

Echoes of Logos and Dao: 'Yellow Earth' and the Question Concerning Technology, Language,
and Cross-Cultural Dialogue

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in the Department of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies in the Graduate School of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The study aims to elucidate and address the problem of cross-cultural encounters and artwork interpretation by exploring the philosophical concepts of “the Logos and Dao.” Through the examination of Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s thoughts on “Logos” and referencing Daoist thought, the essential meaning of “the logos and Dao” is gradually explained with the notion of “Enframing” (Ge-stell), which denotes a mechanism that gathers and sends over. The structure of “Gestell” not only supports the fundamental function of the “house of language,” but also plays an important role in the question of modernity and technology. Through a detailed analysis of the film work *Yellow Earth*, the study illustrates how technology, while presenting challenges to the essential relation between humans and beings, also holds the potential to unveil the “Enframing” force of “the Logos and Dao.” This revelation fosters a reimagined understanding of cross-cultural dialogue in the age of modern technology, and it also urges us to rethink the relation between humanity, language, and technology.

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1. Introduction

The following thesis from the late Heidegger on the essential relatedness between Dao and Logos informs a possible dimension where cross-cultural dialogue between East and West could be reimagined. It appears in the following lines of the lecture of “Identity and Difference”:

We must experience simply this owning in which man and Being are delivered over to each other, that is, we must enter into what we call *the event of appropriation*. The words *event of appropriation*, thought of in terms of the matter indicated, should now speak as a key term in the service of thinking. As such a key term, it can no more be translated than the Greek Logos or the Chinese Tao (Dao).¹

As we can see, Heidegger linked the terms “Logos” and “Dao” together through something called “the event of appropriation” (Ereignis) which refers to a strange mechanism that gathers “man” and “Being” together, but at the same time sends them away from each other. This “event” can only be elucidated through the term “Logos” from ancient Greek, and the “Dao” from Chinese Daoism.

To grasp the full meaning of this paragraph from Heidegger, we need to look beyond its surface meaning, and extend our interpretation to the context and the key intent of this lecture itself. The aim of this lecture “identity and difference” is to critically examine the principle of “identity” expressed through the thesis of Parmenides:

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. and introd. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 36.

“Thinking and Being are the same.”² This original proposition affirms the identity between human’s thinking and Being. According to the words by Parmenides, human thinking must be able to access the highest, most universal principle (Being) for they are essentially the “same.” Through Heidegger’s reinterpretation, however, the meaning of this sentence is violently “deconstructed”: “Thinking and Being belong together in the Same and by this Same.”³ Now, the “Same” conveys less as a modifier to “thinking and Being.” It no longer denotes a trait of “sameness” that communicates the preexisting identity between “thinking and Being”; rather, it appears as a mechanism that works in and by itself upon both “Being and Thinking” which presses thinking and Being together. Yet, because the “Same,” something working by itself, belongs neither to the side of “Being,” nor to the side of “man,” its very existence, in-between “man” and “Being,” at also marks a persistent unsurpassable rupture within their correlation. The “Same” is thus also the framework that produces the differencing distance between thinking and being. In other words, the “Same” produces and lets endure the “Difference.”

The philosophical lesson we might get from this formulation is that what hinders Being from fully integrated into human thinking is precisely what connects human thinking to Being. Yet, perhaps this abstract, philosophical lesson is not the most valuable part of Heidegger’s thinking. We must further see that the terms that Heidegger uses to refer to this binding-separating force of the “Same” - the event of appropriation - are “Logos” and “Dao.” These terms, despite their different meaning and cultural significance, simultaneously point toward the same field: language.

² τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι

³ Ibid., 28.

Language, understood in the broadest, most universal sense, functions by distinguishing and correlating, gathering and separating: Things are gathered within the same sphere of language, but at the same time, they show their difference manifestly through language. Humans are connected through language, but their inter-relationship is also mediated through it, which gives them linguistical and social distance. Finally, the fundamental category of “Being” is only manifested to humans through language, confirming their interconnectedness. But the very ambiguity in its linguistical meaning also evidences its distance from humans. It is precisely in language that the affinity and the distance between human and Being is felt and thought. This basic experience of language thus explains why Heidegger considers the term “Logos” or “Dao” to best express the self-working principle – the “Same” - of identity and difference: Language itself is the primal structure that produces and reproduces identity and difference.⁴

The language-based model of the principle of “identity” presents a different way of envisioning the connection between human and Being. Originally, the Parmenides thesis choose the word “νοῦς” to denote human thinking, which also means: seeing. The choice of word indicates an optical metaphorical network. The correlation between human and Being is first and initially grasped through the metaphorical correlation between seeing and showing. In comparison, the Heideggerian way of putting forward the principle of identity redirect our attention towards the field of language and speaking,

⁴ See the following expansion made by Heidegger about Language as the Ereignis that appropriates man and Being into its structure: “The event of appropriation is that realm, vibrating within itself, through which man and Being reach each other in their nature, achieve their active nature by losing those qualities with which metaphysics has endowed them. To think of appropriating as the event of appropriation means to contribute to this self-vibrating realm. Thinking receives the tools for this self-suspended structure from language. For language is the most delicate and thus the most susceptible vibration holding everything within the suspended structure of the appropriation. We dwell in the appropriation inasmuch as our active nature is given over to language.” *Ibid.*, 37.

where “Dao” and “Logos” intersects. His view of language as Ereignis, something working by itself which sets out the fundamental framework⁵ (Gestell) that structures the relation between thinking and Being, returns the ontological primordiality to language, particularly because of its capacity of “Enframing” referring to the act of installing “frameworks” of all level that structure and sustain, gather and dispatch, connect and differentiate. By creating and letting endure all the differential structures between “thinking” and “Being,” and “Being” and “beings,” the power of “Enframing” originated from Logos prevails across the whole history of philosophy.

Heidegger’s insight into the ontological pervasiveness of the framework of language (understood in terms of Logos and the Dao) is then further developed by Gadamer. In relation to this position, his philosophical hermeneutic expresses two principles: hermeneutical experience is universal, and also language is the fundamental medium of hermeneutic experience.⁶ The first principle expresses the idea that human’s relation to the world, to the beings, the artworks, and to others are all fundamentally hermeneutic experience. More importantly, as is expressed through the second principle, the hermeneutic experience is grounded in language. By language, Gadamer also means Logos⁷ (but without the mentioning of Dao), which he interprets in a platonic tradition as “discourse and dialogue.” Understanding, the key component of hermeneutic experience, is always concerned with the interplay of speaking, listening and responding. It never

⁵ Martin Heidegger and William Lovitt, *The Question Concerning Technology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 20 :“According to ordinary usage, the word Gestell [frame] means some kind of apparatus, e.g., a bookrack. Gestell is also the name for a skeleton.”

⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum International, 2004), Part III, “Language as the Medium of Hermeneutic Experience.”

⁷ Hans Georg Gadamer, *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), essay “Greek Philosophy and Modern Thinking.”

aims at an absolute integration of one into the other or a forceful control and mastery of meaning, but rather to engage into a dialogical relation with what is to be understood, like two conversing partners who come into an agreement of co-speaking, at a dialogical distance that initially enables the dialogue to begin and continue, which also offers a chance to experience a change in themselves through the experience of conversation.

