eliot and "Race": Jews, Irish, and Blacks' in *A Companion to T.S. Eliot*, ed. by D.E. Chinitz, 335-349 (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). For Heidegger see J-F. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the Jews"*, trans. by A. Michel and M.S. Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

of anti-Semitism in Eliot and Heidegger would be impossible. But again, there are a number of books on this issue.⁹ However, the question of Eliot and Heidegger's anti-humanist stance I will briefly allude to.¹⁰ Another interesting aspect I have not addressed is Eliot and Heidegger's understanding of God. I have assumed that Eliot's overt Anglo-Catholicism and Heidegger's explicit rejection of Catholicism mean that, outwardly, their respective conceptions of God would be incompatible. However, the deep concordance I uncover in their later work in the third chapter suggests that perhaps this assumption is too simplistic. This is an avenue ripe for exploration which I intend to address at a later stage.¹¹

An aspect of Eliot's poetry which falls outside the scope of this thesis is a close focus on the prosody of his poems. Occasionally I will discuss the poetic form but my main focus is the semantic content.¹² Lastly, I have use *The Waste Land* sparingly. Themes such as authenticity, everydayness and angst which are so powerfully present in *The Waste Land* I discuss in the first chapter in sufficient detail for the overall purpose of the thesis, namely charting the thematic and chronological intellectual development of Martin Heidegger and T.S. Eliot.

In preparation for the first chapter I will sketch the broader context of my overall argument by discussing some of T.S. Eliot's early philosophical influences, especially his reading of Husserl and careful study of F.H. Bradley. The aim is to give a sense of Eliot's

⁹ See V. Farias, *Heidegger and Nazism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); T. Rockmore, *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*; J. Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ See chapter three, section I.

¹¹ Much has been written on Heidegger's complex relationship to theology. For a general overview see J.D. Caputo, 'Heidegger and Theology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. C Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 270-288. See also J.O. Prudhomme, *God and Being: Heidegger's Relation to Theology* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997), J.D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) and R. Kearney *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). Especially interesting is S.J. McGrath's *The Early Heidegger & Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2006). M. Johnston's *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) is an articulate and thought-provoking work on religious sensibility and provides a possible avenue for exploring how Heidegger and Eliot conceive of and construct 'God'. In terms of T.S. Eliot see the definitive B. Spurr, 'Anglo-Catholic in Religion': *T.S. Eliot and Christianity* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2010).

¹² See P. Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979) for a helpful starting discussion of modernist prosodic techniques. See also H. Gross, *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry: A Study of Prosody from Thomas Hardy to Robert Lowell* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965). For a discussion of Eliot's mediation between the use of free verse and verse tradition see R. Gates, 'T.S. Eliot's Prosody and the Free Verse Tradition: Restricting Whitman's "Free Growth of Metrical Laws,"' *Poetics Today* 11, no. 3 (1990): 547-578. Lastly, M.S. Burrow's 'Raiding the Inarticulate: Mysticism, Poetics, and the Unlanguageable', *Spiritus* 4, no. 2 (2004): 173-194, provides an insightful discussion of how poetry can push the boundaries of the 'sayable'.

own philosophical position, of which the reader may be unaware, and so suggesting why my study of Heidegger and Eliot has proved so fruitful.

Eliot's 'objective correlative'

A discussion of the context of Eliot's famous term 'objective correlative' provides an entrance into the intertwined philosophical world of Heidegger and Eliot, and the intellectual milieu of England and the Continent in the early twentieth century. The term first appears in Eliot's essay 'Hamlet And His Problem', published in a collection of essays written by him, titled *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry & Criticism* (1920):

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (SW: 100)

Sanford Schwartz points out that the term first appears in Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900),¹³ and that Eliot's early philosophical papers indicate that he knew exactly what he was doing when he lifted the term from Husserl.¹⁴ Eliot read *Logical Investigations* while at Marburg University, Germany in 1914, attending a summer programme for foreign students.¹⁵ His comment to a colleague at Harvard was that he found it terribly hard, but very interesting.¹⁶ In *Logical Investigations* Husserl distinguishes sharply between categories of meaning and objective categories, regarding the latter as 'objective correlates' [*objectives Korrelat*] of the former.¹⁷ My discussion will show how Eliot transposes Husserl's concept from the phenomenological to the literary field. We should also keep in mind that Husserl was Heidegger's teacher and a formative influence on his philosophical development. So though we have no direct evidence that Eliot ever read Heidegger, or vice versa, we can certainly say they were familiar with the same general fields of philosophic thought.

Thus it is also no surprise that ideas reminiscent of the 'objective correlative' appear in Heidegger's early work. He uses the term 'objective correlate' (KJ: 18) in his review essay

¹³ E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations. Volumes 1&2*, trans. by J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 1970).

¹⁴ S. Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot and Early Twentieth-Century Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 9.

¹⁵ L. Gordon, *T.S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 95. Eliot had barely settled into life at Marburg when the First World War broke out and he left for Britain.

¹⁶ Jain, *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy*, 291.

¹⁷ J.M. Steadman, 'Eliot and Heidegger: The Origin of the 'Objective Correlative'', *Notes and Queries* CCIII (1958): 262. See Husserl, *Logical Investigations*. Vol. 2, Inv. 1, § 12, 'Continuation: the objective correlate of an expression', 286-289.

on Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), titled *Comments on Karl Jaspers's Psychology of Worldviews* (written between 1919-1920, and more fully explored in chapter two of this thesis.) In terms of the 'objective correlate' Heidegger criticizes Jaspers's philosophical 'preconception' that the subject, in order to understand the 'object' or 'whole' of reality, requires a 'theoretical, observational attitude' as a 'correlative' way of understanding it (KJ: 18). Henri Bergson (1859-1941) also alludes to the idea, though more in the literary than the philosophical sense, in his *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1910).¹⁸ Bergson argues that the 'charm of poetry' is derived from the poet in 'whom feelings develop into images'. When we, as readers, experience these images in the poetry, we in turn experience the feelings that are the 'emotional equivalents' of the ones experienced by the poet.¹⁹ This idea is very similar to Eliot's own definition of the 'objective correlative' discussed in more detail below. Eliot was also more familiar with Bergson's work than with Husserl's, as he attended two months of lectures by Bergson while in Paris in 1911, and wrote an essay on Bergson thereafter.²⁰

Though Eliot transfers the term 'objective correlate' from phenomenological theory to literary criticism, he retains the sense of a formalized category (in Eliot's case, an emotional response), derived from a set of external circumstances to which it is a response. The emotional response in the person experiencing the work of art is a result of his or her consciousness experiencing an intentional object, namely the work of art, which evokes that emotional response. Eliot develops the term to criticize William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) *Hamlet*, which he considered a failure because Shakespeare did not provide enough content in the play to generate the horror in the audience that Hamlet, the character, experiences in himself. '*Hamlet*', Eliot writes, 'is full of some stuff that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate, or manipulate into art. And when we search for this feeling, we find it . . . very difficult to localize' (SW: 100). In other words, *Hamlet* is a failure because it *lacks* an objective correlative. 'Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an

¹⁸ H. Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by F.L. Pogson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950). See S. Crocker, 'The Oscillating Now: Heidegger on the Failure of Bergsonism', *Philosophy Today* 41, no. 3 (1997): 405-423 for a discussion of Heidegger's critique of Bergson's analysis of the phenomenon of time. See also D. Scott, 'The "Concept of Time" and the "Being of the Clock": Bergson, Einstein, Heidegger, and the Interrogation of the Temporality of Modernism', *Continental Philosophy Review* 39 (2006): 183-213.

¹⁹ M.A.R. Habib, *The Early T.S. Eliot and Western Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 45. See Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 15.

²⁰ Dating this manuscript on Bergson has proved puzzling for Eliot scholars, though most agree that it was either written in 1913 or 1914, after Eliot had returned to Harvard to write his PhD. See Habib, *The Early T.S. Eliot and Western Philosophy*, 61ff.

emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear' (SW: 101). Eliot locates this excess of emotion in Hamlet's reaction to his mother Gertrude. Hamlet is disgusted by her but his disgust envelopes and exceeds her as a character. It is thus a feeling Hamlet cannot understand, and so neither can we the audience. The problem, Eliot contends, is that Gertrude is not an adequate equivalent to represent this disgust. Furthermore there is nothing in the play that Shakespeare can do to express this reaction. Eliot points out that in successful tragedies you find this 'exact equivalence', for example

you will find that the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep has been communicated to you by a skilful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions; the words of Macbeth on hearing of his wife's death strike us as if, given the sequence of events, these words were automatically released by the last event in the series. The artistic 'inevitability' lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*. (SW: 100-101)

This criticism of *Hamlet* has struck many critics as odd. In the words of one critic, Eliot produces in his version of the 'objective correlative' a 'conceptual formulation that has proved difficult and often unwieldy for criticism'.²¹ Certainly Eliot wanted to generate some controversy by criticizing what many would agree is one of the greatest artworks in existence. Nonetheless, his examples go some way in demonstrating the meaning of the term 'objective correlative'. *The Literary Encyclopaedia* points out that the concept is certainly more 'impressionistic' than 'rigorous', but that until more sophisticated theories appeared in the 1960s it was a widespread theory and taught to many students. Furthermore, the concept was of its time, similar in content to the doctrines Ezra Pound (1885-1972) developed while involved in the Imagists, a poetic movement which flourished in London from 1910-1917. The Imagists focussed on using concrete poetic images to communicate emotions to the reader, something which certainly influenced Eliot's *The Waste Land* (which Pound edited).²² Robert Clark gives a succinct explanation of the Imagist manifesto: 'The Imagist refused all didacticism, all abstraction, and sought only a clear, striking and objective representation of experience where the observed physical phenomena would, in a sense, be seen to speak for themselves'.²³ The classic Imagist poem is Pound's couplet 'In a Station of the Metro' (1916). It consists of two lines: 'The apparition

²¹ B. Greenburg, 'T.S. Eliot's Impudence: *Hamlet*, Objective Correlative, and Formulation,' *Criticism* 49, no. 2 (2007): 217.

²² Editors. 'Objective Correlative,' *The Literary Encyclopaedia*, The Literary Dictionary Company, <http://www.litencyc.com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=783>.

²³ Clark, R, 'Imagism,' *The Literary Encyclopaedia*, The Literary Dictionary Company, <http://www.litencyc.com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=542>.

of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough'.²⁴ Significantly influenced by the Imagists was William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), whose poem 'The Red Wheelbarrow' (1923) is also considered an exemplar of this poetic method:

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.²⁵

Significant here is the phenomenological approach implicit in this poetry. Whatever the poetic consciousness is intent on is recorded as sparsely, directly and purely as possible.

German Idealism and F. H. Bradley

Another intertwining of Eliot's intellectual world with Heidegger's happens via Eliot's in-depth study of Francis Herbert Bradley's (1846-1924) metaphysics. Bradley, based at Oxford University, was the last British neo-Hegelian, a link with the German Idealist tradition before it was eclipsed by the advent of modern logic and analytic philosophy, spearheaded in Germany by Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) and, at Cambridge University especially, by the likes of G.E. Moore (1873-1958), Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951).²⁶ Eliot wrote his PhD on Bradley, though later briefly came under the influence of Bertrand Russell (who while mentoring Eliot was also seducing his wife²⁷).²⁸

Yet, in spite of Russell's brief influence arguably the most important idea that remained with Eliot from this period of his intellectual life, and that can be discerned in much of his criticism and poetry, is a firm understanding and conviction of the importance

²⁴ E. Pound, 'In a Station of the Metro,' in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, ed. by M. Ferguson, M.J. Salter and J. Stallworthy, 5th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 1297.

²⁵ W.C. Williams, 'The Red Wheelbarrow,' in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, ed. by M. Ferguson, M.J. Salter and J. Stallworthy, 5th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 1274.

²⁶ T. Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 912. Wittgenstein is considered the leading analytic philosopher of the twentieth century.

²⁷ L. Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 120-121.

²⁸ 'In essays dating from 1917 to 1920, [Eliot] frequently praises Russell's philosophy as "clear and beautifully formed thought" and "a victory of science" which liberated English philosophy from German influence' however, 'Russell's philosophical influence on Eliot was relatively short-lived, and by 1927 we find criticism of Russell's "scientific" philosophy for being "crude, raw and provincial" and for lack of "wisdom".' R. Shusterman, 1994. 'Eliot as Philosopher', in *The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot*, ed. by A.D. Moody, 31-47 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 35-36, 38.

of Bradley's Hegelian holism. Simply put, this entails the belief that 'the meaning of any thing is never autonomously given but is always a function of its place and interrelations with other things in a wider whole'.²⁹ This notion can be seen in both Eliot's thinking about the nature of the literary canon and in the central ideas of the twentieth-century hermeneutic tradition, which are thus both revealed to be, on some level, inheritors of and challenges to German Idealism.

Ann Bolgan (who was instrumental in the formal publication of Eliot's PhD in 1964) writes that 'it is patently clear to anyone who has studied the work of both these men that it is Bradley's mind that lies behind the structuring principles of Eliot's poetry, as well as every major theoretical concept appearing in his literary criticism'.³⁰ The particular brand of idealism that Eliot studied at Harvard and Oxford is known historically as 'Anglo-American' idealism, which reached its apex in the early decades of the twentieth century with proponents like Bradley and also Royce, Eliot's mentor at Harvard.³¹ Anglo-American idealism emerges from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770-1831) system of idealism which can trace its origin back to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Bradley's philosophy is an example of the movement of British philosophers away from the tradition of British empiricism towards German Idealism, with a focus on Hegel especially.³²

Rafey Habib, a recent commentator on the early Eliot's relationship to Western philosophy, highlights a number of similarities which Hegel and Bradley share, and which show how they differ from the empiricist tradition. Both assert monism against empiricist plurality; both believe that relations between things are internal and hence that the only reality is the all-inclusive Absolute; they tolerate no rigid distinction between the subjective and the objective; and both, in their respective ways, attempt to sublimate Kant's *phenomena-noumena* distinction.³³

There are, at first glance, broad affinities here with Heidegger's philosophy, which is strongly monist in character, and very critical of Cartesian dualism and Kantian idealism. Heidegger does regard Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as an 'unprecedented' ground-laying

²⁹ Shusterman, 'Eliot as Philosopher', 33.

³⁰ A.C. Bolgan, 'The Philosophy of Bradley and the Mind and Art of Eliot' in *English Literature and British Philosophy*, ed. by S.P. Rosenbaum, 251-277 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 253.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 100.

³³ Habib, *The Early T.S. Eliot and Western Philosophy*, 133. Hegel's system is characterized by the rejection of the *noumena* because Hegel perceives human thought as a reflection of reality itself, not merely based on the *appearance* of a reality which, in itself, is unknowable. Bradley's system is slightly different. He argues that our initial fragmentary understanding of reality can ultimately be reconciled with the Absolute.

work of metaphysics and a genuine attempt to address questions about the fundamental ontology of Dasein (KPM: 162-163, 170). However, Heidegger is very critical of Hegel, seeing himself in 'historical argument and confrontation with Hegel',³⁴ writing pointedly in *Contribution to Philosophy* that the 'time of "systems" is over' (CP: 4).³⁵ *Being and Time* is explicitly critical of Hegel's definitions of 'Being' (BT: 22-23) and of time, arguing for an interpretation of Dasein's temporality that is orientated in 'precisely the *opposite*' direction to Hegel's (BT: 457; §82).³⁶ In Heidegger's lecture course on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* he again pointedly writes that his thesis, in *Being and Time*, that '*the essence of being is time* is the exact opposite of what Hegel tried to demonstrate in his entire philosophy' (HPS: 145).

F.H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies*

Bradley's most Hegelian work is his *Ethical Studies* (1876) which describes his ethical system.³⁷ The book consists of a series of connected essays which function dialectically, each essay highlighting the other's contradictions. Through this dialectical process Bradley eventually settles on an ethical outlook based on 'self-realization' understood in the Hegelian sense, meaning that the self's fulfilment is achieved through its role within the social organism which grounds its duties³⁸. However, Bradley also acknowledges the inadequacy of this theory. He points out that an *actual* society may have moral imperfections which impede the self-fulfilment and self-realization of the individual. Thus a society would need reform to ensure this self-fulfilment.³⁹ For Bradley, only the ideal society can provide the 'ideal morality', and thus enable the fullest expression of the best possible self. The obvious problem he recognizes is that society is, by nature, imperfect, and so his theory is self-contradictory; self-realization is not ever truly possible. Thus the final essay of the book concludes that morality is 'an endless process, and therefore a self-

³⁴ GA 36/37, 14, 'geschichtliche Auseinandersetzung mit Hegel'.

³⁵ See R. Sinnerbrink, 'Sein und Geist: Heidegger's Confrontation with Hegel's *Phenomenology*', *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 3, nos. 2-3, (2007): 132-152. Sinnerbrink gives an account of Heidegger's confrontation with Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

³⁶ For a detailed discussion of Heidegger's critique of Hegel's conception of time see K. de Boer, *Thinking in the Light of Time: Heidegger's Encounter with Hegel* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2000).

³⁷ F.H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

³⁸ Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, 163.

³⁹ S. Candlish and P. Basile, 'Francis Herbert Bradley' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2009 Edition), ed. by E.N. Zalta, Stanford University, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/bradley>.

contradiction'.⁴⁰ It is impossible to attain in an imperfect society, and thus the realization of the ideal self is unattainable through it.

Interestingly, however, the book closes by suggesting that morality is 'imperfect' in such a way 'as implies something higher, which is religion' and goes on to explore that possibility.⁴¹ Eliot's life, as many biographers attest, among them the authoritative Lyndall Gordon, was characterized by the search for 'self-realization' in Hegelian terms, which a Christian would call 'salvation', and a Heideggerian perhaps 'authenticity'. The decisive step in this quest occurred in 1927 when Eliot was baptized an Anglo-Catholic (see chapter two, section II).⁴² Eliot's 1924 description of Bradley's prose as imbued with 'the agony of spiritual life'⁴³ suggests how Bradley's intellectual struggle with faith resonated with Eliot's own. 1927, the year of Eliot's baptism, was also the year he published a review in the *TLS* of *Ethical Studies*, reprinted for the first time since its original publication in 1876.⁴⁴ This temporal coincidence suggests the on-going importance to Eliot's intellectual and spiritual life of Bradley's work, long after Eliot's formal study of him ceased.

F.H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*

Eliot's thesis discusses Bradley's metaphysical work *Appearance and Reality* (1893), which is divided into two sections. The first, 'Appearance', aims at dismantling ideas and concepts we use when trying to understand the universe, essentially ideas of 'common sense'.⁴⁵ Bradley argues that these 'common sense' ideas are 'hardly consistent' and ultimately lead to contradictions and incoherence.⁴⁶ Among the ideas he rejects are philosophical distinctions, such as that between primary qualities inherent in things and secondary qualities which merely reflect our way of knowing; others are everyday concepts such as time, space, causation, the self, things and thing-in-themselves.⁴⁷ Following in the tradition of Humean scepticism, Bradley comes to a conclusion which Roger Scruton

⁴⁰ Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, 313.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 314.

⁴² See B. Spurr's recent, 'Anglo-Catholic in Religion': *T.S. Eliot and Christianity*.

⁴³ Quoted in Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 71, from T.S. Eliot's article for *Vanity Fair*, 'A Prediction in Regard to Three English Authors, Writers Who, Though Masters of Thought, Are Likewise Masters of Art' (Feb. 1924), 98.

⁴⁴ Originally titled 'Bradley on Need for Religious Point of View' it is reprinted as 'Francis Herbert Bradley' in *T.S. Eliot: Selected Essays 1917-1932* (see SE: 358-368).

⁴⁵ R. Scruton, *A Short History of Modern Philosophy: From Descartes to Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2002), 245.

⁴⁶ F.H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2002), 279.

⁴⁷ Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, xvii-xix.

points out 'is rightly seen as Hegelian'.⁴⁸ Any single judgement is incapable of expressing a complete fact because everything exists in complete interdependence with everything else. A 'plurality' is 'dependent on the relations in which it stands' because what 'appears' separate is, in *reality*, part of the Absolute, 'one system', harmonious and indivisible.⁴⁹

Thus the second part of the book, 'Reality', aims to give a positive account of the Absolute – 'the ultimate, unconditioned reality . . . not distorted by projection through the conceptual mechanisms of thought'.⁵⁰ Bradley describes reality as a 'single and all-inclusive experience, which embraces every partial diversity in concord'.⁵¹ He rejects the idea that reality could be considered as consisting of many, separate objects existing independently of each other (pluralism) and also rejects our experience of them as such (realism). Bradley's own view consistently combines monism, the claim that reality is one and that there are no real separate things, with absolute idealism, the idea that reality consists solely of idea or experience.⁵² He argues for his position by showing that all judgements are highly problematic in their description of reality if they separate 'a "what" . . . from its "that",' or in other words, separating the quality from the being. For example, the statement 'The hammer is heavy' abstracts and separates the thing 'hammer' from its quality 'heaviness'. This demonstrates an inherent contradiction in our common sense distinction between a thing and its quality. Thus Bradley argues that it is impossible to ever express anything perfectly, because any judgement or statement always abstracts from the world that it is about. A true statement about reality would not abstract from reality at all, which, from Bradley's account, is not possible – thus any final truth about reality is, in principle, inexpressible.⁵³

This is not an especially sophisticated understanding of language and many twentieth-century philosophers would disagree in various ways with Bradley's account of it. However, it does explain why he argues for a form of Absolute monism as the underlying and grounding nature of reality. For Bradley, all the concepts that make up common sense metaphysics, like thing, quality, time, space and self, as mentioned above, are inherently contradictory. If this is the case then one must ask: what *is* real? For

⁴⁸ Scruton, *A Short History*, 245.

⁴⁹ Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 143, 146.

⁵⁰ Candlish and Basile, 'Francis Herbert Bradley'.

⁵¹ Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 147.

⁵² Candlish and Basile, 'Francis Herbert Bradley'.

⁵³ See the section on Error, *Appearance and Reality*, 184-196.

Bradley, the answer is to posit a premise: ultimate reality must be non-contradictory, a 'harmonious system of ideal contents united by relations, and reflecting itself in self-conscious harmony'.⁵⁴ Bradley uses the metaphor of an organism and its organs to express how all the parts form an integral part of the whole, and yet how the organism, as the whole, is more than the sum of its parts.⁵⁵ He bases this assumption on what he describes as 'the unity of feeling', which is our initial intuition that the self belongs 'to the whole, undivided mass'.⁵⁶ It exists in 'undifferentiated harmony' with the universe. However, when we begin to describe reality and make judgements, we use language to 'abstract' the real, and through this process begin to create the 'inherent contradictions' that form part of our understanding of the world.

Bradley's metaphysics proposes a system that allows us to overcome this destructive tendency which hinders us from grasping the Absolute. As Scruton succinctly puts it, we can 'rediscover at the level of consciousness what we lost in becoming conscious, but knew intuitively before'.⁵⁷ Bradley's metaphysical solution allows us to comprehend that everything forms part of a singular, unified totality. This is not some form of transcendent experience, but a way of 'seeing' reality. The Absolute is not the Kantian *noumena*, something beyond our grasp, but neither is the appearance of the world, the *phenomena*, the only reality we have access to. Rather, once the system is understood, reality as a totality will be disclosed to us, and we will grasp the Absolute. As Habib notes, Bradley's philosophy is an attempt to 'reinstatate the notion of unity' – to get beyond appearance to an encounter with reality proper, 'immediate experience'. Categories which attempt to organize and separate aspects of reality, found throughout philosophy from Aristotle to Descartes, merely perpetuate reality in terms of separate appearances. Instead Bradley wants to position the notion of unity at the 'very centre of experience itself'.⁵⁸ As we shall see, Eliot's poetry, especially *Four Quartets*, draws this philosophy into poetic expression.

T.S. Eliot's 'situatedness'

The general argument of Eliot's doctoral thesis, written between 1913 and 1916, concerns subject-object dualism and affirms Bradley's position that 'immediate experience' is *prior* to any sense of the separation between 'subject' and 'object'. Eliot's argument is a critique

⁵⁴ Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 170.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁷ Scruton, *A Short History*, 245.

⁵⁸ Habib, *The Early T.S. Eliot and Western Philosophy*, 132.

directed at the modern Cartesian conception of the subject and the short-comings thereof. Understanding myself as a 'subject' involves a conscious separation and re-orientation of my relationship with the immediate experience of my everyday concern with the world. Eliot writes that

[w]e have no right, except in the most provisional way, to speak of my experience, since the I is a construction out of experience, an abstraction from it; and the thats, the browns and hards and flats, are equally ideal constructions from experience, as ideal as atoms. (KE: 19)

According to Eliot Edwardian psychology 'persistently objectified the subject' and a great deal of Romantic and Victorian poetry, 'persistently subjectified the objective, until excesses in both directions left the artist in 1916 looking for antidotes'.⁵⁹ One such antidote was literary Modernism which, to generalize, attempts to account for the nature of experience itself, the flow of the world in its constant coming to be, and to give expression to the seamless, and paradoxically rupturing and unifying nature of the conscious experience of our consciousness. Eliot, as poet, was one of its foremost proponents but there were many others who, in a myriad of ways, gave expression to this impulse. Certainly in reading Husserl in Marburg Eliot would have found a philosophical ally developing a theory of the intentional nature of consciousness, the idea that conscious experience is always an experience *of something*, structured such that it is always *intent on something* beyond itself, and that because of this intentionality 'it denie[s] the Cartesian "two worlds" in favour of one immediately lived and everyday world'.⁶⁰ The phenomenon of intentionality argues that the Cartesian model of the 'I', the subject, is inaccurate; the 'I' is always only aware through being conscious of *something* else. Thus consciousness, for Eliot, is a 'construction out of experience' (KE: 19), not the original source of that experience. Rather, understanding the 'I' requires understanding the contexts which shape that construction. Here Eliot reaches a similar position to that of Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), but arrives at it through F.H. Bradley's Hegelian holism.

This philosophical parallelism is something to which Richard Shusterman is attentive. He writes that Eliot's value of 'personal, situated, understanding', and with it hermeneutic historicism and pluralism reflects an 'evolution salient in contemporary philosophy'.⁶¹ Shusterman identifies three ideas which 'impelled' Eliot towards this

⁵⁹ B. Johnson, 'A Modern Noesis' in *Omnium Gatherum. Essays for Richard Ellmann*, ed. S. Dick *et al.* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1989), 60-61.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Shusterman, 'Eliot as Philosopher', 40.

position. The first two are 'human finitude and situatedness as fundamental features which condition understanding, while the third concerns the mutability of man's situation over time and his perception of this mutability and temporality'.⁶² 'Situatedness' Shusterman defines succinctly as the idea that I am 'always and irremediably located in some part of the spatio-temporal, socio-historical world, and that [my] perception and thinking are structured and motivated by [my] situation'.⁶³ This idea underpins the work of many important twentieth-century philosophers. Wittgenstein implies it in his argument that the intelligibility of language and thought depends upon our living in a 'concrete social context,' and that this expresses itself in a 'plurality of language games'.⁶⁴ Heidegger expresses our situatedness through the term 'Dasein', which indicates the being that *is there*, in the world, in a specific historical moment and context. For Gadamer this is a central tenet which guides his hermeneutic approach to our interpreting the world, always within a specific horizon of meaning. Eliot expresses this idea in various ways in his work: 'We are limited, by circumstance if not by capacities' (CC: 104); 'limited by the limitations of particular men in particular places and at particular times' (UPC: 142) and 'each generation, like each individual, brings to the contemplation of art its own categories of appreciation, makes its own demands upon art, and has its own uses for art' (UPC: 109). Finitude, for Eliot, forms part of our situatedness and affects our perspective on the world, which is also always changing. Because we are limited beings it is impossible to experience all possible points of view. Finite and situated 'our vision is always partial and our judgement always prejudiced'.⁶⁵

From context to comparison

Thus, the broader context of early twentieth-century philosophy, in its post-Kantian, neo-Hegelian tradition, provides Eliot's philosophical training and earliest poetry with its grounding context. These early philosophical influences were to lastingly shape his thought and poetry, to the extent that his genius as a poet cannot be fully understood if the philosophical complexity of his own thought is not taken into account. Therefore it is no surprise that there is a great deal of scholarship on Eliot and philosophy. The most

⁶² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ T.S. Eliot, 'Experiment in Criticism', quoted in Shusterman, 'Eliot as Philosopher', 42.

helpful starting point is the overview provided by D.J. Childs in *From Philosophy to Poetry: T.S. Eliot's Study of Knowledge and Experience*.⁶⁶

Some work has also been done on Heidegger and literature, for example essays in the volume edited by W.V. Spanos, *Martin Heidegger and the Question of Literature: Toward a Postmodern Literary Hermeneutics*.⁶⁷ However, there is very little sustained scholarship which concentrates on the similarities between Heidegger and Eliot. I have addressed some of these shared points in my Masters thesis, which was motivated primarily by the intuition that there was something worth saying about Heidegger's and Eliot's work in relation to each other.⁶⁸ The Masters was a ground-laying exercise and focussed mostly on Heidegger. It allowed me to discern some of the important themes which I have revisited in more detail in this thesis, as well as exploring wholly new aspects of Eliot and Heidegger's shared concordance.

Two unpublished doctoral theses have been written, both at Loyola University, and I think of these works as predecessors to my own. The first, titled 'The Poet's Place In Modernity: Heidegger, Eliot and Pound', by J. Derr explores the work of Heidegger, Eliot and Pound and their focus on the place of poetry and poets in modern society.⁶⁹ The second, 'Poets in a Destitute Time: A Theory of the Sublime and its Implications' by T. Kucharski focusses on the poetry of Hopkins, Eliot and Pound, through the lens of Heidegger's writings on aesthetics generally, and the sublime specifically.⁷⁰ Though my thesis is somewhat different in conception to the work of these two writers, all of us have discerned the numerous significant shared concerns and prejudices in the work of Eliot

⁶⁶ D.J. Childs, *From Philosophy to Poetry: T.S. Eliot's Study of Knowledge and Experience* (London: Athlone, 2001).

⁶⁷ W.V. Spanos, *Martin Heidegger and the Question of Literature: Towards a Postmodern Literary Hermeneutics*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).

⁶⁸ D. Griffiths, 'On the Uses and Advantages of Poetry for Life. Reading between Heidegger and Eliot' (MA thesis, University of Pretoria, 2006, <http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-02282007-144303/> date accessed 20 May 2012).

⁶⁹ J. Derr, 'The Poet's Place In Modernity: Heidegger, Eliot and Pound' (PhD diss., Loyola University, 2002).

⁷⁰ T. Kucharski, 'Poets in a Destitute Time: A Theory of the Sublime and Its Implications' (PhD diss., Loyola University, 2002).

and Heidegger which we have deemed worth investigating.⁷¹ To this comparison we will now turn.

⁷¹ Other helpful texts are M. Jain's book, already mentioned *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: the Harvard Years*, as well as material in *The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) edited by A.D. Moody, particularly the articles by R. Shusterman, 'Eliot as Philosopher', 31-47 and J.-M. Rabaté, 'Tradition and T.S. Eliot', 210-222. E. Hay's *T.S. Eliot's Negative Way* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982) offers some brief, interesting points of intersection which are not significantly developed. Two excellent articles, one by W.V. Spanos, 'Hermeneutic and Memory: Destroying T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*' *Genre* 11, no. 4 (1978): 523-573, and one by E. Wilson, 'On the Way to the Still Point: Eliot's *Four Quartets* and Martin Heidegger' *Yeats Eliot Review* 13, nos. 3&4 (1995): 56-63, offer interesting readings of Eliot's *Four Quartets*. The reader is advised to avoid H. Davidson's book, *T.S. Eliot and Hermeneutics: Absence and Interpretation in The Waste Land*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985) which is a poorly executed and largely incoherent account of Heidegger's philosophy.

Chapter One: Authenticity

I wanted the word down
And *they* wanted me at a punch press
‘death is smoking my cigars’ – Charles Bukowski⁷²

Everyone wants the same thing, everyone is the same: whoever thinks otherwise
goes voluntarily into the madhouse.
Thus Spoke Zarathustra – Friedrich Nietzsche⁷³

This chapter investigates the rich ontological commonalities between Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1927) and T.S. Eliot’s ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ (written in 1910-1911, first published in *The Egoist* in 1915). Both texts offer compelling expressions of the early twentieth-century existential milieu. Heidegger’s concepts of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*), inauthenticity (*Uneigentlichkeit*), the ‘they’ (*das Man*), ‘idle talk’ (*Gerede*) and angst (*Angst*), which are developed in *Being and Time*, illuminate ontological, existential concerns which some of Eliot’s early poems strongly suggest, and which revolve around the question of authenticity. There are two sections to this chapter. The first, titled ‘Dasein and the ‘they’ (*Das Man*)’ presents an exegesis and overview of this concept in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. It is fairly lengthy and covers some of the various terms associated with the ‘they’, such as the self, temporality, inauthenticity and authenticity. This section provides the backdrop as well as the interpretive framework for my reading of ‘Prufrock’. Section II begins the discussion of the actual poem, drawing out its themes in relation to the concepts discussed in Section I. Section II continues exploring themes in *Being and Time*, notably ‘idle talk’ and ‘angst’, which provide additional material for my interpretation. This chapter’s comparison demonstrates the complementary dynamic in Eliot and Heidegger’s early work and the strong patterns of concordance that bridge their separate projects.

There are only two pieces of writing which I have discovered that attempt an existential philosophical reading of ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, and neither of them uses Heidegger’s philosophy as a basis. The most recent piece, ‘Prufrock’s Question and Roquentin’s Answer’ (2009), presents a comparative reading of Eliot’s poem and Jean-

⁷² C. Bukowski, *The Last Night of the Earth Poems* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 72.

⁷³ F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), 46.

Paul Sartre's (1905-1980) novel *Nausea* (1938).⁷⁴ It also draws on Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943) (a book largely modelled on *Being and Time*), briefly discussing the notion of 'bad faith'.⁷⁵ The article demonstrates the sometimes tenuous similarities between Prufrock and Roquentin, but makes only a superficial attempt to ground this link in the existential philosophy which informs the reading. Its focus is mainly on the similarities in behaviour that Prufrock and Roquentin exhibit. Another article which I mention because of its existential theme of bad faith is 'Prufrock in St. Petersburg: The Presence of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which explores the influence of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in 'Prufrock'. Eliot was reading *Crime and Punishment* in French in 1910 while in Paris, more or less around the time when he was writing the poem.⁷⁶ The article is also a character study and illustrates the similarities in Raskolnikov and Prufrock's behaviour.⁷⁷ What is interesting is that both articles show that Roquentin and Raskolnikov are redeemed from the existential burdens that weigh upon them. Roquentin, in his deciding to write a novel at the end of *Nausea*, finds meaning through art, while Raskolnikov confesses his crime and is redeemed from his guilty conscience. Unfortunately, as this chapter will show, Prufrock remains, at a core, a hollow man, unable to redeem his existence in any meaningful way.

⁷⁴ See W. Irwin, 'Prufrock's Question and Roquentin's Answer,' *Philosophy and Literature* 33 (2009): 184-192. I emailed Prof. Irwin a copy of my article, a much shortened version of this chapter, and we had a brief exchange over our readings of 'Prufrock'. For my article see D. Griffiths, 'Daring to Disturb the Universe: Heidegger's Authenticity and *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*,' *Literator* 30, no. 2 (2009): 107-126. See also J-P. Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. by L. Alexander (New York: New Directions, 2007).

⁷⁵ J-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. by H.E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square, 1992), see part one, chapter two for a discussion of 'bad faith'.

⁷⁶ For an overview of his year in Paris see N.D. Hargrove, *T.S. Eliot's Parisian Year* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009).

⁷⁷ See P. Lowe, 'Prufrock in St. Petersburg: The Presence of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock",' *Journal of Modern Literature* 28, no. 3 (2005): 1-24.

Section I: Dasein and the 'they' (*Das Man*)

This section begins by discussing aspects of *Being and Time* which are relevant to an analysis of 'Prufrock'. The pertinent themes are first developed in Division One, Section IV of *Being and Time* where Heidegger discusses the existential analytic that concerns Dasein's being-with-its-self as well as being-amongst-the-'they'. My discussion will begin by focussing on this chapter. Other apposite ideas appear dispersed throughout *Being and Time*, and will be discussed as relevant.

Before turning to focus on Dasein's selfhood and its relation to others *Being and Time*, in its first division, discusses the basic state of Dasein's existence, namely that it is foremost a being-in-the-world with 'worldhood' as one of its fundamental 'existentials' (BT: 92).⁷⁸ In Section IV Heidegger moves on to discuss a feature of its worldhood, namely Dasein's way of being-with-others, which directly affects the way it relates to its own existence. This particular existential concern has an important role in Eliot's own presentation of human nature, and it can, I believe, provide an interesting framework for understanding some of the concerns in Eliot's early poetry, particular 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. The term 'early' poetry requires some qualification. His collected works begin with poems written in 1909 and ends with those from 1962. Over this period the poetry undergoes marked stages of development. T.S. Pearce describes four or five such creative periods.⁷⁹ But for my purposes I distinguish two broader stages, the pre-conversion poetry from 1909 up to 1925, including important poems such as 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1917), 'Preludes' (1917), *The Waste Land* (1922) and 'The Hollow Men' (1925), and the post-conversion poetry such as 'Ash-Wednesday' (1930), 'Choruses from "The Rock"' (1934) and significantly *Four Quartets* (1935-1942).⁸⁰ Thus, to generalize, the term 'early' poetry designates poems written before Eliot's conversion to High Anglicanism in 1927, (the same year Heidegger published *Being and Time*) and the later

⁷⁸ In *Being and Time* Heidegger makes an important distinction between 'existential' and 'existentiell'. An existential is an essential ontological attribute that Dasein has, something which constitutes it as Dasein. Examples could be that Dasein is always a being-towards-death or, in the case of this discussion, that Dasein is constituted as being among the 'they'. This is Dasein's general predisposition. The modification of Dasein's orientation towards these ontological existentials is referred to as an *existentiell*. Thus my existential disposition is to be inauthentic among the 'they', while the modifying of my disposition to authenticity is an *existentiell*; P. Gorner, *Heidegger's Being and Time: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 110.

⁷⁹ See T.S. Pearce, *T.S. Eliot: Literature in Perspective* for an account of these possible groupings (London: Evans Brothers, 1967), 20.

⁸⁰ All these poems appear in T.S. Eliot's, *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969).

poetry follows after this year.⁸¹ Scholarship on Heidegger also often distinguishes between two or sometimes three stages in his thought, separated by the so-called 'turn'. The change is clearly apparent in his essays written after the Second World War, but can be traced back to the work he produced after *Being and Time*, as early as the 1930 essay 'On the Essences of Truth' (OT).⁸² These essays begin to differ stylistically and thematically from *Being and Time*. However, Heidegger himself was uneasy about any distinction of stages, insisting that only through understanding 'Heidegger I' is it possible to access the thought of 'Heidegger II'.⁸³ Eliot is similar in term of his own poetic development. Appreciating the significance and fullness of *Four Quartets* requires understanding the sense of despair and uncertainty which characterizes much of his early poetry.

To return to Section IV of *Being and Time*, Heidegger's concern is with performing an ontological analysis of the being that recognizes its 'thereness' and is thus both fascinated and absorbed by its world (BT: 149). His search is driven by a question of identity namely, *who* is this being that finds itself already in a world? A secondary question is, what are the equiprimordial structures which enable this 'worlding' to occur (*ibid.*)? If these structures can be uncovered then Heidegger believes he can establish the answer to the *who* question.

The traditional metaphysical answer to *who* is to posit an 'I', 'subject' or 'self'. Another way of explaining the *who* is to describe it as 'something identical throughout changes in its Experiences and ways of behaviour, and which relates itself to this changing multiplicity in doing so' (BT: 150). I am myself only if I remain cognizant of a continuous temporal sense of my identity, even though the circumstances of my life and the world around me change. As I will discuss more in chapter two of this thesis, a sudden temporal disjunction in my existence can complicate my sense of who I am, or at least make my own existence problematic or puzzling; in this idea lies the root of *Ereignis*, a concept of central importance for Heidegger's later work and, I will argue, for Eliot's poetry, particularly *Four Quartets*. In *Being and Time*, however, Heidegger's thought has not yet fully developed this

⁸¹ See J.M. Perl's 'Disambivalent Quatrains' in *A Companion to T.S. Eliot*, ed. by D.E. Chinitz, 134-144 (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 133, for further discussion on the convenience and problems of making this two-phase division.

⁸² See R. Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 117-121 for an overview of the 'turn' in Heidegger's thought.

⁸³ See the letter Heidegger wrote to Richardson, in *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 8. There is also a succinct discussion of this issue in *Heidegger: An Introduction* by H. L. Dreyfus and M.A. Wrathall (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 9ff.

far. He begins with the insight that temporality is primordial in how Dasein's existence can be understood.

Reckoning with time

To put it succinctly, Dasein's being is, in some fundamental sense, grounded in temporality (BT: 464). In his pre-*Being and Time* works Heidegger is still refining the distinction between temporality and time and our relation to these structures. He conflates temporality and time in both *The Concept of Time* (CT, 1924) and *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (HCT, 1925). For example he writes that 'Dasein is time, time is temporal. Dasein is not time, but temporality . . . *Time itself* is meaningless; time is temporal' (CT: 21E). And again 'The being, in which Dasein can be its wholeness authentically as being-ahead-of-itself, is *time* . . . *Not "time is" but Dasein qua time temporalizes its being*' (HCT: 319). Heidegger seems to know what he wants to say, but to lack a defined enough vocabulary to say it. Nonetheless, these two early texts are clearly fore-runners to what comes to fruition in *Being and Time*.

In this first longer work, Heidegger finally distinguishes clearly between time [*Zeit*] and temporality [*Zeitlichkeit*]. Put simply, 'time' is how Dasein, for the most part, understands and accounts for its temporal being ontically, mainly through the way it measures and reckons with time. 'Temporality', however, is something more primordial and ontologically significant. It is composed of the future, the character of having been, and the present; these three modes of temporality Heidegger refers to as the 'ecstases'⁸⁴ of temporality. Temporality itself is not prior to these states, it is not 'an entity which first emerges from *itself*; [rather] its essence is a process of temporalizing in the unity of the ecstases' (BT: 377). Temporality's ecstatic relation to its manifestations as the future, present and past are inseparable from itself. It is the unifying, primordial component which emerges as the flow of Dasein's uninterrupted experience of its temporal existence. Yet, Heidegger is careful to point out that temporality 'is' not an 'entity at all. It is not, but it temporalizes itself' (*ibid.*). Temporality, in *Being and Time*, is 'immaterial and incorporeal, yet absolutely concrete, absolutely real, with a potential that exceeds any actuality'.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ 'Ecstases' derives from the Greek root '*ekstasis*' and means 'standing outside oneself'.

⁸⁵ M. de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 119.

How Dasein accounts for this *ecstatico-temporal* experience is to characterize it as 'time', this making it accessible to ordinary understanding and relating it to our everyday experience of measuring time. Understood in this ordinary way time consists of a 'pure sequence of nows' in which the 'ecstatical character of primordial temporality has been levelled off' (*ibid.*). Time is available publically for Dasein's everyday being-in-the-world (BT: 464). This temporalization of temporality, in this levelled-off, public mode, Heidegger construes as an 'inauthentic' time (BT: 377). Because of Dasein's state of *thrownness*, this understanding of time is already disclosed and is the time which we all have access to, which we *reckon* with (time-reckoning: *Zeitrechnung*). Because of this everyday understanding Dasein characterizes itself as a being 'with-in' time and thus measures the time it has accordingly, understanding time as something ready-to-hand. A simple example is the Clock Tower on Auckland University's city campus, a building which has the central feature of a clock, prominently displayed and kept in time. This allows anyone to know, with a brief glance, what time of day it is, or to set their watch accordingly.

The problem with this everyday conception of time is that public time is guided by *Das Man*, the 'they' – a concept which will feature largely in this chapter. Dasein's inauthentic state of being 'with-in' time means that time is generally considered in terms of its immediate availability, and is *reckoned-with* as it is required to perform certain tasks and live out our daily lives. Time, construed *inauthentically* as a pure sequence of nows, beguiles us into a complacent understanding of this phenomenon. We measure out our lives according to hours and days which immediately concern our present – we 'measure out our lives with coffee spoons' (LS: 14), to paraphrase Prufrock, whom we will soon encounter. For many, time is measured out according to the beginning and end of their work days and work weeks.

However, for Heidegger, what is concealed in this immediate concern and absorption with everyday time is a 'fleeing in the face of death', a failure to recognize authentic futurity and thus temporality in general (BT: 477). He writes that the '*primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future*' (BT: 378). Dasein's being is finite, and characterized properly as being-towards-death. Understanding my future as something which will *end* entails recognizing the primordial nature of my temporality and requires being authentically resolute in the face of this knowledge. But also part of the recognition of my futural projection is acknowledging my remaining undisclosed possibilities of existence, including the potential to become authentic to myself. However, if I remain immersed in public time, then the nature of my true temporality is covered

over, because public time creates the illusion of being *infinite* time. The reason for this is because the phenomenon of the 'they' *cannot* die, because death is always *my own* (BT: 477). Thus immersion in public time prevents the recognition of Dasein's own temporal nature and promotes a *fleeing* in the face of death, a 'looking away from the end of Being-in-the-world' (*ibid.*). Particularly in the example of Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' this important temporal distinction will become apparent.

Rejecting the self

Temporality is thus central in answering the question of the *who*? What Heidegger wants to avoid doing, and is critical of, is construing the answer to this question as an 'I', 'self' or 'subject'. His critique is directed at the metaphysical dualism of René Descartes (1596-1650), which underpins much of Modern philosophy that developed after him. Descartes conceives of the self, *res cogito*, as distinctly separate from the world, *res extensa* (BT: 131). Not only is the self conceived of as something separate from the world it resides in, but also, as the focus on the self begins to dominate Modern philosophy, it begins to be conceived of as the entity which creates and constitutes the world. This is one of the dominant themes in Kant's philosophy, his Transcendental Analytic, which aims to determine the *a priori* principles of understanding which give the world its intelligibility. This theme continues in the German Idealist tradition, and reaches its zenith in Hegel's Absolute conception of the self as 'Geist' (Spirit).⁸⁶

For Heidegger, as part of his early *Destruktion* of metaphysics, this position is untenable for many reasons, some of which I shall briefly mention. Most fundamentally Dasein is a *being-in-the-world*. My existence and sense of self are only intelligible because they are intimately and intricately embedded in a meaningful relationship within the particular world I inhabit. To separate the self from its world is to deny the self its essence, which resides in its existence in its world. This separation would transform Dasein into an entity which is present-at-hand – something with *thinghood*. Heidegger explicitly rejects this position because entities understood as present-at-hand are indifferent to their existence, and can be interpreted from a theoretical, objective perspective. For example, Descartes' *res cogito* entails the reduction of the self to something which is present-at-hand, and thus something which can be objectified and considered indifferent to its existence. We can examine objects around us in a disinterested mode, and understand

⁸⁶ See R. Solomon's *Continental Philosophy since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self* for an accessible and succinct discussion of this topic (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

them in terms of their properties and categorize them accordingly. *But* because Dasein understands itself as a being who *has* existence, and whose existence is its singular concern, it cannot be understood or reduced to something present-at-hand. It (meaning its existence) is not a thing at all.

Three interrelated phenomenological observations underlie this position. First, existence is always *mine* (*mineness: Jemeinigkeit*) (BT: 68, 150). My existence is my own concern such that it would be impossible for someone else to understand theoretically or otherwise how it is with *my* individual being. My existence and the existential concerns attached to it, such as my finitude, the possibilities my life may take, my potential for authenticity and my death, are fundamentally *my own*. This is irreducible to *thinghood*.

Secondly, Dasein *is* its possibilities, and this existential trait maintains Dasein as an entity who is projected towards its future being, which is *still* to be disclosed. Thus the ecstatic nature of Dasein's existence precludes it being reduced to something present-at-hand, for what there is to know about Dasein is always, in some futural sense, unknowable. When the 'Self' is posited as an explanation or answer to the question of the *who* of Dasein, then 'ontologically one is still positing something whose Being retains the meaning of present-at-hand, whether it does so explicitly or not' (BT: 150). Thus to introspect about the inner-world of my own present and immediate conscious experience is, in some sense, to assume a theoretical attitude towards my own 'I'. This is not necessarily a bad thing, for it may provide the framework for understand consciousness as such (BT: 151). It is certainly the pursuit of those interested in the philosophy of mind. However, this introspective position entails closing off possibilities outside, *but* part of my individual existence (and existence with others) which have *yet* to be disclosed. Thus the position of the theoretical subject can only offer a limited perspective on my being-in-the-world.

The third position, which follows from the second, is that if we assume this theoretical stance towards our own existence then we actually take up a 'second order' position to our average, everyday existence. If we are, essentially, beings-in-the-world, then our investigation concerns how it is with that *being-in* as such, because this is our primary mode of orientation and engagement with the world. This is where phenomenological ontology should begin – not by abstracting the self into an ideal, abstract construct. So, for Heidegger, this is where the answer to the *who* is found

foremost and, as such, is the position he wants to defend, because it provides the ground for a proper ontological analysis of Dasein and its worldhood.⁸⁷ It also shows up the incorrect privileging of a 'transcendental ego' as somehow responsible for shaping the world and providing it with content, as if this was always our basic and most important state of orientation.

Finding the others

§26 of *Being and Time* discusses how our being is always with others, even if there is no one present in our immediate vicinity. In our everyday existence we always encounter an environment full of equipment, things that are, for the most part, ready-to-hand. To a large extent these things constitute our world of work – the work of others and our own. The importance of work for human existence is implicit in *Being and Time* via the equipmental nature of things that surround us. Without work and equipment we could not sustain our existence.

Thus in our everydayness (*Alltäglichkeit*) we encounter objects which, by the sheer fact of their existence, presuppose a world of others. A simple example would be the dictionary next to me, the creation and production of which requires the efforts of an editor and editorial team, publishing house and distributors and numerous other people and institutions involved in a complex web of meaningful relations which can produce such a detailed, complex object. To confirm the existence of others, and that my existence is inherently a social one, I can merely glance at the dictionary. This is what our world is like: the paving I walk upon entails the work of a civil engineer and architect, a team of workmen; the car parked on the paving is owned by someone; the bench in the park is available for someone to sit on. These ready-to-hand entities are *there*, in the world, and available for me or someone else – they suggest the existence of other people, not only as individual entities, but also as a co-existing community in a shared world.

The point is not that I am somehow separate from the others, as if *they* are everyone else except me. In fact, I am, for the most part, indistinguishable from them. I am *with* them in the same world (*with-world: Mitwelt*). Moreover, this being-with is characterized as a 'circumspectively concerned Being-in-the-world' (BT: 154). The fact that the world is

⁸⁷ Heidegger still has to assume some kind of 'observer' perspective in order to perform this analysis. Thus he has to treat Dasein's being-in-the-world as something 'present-at-hand' in order to say anything meaningful about its existence. Throughout *Being and Time* however he does acknowledge that Dasein is 'neither present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand' (BT: 154).

full of public things which are ready-to-hand, and that we work together to sustain and enrich our existence collectively indicates an attitude of care (*Sorge*) that we share, for the well-being and flourishing of our worldhood. We wait patiently at the traffic light for it to indicate that we can turn safely without endangering ourselves or others. I return library books on time and recycle my garbage so that things that can be used and re-used by others. These are simple examples but establish that being-in-the-world is characterized existentially as a *being-with-others* (*Dasein-with: Mitdasein*, BT: 155). This state of *being-with* is so ontologically significant for Heidegger that he claims that Dasein's *understanding of Being itself* already implies an understanding of others. This is not an understanding derived from knowledge gained through experience but something more primordial, something embedded in the meaning of our being. Our own individual existence is, even before we can know it, a creation of the biological unity of others and thus even the possibility of knowing ourselves is already grounded in a world in which there are others (BT: 161).