However, one must admit the more Gadamer leans towards this platonic-colored interpretation of “Logos”- in the sense of a benevolent dialogue that fosters the development of arguments of both sides, the more the initial forceful and repressive “Enframing” (Ge-stell) side of “Logos,” which has been informed by Heidegger with the term “event of appropriation,” comes to be ignored. For Gadamer, the experience of speaking centers upon the *dual relation* between the two interlocutors engaged in a conversation in good will for allowing and facilitating the other side to develop his ideas and thinking (εὐμενεῖς ἔλεγχοι.) Yet, for Heidegger, there also involves a third party – Logos or Dao – that consistently frames and positions the unfolding of dialogical relations. The insight into this potentially repressive aspect of language is also retained and underscored in Heidegger’s formulation. Part of the reason for his not overlooking the self-working mechanism of Language, stems from the source that he develops his view of language – not principally the platonic notion of “dialogue”, but Heraclitus’s saying on “logos” and also Lao Zi’s saying about “Dao.” Both of the views focus on the self-working nature of the “Logos” and “Dao.” For this reason, Heidegger links these terms – Logos and Dao - with his idea of “event of *appropriation*.” The semantic part about “appropriation” also conveys the meaning that something takes, absorbs, and relates other things into itself without losing its self-independency and *sovereignty*. In

this sense, language, understood in Dao and Logos, is not just a neutral medium for understanding to unfold but also has an authoritative power in itself. As an “event of appropriation,” it occurs all of a sudden by its own and installs the most fundamental scaffolding structure (Gestell) to the world. Humans only subsequently become gathered into this structure to acquire the freedom to speak and to engage in hermeneutic relations. But this freedom is always grounded upon their unfreedom in the sense that they are always undecidedly being “thrown” into Logos by the gathering power of Logos itself. The same unfreedom also belongs to the side of “Being” itself: it is initially installed into a framework of ontological difference by “Logos” because of which it destined to be forgotten. In this sense, “Logos” is not only what situates humans in relation to Being, but also what entraps them both. We must be able to see that this direction of thinking does not fully translate into a tenor of peacefulness, but instead, a warning about the hidden force of repression hidden in the depth of “Logos.”

How, then, can the discussion of Heidegger’s idea of Dao and Logos facilitate our understanding of the meaning of cross-cultural *dialogue*? A preliminary lesson is perhaps: the thinking on this subject matter must cease at the level of mere cross-cultural comparison, but has to delve into the discussion of the nature of “dialogue” itself, the domain where Logos and Dao intersects. The question of cross-cultural encounter essentially concerns the questions of the nature of language and the essential meaning of “dialogue.” Does “dialogue” mean arguing over the other to affirm one’s self-assertiveness which happens, under the disguise of the application of a variety of “methods,” including the so-called “theories”? Or, does “dialogue” mean that one is

willing to engage in a relationship with something other than itself where he finds an opportunity to transform himself?

In this regard, the contributions of Zhang Longxi made in the seminal work *The Tao and the Logos* are irrefutably important. Zhang's practice is guided by Gadamer's idea of the universality of hermeneutic experience. He seeks to, depart from the shared hermeneutic experiences between East and West, and "put them in a sort of critical dialogue"⁸ in the field of literary hermeneutics. By featuring a range of literary phenomena, Zhang shows that both East and West are exposed to similar hermeneutics problems and they respectively come up with similar yet different answers. The conclusion of this hermeneutic journey is what Zhang calls the "interpretive pluralism" which stands in opposition to what is called "totalizing discourse": "Contrary to the totalizing discourse in much of contemporary theory and criticism, literary hermeneutics as we have understood it has as its inevitable consequence the advocacy of interpretive pluralism, the emphasis on the importance of an open-ended and truly reciprocal dialogue as the paradigm of communication."⁹ In other words, "interpretive pluralism" calls for a *conversational relation* between interpreters and scholars from different interpretation backgrounds. There is no absolute valid reading of a work and each interpreter should respect and be open to the interpretative views of others, to allow a meaningful dialogue and contribute to the multiple explanations of literary works. In this context, the guide words "Dao" (Tao) and "Logos" are understood by Zhang as signs that affirm the

⁸ Longxi Zhang, *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), Preface xiii.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.

limitedness of language, unattainability of absolute meaning, and fluidity of understanding, which have been accepted in both East and West. By expressing the inevitable presence of indeterminacy and instability in the field of “meaning,” the terms “Dao” and “Logos” naturally support the spirit of “pluralism”: since there is no absolute meaning behind the text, interpretative practice should be open-ended. In the introduction part, Heidegger’s ideas on identity and difference are also quoted and are explained by Zhang in accordance with the aforementioned understanding: “To find out sameness is not to make disparate things equal or identical or to erase the differences that inhabit the various cultural and literary manifestations. However, at the same time, to recognize this distinction Heidegger specifies is also to accept the very possibility of sameness and not dismiss the same as merely equal or identical.”¹⁰

However, we must also see that Zhang has transposed some of the key motifs underlying the thoughts of Gadamer, and Heidegger to serve the ideal of interpretive pluralism, which makes him ignore the potentially important insight within their original formulations. One of these insights is Gadamer’s implicit critique of the dominant scientific methodological thinking in his philosophical hermeneutics. Initially, the hermeneutic “dialogue” was envisioned by Gadamer to be set between the interpreter and the artwork itself. Unlike a scientific mode of investigation, the hermeneutic experience, which occurs as a *dialogue* with the work, creates a possibility for one to be truly confronted and affected by something beyond their initial grasp and other than himself. It is as if someone is thrown into an unexpected discourse with an other. Following the

¹⁰ Ibid., xv.

platonic guidance about the good will aiming for the facilitation of a co-speaking experience without the domination of the speaking from either side, the key intent of philosophical hermeneutics with regard to the question of artwork shall be: to let the work speak from itself and to enable the interpreter to speak together with it. By contrast, the scientific method, which Gadamer criticizes, holds a tendency to silence the work's speaking by imposing a prepared framework upon it. The result is always homogeneous to the nature of the framework itself, creating a monologue-like situation without the real engagement and recognition of the otherness of the work. This tendency of scientific methods facilitates a self-assertive attitude by the hermeneutic subject, which, as hermeneutic experience is the foundation of our experience of the world, further leads to a self-centered tendency in ourselves when interacting with the world and the people around. We refuse to listen, to hold back our urge to express ourselves, and are reluctant to be open to the possible changes of ourselves by experiencing the confrontation of the otherness of an other.

However, in the work of Zhang, the inherent tension between the method-oriented consciousness and hermeneutical mind is downplayed. "Interpretive pluralism" celebrates the diversity of interpretive *methods* without considering the potential scientific mode of knowledge production that could be working at the roots of academic literary analysis. The critical undertone of Gadamer is not properly listened. Furthermore, the theories themselves are precisely envisioned with a methodological color – as neutral medium for comparison - by Zhang, as he expresses "Literary theory, which by definition *transcends national and linguistic boundaries*, provides a truly fertile ground for comparison and promises a great deal of insight into the art of literature by examining a variety culturally

heterogeneous and historically unrelated works.”¹¹ From this understanding, theories themselves become a neutral medium which can put “different cultural traditions on an equal footing.”¹² Yet those comparison does not occur as the true dialogical encounter suggested by Gadamer, but is always already mediated through these neutral platforms themselves. In other words, the theories mechanically set up the framework of comparison and subjects the different parties under its own voice. In this sense they also exhibit a methodological nature. This is why Zhang’s celebration of theories is very likely to meet the direct opposition from Gadamer: within those preconceived plans and frameworks offered by the universalized theories, a genuine dialogical encounter, anticipated by philosophical hermeneutics, with the work itself can no longer be experienced. What sounds is rather the monologue of “theories” themselves.

Indeed, Zhang takes notice of Gadamer’s approach against the methodological thinking, but the misunderstanding of Gadamer’s dialogical spirit further leads to a misleading interpretation by Zhang of the critique of the “method” by Gadamer. He recognizes Gadamer’s argument as a critique of the fixation to one specific type of method¹³ . But rather what Gadamer really opposes is the very mode of relation entailed by the act of application of “methods” at all – which presupposes a rootless, free-standing interpretive subject, a wide range of available, equivalent interpretative tools, and an object set before oneself. On the other hand, the spirit of methodological thinking, which is opposed by Gadamer, does not exclude the diversity of methods advocated by Zhang.

¹¹ Ibid., xi.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid, 198

In the field of science, “methods” can also appear in multiple numbers and the task of investigation can be distributed to different departments, specialized by different researchers. This is why, viewed from a truly philosophical hermeneutic perspective, the mere phenomena of the *diversity* of the so-called literary theories themselves shall never be blindly celebrated, without critical reflection upon the traditions, historical consciousness and most importantly the institutionalized mode of knowledge production that stands behind them.

Apart from the transposition of Gadamer’s idea, following the spirit of “interpretive pluralism,” Zhang also translates Heidegger’s “identity and difference” into something like a “identity and diversity.” This interpretation ignores the critical undertone within the term “difference” which means the preservation and subsistence of *one and the same* differencing gap that persists throughout the whole history. For Heidegger, this gap means the ontological gap between beings and Being that secretly structures the whole history of philosophy. Here, the emphasis is that “Difference” is something singular and self-constant, and for this reason it cannot be translated into “diversity” or multiplicity. Behind this Heideggerian claim of “identity and difference” stands a particular way of viewing history: the seeming manifoldness of historical phases is a repetition of the same division: the recurring of the same gap, and this recurrence grants the “differencing” gap a self-constancy, which constitutes its “identity.” This vision is exactly something “totalizing” that Zhang would probably reject: to view the entirety of history totalized by *one* gap of negativity. The call of Heidegger to take notice of the “difference” is thus, not a call to embrace diversity, as is interpreted by Zhang, but rather to consider the one and the only “totalizing negativity” that underlies all the

manifoldness. Also, it urges us to ponder deeply into the framework (Gestell) that initially produces and constantly maintains this singular “difference.”¹⁴ This reflection about the framing operation of Logos constitutes a potentially critical dimension in Heideggerian thinking, which relates intimately with his critique of technology where the essence of modern technology is positioned within the same field from which metaphysics originates. As will be explicated in the following chapter, it is the same mechanism of “Ge-stell” (Enframing) in the depth of Logos that produces the ontological distinction and also the reign of modern technology.

Yet, we must be able to see that this critical undertone in Heidegger’s indication about the repressive side of Logos, arising from the acknowledgement of its totalizing effect, is not just lacking in Zhang’s thinking but also in Gadamer’s thinking. There is a tendency in Gadamer to single out the saving power of “logos,” understood in terms of the platonic mode of “dialogue” to oppose the scientific mode of thinking, without considering their homological origin:

In the articulation of the experience of the world through the logos, in speaking with each other, in the communicative sedimentation [in language] of our world experience which encompasses everything that we are able to exchange with each other, there comes forward a form of knowing that presents the missing other half of the truth, a truth that stands alongside the great monologue of the modern sciences and their growing collection of [unexploited] experiential potential.¹⁵

¹⁴ The similar way of thinking can be found in Psychoanalysis which uses the one and the same “gap” — the unconscious to explain the entirety of personal history, as well as in Marxism which consider “class division” as one and the same “difference” that determines the whole course of history.

¹⁵ Gadamer, *The Gadamer Reader*, 273.

Gadamer, in this case, places a pure trust in the “logos” at the cost of ignoring the danger coming from “logos” itself. The trustful gesture thus covers up the dark ground of the “universality” of the so-called hermeneutic experience which is treated as a given in Gadamer’s philosophy. Here, the repressed question seems to be: where does this universality come from? Why does the hermeneutical experience dominate everything? Perhaps, informed by Heidegger’s thinking, the universality is itself a reflection of the ruling power from the sovereignty of Logos. The freedom that we experience in the hermeneutic experience, the freedom to dialogue, is grounded by a deeper layer of unfreedom, through which humans are situated, not just in the tradition which they belong to, but also in a determined relation towards the framework of Logos itself. From this perspective, for the hermeneutical experience to be discussed more comprehensively, the attention has to be turned towards, not just the interlocutors but also the third party that puts them into a constellation (konstellation) – the Logos or Dao.

Following the aforementioned line of discussions about the philosophical hermeneutical tradition developed by Heidegger and Gadamer and the applications by Zhang of their ideas into the scenario of cross-cultural dialogue, I develop my own project of investigation, within the same realm of thinking as those thinkers. My investigation into the theoretical problem of East-West dialogue, begins from a slightly different angle from the literary hermeneutics practiced by Zhang Longxi. To fully release the potential “universality” of the hermeneutic experience, I think, one should precisely not restrict oneself to the field of literary interpretation. As has been pointed out by Gadamer, the structure of language and the hermeneutical experience is everywhere, even found in Nature: “Here we are getting to the foundations. It is not by accident that

one could talk about the ‘book of Nature,’ which contained just as much truth as the ‘book of books.’ That which can be understood is language. This means that it is of such a nature that of itself it offers itself to be understood.¹⁶”

In this case, the cross-cultural encounter between East and West *in general* can also be seen as language event, which involves a face-to-face encounter of an “other,” the exchanges of sayings, the process of unexpected and unprepared coming into sight. This encounter carries with itself a hermeneutical situation, which calls for the thinking into the nature of dialogue and language. However, unlike Gadamer’s position that seems to overemphasize the role played by good will of opening to the other and understanding them in hermeneutic practice, I would instead put more emphasis on that the appropriating force that happens in-between the two sides, which pressures both into the an irresistible gravity of having this confrontation. In other words, the experience of encountering the appropriating power by Logos as “the event of appropriation” occurs suddenly and intensely beyond the subjective control of either side of this dialogue.

Within this understanding, a conversation is not imagined as if it is initiated at the behest of friendly wills from both sides. Nor is it a result of a third-party comparatist who arranges and juxtaposes the two. What happens instead is the sudden occurrence of an unnamed gravity that forces and commands the two to confront each other, situating them into a necessity of having a dialogue. Interlocutors are face-to-face with each other but at the same time, they are in the same position of facing the same claim from language (Logos and Dao) itself that gathers them and separates them. Actually, we all experience

¹⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum International, 2004), 470.

the individuality of this linguistical power in all forms of successful or unsuccessful dialogue. Language, the dialogue-forming force, appears to have its own will. In many cases, even if we deliberately set up a stage for dialogue, it just does not happen properly. Each speaker may only engage their specific problems and shows no interest in being truly face-to-face with others. On other occasions, however, an authentic dialogue, which everyone would consider impossible, would happen all of a sudden with gigantic energy, beyond the expectation and explanation of everyone.

Isn't it true that the Chinese film *Yellow Earth* and its Western reception precisely demonstrates a case of such kind? The work and its overseas influence were never calculated nor anticipated by either side. It is as if an unintelligible "call" occurs in-between the fifth-generation directors and the overseas audience, whose inherent gravity installs a structure of "calling" "listening" and "responding" that frames the connection of both sides. The encounter appears truly as an "event" of Logos without the intervention of theories and methodologies acting as "grounds for comparison" (suggested by Zhang.) Rather, it is the experience the ineffectiveness of "methods" that prevails, as realized and reflected on in Esther C.M. Yau's essay: "Yellow Earth: Western Analysis and a Non-Western Text."¹⁷ The author claimed that there is something beyond the explanatory power of the so-called Western methods – "cine structuralist, Barthesian post-structuralist, neo-Marxian culturalist, and feminist discursive" - working within the work.¹⁸ On the level of the film work, this inexplicable element manifests as the scene

¹⁷ Esther C. M. Yau. "'Yellow Earth': Western Analysis and a Non-Western Text." *Film Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1987): 25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1212362>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32

where Chinese losses plateau is silently portrayed. The mere exposition of the Nature “run counter to its grain of modernist activities and does not yield to a historicist reading.”¹⁹ As is pointed out by Gadamer, the end of the method-oriented consciousness probably marks the happening of a genuine dialogue with towards the work. This inexpressible scene instigate Yau’s increasing awareness of importance of reflecting upon the limitedness of the western analytic methods and it propels her to start to affirm the otherness of the other by calling for a non-western interpretation for the non-western text.²⁰ Disregarding the question of whether this attitude creates an other level of essentializing an “other” which turns back to the self-assertiveness by the Western interpreter, the challenge, the impact, the experience of a form of inexpressible “thrust”²¹ caused by the artwork which sends the hermeneutic subject onto the path of dialogical thinking is irrefutable. Where does this dialogue-creating power of the work come from? How is it preserved within the work itself? What can the artwork informs us of the truth of Logos and Dao?