This position is evidently anti-solipsistic and anti-Cartesian. To determine the first principle of philosophy by postulating a subject or ego separate from the world and from others is inadequate and insubstantial, for it does not reflect the *actual* existential conditions which we literally find ourselves in. Existence is one *with* Others, and in that Dasein *is* at all, it has this being-*with* as its kind of Being (BT: 163). However, Heidegger makes a further phenomenological distinction about our relation to others which is significant for my thesis. This distinction is the relational *difference* that emerges between being *with* 'the Others' as they are encountered and related to in the world *reflective* Dasein can identify with, and being *among* 'the they' (*Das Man*) who are those others that Dasein *itself* becomes when it is no longer individuating itself, or reflecting on the conditions which maintain it in its worldhood. Thus when Dasein is *absorbed* in the world, a world where it becomes merely one-*among*-Others, the world of the 'they', then, for Heidegger, Dasein is *no longer* genuinely itself or genuinely *with*-Others.

His question now, before he discusses Dasein's genuine self, is *who* is it when its reflective being-*with*-itself and being-*with*-Others has been taken over by *Das Man*? (BT: 163).

Losing the others

For the most part, Dasein is both fascinated and absorbed with its world (BT: 149). It finds itself thrown (*geworfen*) into a *particular* world, in which it is mostly and ordinarily immersed in, and cannot choose the initial, particular circumstances of its existence in this

world. In this state Dasein remains unaware of its thrown condition. Rather, its primary constitution is as a *being-in-the-world*, an average state of immersion, characterized as its everyday mode of being. Heidegger characterizes this ordinary mode of being as *inauthentic*, and discusses various 'existentials' which contribute to, and maintain Dasein in this state of inauthenticity. The most significant of these he calls the 'they' (or 'the One': *Das Man*). The term is used in our everyday idiom, in phrases like 'They say that . . .' or 'One should brush one's teeth twice a day . ..'. Heidegger contends that, for the most part, when Dasein exists it is not just as a being-*with*-Others [*Mitdasein*], but as *one among the 'they'*. This mode of existence entails Dasein losing itself, or falling away from itself, and because it is lost to itself it is in a state of inauthenticity. For Heidegger the question is how does the 'they' maintain individual Dasein in this state of inauthenticity? The 'they' implies no one and yet everyone, embodying the masses, the faceless body of society in general. The 'they' is the source and site of accepted, acceptable public opinion, and so exerts an anonymous pressure on each of us to conform to the dictates of society in general. It is the 'they' that 'prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness' (BT: 164). What will become apparent is that the 'they' is not benign, but exerts a dictatorship over the decisions each of us makes, such that often those decisions are no longer our own, but, in fact, made under the influence and coercion of the 'they'.

In its everyday mode of living, Dasein is immersed in the world of the 'they' and thus also conforms to it. One is constantly concerned by how one differs from *them* or is the same as *them*. So when Dasein is among the 'they' it measures itself against them, possibly to differentiate itself from them, or align itself to *their* preferences. This kind of being-*among-one-another* Heidegger says has the character of *distantiality* (*Abständigkeit*). This suggests that though one does not want to admit obvious, explicit conformity to the 'they' and tries to preserve one's own sense of individuality, there is always some measure of distance; one is much like the 'they' or trying to define oneself in non-conformity to the 'they'. Nevertheless, what prevails is an averageness, everyday *distantiality*, a levelling-down (*Einebnung*) of individual Dasein.

But to what real world society does this phenomenon apply? Johannes Fritsche argues that the idea of the 'they' applies only to Heidegger's immediate context, namely the Weimar-era urban centres in Germany, then undergoing a rapid loss of tradition and

culture.⁸⁸ This is perhaps a skewed reading of *Being and Time*, missing the key point that the book's fundamental aim is to offer an omnitemporal account of the structures that make up human existence, much in the spirit of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁸⁹ Theodore Schatzki broadens the scope of the phenomenon, writing that the 'they' 'seems peculiarly keyed to early twentieth-century public life in Germany and northern Europe'.⁹⁰ This is a good point but still misses the wider sense of what Heidegger *intends* the 'they' to represent. Julian Young interprets the 'they' as applying to the full sweep of human culture, as an 'omnitemporal 'existential'', which is how Heidegger, given his overall intention in *Being and Time*, intended the 'they' to be understood and why he describes this phenomenon as an 'existential'.⁹¹

Nonetheless, despite the difference these commentators' underlying point is that the phenomenon of the 'they' is a result of humans' existing together, and that it is specifically keyed towards ensuring their conformity in a society. In this their agreement with Heidegger is unanimous. However, it does raise questions about whether the 'they' is a result of the existence of a public sphere as such, and whether this sphere has to be particularly politically robust in order for public opinion to carry such weight. Does a democracy, based on principles of equality, create greater conformity in a society because it is so tolerant of the availability of public opinion, than say a monarchy or dictatorship? What of fascism? If everyone's opinion matters does it mean, effectively, that no-one's matters? Was Heidegger implicitly criticizing the Weimar Republic and the political structure of democracy that was foisted onto Germany after the First World War?⁹²

These are difficult questions. Perhaps the simple answer is to keep in mind that in *Being and Time* Heidegger is detailing ontological structures which shape the existence of Dasein. He is not offering an implicit political critique of the society he lived in. If Dasein

⁸⁸ J. Fritsche, *Historical Destiny and National Socialism in Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 15.

⁸⁹ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. P. Guyer and A.W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁹⁰ T.R. Schatzki, 'Early Heidegger on Sociality' in *A Companion to Heidegger* ed. by H.L. Dreyfus and M.A. Wrathall (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 243.

⁹¹ Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism*, 199. Furthermore, Young points out that a great deal of Foucault's philosophy reads as an exploration of Heidegger's 'they'. For Foucault 'normalization' is a key process produced specifically as a result of Enlightenment thinking. Young writes that this process of 'normalization' is not portrayed in Heidegger's discussion of the 'they' which is presented as an ahistorical phenomenon present in all human societies, but rather as 'the dark under-belly of the Enlightenment', which for Foucault entails the disciplines and techniques of normalisation; Young, *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* (London: Routledge, 2003), 177.

⁹² See Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism*, 122 and Schatzki, 'Early Heidegger on Sociality' for more on this question.

is, for the most part, a being-*amongst*-Others then it always has to contend with the 'they'. The historical and political circumstances of this may change but the ontological ones, if we accept *Being and Time*, do not. Heidegger even writes that the extent to which the dominion of the 'they' becomes compelling and explicit may change in the course of history (BT: 167). The founding premise remains that every human as Dasein lives its life in the world of the 'they' and is largely shaped by, and immersed in this world.

John Cooper does, however, offer a nuanced insight as to the particular significance of *Being and Time* for the post-First World War German intelligentsia. In 1927, Cooper argues, the tone and content of the book was 'intensely poetic, self-assertively unblinkerred, ironic', and seemed to Heidegger's peers 'above all, consolatory'. It comforted the German intelligentsia by

condemning to the sphere of the everyday (and, thus, to inauthenticity) all that was the immediate cause of anxiety and distress in Germany in the 1920s – the collapse of Wilhelmine moralism, the hyper-inflation, the political charades at Weimar, and the arrival of mass culture . . . For the honest thinker, *Being and Time* held out a more heroic fate by thrusting small woes aside, no matter how significant they seemed, to let a more radical Anxiety do its proper work, namely to being Dasein back to itself, 'back from its absorption in the world'.⁹³

Cooper's comments suggest that the particular historical circumstances in which Heidegger and his generation lived brought to the fore particular facets of the general omnitemporal, ontological condition of existence. Eliot's early poems such as *The Waste Land* (1922) and 'The Hollow Men' (1925) were written in the same post-First World War period, and interpreting an early poem by T.S. Eliot in the context of Heidegger's *Das Man* raises this question again: to what extent is the 'they' an existential omnitemporal if it seems to describe so accurately a phenomenon which developed as a result of urbanisation and rise of the cityscape – namely mass society. Though England was not nearly as depressed as Germany, it shared this phenomenon with its Teutonic cousin, one that was thrown into greater relief by the post-war depression.

In his famous essay *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), an argument for the recovery of Christian community, Eliot writes that,

The more highly industrialized the country, the more easily a materialistic philosophy will flourish in it, and the more deadly that philosophy will be. Britain has been highly industrialized longer than any other country. And the tendency of unlimited industrialisation is to create bodies of men and women – of all classes – detached from tradition, alienated from religion, and susceptible to mass suggestion: in other words,

⁹³ Cooper, *T.S. Eliot and the Ideology of Four Quartets*, 122-123.

a mob. And a mob will be no less a mob if it is well fed, well clothed, well housed, and well disciplined. (SPE: 287)

And further in the same essay:

But what is more insidious than any censorship, is the steady influence which operates silently in any mass society organized for profit, for the depression of standards of art and culture. The increasing organization of advertisement and propaganda – or the influencing of masses of men by any means except through their intelligence – is all against them. (SPE: 289)

Eliot's perceptive critique chimes well with Cooper's assessment of *Being and Time*. What Eliot so keenly discerned in Britain in 1939 is the same European societal malaise that was seeping into Germany, and arguably, what Heidegger distilled in *Being and Time*.

Keeping this in mind when returning to the argument gives further illumination to the modern condition and how Eliot and Heidegger diagnosed and responded to it. The danger that faces Dasein when it is 'levelled down' in this immersed state of being, one among the 'they', is that it forgets its own self-being and disregards the possibility of recognizing its own individuated existence. It becomes entirely formed by and part of the 'they-self' of everydayness. Because its initial state of existence, before it has come to terms with its own self, is among the 'they', Dasein's identity is already significantly formed by the context and circumstances created by the 'they'. This formation of identity occurs pre-conceptually, so inauthenticity is inevitable and unavoidable, because Dasein is primarily a being with others in a shared world. Thus subservience to the 'they' is inevitable, but existentially problematic.

The first problem with the 'they-self' is that Dasein may never discover its own authentic self, if it remains embedded in and controlled by the dictates of the 'they'. This in turn leads to the second problem, which is the continual reduction of the futural possibilities of Dasein's own existence, because all its choices are limited and moulded according to the whims and desires of the 'they', and this further compounds its inauthentic state.

The averageness that permeates the 'they' prevents Dasein from realizing its own authenticity. As an inauthentic Dasein the individual stands in subservience to the others; 'It itself is not; its Being has been taken away by the Others. Dasein's everyday possibilities of Being are for the Others to dispose of as they please' (BT: 164). These Others are not definite others, I cannot point them out, for I belong to the Others myself. When I am in the public sphere, riding the bus, doing the shopping or taking books out the library, I am one of *them* such that I become indistinguishable from the 'they'. In this inconspicuousness, Heidegger writes, consists 'the real dictatorship' of the 'they'. For I enjoy pleasure like *they* do; appreciate art and judge literature as *they* do; moreover I

shrink back from the 'great mass' as *they* shrink back (BT: 164). Thus my everyday existence is prescribed for me so effectively that, for the most part, I am not aware of my role as one of the 'they'. Not only this but when I do attempt to differentiate myself from the 'they', I do so as *they* do. In other words, even non-conformity is a response to the conformity imposed by the 'they'. This is the real dictatorship which controls most of the decisions that shape my life (even the decision to be 'different'). This control manifests itself in the form of *averageness* which prescribes what 'can and may be ventured' (BT: 165). Anything exceptional is diminished, priorities are suppressed and fundamental things are 'glossed over as something that has long been known' (*ibid.*).

Hence each individual, under the 'spell' of the 'they', is 'levelled down' according to *their* prescribed dictates and falls prey to *their* whims. This ensures that all behaviour conforms to societal norms. This 'levelling down' occurs because the 'they' already presents each Dasein with specific, ready-made, acceptable moulds, opinions and attitudes that are deemed correct, to ensure the well-being of the 'they' as a totality. Thus the 'they' disburdens Dasein in its everydayness because, having been levelled down, it never faces the responsibility of its own choice. Rather, it can always find recourse from itself in the unanimity of the 'they' and be disburdened from itself. The immediacy and perplexity of Dasein's own existence is lost and covered over by allowing the 'they' to remove its responsibility for being (BT: 165). This mode of being is *inauthentic*, 'the failure to stand by one's Self' (BT: 166) and also as fallen (*Verfallen*) (BT: 220). The term 'fallen' has Christian connotations, which Heidegger does not discuss, though they resonate in the text. Rather, he means that idle talk (discussed in the next section), curiosity and ambiguity are three existential aspects of Dasein's existence which constitute its being one-*amongst*-the-they, as one who has *fallen* away from itself. These aspects maintain its mode of everydayness, as 'fallenness'. In Dasein's absorption with the world, it has fallen away from its authentic potential and is lost in the publicness of the 'they'. Its absorption with the world of the 'they' is maintained and informed by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity.

However, before we conclude that being an inauthentic one-*amongst*-the-they is an intolerable, inhuman condition, Heidegger is careful to point out that inauthenticity does

not signify a lessening of the facticity of Dasein (BT: 166).⁹⁴ In the mode of inauthenticity Dasein is not less 'real', nor somehow deficient compared to Dasein in the mode of authenticity. Both these modes form part of the ontological constitution of our being-in-the-world. Heidegger asserts that '*the 'they' is an existentiale and as a primordial phenomenon, it belongs to Dasein's positive constitution*' (BT: 167). 'Positive' indicates an affirmation of this 'existentiale' as part of the make-up of Dasein. Heidegger ascribes no value judgement to being-among-the-'they'. It serves only as an ontological determinant which constitutes Dasein's being-in-the-world. Though each Dasein is subservient to the 'they', falls under *their* dictatorship, and is levelled out and levels itself out in term of conformity and difference to the 'they', this phenomenon exists without the intention of deliberate malice. It merely ensures normality and functionality in our existence with others, and allows society a certain predictable regularity. Still, it is difficult not to be repulsed by the 'they' for it seems to imply that individual freedom and the possibility of being open to a genuine choice is either closed off by the 'they', or that the possibility of choice is a sophisticated illusions perpetuated by the 'they'. The relationship is ambivalent at best and, as we shall see with Prufrock, is fundamentally detrimental to him realizing his own authentic self, with depressing implications.

Finding yourself

The authentic self is defined as 'the self which has explicitly grasped itself' (BT: 167). To become authentic Dasein must break out of the limitations imposed by the 'they-self'. Its dispersal as a being-*amongst*-others must be claimed back, such that it can take hold of its *own way*. If Dasein remains absorbed within the 'they-self' its involvements are never truly its *own* but manipulations of the 'they'. Its own existence is over-shadowed with concerns which are projected upon it, and which it lives out under circumstances which it does not choose. In order to have its own choices Dasein must first find *itself*. However, the self that it finds must be its authentic self, not a self which has been projected upon it by the 'they-self'. How this is revealed has much to do with Dasein's individual experience of *angst* – a theme which we will encounter further on in this chapter. Dasein's disclosure of its own

⁹⁴ 'Facticity' is meant in the sense that whenever Dasein *is*, it 'is as a fact'. Heidegger writes that the concept 'facticity' implies that an entity 'within-the-world' has being-in-the-world such that its understanding of itself is bound up with the being of those entities it encounters in the world (BT: 82). So implicit in Dasein having existence is that its existence is also *thrown*, a being-*in* and being-*with*. Its existence is *already* made up of circumstances which limit and shape its potential to be.

world comes about by 'clearing away coverings and obscurities', and by breaking up the disguises where it cuts itself off from itself (*ibid.*).

For the most part Dasein 'deceives' itself because of its immersion in the world of others. This world, in which Dasein is absorbed, creates the illusion that in conformity (or non-conformity) with the 'they' Dasein is its 'true' self. Yet, maintained in this condition, it is effectively alienated from itself. If Dasein can recognize itself, that is, its own existence as unique and finite, and move beyond the need for the affirmations of the 'they', it will disclose its own authentic existence. The authentic person as Dasein, in Heidegger's terms, grasps its own existence as 'mineness' (*Jemeinigkeit*). It achieves its capacity for genuine individuality.⁹⁵ In the words of Taylor Carman, 'authentic modes of existence . . . are those in which Dasein stands in a directly first-person relation to itself in contrast to second- and third- person relations in which it stands to others'.⁹⁶ For Julian Young the authentic person achieves the courage to 'carry on in the face of the nihilating pressure of the nothing' which, for Young, is characterized as 'heroic alienation'. This is a courage, as we shall see, that Eliot's Prufrock fails to muster.⁹⁷

Heidegger writes that through disclosing the world and the 'they', 'Being-in-the-world, in its everydayness and averageness [becomes] visible' (BT: 168). This is what a 'direct first-person relation' is. I no longer 'see' the world through the eyes of others, i.e. shaped by the general prejudices and norms which dictate my own behaviour. Instead, through the *Augenblick*, the 'moment of vision',⁹⁸ I see my own existence for what it is, freed from its absorption and dispersal in the public, everyday world. In this self-reflexive mode what is recognized is not only the sheer, bare existence of my individual being, but also *my* being as such, as a being-in-a-meaningful-world, *but* no longer immersed *unselfconsciously* in that world.

Now that it sees its condition, Dasein can clear away the 'covering and obscurities' that prevent it from grasping itself. To become authentic, Dasein must 'see beyond' the world of the 'they' and realize itself, without forgetting that the being of averageness and everydayness is also a necessary and real way of being in the world. Although its existence

⁹⁵ S. Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996), 131.

⁹⁶ T. Carman, 'Authenticity' in *A Companion to Heidegger* ed. by H.L. Dreyfus and M.A. Wrathall (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 285.

⁹⁷ J. Young, 'What is Dwelling? The Homelessness of Modernity and the Worlding of the World,' in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert. L. Dreyfus, Volume 1*, ed. M. Wrathall and J. Malpas (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 190.

⁹⁸ Discussed in detail in chapter two, section I.

is certainly part of the everydayness of being, this should not limit Dasein's being to everydayness. For Heidegger, *'Authentic Being-one's-Self'* does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the 'they'; [rather] *it is an existentiell modification of the 'they' – of the 'they' as an essential existentielle'* (BT: 168). The presence of the 'they' can never be escaped, but its pressures and dictates need not be succumbed to either. Rather, grasping my own Dasein opens up existential possibilities that are not limited by the dictates of the 'they', but depend solely on my choice and possibilities as an authentic individual.

The next section will focus on Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', a poem which, as my reading will show, effectively illustrates and distils many of the concerns discussed in *Being and Time*.

Section II: *Prufrock and Other Observations*

Eliot's first collection of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, was published in June 1917 by The Egoist Press in Bloomsbury and has been hailed as marking the 'beginning of an era of Modern poetry'.⁹⁹ This printing press would later publish books by other important Modernists such as James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis. Eliot's slim volume had a print run of five hundred copies and it took four years to sell out the edition. Eliot, twenty-nine years old and a London Bank Clerk, received ten guineas in royalties and the printing house profited eighteen shillings and eight-pence.¹⁰⁰ Eliot's main interest in this poetry is in detailing character – significantly not individual character (though many of the poems deal with 'individual' characters) but rather characters who represent humankind in general – character types.¹⁰¹ So, in effect, the early Eliot is offering *observations* of human nature, though his view changes as his poetry develops. In this important sense there is a phenomenological approach in Eliot's earliest poetry, a critical observation of lived experience and a focus on the process of consciousness itself.

As I have mentioned, Eliot read Husserl's *Logical Investigations* while at Marburg in 1914. However poems such as 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'Portrait of a Lady' had already been written in 1910-1911. Ezra Pound claimed that Eliot's genius was unaided, that he 'modernized' himself,¹⁰² adopting a 'phenomenological mode' of perceiving the world, and writing poetry that was focussed on subject matter that was new and 'unconventional'. Eliot's use of free verse, and his extensive use of allusion, especially in *The Waste Land*, would challenge even the most educated and enlightened of his readers. Of course, Pound was something of a flatterer, since he took pride in claiming to have discovered Eliot. Later commentators, however, point out that Eliot learned a great deal of his poetic technique from the French Symbolist poet Jules Laforgue (1860-1887), whose work Eliot greatly admired. Eliot's ironic attitude in his poems, his use of free verse and ability to endow unpoetic modern objects with significance are all techniques he learned

⁹⁹ F. Dickey, 'Prufrock and Other Observations: A Walking Tour' in *A Companion to T.S. Eliot*, ed. by D.E. Chintz, 120-132 (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 120.

¹⁰⁰ R. Kirk, *Eliot and His Age: T.S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008),

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¹⁰¹ Pearce, *T.S. Eliot: Literature in Perspective*, 82.

¹⁰² Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 33. Pound secretly subsidized this volume of poetry and conducted a 'blistering defense of the work' when confronted with unfavourable reviews; see Dickey, 'Prufrock and Other Observations: A Walking Tour', 121.

from Laforgue.¹⁰³ Whatever its influences Eliot's first volume, especially 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', remains, as F.R. Leavis commented in 1932, an important event in the history of English poetry, in that it represented a complete break with the nineteenth-century tradition and a new start.¹⁰⁴ High praise indeed, and certainly a reason that explains the poem's enduring popularity.

Similarly Husserl's phenomenology was, in many respects, a completely original approach to philosophy, and would significantly influence developments in twentieth-century philosophy. However, there is a distinct difference in Husserl and Heidegger's approaches to phenomenology, with Heidegger distancing himself from the neo-Kantian approach to phenomenology that Husserl adopted after *Logical Investigations*. Heidegger used phenomenology to interpret the ontological structures of everyday human existence, whereas Husserl focussed on describing the contents of consciousness that become apparent through the 'bracketing' process that his phenomenological method developed. In this sense Husserl was still practicing philosophy in the Cartesian mould, focusing on the ego as the starting point of certain knowledge, which is exactly where Heidegger's critique of modern philosophy centres. Heidegger used Husserl's insights, but in a radically different way, diverging from his master.

There are evident similarities between Eliot's approach in his earlier poetry and Heidegger's existential phenomenological insights in *Being and Time*. Firstly, both are concerned with the ordinary, average existence of humans and the existential burdens and choices that accompany such an existence. Moreover, both present rather bleak and anxious accounts of this existence, mostly denying it any redemption or salvation, and implicitly suggesting that there is nothing else out there, nothing beyond this world. Thus a pervasive nihilism is apparent in their 'early' work. George Steiner writes that there is a distinct sense in which *Being and Time*, 'for all its erratic singularity, does belong to the same climate of catastrophe and the same quest for alternative vision' as Eliot's *The Waste Land*.¹⁰⁵ Cooper points out that literary Modernism in the 1920s had to account for the damage of the 'earlier calamity', namely the First World War; he writes that 'it was Heidegger who gave it its philosophical voice, Eliot who gave it striking poetic

¹⁰³ Dickey, 'Prufrock and Other Observations: A Walking Tour', 121.

¹⁰⁴ F.R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 60.

¹⁰⁵ G. Steiner, *Martin Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 75-76.

expression'.¹⁰⁶ Eliot's poignantly dedicates *Prufrock and Other Observations* to Jean Verdenal, who lodged with Eliot while he was in Paris in 1910-1911. Verdenal became an army medical officer in November 1914 and was killed in the Dardanelles (Turkey) on 2 May 1915.¹⁰⁷ Steiner and Cooper also notice what I see as the strong underlying resonance that Eliot and Heidegger share in their early work and its development. Furthermore there is clearly a movement from a position of nihilism, to one of redemption which marks both Eliot and Heidegger's individual writings. How this unfolds will form part of the discussion of the thesis.

The struggle with conformity, individuality and limitation that has been discussed so far in *Being and Time* is exemplified in the protagonist of Eliot's poem, Prufrock, who suffers from a constant, pervasive obsession with the perceptions and precepts of the 'they'. This obsession contributes to and compounds his inauthentic state. The pervasive tone of inauthenticity is immediately set by the title – 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. The poem is named as a love-song, suggesting an Elizabethan or Romantic lyric – but then does not refer to love again. This ironic tone is as unrelenting as Prufrock is himself in his constant indecision and revision. Prufrock's first name is never disclosed. This already suggests that to give him one is to begin secure his individual existence – to individuate him from his being one among the 'they'. By keeping this information from the reader Eliot prevents any sense of intimacy or familiarity forming with the protagonist of the poem, as if already, in the title, to secure his place among the 'they' and condemn his existence to inauthentic everydayness. The name 'Prufrock' seems reminiscent of the word 'peacock' and suggests a bit of the dandy about Prufrock, which becomes apparent in the poem and suggests a further lack of authenticity about him. He wears a frock coat, which was a fashionable item of clothing for men during the Victorian and Edwardian periods, a knee-length, long-sleeved coat worn in formal circumstances (in the poem Prufrock appears to be visiting ladies). The frock coat also suggests a symbolic shell of clothing which ensures Prufrock looks like all the other men, in their more or less identical frock coats as they go courting. Interestingly in the poem the coat is only mentioned when it is taken off: 'I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker, / And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker' (LS: 15; ll.85-86). Only with the event of foreseeing his death does the coat, as the guarantee of anonymity, get removed.

¹⁰⁶ Cooper, *T.S. Eliot and the Ideology of Four Quartets*, 125.

¹⁰⁷ M. Jain, *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), 31.

At the beginning of the poem, aside from the title, another clue to the journey that awaits the reader is the epigram which opens the poem. It is taken from Dante's (1265-1321) *Inferno* (XXVII).¹⁰⁸ The speaker is Guido da Montefeltro who resides in the eighth circle of hell for the sin of fraud for giving false or evil counsel. He is concealed by a flame and replies to Dante's question about his identity:¹⁰⁹

If I thought my answer were to one who ever could return to
the world, this flame should shake no more;
But since none ever did return alive from this depth, if what
I hear be true, without fear of infamy I answer thee. (LS: 13)

Guido replies to Dante because he mistakes Dante for one of the damned, for whom there is no escape from hell; similarly, perhaps, Prufrock is willing to share his 'love song' because he believes that no-one will hear it (perhaps it is an internal monologue), for he too is damned in a hell which, as Sartre famously described in *No Exit*, is made up of other people.¹¹⁰ Yet, the important difference is that Guido *does* reveal himself, whereas Prufrock, at the end of the poem, confirms his identity only in its conformity with *Das Man*. Thus, existentially, he never reveals his authentic self but leaves the reader with only shadows and equivocations.

Prufrock (like Guido) is a false counsellor in that he beckons the reader to follow him on a journey which goes nowhere; he leads himself to the 'overwhelming question' which is never actually asked or even formulated, and ends the poem metaphorically drowning in this hell of other people. In the poem he describes himself as merely an attendant lord, implying that he is not someone important enough to be in control of his own choices or destiny: 'No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; / Am an attendant lord, one that will do / To swell a progress, start a scene or two' (LS: 16; ll.12-14). Prufrock is not the master of his own destiny, but merely playing a small role in someone else's story. He likens himself implicitly to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, mere chess pieces in Hamlet's game, although the most obvious reference is to Polonius, who concerns himself with his appearance and attempts at social advancement, while failing at his role as councillor to Hamlet, to whom he always gives bad advice. So the epigram connotes many aspects of Prufrock's behaviour, which we encounter throughout the poem.

¹⁰⁸ D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. C.H. Sisson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ Translated in G. Smith's *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 16-17.

¹¹⁰ J-P. Sartre, *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 45.

The opening stanza of the poem is as follows:

Let us go then, you and I,	1
When the evening is spread out against the sky	
Like a patient etherised upon a table;	
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,	
The muttering retreats	5
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels	
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:	
Streets that follow like a tedious argument	
Of insidious intent	
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...	10
Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'	
Let us go and make our visit (LS: 13)	

In this opening stanza the initial sense of hopelessness and uncertainty gradually develops into patent angst. The opening lines already perplex us because we are not sure who is doing the addressing and who is addressed (is it Prufrock addressing me? Or an undisclosed companion? Is it narrated by the same voice through-out the poem? Is that voice Prufrock's? Does he address himself?).

Confirming this opening ambivalence Charles Taylor points out that, 'Prufrock' is the epitome of Modernist poetry in that it is not easy to determine what the poem is about. Presumably 'Prufrock' is 'about' the 'etiolated, pusillanimous life of contemporary man . . . But much of the poem neither describes nor clearly expresses such a man'. Thus to determine what the poem is about we rely on the meaning and emotion it generates through its images, (in the spirit of Eliot's 'objective correlative'). But evident here is Eliot's debt to the French Symbolists, who created meaning through the juxtaposition of images and words, not through referring to some 'unambiguously defined matter'. For Taylor the epiphany in modern art 'comes from the words or images . . . from the force field they set up between them, and not through a central referent which they describe while transmuting'.¹¹¹ This is certainly apparent in the opening stanza of 'Prufrock'. The foreboding and weary mood of the poem is created through the juxtaposition of various images of a city, relayed to the reader through the experience of the protagonist. Though the images describe a particular cityscape, what they actually reveal is the psychological condition of the voice of the poem.

Returning to the two companions, one possibly Prufrock and the other an unidentified male or female partner (or the reader), we get the impression of them

¹¹¹ C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 465-466.

seemingly existentially lost among the 'half-deserted streets' (l.4), wandering aimlessly among and forming part of the 'they'.¹¹² We are confronted with an anonymous threat of plurality in the events that are described, the 'restless nights', 'cheap hotels', 'sawdust restaurants' and 'oyster shells' (ll.6-7). The overall impression is that this has all happened innumerable times before, the events of this life resembling a 'tedious argument of insidious intent' (l.8). Their repetition has begun to reveal something immoral, harmful and empty about this particular banal, everyday existence. There is an underlying lechery in 'cheap hotels', an attempt to conceal everydayness in the supposed extravagance of 'oyster shells'¹¹³ and a sense of hopelessness in wandering the 'half-deserted streets'. Eliot captures the portentous nature of Heidegger's 'they', an anonymous force exuding from the everydayness and averageness of existence, a force that threatens to swallow the 'us' in this first passage.

The opening phrase, 'Let us go then' (l.1), contributes to this general mood of tediousness and indicates Prufrock's resignation to his fate, as if at the beginning of the poem he has already foreseen and accepted the manner in which it ends. Thus the journey trope, suggested by the Dantesque epigram, is immediately thwarted in the first line with its tone of reluctance, and further inhibited by the simile of the 'patient etherised upon a table' (l.3). There is clearly a sense of the mock-heroic in these opening lines. Readers are confronted with the epigram and the severe implication of Dante's undertaking to journey into hell, and then beckoned to wander aimlessly with Prufrock through possibly a red-light district, in order to glimpse, perhaps even to partake in the sordid offerings of the 'half-deserted streets'.

The journey brings Prufrock no certainty or answers, but instead culminates in Prufrockian angst, which is constantly present throughout the poem. In Heidegger's terms, Prufrock is in persistent tension between the 'they', his own inauthenticity, and the realization of the hinted possibility of his gaining his authentic self; as the poem will show, this is something he unfortunately never manages. This persistent tension is oppressive to the point of existential paralysis. At several moments in the poem it rises to the surface in

¹¹² For a detailed discussion of the 'you and I' in the poem see D.J. Childs, 'Knowledge and Experience in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,"' *English Literary History* 55, no. 3 (1988): 685-699.

¹¹³ Smith points out that Eliot began 'Prufrock' while at Harvard in 1910 and finished it in 1911 during a visit to Munich while he was residing in Paris; *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*, 9. I mention this because the Union Oyster House, at 41 Union Street in Boston, was established in 1826. It seems likely that Eliot might have frequented this restaurant himself while wandering the streets of Boston (See Union Oyster House, <http://www.unionoysterhouse.com/>).

the form of an unasked question, *the* singular overwhelming question which offers to redeem Prufrock from his inauthentic self. The question is overwhelming because it is so existentially important for Prufrock that he is in awe of asking it.¹⁴ This question discloses the distinctive moment in an individual's life that distinguishes him- or her from all others. Thus what faces Prufrock is the possibility of his own authenticity, which he is constantly on the verge of grasping, but which he never does.

For my reading of 'Prufrock' I consider this unasked question in Heidegger's terms – that is, as a question about the meaning of Being, such as why *is* there anything or something or everything, when there could *be nothing*? We encounter this question in its pure starkness in Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (IM: 1). It is the first line of the first page. The boldness of the question is deliberately overwhelming and challenging. In this question Heidegger reminds us that he is the philosopher who, above all, engages with and is overcome by the notion that what is, *is*. He is 'inexhaustibly astonished by the fact of existence, and haunted by the reality of the *other* possibility, which is nothingness'. For many of us this singular question 'looms in moments of great despair, when things tend to lose all their weight and all meaning becomes obscured'.¹⁵ Prufrock, throughout the poem, is prone to moments like these but, instead of seizing upon them and *looking metaphysics in the face*, as Heidegger would say (FCM: 4), is rendered inarticulate. As a whole the poem paradoxically represents the failure of language to express and seize upon the 'moment of vision' that Prufrock verges on but never realizes. In the instance in the first stanza the impulse to articulate the question is immediately suppressed by the line 'Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"' (l.11) The question is delayed by Prufrock; instead he immediately departs on a visit. The promise of the moment is substituted by this distraction, which allows Prufrock to forget himself and succumb to the blanketing, protective immersion offered by the 'they'. The visit is the subterfuge he needs to distract himself from himself. The momentary tension evaporates and, almost effortlessly, Prufrock slips back into everyday, inauthentic conformity.

The critical, continuous delaying of an honest answer to the question is incessant throughout the poem. The question hovers on the borders of Prufrock's consciousness, threatening to rise to full articulation at various points, appearing half-formed in lines like:

¹⁴ Somewhat reminiscent of Zarathustra's 'abysmal thought' (the eternal recurrence). See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 183, 237.

¹⁵ Steiner, *Martin Heidegger*, 35.

‘And indeed there will be time / To wonder, ‘Do I dare?’ . . .’ (ll.37-38), or ‘Do I dare / Disturb the universe?’ (ll.45-46), or ‘To have squeezed the universe into a ball / To roll it towards some overwhelming question’ (ll.93-94). Another instance is ‘Should I, after tea and cake and ices, / Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?’ (ll.79-80). The question never rises fully to the surface of Prufrock’s conscious because of the ‘hundred indecisions . . . and revisions’ (ll.32-33) that he makes under the pressure of the ‘they’, who influence his every decision, and in the end are the reason for his perpetual indecision. The strength of this influence appears in his constant awareness of their insidious voice in his consciousness:

Time to turn back and descend the stair,
 With a bald spot in the middle of my hair – 40
 (They will say: ‘How his hair is growing thin!’)
 My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
 My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin –
 (They will say: ‘But how his arms and legs are thin!’)

And further:

And I have known the eyes already, known them all – 55
 The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
 And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
 When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
 Then how should I begin
 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways? 60
 And how should I presume?

Prufrock’s Dasein stands in subservience to the ‘they’. He attempts to be himself, with his bald spot and his necktie yet, always feeling on public display, is acutely anxious about what ‘they’ will say about him. This obsession with the ‘they’ effectively prevents him from disclosing and realizing the possibility of his own authentic self. The most disturbing aspect of this is that Prufrock is conscious of it, even complicit; as he says, ‘I have known the eyes already, known them all’. He is acutely aware of how he is levelled down and averaged out, but remains unable to force the moment to its crisis and face the ‘overwhelming question’. He feels, with intense anxiety, his inauthentic state of existence bearing down upon him, but cannot break from it. The hopeless indignity of this position is captured in the image of Prufrock as an insect ‘sprawling on a pin’, prepared for dissection. Rather than face the crisis, he mutters excuses for himself, blaming the entrapment he himself consents to, like a smoker who spits out his latest butt-end to complain about his cough. The mingled violence and subservience of the lines convey Prufrock’s simultaneous resentment of and submission to the ‘they’.

The intensity of Prufrock’s struggle suggests the profound importance of authenticity. The question it poses is truthfully of life-and-death significance, for being-

'here's no great matter' he states with an air of self-deprecation. From Heidegger's perspective Prufrock has perverted his anxiety in the face of death into cowardliness. The essential anxiety that is experienced in being-towards-death, anxiety in the face of the nothing, and of the 'possibility of the impossibility' (BT: 307) becomes fear of the something – 'And in short,' Prufrock confesses, 'I was afraid'.

To measure out a life with coffee-spoons, to have 'known them all already' suggests that Prufrock does not project himself towards the future possibilities of his life that have yet to be disclosed. Rather he assumes this series of nows will be like the next and the next series – that future events have already been disclosed by the present and the past. All has been levelled down to the possibility of a flickering moment, a grand gesture which is never performed, a momentous question never articulated. Prufrock's absorption with time is inauthentic and, as Heidegger has already told us, what this reckoning-with conceals is a 'fleeing in the face of death', a failure to recognize authentic futurity and thus temporality in general (BT: 477). Prufrock's immersion in public time, the time of the 'they', conveys to him the illusion that time is endless. Even the brief recognition he grants himself in the face of his death ('I have seen the eternal Footman . . .') does not individuate him enough to enable a resolute anticipation of his end. Instead, the next lines of the poem give in to a banal curiosity: 'And would it have been worth it, after all, / After the cups, the marmalade, the tea, / Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me' (ll.88-90). Prufrock has, he thinks, time to ponder, time to 'turn back and descend the stair' (l.39).

This cowardice shapes another vivid image that glances through Prufrock's mind, that of the ocean floor. In the crammed moment of all the busyness, distraction, dithering, shallowness, superficiality and uncertainty of Prufrock's life and thoughts, he suddenly thinks, 'I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas' (ll.73-74). The calm of the ocean floor is an image of escape for Prufrock from the 'they' and the world that inhibits and suffocates him. This peaceful image and its calming effect on his crisis may initially seem positive, but it is mistaken and cowardly. It represents an impossible retreat; rather than fighting free of the 'they' Prufrock resorts to dreaming of being an isolated, insignificant crustacean, scuttling across the empty ocean floor. Though Prufrock desires this escape, it will not bring him nearer to his authentic self; instead he substitutes one form of inauthenticity for another. Like the frock coat which Prufrock's name suggests – something which cloaks his true identity, the metaphor of the crustacean, a shelled creature, is also an apt image given Prufrock's constant evasiveness. The image of

the ocean offering him escape recurs in the poem, connected to Heidegger's concept of 'idle talk', to which we now turn.

Idle talk (*Gerede*)

In *Being and Time* Heidegger argues that an awareness of what constitutes the 'they' helps to reveal the nature of Dasein's thrownness, its initial inauthentic being-in-the-world. This awareness can identify the factors that maintain this state (BT: 210). One such factor is *Gerede*, 'idle talk'. This term relates to the 'they' and inauthenticity, and is very useful in enriching this reading of 'Prufrock'. In his investigation to disclose what constitutes our everyday being with others, Heidegger develops 'idle talk' as an important everyday existential characteristic of the 'they'. 'Idle talk', or 'derivative talk', is the way average everyday communication of the 'they' occurs. Steiner refers to this phenomenon as 'vacuous "high gossip"' which we use as a pretence to make ourselves appear busy and well informed but which is, in fact, often cliché.¹⁷ Schatzki points out that Heidegger's discussion of idle talk becomes a thinly veiled denunciation of everyday chatter. Like the 'they' to which it is attributed, idle talk is a 'dubious human universal'.¹⁸

For Heidegger idle talk is a discussion in which the speakers have no genuine understanding of what is discussed, no 'primordial understanding' of the topic (BT: 212). Idle talk emerges from discourse (*Rede*), which is communication involving *genuine* understanding, which he discusses in §34 of *Being and Time*. Language has an ontological priority in the way it relates to Dasein. To make the world intelligible involves language because our state of mind is expressed and accessed through language. But this does not occur in a vacuum – we have *already* inherited a specific language and its associated traditions because of our thrownness. So whatever we say is based on something that already has some understanding in our world. This is always framed within a certain pre-existing structure of the average possibilities which are available to Dasein in its world. Thus, because of its thrownness, Dasein is 'constantly delivered over to this interpretedness' (BT: 211). Dasein is already embedded in an environment of pre-existing opinions and interpretations which are disclosed to it. When it communicates with others it does so by largely drawing on this pre-existing environment wherein lies an *average intelligibility*. This is the result of our existence in a shared world, but it means that when

¹⁷ G. Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 7. Though 'high-gossip' suggest a class distinction, which 'idle talk' is not – all class engage in *Gerede*, not just 'high society'.

¹⁸ Schatzki 'Early Heidegger on Sociality', 243.

we communicate often we do so at the expense of a genuine understanding of the discussion. We discuss the world ontically, at a superficial level based on what is apparent in our everyday being-in-the-world. This is idle talk: the communication is superficial, based on the average, everyday understanding of Dasein. People can engage in this kind of banter because they share the same language and a similar frame of world-reference. Idle talk is effective because it allows Dasein's existence to remain absorbed within the confines of 'they'. Because of the 'levelling down' and averageness that permeates this existence, *genuine* understanding through discourse often does not take place. Dasein does not communicate in a faithful manner, 'but communicates rather by following the route of *gossiping* and *passing the word along*' (BT: 212) in a cycle of pernicious cliché.

Idle talk is not innocuous. What is talked about becomes widely accepted and gains authority, yet often remains completely groundless in its essence. Essentially, idle talk offers the possibility of understanding everything without any previous appropriation of it, and herein lies its danger. Beliefs that are in fact specious and without any real content can become prevalent in society. Because '*they*' say so, these beliefs are regarded as authoritative, and influence Dasein's level of understanding, by effectively offering it an 'undifferentiated kind of intelligibility, for which nothing is closed off any longer' (BT: 213). Idle talk operates in a double-edged manner; it offers Dasein the illusion of the possibility of understanding something (even everything) while, in fact, 'closing-off' that understanding.

Furthermore, because our existence is being-*with* and our being-in-the-world has a level of publicness attached to it, we *already* inhabit a world which is *pre-disposed* to certain values informed by the 'they' and the idle talk this phenomenon generates. This is so to the extent that the 'they' even prescribes one's state-of-mind (Prufrock's interior 'They will say . . .'), and determines what and how one 'sees' (BT: 213). Dasein never initially encounters a world which it is free to interpret in an original manner. We are always already *in* it, and this being-in carries with it the established opinions and attitudes of others, the obvious and self-assured average ways in which things have been interpreted already.

Yet, as Heidegger writes, 'when Dasein maintains itself in idle talk, it is – as Being-in-the-world – cut off from its primary and primordially genuine relationships-of-Being toward the world, towards Dasein-with, and towards its very Being-in' (BT: 214). Any genuine, open and reciprocal understanding between human beings is closed off if they are continuously engaged or engulfed in idle talk. Dasein drifts along in an uprooted state

entirely convinced that it does 'understand' its world and that it can participate meaningfully in it. The 'they' offers a 'protecting shelter' and hides Dasein from the fact that it is 'uprooted' and groundless; that it has 'fallen' away from itself (BT: 214). This is a condition Prufrock is aware of but cannot escape from, as will be illustrated shortly. Although Heidegger does not emphasize it explicitly, being open in discourse and facilitating genuine understanding, on the one hand, and being engaged in superficial idle talk, on the other, are categories that fit neatly inside the distinctions of authentic and inauthentic modes of being, respectively. This is not always the case and the relationship can become complex, but for the most part being busy with idle talk implies subscribing to the precepts of the 'they', which is essentially inauthentic.

Eliot, in 'Prufrock', strongly suggests the prevalence in society of 'idle talk'. Prufrock is intensely aware of it, yet unable to elude it. The relevant passage is short yet admirably encapsulates this complex notion, suggesting the continual shadowy presence of the 'they' and its accompanying gossip: 'In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo' (ll.13-14, 25-26). The lines appear in exactly the same form twice in the poem, the deliberate repetition creating the impression that wherever Prufrock goes there seem to be women talking of Michelangelo. This repetition in the poem enforces the banal regularity of his life, the endless visits, the same questioning eyes, the same frivolous banter, the suppressive pressure of *Das Man*. The discussion of the artist seems rather careless and indifferent, for the phrase 'come and go' suggests the passing throw-away nature of this conversation; this image epitomizes Steiner's characterisation of idle talk as 'vacuous high gossip'. The brief scene becomes a metaphor for the general inauthentic mode of Prufrock's existence, typified in these women engaged in this banter. These lines are pivotal in the poem and embody the unavoidable presence and influence of the 'they' throughout it. Their talk pervades Prufrock's consciousness, as we have noted before, and becomes the key factor preventing him from facing the possibility of his authentic self. We see this re-emphasized in his 'own' interior monologue when he paraphrases the 'they',

(They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!')
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin –
(They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!')

41

Another example is 'And I have known the eyes already, known them all – / The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase' (ll.55-56). These lines reiterate the dandyish nature of Prufrock and his pre-occupation with his own appearance, a concern he believes matters terribly because it will influence the opinion those he appears to have of him. The brackets effectively illustrate how he interrupts his own interior monologue when imagining the

impressions they will have of him. Even his thoughts are not his own but sequestered to a public role he must inhabit. Further on in the poem we see how the failure of language itself occurs, as if Prufrock has assumed his preordained role with such accuracy and hopeless commitment that he can no longer formulate his own authentic language. Seemingly the possibility of genuine understanding, genuine discourse, has been closed off to him permanently. The 'eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase' suggests this exactly; idle talk is based on an over-reliance of unoriginal, worn-out phrases that *Das Man* resorts to and Prufrock has 'known' before.

Further instances of the failure of authentic language, the inability to utter one's own thoughts, is apparent throughout the poem. Prufrock cannot formulate the question that emerges so pressingly, like a thorn in his mind. He wonders 'Do I dare' and 'Do I dare / Disturb the universe?' (ll.38, 45-46) and further, 'To say: 'I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all' - ' (ll.95-96).

Yet this daring is never clearly articulated – what does he dare, the reader is left wondering? What secret knowledge has he supposedly come back to tell us, with a tone of such over-bearing, prophetic authority? The hyphen at the end of this declaration is so potent because it seems to promise that finally Prufrock will reveal himself, will enact the grand gesture and the epiphany will be complete. Like Dante, Lazarus too returns from the world of the dead and Prufrock assumes the facade of this profound experience, equating himself with someone who has been resurrected – someone, in Heidegger's terms, who has steeled him- or herself resolutely against the nothing. Unfortunately this moment builds to an ironic anti-climax – instead of proclaiming the truth we are met with the lines, 'If one, settling a pillow by her head, / Should say: 'That is not what I meant at all. / That is not it, at all' (ll.97-99). Again, we are faced with the impotence of language. Prufrock's 'love song' is met with a blank stare of incomprehension. Moreover, these lines above, 'That is not what I meant at all. / That is not it at all', are repeated again in the next stanza (ll.110-111) to reemphasize this impotent bewilderment of being unable to articulate one's true intentions or one's true nature. Also in the same stanza are the lines 'And this, and so much more? – / It is impossible to say just what I mean!' (ll.104-105), which reiterate this failure of language. Prufrock's over-reliance on idle talk has left him bereft of words in which to say just exactly what he means to anyone, even to the nameless, faceless woman he is trying to declare love to. The overwhelming question overwhelms him, and renders him inarticulate.

The finality of this condition is apparent right up to the end of the poem where Prufrock resorts to finding refuge from himself in the escapist mermaid fantasy which abruptly ends the poem: 'We have lingered in the chambers of the sea / By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown / Till human voices wake us, and we drown' (ll.130-132). From his dream of a responsibility-free, 'sea-chambered' unconscious existence, Prufrock returns, abruptly, to the world of human voices to drown in the idle talk of the 'they'. His condition of tension cannot be so easily escaped, because his obsession with his inauthentic state has roots deeper than the 'they' and the world to which he is condemned. Though it is the world of others he drowns in, Prufrock's *angst* is the major cause of his inauthentic state of being, exacerbated by the presence of the 'they'.

Angst

Angst is the root cause of Prufrock's existential state. In *Being and Time* the experience of angst is the state-of-mind where Dasein can recognize its own existence, individuated and distinct from its they-self. Angst is the potentially clarifying principle that lies in Dasein itself that can bring it before itself (BT: 226). It should be understood more in terms of uneasiness, dread or malaise than anxiety.¹¹⁹ Angst can disclose Dasein's own being-in-the-world, made transparent to itself.

Dasein's absorption in the world of the 'they' is like a *flight* of Dasein from the authentic potentiality it has for being itself. Its self is dispersed among the myriad curiosities and distractions which make up the world it exists in. To become authentic, Dasein needs to 'recollect' itself and become individuated from its dispersal among the 'they'. In doing so it can recognize its existence *as* being-in-the-world as such, and *as* shaped by the peculiarities which inform its world. Through the experience of angst Dasein gains a perspective of itself which *frees* it from its immediate absorption in its world. This freeing is double-edged, however, for while it allows Dasein to recognize its being-in-the-world as such, and appreciate both existence as a whole and the fact that anything exists at all, it also reveals Dasein's 'meaningful' life to be a construct, and the

¹¹⁹Angst can be translated in various ways. The Macquarrie and Robinson translation of *Being and Time* (Malden: Blackwell, 1962) uses 'anxiety', while Stambaugh's translation (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), keeps the word untranslated, as 'Angst'. Macquarrie and Robinson note that the German word *Angst* is rendered 'dread' in translations of Kierkegaard and in some discussions on Heidegger, but also note that in some contexts in *Being and Time* 'uneasiness' or 'malaise' would perhaps be more appropriate than anxiety (BT: 227n). To avoid over-simplifying the term, which conveys a more profound sense of existential anxiety than the English 'anxiety', I will simply use 'angst' which is used, although not widely, in English speech and is entered in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. 10th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

choices that it has made in shaping that life to be arbitrary. Angst confronts Dasein with the sheer fact of its existence, with the realization that essentially all Dasein has is existence; the rest is merely window-dressing, except the possibility of resolute authenticity in its-being-towards-death.

For the most part, Dasein's fallenness [*Verfallenheit*] ensures that the potential authenticity of being-its-self is closed off from it – it flees in the face of itself because it flees in the face of death (BT: 229). Yet, this falling does not prevent Dasein from experiencing angst, *for it is being-in-the-world as such* which is the cause of angst (BT: 230). This is why angst is so disconcerting – it is not situated in a particular phenomenon, but rather, is centred *nowhere*. Whereas the experience of fear is directed at something in the world, which we can respond to appropriately, angst threatens precisely because it has no objective, tangible quality. It is merely 'there' and, as such, is 'nowhere'. This is extremely disconcerting, for being angstful is precisely being unable to identify what is causing the experience of angst:

it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one's breath, and yet it is nowhere . . .
What oppresses us is not this or that, nor is it the summation of everything present-at-hand; it is rather the possibility of the ready-to-hand in general; that is to say, it is the world itself. (BT: 231)

When the experience of angst passes, if someone asks us what was wrong we reply, 'It was really nothing'. The point is that *what* it was cannot be expressed in everyday language because this language is focussed on the ready-to-hand, within-the-world as such. Angst, however, is nothing ready-to-hand within-the-world (*ibid.*). What angst discloses is the world *as world*, and Dasein's being-in-that-world stripped of its immediate, meaningful context. Angst makes Dasein's world indefinite and perplexing, eroding the meaningful structures it has with this world such that it no longer understands its world.