Through a close reading of the film, in particular, I would answer the question by contemplating the *unexplainable image of the Yellow Earth*, the Chinese losses plateau that challenges Yau’s “methods.” In my view, the scene itself expresses a structure of linguisticality, which is inherently set into work by the camera. The furrows and ruptures that spreads across the whole landscape of losses plateau is itself a figure (Gestalt)

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ To comprehend this experience, see Gadamer’s description in *The Gadamer Reader*, 78: “Is it not true that when a work of art has seized us it no longer leaves us the freedom to push it away from us once again and to accept or reject it on our own terms?”

resulting from the silent geographical “conversation” between the sky and the earth. The conversation take place and continues in the following sense: the sky voices itself with its erosive raining and wind, the earth replies with its steadfast towering high into the air. The two are engaged within this universal, silent dialogue, whose presence circulates not just the land of yellow earth but also within the whole of Nature. It is precisely this dialogue shapes the landscape, making prevail the element of “rift” that spread across the land. By dynamically presenting this element, the camera not only offers a copy of the *Yellow Earth*, but it liberates and reveals the original dialogue-creating and the relation-forming mechanism which is working within the natural geographical structure of *Yellow Earth*, the land itself. This mechanism is what Heidegger would call the event of appropriation intimated with the term of “Dao and Logos.” By enabling us to be face to face with the inherent skeleton of the “lingusticality” (Sprachlichkeit²²) within Nature, the camera, a technological construction, accomplishes a poetic task: the *measuring* of the structural frames of Logos.

The above analysis about technological instrument and its ability to gauge the li design of Logos further informed the answer to another crucial question, which is also reflected on the narrative level of the film *Yellow Earth*: the relation between language, modernity and the essence of technology reflected by its theme of folk song and the encounter between a modern soldier and the traditional peasants. As we have said, the initial possibility of “Enframing” originate from the field of Logos. Heidegger considers this force of “Enframing” also characterizes the essence of technology, which denotes the

²² I take the term from Gadamer which implies a language-based nature.

technological capacity that gathers and dispatches, regulates, and orders. The indication about the language-based source of technology informs us with the following: just as the dialogue between the sky and the earth has been on-going for thousands of years, before we order Nature into the resources for our use with technology, everything, including us, is already ordered into the “framework” of linguisticality. Just as we are being “owned” by technology, we are already being “owned” within the house of language. The two has an implicit connection. In this sense, I firmly adhere to the view point that the appropriating power of technology takes its root in language itself and I consider the film’s disclosure of the original “logos” that structures the landscape of the yellow earth as also a disclosure of the essence of modern technology, as well as the relating issue of modernity which appears on the narrative level of the film.

I shall particularly mention that this way of thinking the question of technology separates my stance from that which taken by the philosopher Yuk Hui. Hui’s “The Question Concerning Technology in China” starts with the critique of Heidegger’s potentially Eurocentric tendency to understand the phenomenon of technology²³. Yuk Hui believes that the Greek notion of “techne,” which Heidegger considers as the root of modern technology, cannot be universalized to illustrate all the technological experiences in the world, and therefore, he turns to develop a Chinese philosophy of technology by expounding the metaphysical “Dao-Qi” dichotomy which could, on the one hand, help to explain the specificity of Chinese experience of technology that evades the limitedness of

²³ Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics* (Urbanomic, 2016), 33-39.

Western paradigm, while on the other hand contribute to the heterogenous landscape of “cosmos-technics,” and pluralist understanding in the field of Philosophy of Technology. Although I fully agree that thinkers from different traditions and different cultures inevitably embark upon different paths toward the question concerning modern technology, I consider Yuk Hui’s thoughtful practice, however, fail to consider the critical aspect of Heidegger’s view concerning technology – his indication about the relation between technology and language (logos). As is shown in his lecture “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger does not consider the Greek notion of “techne” as *the ultimate source* of modern technology. Instead, he traced that source further back to the notion of “poiesis,” upon which, he claims, “techne” is grounded²⁴. He then furthers ground “poiesis” in Language (“Logos”) which is correlated, even equated, with the Chinese notion of “Dao.” He says: “Framing (Ge-stell, also translated as Enframing), as the nature of modern technology, *derives from the Greek way of experiencing letting-lie-forth, logos, from the Greek poiesis and thesis.*”²⁵ This sentence suggests to us that the essential nature of modern technology, Enframing, is rooted in the field of language (Logos), especially the two aspects of poiesis (bringing forth) and thesis (setting over against). It is precisely these two linguistic gestures which we perform in our verbal or non-verbal linguistic experience that give birth to our capacity of performing all the technological activities that are developed afterwards. For this reason, the answer to the mystery and challenges posed by modern technology has to be found by thoughtfully responding to the call of “language” – a field which bids the inceptual

²⁴ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 10.

²⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 83.

thinking from both Daoism and the Greek philosophy - instead of proposing another metaphysical ontology about cosmos.

This Heideggerian idea about the essential connectedness between language and technology thus further raises question about the consideration of “time” within the question of technology, a point of view that is inherited by Yuk Hui from the philosopher Stiegler. Also inspired by the thinking of Heidegger, Stiegler retrieves the theme of time that is prevalent in Heidegger’s early thinking and reconsiders its role in the problem of technology. Yuk Hui further develops this way of thinking and goes on to examine the role played by the question of time within the Chinese traditions of thought. However, to reiterate my view, it is the field of language that takes dominance in the late Heidegger’s thinking on technology rather than the category of time. The reason for this selected focus is important. As we know, the initial motivation for Heidegger to touch upon the question of time is that he discovers that the principal understanding about the meaning of Being, as “presencing,” is guided by a specific horizon of time, in particular, the temporality of the “present.” Nonetheless, as he more and more investigates the nature of metaphysics, the focus of his viewpoint changes. What primordially constellates human and Being together is no longer considered to be the horizon of time, but rather language – understood in the sense of Logos and Dao. This does not suggest that the category time is unimportant, but rather that it loses its ontological primordiality. It is from the original event of language – the happening of the original connectedness between human and language that endures within the whole history of humanity that the dimension of temporality originates. In the lecture on the nature Holderlin’s poetry, this idea is expressed with the following sentences where this event of language is referred to with

the term “conversation”: “We have been one *conversation* since the time when there ‘is time.’ Ever since time arose and was brought to stand, since then we are historical.”²⁶ In the later lecture on “time and being”²⁷, time is redescribed through a set of metaphorical expressions which stands in close relation to the language-based experience of sending, nearing and passing away of sounds, and the invisible, silent relationship between the caller and the answerer. Eventually, time and space are both grounded upon the event of “Ereignis” in this discussion, which one can translate into Logos or Dao. The ultimate task of thinking is also not about pondering the nature of time but rather “*saying*.”²⁸ My interpretation of the late Heidegger’s thought on this matter (time and being) is that he no longer comprehends time merely as a transcendental horizon through which being is viewed. Instead, he based the origination of temporal and spatial distance upon the movements of the coming into presence and the passing away of the original call of Logos, as an original language event that determines the nature of human. For this reason, again, I do not return to the field of temporality to seek answers to the question of modern technology. Rather, I look towards the “hermeneutic universality” reckoned by Gadamer and think upon the homological linkage between the universality of language experience itself and the overarching reign of technology.

The Heideggerian answer about how to overcome the problems caused by modern technology is notoriously well-known. He states that the danger of technology cannot be overcome by the expansion of modern subjectivity but instead can only be solved by

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000),57.

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 1-24.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 24.

poetry. The reason behind this consideration is evident within the context of our discussion: the essence of technology originates from the field of language, and therefore, to seek the chance of saving one should inevitably look towards the constitution of language itself, which is accomplished by the “measuring-out” function of poetry²⁹. However, this way of thinking tends to separate poetry from modern technology, rejecting the already informed homological relation between poetry and technology – they are both the offsprings of language. As is shown in the work *Yellow Earth*, the universal linguisticality as an aspect of the Dao, is merged with the visual figure of the “yellow earth” and camera, as a technological construction, can itself perform the poetic function of “measuring” defined by Hölderlin and accepted by Heidegger. The so-called “saving power” to counteract the danger of modern technology can also lie within technology itself through the releasement of its capacity for measuring structures, creating events and fostering dialogue. Perhaps, the other possibility lying within the modern technology, in this regard, is that it is able to generate something of beyond our previous expectations and forces us to rethink our relation to the world and to language, propelling a shift from Heidegger’s thesis about the “world picture” into the “world dialogue.” Isn’t it true that this potential is precisely reflected in the above-mentioned cross-cultural hermeneutic situation caused by the film work in which the incomprehensible image of the yellow earth pictured by the camera challenges both sides to thinking together in ever more radical way? Isn’t it also true that the function of the camera further informs a way of understanding the critical dimension where global

²⁹ See the essay on “poetically man dwells” in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (First Perennial Classics, 2001), 209-227.

relationality can unfold between different cultures in the age of technology? I believe the salvage possibility lies precisely in modern technology's role in causing opened-ended crises and challenges forces and orders the whole world to be faced with the same *center of negativity*³⁰, through the inevitable confrontation of which the whole world must undergo an experience of speaking and thinking together. The process brings changes and dislodgements to the pre-established frameworks of all sides, enabling them to experience and position themselves in a new way.