However, in doing so angst also 'saves' Dasein, in that it throws it back upon that which it is anxious about – 'its authentic potentiality-for-being-in-the-world' (BT: 232). Angst individualizes Dasein by confronting it with its future possibilities. It restores to Dasein the knowledge that the '*primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future*' (BT: 378). As discussed in section I of this chapter, our futural existence is the most significant of our temporal modes. The experience of angst is disconcerting because it discloses this future existence as something *yet to be decided* – the futural possibilities of our being have *yet to be realized*. These future possibilities focus Dasein on its 'ownmost potentiality-for-Being – that is, its *Being-free* for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself' (BT: 232). Angst is the tension arising between the riveting paralysis of experiencing the utter nullity of existence, and the possibility of

becoming resolute in the face of this nullity, and thus being freed for the authenticity of one's own being.

The problem with Prufrock is that he only manages to get half-way in this journey – he reaches the riveting paralysis but is unable to overcome it. Furthermore, he closes himself off from his potentiality-for-being-in-the-world and from recognizing his futural temporality. The poignant, memorable lines: 'For I have known them all already, known them all – / Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, / I have measured out my life with coffee spoons' (ll.49-51) evoke this terrible ability to close off possibilities by preempting them. The life that remains has been eked out, carefully measured before it has been realized. In fact, much of the poem is written in the past tense or the conditional mood. Past tense lines such as 'For I have known them all already, known them all –', 'And I have known the eyes already, known them all –', 'And I have known the arms already, known them all –' (ll.49. 55. 62) suggest the potential possibilities of the future have already been imagined and consigned to the past.

The repetition of the lines 'known them all' is particularly effective in emphasizing this resignation. In the conditional mood are lines like: 'I should have been a pair of ragged claws' (l.73), 'And would it have been worth it, after all', 'Would it have been worth while, / To have bitten off the matter with a smile' (ll.91-92), 'And would it have been worth it, after all' (l.100). The repetition compounds the effect. The conditional mood creates an imagined hypothetical state of affairs, and allows Prufrock to pre-empt his future by foreseeing it and thus forestalling it, because the answer to the question, 'Would it have been worth while?' is an anxious 'No!' Prufrock's experience of angst briefly reveals but then conceals a future of potential possibilities, such as actually articulating the overwhelming question or declaring his love. He cannot face these with authentic resolution, preferring the escapism of lingering in the chambers of the sea.

The experience of angst is 'uncanny' (*unheimlich*), or more literally, 'unhomelike'. Ordinarily our existence is one of being-in and along-side-others in a shared world, absorbed in the publicness of the 'they' which brings 'tranquillized self-assurance – being-at-home' (BT: 233) (reminiscent, somehow, of the patient 'etherised upon the table', l.3). This is because of our thrownness, and is how the unreflective, inauthentic self finds itself in the world. The other state of affairs is the collapse of this everyday familiarity (BT: 233). In the former, our experience of the world is secured by the dictatorship of the 'they' and the familiar, everyday world we inhabit, which we are *at home* in. In the latter the experience of angst individualizes us and pulls us away from this tranquil absorption. It

reveals our existence, but in the sense of 'being-not-at-home'. This is the condition Dasein flees from and yet is why it is *fallen* in the first instance. We find refuge in the lostness the 'they' provides and the certainty of everyday things. We flee from our thrownness, from the knowledge that our essence consists only in the sheer, pure fact of our existence and thus continually attempt to escape the uncanniness which pursues us.

This is futile, for angst, though a rare experience, is a basic condition of human existence and belongs to the way in which we understand ourselves in the world. For Heidegger 'Dasein is anxious in the very depths of its being', implying that angst is a necessary ontological feature of our existence. The possibility of individuation and perception into the nature of inauthenticity and authenticity are defining possibilities of our existence (BT: 235). Prufrock is brought to this point of insight, but *flees* in the face of it. His behaviour among others, his interior monologues and his imagined ocean escapes, his fear of the 'eternal Footman' are a *flight* from the possibility of his authentic self into the 'they-self', a flight rooted in his existential angst.

The irony is that as long as Prufrock is in the world he cannot escape his angst, because it arises in his very being as Dasein. He is always himself, even if only a resented, cowardly version. His angst is essentially the inability to reconcile the way the world is, with the way he would like to relate to the world and himself.

A particularly regressive and desperate passage of the poem reveals Prufrock trapped within his angst, which both prompts and paralyzes him in grasping towards his authentic self. Both these intentions appear in a pivotal moment in the poem:

And indeed there will be time	37
To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?'	
Time to turn back and descend the stair ...	
Do I dare	45
Disturb the universe?	
In a minute there is time	
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.	

The question is starkly grasped in all its enormous import: 'Do I dare / Disturb the universe?' If the answer is yes, the course of the poem and of Prufrock's life will change irreversibly. He will grasp himself authentically and confront his own existence as being-towards-death. He will also individuate himself from the 'they' thus freeing himself for his own genuine choices. Yet this possibility is suffocated and insulated in the terror and prevarication that this enormity brings with it; once the step is taken Prufrock will be unable to 'turn back and descend the stair', or to make those 'revisions which a minute will reverse'. This is a true experience of angst under both its aspects, both revealing Dasein's

ownmost potentiality for being, which is being free to choose itself, *and* disclosing this realization as overwhelming and dreadful.

Prufrock cannot leap into the abyss; rather he reckons with time; time to turn back, time to reverse and revise a decision instead of facing the nature of his existence. So the crisis collapses. The awesome possibility dissipates, the bold, though unfulfilled 'daring' disappears, and Prufrock loses all courage. Eliding the unsettling possibility of 'disturbing the universe', he takes refuge in insignificant decisions exalted into grandiose uncertainties: 'Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?' (l.123). This elevation of insignificant actions to the same level as 'disturbing the universe' entirely deflates his pursuit of authenticity. As the poem ends, as Prufrock resigns himself to drown in human voices, in the background we can distinctly hear the hum of the women who come and go, talking of Michelangelo. He gives up the possibility of coming to terms with his own existence and remains in the arid chattering world of the 'they'.

Yet his failure is not final. In the poem as a whole, in raising the vision of authentic being in all its unsettling power, as in his broader project, Eliot joins Heidegger in diagnosing the promise behind the angst of Dasein and inviting us to live beyond Prufrock's example. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', understood through the prism of *Being and Time*, reveals some desperate truths about the state, not only of the Western human condition in the early twentieth century, but also of all human existence, and the promise implicit in these truths. The existential facets of Dasein that Heidegger discusses become the means of diagnosing the Prufrockian dilemma: how is it that one should be? The lasting influence of the poem and the singular importance of *Being and Time* affirm the enduring and profound nature of this question.

Chapter Two: *Ereignis*

Things are not so comprehensible and expressible as one would mostly have us believe; most events are inexpressible, taking place in a realm which no word has ever entered, and more inexpressible than all else are works of art, mysterious existences, the life of which, while ours passes away, endures.

Letters to a Young Poet – Rainer Maria Rilke¹

Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical.

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus – Ludwig Wittgenstein²

We live in a constellation
Of patches and of pitches,
Not in a single world,
In things said well in music,
On the piano, and in speech,
As in a page of poetry –
Thinkers without final thoughts
In an always incipient cosmos,
The way, when we climb a mountain,
Vermont throws itself together.

July Mountain – Wallace Stevens³

This chapter's aim is two-fold. The first intention is to provide a general exposition of the term *Ereignis* (typically translated as 'event of appropriation' or 'Event'), which in the past decade of Heidegger research has come to be seen as a central term in his thinking, especially after the publication, in 1999, of the English translation of *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (1936-1938), translated as *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* (CP).⁴ *Ereignis*-thinking, after *Being and Time*, was definitively integrated into Heidegger's later thought but, as this chapter will show, he was already alluding to the term in his 1919 lectures, published as *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* (TDP). Two 'middle' works also explore *Ereignis* in detail, namely the already mentioned and

¹ R. M. Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. by M.D. Herter (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 15.

² L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London: Routledge, 1974), 88.

³ W. Stevens, *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by F. Kermode and J. Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1997), 476.

⁴ The most accomplished secondary text on *Ereignis* and on *Contributions to Philosophy* is Richard Polt's *The Emergence of Being: On Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006) which I have used extensively. There are a number of other texts such as D. Vellega-Neu's *Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy: An Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), *Companion to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. by C.E. Scott et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) and P. Emad's *On the Way to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2007).

somewhat controversial *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*,⁵ and volume 71 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, titled *Das Ereignis* (1941-1942).

The first section of this chapter traces the early chronological development of the term and highlights how it changes and transforms, while still retaining an essential core meaning. This will entail an exegesis of the important early lectures and a brief survey of *Being and Time*, followed by discussion of the ‘middle’ texts, and finally examination of the term in some of Heidegger’s later texts, such as the lecture ‘The Principle of Identity’ in *Identity and Difference* (1957; ID), some of the Hölderlin essays (1936 onwards; EHP) and *Time and Being* (1962; TB).

What will become apparent is that *Ereignis* is described in *two* ways, and not always very consistently. In one of its senses *Ereignis* is a ‘unique happening’, an individual moment of bewilderment, anxiety and revelation. In the other *Ereignis* is a ‘universal structure’,⁶ essentially an ineluctable condition of our being-in-the-world. For the purpose of this chapter I will favour the former definition, but remain cognisant of the latter.

The second intention of the chapter is to relate and interconnect the concept *Ereignis* to some of the important poetic works and images of T.S. Eliot. I believe that there are numerous instances in Eliot’s poetry which effectively illustrate the central core of *Ereignis*, that revelatory essence that remains unchanged throughout Heidegger’s corpus. In the discernment of this essence Eliot’s poetry is invaluable for in it we encounter, on occasion, the description of a moment which defies our ordinary experience of the world. Eliot’s poetic language conveys the very profundity of this event in a way which opens it up for us, and challenges the limits of our ordinary language, reminding us, to use a phrase from the later Heidegger, ‘what poets are for’ (WAP: 89).

Eliot calls this moment many things throughout his life: ‘On the doorstep of the Absolute’,⁷ ‘the bewildering minute’ (SPE: 13), ‘the unattended / Moment’ (DS: 190),

⁵ In this chapter I use this English translation of *Contributions* sparingly, because in the process of writing I have come to the conclusion that it is deeply flawed, such that it makes much of what Heidegger writes so obtuse as to render it meaningless. *Contributions* is certainly a poetic, hermeneutic work and this is perhaps its great achievement in its original language. However, the language contortions the translators have resorted to so as to translate the book make it almost unintelligible. Thus I have largely relied on the scholarship of certain commentators and their proficiency in German to give a broad overview of the term *Ereignis* in relation to *Contributions*. For a scathing review of this translation see S. Blackburn, ‘Enquivering,’ *The New Republic*, October 30, 2000, 43-48.

⁶ R. Polt, ‘*Ereignis*,’ in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by H.L. Dreyfus and M.A. Wrathall (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 389.

⁷ Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 44. This is the last line of a poem, titled ‘Spleen’, published by Eliot in the *Harvard Advocate* in 1910.

'Looking into the heart of light' (WL: 62), 'the moment in and out of time' (DS: 190). His poetry, particularly *Four Quartets*, can be understood as a testament to this moment – an exploration of its meaning, and an account of the bewilderment it produces and the transformation it inspires. Once such a moment passes, it leaves us with questions about the meaning of our existence and finitude, and brings us to an examination of things done and things left undone in our lives.

For Heidegger the 'Event' is understood as an experience that 'transports' and 'enchants'.⁸ His own thinking is informed by the great Nietzschean Event, announced by Zarathustra's madman who proclaims the 'death of God'.⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) words cast a long shadow and Heidegger's project – destructing the history of philosophy – is given its impetus by continuing the Nietzschean maxim: "That which is falling should also be pushed!"¹⁰ The event of the death of God, for Heidegger, heralded the death of metaphysics too. His life-long dedication to *Die Seinsfrage*, the 'question of Being', was motivated by the knowledge that our prolonged metaphysical substitute for Being, 'God', was no longer available. Heidegger's aim was to uncover the meaning of this difficult, intractable word 'Being' in order to think authentically and genuinely about existence and its *Event*-full nature.

A significant point of intersection for Eliot and Heidegger is that both try to understand, in the language, respectively, of poetry and philosophy, the meaning of 'the event'. Both recognize the significance of the moment which *irrupts* out of ordinary experience, and reveals a tantalizing glimpse of a reality so full and yet so mysterious it remains almost beyond articulation. In *The Waste Land*, for example, the encounter with the hyacinth girl gives us a sense of this:

– Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden, 37
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, 40
Looking into the heart of light, the silence (WL: 62)

⁸ Quoted in J. Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 106-107. Young points out that this choice of words, '*Entrückung und Berückung*', 'transport and enchantment', appears in *Contributions to Philosophy* (GA 65, 70; CP: 48) as well as the essay on Hölderlin's poem, 'As when on a Holiday...' (GA: 4, 54; EHP: 76). A. Scult describes the *Ereignis* as an encounter with an 'overwhelming sense of truth not of our own making', which, in the context in which I will use it, is an apt description. See A. Scult, *Being Jewish/Reading Heidegger: An Ontological Encounter* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 54.

⁹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 226.

Here even poetic language struggles to account for this ‘silence’ that forms part of the event.

The vacuum left by the ‘death of God’ prompts this search for a grounding, authenticating explanation which can account for the meaning of the *Ereignis* event. This prompting is shared by Modernist thinkers and artists, among whom both Eliot and Heidegger can be included. To understand more fully the meaning of the event in the work of Heidegger and Eliot I will create a bridge between them, giving an overview of the development of the Event in Heidegger’s work and then look to the words of Eliot to complete the crossing.

Also underling this interpretive, comparative exercise is what Charles Taylor, via James Joyce, calls the Modernist ‘epiphany’, which remains a central notion in the study of the work of art. Taylor describes the work of art

as the locus of a manifestation which brings us into the presence of something which is otherwise inaccessible, and which is of the highest moral or spiritual significance; a manifestation, moreover, which also defines or completes something, even as it reveals.¹¹

Twentieth-century art problematizes the notion of epiphany, by shifting its locus onto the actual artwork itself, unlike the Romantics for whom the artwork, as a symbol, signifies something definite and outside the artwork, such as unspoilt nature or human emotion.¹² In the case of Modern art, such as Modernist poetry, literature or non-representational visual art, it is often difficult to say just what is being celebrated.¹³ The encounter with the hyacinth girl and ‘heart of light’ presents just such a difficulty, offering a liminal moment which defies description and yet which remains unavoidably real.

¹¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, 419.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 429. For a survey of some of these epiphanic moments in T.S. Eliot, James Joyce (1882-1941), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) and E.M Forster (1879-1970) see A. Wessels ‘Humankind Cannot Bear Very Much Reality’: Modernist Perceptions of Time and Experience’ (paper presented as an inaugural address, University of Pretoria, South Africa, March 24, 2009): http://up-za.academia.edu/AndriesWessels/Papers/879050/_Human_kind_cannot_bear_very_much_reality_modernist_perceptions_of_time_and_experience (accessed: October 19, 2011). See also M. Ludwigs, ‘Epiphanies in Literature and Narrative Meaning’ (PhD diss., University of California, 2007) and M. Beja, *Epiphany in the Modern Novel* (London: Peter Own, 1971).

Section I: The early 'early' Heidegger

On the way to *Ereignis*

For Heidegger the problem with the limits of language is essentially a problem of representation, rooted in metaphysics itself. The language of metaphysics can only 'reproduce a representational objectifying discourse in which the forgetfulness of being is enacted yet again'.¹⁴ Metaphysics has reached the stage where 'all fundamental words have been used up' (CP: 3). Language now, because of enframing (*Gestell*, discussed below), is reduced to express only ontic reality and providing descriptions for beings; but Heidegger believes that, transformed, language can speak the 'holy' (EHP: 98) and say what is seemingly unsayable. It is this 'epiphanic speaking' which Heidegger wants to revitalize, through a '*Verwindung*' (QB: 313, ID: 37, 101) ('getting over'/incorporating/overcoming) of metaphysics,¹⁵ initiated by his own *Ereignis*-thinking. Epiphanic thinking attempts a circumvention or 'overcoming' of the representational language trap. Heidegger explores this possibility throughout his writing, but only after his 'turn' to the poetry of others and the work of art in general does it come to fullness.

There is no English term which adequately conveys the special quality of the meaning of 'Event' which Heidegger develops. I use his term, *Ereignis*, as I use the term 'Dasein' in chapter one, alternating it with 'Event' or 'event of appropriation'. In English we speak of the 'event' of someone's arrival or birth, but not the 'event' of making a cup of coffee because this is an ordinary event, one we take more or less for granted. Heidegger's use of *Ereignis* draws on the special meaning of 'event', but has its own important and particular meaning.¹⁶ The term carries a depth and philosophical richness which the usual translation of the word in English as 'event' does not convey.¹⁷ This chapter draws out this philosophical depth in Heidegger's writing, but it will also go beyond that, and look to the poetry of T.S. Eliot to illustrate and amplify this special quality.

In everyday German, any change or motion, any happening, can be called an 'Ereignis'. The *Oxford-Duden German Dictionary* translates the term as 'event' or

¹⁴ H. Ruin, 'Contributions to Philosophy,' in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by H.L. Dreyfus and M.A. Wrathall (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 365.

¹⁵ For a discussion on '*Verwindung*' in Heidegger see G. Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, trans. by J.R. Snyder (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), especially the essay 'Nihilism and the Post-Modern in Philosophy', 164-181.

¹⁶ Polt, '*Ereignis*,' 388.

¹⁷ Ruin, 'Contributions to Philosophy,' 365.

‘occurrence’.¹⁸ In Heidegger scholarship the term appears sometimes as ‘event of appropriation’ or ‘Event’, the use of the capital letter drawing attention to the special emphasis the term suggests. The translation of *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*¹⁹ translates the term *Ereignis* as ‘Enowning’. This is an awkward neologism, but, according to Hans Ruin, still a philosophically well-founded possibility, since the German term is composed of the prefix ‘er’, an intensifier (in English the equivalent prefix is ‘en’, e.g. *enliven*, *ennoble*), and the stem ‘eigen’, which means ‘own’, thus in the English we get ‘en-own’.²⁰ The prefix ‘en’ is meant to further emphasize the quality of *belongingness* to the event. However, Thomas Sheehan believes this is a poor choice of translation and does not endorse it.²¹ For example, the following German phrase, ‘dem Er-eignis übereignet zu werden’,²² if translated would literally be ‘being owned over into enowning’ instead of the more idiomatic English meaning: ‘being abandoned to [or, ‘delivered over to’] the event’.

The various choices made by other scholars and translators each highlight different senses of the German term. An important aspect of the *Ereignis* experience is that it is ‘something’ which *happens* to someone. Hence ‘event of appropriation’ is a good translation because it conveys this sense of *belonging* to the ‘Event’. Someone who experiences the event is also appropriated by it and forms part of the event itself, as it happens or will happen. Thus *I experience* the event (or even abandon myself to it); there is a sense of my *ownness* (*eigen*) in the experience because I belong, in a primordial way, to the happening of the event. The *Ereignis* is something which ‘shines forth, as something to which the subject of knowledge also *belongs*’.²³ This sense of belonging in an intimate way to the event is an aspect of *Ereignis* which Eliot is able to reach in poetic language.

The term *Ereignis* is descriptive and ‘short-circuits’ itself, for it is not an ordinary explanatory term, ‘whereby something is depicted and designated by someone’.²⁴ Ruin writes that this on-going difficulty with language is a position Heidegger was aware of as early as the 1920s, but especially emphasized in his lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929, FCM). Any ‘existential-ontological’ terms (such as Dasein,

¹⁸ *Oxford-Duden German Dictionary*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 231.

¹⁹ Henceforth I will shorten the title to *Contributions*.

²⁰ Ruin, ‘Contributions to Philosophy,’ 365.

²¹ See T. Sheehan, ‘A Paradigm Shift in Heidegger Research,’ in *Continental Philosophy Review* 34 (2001). Polt does not endorse the translation either; see Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, 10. Jeff Malpas also has his doubts, see J. Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 216-217.

²² Taken from GA 65:3 (CP: 3), quoted in Ruin, ‘Contributions to Philosophy,’ 365.

²³ Ruin, ‘Contributions to Philosophy,’ 366.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

angst, boredom, *Ereignis*) must not be confused with 'ordinary descriptive categories'. Rather, they must be taken as 'formal indicators' of a meaning which has to be *lived* and *enacted* by Dasein, for

when life is reflecting on itself it is seeking to determine not the meaning of some objective nature, but precisely itself as a source of meaning. In *Contributions* we can see how this self-reflexive nature of the philosophical pursuit is established as its fundamental principle.²⁵

Contributions' development of this self-reflexive 'fundamental principle' led one of its first commentators, Otto Pöggeler, to judge the volume a major work. He believes that a thematic exploration of the text demonstrates the philosophical unity of Heidegger's quest, encapsulated in the 'ultimate' existential-ontological indexical: *Ereignis*.²⁶

John Bailiff, Pöggeler's translator, translates the term as 'emergence' (a theme Richard Polt develops substantially in his book on *Contributions*) because it suggests the 'independent sense of being [which] comes forth in the course of events, while not confining such unfolding to the singular 'event''.²⁷ Pöggeler goes so far as to claim that Heidegger's thinking on *Ereignis* was his way of naming the 'ultimate relationship between being and time'.²⁸ This suggests that *Ereignis* could be seen as the 'answer' to the questions Heidegger posed at the end of *Being and Time*, where he writes:

The existential-ontological constitution of Dasein is grounded in temporality. Hence the ecstatical constitution of Being must be made possible by some primordial way in which ecstatical temporality temporalizes. How is this mode of the temporalizing of temporality to be interpreted? Is there a way which leads from primordial time to the meaning of Being? Does time itself manifest itself as the horizon of Being? (BT: 488)

Is Heidegger's understanding of the meaning of Being manifest as *Ereignis*? Is Being temporalized as Event? These are complex questions to which I cannot justice to in a thesis. However, in the later Heidegger's essays and lectures it is clear that *Ereignis* does attain significant importance in his understanding of the ending of metaphysics. Event-full thinking will herald a radically different understanding of the world, and disclose the meaning of Being in a way which is still hidden from us.

The reason this 'truth' of Being is hidden from us has much to do with enframing and our relationship to modern technology. Briefly described (I discuss this concept in detail in chapter three), enframing is the pervasive modern attitude which reveals the

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Pöggeler had access to a partial version of this text, before it was published in the *Gesamtausgabe* (Ruin, 'Contributions to Philosophy,' 359).

²⁷ O. Pöggeler, *The Paths of Heidegger's Life and Thought*, trans by J. Bailiff (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), viii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

world only as 'standing reserve' (*Bestand*). Essentially this is a reductive outlook which prevents other possible conceptions of the world from being made manifest. Thus, essentially, enframing excludes *poiesis* (bringing-forth), which is linked importantly to *Ereignis*. Young, writing on the later Heidegger's thinking on the essence of modern technology, points out that the world shows up as *poiesis* when it

shows up as a holy place, the self-disclosure of the awesomely incomprehensible 'Origin' of things. Heidegger has various ways of describing this way of the world's showing up. Sometimes he calls it 'the *Ereignis*' (Event, with a capital 'E') or '*Ereignis*-experience', experience of 'transport and enchantment [*Entrückung und Berückung* (CP: 48-49)]'.²⁹

Enframing conceals this 'showing' (or 'eventing') of the world, in terms of its plenitude and thus enframing is the 'supreme danger' (QCT: 332). At other times Heidegger calls this 'showing' 'the thing's thinging', implying 'the world's worlding' because a thing is inseparable from the context of the world which makes it 'thing'. Young writes that 'Things 'thing' when they show up as radiant, charismatic, sacred beings'.³⁰ This is an 'Event'. Something *happens* which transforms, albeit briefly, our ordinary experience of being-in-the-world. We experience the 'holiness' of the world, such that it 'shines forth' through enigmatic moments.

This experience is not necessarily divine, and experiencing the world as a 'holy' place does not imply that it has a divine, transcendent nature. Even in his earliest extant 1919 lectures Heidegger writes that the general experience of the 'something' on its own can be a genuine *Ereignis* – even a sign of 'the highest potentiality of life'. It can happen in 'gliding from one world of experience to another genuine life-world, or in moments of especially intensive life' (TDP: 97). This intensity is not 'outside' or transcendent to this world, but is firmly grounded in it. One could consider an artistic breakthrough in which a poet or painter experiences the sublime wonder of the world, and can express this through the artwork as a fitting example of such intensity. An experience like this is still *my own*, but *who I am* has temporarily become a problem.³¹ This intensity prompts me to see the world 'with new eyes' as the idiomatic expression goes. The image of 'eyes' here is significant for the term *Ereignis* has no direct etymological connection to *eigen* (own, proper, particular).

²⁹ J. Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 70.

³⁰ Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, 52.

³¹ Polt, '*Ereignis*,' 388.

Instead, it is related to *Augen*, 'eyes' and originally meant something like 'coming into view'.³²

All these senses and layers of meaning are important and contribute to our understanding of the term *Ereignis*, and in turn generate more complexity from each other. As the next section will show, Heidegger constantly draws out these varied meanings, experimenting and re-writing, working with resonances he hears in language and following the path down which *Ereignis*-thinking leads him. Yet, at the same time he knows that his destination, in the words of Eliot, '[w]ill be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time' (LG: 197).

The first encounter with *Ereignis*

The word '*Ereignis*' first appears in Heidegger's war emergency semester lecture course presented at the University of Freiburg at the beginning of 1919.³³ He was a twenty-nine year old *Privatdozent* and had just begun working as Husserl's assistant in 1918. Rüdiger Safranski writes that during these first intensive years of collaboration Heidegger was already lifting Husserl's ideas 'out of their consciousness-immanent connections and hurling them into the world'.³⁴ This focus on our immediate conscious experience of the world is a theme that comes across strongly in Heidegger's earliest extant lectures, which I now discuss.

This intense philosophical creativity has its roots, Safranski believes, in Heidegger's experience as a reservist soldier.³⁵ While at the frontline in 1918, stationed with the meteorological service, Heidegger seemingly underwent a 'rebirth of the spirit'; he wrote to Elisabeth Blochmann, without irony, 'To me it is indeed a pleasure to be alive'.³⁶ Witnessing first-hand the defeat of Germany at the end of the First World War awoke in him a 'new intensity' which focussed on 'the spirit and its power'.³⁷ Germany's defeat

³² Sheehan, 'A Paradigm Shift in Heidegger Research,' 196-198.

³³ These are the earliest extant lectures by Heidegger, given soon after he transferred from the theology faculty to the philosophy faculty at the University of Freiburg. The English text of these lectures, translated by Ted Sadler, is titled *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* (2000, TDP), translated from *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, first published as Volume 56/57 of the *Gesamtausgabe*.

³⁴ R. Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, trans. by E. Osers. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002, 83.

³⁵ Heidegger enlisted for active duty in October 1914, but because of heart trouble his mobilization was deferred. He later re-enlisted in January 1918. See Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 55-88 for an account of Heidegger's service involvement in the First World War.

³⁶ Letter quoted in Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 86. Blochmann studied philosophy and German literature. She was a student with Elfride Petri, Heidegger's future wife.

³⁷ Letter quoted in Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 87.

offered Heidegger the opportunity to perceive the possibility of a fresh beginning out of the ruins of an end. Watching the destruction of the Germanic pre-war spirit presented the young philosopher with what he saw as the possibility for genuine reflection on those 'primordial experiences' which had become obscured by the prevailing (and now essentially defunct) philosophical and spiritual/political pre-war ideologies in which he was versed (and of which he had previously, perhaps, been convinced).³⁸ This impulse is much in the spirit of what would become Heidegger's approach to philosophy in general, an uncovering of hidden truth through the destruction of what conceals it. Experiencing the end of the war revitalized his thinking and the clarity of these insights gripped his philosophical imagination. In his letters of this period we discern those singular experiences in Heidegger himself which he will begin to call *Ereignis* experiences in his lectures to come.

The 'new life' is possible, Heidegger writes in another letter to Blochmann in 1919, because of the 'evident content of total intuition'.³⁹ Understanding the nature of 'total intuition' allows untrammelled access to 'primordial experience', offering radically new and original philosophical insights. Certainly underling Heidegger's discovery was Husserl's phenomenological breakthrough, which provided the impetus and method the young scholar-soldier Heidegger needed to account for this total 'comprehension', 'this evidence of moments'.⁴⁰ With the new tools of phenomenology he felt able to lay bare pure, intense momentary experience without clouding it with metaphysical or spiritual presumption. The nature of this 'primordial experience' is mysterious, though it is integral to everyday life. Significantly Heidegger recognizes the problematic *temporal* nature of this moment. Time

produces the intuition and the evidence of the moment, but it does not preserve them, it does not endow them with duration. It [the event] happens, it is nothing 'made,' but everything depends on what we make of it.⁴¹

In a similar tone Heidegger writes another letter to Blochmann in May 1919 which contains this passage:

It is a rationalist misunderstanding of the nature of the personal flow of life to believe, and demand, that it should vibrate in those same broad and sonorous amplitudes which well up at inspired moments. Such demands arise from a lack of inner humility before the mystery and grace of all life. We should be able to wait for high-tension

³⁸ Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 87.

³⁹ Letter quoted in Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 87.

⁴⁰ Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 87.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

intensities of meaningful life – and we must live in continuity with those moments – not so much enjoying them as fitting them into our lives, taking them along in the passage of life, and including them in the rhythm of all future life.

And at moments when we directly feel ourselves and the direction in which we, as we live, belong, we should not only state, or simply record, the clarification that has come to us – as though it were simply confronting us as an object – but the comprehending possession of one’s self is genuine only if it is truly lived, i.e. if it is, at the same time, a Being.⁴²

Significant themes in this passage will become central to Heidegger’s early philosophy. Anxiety and authenticity, the mystery of the something, the ‘high-tension intensities’ of *Ereignis* moments, ordinary, everyday being-in-the-world, the recognition of our historical-situatedness, and individual fate and its relationship to destiny are all expressed here in tentative form. Only in these ‘inspired’ moments is the ‘comprehending possession of one’s self . . . truly lived’. This is evidently a precursor to *Augenblick*, the ‘moment of vision’ which Heidegger will develop in *Being and Time* and which forms part of the development of his *Ereignis*-thinking. Though the ideas are still in their infancy Heidegger’s young, intense and formidable mind is shaping them and uncovering how to articulate them.

War Emergency Lectures (1919)

This ‘new intensity’ inspires Heidegger’s teaching immediately after the war. The text of the extant two lecture-course is published together with some student transcripts for other lectures Heidegger delivered but which were unfortunately lost. The lectures and transcripts were first published in 1987 as volume 56/57 of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe*, titled *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*. The first lecture of the course which I shall focus on most closely is titled ‘The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview’ which is a critique Heidegger develops against the idea of ‘worldview’, a then prominent philosophical issue.

Philosophy, ideally conceived, ‘strives for a higher autonomous worldview, cultivating a thinking free from religious and other dogmas’ (TDP: 6). The philosopher’s aim is ‘directed towards what is in every sense ultimate, universal, and of universal validity’ (TDP: 7). Once a philosophy comes to ‘unrestricted expression’ it takes the form of ‘metaphysics’ (TDP: 7). It becomes systematized into a framework and becomes a formal worldview. The activity or task of the philosopher, broadly construed, is the creation of a worldview. In the language of Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), such a worldview is a

⁴² Letter quoted in Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 88.

‘meta-narrative’, an all-encompassing story which attempts to account for reality.⁴³ We speak of a Platonic worldview, Augustine’s worldview, the Hegelian worldview. Each has its own ‘story’, so to speak, which it tells about the nature of reality, essentially giving an account of ‘the Truth’.

This way of thinking about philosophy, ‘Philosophy’ as Richard Rorty (1931-2007) says, with a capital ‘P’,⁴⁴ is first critically questioned and undermined with Nietzsche. He argues that we should be ‘on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a “pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject”; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as “pure reason,” “absolute spirituality,” “knowledge in itself”’.⁴⁵ Rather, we should cultivate a ‘variety of perspectives’,⁴⁶ a ‘plural realism’.⁴⁷ This view accepts the validity of ‘truth’ conceived of in many forms, with no single worldview absolutely conclusive or able to claim sole possession of ‘the Truth’.

The important way this insight emerges in Nietzsche’s philosophy is through the symbolic proclamation of the ‘death of God’, and the consequent call for the ‘revaluation of values’.⁴⁸ Nietzsche targets the governing understanding of ‘Philosophy’ as a search for a single, over-arching metaphysical construct or worldview. The death of this supreme authority motivates, in the twentieth century, the search for philosophy conceived as a ‘primordial science’, rooted in human experience rather than metaphysical extrapolation; a quest for philosophy *freed* from worldview, unhindered by value. Husserl’s phenomenology attempts to go ‘back to the “things themselves”’,⁴⁹ while Heidegger’s ontological project searches for the meaning of primordial Being. Existentialism’s concern is with existence as such and the anxiety of embracing a freedom without a guiding worldview or morality to accompany it. These are all expression of attempts to

⁴³ J-F, Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

⁴⁴ Rorty means ‘Philosophy’ as entailing questions about the nature of normative Platonic notions, such as Truth or Goodness, whereas ‘philosophy’ is understood as a pragmatic account of how things ‘hang together’. See R. Rorty, ‘Pragmatism and Philosophy,’ in *After Philosophy: End or Transformation*, ed. by K. Baynes, *et al.* (Cambridge: Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 28.

⁴⁵ F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. by W. Kaufman (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 119.

⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 119.

⁴⁷ H.L. Dreyfus, *A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 262. See also S. Elden, *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the Project of a Spatial History* (London: Continuum, 2002), 61.

⁴⁸ F. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 199. See also Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 20.

⁴⁹ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 252.

philosophize without creating a worldview; rather to account for the individual's experiences of the world *as it is*.

In his earliest extant lecture, Heidegger recognizes and seeks to address this incompatibility between philosophy and worldview. The problem lies with philosophy itself – 'it is itself a problem' (TDP: 9-10) and thus the title of this volume '*Towards the Definition of Philosophy*' [my emphasis]. Heidegger wants to explore philosophy as 'primordial science' and begins this lecture by searching for a 'methodological way' this search can be initiated. He arrives at phenomenology, describing it as 'pre-theoretical primordial science' because it allows an analysis of the structure of experience (TDP: 53). Phenomenology allows us to investigate the meaning behind the question, 'Is there the "there is?"' (TDP: 52) without appealing to an external authority or creating a worldview.

The lecture material is somewhat difficult to follow because it was not originally intended for publication, and is unpolished and conversational; however, it is important to give an overview of the argument for two reasons. The first concerns Heidegger's life-long obsession with Being. In this first lecture he asks his students to explore with him the meaning of the question: 'Is there something?' (TDP: 53). Clearly the question is a predecessor to the way we encounter it in *Being and Time* and *Introduction to Metaphysics* and in many other places in his corpus. So exploring it in this early form is important for understanding its development. Secondly, Heidegger's exploration of our encounter with this question: 'Is there something?' is paradoxically meant to stand both in opposition to *and* confirm our lived, meaningful experience of life, and it is this relationship which shapes the meaning of *Ereignis*.

Heidegger begins his exploring in §13 of the lecture, titled 'The Experience of the Question: 'Is There Something?'' He performs an analysis of the structure of experience via a phenomenological discussion of what he calls the 'psychic subject' (in Husserlian terminology the individual consciousness/ego pole) and its 'environmental experience' (object pole). Heidegger argues dramatically that the phenomenological experience of the question, 'Is there something?' brings us to an abyss which leads either into the very life or the death of philosophy. The interrogative experience we undergo in the face of this question results in two possibilities. Either our experience of the world is transformed into nothingness, into 'pure reification, pure thingness' or the very opposite happens – somehow we are enabled to 'leap into *another world*, more precisely, we manage for the first time to make the leap [*Sprung*] into the world as such' (TDP: 53).

In the lecture Heidegger gives his students two possibilities that result from this phenomenological exercise. The first entails that the experience of 'the something' stripes away all meaningful structures and horizons such that our everyday 'environmental experience' is reified into pure thingness. The book before me is reduced to merely a three-dimensional, rectangular object that endures over time as I perceive it. For Heidegger, the creation of this mental space is the 'product of a theoretical attitude that is neither normal, nor philosophically necessary'.⁵⁰ Evidently this position is a thinly disguised attack on Husserl's own phenomenology, which, in the process of bracketing, reifies the world into pure thingness, reducing our experience of it to pure presence-at-hand. Heidegger is critical of this kind of result, attained through phenomenological bracketing, seeing it as hindering, rather than assisting our understanding of 'the something'. He wants to take Husserl's method and go beyond it – he wants to use it to *leap* into the world as such.

This is the second possibility, and the one Heidegger is encouraging in his students – to use this phenomenological experience of 'the something' to uncover a more 'primordial experience' of the world (TDP: 186). What he is working towards here, in this early lecture, is evoking in his students the sense of the world as *happening*, as *Ereignis*. Instead of perceiving the world as a reified thing, as Husserl intends, it is experienced in all its ontological fullness and depth. This is the 'leap' into 'the something' the young Heidegger seeks, an encounter with the Beinghood of beings itself. So, instead of perceiving the book as a mere three-dimensional thing, it is perceived as a small fragment of the mystery of Being itself, for the book and its *isness* are, fundamentally, indicative of that fact that 'Something' is. Heidegger wants his students to grasp the bewilderment of perceiving the *eventful*, (*event-full*), nature of the world. He is using phenomenological methodology to provoke his students with the interrogative question he proposes.

Through this Heidegger wants to attain a 'ground-laying and essential insight', namely 'the characterization of the lived experience as event [*Er-eignis*] – meaningful, not thing-like' (TDP: 58). This is the first time '*Er-eignis*' appears in Heidegger's lectures and refers to a quality of *all* experience, properly understood and which ordinarily we are unaware of. Namely, that the world is brought forth and revealed as a *happening* or manifestation. Our genuine experience of the world is *not* as a 'thing-like' part, an object –

⁵⁰ Polt, '*Ereignis*,' 388.

the world itself, to which some other thing, the 'something' of experience, the subject – is attached. Rather, in the whole, undivided experience of the 'something' the 'non-thingly character of all experiences whatsoever can be brought to full intuitive understanding' (TDP: 59). The phenomenological exercise reveals the world as *event*.

To understand this more fully we can contrast it with Husserl's understanding of phenomenology because it is his process that Heidegger is implicitly critiquing. In Husserl's phenomenology the ego-pole and object-pole of experience are understood to be differentiated; *but* in Heidegger's thought they are not – rather the 'whole, undivided experience' of the something is manifest. The individual 'I' is *appropriated* by this experience such that it becomes *part* of a being experiencing being/'the something' happening. This, fundamentally, is the event of *Ereignis*, conceived in Heidegger's early phenomenological language. It is a phenomenological/ontological experience of the ground of beings which reveals Dasein as a distinct temporal manifestation of this ground, enabling the recognition of the whole, undivided 'something'. What is also significant about this experience is that it is *valueless*, no worldview is attached to it. The individual 'I', the subjective self with its web of meanings and values is no longer present – only a 'general I', Dasein.

Heidegger wants his students to become aware of experience in this way so that they will be brought to two levels of recognition. Firstly, they will encounter 'the something'; the world emptied of its content, purely ontologically. Secondly, once they achieve this particular *epoche* and return to ordinary experience, they will be aware of their own being-in-the-world *as such*; they will have insight into the fact that their world *worlds*. In the language of *Being and Time*, it is the nature of their own *thrownness* Heidegger wants his students to perceive. So the question, 'Is there something?' reveals the *non-thingly* essence of existence, and in doing so opens up further reflection on the immediate nature of our own environment [*Umwelt*], something which, at first, *appears* to consist of separate objects – but on a primordial reflective level does not.

Our experience of objects as separate entities is, in fact, *secondary* to our immediate and primary experience, which is the *unity* of the world itself, our being-in-the-world as such. This unity happens as *event*, and is given without 'mental detours across thing-orientated apprehension. Living in an environment, it signifies to me everywhere and always, everything has the character of world. It is everywhere the case that '*it worlds*' [*es weltet*]' (TDP: 61) The experience of the question 'Is there something?' causes the world to show up as '*it worlds*' and I, in my historic singularity, am not present in the full

experience of this question. In asking the question, 'thing-orientated apprehension' is 'extinguished' or 'stripped away' and the world environment becomes 'anything whatsoever'; my unique 'I' is also subsumed into this 'anything whatsoever' (TDP: 62).

Heidegger wants this strange primordial experience to allow his students to reflect back on how ordinary lived experience actually *happens* – meaning that it happens as event. The example he uses is the perception of a lectern. As the lecturer gives his presentation in the lecture hall, something he has done in the past and will do in the future, the lectern is fully present to him, resonating in his experience of it. He does not see it as an object or process *separate* from his experience, because he is a teacher, at a university, walking from his office to a pre-arranged lecture hall which he expects will contain a blackboard, chalk, chairs, perhaps a table, a lectern to deliver his lecture and hopefully some students. Rather, everything in this scenario has the character of simply 'worlding', meaning that it fulfils his horizons of expectations from his world-environment, because he is always already within a world⁵¹

Similarly, students experience the lectern as part of the place in which they have lectures. In neither case is this experience of the thing that is a lectern a process 'but rather an *event of appropriation [Ereignis]*' (TDP: 63). I do not *initially* perceive the lectern according to its properties, surfaces, geometric shapes or colours and then, as a *secondary* process, conclude that it is the thing 'lectern'. Lived experience does not pass in front of me like a thing or a process which I am separate from. Rather I *appropriate [er-eigne]* it to myself, and it appropriates itself according to its essence. My experience of the world is not as a subject experiencing objects which constitute separate things which I then process as a unified experience. Rather, it happens precisely in the opposite way, as an 'event of appropriation' (TDP: 63). The lectern is given to me as part of the meaningful world that I inhabit, which is unified with all the other aspects of that world.

This understanding of how the world is given is very different to the Cartesian position which creates an untenable dualism between *res cogito* and *res extensa*. Rather, *my* experience of the world is constituted by that very world itself, both in my appropriation of it, and its appropriation of me. *Ereignis* is to describe 'experiences that belong to my own, meaningful life'.⁵²

⁵¹ S. Elden, *Speaking Against Number: Heidegger, Language and the Politics of Calculation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 152.

⁵² Polt, 'Ereignis,' 388.

But it is complexified because there are two senses of the *Ereignis* 'event', both actively at work. The first sense emerges through the ontological realization of encountering the question 'Is there something?' Through this encounter what is revealed to Dasein is the 'whole, undivided' nature of experience; 'the something' manifest. Dasein's awareness is *appropriated* by this experience – reduced to a 'general I' experiencing 'the something'.

The second sense is phenomenological, in that the suspension of our horizons through the interrogative experience of the question 'Is there something?' allows us an understanding of *how* we are beings-in-the-world – not as subjects, or ego, but as beings who are *there*, in other words, how '*it*' *worlds* for us. The world around me may seemingly consist of separate things but my own *actual* experience of it, Heidegger shows, is of a single, unified reality which I partake and exist in. Lived experience is lived out of one's 'own-ness and life lives only in this way' (TDP: 64). In both senses we are dealing with an *event*. The first sense reveals the event of appropriation itself – the non-thingly nature of 'the something'. The second bring us to understand how life happens and unfolds as event, in a unified, meaningful way.

The point is that we need the primordial experience of the world *eventing* in order to reflect on how ordinary experience is itself an event, something which happens meaningfully and cohesively, not in a Cartesian way. Furthermore, Heidegger's exercise with his students is meant to provoke them out of this Cartesian complacency – to radically change how they understand the world as being *there*, as *something*, which they behold for the first time.

The next step on the way: *Ereignis* unfolds

Heidegger returns to the concept of *Ereignis* again in the summer semester of his 1919 lecture course. Unfortunately the lectures themselves have been lost, so we have to extrapolate from notes made by a student, Oskar Becker, included as Appendix I in volume 56/57 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, titled *On the Nature of the University and Academic Study* (TDP). From the notes it *seems* Heidegger suggests that *Ereignis* is a unique event, but the two senses of the word are still present – though Becker's notes are unclear, and the word itself is not mentioned, just contexts discussed which are applicable to it.

Heidegger discusses the 'situation in the life-context', briefly re-capping the War Emergency Semester lecture. This 'situation' has a certain unity in natural experience [*Erlebnis*], a unitary tendency is present. There are no static moments, but 'events' and these events are not 'processes' which can only be observed from a theoretical position.

Rather, events 'happen to me', or happen with me as part of them. Because I am *in* the situation already I experience their happening as a unitary wholeness, with myself included.

Now Heidegger moves on. He says it is possible for this situational context to dissolve. What occurs is that my 'nearness' to the situation, my unitary wholeness, can dissipate and a *relationlessness* emerges between the objects which make up the situation. The example is:

. . . climbing a mountain in order to see the sunrise. One has arrived at the top, and everyone experiences silently. One is totally given over to the event, one sees the sun's disc, the clouds, a mass of rocks of this definite form, but not as a specific mass that I have just climbed. Here at any rate the I remains. On the other hand no purely theoretical objectivity is possible. The objects are no longer held together by the situation; they are isolated. But a new different type of totality is constituted . . . (TDP: 173-4)

There are a number of elements for discussion in this passage. The first is that the experience of this event forms part of lived experience, i.e. the participatory, social act of climbing a mountain with companions in order to experience the sunrise. But, also there is a deliberateness here, a *purposeful* desire to experience the event as an *event*, something significant. Something *happens* when the summit is reached. I am 'totally given over to the event', witnessing the sun's ascent. The mountain 'disappears' beneath my feet as I observe the sun's rising. Yet ordinarily the sun rises everyday – but only now, in this moment of witness, do I truly perceive this event in its awe-inspiring simplicity and mystery.

In the immersed experience of this event the 'I' is not capable of 'theoretical objectivity'; the event is not processed in a scientific mode in terms of physical and gravitational laws. But neither do I experience it as *mere* lived experience. Rather 'a new different type of totality is constituted'. The I 'flows with the situation' (TDP: 174). It is this particular and significant experience of existence, which involves 'the dissolution of the situational character' (TDP: 173), that Heidegger comes to characterize as an *Ereignis* event.

But, again, in these notes we seemingly have *two* kinds of event. The first is concerned with the 'situational context' intact. This is our ordinary experience of being-in-the-world, in which we are in the world and thus appropriated by the events that take place in our world – we live with them. In the second example the 'situational context' dissolves. Heidegger describes the experience of the sunrise, as an 'Event', one that in his later language 'transports' and 'enchants'.

Becker's notes suggest a distinction between ordinary, situational, lived experience, where the situation has relative closeness and my 'I' is indistinguishable from the

situation, and what he calls the ‘dissolution of the situational context’ when the situational character disappears and the ‘unity of the situation is exploded’ (TDP: 174). This second kind of experience is like the ‘primordial experience’ we have already encountered in the previous lecture. It is more ontological in nature, a more genuine appropriation and happens in an unpredictable and bewildering way, one is ‘totally given over to the event’ and does not have a choice. The important difference is that in the previous lecture Heidegger was trying to manufacture an *Ereignis* experience with his students in the lecture, in a similar way to how one can consciously enact a Husserlian *epoche*. This first event is phenomenological in character – we can become conscious of the world happening as event, by bracketing ourselves out of the ‘situational character’ and gaining an insight into its phenomenological quality.

In this lecture something different is described. The meaningful relationships of the world fall away and the world, briefly, stops *worlding* in the ordinary way that is understood and expected. Objects take on a relationlessness and lose the unity which the situation gave to them. The individual is appropriated by the event and thrown back upon, or leaps into existence itself. The situational context is replaced by a different experience of being where being itself *happens* in an unmediated, direct way.

This emphasis on the ‘dissolution of the situational context’, on the ‘situation exploding’, is the embryonic form of *Ereignis* which, after *Being and Time*, begins to assume a central position in Heidegger’s thought. The next section of this chapter will explore this embryonic form further, through a discussion of the ‘limit-situation’, a term associated with the work of Karl Jaspers. Heidegger was reading and reviewing Jaspers at the time when he was writing his first extant lectures, suggesting a very probable link between Jaspers’s ‘limit-situation’ and the origins of *Ereignis*.

Heidegger’s critique of and debt to Jaspers’s ‘limit-situation’

In September 1920, Heidegger finished a lengthy draft review essay, titled *Comments on Karl Jaspers’s Psychology of Worldviews*.⁵³ The essay was only published in 1972 when a copy of it was found among Jaspers’s papers after his death, in 1969. Heidegger had written the draft and sent it to Jaspers, Husserl and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936) in 1921 but, for

⁵³ T. Kisiel and T. Sheehan (eds.) *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of his Early Occasional Writings, 1910-1927* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 110.

unknown reasons, decided not to publish it at that time.⁵⁴ The draft review critiques Jaspers's book *Psychology of Worldviews* (*Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*) recently published in 1919. As we have seen, the problem of worldviews and their relation to philosophy was something Heidegger was lecturing on at this time, lectures in which where we encounter the term *Ereignis* for the first time. Before I move on to discuss other texts by Heidegger I want to consider this review essay and the concept of a 'limit-situation' [*Grenzsituationen*]. The concept is suggestive of Heidegger's own early conception of *Ereignis* (though there are important differences) and there is a link between the development of Heidegger's concept and Jaspers's idea.⁵⁵

In Jaspers's early work, central status is ascribed to 'limit-situations'. Trained as a psychiatrist, Jaspers became dissatisfied with the treatment of mentally ill patients and made gradual forays into psychology, before settling on philosophy. His hope was that these disciplines would contribute to and improve his psychiatric approach. Limit-situations are

moments, usually accompanied by experiences of dread, guilt or acute anxiety, in which the human mind confronts the restrictions and pathological narrowness of its existing forms, and allows itself to abandon the securities of its limitedness, and so to enter new realm of self-consciousness.⁵⁶

A limit-situation offers the possibility of transcendence if the mind can relinquish its previous 'comfort zone' and embrace and integrate itself within a new framework. Part of this idea is also the theory of the 'unconditioned' (*das Unbedingte*).⁵⁷ Limit-situations are 'unconditioned moments of human existence'.⁵⁸ Human reason, through intense impulses, impels itself to expose the 'limits of its consciousness and to seek higher or more reflected

⁵⁴ D.F. Krell, *Intimations of Mortality: Time, Truth, and Finitude in Heidegger's Thinking of Being* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 11.

⁵⁵ A.S. Jensen traces an interesting link between Heidegger and Schleiermacher's possible influence on the *Ereignis*. Heidegger read Schleiermacher's *On Religion* in 1917 where he speaks of a 'mysterious moment' where something is perceived in relation to the universe. See A.S. Jensen, 'The Influence of Schleiermacher's Second Speech *On Religion* on Heidegger's Concept of *Ereignis*,' *Review of Metaphysics* 61, no. 4 (2008): 815-827.

⁵⁶ C. Thornhill, 'Karl Jaspers,' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2009 Edition), ed. by E.N. Zalta, Stanford University, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/jaspers/>.

⁵⁷ See K. Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1919), 205. No English translation of the text exists. A simple example Jaspers provides of an 'unconditioned moment' is looking into the night sky – we think we see the infinite directly, but this an illusion of reason, an emotion – in fact all we see is a small portion of space mixed with starlight. Our thought of the infinite is in tension with our understanding of the night sky.

⁵⁸ Thornhill, 'Karl Jaspers'.

modes of knowledge'.⁵⁹ Jaspers adhered to Hegelian dialectics in how he understood this progression.

In his *Psychology of Worldviews*, Jaspers's investigation centres on what is 'formally indicated' as our existence [*Existenz*] and how it is shaped by 'limit-situations'. Heidegger, in his review on this book, writes that the phenomenon of, 'existence' points specifically to what we mean when referring to the 'I am', calling attention to the *fact* of human existence, our general factual nature, what Heidegger, in the review, formally calls 'Dasein' (KJ: 9-10). For Jaspers, our most intense recognition of consciousness of our existence arises through 'our consciousness of situations of antinomy' (KJ: 9-10). An antinomy Jaspers defines as an 'incompatibility that cannot be overcome, contradiction that will not be resolved but exacerbated by clear thinking'.⁶⁰ An example could be the sudden, unexpected death of a parent.⁶¹ Ideally a parent is a unique and irreplaceable figure in a person's life, providing a support structure and secure sense of familial identity. The parent's sudden and permanent absence could provoke a limit-situation, and give rise to an antinomy because it is an 'unconditioned moment' of human existence – one that cannot be prepared for or anticipated adequately. Bare human conscious existence (the 'I am') is revealed in these moments of seemingly irreconcilable existential tension, and the experience of antinomy throws us back upon our individuated 'I'. This experience prompts, in Jaspers's terminology, the emergence of a 'limit-situation' [*Grenzsituationen*] where our 'most intense consciousness of existence flares up, and this consciousness is a consciousness of something absolute . . . Limit-situations are experienced as something ultimate for human life' (KJ: 10).

For Jaspers, antinomies arise because in us there is a vital *will to unity*. Our minds are determined to organize and understand seemingly irreconcilable antinomies and thus, paradoxically, it is in the confrontation with antinomy that we learn more about this mystical and vital unity in ourselves (KJ: 10). The experience of antinomies surfaces because humans always already find themselves within the 'whole' and experience their Dasein as something 'surrounded' by this unbroken 'medium' (KJ: 11). Life is experienced as a 'flowing stream' and it is this natural flow which is destroyed and disrupted by a limit-situation (KJ: 11). Experiences of limit-situations place us momentarily 'outside' the 'whole'

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ K. Jaspers, *Philosophy: Volume 2*, trans by E.B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 218.

⁶¹ Jaspers uses this example specifically, see *ibid.*, 194.

and enable a perception of the 'unifying force' which constitutes existence. We attain certainty about the 'totality' of existence and are given a glimpse of the Absolute (KJ: 11).

These moments are accompanied by a sense of dread or angst in which the mind 'confronts the restrictions and pathological narrowness of its existing forms'.⁶² They confront an individual with something initially unimaginable, which goes beyond the limits of previous world-experience. If the individual can find resolve in the face of this trauma and reconcile him- or herself to the antinomy, flourishing is possible. However, if the individual is paralysed or impeded by the limit-situation this can lead to psychological breakdown and mental collapse. This confrontation with the *unconditioned* (*das Unbedingte*) exposes reason to the limits of its consciousness precisely because it has not been 'conditioned' to this exposure before. Ideally the individual can overcome the challenge of the situation and achieve a new perspective. Thus exposed to the limitedness of its securities the individual abandons them and enters a new realm of self-consciousness.⁶³

In his review, Heidegger recognizes that limit-situations are 'bound up with our very humanity, and . . . are unavoidably given for our finite Dasein'. Furthermore, 'struggle, death, chance and guilt' are particular instances of limit-situations (KJ: 10). The evident debt Heidegger has to Jaspers is the recognition of death as a limit-situation, discussed in *Being and Time*.⁶⁴ Our initial inauthentic relationship to death and its accompanying angst are significant themes in *Being and Time*. Achieving authenticity and resoluteness in the knowledge of our mortality forms an essential part of how Dasein can relinquish its anxiety.

For Jaspers, 'limit-situations' which, because they emerge through the experience of antinomies, create a subject/object split in the psychical flow of life (KJ: 17). For example, in the death of my parent, my subjecthood is made unbearably apparent to me by the initial and unexpected failure of the new circumstances of my world to meet my old and mostly unexamined needs and expectations. The problem, for Heidegger, is that this 'split' *presupposes* an 'essential human need for unity, totality and infinity', in other words, the

⁶² Thornhill, 'Karl Jaspers'.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ See W.D. Blattner, 'Heidegger's Debt to Jaspers's Concept of the Limit-Situation,' in *Heidegger and Jaspers*, ed. by A. M. Olson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 153-165 for a discussion of *Being and Time*, death and the limit-situation.

will to unity which dominates Jaspers's work.⁶⁵ For Jaspers this 'splitting asunder' of subjectivity and objectivity is the ultimate antinomy of existence,⁶⁶ the '*primal phenomenon of psychical life*' (KJ: 18). The meaning of the relationship between the subject and object is constituted by this 'primal phenomenon', for this 'splitting asunder makes sense only insofar as we begin with the notion of that which is not split asunder, and approach it as the underlying reality' (KJ: 18).

Though undoubtedly inspired by Jaspers's work in his own thinking about *Ereignis*, Heidegger offers a very perceptive critique of it. In his essay he attacks Jaspers's lack of critical methodology in approaching the 'phenomenology of existence'.⁶⁷ Jaspers analyses the phenomenon of existence through observation, but fails to see how the 'pervasive influence of unclarified preconceptions' drawn from the subjectivist philosophical tradition bias his observations.⁶⁸ Heidegger shows how Jaspers misses that the 'characteristic of all intuition' is that it is 'enacted in a context of a definite orientation' with includes an 'anticipatory perception of the respective region of experience' (KJ: 4).

Heidegger is not interested in proving whether this metaphysical 'whole' or 'totality' can really exist; what is problematic is the 'functional sense' initially put forth in Jaspers's preconception (KJ: 18). This realm, the 'whole', or 'totality', Jaspers intends to be the realm in which everything takes place, and is transformed into an 'object that ultimately requires a theoretical, observational "attitude" as the correlative way of understanding it' (KJ: 18). The antinomy which splits the subject and object apart shows up the whole as this 'objective *thing*' and it is from this 'primal split' that the subject derives its meaning, as a 'limited individuation of life itself' (KJ: 18-19).

This is precisely the problem for Heidegger – Jaspers's initial approach to psychical life is based on a *preconception* about the nature of psychical life which *already* forms part of the 'objective' and 'primordial' observations he wants to make (KJ: 7). For Heidegger the question is *whether* this preconception 'enjoys the level of primordiality that is claimed for it' (KJ: 19). Are the *motives* which drive Jaspers along his interrogative path made evident? For Heidegger clearly they are not. Jaspers believes that his method, 'mere observation' can observe 'simply that which exists and is there for us so far in human experience (KJ: 32). But this ignores the *historicized* nature of all observation, the fact that 'our observing of

⁶⁵ Krell, *Intimations of Mortality*, 15.

⁶⁶ D.K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 130.

⁶⁷ Krell, *Intimations of Mortality*, 15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

phenomena of life is *historical*, insofar as it must inevitably be interpretive' (KJ: 33). In order to understand the methodology that observation entails I must interpret its nature within the context where it occurs. As *Being and Time* puts it, any 'interpretation which is to contribute understanding must already have understood what is to be interpreted' (BT: 194). Hence the need to investigate Dasein itself *before* the 'objective' world can simply be 'observed'. The prejudices and presuppositions which direct observation must be examined and interpreted. Heidegger concludes the essay by arguing that 'mere observation' must evolve 'into an "infinite process" of radical questioning that always includes itself in its questions and preserves itself in them' (KJ: 37). Essentially he requires constant cognisance of the hermeneutic circle which, if ignored, makes 'mere observation' a phenomenologically naïve and misguided process.

Heidegger's critique of Jaspers is characteristic of his approach to philosophy in general – he is questioning Jaspers's unexamined use of a worldview, not the particular worldview itself. What is more important for my discussion is the idea of the 'limit situation', how it occurs as part of everyday life and lifts us *out* of our worldview, exposing deeply held and unexamined beliefs. Interesting similarities can be drawn between Heidegger's early conception of *Ereignis*, and Jaspers's 'limit-situation'. Though Heidegger's is more phenomenological in character and Jaspers's more psychological, both terms suggest an encounter which upsets and bewilders our ordinary experience of the world. But, perhaps more important, is that Heidegger can discern in Jaspers's notion of the 'limit-situation' how it might be possible for us to get *beyond* beings to Being, or rather, to get 'out' of an experience and become aware of it in a new way. We see this in Heidegger's early discussion with his students about 'the something', and then later when he describes the ascent of a mountain to witness the sunrise. Evidently Jaspers's work, which he was reading at the time, was feeding into his own.

There is also a strong existential resonance between these ideas in Jaspers and Heidegger which find their roots in Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855).⁶⁹ Themes such as the transcendence of empirical reality, 'leaping into the world' as such, confronting situations of extreme existential tension, the 'leap of faith', questions of the nature of authentic *Existenz*, and the *Augenblick* are all features of the post-Nietzschean death of God

⁶⁹ I have not addressed Kierkegaard's significant influence on Jaspers and Heidegger. However, for an excellent overview see K. Ward's *Augenblick: The Concept of the 'Decisive Moment' in 19th- and 20th-Century Western Philosophy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

landscape and part of an attempt to understand the ‘re-evaluation of all values’⁷⁰ that it created. T.S. Eliot’s early poetry offers the poetic literary expression of these uncertainties, though these themes dominate much of literary Modernism.

The ‘early’ Heidegger

Being and Time

The term *Ereignis* does not appear in *Being and Time* with the significant emphasis we encountered in the early lecture. Instead *Ereignis* refers to events understood as forming part of ordinary existence – things such as natural events, a storm or the arrival of a friend (BT: 193, 294). These events are futural in character, in that they can, for the most part, be anticipated and prepared for. They affect the individual and also the world (BT: 318, 330). Past events can form the basis for understanding and charting the development of history and the remains of such events, for example an Ancient Greek temple, though present-at-hand in the ‘now’, also stand as event residues which linger on from the past. Thus ‘the past’ can have a ‘double meaning’, in that it belongs to an irretrievable earlier time but can still exist in the ‘now’ (BT: 430); though it has already taken place it remains indelibly part of the present’s conception of itself, because of what remains after the event.

Augenblick

The term ‘*Augenblick*’, literally ‘a glance of the eye’, has a more significant meaning in *Being and Time* than the ordinary meaning of ‘event’, and is closer to the sense of *Ereignis* as we encounter it in the other works. In English our nearest approximation would be ‘in the blink of an eye’ but this idiom, while conveying the speed and surprise at which the event occurs, i.e. ‘It happened in the blink of an eye’, does not necessarily convey the significance or possible momentous realization the nature of the event provokes – which ‘*Augenblick*’, in *Being and Time*, intends to, though in ordinary German ‘*Augenblick*’ simply means ‘moment’ or ‘immediate’, similar to its English counterpart.⁷¹

‘*Augenblick*’ in *Being and Time* is translated as ‘moment of vision’ (BT: 376) and this English approximation is a good choice. Afrikaans has the word ‘*oomblik*’ which is translated as ‘instant’ or ‘moment’ but has also lost the specialness of *Augenblick*, though both terms share the same root, ‘Auge’, ‘oog’, meaning ‘eye’, and ‘blick’ or ‘blik’, meaning

⁷⁰ F. Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, trans. by W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 3.

⁷¹ *Oxford-Duden German Dictionary*. 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 71.

'blink'. In *Being and Time Augenblick* is described as a moment of existential clarity, the moment Prufrock is both constantly denied, and with which he is constantly preoccupied. The word 'vision' is an excellent term for the English rendering because it connotes revelation, as well as foresight and prescience; all of these form part of our temporal being-in-the-world.⁷²

The moment of vision is characterized by Dasein's resoluteness. Resoluteness, discussed in detail in §60 in *Being and Time*, is the 'authentic Being-one's-self' (BT: 344). Dasein is 'summoned' from its 'lostness' in the 'they' and grasps itself (BT: 345). The meaning of this authentic grasping has already been discussed at length in chapter one, section I. However, what accompanies resoluteness is an existential phenomenon Heidegger calls the 'Situation' (BT: 346). When I am resolute I 'see' the Situation I am in, meaning that the current 'involvement-character of the circumstances discloses itself to the Self, and I perceive that I am 'there' (BT: 346). I attain a transparency and handle on my being-in-the-world. Conversely, for the 'they' the Situation is something which is 'closed off' – the 'they' knows only the 'general situation, and loses itself in the immediate opportunities which are closest to it (BT: 346). Being 'there' in the Situation is accompanied by the 'moment of vision'. Dasein is brought back from its falling in the inauthentic nature of the 'they' to be more authentically 'there' to itself (BT: 376).

The moment of vision is *momentary* and entails a shift in Dasein's temporal perspective of its being-in-the-world. Resoluteness interrupts Dasein's being among the 'they' and its absorption with the everyday things of its immediate concern. The *Present* becomes apparent in this moment, but understood as a convergence in the broader confluence of Dasein's past and future. In the moment it gets 'held in the future and in having been' (BT: 387) and crystalizes Dasein's temporality such that it 'sees' the potentiality of its futural being and the shape of its past which has brought it to the present. Thus the momentary insight is held in 'authentic temporality'. Dasein is 'carried away' (enraptured) and wholly absorbed by this Situation but held in resoluteness (BT:

⁷² A recent film example of this moment is *The Fighter* when Mickey, an ex-boxer and long term crack junkie, is about to visit his acquaintances who peddle the drug. He is carrying a cake given to him by his family to celebrate his birthday, which he intends to share with his fellow crack users. When he arrives at the house with the addicts cheering his appearance, he stops and pauses. Unexpectedly he hands the cake to the addicts, turns around and runs back to the boxing club. He undergoes an *Augenblick*, perceiving the possibilities of his future and recognizing the choices of his past which have brought him to this 'now'. In other words, he has a vision into his own temporalized life and his being-towards-death, and this prompts authentic resoluteness. In Jaspers's terms Mickey reaches a psychological limit-situation, but this does not capture the ontological implication of the event's significance which the 'moment of vision' does. See S. Silver, *The Fighter*, DVD, directed by D.O. Russell (Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 2010).

387). It is not a daydream or a fantasy which overtakes Dasein's thoughts, but a momentary illumination of the futural possibilities of its life.

Heidegger is certain that this moment is *not* a 'now' and does not belong to time as 'within-time-ness', as something which 'arises, passes away, or is present-at-hand' (BT: 388). Rather it permits Dasein the possibility of encountering '*for the first time*' something which in the course of time can be encountered as ready-to-hand or present-at-hand; the moment of vision reveals an 'authentic future' before it has actually taken place (BT: 388). Anxiety *precedes* and holds the moment of vision 'at the ready' but once this moment enraptures Dasein 'it [the moment] itself, and only itself, is possible', disclosing the authentic 'there' (BT: 394, 398). This moment overwhelms the everyday and briefly gains mastery over it (BT: 422), but the condition of this moment is fleeting.

In *Being and Time* the moment of vision is associated with Dasein's futural ecstatic temporality, because it 'clears' and 'unfogs' the future possibilities of existence – it reveals them with a clarity Dasein is usually denied in its absorbed everydayness. The moment of vision allows Dasein a momentary perceptive recognition of its own thrownness and throws it back upon its 'factual "there"' by shattering itself against death' (BT: 437). The moment unites Dasein's inherited past and projected knowledge of the firm inevitability of its death, and this gives rise to a state of authentic temporality, allowing the recognition of its fate (BT: 437). This recognition gives insight into the meaning of choice, both in terms of chosen and unchosen possibilities. Hence Heidegger writes that the moment of vision allows Dasein the freedom to '*give up* some definite resolution' (BT: 443) because it perceives with clarity the irreversible linear and mortal nature of its temporal existence. This 'steadiness of existence' is confirmed *in* the moment of vision, even though the moment interrupts it (BT: 443). Dasein is brought to a situation of acceptance in acknowledging its fate in terms of what it has done and left undone. This relationship to past, present and future is possible because Dasein is a historical temporal being, and the nature of its temporal existence is crystalized in the 'ecstatico-horizonal unity of its raptures' (BT: 448). The moment of vision provides this unifying insight into Dasein's own temporal existence. It also allows Dasein the ability of conceiving of its existence in terms of 'monumental' possibilities (BT: 448).

Here Heidegger alludes to one of the three species of history Nietzsche's describes in his untimely meditation 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life'.⁷³ For each individual 'monumental' history is a way of reflecting on his or her own existence in terms of significant choices and events which serve as permanent markers of that Dasein's unique life journey. This shapes and reconciles Dasein's relationship to its fate, so that it can be authentically resolute when it faces down the meaning of its life and the inevitability of its death. In the Nietzschean vein, Dasein, in the 'moment of vision', does not perceive its life in the present moment, merely as the outcome of random, accidental events, but rather as a purposeful, directed existence; it can reflect on its life and say '*I willed it thus!*'

This resolute attitude is the key to accepting Nietzsche's challenge of the eternal return of the same.⁷⁴ The moment of vision provides this opportunity for temporal existential reflection in terms of Dasein's relationship with its *Present*. Importantly Heidegger writes that the individual's existence in this moment 'temporalizes itself as something that has been stretched along in a way which is fatefully whole in the sense of the authentic historical *constancy* of the Self' (BT: 463). This insight allows Dasein to see its life as meaningfully shaped by its choices and precipitates authentic resoluteness in the face of being-towards-death because, in the moment, it perceives its fate as something it *willed* all along. Being able to relate to one's past decisions in this authentic way means that the possibilities of Dasein's future being are also, in the moment, temporalized in terms of its 'ecstatico-horizonal' futural temporal being because the moment unifies temporality (BT: 479). Heidegger's point is that the moment of vision is temporalized *elsewhere* than within 'ordinary' time, i.e. time conceived as a series of 'nows'. Thus it is very difficult to clarify the meaning of the moment of vision within this essentially inauthentic temporality, the temporality of the 'they'.

How can Dasein give genuine expression to the 'moment of vision' when it is no longer 'in' it, so to speak? As will be discussed in section II of this chapter, this problem of articulation is part of Eliot's difficulty with the language of poetry too. Heidegger avoids addressing this problem somewhat because he relies on the language of formal indication in *Being and Time*, using a term such as *Augenblick*, which *points to* this experience of

⁷³ F. Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by D. Breazeale, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 68.

⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 216.

Dasein without describing its content – certainly because its content would vary for each individual and verge on mystical and obtuse language. However, the *ontological* framework of the moment would, in *Being and Time*, be the same for any Dasein, and thus it is the phenomenal description of this event which is Heidegger’s concern. Eliot’s poetry offers us a way to deepen our understanding of Heidegger’s philosophy because the use of poetic language allows a much more liminal and ‘accurate’ description of such moments, and, furthermore, precisely *because* such moments are an important core of Eliot’s poetic vision.

There are clear similarities between *Augenblick* and the early expression of *Ereignis*.⁷⁵ *Augenblick* also fits within the broader conception of *Ereignis*, as it develops through Heidegger’s thinking. Clearly the influence of Jaspers’s ‘limit-situation’ is also present in the description of the ‘moment of vision’ in *Being and Time*. Heidegger has moved beyond the tentative phenomenological exploration of *Ereignis* in his early work and crystalizes it in the existential language of *Being and Time*, specifically in the context of authenticity. Nonetheless the sense of being momentarily transformed and gaining an unusual insight into the world in terms of a ‘primordial experience’ is very much present. The ‘moment of vision’ offers a new type of totality and a way in which Dasein can re-orientate how it perceives and lives its own existence. As we will see, these core characteristics of *Ereignis* continue to be carried through in the middle and later Heidegger’s development of *Ereignis*, to which we now turn.

The ‘middle’ Heidegger

The Contributions’ contribution to *Ereignis*

The concept *Ereignis* reappears again prominently in *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, written during the period 1936–1938 and builds upon the second ontological sense of the word as we have already encountered it in Heidegger’s earliest lectures. The special quality of this event, already described in embryonic form in the 1919 summer semester transcripts, is re-emphasized, but now Heidegger describes the *Ereignis* event as a much rarer occurrence, less frequent and altogether more mysterious – even, as Richard Polt interprets it in the context of *Contributions*, a unique *future* possibility that has yet to

⁷⁵ See H. Ruin, ‘The Moment of Truth: *Augenblick* and *Ereignis* in Heidegger,’ *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 6 no. 1 (1998) 75-88.

take place.⁷⁶ It may occur only with the arrival of the gods which Heidegger cryptically refers in his *Der Spiegel* interview (OGS: 107). Life now, in the context of *Contributions*, in its everyday modern state, is drained of meaning and consigned to the ‘confusion of unbeings’.⁷⁷ In this confusion a supreme effort is required if we might begin to take part in the event of appropriation – so much so that perhaps only a state of extreme emergency can precipitate the Event.⁷⁸ This crisis which creates the ‘emergency of being’ is the distinctive theme Polt uses to interpret Heidegger’s *Contributions*.

A shared and significant premise in Eliot and Heidegger’s work between the wars was the belief that humankind was in a state of crisis and the world in desperate need of a genuine spiritually restorative power. Eliot’s own (perhaps naïve) conviction and general hope was that Christian metaphysics, in the right guise, offered the West its only genuine salve. His traditional conservatism and firm belief in the stability and innate hierarchy offered by the Christian worldview was something affirmed and practised in his own life after his baptism. Heidegger at an earlier point in his life, had abandoned the ‘system of Catholicism’⁷⁹ and would not return to the fold of what seemed to him a worn-out, empty creed. So while Eliot looks backwards to the certainty of a past tradition, Heidegger seeks the saving power of absent gods whose return we await. Yet what underlies both positions is the recognition of the need for a second coming of sorts – an Event of such significance that it would compel us to abandon technological materialism and see the world and our existence in it in a new light.

Contributions, as with all of Heidegger’s thought, is fundamentally concerned with interrogating the singular question, the question of Being – *die Seinsfrage*.⁸⁰ Keeping this guiding question in mind helps us understand this particularly difficult text, and also helps further explicate the meaning of *Ereignis*, as something intrinsic to this question. *Contributions* formulates ‘Being’, *Sein*, now as *Seyn* (‘be-ing’). The archaic formulation of the word is Heidegger’s attempt to re-vitalize this life-long obsession and to remind his

⁷⁶ Polt, ‘*Ereignis*,’ 388. In the last part of this section on the later Heidegger this apocalyptic sense of *Ereignis* comes to the fore.

⁷⁷ Quoted in *ibid.* 388. In *Contributions* the words used are ‘chaos of not-beings’ (CP: 6).

⁷⁸ Polt, ‘*Ereignis*,’ 388.

⁷⁹ M. Heidegger, ‘Letter to Engelbert Krebs on His Philosophical Conversion’, in *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of his Early Occasional Writings, 1910-1927*, ed. by T. Kiesel and T. Sheehan (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 96.

⁸⁰ Heidegger, at the time of writing *Contributions*, was beginning to fall out of love with Nazism. In April 1934 he had resigned his Nazi Vice-Chancellorship and when he began writing *Contributions*, in 1936, he was under Gestapo observation. See H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, trans by A. Blunden (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 269.

readers not to over-estimate their insights into the meaning of Being, nor become complacent in whatever tentative grasp they may think they have of it.

What is meant by *Seyn* is indicated more clearly by pointing out what it is not. We can say that certain beings exist, or demonstrate that the general characteristic of all beings is their shared partaking of existence as such, or attempt to define what it means to “be”. However, none of these approaches reaches towards what Heidegger is trying to investigate. In *Contributions* he writes that the question of *Seyn* cannot be answered as if it were a question about beings:

[T]here is no way that leads directly from the being of beings to *be-ing* [*Seyn*], because the look to the being of beings already takes place outside the momentariness of Dasein.

Henceforth an essential differentiation and clarification can be brought into the question of being. Such clarification is never an answer to the question of being but rather only a thorough grounding of questioning, awakening and clarifying the *power* to question this question – which always arises out of Dasein’s distress and upward swing. (CP: 52)

Questioning the meaning of being takes place within the everyday world of Dasein and, to a certain extent, is shaped and limited by our average everyday understanding. Yet the meaning of *Seyn* is ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ the constant becoming of lived experience, so there is no ‘way’ in ordinary experience which leads directly to it. Nonetheless, it is through this questioning that we come to realize that what is puzzling and mysterious about the world is that it *is* given, it is *there*, there is ‘something’ – this is the ‘awakening’ and ‘clarifying’ power of the question, and confronting it provokes wonder and anxiety (‘Dasein’s distress’). To have the insight that *Seyn is given*, through our encounter with beings themselves, does not explain the reason *why* this is so. The ontic reality of the world does not explain its underlying ontological reality. We see something in this which reflects the ‘Is there something?’ interrogative exercise from the 1919 lectures.

Heidegger clearly distinguishes between *Seyn* and *Sein*, insisting that there is no *direct* way that leads from recognizing that things have being to *Seyn* itself. He means that the category that pertains to all things that exist – ‘being’ or *isness*, does not lead directly to that which *gives* a being its being, meaning *be-ing* [*Seyn*]. If this distinction is not acknowledged then we succumb to the temptation to think of *Seyn* metaphysically, as a kind of general being, namely the ‘Being’ of beings. Rather Heidegger wants us to ‘leap’ further with this insight, to see being, i.e. the ‘isness’ of all things, as something *given* by *Seyn*, the granting disclosiveness which gives beings their being but which remains essentially hidden. It is this encounter with a thing in its thingness or beingness, not merely as an everyday object, which allows us to notice it as an instance or happening of

Seyn itself. *Contributions*' aim is to account for this mysterious moment – how it is that 'the look to the being of beings takes place outside the momentariness of Dasein'. The answer is that this 'look' or 'glance' into the 'heart of light' (WL: 62) happens through the *Ereignis* event. This is why *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning [Ereignis])* has 'Ereignis' in the title because the significance of this event forms a core theme in this book, and is the fundamental way in which this 'leap' occurs.

This is a brief summation of *Contributions*, a complex and difficult text. Important to remember is that Heidegger is prompted to ask '*die Seinsfrage*' as a response to the crisis that emerged due to what he perceives as the failing and collapse of the Western metaphysical tradition, and with it, the death of its greatest construct, the Christian God. In line with this theme of 'crisis' Polt directs his exegesis of *Contributions* to the theme of *emergency*.⁸¹ He argues that the *Contributions* 'venture[s] the thought that being comes into its own in *Not* – emergency, urgency, exigency'.⁸² In reaching the 'end of metaphysics' and entering the destitute age of modernity we have reached a crisis point in the history of Being – we are in a state of *emergency*.

To address this crisis Heidegger proposes enacting 'a questioning along a pathway which is first traced out by the crossing to the other beginning, into which Western thinking is now entering' (CP: 3). This 'other beginning' commences at the end of what we could call the 'first beginning' begun by Plato and culminating in the work of Nietzsche 'last metaphysician of the West' (N: 8), who pronounced the death of the last, enduring metaphysical construct, God. Heidegger tells us that from the Greeks to Nietzsche, the *guiding question* (inquiring into beings as beings, e.g. Aristotle formulated it as: What is a being?) defines in the same manner the question of 'being' itself. The unity of this tradition is exemplified in Hegel's *Logic* (CP: 52-53). This questioning implies being as *beingness*, i.e. what is common for every being. However, this does not inquire into be-ing (*Seyn*), that which gives being (*Sein*) its being. Heidegger sees his thinking as a 'leap' to the 'other beginning', which was instigated in *Being and Time* (CP: 53) and which continues in *Contributions* and into his later work. *Contributions* itself is the textual bridge which connects Heidegger's earlier and later thought, but all of it remains *only* a beginning – an

⁸¹ 'Emergency' has many interesting connotations, both in terms of crisis, the need for help which requires response and in terms of something 'emerging' and 'emerge', something appearing or being revealed which was not previously apparent, yet was present all along. For example, an ambulance is always present, available, but only 'emerges' when there is an emergency.

⁸² Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, 5.

emergence of a new way of thinking about being – its own attempt to precipitate the *Ereignis* event.

The theme of ‘emergency’ is also a response to technologically-enframed thinking. This thinking has produced the West’s current crisis, that is, the destitution and existential homelessness of the age of modernity, where genuine dwelling is no longer possible. The root cause of enframing is a thinking and conceiving of *Seyn* which reduces our understanding of the world to only *one* limited and limiting conception of itself. This is the metaphysical framework of *Gestell*, and it is fuelled by the certainty that everything that exists is knowable in a scientifically reductive, objectifiable and technologically useful way. The pervasive belief in the superiority of this knowledge blinds us to other possible ways of understanding the world. *Gestell* thinking is also driven by the desire for power and efficiency, from power over the atom to power over human activity; everything is subsumed into this framework. This enframing conceals the mystery of the *givenness* of being and precipitates our emergency and its resulting ‘distress’. We live in constant danger of the oblivion of *Seyn* and yet ‘*die Seinsfrage*’ is also distressing, because it provokes us out of our complacency in the face of this oblivion.

It is the *Ereignis* event, in *Contributions*, which instigates the ‘other beginning’. Through *Ereignis* a new conception of *Seyn* can emerge. Polt uses the German word *Not* in this context, which means emergency but also *need*, for to be in an emergency situation is also to be in need of help. The etymology is similar in Afrikaans, where *noodhulp*, for example, means emergency services, which both respond to and assist in an emergency. Similarly Heidegger responds (something like a philosopher ambulance driver) to the crisis of modernity by challenging our modern conventions of thought and destructing the history of philosophy which has given rise to that thought. The singular ‘event’ is a momentary appropriation beyond the confines of our everyday *Dasein* which radically transforms and undermines our metaphysical past. *Contributions* is about this moment and how it provides the means ‘to restore beings from within the truth of be-ing’ (CP: 8). Thus the central insight of the book is that ‘*Seyn* essentially happens as *Ereignis*’ (which in the book is translated as ‘Be-ing holds sway as enowning’ [*das Seyn west als das Ereignis*] (CP: 3, 22, 180, 183)).⁸³

⁸³ Heidegger re-iterates and affirms this position in 1969, in the third *Le Thor* seminar (FS: 60) referring specifically to the essay ‘The Principle of Identity’, discussed below.

Das Ereignis

Das Ereignis appears as volume 71 of the *Gesamtausgabe*. It was written in 1941–1942 (after *Contributions*) and Richard Polt points out that it should not be considered a ‘great’ work.⁸⁴ It is rather a thought-provoking compilation of sketches, much like *Contributions*. *Ereignis*, as we already know, is not an ‘event’ in any usual sense of the term, and Heidegger did not necessarily mean it primarily as ‘appropriation’ or ‘enowning’, though these are acceptable translations in the correct context of interpretation. Thomas Sheehan provides a detailed discussion of the term, as it is discussed in *Das Ereignis*, closely following Heidegger’s annotating of the Grimms’ etymology, where he developed the etymological definition of the word from.⁸⁵ Heidegger learns from the Grimms’ Dictionary that the etymon of *Ereignis* is not *eigen*, ‘own’, but that the primary meaning of ‘*sich ereignen*’ is ‘to come into view, to appear, to be brought forth and revealed’. The word ultimately derives from *eräugen/ereugen* which contain the root ‘*Augen*’, ‘eyes’.

The misunderstanding surrounding *Ereignis* crept into language when *er-äugen* and *er-eugen* devolved into *er-eigen* and *eigen* and came to be associated with the entirely unrelated adjective *eigen*, and subsequently with the infinitives *eignen* (this word is now obsolete in German and meant ‘to fit with, belong to’) and *an-eignen/zu-eignen* (‘to appropriate something to oneself’). Hence we encounter the word translated in English as *enownment*, or *appropriation* – the latter derived from the Latin *proprium*, meaning ‘own’.⁸⁶

To arrive at a more correct understanding of *Ereignis*, we should follow up the original root of the word, which is *äugen*, not *eigen*. The related Latin terms would then be *ostendere* (‘stretch out to view’) and *monstrare* (‘show’). In English we still have the word ‘ostentatious’ (‘stretch out to view’), meaning a showy or pretentious display of something which is brought into view. Similarly *monstrare* remains in English the root of ‘demonstrate’ and also ‘monstrance’, the open receptacle in which the consecrated Host is exposed for veneration during Catholic Benediction. This is a good example of the complexity of *Ereignis*, in terms of its etymological origin, for though the Host is revealed (in its transubstantiated form) it still *appears* merely as a wafer – so its actual reality is still

⁸⁴ Polt, *Emergency of Being*, 1.

⁸⁵ Sheehan, ‘A Paradigm Shift,’ 197. The Brothers Grimm, aside from collecting and publishing fairy tales, began writing *the German Dictionary (Das Deutsche Wörterbuch)*. Started in 1838 it was only completed in 1961 and consists of 32 volumes.

⁸⁶ Sheehan, ‘A Paradigm Shift,’ 197–198.

'hidden', but paradoxically also revealed. *Ereignis*, understood through this Latin etymological example, is the act of revealing something which *appears* to remain concealed.

Significantly, Heidegger includes in his exploration of the word one that does not appear in Grimms' etymology, namely *lichten* ('to disencumber and free up, to open up or clear'). In the reflexive, *sich erweisen* and *sich erzeigen* ('to show up or appear as what one is') equates to the same meaning as *sich lichten* ('to be opened up and cleared'). Heidegger reinforces this when he states that *das Ereignen* has the same transitive sense of '*lichtend – weisen*', 'to show by opening up' (in the reflexive: 'to appear by having been opened up'). Heidegger further complexifies this when he uses *das Er-eignen* in terms of art. Here the term pertains to the 'open as coming into appearance in conjunction with intrinsic concealment'.⁸⁷ We see this process demonstrated in Heidegger's discussion of Van Gogh's peasant shoes in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (OWA). The shoes appear as nothing but shoes in the painting, but through a hermeneutic process are transformed into the world of the peasant woman. The artwork is already 'open' in the sense of being available for view, but Heidegger's interpretation 'opens up' something concealed in the painting, namely the world of the peasant woman.

One *Ereignis* or two?

The question which emerges here is much the same as the one that emerges in the earliest lectures: does Heidegger describe one *Ereignis* or two? Or does he deliberately leave both possibilities open? In *Contributions Ereignis* is conceived as a significant encounter that radically alters our conception of reality. Furthermore there is the sense that this encounter occurs on a communal, rather than an individual level. The *Ereignis* is no longer an individual *Augenblick*, but an event of world-changing historical significance, something even apocalyptic.

Yet, in *Das Ereignis*, as the discussion will show, a different sense of the term is brought forth, one that suggests that *Ereignis* is the *always* already open possibilities which the world presents to us. *Ereignis* here is an *a priori* condition of a being-in-the-world. This sense of the term links back to the earliest lectures where Heidegger wants his students to perceive the 'eventful' nature of the world which appropriates us as reality unfolds.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

In Sheehan's exegesis of GA 71 he is careful to leave 'appropriation' (but not 'enowning') as a possible term that could translate *Ereignis* adequately, only if, as an event, it is understood as the 'a priori event' of the opening up of the open. And the emphasis here is less on 'appropriation' than on 'opening up and appearing'.⁸⁸ Sheehan draws out the link between *Ereignis* as the 'opening of the open on the basis of a concealment' and *Lichtung* which he defines as the way the world is an open field of sense-making relations, an 'opening that clears things'. The 'clearing' is what removes something from its simple 'thereness' by relating it to human purpose. This, for Sheehan, is what Heidegger means by *Lichtung*.⁸⁹ The example Sheehan uses is a piece of granite which I can use to hit in a tent peg because I forgot the hammer, or decide to keep and use as a paper weight. The world provides the opening for the 'something' (e.g. hammer or paperweight) concealed in the piece of granite, which is revealed because of 'sense-making relations'. Dasein's role in this remains central throughout Heidegger's corpus. This centrality, Sheehan claims, is the most extraordinary thing about both the earlier and later Heidegger, namely his unwavering insistence that human being is that 'open' and thus is 'the thing itself'. Sheehan claims that from the beginning of Heidegger's career to the end, he never got beyond this point.⁹⁰

Sheehan argues that in 'Dasein' Heidegger understood the 'Da' not as the 'there' but as *das Offene* or *die Offenheit*, the 'open'. Thus the 'Da' is not only the same as *Welt* and *Lichtung* but also equivalent to other terms that Heidegger uses for *die Sache selbst* (the thing's own self). The 'Da' is 'the *Es* of *Es gibt Sein*: it is ἀλήθεια, *Ereignis*, and *die Wahrheit des Seins selbst*'.⁹¹ For example, consider this passage from the *Contributions*

What opens up in the grounding of Da-sein is enowning. With that is not meant an 'over against', something intuitable, or an 'idea'. Rather, what is meant is the beckoning-inviting and a holding-over across into the open of the 't/here' [Da], which is the clearing-sheltering turning-point in this turning. (CP: 21)

The 'Da' in Dasein is not a place or space so much as an *opportunity*, a granting of possibility, for meaning to happen. The 'space' in which meaning happens is not an object 'over against' me, but an activity manifesting in me. 'Da', despite its spatial metaphor, is

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁸⁹ GA 9, 326.15-16 quoted in Sheehan, 'A Paradigm Shift,' 193.

⁹⁰ Sheehan, 'A Paradigm Shift,' 193.

⁹¹ Sheehan provides the following sources to substantiate this: (1) ἀλήθεια: M. Heidegger, *Lettre sur l'humanisme*, 2nd edition, trans. by R. Munier (Paris: Aubier, 1964), 184.2 and Heidegger's letter to Jean Beaufret, November 23, 1945; (2) Ereignis: *Zollikoner Seminare*, 242.13 (3) *die Wahrheit des Seins selbst*: GA 9, 336.27 (See Sheehan, 'A Paradigm Shift,' 202).

not spatial in any physical or psychological sense. For Sheehan there is no ‘there’ there. Like the other terms (*Lichtung*, *Ereignis*, ἀλήθεια, etc.) ‘Da’ is the ‘dynamic openness that makes possible all acts of taking as’.⁹² Heidegger insists that the verbal emphasis in the word ‘Dasein’ falls on the second syllable: Da-*sein*, ‘having-to-be open’.⁹³ The point is that, of necessity, human beings are the ‘Da’, not occasionally or by their own choice. We cannot *not* be open, just as we cannot *not* be our own minds. We are thrown into this ontological state with no say in the matter. Furthermore, we are not thrown into something, as if the ‘open’ was a receptacle waiting for us to inhabit it. We are not open to something else as if it were separate from us, we do not transcend it, and we do not project it as if we brought it about. Sheehan writes, ‘Without us there is no open at all; but with us, the open is always apriori operative’.⁹⁴ There is no world to *be in*, as if the ‘world’ were somehow a separate entity and our being was a being-in-that-world out of choice, rather than necessity. ‘Being-in-the-world’ actually means ‘being-the-world’.⁹⁵

Sheehan argues that in *Contributions* Heidegger is focussed on the same core topic as his earlier work, *Being and Time*, namely understanding ‘the a priori openedness of the open-that-gives-being’. What Heidegger wants to articulate

in both the earlier language of *Geworfenheit* and the later language of *Ereignis* is that being-open is the ineluctable condition of our essence, not an occasional accomplishment of our wills. It is our “fate,” the way we always already are (GA 2, 431.16–17). This is the central issue of his thought, and it does not change between Heidegger I and Heidegger II. To-be-the-open is to be apriori opened, and only as such can we take-things-as. *Dasein* is “*erschließend erschlossenes*” [opened-up opening] (GA 27, 135.13), able to open up other things only because it itself is already opened up.⁹⁶

Thus, to reiterate Sheehan’s point, ‘Dasein’ should not be translated as ‘being-there’ or ‘being-the-there’ or ‘there-being’, but rather, as ‘always-being-open’ or ‘already-having-been-opened’ or ‘a priori openedness’. These are awkward phrases to use and so he settles simply for ‘openness’.⁹⁷ In a similar vein De Beistegui speaks of Dasein in *Contributions* as the ‘primary dimension of the unity of space and time . . . the originary absence at the heart of presence’.⁹⁸ He also characterizes Dasein as the ‘capacity for openness to the

⁹² Sheehan, ‘A Paradigm Shift,’ 193.

⁹³ Zollikon, 157.8, 188.14 quoted in Sheehan, ‘A Paradigm Shift,’ 194.

⁹⁴ Sheehan, ‘A Paradigm Shift,’ 194.

⁹⁵ *die Lichtung-sein*: GA 69, 101.12 quoted in Sheehan, ‘A Paradigm Shift,’ 194.

⁹⁶ Sheehan, ‘A Paradigm Shift,’ 194.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ De Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis*, 124, 127.

Openness of being'.⁹⁹ Though each commentator uses his or her own rich language to account for the meaning of the 'Da' clearly the idea of our already-always-being-opened is the central notion.

Sheehan's position argues for the necessary relationship between *Ereignis* as the ground [*Grund*] of *Seyn*, and *Dasein* as the site wherein this emergence takes place, or is made manifest. To understand *Ereignis* as 'the opening of the open on the basis of concealment' asserts *Dasein*'s role in enabling the opening itself. *Ereignis* offers the revealing of our potential *to be*, which can be realized in the world because *we* are the 'Da', the site where this 'already open' openness can be 'fully' opened. In *Contributions* Heidegger writes that, 'Da-sein means en-ownment in enowning as in the essential sway of be-ing. But be-ing comes to truth only on the ground of Da-sein' (CP: 207). This relationship forms a complex on-going hermeneutic event where our appropriation is formative of, and co-dependent on *Seyn*. Yet we remain the site of this truth because of our freeing potential as the 'Da'. The relationship is intrinsic to our sense of being-*already-open-in-the-world* and is separated from us only when we die, when the possibilities of our *being-possible* become impossible.

The problem with Sheehan's interpretation of *Ereignis* is that it remains broadly phenomenological and overlooks certain vital aspects of the term's meaning which cannot be ignored. For Sheehan, *Ereignis* is our primary state of existence and this fate is the ineluctable condition of our already being-open. Thus the meaning of *Ereignis* is always already occurring and we are the medium, or centring point (in Eliot's language, 'The still point of the turning world', BN: 173) where the possibilities of existence manifest through this *already* opened openness. But this broad understanding diminishes the *special* poetic quality of the event to which Heidegger, and also Eliot, is attentive.

As we have seen, Heidegger's early 1919 lectures first describe *Ereignis* in terms of the 'characterization of the lived experience as event [*Er-eignis*] – meaningful, not thing-like' (TDP: 59). The focus in this part of his early lectures is on our sense of *lived* experience as such, as opposed to devivified, scientific experience which objectifies reality and breaks us out of the flow of lived experience. Lived experience, in Sheehan's sense, would be understood as a constant manifestation of events. I appropriate the world in a meaningful way because I experience and transform the world in all its phenomenal variety. This

⁹⁹ M. de Beistegui, 'The Transformation of the Sense of *Dasein* in Heidegger's *Beiträge Zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*', *Research in Phenomenology* 33 (2003): 244.

supports Sheehan's interpretation that if we are *always already* being-open, then we always already experience reality as a constant flow of *Ereignis*, i.e. our lived experience is the world opening itself to us in a meaningful way, whether the experience is of writing a poem, going through a religious conversion or making a cup of coffee. The point, I think, for Sheehan is that we are, mostly, unaware of the *eventing* nature of the world and oblivious to how it is that things happening.

However, Sheehan's interpretation overlooks the second sense of *Ereignis*, already hinted at in 1919 lectures, of *Ereignis* as something unique, or at least not an ordinary, regular occurrence. As discussed in section I of chapter one Heidegger uses the phrase 'dissolution of the situational context' when discussing the experience of the sunrise, where the individuated 'I' ceases to be itself because ordinary, lived experience breaks down and a 'new type of totality is constituted'.

This kind of particularly intense and bewildering moment of human experience is what Polt calls *Ereignis*; it is an 'emergence', because it breaks with that everyday familiarity in which the nature of our already being-opened existence is mostly concealed from us. Ordinarily the world is familiar, experienced as 'lived' in terms of 'being-in-the-world'. Polt thus situates *Seyn* not in our openness, but in the givenness of the world, which we take for granted as we count on 'the subsistence of the whole of beings in our every act'.¹⁰⁰ We remain oblivious of the whole itself, the very *worlding* of the world, in everyday existence, while maintaining a deep ontological belief in the constancy and completeness of our world. This reading is supported by Heidegger himself, for example when he writes that often we only 'fleetingly grasp that which is. We barely have an understanding of the way of being in which beings, so diversely spoken of and compelled, show themselves to us' (IP: 4).

Ereignis, in these terms, is the experience of the 'whole' itself, 'the way of being' when beings 'show themselves'. It happens when our 'primal familiarity' is broken apart. Polt points out that this is obviously problematic because the experience of the whole requires a space which is *not* contained in the whole. This 'space' is a kind of boundary, a liminal point which separates what is, from what is not. Ordinary experience tells us that this is counter-intuitive, for there is *nothing* outside the whole; therefore the experience of the whole would seem to remain 'not just mysterious but impossible'.¹⁰¹ But the strange

¹⁰⁰ Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, 24.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

fact is that we do have such experiences, and then it is ordinary experience which loses its authority and we fall back upon nothingness, 'outside' the whole. Such a break can be provoked by many events; Polt lists as examples 'an error in judgement, an illness, a surprise, an experience of beauty. Sometimes the provocation is trivial; but even when it is important, it cannot fully account for the occurrence of the break'.¹⁰² Heidegger offers an example in the opening of *Introduction to Metaphysics*: 'Why are there beings at all instead of nothing? That is the first question. Presumably it is no arbitrary question' (IM: 1). Heidegger goes on to point out that if this question is posed and thought through genuinely then the questioning is not an insignificant process 'but rather a distinctive occurrence that we call a *happening* [*Geschehnis*]' (IM: 6). This happening is the question recoiling back upon the questioner, for it is forever unanswerable and yet, lastingly compelling, evoking both deep perplexity and unresolvable uncanniness in the face of existence.

In Polt's terms, this experience breaks us out of, or separates us from our primal familiarity with the whole, for 'the there' is *there* suddenly, and stands before us as a question. One is no longer 'at home' in one's own self and environment, for the nature of the self and the world that informs its identity has become problematized, and stands out in a mysterious, non-rational manner. This experience provokes a crisis or emergency because it is accompanied by profound lack of *not* knowing and the anxiety that accompanies this; we 'come to feel that, despite whatever expertise or facility we may have, there is nothing that we truly know'.¹⁰³ The certainty of the knowledge we possess most of the time (Eliot's 'assured of certain certainties', PL: 23) of knowing that we know, unravels before our eyes. The opening of *Introduction to Metaphysics* is an immediate challenge to the reader, and if genuinely considered can bring about awareness, no matter how oblique, to the world *eventing*, to the 'something' happening.

Polt highlights four aspects of the *Ereignis* experience. The first aspect, as discussed above, is that the 'whole' is displayed and thus somehow a foothold in nothingness is obtained. The entirety of Being, our existence included, becomes an issue for us. Secondly, the nature of this existence is displayed, that is, our primal familiarity with everydayness. The contextual and constructed nature of our situatedness becomes apparent, and may lead to a fresh re-appropriation of our sense of being-at-home in the world. Thirdly, beings

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 26.

are displayed *as such*. We feel separated from what is, but also perceive beings in their beingness. This may be a cause for angst because it is the very fact that things *are* which can be distressing; though beings become apparent and isolated from their context (separated from their phenomenological wholeness with the world) we cannot articulate or explain this occurrence, and yet cannot *not* be compelled and perplexed by it. Finally, the *given* itself is displayed *as such* – the fact, as Heidegger would have it, that the something *is*. We will certainly wonder and reflect on how the ‘given’ is given, but what underlies this is the fundamental recognition that what is given is a gift, one that defies rational explanation, though its existence cannot be denied. As noted above, Polt interprets givenness of this gift as the *Seyn of Contributions*.¹⁰⁴

So where Sheehan turns to the more phenomenological sense of *Ereignis* to which some of the earliest lectures gesture, namely the *a priori* open, eventful nature of the world, with a focus on our existence as the site or locus of this opening, Polt holds more to the second sense, where *Ereignis* is revelatory, an appropriation which transforms us through rare and dramatic encounters with reality. This could encompass individual events such as the death of a parent, in the sense of a ‘limit-situation’, or could be a climactic, world-changing event.

At this stage we would be tempted to ask: which is it? But perhaps this is no longer a viable question. Both interpretations are ‘correct’ and evidently Heidegger keeps both viable. The important point for my argument is that here, in the middle of Heidegger’s thought, he begins to perceive *Ereignis*-thinking as having a *poetic* dimension. Thus he more or less abandons his own attempts to account for the meaning of *Ereignis*, instead looking more intensely to the poet and his or her shaping of language, as the rightful creator of words that reveal *Seyn*, and not only reveal *Seyn*, but importantly, reveal it as a gift.

For Heidegger poetic language becomes the most potent way the revealing of the nature of this gift can occur, because poetry’s very nature crystalizes, in language, the possibilities and potentials of things in the world, allowing them to shine forth as themselves, and as revealed gifts given by *Seyn*. Poetic language transforms everyday familiar objects into things brimming with potency and mystery. It reminds us of, and restores to our world its sacral and mysterious dimension, by revealing and awakening the

¹⁰⁴ R. Polt. *The Emergency of Being. On Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 26-27.

potential for a genuine encounter with the seemingly familiar. Thus the poetic moment incarnates a significant manifestation of *Ereignis*. Heidegger believed that Hölderlin's poetry was an exemplary expression of this moment (HH: 9). Julian Young notes how Heidegger's early texts on Hölderlin characterize the fundamental mood of Hölderlin's poetry as 'holy mourning', but later in re-visiting the poems changes this to 'gratitude' or 'thankfulness' (*Das Danken*).¹⁰⁵ Hölderlin, in Heidegger's later essays, discloses the world as a *holy* place (even in the absence of the gods). As Young writes,

[t]o experience one's world as a holy place is, as a matter of conceptual necessity, to inhabit the mood of cosmic gratitude, to 'give thanks' for the 'gift' of such a world and for one's own existence in it . . . experiencing the holiness of the world and cosmic gratitude are not merely connected. They are one and the same phenomenon.¹⁰⁶

Young goes on to describe what he calls Heidegger's turn to 'Ereignis-thinking' in his later encounter with Hölderlin. Like Sheehan, Young interprets 'Ereignis' as the fundamental structure in which things show up as the beings they are, a showing which is not something independent of human beings because we are the site of the 'Da'. Our openness towards *Seyn* is the ground which enables the world to 'happen' meaningfully, and thus the eventful, *event-full*, nature of the world is tied to human activity and the changes this action eventuates.