Perhaps, Zhuang Zi's words about the pervasiveness of Dao require a different hearing in the age of modern technology: *it is everywhere, even in the ants; the weeds, and excrement, and urine.* The statement foretells the universal dominance of technology in today's world, as it truly permeates into every aspect of our life, making it represent Dao. On the other hand, it suggests to us a possibility of understanding today's situation of modern technology differently: rooted in Logos or Dao, technology are not just mere instruments, but also "ways" like language that take us to encounter something and someone entirely different and open-ended. This dialogical experience not just enables us to truly recognize the others in conversation, but more importantly challenges both sides to reflect upon the Logos-based structuring power operating by itself in the middle sphere that has been waiting for the response by modern humanity for so long.

To fulfil the task of elucidation of the aforementioned ideas, I divide my work into two parts: the first part would focus on developing my interpretation of the late

³⁰ That is to say, an untrodden sphere that has never been properly thought upon and awaits our thoughtful response. Its aesthetic presentation manifest as the nothingness that structures the "rift" structure, supporting the "strife" between the world and the earth.

Heidegger's thinking on the question of Logos and Dao. By explicating the reason for Heidegger's turn toward the field of "Dao" and "Logos," I seek to clarify some of the fundamental concepts relating to the issue of Logos, Dao and art, such as "rift," "Earth," and "strife," etc., in Heidegger's thinking and preliminarily develop a framework of thinking that addresses the phenomena of language and technology, which will be applied to the concrete analysis of film work and the cross-cultural encounter it produced. The second part is devoted to the discussion of the question of cross-cultural dialogue concerning the problem of technology and language, exemplified by the case of "Yellow Earth" and its reception. I intend to show how the "structure" enframed by Dao and Logos is manifested both inside and outside of the film work itself – on both an aesthetic level and the plane of its reception - and how it is exposed and gauged by the camera work, a technological tool. A lesson gained from the discussion of the film work is perhaps a renewed way of imagining the cross-cultural encounters and global dialogue in the age of technology, intimated by the polyvalent meanings of the words: Dao and Logos.

2. The Way to Language

Unlike the Daoist thinking which puts the question of “Dao” to the forefront at the very outset, the question of “Logos” does not always occupy a central position across the philosophical path of Heidegger. Rather, it is developed through Heidegger’s changing opinions on the question of the Truth. To understand the growing importance of the notion of “Logos,” as well as its inherent signification, throughout Heidegger’s thinking, therefore, it is advisable for us to trace the development of the concept of Truth in Heidegger’s thinking. Daoist thinker, Laozi, understands true knowledge from the very beginning as something with dual nature: unconcealment and concealment at the same time. Knowing the Dao does not translate to absolute lucidity, but it always involves the enduring of both clearness and obscurity. The idea is expressed through phrases like: “Knowing the brightness, guarding the darkness”¹ as well as “Everything embraces the Yang yet is backed by Ying.”²(Chapter 42)

In my view, one of the reasons for this dialectical insight in Daoism is that the Daoist thinking intuited the truth of the highest principle - Dao - primarily through the experience of speaking (Dao) – a process involving both positivity and negativity. In the process of speaking, the presence and absence of sound does not occur in a clear-cut distinction. Instead, one always experiences the coming-into-presence and the passing-into-absence of sound, a process in which presence and absence organically accompanies together. What’s more, when one engages into a dialogue with the other, he must not just

¹ Laozi, Laozi: *Current Annotations and Translation*, annotated and translated by Chen Guying, Beijing: Commercial Press, 2003, 183.

² Ibid., 226: “知白守黑.”

learn to express himself, but also, holds back his expression to hearken to what the other says. If the gesture of self-expression is a sign of producing the presence, then the gesture of listening precisely aims to produce absence. Both are equally important in the experience of speaking with someone. The metaphorical network of Dao (the word that stands for speaking and language) naturally makes possible a more balanced and dialectical viewpoint on the questions concerning the most universal principle, as is demonstrated by Daoism. By contrast, in the beginning of ancient Greek, the truth of the highest principle - being - is related to the experience of the eye, as is expressed through Parmenides³ saying "Thinking (seeing) and Being are the same." The saying naturally correlates Being as something emits the brightest light of unconcealment while human's thinking as the faculty of seeing that receives, appropriates and re-project the luminosity of Being. Influenced by this tradition of thinking, the early Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, also primarily focused on the unconcealing side of the truth rather than the concealing side. Although he analyzes the phenomenon of "inauthenticity," the obscurity covering up the understanding of "Being" inherent to Dasein, this concealment is not considered equiprimordial as the dimension of unconcealment. He rather tends to think that without initial clarification, the concept of being obscured is meaningless. "Inauthenticity" thus always relies on the possibility of "authenticity."⁴ In the 1930s, Heidegger's lectures on the nature of truth⁵ began to emphasize the concealing aspect of truth. He introduced the

³ For the discussion on the philosophical comparison between "Dao" in Laozi and Logos in Heraclitus, one may also look at Jiyuan Yu's essay "Logos and Dao: Conceptions of Reality in Heraclitus and Laozi" in *Chinese Metaphysics and Its Problems* (Cambridge University Press, 2018). Here my discussion on this matter is more or less mediated by Heidegger's thought, instead of directly engaging into the metaphysical discussion of Dao and Logos.

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), see chapters 17 and 38.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, William McNeill, *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), "What Is Metaphysics?" 82; "On the Essence of Ground," 97; "On the Essence of Truth," 136; "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," 155.

idea of a primordial concealment that exists prior to any unconcealment. In the lecture “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger finally offers a more comprehensive view of the dual aspects of truth through metaphor of the “strife between the Earth and the World”⁶. The “Earth” stands for the concealing side of the truth while the “World” stands for the unconcealing side. The relationality between the two is termed “strife” and its presentation is considered to be achieved through “artwork.” The Heideggerian metaphor of “Earth” and “Strife” gathers manifold dimensions including not just epistemological but also moral, aesthetic, and historical implications. Nonetheless, the metaphor of “strife” also connects to the field of dialogue and language – Logos and Dao - the final realm where Heidegger’s thinking on Truth dwells. The word “Language,” expressed by Heidegger with terms like “saying,” “calling,” not just offers new insight into the question of truth, it also introduces a different metaphorical framework that changes the undertones of all fundamental philosophical concepts as well as the fundamental disposition of thinking.

To fully elucidate the change in Heidegger’s thinking and the reason for him to embark on the way of language, it is crucial for us to work through the whole development of Heidegger’s thought. It is worth mentioning that the previous discussions abound on the topic of Heidegger’s “turns”⁷ (kehre). Building on this foundation of

⁶ Martin Heidegger, Julian Young, and Kenneth Haynes, *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-52.

⁷ The work that offers me invaluable insight is *Heidegger’s Ways* which collects a range of Gadamer’s essays on Heidegger’s thought. The essays “The truth of the Work of Art” and “The Way in the Turn” also contain acute observations of the key aspects of Heidegger’s changing focus of thought. I am also influenced by Derrida’s lecture on Heidegger: *Heidegger: The Question of Being and History* where the limitedness of Heidegger’s early thinking is lucidly and a shift are lucidly demonstrated. One might also refer to the work by Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift* (London, England: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd, 2015), which offers a clear and comprehensive explication of the important changes in Heidegger’s thinking. *Engaging Heidegger* by Richard M Capobianco, which also addresses the change, observed from the changing meaning of the term “Lichtung”

previous scholarship, my approach might offer a nuanced interpretation in the sense that I hold the question of Logos and Dao at the center of my view and organize my own interpretive horizon by projecting towards this end. With this focal point, I aim to delineate, through the comprehensive reading of his works, the inherent necessity that drove him to his later thinking on Logos, technology, and poetry, as well as the growing importance of the “Dao,” highlighting their interconnectedness in his philosophical inquiry. Through this process, I will also seek to make manifest the potential inherent limitedness and potentiality latent within the late Heideggerian way of thinking. Hopefully, the discussion can shed light on the following chapter which addresses the question of technology as well as the cross-cultural encounter between West and East reflected within the film work “*Yellow Earth*.” The encounter initially appears as a problem about “methods,” but its essence will be eventually grasped as a language event – concerning Logos and Dao.