Yet like Polt, Young highlights the significant aspect of the poetic nature of *Ereignis*, namely, that the event of appropriation is the 'Event' which *appropriates* us as an *Ereignis* 'experience'.¹⁰⁷ Heidegger writes in *Contributions* that when the 'lighting-concealing' that is truth is 'experience[d] as Ereignis' it happens as 'transport and enchantment (*Entrückung und Berückung*)' (CP: 48-49). Young highlights the significance of the re-appearance of these words '*Entrückung und Berückung*' in Heidegger's work titled 'As When On a Holiday' where he uses them to describe the poet's experience of the presence of the 'wonderfully all-present' (EHP: 76).¹⁰⁸ Young suggests that the poet's epiphany is his or her 'ecstatic experience of the holiness of the world (the fact that there is something rather nothing and we are in the midst of this) . . . Properly experienced, the *Ereignis* is, as Heidegger puts it, 'the *Ereignis* of the holy'.¹⁰⁹ Young and Polt's interpretation of *Ereignis* is attentive to something which I think is overlooked in Sheehan's reading of the term.

¹⁰⁵ Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, 105.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁰⁸ GA 4, 54 quoted in Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, 107.

¹⁰⁹ GA 4, 76-77 quoted in Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, 106-107.

Sheehan aims for a broad and bold interpretation of the term, even calling for a reappraisal of Heidegger scholarship. But I believe what gets lost in his reading is the significance that Heidegger attaches to the *Ereignis* experience as an 'Event', as something transformative and significant in the life of a mortal, which the poet, above all artists, is the most attentive to. This will become ever clearer as we turn to *Ereignis* as it appears in Heidegger's later work.

The 'later' Heidegger

Hölderlin the holy poet

When around 1936, Heidegger was writing *Contributions*, he had already begun what was to become a sustained dialogue with the poet Hölderlin. Heidegger found in Hölderlin's poetry a 'thoughtful confrontation with the revelation of Being [*Seyn*]' (EHP: 9) and soon realized that his own attempts at a similar confrontation in poetic language, of which *Contributions* bears witness, could safely be abandoned. Instead he began to focus his hermeneutic ability on interpreting the poetry of Hölderlin, who, as poet, was more 'equipped' to deal with this struggle.

What this recourse to poetry means makes more sense in the context of Heidegger's thinking about language after his 'turn'. The phrase that succinctly express this thinking is 'language is the house of Being' (LH: 217, WPF: 129) taken from his 1949 lecture 'Letter on Humanism'. Essentially, the later Heidegger sees language as that which 'first grants the possibility of standing in the midst of the openness of beings. Only where there is language, is there world' (EHP: 56). Language provides the 'clearing', that is, the horizon of intelligibility for humankind. It allows the world to *world* for us, creating and sustaining the context of our existence. This is opposite to the position we find in *Being and Time*, where language is described as a tool, something 'we may come across as ready-to-hand' (BT: 204). In *Being and Time* Dasein's intelligibility, a result of its being-in-the-world, allows language to be expressed as 'discourse'; thus allowing the 'totality-of-signification of intelligibility [to be] *put into words*' (BT: 204).

Now, thinking about Hölderlin and poetry in general, later Heidegger writes that language 'is not a tool at man's disposal, but the primal event [*Ereignis*] which disposes of the highest possibility of man's being' (EHP: 56). Because of this elevation of language to 'Event' it is *language*, not mortals, which discloses Being. Mortals may speak language, but, in fact, 'we are already letting language, *from within* language, speak to us, in language, of itself, saying its nature' (NL: 85). The nature of language shapes our reality; it is the 'house of Being' and though we speak it, in fact, it speaks through us – 'In its home man dwells'

(LH: 217). The poet, in this scenario, occupies a central role because of his or her *nearness* to language. The poet experiences ‘an authority, a dignity of the word which nothing vaster and loftier can be thought . . . The poet experiences his [or her] poetic calling as a call to the word as the source, the bourn of Being’ (NL: 66).

The world *happens* as language, the idea being that language is the ‘Event’ which precipitates and enables its happening. The poet’s calling is to articulate the nature of this happening; how it is that the world *worlds* through language. Heidegger understood Hölderlin’s ‘poetic mission’ to be solely to make poems ‘about the essence of poetry’ (EHP: 52), meaning to express, in poetry, how the world happens through language. Recognizing this potential in poetry meant that Heidegger had found a way in which *Ereignis* is crystallized and given full expression. The poet is attuned to this calling and shows us the relationship between language and how ‘thinking Being comes to language’ (LH: 217). Thus, for the later Heidegger, to understand the meaning of *Ereignis* we look not to the philosopher, but the poet.

The reason for the poet’s pre-eminence is because the poem is an attempt ‘to transform our accustomed way of representing things into an unaccustomed, because simple, thinking experience’ (EHP: 176). By this Heidegger means that the poem draws our attention to the world in an unaccustomed and, at times, startling way, essentially transporting us out of ‘the collected framework’ (meaning *Gestell* thinking), into the ‘thinking experience of the centre of the infinite relation . . . as the self-dissimulating event [*Ereignis*] of the fourfold’ (EHP: 176).¹¹⁰ A genuine encounter with the language of poetry is transformative and allows the world to be perceived purely.¹¹¹ This transformative experience takes thinking ‘into the claim of a more originary call’ (QB: 311), affirming our role as dwellers within the fourfold. Understood in this way the language of poetry, as *Ereignis*, reveals Being as ‘the holy’, in the sense Young explains, which is the ‘awesome itself’ (EHP: 85); it shows the world up as a holy place. Poetry breaks us away from ordinary discourse and reveals the ‘richness of the primordial’ in such excess that it can ‘scarcely be uttered’ (EHP: 88).

Thus having begun his early career trying to access *Die Seinfrage* via phenomenology, and then turning to pseudo-mysticism in *Contributions*, Heidegger in the

¹¹⁰ The fourfold (*Das Geviert*) is later Heidegger’s understanding of Being in relation to dwelling. It consists of the inter-relation of mortals, divinities, earth and the sky, and is discussed in detail in chapter three.

¹¹¹ William Carlos Williams’ poem ‘The Red Wheelbarrow’ discussed in the Introduction is a good example of this.

end settles on the poet as his guide, holding up poetic creation as that which can provide a genuine and full encounter with Being, and awaken us to *Die Seinsfrage*. Heidegger's intense engagement with poets and language becomes more committed after the 1940s.¹¹² I agree with Young that *Contributions* is less important than these later texts, despite it sometimes being lauded as 'Heidegger's second greatest work'.¹¹³ *Contributions* and *Das Ereignis* contribute to Heidegger's 'turn' from his earlier anthropological-existential position to his later onto-poetic position, but remain often confusing sketches.

This 'turn' becomes more marked in the essay 'Postscript to "What is Metaphysics"' (1943) where Heidegger brings our ability to reflect on *Die Seinsfrage* to the fore: 'Of all beings, only the human being, called upon by the voice of being, experiences the wonder of all wonders: *that beings are* [B]eing is not a product of thinking. By contrast, essential thinking is presumably an event [*Ereignis*] proper to being' (PM: 234). The 'voice of being', i.e. language, compels the human being to experience 'wonder' – the word conveys the mixture of awe, mystery and gratitude that characterizes *Ereignis*. This experience is not a product of 'calculative thinking' (PM: 235); rather, it is an *appropriation*, a summoning, proper to Being, which opens up the possibility for 'essential thinking'. This thinking is 'essential' because it is 'originary' thinking, the human response in which 'language arise[s] as the sounding of the word into words' (PM: 236). Language is disclosed in the silence of Being through the voice of mortals. This disclosure is in itself an event [*Ereignis*], what Heidegger calls a *sacrifice* because 'being lays claim upon the human being for the truth of being' (PM: 237). The human being surrenders to this claim and is appropriated by it.

I think what is meant here is in a similar vein to ideas from the 'middle' Heidegger, discussed in the previous section of this thesis. There, we saw how mortals, *Dasein*, are the site of the 'open', and yet this 'openness' is granted by *Seyn*. Now the 'later' Heidegger shows that this granting is disclosed through language (the house of Being), which allows us to express or *give voice* to our being in the midst of Being. This expression is a surrender, but not a conscious one, since it is part of our thrownness and ontologically fused to our existence. Thus speaking is a kind of ontological compulsion, a call we cannot

¹¹² English speaking scholarship has been able to access many of these later essays and lectures for some time with essay collections such as *On the Way to Language* published in 1971 and *Poetry, Language, Thought* in 1975.

¹¹³ Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, 107 n20.

refuse. The thinker and poet are most attentive to this call: ‘The thinker says being. The poet names the holy’ (PM: 237). In his ‘Letter on ‘Humanism’’ (1949) Heidegger writes:

Language is the house of being. In its home human beings dwell. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of being insofar as they bring this manifestation to language and preserve it in language through their saying. (LHP: 239)

The thinker and poet are affirmed in their special role as guardians of language. Through them Being is manifested in language, in the ‘Event’, of the philosopher or the poet’s speaking. In true thought and true poetry, Being itself ‘strikes a particular thinking’, allowing such thinking to ‘spring forth in springing from Being itself in such a way as to respond to Being as such’ (WM: 279). This is the ‘event of appropriation’ (WM: 279n.), in which poet or philosopher responds to the ‘originary call’ (QB: 311), with ‘recollective thinking’ [*Andenken*] (QB: 314).

This idea that Being may strike a ‘particular thinking’ and thus spring forth as a way to respond to this thinking is a theme considered at length in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ (1935-1936) in terms of the artwork. Art is described as the ‘setting-itself-to-work of truth’ (WA: 19). Truth *happens*, is manifest, from out of the Event (WA: 19n). The artwork is a manifestation of the event – it is ‘*a becoming and happening of truth*’ (WA: 44). Heidegger argues that all art, because it is the ‘letting happen of the advent of the truth of beings’ is, essentially, poetry (WA: 44), because of the founding relationship between language and *Ereignis*, which he re-iterates in this essay on the artwork. All poetic creativity, understood broadly as ‘poetry’, stands as an expression of primordial, originary thought, grounded in language.¹¹⁴ Thus language brings the world into being, which is expressed purely and simply in the artwork.

We see here that Heidegger seems to interweave the two meanings of *Ereignis*. In as much as language belongs to all of us, and all of us to language, the poet and the philosopher only enact the epitome of our Dasein-ness. We are the already open, and the open is implicit in the everyday. But the individual poetic act or true originary thought is also an example of the other sense of *Ereignis*, the prophetic kind; the artwork (or the challenging through *Die Seinfrage*) is an opportunity for other Dasein to have access to similar experiences of ‘transport’ and ‘enchantment’.

¹¹⁴ This ‘primordial, originary thought’ is found readily, for Heidegger, in the pre-Socratics – especially Heraclitus and Parmenides, both discussed in the next two sections.

Heidegger on Heraclitus (a brief diversion)

In 1935 Heidegger presented the lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics* which was only published in 1953 and thus falls somewhere between the ‘middle’ and ‘later’ Heidegger. Though Heidegger does not state it explicitly in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, the term *logos*, which receives substantial attention in the text, is clearly a precursor to being (*Seyn*) as we encounter it in *Contributions*.

Two observations support this position. The first is that Heidegger presented *Introduction to Metaphysics* at the University of Freiburg in the summer semester of 1935. He wrote *Contributions to Philosophy*, where *Seyn* is given its fullest development, during the years 1936-1938 and thus the close proximity of these dates suggest the correspondence and overlap between these different ‘formal indicators’ of Being. And secondly, the definition of *logos* in *Introduction to Metaphysics* as the ‘constant gathering, the gatheredness of beings that stands in itself, that is, Being’ (IM: 138) is not dissimilar from the description of *Seyn* as ‘the ground in which all beings first of all and as such come to their truth’ in *Contributions* (CP: 53). Both concepts are trying to articulate the same sense of what underlies beings and what makes their existence and inter-relation meaningful, but without falling into the condition of absolutizing this into a transcendental precept which underpins temporal reality.

The discussion of *logos* in *Introduction to Metaphysics* is important to this thesis for two other reasons also. Firstly because of the time Heidegger spends on the Ancient Greek concept *phusis*, in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, which is very suggestive of *Ereignis*, and secondly because Heraclitus is also a very significant thinker for Eliot. Eliot opens *Four Quartets* with two fragments from Heraclitus, and thus signals the importance of the pre-Socratic in providing the philosophical underpinnings of the poem. When we read Heidegger’s interpretation of the *logos* in *Introduction to Metaphysics* and then move to *Four Quartets* we see a powerful resonance between the philosophical descriptions of *logos* and the poetic evocation of it, thus further deepening our insights into the poem.

Heidegger’s interpretation of Heraclitus’ *logos* stands in marked contrast to the traditional (and Christian) understanding. Eliot and Heidegger both used the arrangement by Hermann Diel (1901), the standard edition available in the first quarter of the twentieth century.¹⁵ *Logos* was routinely translated as ‘Word’, making Heraclitus appear as a

¹⁵ H.A. Diels, *Herakleitos von Ephesos: Griechisch-Deutsch* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1901).

predecessor to the opening of the Gospel of John, and the pre-Socratic *logos* as a prefiguring of Christ. The sequence Diel chose for his arrangement of the fragments reflected this interpretation. This understanding of the Heraclitean fragments as partial revelation foretelling the actual, historical Incarnation would have appealed to Eliot's sense of history, as the teleological culmination of divine will.

The problem for Heidegger is that this not at all the correct reading of *logos*. He argues, in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, that Heraclitus has been the subject of the most fundamentally 'un-Greek misinterpretation in the course of Western history', the most flagrant perpetrators of which were the early Church Fathers (IM: 133). This misrepresentation had far-reaching consequences, Heidegger argues, since it cemented the pre-Socratics into the role of predecessors of Christian revelation and the philosophical worldview that developed from it, rather than allowing them to speak their own culture's unique and originary worldview.

Heidegger traces the error of the Church Fathers to an earlier mistaken tendency, which is Plato and Aristotle's representation of Being as *presence*. Though *logos* has many different meanings in the writings of these successors to the pre-Socratics, its most basic sense comes to be 'discourse'. In *Being and Time* Heidegger writes that *logos* is the manifestation of 'what one is "talking about" in one's discourse . . . The *logos* lets something be seen . . . namely, what the discourse is about' (BT: 56). This act reveals beings by bringing them to presence, for '*logos* is a definite mode of letting something be seen' (BT: 57). *Logos* establishes a being's 'thinghood' because once described, that being becomes present. This results in the general treatment of the meaning of Being as something which signifies 'presence' [*Anwesenheit*]. Being becomes conflated with beings, which for Heidegger is *the* ontological mistake, perpetuated in various guises throughout the history of philosophy. It is mistaken because

for the most part [Being] does *not* show itself at all: it is something that lies *hidden*, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and ground. (BT: 59)

Once the fundamental ontological mistake is made, and entities are grasped in their being as 'presence' (including Being), they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time – the "*Present*" (BT: 47). For Heidegger, Eric Wilson writes, philosophers since Plato and Aristotle 'have constantly abstracted worldly, temporal Being into a permanent presence

that is constant in its appearance before the sight, the thought, or intuition in any given present moment of time'.¹¹⁶ This fundamentally flawed way of thinking about Being has, in Heidegger's view, been re-enacted in philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche. The temporal nature of Being has been forgotten and confined to an abstract principles like '*idea, ousia, energeia, substantia, actualitas, perceptio, monad*, as objectivity, as the being posited of self-positing in the sense of the will of reason, of love, of the spirit, of power, as the will to will in the eternal recurrence of the same' (TB: 7). This absolutizing of metaphysics is the reason Heidegger calls for the end of philosophy, for the tradition has become hardened by the repeated disguising and transforming of Being into something always vaguely reminiscent of the Platonic form, an eternal, transcendent presence which encompasses, underpins and explains reality.

This kind of metaphysics forgets what for Heidegger is the pre-Socratic experience of Being, which is primordial. For the early Greeks Being became present in the

ever-rushing flux of time, and thus remained hidden because of the tumultuous horizon from which it emerged and because of our limited human capacity for understanding a phenomenon that would not stand still. In sum, for the early Greeks, the one could only be experienced in and through the many.¹¹⁷

The 'one', hidden but experienced and revealed in the multiplicity of the many, lies behind the pre-Socratic notion of *phusis*, which in *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger interprets as the earliest conception in Western philosophy of what beings are. The authentic meaning of the word was lost when Greek was translated into Latin and this act of translation, of ontological violence, 'was the first stage in the isolation and alienation of the originary essence of Greek philosophy' (IM: 14). Heidegger's task is to reclaim the originary meaning of this word. He writes that *phusis* is

what emerges from itself . . . the unfolding that opens itself up, the coming-into-appearance in such unfolding, and holding itself and persisting in appearance – in short, the emerging-abiding sway . . . *Phusis* as emergence can be experienced everywhere: for example, in celestial processes (the rising of the sun), in the surging of the sea, in the growth of plants, in the coming forth of animals and human beings from the womb. But *phusis*, the emerging sway, is not synonymous with these processes, which we will still today count as part of "nature". This emerging and standing-out-in-itself-from-itself may not be taken as just one process among others that we observe in beings. *Phusis* is Being itself, by virtue of which beings first become and remain observable. (IM: 15)

¹¹⁶ E. Wilson, 'On the Way to the Still Point: Eliot's *Four Quartets* and Martin Heidegger'. *Yeats Eliot Review* 13 nos. 3&4 (1995): 56.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

For pre-Socratic Greeks, *phusis* was the 'whole', encompassing both Being and becoming. *Phusis* is not one 'thing' or concept; it is not a singular principle which abstracts reality into a transcendental, metaphysical principle. Rather, it is the way the world and nature unfold, the becoming of beings which reveals their uniqueness and mystery, and yet also unifies them and draws them together. The examples from nature pertain to the biological and physical processes which underpin the universe and allow the flourishing of life. Yet, *phusis* cannot be equated with 'nature', or with biological determinism or physicalism. Rather *phusis* is a 'formal indicator' which recognizes the mystery that there is 'something' which forms and enables the unfolding, living and perishing of beings. This sense of Being, *Seyn*, is always already open, and yet concealed by its constant becoming; the pre-Socratics found it difficult to describe accurately calling it *phusis*, *logos*, *harmonia*, *aletheia*, *phainesthai*. For Heidegger it 'shows itself in a way that is anything but arbitrary' (IM: 142). Though Heidegger does not discuss *Ereignis* in *Introduction to Metaphysics* it is clear that it forms part of this way of understanding reality, and aligns with *phusis* and with *logos*.

Heraclitus understood Being, the *logos*, as something that is never static and thus never permanent in its presence. His image for it was fire, an element that is constant but also constantly changing, transforming and consuming what it encounters. Heidegger, through his interpretation of Heraclitus, translates *logos* as 'gathering'. *Logos* does not mean 'Word', 'Centre' or 'Law', but rather 'the gathering gatheredness, that which originally gathers' or '*gatheredness of beings themselves*', or that which is '*constantly together, gatheredness*' (IM: 135-137). *Logos* is the dynamic energy, which expresses itself as *phusis*, which gathers all beings together in a meaningful way. It is the 'one' which unites and underpins the many.

Most of us, however, live in ignorance of this knowledge. This is the meaning of Heraclitus's second fragment which is one of the fragments Eliot opens *Four Quartets* with, and one of the fragments Heidegger translates in *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Conventional translations would be:

Though the law [*logos*] of things is universal in scope, the average man makes up the rules for himself.

Though the Word [*logos*] governs everything, most people trust their own wisdom.

Although there is but one Centre [*logos*], most men live in centres of their own.¹¹⁸

Heidegger's translation is: 'Hence one must follow the Together in beings – that is, adhere to it; but whereas *logos* essentially unfolds as this Together in beings, the mass lives as if

¹¹⁸ Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays*, 255.

each had his own understanding (sense)' (IM: 135). Instead of having cognisance of this fundamental insight, that reality is one and only appears separate, 'most people' believe only in beings and nothing else: 'One person takes hold of this, the other takes hold of that, and each person's sense follows what is his own – it is caprice. Caprice prevents them from properly grasping in advance what is gathered in itself' (IM: 138). Those (perhaps also known as *Das Man*) who do not grasp the *logos* are incapable of bringing their Dasein to stand in the Being of beings; those who can understand *logos* in its splendour of movement are the poets and the thinkers (IM: 141).

'The Principle of Identity'

The relationship between the Event, human beings and language is teased out further in some of Heidegger's last essays. In 'The Principle of Identity' (1957) he writes that 'Man and Being are appropriated to each other. They belong to each other' (ID: 31-32). Man is 'the openness of a clearing' and he alone 'lets Being arrive as presence' (ID: 31). There is a reciprocal 'belonging' between Being and us, 'for only with us can Being be present as Being, that is, become present' (ID: 33). Conversely Being allows us the role of guardianship and permits us the 'Da', the site of our own openness. But there is a 'spring' needed to fully and authentically experience this '*belonging together*'. The 'spring' is something like the artwork, something which *gathers* man and Being into their mutual belonging together. This 'spring' provides an 'abrupt entry', 'extended as a gift'. Only 'the entry into the realm of this mutual appropriation determines and defines the experience of thinking' (ID: 33).

This entry to thinking is 'abrupt' because of our rootedness in metaphysics. In 'The Principle of Identity', Heidegger traces an alternate approach back to the pre-Socratic Parmenides and his idea that 'thought and being are the same' (ID: 7, 27). Even a fleeting grasp of this idea requires a 'spring', an 'abrupt entry', because it understands Being in a way wholly different to metaphysics, and thus wholly different to the tradition which regards the principle of identity, $A=A$, as 'the highest principle of thought' (ID: 23). This principle means that 'every A is itself the same with itself' (ID: 25). Thus identity entails unity, something cannot *not* be what it is, it is united with itself. Its existence is one and

the same with what it is. Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, writes ‘each thing is inseparable from itself; and its being one just meant this. This, however, is common to all things . . .’.¹¹⁹

Parmenides’s statement that ‘thought’ and ‘being’, two *separate* things, are, in fact, the same, meaning that two different and seemingly distinct things are identical, violates the law of non-contradiction and the principle of identity. Parmenides’s insight is fundamental to Heidegger’s own project, because it confirms that man and Being are appropriated and belong to each other (ID: 31-32). It is our thinking which shapes Being, and yet Being which enables our thinking. We are thus one and the same with Being.

This sense of mutual appropriation is entirely opposed by the modern metaphysical position, defined by the ‘mutual confrontation of man and Being . . . The framework [*Gestell*] concerns us everywhere, immediately’ (ID: 37), rather than the ‘simple’ experience in which man and Being ‘are delivered over to each other [in] the *event of appropriation*’ (ID: 36). Now we try to make Being subject to calculability and order, pursuing ‘a strange ownership and a strange appropriation’ (ID: 36). Heidegger suggests that a genuine appraisal and reflection on our modern, technological condition might enable the ‘spring’ which transports us into a ‘simple’ yet radically different conception of reality, awakening and clarifying the Parmenidian insight. The nature of our current technological condition will be discussed further in chapter three, section I.

In ‘The Principle of Identity’ Heidegger seems to conceive of this movement of appraisal as Polt’s apocalyptic emergency, something which happens ‘only in the singular’, ‘uniquely’ (ID: 36). In this Event of Appropriation, ‘man and Being reach each other in their nature’ and lose ‘those qualities with which metaphysics has endowed them’ (ID: 37). Thus Parmenides’s understanding of Being will be remembered and realized, and be the spring for the final emancipation from metaphysics. Through the surrender of ‘man and Being to their own being’ a path would open for man to experience beings in a more ‘originary way’, such that ‘the totality of the modern technological world, nature and history, and above all their Being’ (ID: 40) is renewed, as a ‘self-suspended structure’ (ID: 38). Language is vital for this transformation, for ‘We dwell in the appropriation inasmuch as our active nature is given over to language’ (ID: 38). If Man and Being are appropriated to one another and belong together, then language, ‘the house of Being’ is the glue which binds them.

¹¹⁹ Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation, Volume 2*, ed. by J. Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1643.

The other sense of *Ereignis*, however, as an ineluctable, *a priori* condition of Being, also remains active, appearing in Heidegger's final lecture 'Time and Being' (1962) where he again re-affirms the belonging together of man and Being. He states plainly that there 'is no time without man' (TB: 16) and that 'time and Being' are brought together in '*Ereignis*, the event of Appropriation' (TB: 19). In the previous lecture 'The Principle of Identity' it was 'thought' and Being which belong together, so we can draw the conclusion that humankind *is* its temporality and thinking – that this is the three-fold unified structure of the '*Da*'. But Heidegger takes the point to its logical conclusion: now Being is itself described as the event of appropriation – not as a 'species of Being' or as a 'continuation of metaphysics' (TB: 21). Rather Being 'belongs into Appropriating'. It is the 'highest, most significant event of all', for 'without Being, no being is capable of being as such' (TB: 21). Our task and challenge is to think this through, which involves not a thinking *about* the nature of appropriation as a subject/object relation, but rather being *ourselves* appropriated by and belonging to appropriation (TB: 23). To realize this relationship means that 'Being vanishes in Appropriation' (TB: 22).

Thus metaphysics ends; it is 'abandoned' [*überlassen*], in this final lecture, with the vanishing of Being.¹²⁰ Having moved from 'being' through *Sein*, *Seyn*, and 'Being' crossed out (QB: 31), Being now vanishes into Appropriation – for Appropriation 'neither *is*, nor is Appropriating *there*' (TB: 24). Rather the Parmenidian ideal is realized – thought and being are one unified reality and the ontological difference is overcome (*Verwindung*). It reaches its end, its path is run.

This has been a complex journey into the meaning of *Ereignis*, from its earliest conception as the phenomenological experience of the 'something', to the *Augenblick* of *Being and Time* and then to the middle Heidegger where the relationship between *Ereignis* and *Seyn* is drawn together. In the later Heidegger this relationship is finally fused into one, with the role of language and importance of the poet brought to the fore. In the end, while suggesting that *Ereignis* is the revelatory Event which finally overcomes metaphysics, thus overcoming the 'dominance of the frame' and prompting a 'recovery from the world of technology' (ID: 37), Heidegger also keeps viable the sense that our openness is an integral part of how the world itself *happens* as event, and that perhaps it is

¹²⁰ See J. Sallis, *Echoes: After Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 75.

the momentary glimpse into this always already openness which is the only answer to *Die Seinfrage* that is available to us.

The next section will try to make sense of this through the language of T.S. Eliot's poetry, following in the footsteps of Heidegger's own appropriation of Hölderlin's poetry. I will explore certain moments and images in Eliot's work which I believe are very suggestive of how *Ereignis* comes to language, in its most exemplary form.

Section II: T.S. Eliot's *Ereignis*

T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, certainly his greatest philosophical poem, was published in New York in the spring of 1943, and later in London in the autumn of 1944. Each of the four poems that make up *Four Quartets* had appeared separately earlier in various publications. Published together they create the unified composition which Eliot first began to envisage while writing the second quartet, 'East Coker'. According to Eliot, who in the late 1930s was mostly writing drama, the first quartet 'Burnt Norton' might have remained an individual poem if not for the outbreak of the Second World War, which turned him 'in on himself' and away from writing for the stage.¹²¹ Presented together the *Quartets* interweave a moving philosophical reflection on the nature of temporality, finitude, memory and redemption. Kenneth Paul Kramer, who has spent much of his life reflecting on the poem, and written a very scholarly and insightful account of it, puts it so: '*Four Quartets* contemplates, through idea and word, how timeless moments – of redeeming reciprocity, of graced consciousness – shine through physical landscapes and release the poet from temporal enchainment'.¹²² Exploring these 'timeless moments' is the aim of this second section of chapter two. I will account for the moments Eliot describes using the language of *Ereignis*, drawing parallels and exploring possibilities for the meaning of these events in the language of Heidegger's thought.

To begin tracing Eliot's interest in what Heidegger would call '*Ereignis* experiences', we can go back to one of the very first poems he wrote, 'Silence', which though written in June 1910, was only published posthumously in *Inventions of the March Hare* (1996):

Along the city streets	1
It is still high tide,	
Yet the garrulous waves of life	
Shrink and divide	
With a thousand incidents	5
Vexed and debated: -	
This is the hour for which we waited -	
This is the ultimate hour	
When life is justified	
The seas of experience	10
That were so broad and deep	
So immediate and steep,	
Are suddenly still.	

¹²¹ K.P. Kramer, *Redeeming Time: T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets** (Lanham: Cowley, 2007), 28. I have surveyed many fine books on *Four Quartets*; however Kramer's book, aside from being one of the most recent, is the most apposite for my thesis.

¹²² Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, xiii.

You may say what you will,
At such peace I am terrified.
There is nothing else beside. (IMH: 18)

15

Gordon reads this poem as recounting some kind of profound experience, one rare and difficult to articulate.¹²³ I argue that this can be understood an *Ereignis* experience. The temporal, constant becoming of reality, the dynamism of the 'garrulous waves of life' (l.3) experienced in the city streets, is subsumed somehow, stilled by the experience of something mysterious, 'the hour for which we waited . . . the ultimate hour' (ll.7-8). The timeless intersects with temporality and a glimpse of a 'terrifying' peace is given (l.15), which, somehow, gives life its justification. The poem is ambivalent. The experience of this silence is paradoxically peaceful and yet deeply unsettling, somehow like the experience of angst, which is caused precisely because of the experience of the nothing. This poem is very much in the lyric style, with a focus on the narrator's own intense inner experience.

Some years later, in 1931, Eliot in an introduction to Blaise Pascal's (1623-1662) apologetic *Pensées*,¹²⁴ wrote a revealing sentence about mystical experience: 'You may call it communion with the Divine, or you may call it a temporary crystallization of the mind' (SPE: 238). He offers an explanation which would satisfy both the religious and the sceptic, in the process suggesting how *Ereignis*, that moment of 'crystallization', reaches to the deepest levels of human experience, where the most important questions of meaning, truth and faith are confronted.

In 1935 Eliot connects this kind of experience with art, in a letter to the poet Stephen Spender (1909-1995). He talks about what he calls the 'bewildering minute' in the experience of reading a work of literature:

You don't really criticize any author to whom you have never surrendered yourself . . . Even just the bewildering minute counts; you have to give yourself up, and then recover yourself, and the third moment is having something to say, before you have wholly forgotten both surrender and recovery. Of course the self recovered is never the same as the self before it was given. (SPE: 13)

Here Eliot identifies three stages in this 'bewildering': the surrender, the recovery and then the need to express what has just taken place, to contextualize it in a meaningful way. He had previously described a similar experience in his essay on Dante (1929), where he says how meeting a work of literature

. . . is very much like our intenser experience of other human beings. There is a first, or an early moment which is unique, of shock and surprise, even of terror; a moment

¹²³ Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 23.

¹²⁴ B. Pascal, *Pensées* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1958).

which can never be forgotten, but which is repeated integrally; and yet which would become destitute of significance if it did not survive in a large whole of experience; which survives inside a deeper and calmer feeling. (SPE: 14)

Evidently throughout his life and career as poet and critic Eliot was attuned to his own sense of *Ereignis* – of those moments of ‘intenser’ experience which irrupt into our ordinary world. Such moments are not forgotten but remain a feature of our existence; sometimes they are so significant that we perceive our lives within a trajectory understood as the time before and time after the event.

It is well known that one such life-changing moment for Eliot was his conversion. Having been brought up in a puritan, Unitarian tradition, Eliot underwent a Christian baptism in 1927, when in a private ceremony he was received into the High Anglican Church. He remained unwavering in his Anglican profession for the rest of his life.¹²⁵ On the surface this is a sharp emblematic distinction between Eliot and Heidegger, for in the same year, 1927, Heidegger placed the finished draft of *Being and Time* on the lap of his dying mother, an ardent Roman Catholic of the conservative South German variety;¹²⁶ the text was the fruit of his long and difficult relinquishing of the Catholic Church. As a philosopher, he was determined to unmake the fundamentally flawed ‘system of Catholicism’¹²⁷ and its perpetuation of an intellectual tradition that, for him, went astray long before the birth of Christ.

Both Eliot and Heidegger had made difficult but deeply considered decisions about where they would place their faith, decisions reflected in these two symbolic gestures. Whereas Heidegger rejected the Christian tradition of thought, with its Greco-Judaic roots, it was precisely this depth of tradition which satisfied Eliot, because, it ‘addressed the deep and recurring longing within human beings for a redemptive, timeless

¹²⁵ The Bloomsbury group were scandalized by this distinctly anti-Modernist gesture and Ezra Pound wrote a caustic couplet to describe his reaction to Eliot’s conversion: ‘In any case, let us lament the psychosis / Of all those who abandon the Muses for Moses’; Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, 4. Kramer notes that after joining the Church of England Eliot became an almost daily communicant; 198. Virginia Woolf wrote to her sister Vanessa Bell, ‘Then I have had a most shameful and distressing interview with poor dear Tom Eliot, who may be called dead to us all from this day forward. He has become an Anglo-Catholic, believes in God and immortality, and goes to church. I was really shocked. A corpse would seem to me more credible than he is. I mean, there’s something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God’. Quoted in P. Lewis, ‘Modernism and Religion’. In *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, 2nd edition, ed. by M. Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 178.

¹²⁶ Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 2.

¹²⁷ M. Heidegger, ‘Letter to Engelbert Krebs’, 96.

presence'.¹²⁸ The High Anglican tradition, particularly, its association with well-bred Englishness and royalism, strongly attracted him.

Superficially then the difference that emerges between Eliot and Heidegger in 1927 is obvious. Yet, if we consider one of the Heraclitian epigrams which opens *Four Quartets*, 'The way up and the way down are one and the same' (BN: 171), perhaps there is a deeper impulse which unites their apparent differences in religious and spiritual orientation. The fragment can serve as a point of intersection between Eliot and Heidegger in that, though both place their search for truth in seemingly different things, the motivation that draws them onwards in this search is the same principle, their individual attempts to comprehend the *Ereignis* moment.¹²⁹ In this experience, in the glimpse of the timeless intersection with the temporal, the givenness of *Seyn* is manifest. For both thinker and poet this givenness points to the ultimate mystery, which in chapter three I will discuss as the point of intersection of the fourfold, essentially, the *Ereignis* is the revealing of the 'holy', infused and concealed in the world. To interpret *Four Quartets* in this way, as a poetic testament to the meaning of *Ereignis*, opens the poem to Heidegger's thinking and allows a deep reconciliation between what, on the surface, may appear to be two different voices proclaiming two different realities.

My contention is that Eliot can be revealed as a poet in the spirit of Heidegger's interpretation of Rilke and Hölderlin, i.e. one cognisant of the world as a 'holy' place, and whose poetic writing is a genuine testament to this awareness. So much so that not only is the poet deeply aware of the relationship between language and Being, but the poetry itself can draw the reader into recognizing this experience for him- or herself, that the event of the poetic word can be the advent of the holy.

The heart of light

As discussed above, before *Four Quartets* and before his conversion, Eliot was already attuned to moments and encounters with the 'Silence', the 'bewildering minute'. The most powerful description occurs in *The Waste Land*, where Eliot depicts a moment 'charged with enigmatic power and significance':¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, 5.

¹²⁹ With a tone Heidegger would have approved of Eliot wrote in a letter to a friend that, with his conversion, he had 'just begun a long journey underfoot' (1929, quoted in Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, 5).

¹³⁰ J. Bowden, 'The Politics of Redemption', in *The Waste Land*, ed. by T. Davies and Nigel Wood (Bristol: Open University Press, 1994), 40.

this with great immediacy. Our ordinary modes of perception fail and Eliot's poetic language expresses this phenomenological breakdown of ordinary reality.

Both the phenomenological and poetic experience of the 'event' suggests that the 'I' has little choice in whether or not to willingly surrender. Heidegger's description of the sunrise and Eliot's hyacinth encounter are appropriations, in that the 'I' is *taken over* by the event suddenly and unexpectedly, 'totally given over' (TDP: 173), and overwhelmed. There is also the sense of *relationlessness* in the hyacinth encounter, with the dissolution of the 'situational context' (TDP: 174) that Heidegger describes in his mountain ascent. Furthermore, silence features in both events. Heidegger writes that 'everyone experiences silently' (TDP: 173), while for Eliot looking into the heart of light is accompanied by 'the silence'. The awe of this experience provokes silent reverence to enable fuller contemplation, but also suggests an inability to speak, being awe-struck, even paralysed by trepidation in the face of the event. Lastly, witness is a significant theme in both experiences and remains integral to Heidegger's *Ereignis*. Both events pass before 'the eyes'. Heidegger sees 'the sun's disc, the clouds . . . but not as a specific form that I have just climbed' (TDP: 173). The eyes of the speaker, in Eliot's poem 'fail' and yet the 'I' is 'looking into the heart of light'. The sense of seeing 'something' but failing to comprehend what it is that one 'sees' is conveyed by both writers.

Also, in this passage the water hyacinth holds a similar symbolic meaning to the lotus (discussed shortly) in *Four Quartets*, namely as a flower associated with enlightenment, or, in this case, epiphany. Both flowers bud underwater and rise to bloom on the surface. In Greek mythology the boy Hyacinth was companion and lover of Apollo, who accidentally killed him. From his spilled blood Apollo created the hyacinth flower, thus the hyacinth is seen as a symbol of both tragedy and rebirth.¹³¹ This theme of rebirth, new life, is very much evident in the above passage, but what accompanies it is also the anxiety of 'knowing nothing', for we must face new and unknown possibilities after the event has past.

The first movement of 'Burnt Norton'

One of the core ideas in *Four Quartets* is that human finitude can only be fully revealed in *Ereignis* moments. These moments are characterized by an intensity and illumination that can create a profound shift in orientation in the person who undergoes them. They can be

¹³¹ Though Apollo's hyacinth is a land hyacinth, not a water hyacinth but Eliot is drawing this allusion into the poetic image.

interpreted as having mystical undertones but are also phenomenological in nature because they make transparent the temporal experience of human existence, and how it is in an ecstatical relation with itself and its world. Those moments also ‘disembed’ a person from his or her being-in-the-world, showing the world up as something *there* somehow, as the encounter with the hyacinth girl suggests.

An important example of this theme is the first movement of the first quartet, ‘Burnt Norton’. This movement details a significant *Ereignis* moment, and its life changing effect, and sets the tone for the rest of the poem:

Time present and time past	1
Are both perhaps present in time future	
And time future contained in time past.	
If all time is eternally present	
All time is unredeemable.	5
What might have been is an abstraction	
Remaining a perpetual possibility	
Only in a world of speculation.	
What might have been and what has been	
Point to one end, which is always present.	10
Footfalls echo in the memory	
Down the passage which we did not take	
Towards the door we never opened	
Into the rose-garden. My words echo	
Thus, in your mind.	15
But to what purpose	
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves	
I do not know.	
Other echoes	
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?	20
Quick said the bird, find them, find them,	
Round the corner. Through the first gate,	
Into our first world, shall we follow	
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.	
There they were, dignified, invisible,	25
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,	
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,	
And the bird called, in response to	
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,	
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses	30
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.	
There they were as our guests, accepting and accepting.	
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,	
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,	
To look down into the drained pool.	35
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,	
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,	
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,	
The surface glittered out of the heart of light,	
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.	40
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.	
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,	
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.	

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
 Cannot bear very much reality. 45
 Time past and time future
 What might have been and what has been
 Point to one end, which is always present. (BN: 171-172)

In the opening of the movement, Eliot, much like Heidegger, understands that human existence is the site of temporality. For Heidegger, 'Dasein's Being finds its meaning in temporality' (BT: 41) and Eliot, by beginning the poem with a reflection on time and our ecstatic relationship with it, places the meaning of our temporal existence at the centre of his poem. The first lines draw the reader deeper into this reflection by delving into our relationship with time, drawing out how we are caught between the past and the future. The overriding question here is: how do we make peace with the present? How do we reconcile ourselves to 'what might have been and what has been' (l.9)? This question emerges in the context of *Ereignis*, namely the event which takes place in the rose-garden, which, like the hyacinth girl from *The Waste Land*, is another encounter with the 'heart of light' (l.39). The movement builds up to this encounter, preparing the reader for it by offering a reflection on time remembered and time imagined.

In the context of this chapter what Eliot describes in the first movement is an event akin to the 'Augenblick', the 'moment of vision' (BT: 376) which Heidegger develops in *Being and Time*. The 'moment of vision' is characterized by resoluteness, when I 'see' the Situation I am in (BT: 346), and grasp my authentic self (BT: 344). What the opening movement of *Four Quartets* explores is this coming-to-be-authentic to myself. Eliot opens initially with tentative claims: *perhaps* time present and past are 'present in time future', 'If all time is eternally present' (l.1-4). His concern is with the present, its relation to the past which created it and the future which will unfold from it. If time is unredeemable, then 'What might have been is an abstraction', a 'speculation', a 'perpetual possibility' (ll.6-8). The tentative tone of these lines is prompted by the anxiety of admitting that *perhaps* it is so – perhaps time is unredeemable. This anxiety is fitting because, for Heidegger, the moment of vision is *preceded* by anxiety (BT: 388). In Eliot's movement the build-up to this moment in the rose-garden has an anxious tone, suggesting a reluctance to enter into 'our first world' (l.23).

The opening lines of 'Burnt Norton' draw out this tension in each individual existence. Time is concentrated in the present, the 'now' and because of this, time past is unredeemable. Yet, as soon as this certainty is acknowledged the poem shifts into imaging a past, 'a world of speculation' which was never realized. Memory, imagination and possibility shape this 'world of speculation'. Possibilities are opened up 'Down the passage

which we did not take', into the rose-garden (l.12). Yet again, before we fully enter the rose-garden, the poet is tentative, questioning the purpose of 'Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves' (ll. 17-18). What is achieved by considering what might have been? A world of speculation remains intangible – yet even though the speaker of the poem admits 'I do not know' (l.18), he is summoned by, in Heidegger's language, the 'call of conscience' to respond to the shape of his thrownness. The 'call of conscience', like anxiety, precipitates the 'moment of vision', the moment in the rose-garden which the speaker of the poem witnesses. For Heidegger the call is a summoning which brings Dasein 'face to face with the fact that it is, and that it has to be something with a potentiality-for-Being as the entity which it is' (BT: 321). The call is a way Dasein must reckon with its time past and time future, acknowledging its temporal nature in the spirit conveyed in the Catholic Confiteor, 'For what I have done; and what I have failed to do' – an act of contrition the substance of which Eliot and Heidegger both knew well.

Heidegger characterizes the call as provoked by a lack or deficiency in relation to others. It is motivated by existential guilt 'in the sense of having come to owe something to an Other' (BT: 328). This is particularly appropriate to the first movement of Eliot's poem and the encounter in the rose-garden, which alludes to an important biographic event in Eliot's life. Gordon's sympathetic and authoritative biography on Eliot has a chapter titled 'Enter Beatrice' which explores the role that Emily Hale (1891-1969) played in the poet's life. The allusion to Dante's Beatrice is apt, for Eliot regarded Dante as the greatest poet who lived,¹³² and Gordon's reading of Eliot and Hale's relationship after the model of Dante and Beatrice is very evocative, (though slightly sentimental).

Beatrice was Dante's muse, in the traditional poetic sense, but also his spiritual inspiration, the flesh-and-blood woman being transmuted into an idealization of divine love. Eliot had known Hale in his youth in America, and resumed contact with her in 1927. When in 1933 Eliot legally separated from his estranged first wife, Vivienne Haigh-Wood (1888-1947), he was legally and, in terms of Anglicanism, spiritually free to marry Hale and clearly felt some pressure to do so.¹³³ A brief conversation from 1927 that remains on record

¹³² Unlike Nietzsche who called Dante 'the hyena which *poetizes* on graves'. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, 78. For a recent work on Eliot and Dante see P. Douglas (ed.), *T.S. Eliot, Dante, and the Idea of Europe* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).

¹³³ See Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 283. Chapter eight of her book is titled 'The Mystery of Sin' and it provides a good starting point for this question. See also the loosely biographic film *Tom and Viv* about Eliot and Vivienne Haigh-Wood's marriage, for an account sympathetic to both parties, M. Hastings, DVD, directed by B. Gilbert (New York: Miramax Films, 1994).

gives a strong hint why the marriage never took place. In discussion with Rev. William Force Stead, about the great beauty of *La Vita Nuova*,¹³⁴ the poem in which Dante first describes how his love for Beatrice passes over into love of God, Eliot is supposed to have pensively said, 'I have had that experience'.¹³⁵

Unfortunately, Eliot does not seem to have told Hale this but instead kept her expectant, hopeful and available for marriage to him for nearly 30 years while he pursued the life of a semi-religious, living under a vow of celibacy. This rejection of erotic love was confirmed in his separation from his first wife in 1933, when after a visit to the United States, he did not return to Vivienne but took up residence in a boarding house in Kensington, near St Stephen's Church, formalizing 'with some difficulty, a self-imposed vow of celibacy'.¹³⁶ In 1934 he became warden of this church and when the vicar offered him boarding at the presbytery he accepted. When he did eventually marry his secretary, Valerie Fletcher in 1957 he was nearly 70 and she, 38 years younger, it is likely that his celibacy was no longer an issue, and their relationship an asexual one. When Hale heard of his marriage she had an emotional breakdown and never fully recovered.¹³⁷

The biographic context of 'Burnt Norton' and the use of the plural in the opening movement suggest that it is Eliot and Hale together in the rose-garden at the opening of the poem. Hale visited England in 1934, and they visited Burnt Norton manor in early September 1934. Eliot's *Ereignis* in the rose-garden seems to have been a confirmation that he was, like Dante, more in love with God than with Emily Hale, and that this made marriage to her impossible.¹³⁸ This momentous event in the rose-garden was to haunt Eliot's poetry for the next eight years.¹³⁹

Thus the reluctant admission that 'time is unredeemable' (l.5) opens up the possibility of an authentic appraisal of time, a way to make peace with what was chosen and what remains unchosen. In this way the speaker of the poem does respond to his conscience, for in reckoning with our temporality we have to consider how actions that

¹³⁴ *La Vita Nuova*, or *The New Life* was written by Dante Alighieri in the thirteenth century. It is a medieval courtly love poem and is notable for being written in Italian, rather than Latin. For a recent English version see D.R. Slavitt's translation of *La Vita Nuova* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

¹³⁵ Quoted in Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 236.

¹³⁶ Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, 28.

¹³⁷ Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 422-423.

¹³⁸ Hale donated her letters from Eliot to the Princeton University Library. The collection is sealed until January 2020. See 'T. S. Eliot Letters to Emily Hale, 1930-1956: Finding Aid', Princeton University Library Manuscript Division, <http://findingaids.princeton.edu/getEad?eadid=Co686&kw=>. Eliot destroyed her letters to him; see Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 392 onwards.

¹³⁹ Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 266.

cannot be undone have affected others. Human finitude means that time is unredeemable and yet this acknowledgement raises the opportunity to reconcile ourselves with the present. Thus the initial tone of hesitant caution is overcome in the way the movement ends: ‘What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present’ (ll.47-48), lines repeated twice from earlier (ll.9-10). The tentative opening phrasing gives way to resolute affirmation. This poetic movement explores the journey from inauthentic uncertainty and an unwillingness to face the past and the future, to authentic existence, made resolute in the ‘moment of vision’ and prompted by the call to conscience. The resolute lines at the end of the movement suggest that the speaker is brought back from his fallen, inauthentic nature, that the moment of vision restores Dasein more authentically ‘there’ to itself (BT: 376). The rest of *Four Quartets* is written in the spirit of this resolution, one that Prufrock is denied and that is mostly obscured in *The Waste Land*.

This development of coming to be authentic suggests there is a Nietzschean maxim at work in Eliot’s poem: ‘*What does your conscience say?* – ‘You should become who you are’.¹⁴⁰ *Four Quartets* is an actualization of this Nietzschean aphorism, Eliot’s following of his own ‘dancing star’ to *become what he is*, what he has made himself. Coming to terms with the present requires an authentic appraisal of the past, and so the opening of the poem recognizes the ecstatic, situated relationship we have with time. This is an acknowledgement of individual fate bound up in its heritage. Accompanying this acknowledgement is the resoluteness which involves Dasein understanding the possibilities of its existence, as part of a heritage that it has been *thrown into*, and takes over (BT: 435). Heidegger offers us the abstract language of philosophy to articulate our temporal nature, whereas Eliot’s poetic language is a performance of it. His gift as poet is the ability to express what is both personal and yet universally true about our being-in-the-world.

‘The lotos rose’

Eliot builds to this moment by re-evoking an Edenic ‘first world’, an imagined time. ‘Other echoes / [that] Inhabit the garden’ (ll.19-20) are the offer of those unexplored possibilities which are re-visited in memory. ‘Shall we follow’ (l.23) evokes again the presence of anxiety preceding the moment of vision. Nonetheless the ‘deception of the thrush’ (l.24) is

¹⁴⁰ F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. by B. Williams, trans by J. Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 152.

irresistible and compelling. We, as readers, are drawn into this 'first world', and given a glimpse of what occurred on this visit, paradoxically as both an idyll, and a moment of bewildered enlightenment. The *Ereignis* takes place in the next lines, ll. 24 to 44. In these lines we can discern many of the elements of the Event which Heidegger develops over the course of his life. The moment is one of 'transport and enchantment' (CP: 48-49) like the encounter with the hyacinth girl in the passage from *The Waste Land*. The dry pool is suddenly 'filled with water out of sunlight' (ll. 36-37) and the lotos rises 'quietly, quietly' (l.38).

Eliot is very much working in the spirit of Heidegger's notion of truth as *aletheia* – as a process of revealing and concealing. The pool *appears* dry and brown edged – but the poet's appropriation in the moment *reveals* something which transforms the world, and briefly gives a piercing clarity to that which is ordinarily hidden. Suddenly the pool's surface 'glitter[s] out of the heart of light' (l.39). These lines are mystifying and beautiful. The vision of the 'heart of light' tells us nothing descriptive about what actually happens, except that *something* happens. Heidegger's early *Ereignis* language, with phrases like 'a new different type of totality is constituted' (TDP: 173), or the 'situational context dissolves' and the 'unity of the situation' explodes (TDP: 174) provide many suitable ways of trying, in phenomenological language, to explain what happens.

The presence of nature is significant. In Heidegger's 1919 lectures it was the ascent of a mountain which provoked the *Ereignis* experience, and in *The Waste Land* it was returning from the hyacinth garden. Here it is a rose-garden where the encounter takes place. The garden image is one of the most important symbols in Eliot's poetry. It symbolizes spiritual redemption and hope, and is Edenic and innocent. Its association with water is important for fertility and abundance. The garden is an important liminal symbol, a boundary between nature and humankind, and because of this threshold position occupies a powerful, and unpredictable place in Eliot's poetry.

The central image in the opening movement of 'Burnt Norton' is the rising lotus (l.38), a vital symbol in both Hindu and Buddhist teaching, said to signify the progress of the soul in its ascent to enlightenment. Eliot knew that the Hindu *Vedas* describe a thousand-petalled, pure gold, cosmic lotus which is the mouth of the universe. From this the creator, Brahma, *Atman*, the true self, issues forth.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, 221.

The lotus has its roots in mud, and extends upwards through the water to open itself on the water surface, exposed to and basking in the sunlight. This, in Buddhist teaching, is analogous to the journey of the soul, which begins trapped in the belief in the material world, travels through it gaining experience, and then achieves enlightenment, realizing that the material world and the self are an illusion, and that true reality is one undivided, unified whole. This understanding of reality, central to both the Buddhist and Hindu religion, is also similar to the view of the Heraclitian *logos* – that true reality is a transcendent unity which underpins the transient flux of ordinary existence. For Heraclitus this truth – though common to all – is not immediately available to all. The first Heraclitian fragment (discussed in the previous section) which opens *Four Quartets*, ‘Although the law of reason the Logos is common to all, the majority live as though they had an understanding [or wisdom] of their own’¹⁴² (BN: 171) could be interpreted as saying that, though all have access to this truth, most live outside it, lost as *Das Man* and closed off in their own ‘truth’. To attain the truth of the *logos* requires contemplative perseverance. The ascetic practices characteristic of all religions, from the Hindu sadhus, to Buddhists and Christian monks, from the hermit-like lives of Heraclitus and the Desert Fathers to Eliot’s self-imposed austerity and Heidegger’s periodic withdrawals to his hut¹⁴³ all point to the hunger for this truth – in whatever specific cultural form it may manifest.

This notion of enlightenment, of perceiving reality as one unified whole, can be reconciled with Heidegger’s *Ereignis*. The middle Heidegger speaks of *Ereignis* as available only for the few and the rare (CP: 9), those who have the ‘courage for solitude’ (CP: 9). This courage enables preparedness for the *leap* wherein we place ourselves ‘in what is thus opened up’ and through *Ereignis* ‘first become ourselves’ (CP: 163). This sentiment carries with it the resoluteness enabled by the ‘moment of vision’ in *Being and Time*. The ‘Da’ in Dasein is itself an invitation for this appropriation – Dasein is the clearing, the already opened openness where *Seyn* can manifest (CP: 21). The speaker of the first movement of ‘Burnt Norton’ places himself in this openness by entering into ‘our first world’ (l.23) and, in reply, the lotus flower ascends. In its ascension and opening up towards the sunlight in a pool that, a moment ago, was ‘dry concrete, brown edged’ (l.36) we have a powerful metaphor which expresses the possibility of temporality conflating into an instant where

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 212.

¹⁴³ See A. Sharr, *Heidegger’s Hut* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006) for a fascinating architectural account of Heidegger’s hut.

the actual and possible, both real and imagined futures, can co-exist. This is even conveyed in a poignant personal way in the phrase ‘for the leaves were full of children’ (l.42) which bespeaks the descendants that the speaker will never have with a woman he will never marry, and yet there, in the rose-garden, fecund and alive, this possible reality, which is not actualized and lived (instead, given and taken in a moment), is still real and part of the fabric of existence.

Eliot’s poetic expression of this fullness takes the form of a kind of folding of various possible realities together. He describes a couple and their apparitions simultaneously appearing in the rose-garden (ll.25-34). The one set are the present Eliot and Hale, born of that past in which they did not marry, who now in 1935 when this was written are separated by a continent (Hale returned to America after visiting Eliot). The others are their Platonic forms imagined into a different future when the words that echoed in the other’s mind (ll.14-15, possibly the marriage proposal) were actually spoken in the rose-garden, and a different possibility of their future selves realized. Decisions cannot be unmade because the past, *as it happened*, cannot be reversed by the present, yet paradoxically *it can be redeemed* because one can live in the present, reconciled in the knowledge of both the real and imagined past. This is what Eliot is trying to do in this movement and it requires authentic resoluteness. The *Ereignis* event is the way in which one’s authentic resolute self can face up to its thrownness and finitude. Thus the opening reluctant admission that ‘time is unredeemable’ (l.5), gives way, through the *Ereignis* experience, to the possibility of redemption from time, a way to reconcile the past and the present. This momentary affirmation is vital for authentic existence, for, in the words of Nietzsche, ‘If we affirm one single moment, we thus affirm not only ourselves but all existence’.¹⁴⁴

In this moment of revelation where ‘the pool [is] filled with water out of sunlight’ (l.37) the self’s own being-in-the-world shows up as such, phenomenologically separated from its world. We have the two couples, but also the voice of the poet narrating the event, ‘seeing’ himself within the world he depicts. He is there as first his present self, reflected into the past that happened, then also as an imagined future self, remaining intangibly part of his imagination and memory, *and* finally as his current temporal self, that is the poet writing, in the autumn of 1935 in the presbytery at 9 Grenville Place, the poem ‘Burnt

¹⁴⁴ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 532.

Norton'. The enfolding of different temporal modes shows that, in an *Ereignis* moment, temporality itself becomes transparent to Dasein allowing it, in that 'moment of vision', to perceive a deeper, more malleable temporal relationship with time. Eliot's writing about this event in 1935 is an attempt to explain the meaning of it to himself, through symbolic and poetic language, and to share it with his reader. The poet attempts to convey this poetic epiphany, while remaining attentive to the ontological tension between *word* and *world*. He offers us his own *Ereignis* encounter, and the self-reflective language of his poetry draws the reader into appreciating what this moment is, or how it could come to be.

The *Ereignis* moment remains a haunting reminder of this fuller, deeper perception into the world, which we are mostly closed off from: 'Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind / Cannot bear very much reality' (ll. 44-45). This is the reality of the Heraclitian *logos*, common to all but hidden to many. The bird's compassionate gesture breaks the spell of this epiphany, sending us back into the ordinary, everyday world and its linear, uncomplicated time. What remains is a Dasein transformed, for the Event re-orientates and clarifies, making us authentically resolute to the *present* and the past.

The glimpse into the 'heart of light' is bewildering, angstful, joyful, tragic and mystifying. It is a world affirming moment and we can discern, in the spirit of Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin, the 'wonderfully all-present' that 'enraptures, carries away' (EHP: 76) in Eliot's encounter in the rose-garden. The *Ereignis* moment is 'the primal event of the holy' (EHP: 98) and thus thankfulness and mourning also form part of the emotions of this opening movement. The bird's words, 'human kind / Cannot bear very much reality' (lines 44-45) suggest a sorrow, even nostalgia for the moment that must pass, and yet this is made positive through the gratitude and affirmation that remains, for the moment offers us the redemption of time.

The second movement of 'Burnt Norton'

The second movement of 'Burnt Norton' continues to reflect on the *Ereignis* moment of the first movement in the mood, I think, of holy thankfulness. Eliot draws out, poetically, the phenomenological and temporal nature of the experience to account for the meaning of the Event in the rose-garden. The moment of surrender has past and the recovery prompts the need to give an explanation. In this second movement Eliot alludes to the Heraclitian *logos*, very much in the spirit of Heidegger's interpretation in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, by describing it in terms of the pattern of Being which *gathers* all things – the

within the material world as the cause of suffering. In relinquishing the desire to desire there is 'grace' and release 'from the inner / And outer compulsion' (ll.25-26). The conscious elevation and release that follows intensifies and concentrates 'both a new world / And the old' (ll.29-30). Accompanying this are emotions of ecstasy and dread in the encounter with the 'still point'. There is fear and trembling and awe; and also ravishment and elation. These varied emotions are associated with the mystical encounter and in their 'completion' and 'resolution' (ll.31-32) what is achieved is releasement, *Gelassenheit* in Heidegger's later language, discussed below. This sense of releasement is linked with the *Augenblick*, for it is a result of my coming to be authentic and making peace with my temporality. 'Only through time time is conquered' (l.43).

This releasement from action (especially action which is driven by enframed, calculative thinking) is necessary for the cultivation of both an attitude of and thinking characterized by non-willing (DT: 60). Releasement is relinquishing the *will* to will. Such a relinquishing is not driven by calculation or 'practical desire' (l.24). Instead this releasement lies beyond the distinction of passivity and activity, surpassing 'the inner / And outer compulsion' (ll.25-26). The image which reflects this in the poem is 'a white light still and moving' (l.27). Both poet and thinker draw from the wisdom of Meister Eckhart who writes that 'what God wills is that we should give up willing'.¹⁴⁵ *Gelassenheit* is used by mystics to describe the peace one finds in God by taking one's distance from worldly things. For the Stoics this was expressed in the term '*apatheia*',¹⁴⁶ impassivity, and for Heidegger by the term *Verhaltenheit*, 'restraint' which, as a basic mood features in *Contributions to Philosophy* (§ 13).¹⁴⁷ Polt comments that 'restraint' in this context 'involves a kind of caution that holds back from imposing a representation on the non-representable'.¹⁴⁸ This is not diffidence, but a self-collected rootedness that makes room for what Heidegger calls 'great stillness' (CP: 24). Polt believes that 'restraint' in the *Contributions* develops into *Gelassenheit* in Heidegger's later work.¹⁴⁹ The threefold 'Shantih' which closes *The Waste Land* (WL: 75), the peace which passes all understanding, is echoed in the 'great stillness' found in genuine releasement.

¹⁴⁵ Eckhart. *Meister Eckhart: The Man from whom God hid Nothing*, ed. by U. Fleming (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1988), 32. Mention biographic detail – both read Eckhart.

¹⁴⁶ P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. M. Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 136.

¹⁴⁷ M. Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary* (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 117.

¹⁴⁸ Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, 105-106.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Inwood shares this view. See Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 117.

This silence that lies behind all words is precisely what Eliot is (paradoxically) trying to speak. His recourse to the language of mystical tradition acknowledges that this conundrum has troubled mystics for as long as language has existed. These lines from ‘Burnt Norton’ are replete with the techniques of apophaticism. The opening lines of this passage (ll.16-21) evoke contemplation through paradox. This technique is found in many schools of mystical thought, such as the Zen *koan* tradition, Sufi mysticism and Christian medieval mysticism. In Heidegger’s later reflections on language, such as the essay ‘The Way to Language’ (TWL), similar use of paradoxical phrasing is used to help readers overcome barriers in their conception of language and how it shapes reality. These language techniques gesture towards the transcendent margins of ordinary reality, calling their readers to contemplate a fuller reality – ‘the still point of the turning world’ (l.16).

Particularly clear in this passage is a technique characteristic of Dionysius the Areopagite’s *The Divine Names*, which is defining by negation.¹⁵⁰ This technique presents something which defies the formal parameters which describe it. In the above passage this ‘something’ is ‘Neither flesh nor fleshless’ (l.16), ‘Neither from nor towards’ (l.17) and so forth. Terms which describe the physical world such as ‘movement’, ‘arrest’ and ‘fixity’ are negated and as alternative only the words ‘I cannot say’ (ll.22-23) are offered. This language attempts to overcome the limitations these conceptual terms create by subverting their meaning, particularly in juxtaposition, for example, ‘neither arrest or movement’ (l.18), or ‘Neither ascent nor decline’ (l.20). Eliot’s passage is essentially a compelling evocation of the difficulty of speaking about *Seyn*, revealing Eliot’s own struggle with language, a struggle shared by Heidegger, who wants to account for Being but without creating another language of metaphysics. Both philosopher and poet have to contend with language as the limit of the ordinary, profane world, the on-going ‘intolerable wrestle / With words and meanings’ (EC: 179).

We know from *Contributions* that *Seyn*, in Eliot’s language ‘the still point of the turning world’ (l.16) is revealed only in our momentary appropriation, that ‘*Seyn* essentially happens as *Ereignis*’ (CP: 3, 22, 180-183). Eliot’s Event in the rose-garden, the

¹⁵⁰ Here is a representative example of the technique: ‘Hence God is known in all things and apart from all things; and God is known through Knowledge and through Unknowing, and on the one hand He is reached by Intuition, Reason, Understanding, Apprehension, Perception, Conjecture, Appearance, Name, etc.; and yet, on the other hand, He cannot be grasped by Intuition, Language, or Name, and He is not anything in the world nor is He known in anything. He is All Things in all things and Nothing in any, and is known from all things unto all men, and is not known from any unto any man’. Dionysus the Areopagite, ‘The Divine Names’, in *The Divine Names and The Mystical Theology*, trans. by C.E. Rolt (London: SPCK, 1940), 151-152.

encounter with the ‘heart of light’, is a manifestation of this revelation and the second movement of ‘Burnt Norton’ attempts to use mystical language (like *Contributions*) to account for it. For Eliot the ‘still point’ is where the Heraclitian *logos* – in Heidegger’s understanding the ‘gatheredness’ of beings – is gathered. Heidegger’s metaphor, which combines a sense of movement with that of a fixed point (to which the shifting appearances gather), is strikingly similar to the ancient mystic image of the dance, to which Eliot alludes (ll.17-21). The moment of *Ereignis* crystalizes this dance, offering a leap, a foothold to this elsewhere: ‘I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where. / And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time’ (ll.22-23). The inability to place the moment topologically or temporally is the same kind of difficulty Heidegger has at the end of *Being and Time*, which I have discussed in section I of this chapter. Eliot does not dwell on this problem, only according it two lines (ll.23-24). As Heidegger did after *Being and Time*, Eliot knows that the mystery of our temporality brings greater wisdom when experienced, rather than grappled with in spare rationality.

For both thinker and poet, language understood as ‘Event’ (EHP: 56) holds an answer to this difficulty, but also conceals it. In the above passage Eliot uses mystical language which constantly negates itself, thus becoming poetic language that speaks what ordinary language cannot easily say. The struggle to bring the world to language, to obey the urge to openness, is the poet’s essence and first duty. In the fifth movement of ‘East Coker’, Eliot ruefully acknowledges just how thankless a task this can be:

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years –	1
Twenty years largely wasted, the yeas of <i>l’entre deux guerres</i> ¹⁵¹ –	
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt	
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure	
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words	5
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which	
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture	
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate	
With shabby equipment always deteriorating	
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,	10
Undisciplined squads of emotion. (EC: 182)	

This passage readily admits the ‘failure’ of words, each beginning a ‘raid on the inarticulate’ (l.8). Yet for Heidegger, the poet is called to this challenge, for the word ‘is the primal event of the holy’ (EHP: 98) and the ‘poetic dwelling of the poet precedes the poetic dwelling of men’ (EHP: 115). The poet constantly strives to ‘get the better of words’

¹⁵¹ A French expression which means ‘between two wars’, it describes the interwar years between the First and Second World Wars.

recognizing their potential to reveal this 'holy' experience. Recognizing this potential in poetry meant that later Heidegger found a way in which *Ereignis*, in some sense, is crystallized and given expression. Eliot's poetry is very much an example of this, and achieves the kind of poetic revelation of *Seyn* that Heidegger found in Hölderlin and Rilke.

Waiting for the Event

Accompanying genuine releasement is waiting, another theme to which Eliot and later Heidegger are attentive. The mystic and the poet wait for revelation and inspiration. The philosopher waits for what the later Heidegger, as will be discussed in chapter three calls, the 'appearance of the god' (OGS: 107), in the vein of Polt's apocalyptic interpretation of *Ereignis*. All wait for the Event.

I am not simply equating *Ereignis* and mystical revelation in a particular religious tradition. However, given the poetic turn of the later Heidegger, and his determined rejection of metaphysical language, his use of the term 'gods' is equivocal. In the third chapter, under 'The fourfold' section I discuss this in more detail. But now I want to explore the meaning of the 'gods' in terms of *Ereignis*. Throughout this chapter we see that Heidegger keeps both extraordinarily rich senses of *Ereignis* active.

One is that our being is essentially the site of openness where Being can be unconcealed. In our ordinary, everyday existence we live in the present, surrounded by beings. But overlooked is Being itself, Being as the 'event' which *gives* beings their presence, Being is the horizon of intelligibility which gives us, without too much difficulty, access to the meaning of beings, but not Being itself.¹⁵² This 'ontological difference' needs to be 'overcome' if we are to reach the end of metaphysics, which means having access to the meaning of Being itself, which paradoxically, only occurs in *our* appropriation by it (ID: 31). Essentially what this means is that we stop seeing the ontological difference as *the difference*.

This is the question early Heidegger raises in *Being and Time*. For the later Heidegger this fundamental insight has taken on an apocalyptic sense, construed as the 'coming of the gods'. Thus the *Ereignis* is, broadly speaking, the advent of the gods, 'gods' being a metaphor for the destining of, an as yet, unimagined conception of Being. The word 'gods' is fitting because it is so opaque and uncanny. Heidegger surely cannot mean *gods*, such as Jesus and Shiva (though in chapter three I leave this possibility open) so he must mean

¹⁵² Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, 154.

some manifestation of the holy, a paradigm of Being scarcely imaginable (but possibly intimated in the second sense of *Ereignis* which I discuss next). We are receptive to this manifestation because we are *the site of the open*, thus when Being is manifest, we shall be the ones who allows and partake in its manifestation. But for now we must wait.

The second sense of *Ereignis* is the more mystical sense of individual, epiphanic appropriation, but couched in the language of phenomenology. This means we can consider Eliot's moment in the rose-garden as an *Ereignis*, St. Paul on the road to Damascus, Siddhārtha Gautama's enlightenment, to name some important examples. These are individual Events, though the last two had worldwide significance, so they could be understood as the arrival of a god, in the first sense of *Ereignis* above, meaning that they provoked a world-changing *Ereignis*, a paradigm shift in the destining of Being.

The point is that when we interpret these individual moments of appropriation as Events, as moments of 'transportation' and 'enchantment' we have a language which can account for the personal experience and which transects the cultural and religious traditions which may claim this experience. All the mystical traditions which appear within *Four Quartets* suggest that the seemingly distinct traditions are governed by the search for, in Heidegger's language, the meaning of *Sein*. The second Heraclitian epigram that opens *Four Quartets* 'The way up and the way down are one and the same'¹⁵³ resonates with the Vedic principle that 'Reality is one, but different religious teachers speak of it differently'.¹⁵⁴ Heidegger's search is similarly wide-ranging.¹⁵⁵

Genuine waiting requires preparedness – not a passive *waiting for* but an active *waiting on*.¹⁵⁶ To *wait on* is to be receptive and reciprocal without instigating. It is not passivity, but alertness and responsiveness to what unfolds. We *wait on* the gods, 'wait for intimations of their coming and do not mistake the signs of their absence' (PLT: 148). Similarly the mystic *waits on* God, waits for the Event to manifest. In the Event's arrival and passing, it brings renewed hope for the Event again, just as the priest's daily act of transubstantiation enacts and repeats the Event of the Last Supper, itself repeated in the

¹⁵³ Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, 212.

¹⁵⁴ Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 355.

¹⁵⁵ In his re-interpretation of Heraclitus and exploration of Asian philosophy, especially the Zen tradition and Daoist tradition, he showed himself willing to search for truth in its manifold cultural manifestations See L. Ma, *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue. Anticipating the Event* (New York: Routledge, 2008) for a fascinating discussion of Heidegger and Eastern thought. See also Heidegger's 'A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer' (DA), as well as *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987).

¹⁵⁶ Young. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, 117.

Crucifixion. Waiting and stillness intertwine and form part of this expectancy in movement III of 'East Coker':

I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you Which shall be the darkness of God.	12
...	
I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love	23
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.	25
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought: So the darkness shall be the light and the stillness the dancing. (EC: 180)	

These lines express this *waiting on* in silence and submission, which requires releasement from the ordinary world of distraction in order to devote concentration entirely to the 'still point' (BN II, l.16) the 'darkness of God' (EC III, l.13). Once again Eliot uses the language of negation, since this expectancy is 'without hope' (l.23) for that would project desire and create hope for 'the wrong thing' (l.24). Instead mortals 'hold up to the divinities what is unhopd for' (PLT: 148).

Heidegger states something very similar in his famously hermetic *Der Spiegel* interview of 1966 where, in our present homelessness and abandonment, we wait for the god who saves: 'Only a god can save us. The sole possibility that is left for us is to prepare a sort of readiness, through thinking and poetizing, for the appearance of a god . . . we can not think him into being here; we can at most awaken the readiness of expectation' (OGS: 107). 'Readiness to wait' is analogous to Meister Eckhart's cultivation of non-willing, which is where Heidegger found the germ of his idea of *Gelassenheit* [releasement] (DT: 54-55; CPC: 70, 103). It requires equanimity and fortitude to wait patiently for the 'darkness of God'. Eliot waits for the Christian God and Heidegger for the future unknown and nameless god, the '*Unknown One*' whom Hölderlin speaks of in his poetry (PMD: 220). Poet and thinker await a second coming, the mysterious *Parousia*.

Fortunately for us this extremely abstract language is saved from Gnosticism by both Eliot and Heidegger's insistence that human life is rooted in the earth, and waiting for god forms part of a general attitude of careful thought which can restore 'everything to the releasement [*Gelassenheit*] of patient reflection' (PM: 232). This attitude finds its fullest expression in dwelling, to which the third chapter will now turn.

Chapter Three: Dwelling

I had my existence. I was there.
Me in place and the place in me.
‘A Herbal’ – Seamus Heaney¹

‘Remember, young man, unceasingly,’ Father Paissy began directly, without any preamble, ‘that the science of this world, having united itself into a great force, has, especially in the past century, examined everything heavenly that has been bequeathed to us in sacred books, and, after hard analysis, the learned ones of this world have absolutely nothing left of what was once holy. But they have examined parts and missed the whole, and their blindness is even worthy of wonder. Meanwhile the whole stands before their eyes as immovably as ever, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’.

The Brother Karamazov – Fyodor Dostoevsky²

T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* is a poem that is foremost a meditation and psychological narration on the significance of place, understood, as I will show, as ‘*dwelling* place’ in the full Heideggerian sense. Each quartet is named for a place which, either because of historical or personal memory holds importance for Eliot. ‘Burnt Norton’ was published in April 1936, ‘East Coker’ in March 1940, ‘The Dry Savages’ in February 1941, and ‘Little Gidding’ in October 1942. Together they appeared in a collected volume in May 1943. Three of the landscapes are in England and one in the United States. The *Quartets* are generally considered a testament to Eliot’s conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927. As we have seen, in chapter two, on one level the poem does explore themes such as the redemption of time and the existential difficulties of faith. On another important level, however, *Four Quartets* offers an alternative narrative for the disenchanted world. The poem does this by describing and infusing the landscapes it encounters with spiritual and emotional content. We are given access to the world through the eyes of the mystic poet; it is revealed as a mysterious dwelling place infused with the divine presence. In line with Heidegger’s understanding of truth as *aletheia*, a process of revealing and concealing (QCT: 319), Eliot opens the world to us in a way which is mostly hidden; he transforms, through poetry, the profane, everyday world into a sacred place where we may, if we are attentive, encounter the Godhead.

¹ S. Heaney, *Human Chain* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), 43.

² F. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. by R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1992), 171.

Heidegger's later thinking tells us that the modern world is forsaken by the gods; they have 'failed to arrive' and our time is one of 'destitution' (WPF: 89, AWP: 58). In this destitute time, no god 'gathers men and things unto himself' and the 'divine radiance' of the world has been extinguished (WPF: 89). Compounding this loss of the gods is the gradual eclipse of the world, in all its myriad plenitude, under the sole rubric of modern technology. Heidegger looks to the poets as those who follow the 'traces of the fugitive gods' (WPF: 91), because they remain, even in the 'darkness of their world's night' (WPF: 91) attuned to both the absence and, hopefully the return of the gods. True poets 'utter the holy' through their writing (WPF: 92, EHP: 85), remaining attentive to the nature of language and using it to reveal the world as a 'holy' place; we others 'must learn to listen to what *these* poets say' (WPF: 92). The possibility of our 'homecoming', i.e. coming to dwell can only occur if the world can be re-envisioned as a 'sacred place', a 'place of poets'.³

In the essay 'What are Poets For?' (1946) Heidegger pays particular attention to the poetry of Hölderlin⁴ and Rilke, as exemplars of poets properly attentive to this flight of the gods. He discerns, in their poetry, a recollecting of a world infused with the presence of the gods as well as a preparing for the possibility of their return. Eliot, as poet, occupies the same poetic space; he too is an exemplary poet in a 'destitute time', a time of the 'world's night' (WPF: 91). *The Waste Land* is the English poem which expresses the sterile secularization and pervasive disenchantment of the early twentieth-century modern Western world. *Four Quartets* is an attempt to counter this existential malaise and re-envisage the world as our sacred home. We need only consider the period of most of *Four Quartets*' composition and publication – during the Second World War itself – for confirmation of this. This complements the hopeful, prophetic message Heidegger gleans from Hölderlin, that where the danger is, is also held the growth of the saving power (WPF: 115, QCT: 333). *Four Quartets* is just such a saving power.

Interpreted by means of Heidegger's later philosophy Eliot's poem offers us a sense of what it truly means to *dwell*, to be at home in the world even when faced with the difficulty of our modern homelessness. In *Four Quartets* Eliot does this by illuminating the

³ J. Young, 'Poets and Rivers: Heidegger on Hölderlin's 'Der Ister,'" *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review* 38, no. 2 (1999): 399.

⁴ George Pattison writes that Hölderlin vied with Goethe and Nietzsche for the honour of being the most popular reading of German soldiers in the First World War. Hölderlin still remains little read in English because of the intrinsic difficulty of his work, its classical formality and strongly nationalistic concerns. See G. Pattison, *The Later Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 2000), 162.

profound spiritual and ontological relationship we can have with place.⁵ His evocation of the four spirit-charged landscapes that make up the *Quartets* confirms, following Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin, that 'poetically man / Dwells on this earth' (PMD: 214).

This chapter will more fully explore what these Heideggerian ideas can mean in the context of Eliot's poem. To do this I will draw on Heidegger's later work, particularly the concept of dwelling. I argue that the poem affirms the importance of dwelling and place in human existence, as well exploring the broader topological and narratological features of this existence. It does this through narrating the ontological significance of place in establishing and affirming individual and communal identity.

To support this claim I will begin by considering the meaning of dwelling itself and its relation to what Heidegger calls 'enframing'. From there I will move to explore the nature of place and narrative and then finally discuss how these ideas can be illustrated in passages from *Four Quartets*. I argue that the articulation of this relationship of nearness to authentic dwelling is what Eliot voices in *Four Quartets*, a poem which is fundamentally concerned with the nature of dwelling. The difficulty here is that, because dwelling is something we understand intimately, even sub-consciously, in terms of our identity, it is difficult to articulate what it means without possibly trivializing it, or reducing it to a superficial description. As when describing the nature of the 'event' in chapter two, we are caught in the open space between the language of philosophy and poetry. And poetry, according to Heidegger's elevation of the role of the poet, is the most effective and genuine way to account for dwelling. This claim will also be explored in this chapter.

⁵ I do not give a detailed, analytic discussion of the concept of 'place', focussing instead on the notion of 'dwelling' as it is developed in Heidegger's work. The concept of 'place' has a complex history and development. E.S. Casey's *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) offers a substantive philosophical historical overview of the term, including a chapter dedicated to Heidegger. Another influential and important text is E. Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976) which is a geographic account of place which draws substantially on Heidegger's *Being and Time*. J. Malpas is the current foremost theorist on place and Heidegger. His trilogy of books offers the most substantive account of Heidegger's topological thinking. See J. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008) and *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012).

Section I: Dwelling

'Dwelling' [*Wohnen*] is the core theme in Heidegger's later work.⁶ Much of what he writes after his 'turn' is concerned with exploring the meaning of this term, as an attempt to reconcile humankind with a world rendered hollow by the absence of God. Yet, perhaps unlike *Being and Time*, this later exploration is marked by a hopefulness found in the possibility of restoring genuine human community, and with it belief in a common destiny, once we recognize our shared role as guardians and preservers of the world and earth.

The Oxford English Dictionary provides some insights into the word 'dwell' which complement Heidegger's own development of the term. 'To dwell' can mean 'to abide or continue for a time, in a place, state, or condition'; 'to let (things) remain as they are, let alone'; 'to spend time upon or linger over (a thing) in action or thought'; 'to remain with the attention fixed on'; 'to continue in existence, to last, persist'; and 'to remain after others are taken or removed'.⁷ 'Dwell', in all these senses, has a clear temporal quality. It suggests maintaining a state of existence for as long as possible, though the definition does not clearly explain *why* this would be the case. Heidegger probes this oversight in the dictionary definition, in his etymological discussion of the meaning of 'dwell' which shall be discussed shortly.

To 'dwell' foremost is to *stay* somewhere, for example 'staying' with a thought for a time or remaining in a physical place. In the material sense dwelling is locational, literally implying the occupying of a space, yet this simple physical occupation of a place in the world is not the same as dwelling there. The crucial difference between *merely being* somewhere and *actively dwelling there* must be articulated. Dwelling requires that a temporal commitment be established in a particular place, at the same time as that place becomes defined precisely in its unique difference from other places. Thus, with a temporal commitment, an 'attitude' towards the place must be established; a particular kind of focussed attention to enable what Heidegger calls a 'thinking' which is a 'building'.

Ideally we understand dwelling in an intimate, unconscious way already, because we are born somewhere, normally the place we originally call 'home', the place that establishes our sense of belonging *somewhere*, to a community. 'Home' is a complex notion, drawing on many facets that entail emotional, psychological and geographic bonds

⁶ See Young, 'What is Dwelling?' 187-188.

⁷ 2nd edition, 1989; online version <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/Entry/58765>.

to place, some of which will appear in this chapter.⁸ Though individuals experience 'home' in their own unique intangible way, we all share a sense of what it means to dwell. It constitutes an existential component of our being human, born, in Heidegger's words, from our *thrownness*. To dwell is an ontological condition. It implies a relationship of *nearness* to our own existence that when present is unnoticed, and when absent leaves us anxious and unsettled, or at least inauthentic in the way we relate to others and our own being-in-the-world.

Heidegger's fullest treatment of dwelling is found in the essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking', delivered as a lecture in 1951. The context of this lecture is telling. Heidegger addresses himself to the severe housing shortage in post-war, defeated Germany.⁹ He argues that this shortage represents a deeper, more serious malaise, namely the existential homelessness of modern, Western humanity. The end of the Second World War left Europe both physically and psychologically in ruins, the destruction symptomatic for Heidegger of a deeper, more profound ontological crisis: the loss of dwelling itself. The world is not just 'out of joint', but 'tumbling away into the nothingness of the absurd' (WCT: 29). This disjuncting loss he diagnoses as rooted in two principle things: the overwhelming, alienating effect of modern technology through the process of 'enframing' and, concurrent with this, the spiritual vacuum left by the 'flight of the gods', essentially a loss of belief in any meaningful spiritual purpose in our existence.¹⁰ The motivation of Heidegger's lecture was to re-visit the meaning of dwelling, to uncover its meaning in a genuine sense. Though this way of being is integral to human existence he argues, in our modern times, it is being eroded by the increasingly frenetic pace of life and the rapid expansion of the industrial cityscape. This, coupled with our increasing post-Nietzschean spiritual destitution and the World Wars has left humanity profoundly disorientated, rudderless and homeless, i.e. bereft of this innate sense of dwelling.

The history of the West in the second half of the twentieth century would seem to bear Heidegger's point out. The end of something is a beginning for something else, in Eliot's words 'The end in where we start from' (LG: 197). The end of the Second World War

⁸ The concept of 'home' is contested and, as H. Easthope shows, has been defined in many ways, drawing on social, spatial, psychological and emotive language. Essentially one's home is understood as a particularly significant kind of place where one experiences strong emotional, social and psychological attachment. See H. Easthope, 'A Place Called Home', *Housing, Theory and Society* 21, no. 3 (2004): 135-136.

⁹ M. Zimmerman, 'The Role of Spiritual Discipline in Learning to Dwell on Earth,' in *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, ed. by D. Seamon and R. Mugerauer, 247-56 (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), 249.

¹⁰ See also Heidegger's *Introduction to Philosophy: Thinking and Poetizing*. He writes here that having become 'God-less and world-less' modern historical man is 'home-less' (IPT: 24).

with the use of atomic bombs, the revelation of the Holocaust and the carpet bombing of Germany, to name just some atrocities, prompted the West to attempt, through events such as the Nuremberg Trials (1945-6), the creation of the United Nation (1945) and the promulgation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Right* (1948), to come to terms with the war and the evil it brought out of itself. Because of their implicit reliance on the principles of humanism, these measures would have seemed deeply misguided to both Eliot and Heidegger. Both men were anti-humanist and believed that the redemption of humankind could only be found in more ancient spiritual and philosophic traditions.¹¹ Eliot, with his avowed adherence to Christianity, would have argued that a return to genuine faith and obedience to the Christian message would save humankind. Heidegger, in a similar vein, looked to dwelling and with it the acknowledgement of the 'gods', to re-connect us to the earth as our home.¹² This is one of the principle impulses which draw Heidegger's later philosophy together with *Four Quartets*.

Freedom

Dwelling is connected with *freeing* things into their essence. In 'Letter on Humanism' (1947) Heidegger writes that dwelling is the *proper* relationship of humankind to Being (LH: 227-8) because it is this proper relationship which enables humankind's freeing essence to be realized.

To briefly re-consider, 'Being' is the formal indicator of all that is, the totality of meaning in the universe and the ultimate horizon of disclosure. In *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1953),¹³ awareness of Being is phrased in the form of the question 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' (IM: 1). This 'something' points to 'Being' itself, the fabric of existence. Another way of conceiving of Being is to consider it in terms of the 'simple onefold' of all the elements of the fourfold (TT: 177). Yet another is to conceive of it as the totality of 'earth' and 'world', as discussed especially in the essay 'The Origin of the

¹¹ In 1927 Eliot published a review of Irvine Babbitt's (1865-1933) book *Democracy and Leadership* (1924), titled 'The Humanism of Irving Babbitt' (EAM). He critiques Babbitt's defence of humanism, arguing that it is not an alternative to religion but is in fact dependent on, and auxiliary to it (EAM: 79, 90). Heidegger, in his 1947 'Letter on Humanism' critiques humanism as a perpetuation of metaphysics that underestimates man's unique position in the 'clearing of Being' (LH: 215, 228, 252).

¹² D. Harvey defines dwelling, in Heidegger's later work as 'the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and things', see *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 300-301. While this definition appears superficial it nevertheless addresses a core motive towards place which guides both later Heidegger and Eliot in their respective thought.

¹³ First presented as a lecture course in Freiburg in 1935.

Work of Art' (1935-1936).¹⁴ One of the important ways humankind is understood as *genuinely freely dwelling* is our living between the mutual tension or 'strife' between 'earth' and 'world', which, ideally, is never entirely reconciled, and permits the 'free' space which allows mortals to dwell within this rift. Heidegger writes that the 'world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through', and the 'earth cannot dispense with the open region of the world . . . The world in turn cannot soar out of the earth's sight' (OWA: 174). Heidegger develops this contrast to explain how truth, manifest as the artwork, emerges in the 'primal strife between clearing and concealing' (OWA: 180, 186) which is an integral part of how freedom is exercised.

Important to note here is that the 'earth' of the fourfold [*das Geviert*]¹⁵ is not the same conception of 'earth' that we encounter in the 'earth/world' distinction.¹⁶ They are different conceptions of 'earth' and encompass different aspects of Being to suit Heidegger's differentiation of them in the context of his essays. What matters is that these elemental distinctions, whether in terms of the fourfold, or the duality of 'earth/world', are meant to exist in a mutual tension, each balancing out the other.

Having a genuine relationship to Being, in terms of dwelling, essentially means fully realizing and expressing our essence, which is our freedom.¹⁷ We are free because we are the 'there' (*das 'Da'*), the 'site of openness', the 'clearing of Being' (LH: 229). This means that our ecstatic futural temporal existence is open to possibilities and action for the future initiated by us in the present. Thus in the context of this chapter human freedom allows us to 'clear' a space in order to *build*; we have the ability to 'open up' and disclose the world in a myriad of ways, both physically, and also, more importantly, imaginatively – through thinking. To articulate freedom in this way Heidegger turns to the Ancient Greek notion of truth as *aletheia*, truth understood as the 'revealing and concealing' of Being through various 'disclosures' (CP: 233, OWA: 35, 49). This revealing is enabled by human beings, who as we saw in chapter two, are the site of openness where Being, in its various manifestations, can be brought to presence. A simple example is a carpenter, who through various materials and techniques, responds to both his craftsmanship and the raw

¹⁴ Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, 13.

¹⁵ The fourfold, which consists of earth, mortals, the heavens and the divinities, is later Heidegger's ideal vision of human existence – one in which all four elements are in interrelated harmony. It is discussed in more detail in this section shortly.

¹⁶ For an overview of this issue see J.J. Kockelmans, *On the Truth of Being: Reflections on Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 105.

¹⁷ See Wood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 74.

materials the earth provides, and creates something new, something which did not previously materially exist – say, a table. Thus human freedom inheres in things – the table is ‘unconcealed’ (QCT: 317), through the freeing process called *poiesis*, or ‘bringing-forth’ (*ibid.*). However, the revealing of the table, *as table* conceals other things that could have been revealed in the wood; thus revealing and concealing occur simultaneously. Art, for Heidegger, represents the pinnacle of the human expression of freedom, because it is the ultimate manifestation of our free essence, of how our openness frees things into being.

One of the facets of human freedom is that it is inherently temporal; we are ‘ecstatic’, meaning that our essence is to ‘stand out’ of the past and project ourselves towards the future from the present (BT: 377). This temporal projection allows us to shape the fabric of the *earth* into things of the *world*; we create ourselves as individuals and communities, while also ‘sparing and preserving’ the nature of both ‘earth’ and ‘world’ (BDT: 147). ‘Earth’ points to the natural physical realm which sustains human life. It is primordial and mysterious, never fully surrendering itself to the world of humankind. ‘World’ is the complex of meaning structures, practices and values, which humankind brings into being by the act of living together *upon* the earth. Earth never disappears wholly into world; the mysteries of natality and death and the untameable forces of nature bear witness to its primordial essence, even within our most sophisticated and ordered worlds.

The continued, intertwined reality of earth and world reveal a second facet of our freedom, that our relationship with Being must be one of guardianship and care: we are both the shepherd and neighbour of Being (LH: 245). So, though humankind has the potential to create many possible worlds, only a world in which responsibility is enacted for the earth, that takes cognisance of the role of earth, can truly be a ‘free sphere’ which sets things at peace, and ‘safeguards each thing in its nature’ (BDT: 147-148). A third feature of freedom is that in order for this ‘safe guarding’ to arise, dwelling must be established through ‘measure’, which Heidegger defines as the granted, recognized space between man and the gods (PMD: 218). This spiritually-charged understanding of ourselves as existing in a realm viewed and surrounded by gods is largely gone in the Occident. Yet the world understood as a sacred place has been a reality to humankind for much of its existence. ‘Man’, Heidegger reminds us, ‘has always measured himself with and against something heavenly’ (PMD: 218). To lose sight of the space separating us from the gods is, essentially, to lose sight of the holy. The holy is a vital dimension of our humanity, and acknowledging it secures our relationship to the gods and affirms our sense of

dwelling as mortals upon the earth. Only in taking this authentic measure can we live 'commensurately' with our nature and dwell fully within the free sphere that surrounds us (PMD: 219). This is the 'proper relationship' which defines dwelling, which enables us to transform our environment from earth into world, while maintaining the balance of each. Human freedom, expressed to its fullest potential, is what enables this ideal, relational sense of dwelling.

A related facet of human freedom, another sense in which it must accord to 'measure', is that because we dwell upon the earth, we dwell in a particular physical location. In many of his later essays Heidegger explores how dwelling transforms this location from mere landscape into homeland, as we create ('build') and live out an ontological topology. This is a way of experiencing our existence as inextricably connected with place, such that an individual's understanding of him- or herself is only fully grasped within the context of the place which shapes his or her identity. This topology is essentially 'locating the locale which gathers being' (QB: 311). It forms the meaningful structures and relationships that surround us, affirming that to be human is to be part of, and in, a world with others, grounded foremost in place. This world is formed, not only by individual choices, but also by the historical narrative which extends before, during and after an individual's life. Each of us is singled out of the broader narrative of human existence by the unique events of our own natality and death.

In other words, dwelling accounts for how the 'space' that surrounds us is transformed into significant 'place'. It explains how the earth which man dwells *upon* is transformed into a world which man dwells *in*. This transformation does not obliterate the role of *earth* or assert the domination of *world* within the two-fold relationship; rather their mutual tension supports and fully enables the role of man as dweller (OWA: 41). What is also essential to this enabling is 'sparing and preserving' (BDT: 147). This is fundamental to dwelling but *also* fundamental for freedom. For Heidegger to free something really means 'to spare' (BDT: 147). Dwelling is not just the experience of staying in a place, but also safeguarding that place, preserving and protecting it. It is this sparing which truly frees something and allows it to be 'brought to peace, to remain in peace' (BDT: 147).

Dwelling and building

To enrich his account of the meaning of dwelling Heidegger appeals to ontological elements hidden within language, via philological exegesis. Language shapes us (BDT: 144) and so by tracing the meaning of words we can uncover their forgotten aspects, and thus

re-discover ways of thinking about ourselves which have become concealed. The important point at the beginning of the essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' is the claim that to 'build is in itself already to dwell' (*ibid.*). Heidegger uses etymology to establish this claim. He looks to the Old English¹⁸ and High German¹⁹ word *buan*, the word for 'building' (*ibid.*). This is an old word, shared by two old European cultures that, in the context of Heidegger's lecture, have just been at war. *Buan* gave rise to the modern German word *bauen*, and to the Afrikaans word *bou*, both meaning 'build'. Heidegger's point, however, is that *buan*, in High German and Old English, really means not, 'to build' but, 'to dwell', that is 'to remain, to stay in a place' (*ibid.*). As we have seen this sense of dwell, as an *abiding* in a place, has been retained in modern English as the definition in the Oxford Dictionary shows. To dwell somewhere physically requires the creation of shelter – hence the etymological relationship between the word 'dwell' and 'build'; technically you can only dwell somewhere if you have built there.

But Heidegger goes further, arguing that the modern German verb *bauen*, 'to build', should really also be understood etymologically as meaning 'to dwell'. To show this in modern usage he presents the word from Old English *neahgebur* and the modern German word *Nachbar*, both meaning *neighbour*, literally 'the near dweller, he who dwells nearby' (BDT: 145). Heidegger traces how far the meaning of dwelling reaches in modern German. From *bauen/buan* comes the word *bin* in the phrase *ich bin*, 'I am', which thus really means 'I dwell' (*ibid.*). Heidegger concludes that the 'way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell' (*ibid.*).

Dwelling, for the later Heidegger, grounds human ontology: *to be is to dwell*. But the word *bauen* connotes more for Heidegger, it also means 'to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for' (*ibid.*). He identifies two ways in which this is realized – in the cultivation and tending of soil, such as viticulture, and in the construction of edifices, for examples in temple and ship building (*ibid.*). Both are a genuine *building*, in the verb sense of the word – a human practice which involves drawing from, and working within the natural cycles and resources of the earth, and through these activities establishing our permanent dwelling. Agrarian societies, Heidegger notes, are marked by permanent

¹⁸ Spoken and written by the Anglo-Saxons and their descendants at least between the fifth and twelfth century.

¹⁹ Old High Germany was used from the fifth century.

settlement because of the establishment of a regular and predictable food supply and durable shelter. Building and dwelling are connected primarily with the earth, and building is dwelling insofar as we interpret it in this mutually dependent and relational way.

If, however, the physical 'building' activities of 'cultivation and construction' too readily claim *bauen*, 'building', 'exclusively for themselves', the 'real sense of *bauen*, namely dwelling, falls into oblivion' (BDT: 146). The real nature of dwelling Heidegger traces further in another etymology. He considers the Old Saxon word *wuon* and the Gothic word *wunian*. These words, like *bauen*, mean 'to remain, to stay in a place' (BDT: 147). Afrikaans has the word *woon*, which means abiding in or inhabiting a place, and we can clearly see the etymological link this word shares with the Old Saxon and Gothic words. But, importantly, the Gothic word *wunian* also means 'to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace' (*ibid.*). In modern German the word for 'peace' is *Friede* and means 'the free . . . preserved from harm and danger, preserved from something, safeguarded'. Furthermore to free something 'really means to spare' it (*ibid.*), to 'leave something beforehand in its own nature' (*ibid.*). Dwelling is thus 'to be set at peace' within the 'free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving*' (*ibid.*). This establishes a peaceful environment. In Afrikaans the etymological connection that Heidegger wants to draw out here is more clearly illustrated: the word *vry* means *free*, and derived from it is *vrede*, meaning *peace* or *contentment*. Not only does the dweller embody freedom, but the conditions of dwelling allow this freedom to set the world at peace, to cultivate and safeguard 'each thing in its nature' (*ibid.*).

We can describe dwelling further as 'habitual' (BDT: 145). The earth is our home which we *inhabit*. In German the word *Gewohnte* ('familiar surroundings' in English translation) describes this condition. In English there is no equivalent which captures this sense of belonging to place – 'inhabit' does not fully express it. Afrikaans is more helpful and closer to the German, with the word *gewoonte*, meaning 'custom', 'habit', or 'way'. The root of this Afrikaans word is *woon*, which, as mentioned earlier means 'dwell', or 'live'. The evident etymological connection between *gewoonte* and *woon* shows how we can, more clearly than is immediately obvious in English, connect 'habit' with 'habitat' – the former ideally belongs to the latter and is established in the routine of daily living. 'Dwelling' arises in the situational context where the dweller has a sense of familiarity with the place he or she *inhabits* – and this familiarity is fostered through everyday habit. This familiarity with place and the routine that establishes it creates the sense of *belonging*

(being *near*) to that place. This belonging is such that a person's identity is only fully established and understood in terms of its association with place. An ontological topology is at work and it is this 'building,' as a continual practice and solidification of habit, which enables us to come to dwell.

Thus one of the key aims of 'Building Dwelling Thinking' is to recover the full meaning of building within the context of dwelling. The immediate context is rebuilding post-war Germany, but as mentioned above, for Heidegger the problem is much more widespread. The modern world does not readily associate building with dwelling, and does not necessarily build for the sake of dwelling, as agrarian societies did. The etymology provides a way to re-discover the fuller diachronic meaning concealed in the word 'building,' by demonstrating its linguistic relationship to dwelling. Heidegger's point, given the post-war context of the essay, is to show that, though building and dwelling are established through our familiarity with or *belongingness*, or *inhabitation* of place, modern humanity does not think of its 'basic character' as 'dwelling' (BDT: 146) anymore. For Heidegger (and Eliot) this subtle, yet profound ontological lack has become evident in the twentieth century and needs to be articulated as the fundamental problem which besets modern humanity. To dwell is to be *at home* somewhere (LH: 260). It means to be in a world of familiarity and peace, but, *especially* it means to be free. Truly dwelling in one place rather than another requires the cultivation and sedimentation of an emotional and psychological attachment toward that place. The truism 'home is where the heart is' succinctly expresses the meaning of this bond because the heart is, metaphorically, the emotional centre of our being. What this means in more realistic terms is that to dwell somewhere, to consider a place as *home*, requires *thinking* of oneself as belonging there. For Heidegger this thinking is a kind of ontological 'building' which both prompts and serves as the basis for physical building. Building and thinking are both 'inescapable for dwelling' (BDT: 158).

Thinking

Dwelling requires 'space' or 'room'. The word Heidegger uses here is *Raum*, 'a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging'. A space is something that 'has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary' (BDT: 152). A boundary is not where something stops but rather 'is that from which something *begins its presencing*' (*ibid.*). Bounded space is thus the precondition for building; it makes 'room' for something before the physical building has begun. We *clear* a forest to make space (or 'room') for a house or field. This sense of clearing is what allows something to begin 'presencing'. When

I clear my thoughts I create a 'mental space' for something to become apparent, to present itself. Our being in physical space and being able to 'create' mental space underpins our existence – we cannot conceive of ourselves as apart from this relationship with space; it is 'neither an external object nor an inner experience' (BDT: 154). We traverse space in our everyday existence and this *being-in-space* provides the possibility of establishing dwelling places. To say 'mortals *are*' is to say that *in dwelling* they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations' (BDT: 155).

Our primordial relationship to space is not physical but ontological. I can be nearer to a particular space in my memory than the space I occupy in my present location – imagination can dissolve the physical or historical separation. Thus space has a phenomenological property, in that the object of intention and the object itself are, in some sense, the same in conscious reflection, regardless of their physical or historical spatial separation. The brief example Heidegger provides is walking towards the lecture hall: 'When I go towards the door of the lecture hall, I am already there, and I could not go to it at all if I were not such that I am there' (*ibid.*). Thinking of myself in this spatial sense is a way of orientating my embodied self within the physical world. Though not yet *at* the lecture hall *physically*, in terms of *thinking* of myself in relation to place, meaning the phenomenological relation between myself and directing my thinking towards the hall, I am already in some sense *there* as I head towards the physical entrance. My ecstatic temporality allows this futural projection which is not only thinking through future time, but also the inhabitation of future space.

Dwelling can be understood as a spatial attitude, a particular way of thinking about ourselves in relation to locations and objects. It is, for Heidegger, 'what is proper' to place in that dwelling is an attunement which gathers people together (FS: xvi). Our relationship to place as a dwelling or home, both on a communal and individual level, is linked to experience – meaning our way of thinking about that place in terms of memory, emotion and imagination. If anxiety or fear characterizes an experience of place, dwelling there is not possible, whereas if peace and contentment are the most prominent emotions, being able to abide there should be the natural result, and further enable human flourishing. But foremost it is *thinking* for the sake of dwelling which is necessary to enable *building* for the sake of dwelling. The act of building is a process of *bringing something forth* – the bridge, for example, joins two previously separated land masses and so brings forth a crossing which did not previously exist. The bridge is a *clearing*, in that it makes actual something which before was conceived imaginatively as possible. The Ancient Greeks call this process

of clearing *techne*, meaning ‘to make something appear, within what is present, as this or that, in this way or that’ (BDT: 157). *Techne* is a *freeing* process, one actualized through our desire to build.

However the *essential* nature of building cannot be adequately understood in terms of architecture or engineering or even as *techne* – the essential nature is ‘letting dwell’, for, only ‘if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build’ (BDT: 157). We build because of our desire to dwell – it being our *proper* relationship to Being – and thus enable the process of *techne* by responding to the world around us and freeing up the potential it possesses.

The fourfold

Dwelling, as a ‘sparing and preserving’, only realizes the fullness of its meaning in the context of *the fourfold* [*Das Geviert*]. Essentially the fourfold is what transforms a place into a ‘dwelling-place’.²⁰ Heidegger identifies four interrelated elements: earth, sky, divinities and mortals, which together constitute ‘a *primal oneness*’ (BDT: 147, TT: 171). It is likely he developed this terminology from Hölderlin’s poetry, where these terms appear often.²¹ Earth is described in term of its fertility and abundance. The sky regulates the rhythms of human existence and with it the seasons and weather. The divinities are the messengers of their godhead. Lastly, mortals are human beings, the only beings who truly die because they alone understand the meaning of mortality. All four elements are held together in a simple oneness (BDT: 148, TT: 176).²² The role of mortals, as *dwellers*, is to *spare* and *preserve* the fourfold in its essence. As dwellers we are the ‘shepherds of Being’ (LH: 234) and our role is guardianship of this home (LH: 217). Heidegger sets up this ideal description of humankind as *dwellers* to contrast it to our modern condition, which is characterized as a fundamental loss of dwelling, homelessness.

A useful way to understand the fourfold, like *Four Quartets*, is to imagine it as a kind of poetic *mandala*, leading the reader into a deeper perception of ‘unity in diversity’.²³ The

²⁰ J. Young, ‘The Fourfold’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger: Second Edition*, ed. C. B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 373.

²¹ Kockelmans, *On the Truth of Being*, 94. See also J-F Mattei, *Heidegger et Hölderlin: Le Quadripartite* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001) who questions this assumption.

²² See G. Harman, ‘Dwelling With the Fourfold’, *Space and Culture* 12, no. 3 (2009): 292-302 for a critical, analytic reading of this concept in Heidegger, which also traces other uses of ‘fourness’ is Heidegger’s thought.