2.1 The Meaning of Truth in *Being and Time*

The principal purpose of *Being and Time* is to interpret the inherent “understanding of being (Sein)” which exists within the particular being (Seienden) called “Dasein,” the kind of being that we are⁸. This understanding of “Being” can be seen as a form ontological knowledge which, although not consciously acknowledged, is

(clearing) in Heidegger’s philosophy. According to the author’s discussion, “clearing” initially refers to illuminating, yet later it only denotes the mere movement of “clearing” in the sense of loosening and opening” The author also traces the changing meaning of “Lichtung” and its relation to the changing status of platonic “sun” in Heidegger’s philosophy in Chapter 6.

⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 15-37. (Chapter Two: "The Double Task in Working Out the Question of Being: The Method of the Investigation and Its Outline"): “Dasein is a determination of the essence of a human being solely on the dimension of ontology, in other words, its being capable of understanding the meaning of being and using this understanding to interpret all the being of other beings and the being of others.”

innately possessed by individuals. The work investigates how this knowledge is reflected within our everyday dealing with things, other people, as well as ourselves, but also the crucial question about how this fundamental knowledge becomes obscured and forgotten, labeled as the state of being “inauthentic,” and it seeks pathways to rediscover and reaffirm this knowledge, thereby rendering Dasein “authentic” once more.

The methodology that Heidegger employs to accomplish this inquiry is “phenomenology”⁹. “Phenomenology” refers to the process of making manifest of something which is potentially self-showing but not yet being fully brought to light. In Heidegger’s words, the principal task of phenomenology is “to *let* what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself.”¹⁰ This means, to let emit the visibility of a phenomenon by fully releasing its inner tendency to reveal itself which is already at work within itself. The use of the term “let” captures the dual nature of phenomenological practice—it is both passive and active. It is passive insofar as it does not impose anything extrinsic upon the core of the phenomenon, aiming instead to liberate the inherent self-showing tendency of the phenomena themselves. Yet, it is also active, as this liberation necessitates the dismantling of obstruction and distortions that prevent a lucid view of the phenomenon’s self-revelation. In this sense, its spirit bears close relation to the essential ethos of Heideggerian “destruction”¹¹ – the removal of obstructions to reveal the real ground that secretly determines the entire development of history.

⁹ Ibid., see Chapter Two.

¹⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹¹ Ibid.,21-22.

Semantically speaking, the term “Phenomenology” is constituted by two parts: “phenomenon,” referring to what inherently manifests itself in itself, and “logy,” which refers to “logos,” the realm in which something can be explicitly articulated, evaluated, compared, and related to other domains of knowledge. The combination of the two parts indicates the fundamental purpose of phenomenology as to bring into clearer view that which naturally emerges from itself (phenomenon), facilitating its presence within “logos,” where its relation with other spheres of knowledge can be shown.¹²

Combining all the definitions and interpretations, the preconception that grounds the method of “Phenomenology” gradually comes to the surface. Its standpoint is essentially grounded in the principle of phenomenality, expressed as the self-constancy of the self-showing nature of a phenomenon. This method must always presuppose that its object of investigation possesses a basic level of self-showing, and it unfolds by following and releasing this self-showing to the fullest. Before it starts its practice, the nature of phenomenality must already be attributed to its object, situating its investigations firmly within the domain of visibility and disclosedness. It operates within the ground plan of visibility regardless of how ambiguous or distorted its subject matter appears. A basic level of manifestness must be always presumed from the outset for the method to proceed. This presupposition of manifestness can also be intuited, which guarantees the validity of phenomenology, through the very meaning of the verb “let”

¹² Here, we shall pay attention to Heidegger’s arguments on how the clarification of the meaning of “being” could ground the other spheres of knowledge. This thinking, I believe, is not arbitrary but rather inherent in the very requirement of “logos” that constitutes the essence of “phenomenology”. The hidden line of thought of Heidegger might be: the clarification of the meaning of “being” helps to clarify the essence of “logos” so that all types of “logies” could be explained based on this clarification. Of course, this ambition is far from being accomplished in *Being and Time*, but it is always somehow unpresently present in Heidegger’s works.

that has been explained previously. “Letting” entails not imposing anything foreign or alien upon something, but rather means allowing something to do something *from itself*. In phenomenology, this *let* means to *allow* what wants to show itself from itself to fully show itself. It simultaneously implies that we cannot compel what always loves to conceal itself to show itself in phenomenology. “Letting” implies the allowance for the unfolding and heightening of something, but not the transformation of something’s nature. The nature of what is being “let” stays unchanged within the practice of phenomenology which only releases and elevates the degree of its self-showing. Following this elucidation, Phenomenology might be best grasped as the practice which departs from a basic level of manifestness and works towards a higher degree of manifestness. But no matter how its scope of investigation expands, it must always adhere to the realm of manifestness and never move beyond it.

The assumptions outlined above are critical to the phenomenological investigation of the meaning of Being, a central theme in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. This exploration, termed “fundamental ontology,” starts off with the premise that “Being,” once situated within the phenomenological framework and linked to the question of “meaning,” inherently possesses the quality of self-showing¹³. Only with this presupposition can the investigation of “the meaning of Being” be possible through “phenomenology,” according to the meaning of this term itself as we have explained. Without this essential capacity for self-manifestation, the phenomenological method of

¹³ The expression “self-showing” already involves the meaning of “arising from itself,” in accordance with the ancient Greek concept of “phusis”. The term “Phenomenology” is inherently endowed with the understanding of the unity between being and phusis (self-arising), logos(logos) and truth (showing).

“letting” — allowing phenomena to reveal themselves from within their own nature of self-showing — would not be viable.

As is demonstrated by Heidegger, the self-showing of Being is precisely attested in our own capability of receiving its light. This linkage might be further traced back to Parmenides’s thesis about the sameness of knowing (imagined in the model of seeing) and being.¹⁴ For Heidegger, one proof of our implicit “sight” of Being is observed in our ability to raise the question of being (sein)¹⁵ itself. For such a question to be raised, the questioner must not be indifferent to what is questioned. The non-indifference is a sign of his being already guided by a preliminary sight of the original self-showing of Being in general. Besides this example, there is also a wide range of cases where our, the being called Dasein, sight of the showing of Being manifests itself. The phenomenological search for the meaning of being necessarily turned into an “existential” analysis of Dasein. Through this analysis, Heidegger examines diverse examples to illustrate there is an inherent understanding of “being” that guides our daily activities. This understanding interprets the being of man-made objects as “present-at-hand,” or “ready-to-hand;” the being of the world in terms of “being-in;” the being of others in terms of “being-with;” and finally, the conception of Dasein’s mode of being as “existence.”¹⁶: standing out in the openness of being¹⁷.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 155.

¹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, see Chapter Two.

¹⁶ For the manifold interpretations of “being” that Dasein holds for himself as well as things, people other than itself, see Division One of *Being and time*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

“Existence” denotes Dasein’s fundamental gesture of stepping out of the realm of concealment and unclearness into the realm of the “clear.” It explains the fundamental capacity of Dasein to access what is outside itself, to cognize and understand what is not itself, by implicitly knowing and projecting the meaning of “Being,” something most universal which constitutes everything. “Being” can be here imagined as an illuminating referential center. Invoking the understanding of Being, all the manifold beings, whether like or unlike Dasein, can be accessed and clarified. As Dasein stands *in* the openness, which means, he is constantly *in* the exposure to the light of this center itself, he is thus able to be *out*, to interpret and understand everything else relative to this center with its light, as well as himself. That is to say, Dasein never exist as a self-closed entity which gives no notice to what happens outside itself. Rather, it can always access the outside through cognition and allow the outside to act upon itself. “Existence,” the particular mode of being of humans, denotes Dasein’s privileged *hermeneutic-cognitive*¹⁸ power amidst other beings, unlike Dasein. Because of his preliminary “sight” of Being, Dasein can cognize the widest expanse, not just the surrounding world but also what has not yet been encountered, not just his immediate life but also his unarrived death. For this reason, Heidegger characterizes the fundamental relation between Dasein and Truth, the meaning of which is “unconcealment” derived from its ancient Greek root “Alethia,” as “Dasein is in the truth”¹⁹.