²³ P.S. Sri, *T.S. Eliot: Vedanta and Buddhism* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 105.

Sanskrit word means 'circle', an encompassing form 'symbolising wholeness'.²⁴ Often the visual mandala image has several concentric circles which enclose a square, cut through by transverse lines. Kramer writes that whether in the East (Indic and Chinese traditions) or the West (in Kabbalah and Hermetic traditions), the 'schematic unity is represented by the quaternary of the four cardinal points'.²⁵ This is where the eye's focus is drawn, to the centre of the diagram where the images and their meaning intersect and are unified. Eliot's poem is a poetic *mandala* because of the way symbols and images re-occur in different quartets, weaving together a compelling whole from four parts. Heidegger's fourfold uses a mandala-like pattern to suggest an ontological truth.

Heidegger, in his essay, 'On the Question of Being' (1955) (QB), discusses the 'negative' sign of crossing out the word 'Being', arguing that is it not merely negative but points to the 'four regions of the fourfold and their being gathered in the locale of this crossing through' (QB: 311). Furthermore this crossing out of being takes human essence into the claim of a more originary way of thinking, meaning *Ereignis* thinking (*ibid.*). Visualized in the context of a mandala, each element of the fourfold is contained within a large circle, which is crossed through by two diagonal lines. The four spaces the lines create contain the elements of the fourfold, and the point of intersection, where the lines cross, represents the unification of their differences within this greater whole. From a visual perspective this intersection point represents the *Ereignis*.

In their use of this obviously symbolic fourfold structure, Eliot and Heidegger follow in the steps of the various ancient traditions that Kramer mentions, where four, because it is an even number and thus 'balanced', can be used to depict harmonious structure and 'schematic unity'. This symbolic structure is also useful in transcending the limits of the written word, offering visual clues which allow patterns to be imagined and depicted that illustrate this unity – hence the use of traditional mandalas as illustrative ways of expressing complex philosophical or religious ideas. In the meeting of poetry and philosophy in language, the symbolic structure further adds to the complexity of meaning, which Eliot, as poet, is certainly attentive to, more so than Heidegger in his description of the fourfold. Nonetheless, the mythical texture of Heidegger's later writings about the fourfold is certainly in the same vein.

²⁴ Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, 219.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 220.

For Heidegger human beings dwell in that we save the earth (BDT: 148). This saving is a *freeing* from our mastery and subjugation of the earth. We receive the sky as sky, respecting the rhythms of the heavens and their seasons, their blessings and inclemency, not turning ‘night into day nor day into harassed unrest’ (*ibid.*). Mortals dwell in that ‘they await the divinities as divinities’ (*ibid.*). This waiting for the divinities to reveal themselves forms part of the continuing life of mortals, who do not make their own gods nor resort to the worship of idols (*ibid.*). Lastly, mortals are named as such because of their essential nature – ‘their being capable of death as death’ (*ibid.*). The nature of death is not facing the void of the Nothing (which it is in *Being and Time*). Rather it is the proper culmination of the life lived as a dweller within the fourfold. It is not a meaningless, empty death.

The fourfold and the role of humankind as dwellers is expressed in our staying-with or nearness to ‘things’ (BDT: 149, TT: 164). The presence of the fourfold is ‘accomplished at any time in simple unity’ through the presence of things. Dwelling, ‘insofar as it keeps or secures the fourfold in things, is as this keeping, a *building*’ (BDT: 149). Our attitude of sparing and preserving toward things, towards a jug, a painting, a bridge, a vineyard, anything created - a *building* - is where the fourfold is manifest. Heidegger uses the examples of a bridge and also a jug, as things which *gather* the elements of the fourfold around them (BDT: 151, TT: 171).²⁶ The proper understanding of the bridge is not only limited to the properties it possesses and its purpose as a crossing, but encompassing the world it reveals and the world contained within it. The bridge, like any thing, is a unique site which draws together the elements of the fourfold in its own way. It is a site of the ‘crossing through’ where the four regions of the fourfold meet (QB: 311).

A suggestive contemporary, though still fittingly Heideggerian example, of this preservation and manifestation of the fourfold is the 100-year-old Grafton Bridge, in Auckland, New Zealand. The bridge is a structure, a ‘thing’. It is used daily by mortals who traverse it on their journeys. Grafton Bridge vaults across two sections of earth, uniting them as one. It was recently modified, to make it more stable in the event of an earthquake, showing that mortals know how to create their dwellings to be able to respond to changes of the earth. The road across the bridge is open to the sky and heavens, so that mortals walking across it can see the sun and stars; yet either side of the walkway is sheltered by a transparent, overhanging balustrade, warding off the elements

²⁶ Young, ‘The Fourfold’, 385-386.

while leaving the view of the city and harbour unrestricted. Fittingly, on one side of the bridge is the Symonds Street graveyard, reminding these mortals of their mortality, that they are, as Heidegger says, 'always themselves on their way to the last bridge' (BDT: 151). The divinities are also not entirely absent, though Grafton Bridge has no '*Herrgottswinkel*' (altar corner),²⁷ and is not named after a saint; the graveyard is a reminder of the divinities' role within the fourfold. Heidegger warns that, of all the elements of the fourfold, the divine presence is most easily obstructed, or even wholly pushed aside (BDT: 151).

This absence of the gods is one of the significant causes of the loss of genuine dwelling, and our resulting modern condition of homelessness. It is important, therefore, to understand exactly what Heidegger means by the 'gods'. Young argues that the divinities in Heidegger's later work play the same role as the heritage and ethos of a community in *Being and Time*.²⁸ The gods, which represent the divine laws of a community, are similar to Dasein's 'existence possibilities', which are shaped by our heritage. We are *thrown* into a heritage and community and this already pre-establishes many of the values which determine the decisions and course of our lives. Heritage is embodied for Dasein in the figure of heroes (BT: 436-437).²⁹

Julian Young argues that both the earlier concept of heritage and later concept of gods function as existential features of human being and are ontologically necessary constituents of our existence. We *always* live before – in the sense of 'in the presence of', 'in front of' – the divinities, even in their absence, whether we acknowledge them or not.³⁰ Young argues that this remains the case if we interpret the gods as exemplary human beings, such as Jesus, Mandela, or Mother Teresa. They embody the best attributes of human existence and are mythologized and deified. Hence they become *godlike* because they act as a repository for the best values we hold to be true. This is a plausible interpretation of the later Heidegger's conception of the divinities and chimes well with the earlier conception of heritage and heroes.

There is more to the gods, however. The problem, I think, is that Heidegger, in making three of the four elements of the fourfold self-evident in their description: earth, sky and mortals, implies an equally literal interpretation for the gods. In doing this he draws attention to our difficulty in acknowledging and relating to this fourth element.

²⁷ Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, 116.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

This shows up how foreign and strained our relationship to the gods has become, compared with the comparative ease of our relating to the other two elements. Living in a disenchanted world means that believing in a concept such as God or gods – as beings with whom we are intimate and whose divine presence infuses the world – is at best difficult, or at worst absurd, in our dominant material and scientific conception of reality. Thus we have effectively concealed and closed ourselves off from the gods of the fourfold. Heidegger himself writes that our time is so destitute ‘it can no longer discern the default of God as a default’ (WPF: 89). Young’s interpretation of the divinities as heroes does not acknowledge how distant and difficult our relationship to them has become as *gods*, and so does not provide an ideal equivalent comparison.³¹ The absence of the gods is part of our modern condition and this complicates genuine building and genuine attempts to preserve and live among the fourfold.

Thus building for the sake of dwelling is an attempt to create space for the preservation and manifestation of the fourfold. Genuine building is characterized as a ‘distinctive letting-dwell’ (BDT: 156) which entails an awareness of, and respect for the fourfold, so that in the process and completion of building the fourfold is manifest. Heidegger considers a Black Forest farmhouse built around 1750, as an example of this kind of genuine building.³² The self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and heaven, divinities and mortals enter ‘*in simple oneness* into things’ orders the house (BDT: 157). The house shows up how the peasants in their *nearness* to the other elements of the fourfold, built the house as a natural extension and expression of their already established sense of dwelling. The house stands on the slope of a wind-sheltered mountain, among the meadows, close to the spring. The roof is built such that can bear the burden of heavy snow which in turn insulates the house and shields it against storms during the long winter nights. The house has a small altar behind the community table; it has chambers for the sacred events of childbirth and death which take place within the life of the house. The house is built in harmony with the world it exists in, and its building is the outcome of mortals dwelling there.

³¹ For Young’s most recent thoughts on the gods specifically, and the fourfold in general see J. Young, ‘Heidegger’s *Heimat*,’ *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 19 no. 2 (2011): 285-293.

³² See E.S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) especially the chapter titled ‘Two Ways To Dwell’ for some alternative, thought-provoking examples of dwelling places, in Heidegger’s sense.

Heidegger is not suggesting that we should only build Black Forest houses (though we should certainly apply the principles behind this kind of building to our modern houses – especially because it is here, in our own houses, where we dwell foremost) but intends to illustrate the essential *meaning of building* as motivated by the human need for dwelling. In Heidegger's context the Black Forest house is the ideal example. So when we consider the attitude towards the world that enabled this house to be built in the first place, we understand how the house now serves as a testament to this attitude (BDT: 158).

The plight of dwelling

The farmhouse, as a structure, is the result of a way of thinking about dwelling (and thus building) and presents a further opportunity to think about the nature of dwelling itself in our present condition. Mortals, ideally, exist as beings that dwell, but building and thinking form an innate part of this ideal existence, and genuine building is only possible as a product of engaged thinking about the nature of dwelling. This brings the essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' to a difficult concluding question: what is the state of dwelling in a precarious age? (BDT: 158); what is the '*real plight of dwelling?*' (*ibid.*). This question has nothing to do, in the context of the essay, with Germany's immediate housing shortage and the attempt to rectify the destruction of the Second World War. The problem is 'older than the world wars with their destruction, older also than the increase of the earth's population and the condition of the industrial workers' (BDT: 159). The real plight is that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they '*must ever learn to dwell*'. For Heidegger, man's homelessness consists in this, 'that man still does not even think of the *real* plight of dwelling as *the* plight' (*ibid.*). Yet, if we 'give thought' to our homelessness, it 'is a misery no longer . . . it is the sole summons that *calls* mortals into their dwelling' (*ibid.*).

What does this mean? Heidegger's discussion focussed on the 'ideal' condition of humankind, namely as *mortals who dwell within the fourfold*. He gives examples, such as the old farmhouse, which suggests that dwelling *has* been part of human existence, but has since been lost, our modern condition being one of homelessness. Yet the essay concludes by stating that the 'real plight' of mortals is that they must '*ever learn to dwell*', that they are always in search of the nature of dwelling. We are always building, tearing down and re-designing the world. No human structure last forever and dwelling itself, something which abides for a time, does not endure permanently. Humans are futural beings and project ourselves into the unfolding and unknown future, and this changes our present circumstance in ways we cannot predict. Furthermore, anxiety in the face of death

and the permanence of death itself means that dwelling cannot endure – individuals, communities and societies have a beginning and an end. Heidegger seems to allude to Schopenhauer’s view of human existence as driven by a deep, irreconcilable dissatisfaction with its current state; our will to live continually strives after more of whatever it does not have, and this cycle is ceaseless and unrelenting. Arguably it is this human drive which prevents our establishing a dwelling that endures permanently. Furthermore, elements of the fourfold itself can destabilize dwelling; the will of the gods is mysterious and fickle, the powers of the earth and sky can create innumerable unpredictable disasters that destroy established dwelling. Long term changes in weather patterns can also necessitate moving from one location to another. Thus there are many ways in which mortals must ‘ever learn to dwell’.

The point for Heidegger, it seems, is the *searching* itself, this is what prompts the thinking about our present homelessness and will ‘summon’ us to search anew for this ideal, hopeful, peaceful, sparing existence. This wisdom as Eliot writes, is ‘the wisdom of humility . . . For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business’ (EC: 179, 182). If we are to escape the nihilism of our present condition the hope lies in the striving and seeking – we await the coming of the gods by remaining cognisant of their absence and perceptive to the intimations of their coming (BDT: 148). We must continually ‘think for the sake of dwelling’ (BDT: 159).

Enframing and technology, or: How not to dwell

The essay ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ (1953) forms part of the core of Heidegger’s later philosophy on dwelling. His evocation of dwelling and the fourfold, this holistic, somewhat mythic³³ and ideal relationship of mortals with Being, is a response to the overwhelming, dominating and all-concealing nature of modern technology. In this essay Heidegger identifies the *essence* of modern technology, which he terms ‘enframing’ [*Gestell*] (QCT: 325, AWP: 82, QTT: 36-37). It is this singular principle which drives modern technology forward. Dwelling is fundamentally inimical to the aggressive, overwhelming nature of the dynamic of enframing. Heidegger is not a Luddite and his essay is not a call to rage against the machine and a return to an agrarian community akin to modern farming communities such as the Amish.³⁴ Rather the essay is a warning to

³³ See D. Griffiths, ‘Reading Elements of the Later Heidegger as Myth,’ *Phronimon* 8 no. 2 (2007): 25-33.

³⁴ Though there is possibly much that he would admire about them.

modern humanity about the dangers of modern technology, *if* we remain unreflective about the fundamental way it is changing the nature of human existence.

The reason for this warning relates to Heidegger's notion of *aletheia* and concomitantly, human freedom. As mentioned above, truth, understood as *aletheia*, is the revealing and concealing of Being through various disclosures. The problem with modern technology is that it 'enframes' all human creation in a way that reflects only technological ordering and calculability. This means that the world, in its plenitude, is reduced to only one particular revealing which dominates and subsumes all others. The world is reduced to a single value reflected in the maximization of profit, the stock indicator, the gold price, the quarterly report. The more effectively we can use the world to produce, the more successful and efficient our enframing of it is. Technology and capitalism go hand-in-hand. However, dwelling, the ideal conception of human existence in which the plenitude of Being can freely manifest itself, is closed off in a world conceived solely in terms of the technological.

Historically the scientific revolution of the eighteenth century and the accompanying industrial revolution drove a surge in the development of modern technology. The teleological view of science promoted by the likes of Aristotle and Aquinas was gradually eroded and replaced with the Cartesian and Newtonian worldview. This enabled humanism to flourish and gradually unshackled humanity from many oppressive and superstitious beliefs. Yet, paradoxically, in spite of this 'new freedom', Heidegger contends that everywhere we remain *unfree* and chained to technology (QCT: 311). To ignore this or consider the impact of technology as something neutral is self-deception. It is this delusion which makes us complacent and blind to the essence of modern technology, which succinctly, is the human will to harness and master raw materials – the will to power over the natural forces of the earth. This will is so overriding that it has outstripped us, its original movers, such that it is no longer clear whether humanity has control of technology, or whether technology has become a golem who controls its creator.

All technologies, regardless of their sophistication, rely on instruments which enable us to control and manipulate nature. The carpenter has his hammer which assists him in creating a table, the physicist a sophisticated particle accelerator to experiment with the nature of atoms and other atomic particles. Both these activities are instances of revealing through a causal process, what Heidegger calls, via the Ancient Greeks, *poiesis*, a 'bringing-forth' of concealment into unconcealment (QCT: 317). The activity of craftsmanship, along

with the tools and raw material, creates the table. Something is brought-forth into being through human effort and imagination. The table could not come into existence spontaneously. Rather, the carpenter *responds* to the ‘shapes slumbering in the wood’ and it is this ‘relatedness’ between the thing, wood, and the craftsman which maintains the whole craft (WCT: 14). As already mentioned this process of revealing the Ancient Greeks called *aletheia* and it is part of the mysterious potential of Being itself. Human ingenuity allows us ways to harness this potential and create things that did not previously exist. As we saw in chapter two we are the site of openness, the *Da*, which allows beings to be manifest, and it is this nearness to things (BDT: 149) which fulfils our role as dwellers.

To illustrate how modern technological enframing works, Heidegger contrasts it to ancient (pre-modern) craftsmanship or ‘craft technology’, meaning the kind of making which harmonizes with natural processes, and is often based on inter-generational, practical applications passed from master to apprentice. Heidegger indicates this kind of technology with the terms ‘older handicraft technology’ or ‘primitive’ technology (QCT: 312).³⁵

There is, however, an important distinction between this kind of craftsmanship, in say the work of the carpenter, and the work of the atomic physicist. Though both rely on tools and technical knowledge to manipulate nature, there is a difference in approach, in attitude and in result. Both are ways of revealing and can, *initially*, be described as forms of *poiesis*. But modern technology does not reveal Being in the way that ancient technology does. The kind of revealing of modern technology is a ‘challenging-forth’, in contrast to ancient technology, which is a ‘bringing-forth’ (QCT: 319-320). Both are ways of revealing the hidden potential of Being but the essential difference is how this transformation from raw material to thing takes place. Ancient technology, as a ‘bringing-forth’, is a process which *freed* something into its essence. The wood the carpenter uses is transformed into a table, but the essential nature of the wood is unchanged. In fact, the very properties wood is celebrated for, its durability, strength and beauty, are all preserved in its transformation into an enduring use object. Ancient techniques of craftsmanship are derived from natural forces themselves. A natural substance such as silver is extracted from nature through applied processes of force and heat and thus *freed* into its essence – as silver. Its *silverness* is fully revealed as jewellery or cutlery. This principle of ‘bringing-forth’ is a natural

³⁵ Young uses ‘ancient’ or ‘pre-modern’ technology and I have adopted his terminology. See Young, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, 37.

unfolding and transformation of a thing, while maintaining something essential to its nature in the process. This is unlike, say, nuclear waste products such as spent plutonium which will remain toxic for thousands of years and has to be stored, useless and dangerous.

Phenomenologically there is also a distinction between ancient and modern technology. The carpenter, because of the close relationship he has with his tools and the materials in the process of making, is absorbed in, and forms part of the creation of the thing. The table itself will bear distinctive traits of the craftsman – not dissimilar from the creation of the work of art. The physicist is more objective and observes a process unfold with a theoretical, neutral distance to ensure the experiment, as far as possible, is not influenced by human error or bias. So while the personality of the craftsman or artist is present and influences the thing he or she creates, the scientist should not influence the experiment in any way which might prejudice the results.

Though Heidegger suggests that *poiesis* is unfolding in both the process of modern and ancient technology, it becomes clear as ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ develops that the process which governs modern technology is, in fact, radically different from the ‘bringing-forth’ of ancient technology. Modern technology is a ‘setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth’ (QCT: 321, ID: 34-35). What is challenged-forth is the natural object as a storehouse of potential energy – what Heidegger calls ‘standing reserve’ [*Bestand*] (QCT: 322). Consider the forest which provides the carpenter’s wood. For most of human history it was naturally replenished through the cycles of nature and left to be. With the dawn of the modern age this attitude to nature has changed dramatically. The forest is manipulated by scientists and engineers, owned and enclosed by multi-national corporations. Trees are planted which grow quickly, can be harvested readily and replanted. The whole process is maximized to ensure proficiency and profitability. This is the sense of ‘*challenging-forth*’ which Heidegger wants to evoke. Nature is *set upon* to provide energy and material which drives modern technology – the forest is seen purely as a form of potential energy.

Another example is the physicist who attempts to unlock the mysteries of the atomic world. Atoms are smashed together in order to unleash energy and unknown particles and the violence this requires destroys the atom itself. The very fabric of the material world is revealed as a storehouse of potential energy. In both these examples a different attitude towards Being is at work, which stands in contrast to the freeing process of natural

technology. The earth as *earth* is eliminated, and everything transformed into *world*, conceived purely as 'standing reserve', as resource.³⁶

Modern technology is directly a consequence of the development of humankind. It is not only something we do to the world, but also something we form part of, and enable through our mastery and participation. Paradoxically we inhabit the dual role of being both exploiters of standing reserve, and are ourselves exploited by it, by being treated and reduced to standing reserve through our productivity and consumption. We drive technology forward and in doing so take part in this ordering way of revealing. This approach to nature Heidegger calls 'enframing'. It is the essence of modern technology and yet itself is nothing technological (QCT: 326).

Rather, enframing is a principle which reveals the world in a way that facilitates the work of modern technology – namely purely as standing reserve (*ibid.*). When we consider the issues that most concern us today globally, one of the central problems is uncertainty about the continuing availability of energy. The world is viewed as a storehouse of energy and ever new ways are developed to ensure this is available to us. The secure availability of energy is tied to economic growth and consequently all things (including human beings) are valued in terms of productive power and available energy for consumption.

The 'supreme danger'

What is lost in this hegemonic worldview? For Heidegger, essentially, human freedom. Our existence is the site and place of freedom, where the process of *aletheia* can freely unfold, unhindered. The possibilities of existence are realized in this freeing realm, which remains *yet* to be disclosed in an undetermined, free way because of our ecstatic temporal nature and our futural projected nature. If, however, only one mode of revealing dominates any others, then effectively we are no longer able to recognize or exercise our essential, free nature. Instead this freedom becomes determined according to the principle

³⁶ The natural forces of the earth do not meekly submit; often, they still assert themselves, sometimes in dramatic fashion. The natural disasters caused by weather systems and geological forces remind us that though we consider ourselves 'lords of beings' (LH: 245), some things are still beyond our control. The irony is that enframing drives the exploitation of the earth and also destabilizes the weather cycles of nature. We seem, literally, to be reaping the destruction we sow. Earth and world remain in tension, though if we continue to destroy the earth, it, in turn, will destroy our world. Though I have not addressed the branch of Heidegger studies which deals with 'deep ecology' important work has been done, especially by M.E. Zimmerman. See M.E. Zimmerman, 'Towards a Heideggerean Ethos for Radical Environmentalism,' *Environmental Ethics* 5 no. 3 (1993): 99-131; M.E. Zimmerman, 'Rethinking the Heidegger-Deep Ecology Relationship,' *Environmental Ethics* 15 no. 3 (2002): 195-224; and M.E. Zimmerman, 'Heidegger, Buddhism, and Deep Ecology,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by C. Guignon, 240-270 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

of enframing and our rightful nature is concealed (QCT: 331). Technological enframing becomes the sole and supreme way in which Being is disclosed, to such an extent that we lose sight of other possibilities. Human existence, instead of offering up a myriad of undisclosed potentials, is dominated by one alone, such that the concept of freedom itself becomes superfluous in the overwhelming nature of enframing.³⁷ The ‘supreme danger’ (QCT: 332) is thus the loss of our free human essence. With this our potential for dwelling is lost, because dwelling is a fundamental feature of enacting this freeing sphere. Dwelling stands in direct contrast to enframing. Enframing drives technological advancement forward, while at the same time concealing the possibility of dwelling.

Yet, it is precisely *because* of this risk that Heidegger believes we can still be saved from ourselves. He argues that because human nature is understood principally as the site of freedom, this ontological prerequisite for being human will never be entirely surrendered and relinquished. Rather, in the face of being overwhelmed by technological domination, humankind will recognize its essential nature as fundamentally, *free*, and begin a way of resistance against enframing. Thus contained within the overwhelming nature of enframing is also concealed the ‘saving power’ which resists it (QCT: 330-333). This possibility only exists if we reflect more consciously on the nature of modern technology itself.

This is where the word ‘*Question*’ comes to the fore in the essay title, since Heidegger, as philosopher, is *questioning* the nature of technology, to reveal aspects of it which may, at first glance, be concealed. To pay heed to, and remain mindful, of the danger of modern technology is also to recognize that we have a more authentic and essential nature, based on our freeing human potential, and fully expressed in our potential to ‘*dwell*’.

The ‘saving power’

Thus the most authentic dwelling, ‘poetic dwelling’ (EHP: 115), consists in fully engaging with this free sphere in which humankind can realize its fullest potential. Heidegger’s ideal embodiment of this poetic dwelling is the Ancient Greeks. Ancient Greek society and what it created, its artworks, architecture, philosophy, theatre and politics epitomize, for Heidegger, true human flourishing that is possible when we fully understand and express the meaning of freedom through our dwelling. Certainly whether Ancient Greek society

³⁷ M. de Beistegui, *Thinking with Heidegger: Displacements* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 152.

was really as noble and perfect as thought is highly debateable. Yet this does not detract from the accuracy of the insight into human ontology Heidegger draws from examining them.

Not surprisingly, Heidegger looks to the Greeks' artworks and their conception of art to reveal the 'saving power'. He finds that the great artworks of Ancient Greece illuminated the presence of the gods and the dialogue of divine and human destining, and so they revealed the unfolding of truth as *aletheia* (QCT: 339). These works embody their makers' highest response to the revealing that was granted to them – not merely as aesthetics or cultural activity, but rather as acknowledgment of the compelling mystery of Being itself. The art of the Ancient Greeks was a creativity which responded to the divine potential of the world they inhabited. It is this unfolding which expresses *poiesis* in its fullest sense (*ibid.*). The Greeks achieved the creation of these great artworks because they dwelt authentically. They lived within an understanding of the world where they piously acknowledged their gods and the mysterious divine potential of Being itself. They understood the earth as their home and dwelt upon it.

To find a more contemporary affirmation of this impulse Heidegger looks to the poetry of Hölderlin who tells us 'poetically man dwells on this earth' (QCT: 340; PMD: 211). The fullness of human potential is realized in dwelling poetically. What Heidegger means by this is discussed in the lecture titled '. . . Poetically Man Dwells . . .' (1951) (PMD), which is a philosophical reflection on a late poem by Hölderlin. Poetic dwelling is the ideal, and stands in contrast to our modern condition, where we dwell 'altogether unpoetically' (PMD: 225). Hölderlin, for Heidegger, perceives dwelling as the 'basic character of human existence' (PMD: 213), and poetry as 'what really lets us dwell'; poetic creation, 'which lets us dwell, is a kind of building' (*ibid.*). This argument links with previous discussions in this section, about how *thinking* for the sake of dwelling is necessary to enable *building* for the sake of dwelling. Heidegger affirms this trifold relationship again in this lecture.

He argues here that poetic dwelling is affirmed in and through language. Our genuine relationship to language is one where we think, not that we are the 'masters' and 'shapers' of language (as do those who live in the world of enframed thinking), but rather precisely the opposite: that language is the 'master of man' (PMD: 213). Words constitute 'the ultimate texture and stuff of our moral being'.³⁸ Language, while creating the reality

³⁸ I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 241.

we inhabit, is, at the same time, always reconstituting that reality. Our ecstatic nature means that the future is always open to unknown possibilities, and thus the language to express them and make sense of them is *still* to be revealed. It is in our 'authentic listening' to this call of language which affirms our being open to dwell – a relationship founded on our being in the 'free sphere' (BDT: 147) where the words that will emerge to shape our experience of Being are unhindered.

The poet and his or her poetic creation is most attentive to how this unfolds, for the poet tries to move language beyond its present articulation, to express new worlds and possibilities. In Eliot's language, 'each venture / Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate' (EC: 182). Heidegger recognizes in the poet someone who utterly surrenders to the call of language, who is totally free and open to it and 'submits what he [or she] says to an ever more painstaking listening'. In this submission the poet's language moves beyond 'propositional' statements in terms of 'correctness or incorrectness' (PMD: 214). Instead it becomes a liminal force which challenges our preconceptions about the world and helps us to 'see with new eyes'. The poetic word allows us to be *appropriated* by language and perceive the world itself as an Event which happens through language. The poet takes language beyond its merely descriptive capacity to the highest form of a thinking which can build for the sake of dwelling. Thus Heidegger will go on in the lecture to claim that poetry is the authentic gauge of the dimension of dwelling, that it is the 'primal form of building', the 'original admission of dwelling' (PMD: 225). Without this poetic dimension humankind cannot dwell properly, and it is exactly this dimension which enframing closes off.

The general argument is that the 'saving power' is linked to the great artwork, which can precipitate the *Ereignis* 'event', as discussed in chapter two of this thesis. If we moderns, disenchanted and made homeless by the spiritual vacuum caused by the loss of the gods and our 'worship of the machine', want to restore, or at least recognize our true authentic potential as 'dwellers', then our last refuge is the artwork. These are not artworks conceived of as part of aesthetics or merely as consumer objects. Rather, they are artworks which *world*, in that they provide a unique disclosure of Being, and so escape and even confront technological enframing, and the spiritual and metaphysical nihilism that

accompanies it.³⁹ This possibility Heidegger explores explicitly at the end of his essay of technology, but the question of the saving power of art is a theme which dominates much of his later thought. He questions whether the arts can offer up this poetic revealing in the face of the technological.

A striking illustration of Heidegger's argument is given by Alessandro Baricco, a modern Italian novelist, who shares something of Heidegger's sentiment concerning the Ancient Greeks. Baricco abridged and translated Homer's *Iliad* into Italian, and it was read in public in Rome and Turin, and broadcast on Italian radio in 2004. This public performance of the artwork, an oration, gestures towards art as 'the saving power' in the spirit of the Ancient Greeks, providing a 'unique disclosure of Being' to a community. Baricco re-accounts numerous cases of people who sat in their parked cars for hours, 'unwilling to turn off the radio'.⁴⁰

In his modern translation Baricco writes a brief reflection on the beauty of war for the Ancient Greeks. His argument is that 'war is hell – *but beautiful*'.⁴¹ War offers the only 'recompense for the shadows of life' and this is why, throughout human existence, men have been drawn to it.⁴² Warfare strips life down to its bare essentials and confronts us starkly with the immediacy of action and consequence. In war one is meant to experience existential clarity and, 'truly' know oneself, in a way that ordinary life cannot offer. It is the transcendent 'beauty' of this experience which remains compelling. War gives 'a powerful meaning to things' because it places individuals 'in the blinding light of death'.⁴³ Kant offers a similar sentiment, though he makes a distinction between beauty and the sublime in discerning aesthetic judgements.⁴⁴ For Kant, war, if conducted for the rights of civilians, has something sublime about it. Furthermore, those who partake in war, exposed to danger and performing acts of courage, also foster the sublime about them.⁴⁵

The *Iliad* itself is an ancient testament to the mythologizing of war, because it tells the story of human greatness which can only fully be realized on the immediacy of the

³⁹ Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) is an artist who Heidegger considers for this affirmation. In the discussion of Van Gogh's painting of shoes Heidegger evokes the world of the peasant woman who dwells upon the earth and whose life is structured around the cycles of nature and within the fourfold (OWA: 159).

⁴⁰ A. Baricco, *An Iliad*, trans. A. Goldstein (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), x.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, translated by P. Guyer and E. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 49-50.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

battlefield. For Baricco the argument is that ‘true pacifism’ will only succeed when it stops relying on the ‘demonization of war’, since ‘only when we are capable of another kind of beauty will we be able to do without what war has always offered us’.⁴⁶ Baricco writes that it is in the ‘patient and secret work of millions of artists who every day work to create *another kind of beauty*’⁴⁷ that the ‘saving power’ will be found. Art offers a different beauty to war, more dazzling than Achilles’, and ‘infinitely more gentle’.⁴⁸

Baricco’s idealism for *The Iliad* does not adequately compensate for the sheer horror of war, particularly those of the twentieth century. Nonetheless he is writing this in the context of the Trojan War, a heroic war told in the spirit of Greek tragedy, a war totally unlike our ‘technological wars’, the result of the efficient overproduction of the Industrial Revolution. Heidegger and Wittgenstein were both involved the First World War and Wittgenstein particularly sought out the ‘aesthetic’ and existential experience of war which Baricco describes.⁴⁹ And the First World War was, initially, glorified as an ennobling testament of manhood. The point I want to emphasize via Baricco is that he, like Heidegger, sees a possibility in *art* which is still to be fully recognized and acknowledged, which might even save us from future warfare – but only if it can express *beauty* compellingly enough to absorb humankind and enable us to forget the desire for war. Great art speaks to the heart of life and can re-confirm and gather the fourfold together.⁵⁰

Heidegger contends that the decisive confrontation with technology must occur within a realm that is also a revealing of Being, yet fundamentally different from technology. Such a realm is art (QCT: 340). Art offers up an important way of revealing Being, without ‘challenging it forth’ in the way of enframing. Art offers another way of ‘seeing’, another language of human experience, something, as Baricco says, ‘infinitely more gentle’ than war. But to fully appreciate this we need to reflect on art, not in the

⁴⁶ Baricco, *An Iliad*, 157.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Eliot, belatedly, tried to enlist in August and September 1918, after the United States entered the First World War in 1917. However, because of medical reasons he was disqualified. See Gordon, *T.S. Eliot*, 136-137. For Heidegger’s involvement in the First World War Safranski’s biography is a good place to start, see Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, especially chapter four. Two excellent works on Wittgenstein which discuss his life and wartime involvement are the semi-fictional biography: *The World As I Found It*, B. Duffy (New York: New York Review Books, 2010), and the recent family biography: *The House of Wittgenstein. A Family At War*, A. Waugh (New York: Double Day, 2008).

⁵⁰ When I watch the Rugby World Cup I sometimes wonder if it is here, perhaps, where the ‘saving power’ does truly lie. But the Ancient Greeks where also the first Olympians so perhaps rugby can be reconciled under the umbrella of ‘great’ art. Simon Critchley has some thoughts about this concerning football, see S. Critchley, ‘Men With Balls: The Art of the 2010 World Cup’, Apexart, <http://www.apexart.org/exhibitions/critchley.php>.

manner of aesthetics, but instead as an unfolding of Being itself. Art is a *worlding*, a way of distilling human events and emotion. It offers a way of disclosing a world by narrating and expressing individual and communal human experience. It is an exemplary form of *aletheia*, an expression of revealing purely for its own sake, and so it is an expression of the ideal of human freedom. Art accomplishes revealing, in all its myriad forms, without the engulfing coercive violence of enframing. This is the context of Heidegger's saying that poetry, conceived in its broadest sense as encompassing all artistic creation, 'is what really lets us dwell . . . Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building' (PMD: 213). But the unfolding of art itself, its coming to presence, is still mysterious, for it draws a vital part of its impulse from the earth – the place upon which we dwell. It is this tension between the earth and world that Eliot conveys in *Four Quartets* and the reason why the poem is about dwelling, both in its confrontation with enframing, by offering a vision of the world infused with the divine presence, and also in its acknowledgment of the darker, more mysterious forces of the earth.

From a Heideggerian position, then, *Four Quartets* deals with dwelling on two levels, firstly in that home and identity on the earth form one of its themes, and secondly *because* it is poetry, and as poetry it is also that way in which the possibility of dwelling can be most effectively thought out, expressed and realized. What this means for this chapter is that Eliot, as poet, is enabling a 'building' in the sense that he is building through writing poetry about the nature of dwelling. The fact that he is doing this in a time when dwelling itself has become a question, confirms that he is truly fulfilling the role of poet, for he is a poet writing 'in a destitute time' (WPF: 139) when the need for poetry is great.

Heidegger writes that poets 'who are of the more venturesome kind are under way on the track of the holy because they experience the unholy as such' (WPF: 138). Eliot, whose poem is a spiritual meditation about place and dwelling, is just this 'venturesome kind' of poet, particularly because his earlier poetry, such as *The Waste Land* and 'Hollow Men', is a testament to the 'unholy', and *Four Quartets* itself was composed during our most 'unholy' time, the Second World War. Thus Eliot, as poet, who has experienced both the holy and unholy, is able to express both realities. He understands that only once the proper relationship with the gods, with Being, has been restored, can humankind truly dwell, be existentially 'at home' and experience the world again as a 'holy' place. Heidegger's concept of dwelling offers us a way to interpret and understand Eliot's later poem so that the true meaning of 'home' can be remembered and, hopefully, in small ways, restored.

Section II: *Four Quartets*

Four Quartets is a poetic meditation on place and on coming to be 'in place', coming, that is, to dwell. This being 'in place' is described through a poetic, philosophical and psychological narration which deals with the significance of specific places. Each quartet is named for a place which, either because of historical or personal memory, is important for Eliot's identity; charting his own coming to be 'in place'. Three of the places evoked are in England and one in the United States. 'Burnt Norton' was published in April 1936, 'East Coker' in March 1940, 'The Dry Savages' in February 1941, and 'Little Gidding' in October 1942. The quartets were published in a collected volume in May 1943, forming a single poem.

Eliot's engagement with place in *Four Quartets* is compelling, for though each quartet is named after a place, for the most part the content of the individual quartet does not offer a poetic description of that place, as say, the Romantic poetic tradition would. Rather, Eliot evokes 'place' by creating an ontological topology through describing it in psychological and existential terms of belonging and home. This sense of belonging is established through the use of a complex poetic narration of identity which accounts for how we *come to be* 'in place', how we come to dwell there. There is a complementarity at work here between Heidegger and Eliot and their shared concern about the nature of dwelling, and this is what will be drawn out from the poem.

Eliot's poem evokes poetically what it means to *dwell*, to be, essentially, 'at home' in the world. It does this by illuminating the profound ontological attachment we can have with place. Eliot's poetic mastery is apparent here for the poem goes beyond merely accounting for Eliot's own relationship with *his* places, offering also a sensitive reflection on the meaning of place within the life of the individual. Eliot's own poetic meditation on place provides us with the opportunity to engage thoughtfully with our own relation to place.

The later Heidegger's work on dwelling delves into the ontological meaning of place, exploring elements which build and sustain, reveal, conceal and also destroy place. Eliot's elicitation of the four landscapes that make up the *Quartets* confirms that 'poetically man / Dwells on this earth' (PMD: 214), as Hölderlin puts it, in a quotation much loved by Heidegger. Heidegger's work serves as a philosophical meditation to sustain the claims of Eliot's poem, and also to open it up for us within the rich complexity of Heidegger's own later philosophical thought.

'Burnt Norton'

Burnt Norton manor is an estate house in Gloucestershire, on the Cotswolds, near the market town of Chipping Camden. Eliot stayed there as a visitor in the summer of 1934. It is a large, spacious manor built in the eighteenth century on the site of a house that had burned to the ground in the seventeenth century – hence its name.⁵¹ When I visited Burnt Norton in June 2011 I found it to be an impressive building and well-maintained. The charlady I spoke to said it was in private ownership and, for that reason, I decided not to enter the property grounds itself.

The most evident aspect of this quartet, for the purposes of this chapter, is that Burnt Norton is a dwelling place; its physical structure, as a building, is suited for dwelling. But, as we know from chapter two of the thesis, the quartet does not begin as perhaps anticipated, in the tradition of a landscape poem, with a poetic description of the place, but rather, after the nutty Heraclitian fragments, launches the reader into a complex meditation on the nature of time, culminating in the encounter in the rose-garden.

The crucial question for this chapter is: how does Eliot convey a sense of dwelling in the language of poetry that resonates with the one Heidegger develops philosophically? Heidegger teaches that we must think for the sake of dwelling; thinking in this way is more important than building for the sake of dwelling. Eliot's poem is a testament to thinking for the sake of dwelling, because its focus is on place and belonging.

To generalize, Eliot achieves this thinking for the sake of dwelling in his poetry by creating and infusing a sense of home *as dwelling* – meaning *as belonging* to a place – through a complex and many-layered poetic narrative. Narrating is an act of human speaking or writing, but more importantly, it is an act, in Heidegger's sense, of *thinking*. This act, which occurs on the level of praxis, also requires a detached memorization from lived experience.⁵² We narrate the past as it is remembered from the present and imagine how the future might unfold. Thus narration is always temporalized in the form of an *event*. Furthermore it forms part of the 'ecstatic' essence of human beings. Narration takes account of our temporal modes, allowing us to interpret the past, understand the present and reflect on, and project ourselves into the future, and express it all in language. Poetry is the narrative form which is most authentic to memory, because memory is not

⁵¹ Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, 31.

⁵² J. Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt: Life is a Narrative* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001), 16.

chronological in its remembering. It is the truest form of narrative because it expresses life in life's imprecision – as a jumble of memories, emotions, places and events.

In *Four Quartets* this 'jumble' is thematically ordered by the title of each quartet, drawing us to reflect on how place and memory create and confirm identity. Furthermore, the poem is held together by the Event in the rose-garden, which, as recorded in the opening movement of the poem, the *Ereignis* moment, is the event which shapes and directs this narrative. And its association with place, Burnt Norton manor, shapes the significance of the event itself. Thus the rose-garden functions as the motif which unites the diverse emotional and psychological experiences that Eliot re-visits in his poetic narration of this moment. The famous opening lines, which I addressed at length in chapter two in a different context, concern, as we know, a walk that Eliot took in the rose-garden of Burnt Norton manor with Emily Hale, a long-time friend and, at the time, potential spouse. The first section of the passage ponders the results of the decisions they made on their walk, while the second part evokes for the reader scattered memories of the walk itself. As discussed, Eliot begins by meditating on our human temporality. If time does not pass, it is unredeemable. Yet the future unfolds from the present and contains and is shaped by the past, and in this unfolding perhaps offers the possibility of experiencing moments redeemed from time. Eliot provides a detached narration of a remembered past, attempting to imagine the different trajectories the event may have taken, but did not.

Though the reader is given few details of the event itself, of what Eliot and Hale actually talked about in the rose-garden, the poem conveys a profound sense of the importance this had for him. This importance is what I have tried to do justice to in the previous chapter. This kind of event, which I have called an *Ereignis*, is what Julia Kristeva calls an 'exemplary moment'. The art of narration, Kristeva argues, resides 'in the ability to condense the action into an exemplary moment, to extract it from the continuous flow of time, and reveal a *who*'.⁵³ The point is that the opening temporal reflection of 'Burnt Norton' is not merely prose narration; rather it poetically lays bare the ontological functioning of such exemplary moments. Eliot's memory of the rose-garden at Burnt Norton manor may consist of the scattered sensory perceptions and emotions he experienced at the time, described in the second part of the passage, but actually,

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 8.

fundamentally, the event in the rose-garden was what happened to him ontologically; the person he is *now*, that is, the poet writing, in the autumn of 1935 in the presbytery at 9 Grenville Place, the poem 'Burnt Norton', exists in his very being only because of his past experience in the garden.

Eliot's poetic technique brings out both the nature of his individual exemplary moment, *and* the functioning of all such moments; by addressing the possibilities that emerged *after* the event had occurred, before describing the event *itself*, Eliot brings to his readers' attention how such moments, embedded in their physical setting, come to symbolize in memory those life-changing choices, non-retractable flashes of insight, moods of elation or sorrow, that make us what we are – even if the importance of these events was not noticed at the time. This is how narrative reveals 'a *who*', confirming identity through event. In the case of 'Burnt Norton', this identity is associated in a profound way with the place itself, the quartet title signalling the mutual interdependence of place and person, a relationship of dwelling.

'Burnt Norton' reinforces this sense of dwelling by giving constant attention to the elements of the fourfold, especially mortals and their finitude. As explained in chapter two, time and our relationship to it is a dominant theme, as if Eliot is trying to reconcile himself to his own life and give it an authentic appraisal. Consider these lines which end the first movement: 'Time past and time future / What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present' (ll.44-46). These lines appear together at the end of the first movement, after the encounter in the rose-garden. They confirm a narrative pattern of our three temporal ecstasies (i.e. temporal modes). The present is made sense of by what might have been and what has been. As mentioned above, there is an authentic resoluteness in these lines, a suggestion that the speaker comes to terms with life as it is, and makes peace with the imagined potentials which it offered, but which were never realized due to other choices. Mortals are shaped by the forces of both reality and imagination, which together form how we understand our relationship to the world we create with, and through others.

In this same movement, the lines 'Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children' (l.40) suggests the innocence of this imagined 'first world' (l.21) in the image of children, but also perhaps the sadness that the poet, who died childless, feels for the children he never had with a woman he never married. The mix of regret, pathos and resolution are woven together in the recognition of the present as *present*, utterly so, yet with 'what might have been' remaining an indelible part of this narrative pattern. The

confirmation and acceptance of mortality is woven into the recognition of the linear sequence of a mortal's life which will, one day, end.

This recognition allows both acknowledgement of the fullness of life and resolution in the knowledge of its passing:

Time past and time future	36
Allow but a little consciousness.	
To be conscious is not to be in time	
But only in time can the moment in the rose garden,	
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,	40
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall	
Be remembered; involved with past and future.	
Only through time time is conquered.	

In these lines, which end the second movement, the poet conveys the tension between authentic and inauthentic time. To be truly conscious, awake to the present moment, to experience the wonder (or holiness) of Being, swept into the *Ereignis* experience, is outside mundane temporality, beyond 'clock time' which regulates our daily lives, 'I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where. / And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time' (ll.22-23). Yet, paradoxically, clock time is necessary for our everyday experience in order to reflect on what occurred in the exemplary moment, for 'Only through time time is conquered' (l.43).

Eliot suggests that in the taking account of, in ordinary time, the moment *out* of time, we can deepen our understanding of our finitude and also our relationship to the divinities. This sentiment is reinforced in the second movement of 'Burnt Norton' with the lines:

Yet the enchainment of past and future	33
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,	
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation	35
Which flesh cannot endure.	

Mortals' essential nature, their 'being capable of death as death', (BDT: 148) woven 'in the weakness of the changing body' evokes the linear, temporal nature of human existence, that our flesh will age and pass away. Yet this very embodiedness protects us from 'heaven and damnation'. It is this capacity to both dwell and to die, to make a 'good death' (BDT: 148) which distinguishes us from animals and the divinities. We are the 'still point of the turning world' (BN: 173) and our temporal openness creates the things which gather the elements of the fourfold together (BDT: 151) and tell the individual and communal narratives of life itself.

In this passage from the second movement of 'Burnt Norton' more of Heidegger's fourfold is explored:

The dance along the artery	6
The circulation of the lymph	
Are figured in the drift of stars	
Ascend to summer in the tree	
We move above the moving tree	10
In light upon the figured leaf	
And hear upon the sodden floor	
Below, the boarhound and the boar	
Pursue their patterns as before	
But reconciled among the stars.	15

Here is a vision of dwelling which reconciles mortals to their place in the rift between the earth and heavens. Aspects of Heidegger's description of the fourfold are echoed in these lines, the depiction of dwelling within a harmonious pattern reflected in the stars. The pursuit of 'the boarhound and the boar . . . reconciled among the stars' (ll.13-15) shows up how our Cartesian experience of the world, as distinct subjects viewing the world as separate objects, clouds a deeper Heraclitian understanding of our place within the universe. For the poet there is a pattern that binds us to all things, a pattern figured in the ribs of the leaf and the 'drift of the stars' (l.8).

Dwelling unfolds in acknowledging this accord, which is 'neither arrest nor movement' (l.18). The pattern is both the still point and the dance (l.17), like the Heraclitian fire. The stars drift and are also fixed in the heavens. The passage also draws out the pattern of the seasons, spring ascending to summer in the cycling of the stars and the light upon the leaf. The sodden autumn floor trod upon by the boar pursued by the boarhound as the winter season draws near. The images progress from life created by the small movements of seemingly insignificant things, an artery, a leaf, to the larger movements of animals engaged in an ancient pursuit, all part of a greater pattern, reflected in the stars and the mortals who dwell beneath them.⁵⁴

Yet, Eliot is also attuned to our modern homelessness, our lack of dwelling, and *Four Quartets*, while essentially celebratory, also gives expression to this sombre, angstful existence. The third movement of 'Burnt Norton' exemplifies this:

Here is a place of disaffection	1
Time before and time after	
In a dim light: neither daylight	
Investing form with lucid stillness	
Turning shadow into transient beauty	5
With slow rotation suggesting permanence	

⁵⁴ Terence Malick's film *Tree of Life* (2011) is a profound cinematographic expressing of Eliot's description of this pattern. See T. Malick, *Tree of Life*, DVD, directed by T. Malick (Los Angeles: Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2011).

Nor darkness to purify the soul
 Emptying the sensual with deprivation
 Cleansing affection from the temporal.
 Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker 10
 Over the strained time-ridden faces
 Distracted from distraction by distraction
 Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
 Tumid apathy with no concentration
 Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind 15
 That blow before and after time,
 Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
 Time before and time after.
 Eructation of unhealthy souls
 Into the faded air, the torpid 20
 Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London.
 Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
 Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here
 Not here the darkness, in this twittering world. 25

This 'place of disaffection' (l.1) is a place bereft of dwelling. It is a shadow world, set in a grim twilight, a world drained of spiritual sustenance, a liminal godless place. The flight of the gods has left humankind without a spiritual compass, condemned to wander aimlessly in a twilight Hades, seeking distraction after distraction to plump out an unsatisfying, meaningless existence. The fourfold is broken.

In the movement Eliot appeals to the saving power offered by the kataphatic and apophatic mystical approaches, 'daylight / Investing form with lucid stillness' (ll.3-4) and 'darkness to purify the soul' (l.7), neither of which are present in the grim twilight that is our current existence. From Heidegger's perspective, enframing has closed off the possibility of other realities. We have become (like Prufrock) an unsatisfied force of will, constantly seeking new distractions to cover over the apathetic and unhealthy nature of our souls. Eliot gives us a vision of Heidegger's *Das Man*, human existence characterized by a dispiriting inauthenticity. This human herd is driven like bits of paper indifferently by the wind that sweeps over the 'gloomy hills of London' (l.21). The suburbs and areas named sound like a hollow mantra, place without dwelling, just a sprawling cityscape full of 'unhealthy souls' (l.19). The cityscape has no natural daylight or 'purifying darkness'. Instead it is a perpetual grey and the mutual tension between earth and world is lost. Even the wind is an unnatural 'eructation of unhealthy souls' (l.19) from 'unwholesome lungs' (l.17).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ These images are reminiscent of Eliot's early poem *Preludes* (PL: 22-23).

What is denied in this cityscape is the experience of ‘the moment in the draughty church at smokefall’ (‘Burnt Norton’, second movement l.41), the exemplary moment. Dwelling, as a *being-at-home*, being attuned to your place in the in-between of the rift of earth and world, cognisant of the measure and inter-relation of the fourfold, is concealed from humankind. Instead existence is vapid and transitory, ‘this twittering world’ (third movement l.25) seemingly without the possibility of redemption.

The fourth movement of ‘Burnt Norton’ is brief and stands in contrast to the bleakness of the third movement:

Time and the bell have buried the day,	1
The black cloud carries the sun away.	
Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis	
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray	
Clutch and cling?	5
Chill	
Fingers of yew be curled	
Down on us? After the kingfisher’s wing	
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still	
At the still point of the turning world. (BN: 174)	10

This very complex movement expresses a tentative hope, composed as a question, as a possibility for humankind. The meaning of the lines is elusive but suggests the death and burial of a mortal. The word ‘Time’, which opens the movement, refers not to ‘clock time’ but ontological time that is woven into human existence and tied to its finitude. This primordial time is measured by the sounding bell, an ancient symbol of human ‘clock time’ and our way of measuring the ‘turning world’ (l.10). The church bell is traditionally rung in High Anglican tradition to mark the death of a parishioner – the so-called death knell. Burying the dead is one of the distinctive features of humankind and an acknowledgement of our embodied sacredness. The ‘black cloud’ (l.2) which has carried the sun away is suggestive of the ‘darkness to purify the soul’ (l.7) of the previous movement.

Yet, in spite of this sombre image the movement depicts an alert, responsive natural world. The poet wonders whether, without the sun, the sunflower, clematis and yew branches will ‘cur[l] down on us’ (ll.7-8) Will nature respond to and claim the passing and burial of a mortal? This is the earth of Heidegger’s fourfold: mysterious, unfathomable, and yet fecund and alive. Nature’s response is unlike the torpid, blank cityscape of the previous movement. The human ritual of burial in the earth acknowledges the rhythms and seasons of the natural world, which in turn acknowledges it both in its decay and growth; this is inter-relation of the fourfold.

In these lines Eliot also expresses fear – the fear of death and the possibility of the nothing hereafter.⁵⁶ He does this through the formal shape of the movement which draws the eye to the word ‘Chill’. The first four lines of mostly iambic tetrameter cut to the alliterative dimeter of ‘Clutch and cling’ and then the single syllable ‘Chill’. The alliteration and single syllable create a confinement, a sense of claustrophobia, entombment in the earth. Eliot’s allusion to the yew tree is also significant in terms of English church history. Traditionally a church’s graveyard would have five yew trees, each symbolizing the wounds of Christ, the red berries of the yew representing drops of blood.

The point is that dwelling and mortality are intertwined. Eliot, in genuine acknowledgement of his god, attempts to reconcile his life within this broader pattern. The human body does literally return to the earth as it decomposes underground, but does the earth, that is, of the fourfold, acknowledge its passing? The ‘kingfisher’ (l.8), another allusion to Christ (‘I will make you fishers of men’⁵⁷) features in the last lines of this movement, as divinity acknowledging our belief, ‘answer[ing] light to light’ (l.9). The word ‘After’ suggests that it is perhaps only *after* this acknowledgement by a mortal that the earth is receptive to that mortal’s death. Dwelling extends beyond the life of mortals, into their deaths, and nature’s chthonic reception, though mysterious and even frightening, falls with this broader ‘drift of stars’, meaning that the fourfold is eternally affirmed.

‘East Coker’

‘East Coker’ was published in 1940, some years after the publication of ‘Burnt Norton’. In the writing of ‘East Coker’ Eliot makes a symbolic return to his place of origin. East Coker village is the ancestral home of Eliot’s family, in the countryside of Somerset, west of London, though his ancestors left for the New World in search of religious freedom around 1669.⁵⁸ Eliot visited St Michael’s Church in East Coker – where his ashes are interred today – in 1937, two years before he wrote the quartet itself (1939-1940). The Elyots, as the family name was once spelt, had lived in East Coker for several generations and church records testify to their presence in the village from as early as 1560.⁵⁹

The fact that the first quartet ‘Burnt Norton’ is followed by ‘East Coker’, both places of symbolic and historic value to Eliot’s own identity, begins to create the narrative

⁵⁶ Similar to his early Harvard poem ‘Silence’, discussed in chapter two, section II.

⁵⁷ Matthew 4: 19.

⁵⁸ Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, 66.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

structure which enables the poet to relate to these places as dwelling places. Even though he was not born in East Coker village, he can nevertheless claim an ontological belonging there because of the historical, genealogical trace of his family. This over-arching narrative structure of place, signalled in the title of each quartet, is linked to Eliot's own existence, which promotes the thinking of these places as dwelling places. Narrative is the fundamental way in which the thinking that promotes building, in Heidegger's sense, transforms into dwelling. Our sense of belonging to place is created and established through a narrative structure and this is what Eliot articulates in his poem.

How can narrative do this? How does the act of narrating transform geographic place or space into dwelling place? Jeff Malpas suggests that it is tempting to try to explain place by looking to geographic or geometric place, understood as a region, both open and bounded, and thus more than mere space alone.⁶⁰ He closely follows Heidegger's interpretation of the German word *Raum* ('area' or 'region' in English). Heidegger defines this word as 'a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging . . . something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary' (BDT: 152). Malpas states that 'place' is a 'particular region of physical space or a location within it' and can be 'specified within a relativized spatial framework by means of a set of spatial co-ordinates'.⁶¹

However, Malpas argues that this definition of place, as geographic bounded space, is not *yet* place which has become *dwelling* place or *narrated* place. Certainly this geographic sense of place is necessary, but ontologically secondary, because it defines place in a geometric, measured way. For Heidegger it may even conceal the true nature of objects, by objectifying them purely in terms of spatial dimensions (BDT: 153). Place, understood within the context of *dwelling* place, is the transformation of place as geometric space, as something bounded, into something more significant, something which expresses an ontological topology, conveying an attachment or even inseparable link between individual identity and place.

For Malpas, the transformation of geometric place into dwelling place occurs through narrative. Place is developed and understood collectively and individually through a narrated structure, which arises from the interaction of human beings, and is embedded in a shared history and memory. This narrating activity occurs within an 'objective,

⁶⁰ J. Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 22.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

physical environment'. The process of coming to *belong* to this physical environment happens through the narrating of myself into a new context.⁶² This is what Heidegger means by the 'clearing' or 'freeing' of a place 'for settlement and lodging'. Through *freeing* a geometric space and bounding it, I can begin to inhabit that place and gradually transform it into a dwelling place. Certainly physical action is needed to clear an area, but behind this is the intent to settle or build there, and it is this intention which motivates the clearing and building. This act of narrating, in Heidegger's language, is a *thinking* which is also a *building*, which leads to dwelling.

For Malpas geometric place/space is transformed into dwelling place through the gradual blurring of the initial, distinct subject/object differentiation between the individual and his or her environment. The subject becomes situated, no longer thinking of him- or herself as separate or indifferent to the environment he or she inhabits. This 'humanized', 'personalized' character of place can be viewed as indicating both the

character of places as unitary structures possessed of a certain identity and particularity of their own (something expressed in the giving of a name), and the obtaining of a certain *interdependence*, rather than simply a one-way dependence, between place and person.⁶³

This interdependence between place and person is at the centre of Eliot's poem. To understand the four places as dwelling places the poet interweaves a complex pattern of symbol, history, memory and event. The narrative created is a juxtaposed psychological and spiritual account of lived experience, both individual and communal, both historically real and poetically imaged, linked inextricably to the places where these events happened.⁶⁴

As mentioned above, poetry gives the best expression to this narrative because it is the most authentic reflection of memory, and can convey life in all its jumbled imprecisions. Marshall McLuhan calls this interdependence Eliot's 'landscape motif', by which the poet's juxtaposing of widely diverse and discontinuous objects within a particular quartet, and interweaving of re-occurring themes and symbols throughout all the *Quartets*, 'becomes a precise musical means of orchestrating that which could never be rendered by systematic discourse. Landscape is the means of presenting . . . experiences

⁶² Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 184.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 184-185

⁶⁴ E. Relph, 'Geographical Experiences and Being-in-the-World: The Phenomenological Origins of Geography', in *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, ed. by D. Seamon and R. Mugerauer (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), 26-29.

which are united in existence but not in conceptual thought'.⁶⁵ These emotional perceptual 'landscapes', like the rose-garden from 'Burnt Norton', and the passage below from 'East Coker', are powerful poetic tools because they mimic human memory and imagination. Eliot carries this technique on throughout the *Quartets*, the title of each signalling the importance that place has for the poet.⁶⁶

In the opening of 'East Coker' Eliot uses an image that draws on Heidegger's 'building', because it plays on the word 'house' as meaning a physical building and also, metonymically, the generations of a family line:

In my beginning is my end. In succession	1
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,	
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place	
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.	
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,	5
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth	
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,	
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.	
Houses live and die: there is a time for building	
And a time for living and for generation	10
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane	
And to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots	
And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent motto.	

These lines present the interspersed of two temporal cycles. One is the linear cycle of a single life which is finite and marked by its natality and death; 'In my beginning is my end' (l.1).⁶⁷ This cycle falls within the broader temporal cycle of human dwelling itself, situated upon the earth. The relationship between dwelling and place asserts itself as a continual process of 'building'. Building means a beginning, but contains also its own ending: 'Houses live and die' (l.9). This is the process of a cycle which is constantly becoming, through constant renewal and decay. In the meeting of earth and world, of 'old stone' and 'new building' (l.5), this constant state of becoming unfolds through death and rebirth in both humankind and its creation. This meeting, metaphorically, is the Heraclitian fire, at the centre of all things, which endlessly changes and becomes and does not cease.

⁶⁵ M. McLuhan, 'Symbolic Landscape', in *TS Eliot Four Quartets: A Casebook*, ed. by B. Bergonzi, 239-240 (London: Macmillan, 1969) 239.

⁶⁶ When initially Eliot conceived of writing the first two quartets into a larger unity, he thought of calling them the 'South Kensington Quartets' because that was the area of London he was living in at the time. Place was already a pre-occupation for him at the earliest stages of the poem, which he intended to be a meditation on specific places and the attachment he had with them, Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays*, 255.

⁶⁷ In 'Origin of the Work of Art' Heidegger writes 'Concealed within itself, the beginning contains already the end' (WA: 48).

Houses, like humans, 'live and die'. Our understanding of place, as home, is not distinct from the understanding of ourselves. The image of the transforming landscape in the passage, the earth itself, is indicative of human dwelling and affirms our ontological relation to place in a very physical way.

Supporting this idea of dwelling Kristeva writes that the very possibility of representing birth and death, 'to conceive of them in time and to explain them to others – that is *the possibility of narrating* – grounds human life in what is specific to it, in what is non-animal about it, non-physiological'.⁶⁸ Eliot illustrates this sense of grounding in an exemplary manner in the above passage, for he poetically narrates this grounding within the broader pattern of human dwelling upon the earth. The passage shows the continual interrelation of the creating and passing away of place, in the context of an experience which is uniquely human, namely that of beginnings and endings. A life begins and ends, and so do a genealogy and an empire. We abide, buildings abide, and places abide, but only for a time. It is this very temporality of our existence, its ecstatic nature, which inheres in narrative form, in beginnings and endings.

The fourfold is also a narrative account of human existence within a broader cycle, and *Four Quartets* shares a strong complementarity with elements of the fourfold. Heidegger and Eliot are attuned to the importance of dwelling and attentive to the elements which enable its flourishing. During the course of writing the second quartet Eliot conceived of organizing the four poems around the basic Heraclitian elements of air, earth, water and fire and this interpretive approach to the poem is fruitful.⁶⁹ However to consider the poem in Heidegger's terms of the fourfold substantiates my claim that Eliot is also very much concerned with dwelling, not only in his own identity, but also how dwelling expresses the essential attribute of humankind. Consider another passage from the first movement of 'East Coker':

In that open field	
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,	
On a summer midnight, you can hear the music	25
Of the weak pipe and the little drum	
And see them dancing around the bonfire	
The association of man and woman	
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie –	
A dignified and commodious sacrament.	30
Two and two, necessary coniunction,	

⁶⁸ Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*, 8.

⁶⁹ Kramer, *Redeeming Time*, 68.

Holding eche other by the hand or the arm
 Whiche betokeneth concorde. Round and round the fire
 Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
 Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter 35
 Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
 Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
 Mirth of those long since under the earth
 Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
 Keeping the rhythm in their dancing 40
 As in their living in the living seasons
 The time of the seasons and the constellations
 The time of milking and the time of harvest
 The time of the coupling of man and woman
 And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling. 45
 Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

In this passage we encounter phrases of sixteenth-century English with their archaic spellings. With this language Eliot acknowledges the presence of his ancestors and their beginnings in the village of East Coker. The opening conveys, through repetition of 'if you do not come too close' (l.24), an intimacy which must be negotiated. The reader is cautiously beckoned to witness a ceremony, the poet drawing the reader into the sixteenth-century event, a celebration of marriage. Though there is a temporal and historical distance between the modern reader and this ancient ceremony, the sacral aspect is still apparent. We witness the conjoining of man and woman through the act of dancing around a bonfire. The village celebrates with them. In the passage Eliot conflates the ancient pagan and Christian traditions of the marriage ceremony. Interspersed within the description of the pre-Christian bonfire celebration are archaic English phrases describing the act of dancing as sanctifying the sacramental nature of marriage. The universal and symbolic nature of the dance transcends historical, religious and ceremonial differences.

What Eliot evokes so tangibly in this passage is the interwoven elements of the fourfold itself. 'Mortals' and their closeness to, and dependence on the 'earth', are depicted very visually through the synecdoche, 'heavy feet in clumsy shoes' (l.36). The next phrase 'earth feet, loam feet' (l.37) conveys the fertile, fecund nature of the soil and the underlying intentions of the marriage ceremony. Mortals, in terms of the Book of Genesis, are clay themselves, from the earth, with the breath of God moving within them. When this breath leaves their body they return to the earth 'nourishing the corn' (l.39), completing the cycle of natality and death by returning to the earth itself. The human cycle forms part of the greater natural cycle. The earth is a fundamental life force, its rhythm decreeing the time 'of milking' and 'time of harvest' (l.43). This relationship 'saves' the earth and through the

'dung and death' (l.46) of living things it is replenished. The pagan-like aspects of the ritual reinforce the importance of the earth in this fourfold relationship.

The role of the 'sky' is also evident. The 'summer midnight' (l.25) commemorates the summer solstice. The celebration of marriage is timed to occur during this auspicious moment in the year, when the summer reaches its height. This respect for the rhythms of heaven and the seasons, this 'keeping the rhythm' (l.40), is reflected in the rhythm of the dancing. Time is regulated by the sky, as the passage of the sun and stars determine the seasons and the harvest.

Lastly the gods are also present in their respectful distance. The human ceremony is celebrated in recognition of the gods, in their pagan or Christian form. We witness a celebratory fertility ritual because of the blessings and clemency of the gods. In the context of this passage Eliot's study of George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* is evident.⁷⁰ Frazer's book describes a range of 'seasonal folktales and agricultural and marital rites'.⁷¹ Eliot was especially interested in their 'sacramentality, that all reality is potentially the bearer of divine grace', rather than Frazer's analysis of these rituals in terms of 'homeopathic or imitative magic'.⁷² The term 'divine grace' is apt in consideration of the gods of the fourfold. For Heidegger mortals hold up in hope to the divinities 'what is un hoped for' (BDT: 148). Through the gods' divine grace, they bestow their blessing, infusing the other elements with sacral life so that 'all reality' has this holy aspect.

'The Dry Salvages'

The Dry Salvages (pronounced to rhyme with *assuages*) is a small group of rocks, with a beacon off the coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts, about 50km north of Boston. Aside from their house in St Louis Eliot's family owned a summer house on Gloucester Harbour in Cape Ann where he spent summers in his youth. Eliot was a proficient sailor and could navigate Cape Ann's unpredictable waters.⁷³ 'The Dry Salvages', the third quartet, revisits aspects of Eliot's American heritage with a clear focus on the element water, as river, sea and ocean, and also on those who depend on this often precarious element for their livelihood. Kramer points out that we can see the connection between the earth of the Old

⁷⁰ G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion: A New Abridgement from the Second and Third Editions*, ed. by R. Fraser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 102.

World, Eliot's ancestral England, captured in 'East Coker', and the sea of the New World he knew as a youth, expressed in 'The Dry Salvages'.⁷⁴

In terms of dwelling and the fourfold, 'The Dry Salvages' is Eliot's strongest articulation of the gods in his *Four Quartets*. The volatile and unpredictable nature of the river and the ocean align with the mysterious and implacable nature of the gods.⁷⁵ This quartet also offers a revealing poetic account of the *rift* between world and earth, as well as being attentive to questions about technology and enframing. Here is the opening passage from the first movement:

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river 1
Is a strong brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable,
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges. 5
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten
By the dwellers in cities – ever, however, implacable,
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder
Of what men chose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching, and waiting. 10
His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,
In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard,
In the smell of grapes on the autumn table,
And the evening circle in the winter gaslight.

Eliot confesses that he, like Heidegger, does not know much about gods. Yet, he is also aware of the importance divinities have played for much of human history. The two opening lines acknowledge humankind's propensity for nature worship, yet also express our modern disenchantment with this practice. The river is like a god in its unknowable and implacable behaviour. Yet, again like the gods, it is a necessary feature of human existence, as a natural part of the landscape, something which can be traversed or used for transport. However, once the problems it presents to mortals are overcome it is forgotten. This is an effective illustration for Heidegger's description of the relationship between the divinities and enframing. It is the growing encroachment of technological enframing and its disenchanting effects which have eroded the presence of the gods, or any sense of the world as a holy, wondrous place. The river is useful, but untrustworthy, and soon forgotten once a permanent structure traverses it.

There is an echo here of Heidegger's own thoughts in 'The Question Concerning Technology' when he considers the Rhine River and its use by modern technology. The

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁷⁵ See HH: 139 for Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin's poem 'The Rhine' as a 'demigod'.

river is 'set-upon' in the form of a hydroelectric plant which unlocks energy from the river's motion; in this way the Rhine 'appears to be something at our command' (QCT: 321). As in Eliot's phrase 'conveyor of commerce' (l.4), the river is seen in a reductive way, no longer as a 'strong brown god' (l.2) but merely as a surmountable problem. Yet Eliot also captures, in the above passage, the rift between world and earth that Heidegger is attentive to in his 'Origin of the Work of Art' essay. Though the river is forgotten and absorbed into the cityscape, into the *world* of the 'worshippers of the machine', it remains 'implacable . . . waiting, watching and waiting' (ll.7-10). We forget the river's nature, it being of the *earth*, but it does not forget its own nature, remaining a 'reminder / Of what men chose to forget' (ll.8-9). This was made all too clear in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina caused the Mississippi River (which is the river alluded to in the above passage) to flood, destroying everything on its banks. Eliot's description of the river gives it the qualities of a powerful and unpredictable destructive god, reminiscent of the Hindu goddess Kali, the god of eternal energy and annihilation.

Yet what Eliot also affirms is that the 'river is within us, the sea is all about us' (l.15); 'His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom' (l.11). We, as mortals, stand in the rift between world and earth. We are created from and return to the earth, and there is a primordial connection between humankind and the earth. In other words, via Heidegger's Hölderlin, 'man / Dwells on the earth' (PMD: 214; QCT: 340). Genuine dwelling is the recognition of the mutual relationship between the world of humankind and the sustaining role of the earth. It is a measured existence, unlike technological enframing which attempts to obliterate the role of the earth and thus close off the possibility of dwelling.

Eliot, in his criticism, also wrote presciently about the nature of technology and science. Like Heidegger he was an astute witness to the profound way in which technology was changing the world. In 1930 he recognized and attacked what he called our 'exaggerated devotion to science'⁷⁶ warning that, though it claims to pursue knowledge objectively, science is not free of ideology.

In a later essay, 'Catholicism and International Order' published in 1937, he writes that 'practitioners of both political and economic science in the very effort to be scientific . . . make assumptions which they are not only not entitled to make, but which they are not

⁷⁶ T.S. Eliot, 'Religion Without Humanism,' in *Humanism and America*, ed. N. Foerster (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1967), 108. First published in 1930.

always conscious of making' (EAM: 114-115). And further in the same essay: 'The modern world separates the intellect and the emotions. What can be reduced to a science . . . a limited and technical material, it respects; the rest may be a waste of uncontrolled behaviour and immature emotion' (EAM: 117). Eliot's comments are critical of the positivist orthodoxy that had arisen at the turn of the nineteenth century and the scientism which was usurping the role of religion.

In his essay 'The Idea of a Christian Society' (1939) he reflects at length on the negative implications of technological materialism.⁷⁷ He writes that the organization of society 'on the principle of private profit' and 'public destruction' is creating 'unregulated industrialism' which is deforming humanity.⁷⁸ This rampant 'material progress' is resulting in the exhaustion of the earth's natural resources 'for which succeeding generations may have to pay dearly' (SPE: 290). He mentions 'soil-erosion', a result of the earth's exploitation on a 'vast scale for two generations, for commercial profit', its immediate benefits 'leading to dearth and desert'. Further he contends that 'a wrong attitude towards nature implies, somewhere, a wrong attitude towards God, and that the consequence is an inevitable doom' (SPE: 290). There is a very obvious and pointed similarity between these sentiments and Heidegger's own. Without divinities there is no measure for mortals, consequently they transform themselves into false divinities and conquer the earth with science and technology, reducing it to 'standing-reserve' (QCT: 323)

Eliot, in the same essay 'The Idea of a Christian Society', laments society's prevailing belief 'in nothing but the values arising in a mechanized, commercialized, urbanized way of life', and with this the failure to recognize 'the permanent conditions upon which God allows us to live upon this planet' (SPE: 290). He believes that observing 'the operation of a social-religious-artistic complex' of more primitive societies could teach us aspects of existence which 'we should emulate upon a higher plane' (SPE: 291). Though Eliot does not mention the Ancient Greek, Roman or early Christian communities specifically, there are certainly aspects of these societies which he would believe worth emulating, though within a distinctly Christian, Anglo-Catholic context. Heidegger is more explicit in his admiration

⁷⁷ The essay was written in response to the betrayal of the 'Munich Pact' by Germany in 1939. The Munich Pact was signed in 1938 by Britain, France, Italy and Nazi-Germany. It permitted the annexation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland by the Germans and was a concession that was meant to avert war. However in 1939 Germany invaded Czechoslovakia.

⁷⁸ Eliot, at this stage, was well established in Faber and Faber as a publisher, but had spent the years 1917-1925 working in the Foreign Department of Lloyds Bank. He had certainly attained a professional understanding of economic forces and their consequences.

for the Ancient Greeks, and also the idealized life of the German peasant *Volk* who dwell within the cycles of the fourfold.

The point is that Eliot, like Heidegger, perceives the damage that is being done to human existence because of it being uprooted from the 'social-religious-artistic' context which has sustained it, in many different forms, for millennia. This context has been overwhelmed by the single, dominating modern value, 'progress', central to advancing, industrialized societies. Yet, significantly, for Eliot it 'is only by an effort and a discipline, greater than society has yet seen the need of imposing upon itself, that material knowledge and power is gained without loss of spiritual knowledge and power' (SPE: 291). Eliot's life and work after his conversion are, in many ways, testaments to achieving this kind of discipline between himself and his divinity.

'The Dry Salvages' contains many more reflections on Heidegger's divinities. In movement one, some of which has already been considered, we encounter the evocative lines: 'The sea has many voices, / Many gods and many voices' (ll.24-25). These are lines to those who have been called to the sea: sailors, soldiers and travellers. Many of them voiced prayers of safe passage to their gods and some were claimed by the water. Eliot alludes to the divinities they called upon in their final hours, again suggesting the implacability of the water, at times a ravenous and merciless god.

In the next movement of 'The Dry Salvages' he considers three 'annunciations' which concern death and mortality, but uses images associated with the sea to convey his meaning:

Where is there an end of it, the soundless wailing, The silent withering of autumn flowers Dropping their petal and remaining motionless; Where is there an end to the drifting wreckage, The prayer of the bone on the beach, the unprayable Prayer at the calamitous annunciation?	1 5
There is no end, but addition: the trailing Consequence of further days and hours, While emotion takes to itself the emotionless Years of living among the breakage Of what was believed in as the most reliable – And therefore the fittest for renunciation.	 10

The first annunciation is the sudden and 'calamitous' (l.6) knowledge of death, the realization that both natural things, like the 'autumn flowers' (l.2), and manmade things, like 'the drifting wreckage' (l.4), have an end to their existence. This cycle is endless and can overwhelm us when we realize this 'unprayable / Prayer' (ll.5-6), for there is 'no end' to this (l.7), and we are part of this on-going cycle. Added to this terrible knowledge is the

‘renunciation’ (l.12) resulting from the ‘trailing / Consequence of further days and hours’ (ll.7-8), of ‘Years of living among the breakage’ (l.10)– thus the necessity of continuing to live after those we have loved have died. And this knowledge, the knowledge of loss, for Eliot, means that even what is ‘most reliable’ (l.11), i.e. family, friends, creeds – become those ‘fittest for renunciation’ (l.12). The poem expresses here that sense of authentic resoluteness in the fear of death. To experience the loss of what is most dear and true means that, to be authentic, we must come to relinquish even these, for clinging to them will not change our own being-towards-death. What Eliot describes is the cultivation of the attitude of *Gelassenheit*.

This difficult renunciation is followed by the second annunciation:

There is the final addition, the failing	13
Pride or resentment at failing powers,	
The unattached devotion which might pass for devotionless,	15
In a drifting boat with a slow leakage,	
The silent listening to the undeniable	
Clamour of the bell of the last annunciation	

This is the ‘final addition’ (l.13) to the two aspects of the first annunciation, my own dying, my experience of my own body and mind aging and fading like a ‘drifting boat with a slow leakage’ (l.16), that furthers the cultivation of ‘unattached devotion’, *Gelassenheit*. The profundity of the ‘silent listening to the undeniable’ (l.17) contrasts with the angst-ridden ‘soundless wailing’ (l.1) of the earlier passage, the former resoluteness in the face of death, the latter the ages of human suffering, now made personal in my own fading to my end. The sound of the bell signifies the ‘last annunciation’ (l.18) which is the finality of my own death.

Yet, for the later Eliot, like the later Heidegger, there is something else beyond the empty abyss of this end. Here we encounter the final annunciation:

There is no end of it, the voiceless wailing,	31
No end to the withering of withered flowers,	
To the movement of pain that is painless and motionless,	
To the drift of the sea and the drifting wreckage,	
The bone’s prayer to Death its God. Only the hardly, barely prayable	35
Prayer of the one Annunciation.	

There is no end to this cycle of beginnings and endings, joy and sorrow. The fourfold turns continually on the one point and with it the coming and passing away of mortals. Yet the ‘barely prayable / Prayer of the one Annunciation’ (ll.35-36) restores hope and possibility beyond the ‘voiceless wailing’ and ‘withered flowers’ (ll.31, 32). Eliot acknowledges his own god’s coming, announced to Mary by Gabriel that she would bear the Saviour of the world. So here Eliot makes the devotion to his god explicit, bringing the divinities of Heidegger’s fourfold to the forefront of the poem. Eliot’s god offers redemption from the cycle of birth

born and will die and then reincarnate into another life. Thus, from Krishna's perspective, we must 'not think of the fruit of action' (l.38) and be paralysed by the fear of inaction, but remain mindful that 'the time of death is every moment' (l.36). This, if we recall chapter one, is Prufrock's on-going dilemma.

So in this movement of 'The Dry Salvages' Eliot, via Krishna, calls for life lived resolutely, always within the certainty of death, for what the future brings is of no consequence; rather, the action called for in the event itself, e.g. for Arjuna upon the battlefield, must be most befitting of what Arjuna represents, in terms of his cast and position, and this is what Krishna reminds him of. This is the authoritative role of the divinities within the fourfold. Arjuna tells his doubts to Krishna and is guided according to the precepts of the complexity of Hindu belief. Because this is Arjuna's *fate*, a result of his thrownness, he would be inauthentic if he avoided it. Thus the gods can teach mortals how to live, and remind them to respect and obey what is holy, and to do what they are bound to do. There is no promise that we will 'fare well', only the injunction to ever 'fare forward'.

From here the poem continues with the metaphor of the sea, addressing 'voyagers' and 'seaman' (l.39), the mortals of the fourfold, urging them to 'Fare forward', even though it is assured that they will suffer 'the trial and judgement of the sea / Or whatever event' (ll.41-42). The point is that we will all experience suffering and death, our 'real destination' (l.42), but we cannot hide from our own life because of this knowledge. We cannot bid 'fare well' to living, but must 'fare forward' into the unknown and uncertain sea of life, mindful of the duty which both binds us to life and to living it fully, *and* which will ultimately separate us from it. Thus the 'right action is freedom / From past and future also' (fifth movement, ll.41-42).

In the short fourth movement of 'The Dry Salvages' Eliot switches from a Hindu god to a Catholic god, namely the 'Queen of Heaven' (l.10). He evokes Mary, the Mother of God, as our intercessor, a divinity so close to God, the Supreme Being, that she can bring our prayers to Him and ask for His intercession on our behalf:

Lady, whose shrine stands on the promontory,	1
Pray for all those who are in ships, those	
Whose business has to do with fish, and	
Those concerned with every lawful traffic	
And those who conduct them.	5
Repeat a prayer also on behalf of	
Women who have seen their sons or husbands	
Setting forth, and not returning:	
Figlia del tuo figlio,	
Queen of Heaven.	10

Also pray for those who were in ships, and
 Ended their voyage on the sand, in the sea's lips
 Or in the dark throat which will not reject them
 Or whatever cannot reach them the sound of the sea bell's
 Perpetual angelus.

15

The tone in this piece is imploring, a beseeching prayer to the Queen of Heaven. Anglo-Catholic parishes celebrate her Immaculate Conception and Assumption and in these lines Eliot conveys the strong personal emotion which devotees to Mary sometimes have. In the Catholic context Mary is subordinate to Christ (*Figlia del tuo figlio* – 'daughter of thy Son', l.9) but occupies a unique position in the spiritual hierarchy, higher than other Saints. Because of this nearness to Christ she is the ablest intercessor for our prayers. 'Our Lady, Star of the Sea' is one of her ancient titles, and in the context of sailing the stars are both the constant guide and assurance to sailors of their direction when they are on a pitch-black, seemingly directionless ocean. Mary is the patroness of seafarers and a symbol of hope for Christians in general. Eliot continues to develop the theme that we are all, as mortals, 'voyagers' and 'seamen' (third movement, l.39) '[s]etting forth' (fourth movement, l.8) into the unknown, under the watchful eye of our divinities who we believe have our best interests at heart.

In the last movement of 'The Dry Salvages' Eliot expresses the predisposition mortals have for engaging in futile attempts to search 'past and future' (l.16). This is an inauthentic relationship to our temporality and an attempt to circumvent the role of the divinities:

To communicate with Mars, converse with spirits,	1
To report the behaviour of the sea monster	
Describe the horoscope, haruspicate or scry,	
Observe disease in signatures, evoke	
Biography from the wrinkles of the palm	5
And tragedy from fingers; release omens	
By sortilege, or tea leaves, riddle the inevitable	
With playing cards, fiddle with pentagrams	
Or barbituric acids, or dissect	
The recurrent image into pre-conscious terrors –	10
To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams; all these are usual	
Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press;	
And always will be, some of them especially	
When there is distress of nations and perplexity	
Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgeware Road.	15
Men's curiosity searches past and future	
And clings to that dimension.	

Eliot lists a myriad of fortune-telling practices which humankind has developed to attempt to predict the future and search the past. Such practices are in marked contrast to the behaviour of the 'voyagers' of the previous movement, who genuinely face the unknown, and 'fare forward' into it, showing the implicit trust they place in their own divinities.

In the above lines Eliot gives us a sense of how mortals can pervert this relationship with their gods, seeking to cajole direct communication out of them, or skirting their influence entirely. Succumbing to the fear of the unknown, the fear of death, men's 'curiosity searches past and future' to attempt to control or understand it. What we want is to *manufacture* revelation, to will the *Ereignis* into being without being appropriated by it ourselves, so we can pick through the past and future. Eliot reminds us that to truly apprehend '[t]he point of intersection of the timeless / With time, is an occupation for the saint - / No occupation either, but something given / And taken, in a lifetime's death in love' (ll.18-21). Most of us are not saints, but can take solace in the knowledge that '[f]or us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business' (ES, fifth movement l.18). Eliot ends 'The Dry Salvages' with the following enigmatic lines:

Who are only undefeated	45
Because we have gone on trying;	
We, content at the last	
If our temporal reversion nourish	
(Not too far from the yew-tree)	
The life of significant soil.	50

The 'trying' is something we can enact through 'prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action' (l.31). In Heidegger's language it is the genuine acknowledgement of our gods, and the outward expression of that acknowledgement which manifests as dwelling within the fourfold – both during and after our lives. I think this is what the above lines gesture towards. Eliot writes this in the aftermath of 'Burnt Norton', pondering how to go on living contentedly after the 'moment in and out of time' (l.24). He suggests that to 'nourish / . . . The life of significant soil' (ll.48-50), to dwell within the fourfold, requires only remaining 'undefeated' (l.45), faring forward and thus fulfilling our role as mortals.

'Little Gidding'

'Little Gidding', completed in October 1942, is Eliot's last published poem. It is named for a small shrine built in 1625 by Nicholas Ferrar and his family in the hamlet of Little Gidding in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. When I visited there in June 2011, the shrine is still what it was, a place of pilgrimage, worship and spiritual retreat. The T.S. Eliot festival held there annually was a week away, and my wife and I spent a happy afternoon in the shade of the chapel eating summer cherries.

Nicholas Ferrar established his lay community at Little Gidding in the early seventeenth century, to fill in his own way the vacuum created by the Reformation and the abolishment of monastic life. The Little Gidding community was shaped by cyclical prayer and daily work, much in the spirit of St. Benedict's 'ora et labora' (pray and work). The

society was not strictly monastic and consisted of men, women and children. Eliot visited the chapel in May 1936. For him, spiritually, Little Gidding represented the high church paradigm of the contemplative life, dedicated to mystical devotion. He regarded Little Gidding as his spiritual home and the importance of the place for him is signified by it being the last quartet, the most mystical, and his last published poem. We get a sense of this place as his personal spiritual home spread across passages in the last quartet, for example in the first movement:

There are other places	35
Which also are the world's end, some at the sea jaws,	
Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city –	
But this is the nearest, in place and time,	
Now and in England.	
...	
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,	44
They can tell you, being dead: the communication	
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.	
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment	
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.	

And again, in the fifth movement:

A people without history	20
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern	
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails	
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel	
History is now and England.	

In the first section Eliot affirms his own ontological relationship to place, and to Little Gidding specifically. For though there are 'other places / Which also are the world's end . . . this is the nearest' (first movement ll.35-36). Little Gidding, as place, satisfies Eliot's own yearning and search for spiritual and existential fulfilment. It represents the fullest expression of his own coming to dwell. Though '[t]here are other places' for other people and other times, this place is his *Heimat*; it is the *nearest* for him in terms of his coming to understand his own historical, situated embeddedness.

The second and third passages acknowledge that the present is always narrated and understood through its past, through 'the communication / Of the dead' (ll.45-46) who speak *beyond* the language of the living. 'Death', Heidegger writes, 'is what touches mortals in their nature, and so sets them on their way to the other side of life' (PLT: 123). Eliot captures this sense of 'the other side' with the image of the dead whose speech is 'tongued with fire' (l.46). For Eliot, being in Little Gidding, and kneeling before the altar of his god concentrates that openness where the intersection of ordinary time with the 'timeless moment' (l.47) can erupt. What 'is England' (l.48) is the language of its dead kept

alive in the memory of its living, if the living remain attentive to and in awe of this language spoken by those now on 'the other side of life' (PLT: 123).

Though England is a physical place, and Little Gidding a particular site within it, Eliot perceives history as a pattern of events and exemplary moments which shape the present place; thus paradoxically, time is place and 'History is now and England' (fifth movement l.24). Our sense of physical place is dependent, not only on the 'now', but on the voices of those mortals who have crossed to the 'other side of life'. The poet's being in a secluded chapel on a winter's afternoon in 1936 confirms who and what he is in terms of a broader pattern that extends beyond the boundaries of his own life.

This poetry confirms that, following Ricoeur, we are entangled in narratives – not only our own but those that form the 'pre-history' of our story and bind it to a larger whole.⁸¹ The principle consequence of this 'entanglement' is the desire to make our stories known. Our understanding of selfhood and dwelling is itself a narration, and these passages from Little Gidding show how the meaning of this selfhood is never ontologically separable from place. The repetition of 'England' is meant to serve as a confirmation of Eliot's identity, as an American born into a Unitarian household who finds himself an Englishman professing the Anglo-Catholic faith. This scene at Little Gidding is meant as the culmination of his life story, as well as of *Four Quartets*, and the affirmation of an identity made authentic before the divinities.

In closing this chapter we can consider some passages from the final movement of the final quartet, which I think speak to the heart of dwelling:

What we call the beginning is often the end	1
And to make an end is to make a beginning.	
The end is where we start from. And every phrase	
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,	
Taking its place to support the others,	5
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,	
An easy commerce of the old and the new,	
The common word exact without vulgarity,	
The formal precise but not pedantic,	
The complete consort dancing together)	10
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,	
Every poem an epitaph. And any action	
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat	
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.	

⁸¹ P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative: Volume 1*, trans. by K. McLaughlin and D. Pallauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 75. See also P. Vandeveld, 'The Challenge of the 'Such as It Was': Ricoeur's Theory of Narratives', in *Reading Ricoeur*, ed. by D. Kaplan, 141-162 (New York, State University of New York Press, 2008), 149.

We die with the dying:	15
See, they depart, and we go with them.	
We are born with the dead:	
See, they return, and bring us with them.	
The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree	
Are of equal duration.	20
...	
We shall not cease from exploration	26
And the end of all our exploring	
Will be to arrive where we started	
And know the place for the first time.	
Through the unknown, remembered gate	30
When the last of earth left to discover	
Is that which was the beginning;	
At the source of the longest river	
The voice of the hidden waterfall	
And the children in the apple-tree	35
Not known, because not looked for	
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness	
Between two waves of the sea.	
Quick now, here, now, always –	
A condition of complete simplicity	40
(Costing not less than everything)	
And all shall be well and	
All manner of thing shall be well	
When the tongues of flame are in-folded	
Into the crowned knot of fire	45
And the fire and the rose are one.	

These are profound, mystical lines. We can read them as Eliot's testament to an authentic life dedicated to living fully and consciously within the fourfold. 'The end is where we start from' (l.3) suggests that to arrive at this 'condition of complete simplicity' (l.40) heralds the beginning of another self, one reconciled to the world as it is, but also attuned, without resentment, to the myriad of unrealisable possibilities it offers. This is Heidegger's authentic self. We are temporal beings and are condemned to action (even in inaction) which is unidirectional and irreversible – thus 'any action / Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat / Or to an illegible stone' (ll.12-14). We recall Arjuna's hesitation on the field of battle, afraid of committing himself to one course of action over another, reminded by Krishna that 'whatever event, this is your real destination' (DS, third movement l.42), meaning that, whatever transpires, all action brings us close to death, for all action is governed by temporal existence. What matters is that the action be authentic, genuine, even in the face of adversity. Eliot evokes the sense of gravity and consequence of action in the lines 'a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat'. Consider St Paul (c.5-c.67) and Thomas More (1478-1535) who were beheaded, Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) and Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) who ended their lives on the stake, and the countless voyagers and seafarers whose lives ended down the 'sea's throat'. The courage genuine

Arendtian actions requires places us in the public sphere where we are exposed to risk and irreversible choice. Yet, even so, at the end of our life and the end of our generation all that remains may be an 'illegible stone' in the corner of a forgotten graveyard.

Yet, in spite of the passing of a single life, Eliot captures the sense of mortal life as part of a broader, inter-generational pattern, embraced within the all-encompassing fourfold: 'We die with the dying: / See, they depart and we go with them' (LG, fifth movement ll.15-16). When family members and close friends die 'we go with them'; part of who we are is gone with their death. Yet, '[w]e are born with the dead: / See, they return, and bring us with them' (ll.17-18). New life, natality, carries the memory of those dead into the life of the living, thus they return with us. Who we are and what we become is indelibly shaped by the ancestors of our past. This vision of our profound, continuing humanity, a vision shaped within the fourfold, shows that the 'moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree / Are of equal duration' (ll.19-20). The moment of the rose, a single life, its own *Ereignis*, encompasses within it the moment of the yew-tree, the broader more enduring pattern of human existence. Both are of 'equal duration' in the poet's and mystic's understanding of temporality, and form part of the broader cycle of the fourfold.

Eliot's own poetic writing is a testament to his ability to act, to make a 'beginning'. The poet's task is to get 'every phrase / And sentence . . . right', to realize the 'complete consort dancing together' (ll.3-5), each word in its place. The poet for a destitute time is wholly absorbed in this creative impulse, since writing true poetry requires being true to oneself, for 'every poem' is 'an epitaph' (l.12). Every poem serves as a testament to the life of the poet and thus every 'phrase and every sentence' must be measured, 'every word . . . at home' (l.4).

In the final movement of 'Little Gidding' Eliot describes human dwelling as a ceaseless exploration. We search for truth, for peace, for happiness and come to realize that these things are not objective things that, once attained, will satisfy our will. Rather, 'the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time' (ll.27-29). Coming to terms with our own failings, doubts and fears is to enable a re-appropriation of the self, to achieve a lasting authenticity in the face of death. This insight does not create some radically new person, but someone fuller, more attentive to the present moment, to the wonder of the world. This is Eliot's 'condition of complete simplicity' (l.40), Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*. In ending the poet turns to the fourteenth-century English anchorite, Julian of Norwich, whose consoling words 'all shall be well and

/ All manner of things shall be well' (ll.42-43) reverberate through the centuries to us, reminding us that it is not despite, but *because* of the suffering, mistakes and weaknesses that are inherently part of life that our humanity reaches its fullness. To fully dwell for Heidegger is to be at peace, to be brought to peace and Eliot draws on Julian's words to affirm this impulse.

In the last passage of *Four Quartets* Eliot gathers together important images and themes from the other quartets, many of which have been discussed above. The 'remembered gate' (l.30), 'earth' (l.31) and 'longest river' (l.33) allude to the 'Burnt Norton' rose-garden (BN, first movement l.20), the soil of 'East Coker' (EC, first movement ll.37-46), and the many waters of 'The Dry Salvages' (DS, first movement ll.1, 15 etc). Poetically this structural in-folding at the end of the poem draws together all these life experiences into the symbolic form the poem has given them. This also reveals the philosophy behind the poem, that all these elements of the fourfold are needed to make a life genuine. In this sense *Four Quartets* could only be written by an older man (Eliot was 54 when he completed the poem) because it contains the philosophy, in the spirit of Socrates, of a deeply considered and examined life, one found to be worth living. 'Little Gidding' has a dual role here. As the final quartet it is the site where the other quartets meet and are made one. And as a place Little Gidding chapel is where the fourfold itself is gathered. It is a building built for the sake of dwelling, it is under the sky, for and before the divinities. It rests upon and is built from the earth by the hand of mortals who find their greatest peace within its walls.

Though *Four Quartets* is an intensely personal narrative, focusing on four obscure places that have meaning only to Eliot, it serves as his poetic testament to the possibility of dwelling. Eliot, following Heidegger, is truly an exemplary poet. His poem demonstrates some of the prerequisites of true dwelling, an acknowledgement of our ecstatic temporality, a cognisance of the claims of the earth and its rhythms, an openness to the strangeness of the divine. By narrating the steps by which he comes to feel at home 'now and in England' (LG, first movement l.39), he embodies in his poem the processes by which identity, Kristeva's 'who', comes to existence, is confirmed, challenged, shaped and reshaped through *place*. And because Eliot is portraying dwelling *in poetry*, he can articulate a sense of our nearness to place with a power that no philosophy can muster.

Conclusion

This thesis has been an opportunity to explore, not only thematically but also in a chronological fashion, the substantial concordance that exists between the work of Martin Heidegger and T.S. Eliot. The concern with an authentic life in our post-Nietzschean age haunts the early work of these two men. In their separate projects they express the existential difficulty of living in a disenchanted world, unhinged from the guiding, moral authority of religion and shaken by the First World War from a late-romantic trust in nationalism. Prufrock's angstful 'Do I dare?' succinctly expresses the doubts and uncertainties that beset the modern individual, in his or her quest for the authentic life. Heidegger's bleak call to be resolute in the face of this doubt is the only guiding principle that can be offered. Yet how authenticity is to be fully realized remains a perplexing question, which was to occupy both philosopher and poet for the rest of their careers.

The thesis began by discussing T.S. Eliot's philosophical influences, his brief exposure to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, and his PhD study of the neo-Hegelian philosopher Francis Herbert Bradley. The philosophical underpinnings of Eliot's 'objective correlative', as well as his criticism of Cartesian dualism and promotion of a 'situated understanding', are addressed. The introduction established Eliot's own philosophical context, and suggested that an important reason for the strong concordance between Eliot and Heidegger lies in the German Idealist tradition in which they were both expertly versed.

Chapter one explored authenticity as it is developed in *Being and Time*, as well as associated themes such as temporality, the 'they' (*Das Man*), inauthenticity, idle talk and angst. These themes were then used to interpret Eliot's poem, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. My reading aims to illustrate the strong resonance between the concerns of *Being and Time*, and those of Eliot's poem. Both texts depict a bleak Modernist view of the condition of the early twentieth-century modern individual, characterized by a somewhat dispiriting nihilism and homelessness. In this vein Eliot Weinberger perceptively writes that 'Modernism . . . is less an aesthetic than an existential condition: the end of the old order is both liberating and overwhelming, as its freedom of possibilities and chaos of choices inevitably leads to indecision and malaise'.⁸²

⁸² E. Weinberger, 'Who Made It New?' *The New York Review of Books*, May 23, 2011, 42.

Prufrock, the protagonist of the poem, exemplifies this 'indecision and malaise', unable to 'force the moment to its crisis'.

Yet, in spite of the doubt and anxiety which form part of Eliot and Heidegger's initial vision of our modern condition, their early works also express, on occasion and in sometimes obtuse language, an awareness of moments and events which hold the key to how authenticity might be reconciled with everyday existence. As both men age and their work develops, this moment begins to assume greater significance such that both undergo a discernible 'turn' towards it, integrating it into their worldview. Eliot's 'turn' is clearly signalled in his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism, which assumes a singular importance in his life, and profoundly shapes his later work. However, as chapter two discusses, an awareness of the encounter with 'the Absolute' was already with Eliot from an early age. Heidegger's turn towards *Ereignis* thinking is more gradual, but assumes a juggernaut quality as it grows steadily, from tentative hints in his early letters and lectures, to become *the* unifying concept of his middle and later work, a concept that today we are still trying to understand and interpret. The term is present in his earliest extant lectures of 1919 up until his last lecture of 1962.

The first part of chapter two follows this trail by paying attention, chronologically, to the important texts which form and develop Heidegger's *Ereignis*-thinking. It charts a complex concept with two discernible meanings: one refers to *Ereignis* as an *a priori*, ineluctable condition of human existence, that the world essentially happens *as event*, because we are the 'site of the open' where Being can be manifest. The second meaning, which I have drawn on more for my discussion of Eliot's poetry, refers to *Ereignis* as an individual 'event of appropriation and revelation', which entails 'transport' and 'enchantment'. Importantly, however, these two meanings of *Ereignis* can be reconciled; the world is always happening as 'event', but it is only through our appropriation by the '*Ereignis*' event that we become aware of this.

In Heidegger's middle and later thought this appropriation enables the insight into *Seyn*, which instigates the overcoming of metaphysics. *Ereignis*, aside from the apocalyptic tone of the middle and later work, is also closely aligned with poetic language and the poet who, of all individuals, is called to speak the 'holy', particularly in a 'destitute time'. Heidegger argues that the poet's language, the essential example of the 'house of Being', can bring us nearest to experiencing the wonder and mystery that the world *is*; poetry is itself the *Ereignis*, contained and manifest in language. Heidegger identifies the poetry of Hölderlin and Rilke as example of this manifestation.

Taking my lead from Heidegger I have interpreted Eliot, as poet, in this same light. The *Ereignis* experience forms an integral part of Eliot's own experience of reality, and Heidegger's *Ereignis*-thinking provides a rich and fruitful way to interpret the complexity of the experience that Eliot repeatedly describes in the language of poetry. Here Eliot's work fulfils an important dual role, in that, not only does his poetic language draw us to notice the 'eventing' nature of the world, though language, but several of the important experiences he describes are *themselves* moments which irrupt forth in this way, in other words, *Ereignis* moments. The Event is manifest briefly in *The Waste Land* in the image of the hyacinth girl, before becoming the originating moment of *Four Quartets* with the encounter in the rose-garden. Eliot's poetry, in terms of his life's work, reaches its apex in the first movement of 'Burnt Norton', in the very rising of the lotus itself. Thereafter the remaining quartets of the poem seek to come to terms with the meaning of this Event. Thus *Ereignis*, both as an ineluctable *and* epiphanic condition of human existence is revealed in Eliot's poetry, confirming, in Heidegger's words, 'what poets are for in a destitute time', namely to re-found and restore the wonder of the world and existence itself. This restoration of awe is the result of the poet's never-flagging 'raid[s] on the inarticulate', as Eliot puts it, the poet's continual striving to enact that openness to Being through which human language and the human world constantly come to be.

The final chapter focusses on dwelling and the associated concepts of freedom, building, the fourfold and enframing. Through a close exegesis of some of Heidegger's later texts I established a clear sense of what dwelling means for him, and how he situates his thinking about it within the post-Second World War context. This context is arguably one of the reasons why there is such a deep concordance with *Four Quartets*, a poem written during the Second World War, and essentially, as I claim, about the nature of dwelling. Eliot and Heidegger, in their later work, both share a concern for the meaning of place, in the sense of being *at home*, and how a genuine relationship with place can enable human flourishing. Both are also attuned to the danger of technological materialism and how its pernicious effect is destroying our sense of the world as our dwelling place. This shared desire to understand and restore our ontological topology deepens when ideas such as the fourfold are explored in *Four Quartets*. The underlying complementarity in their later work becomes dynamic, and the poem opens up to insights which affirm Heidegger's philosophy on thinking, building and dwelling, which, in turn, affirms that *Four Quartets* is an example of thinking for the sake of dwelling.

Seen as a whole the thesis provides compelling evidence that there is an essential similarity in Eliot and Heidegger's intellectual journeys. In the first chapter we see two young, ambitious (slightly conceited) and brilliant men, living in the aftermath of the First World War, trying to come to terms with nihilism and authenticity in their respective ways. By the third chapter Eliot has become an Anglo-Catholic and self-proclaimed royalist, Heidegger is smarting from a ruined academic career which he will never recover, and an ex-infatuation with Nazism that will rise like a spectre for as long as his name is mentioned. Yet their intellectual work of the later period is bound by the shared tragedy and horror of the Second World War. In their respective projects both Heidegger and Eliot offer a tentative, but hopeful vision of humanity, asking us to be patient with ourselves, and to continually seek after the 'saving power'. Both become mystics, but not of the classic sort – perhaps it is this shared strand in their later thought which makes them both compelling, and at the same time difficult for our 'post-mystical' age.

Heidegger and Eliot were Moderns in a way we are not. Both believed, I think, that the world's problems could be solved – that all that was required was the correct philosophical, spiritual and social will. For Heidegger our problems are rooted in a philosophical tradition that perpetuates an error that he believed he had detected and dismantled. He knew his solution was untimely, but believed that eventually the rest of us would catch up. For Eliot it was perhaps more simple; genuine Christian faithfulness could restore and save us. What united both men I think is, essentially, a commitment to the genuinely authentic life, not the angstful, even empty authenticity of *Being and Time*, but a richer belonging, which affirms our relationship with the earth, each other and our gods. In their openness to Being the poet and the philosopher, Heidegger believes, must be the trailblazers of this dwelling; they have to take up the responsibility of 'raiding the inarticulate', as Eliot puts it, of never ceasing their forays into Being.

Two figures of such importance to their respective traditions as Martin Heidegger and T.S. Eliot can never be adequately discussed in a single project. As was mentioned in the introduction, many interesting questions remain, such as Eliot and Heidegger's shared anti-humanism, anti-Semitism and interest in mysticism to which I have not given sustained attention. Any of these would provide stimulating avenues for further investigation, and continue in the spirit of my research, which is not only to deepen understanding of these two central figures, but also in this way to enrich our understanding of the early twentieth century and its philosophical and literary milieu. The world of *The Waste Land* and *Being and Time* gave birth to our postmodern, post-religious,

thoroughly materialist and technological age, an age whose dangers Eliot and Heidegger presciently diagnosed. This awareness of the danger and the possibility of the 'saving power' it conceals is the legacy they leave us.

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