¹⁸ A power of “knowing,” but knowing is also “seeing,” a holding of sight of Being. Dasein potentially holds Being in view, therefore he understands beings and the being of himself.

¹⁹ Ibid., 213.

The discussion in *Being and Time*, however, ceases at the level of explicating the meaning of the being of Dasein, as existence, instead of fully explicating the meaning of Being itself. The two are related yet different, because Dasein is only one particular type of beings but not Being in general. For the initial task of working out the “meaning of Being” *in general*, Heidegger must proceed further from the hermeneutics of Dasein towards the hermeneutics of Being itself, instead of staying purely at the level of Dasein’s self-interpretation. This requirement is reckoned at the very end of *Being and Time*: “Setting forth the constitution of being of Dasein, however, remains only one way that we may take. Our goal is to work out *the question of being in general*. Our thematic analytic of existence needs in its turn the light from a previously clarified idea of being in general.”²⁰

Yet, why, within the breath of *Being and Time*, does the task fall short of being finished? From my point of view, the reason resides in the initial setting of Heidegger’s project that turns the question of “Being” into the question of the “meaning of Being.” The two tasks are fundamentally different. To understand this distinction, it’s crucial to refer to Heidegger’s definition of “meaning” (Sinn) as discussed in the section “Da-sein and Discourse. Language” of *Being and Time*:

Intelligibility is also always already articulated before its appropriative interpretation. Discourse is the articulation of intelligibility. Thus, it already lies at the basis of interpretation and statement. We call that which can be articulated in interpretation, and thus more primordially in speech, meaning (Sinn).²¹

²⁰ Ibid., 414.

²¹ Ibid., 155.

According to the definition by Heidegger, “meaning” is that which can be potentially articulated and it appears “in speech” (therefore related to Logos). Its essence derives from “intelligibility” which is “always already articulated.” That is to say, “meaning” not only bears a preliminary level of clearness “before appropriative interpretation” but is also something peculiar to human for its potentiality of being articulated in *human* speech. As “discourse” and “speech” are the fundamental constituents of Dasein’s own nature of “disclosedness”²², the sphere where the “meaning of Being” points towards are not the sphere of Being’s self-showing itself, but rather the sphere where the showing of Being and Dasein’s understanding of Being intersects. This way of formulating the question thus inevitably turns the investigation of “Being” in itself into the investigation of “Dasein,” somehow similar to how the study of ontology is turned into the study of epistemology. As soon as “Being” itself is equated with the cleared part of “Being” for Dasein, the object of investigation is no longer “Being as Being” but rather Dasein’s knowledge about “Being.”

A more important, yet unnoticed, reason for this transformation to happen resides in the initial premise of Phenomenology itself. As we said, “Phenomenology” has its essence in *letting* “what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself.” It implies a practice of removing the coverage that conceals to *see* how the thing initially shows itself. In other words, the phenomenological practice has its essence in the act of “seeing through,” which is based upon the natural correlation between “seeing” and “self-showing.” As mentioned above, Dasein’s ontological position of standing in the

²² Ibid., 127-155. (Chapter Five)

openness amid beings makes possible its understanding of being, signifying a privileged stance of “seeing” and “knowing.” Despite Dasein’s tendency to forget its ontological privilege and to let the semblances cover up the “self-showing” of being, the very stance of Dasein (in the “open”) remains unchanged. This stance enables the agency of Dasein that the phenomenological “letting” could be carried out to liberate the self-showing of all other beings by letting pass the initial light from Being through its ontological privileged position. Furthermore, Dasein is the only creature who possesses the ability of language, the ability of “logos.” He not only feels (attunement) and sees (understanding) the illumination of Being but is also able to explicitly articulate it, in the form of “meaning,” because of its ability of language.²³ Therefore, all phenomenological discussions based on the presupposition of “manifestness of being”; the potentiality of phenomenon made manifest by the practice of “letting” and putting into “logos” is inevitably oriented towards the realm of *Dasein* - the one who stands in the openness. That is to say, the practice of “letting” and “logos” from which phenomenology develops itself themselves peculiar to Dasein. The question of Being, placed in the framework of phenomenology, becomes and can only be limited within the analysis of Dasein.

It is important to mention that Heidegger’s view on the meaning of “Untruth” in *Being and Time* also follows the aforementioned insight. As *Being and Time* depart from the field of manifestness of Being and move towards its manifestness, it considers Being (sein) as what initially shows itself, and Dasein to be that particular being who always already exclusively receives its light and projects this light towards other beings to clarify

²³ See Chapter 34 “Da-sein and Discourse. Language”.

them, the state of “Untruth” is grasped in prior as a secondary mode of Dasein's disclosedness—a possibility of Dasein tendency to overlook or forget its ontological openness. Dasein could also be in “Untruth” not because there exists some fundamental darkness other to the self-same nature of Being as pure manifestness, but rather because it tends to forget its ontological privilege by becoming “closed off”²⁴. But being “closed off” does not negate its standing within the clearance of being. It only means Dasein left this ontological truth undiscovered (but not undisclosed – disclosedness denotes that it is possible to be discovered, while discover conveys the meaning of “removing blockage”). Therefore, although “Untruth” here refers to a negative state of Dasein in which it does not properly understand itself, this is still grounded in the ontological disclosedness of Dasein. In other words, it refers to the covering up of unconcealedness. For this reason, when touching upon the relation between Truth and Untruth, Heidegger mainly explains the essence of the prefix “a” in “Alethia” with the metaphor of “robbery.” It means to forcefully break the distorting semblance that covers up the initially self-showing truth and to allow its inherent light to fully emit again.²⁵

Nonetheless, an untouched alternative layer of “Untruth” arises within the Heidegger’s phenomenological practice. The ground of phenomenology - hidden origin of Dasein’s ontological stance that conditions its capacity to always be in the truth, to stand in the openness of being, and to be the most unique kind of being (Seienden) - remains in fundamental darkness. This variant of “Untruth” does not manifest as a mere obscuration of original openness but rather signals a fundamental unclearness concerning

²⁴ Ibid., 213.

²⁵ Ibid., 214.

the very emergence of the initial disclosedness of Dasein. In this sense, this form of “Untruth” is more primordial than the previously discussed notion of “Untruth” as a derivative form of concealment. It points to the pre-disclosed history of Dasein in which Dasein steps out to stand in the light. Yet, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger still adheres to the ancient Greek understanding of “truth” which is essentially derived from a particular understanding of Being and Truth centering on the metaphor “luminosity.” Therefore, he does not fully acknowledge the primordially of this fundamental negativity inherent in the phenomenon of “truth” in this work. In terms of the dark background of Dasein, Heidegger rather illustrates it with another group of terms originating from the moral and religious sphere: guilt, call, resoluteness, and freedom²⁶.

This unexplained exclusion thus further reflects into the practice of phenomenology itself, which is to let “what manifests itself to manifest in itself.” This guiding principle of phenomenology indicates that its inquiry is only confined to the level

²⁶ Ibid., see Chapter Two, Division Two in *Being and Time*. Guilt refers to the situation in which Dasein could only take over its ontological structural position, the openness of being, yet is unable to decide whether to be or not to be in this position. In other words, Dasein can never choose not to be Dasein. Dasein can never choose not to be placed in the “Da”. It is always already Dasein and it must be Dasein. The root of this “must” is not just unclarified but also refuses any rational reflection and penetration. The ultimate form of saying “yes” is at the same time a saying of “no”. The ontological privilege of Dasein, therefore, is also the guilt of Dasein – although it possesses the utmost disclosing power, precisely because of this, it is never able to fully disclose the root of itself. Yet, also because of this fundamental unclarity in the depth of the ground of Dasein, Dasein, as a “creature” that tends to disclose, illuminate, and project, is also endowed with the tendency to carry out inward reflection about the very mystery of its-self. The inner darkness compels Dasein to dislodge the well-established existentiell self-assurance and to raise questions about his inner truth again. The guilt, therefore, is not a merely deficiency in the being of Dasein but rather becomes an existential mechanism that calls Dasein to turn its outward-looking gaze at the beings outside itself into an inward-looking gaze at the very ground of its existence. It is only by answering this urge, the call, that Dasein could discover its fundamental ontological situation as “standing in the openness of being,” and exist resolutely, which means it remembers what it initially “sees” and understands everything only in terms of this one and only ontological Truth. Resoluteness, the phenomenon in which one adheres to one possibility and carries it out towards the end, disregarding all the other possibilities that co-appear, refers to a steadfast will to know the ontological truth. This will support Dasein’s constant “standing” in the openness of being, but it is itself rooted in unclarity. The “ought” within the resolution that orders one to choose the only choice and to cancel out all the other possibilities is precisely unreasonable. In this sense, “resoluteness” as a category, does not explain the root of fundamental unclarity in the ground of Dasein, it is rather a way of describing the unclarity itself.

of phenomenality – the dimension of self-showing and manifestness. This approach inherently prevents the exploration of a more primordial form of “Untruth” that does not tend to reveal but fundamentally conceals itself. Different from the more derivative type of “Untruth” that Heidegger principally tackles in *Being and Time* whose philosophical archetype seems to be “semblance,” this more primordial Untruth, already implied in the very concept of Truth as “unconcealment” belongs totally to the realm of “non-phenomenality” or “self-hiding.” It is the primordial darkness that lies behind “manifestness.” If our understanding can only move within the realm of manifestness, and also treat “knowing” as a form of “seeing,” the level of non-phenomenality would be forever elusive. Therefore, as long as the investigation of being stays at the level of the search for “meaning” always means a search for “intelligibility,” especially appearing in “discourse” which is grounded in the “disclosedness” of Dasein, the genuine investigation into the fundamental unclearness is inevitably left out.

As has been explicated, the viewpoint of phenomenology has its inherent limitedness which blocks the possibility of discussing certain aspects which are necessarily involved in the question of being. Yet, if the method phenomenology is limited in such a way, why does Heidegger take phenomenology as the principal framework to work out the question of Being? Why is it justified for Heidegger to unreflectively take “being” as a self-showing phenomenon that justifies the methodology itself? We must be able to see that Heidegger’s uncritical acceptance of the long-held Greek metaphorical paradigm that equates Being with constant self-showing presence and his acceptance of the methodology of phenomenology stands together. Intimately linked to the understanding of Being as self-showing presence is the doctrine of Truth as

pure “unconcealment” and knowing as “seeing.” The three are intimately linked together: self-showing is the utmost form of unconcealing (in which unconcealment reaches its self-sameness without any element of semblance), and true seeing is always the exposure to the self-showing of what shows itself. Within this model, Truth belongs to Being, and knowing is accorded with Truth and Being. These notions are connected within the same metaphorical framework focused on “luminosity,” which implicitly dominates the entire scope of metaphysical language, as is only realized by Heidegger later in his work²⁷.

The metaphysical understanding of Being as self-showing presence leads to the phenomenological presupposition of treating Being as a “phenomenon” from which develops the need to overcome the “blockage” of Being’s self-emitting light by the practice of “letting.” Despite Heidegger’s commitment to deconstructing metaphysics in “Being and Time,” his basic assumptions remain relevant to metaphysics. Before his investigation, he already presupposes an answer to the meaning of “Being”: Being is the self-showing presence, and this self-disclosure is intrinsically aligned with the human capacity for vision. Thus, the phenomenality of Being is presupposed and interpreted solely within the domain of manifestness and its exposure to Dasein—the seer who invariably has access to the sight of Being,²⁸ and whose fundamental stance is thus being “in the truth,” having the self-showing of Being unconcealed before him.

²⁷ See section 209 in Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 263.

²⁸ This also explains why Dasein is never treated as a “subject”. The essential determination of Dasein comes from its “sight” while on the other side lies the self-showing Being. The “sight” and “self-showing” belongs essentially together and cannot be divided and set in oppositions.

Following this formulation, the requirement for Dasein's truthfulness thus naturally becomes a need to position oneself in the right way so that his already attained true view of being is not obstructed or forgotten. To overcome this status of being "untrue," therefore, means to see through the manifold semblances and to resolutely decide upon to resolutely determine which perspective, which revelation, holds the utmost significance. The inherent ethical requirement is a resoluteness to insist on the "one" – the fundamental sight of Being – instead of the "manifold," a belief of "all is one" that constitutes the primary motivation driving ontological inquiry. However, even in the discussion of this resoluteness itself, which defines the ontological priority of human beings as "Dasein," the envelopment of the previous enigma persists: Dasein, in its authentic existence, does not operate with complete clarity about itself but rather, navigates by a blind, compelling drive towards "openness" and "disclosure." It is simply "thrown" to the "there" – the open – without his agreement or decision. Its freedom is thus limited in the sense that it is indeed, capable of deciding between "being" and "semblance," yet is unable to make decide between "being" and "nothing" because the latter has always already been made for it. The existential-ontological "freedom" of Dasein - his openness towards the manifold through the insistence on the "one" - is, therefore, always already grounded upon a pre-essential darker "unfreedom." It must always choose the sole option of "being" in order to have the secondary choice between "non-semblance" and "semblance." To exist, to stand constantly in the openness of Being, thus means to *repeat* the same pre-ontological decision to prioritize being over nothing because the secondary decisions are always grounded in the repetition of the same primary decision. In other words, in order to have the freedom to choose, Dasein

must always choose the Same. The precondition to “choose to have the freedom to choose,” manifests not as an option but as a necessity. This type of choice is thus not a matter of free selection but rather a compelled freedom manifesting as the “fate”²⁹. The constancy implied by this “handing over” forms the authentic meaning of “historicity”³⁰. It is, even clearer that the introduction of moral and religious terms, such as “fate” and “freedom,” as well as the above-mentioned “resoluteness” does not explicate the dark ground of Dasein’s existence at all. The introduction of those terminologies is rather a sign of failure for the initial project of “fundamental ontology,” that is, to explicate the origin of other spheres of knowledge (including the moral ethical realms) only through the knowledge of “Being.” Instead, the situation is inverted: the theoretical explanation ultimately relies on ethical concepts with unclear origins.

We must, however, also see that the fundamental unclearness in Dasein also reflects a fundamental unclearness in Being itself. As we have said, knowing (understood in the sense of seeing) and self-showing belongs to the same. As the ground of knowing is essentially an unfathomable will towards openness and disclosedness, the self-showing presence of Being is an equally inexplicable decision, made by Being to unveil itself rather than remain concealed. If the existence of Dasein has its ground in the inexpressible resoluteness towards the practice of *standing out* in openness, then Being itself must exhibit a comparable, mysterious determination towards self-disclosure that initially enables the openness in which Dasein stands. Why does Being open and show itself rather than close and hide itself? The question translates into one of the fundamental

²⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 366.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 377.

questions of metaphysics: why is there being but not nothing? The core enigma of Dasein is intrinsically linked to the enigma of Being itself, necessitating not only a revised comprehension of Dasein but also a reevaluation of the truth of Being itself.

2.2 The Discussions of the Truth of Being

The fundamental ontology, represented by *Being and Time* seeks to explicate the ground of all spheres of knowledge through the clarification of a pre-ontological knowledge about “being.” However, because of the limitation of a pre-understanding of Being, Heidegger is unable to fully explicate the truth about this pre-ontological knowledge. This incapability is already intimated at the very beginning of *Being and Time*, in which he states Dasein’s “this average and vague understanding of being is a *fact*.”³¹ Designating the knowledge of being as a “fact” provides a concrete foundation from which hermeneutical inquiry can depart, for it affirms the givenness of the phenomenon to be interpreted. But inherent in this grounding statement is also a profound prohibition: the “fact” is what is always already laid open “there” and its facticity refuses any forms of rational expressibility. It just stands “there” without any reason. The “fact” of the understanding of being thus denotes the solid yet impenetrable ground for the manifestness (truth) of “Being” to Dasein that serves as the starting point of phenomenological investigation.

However, as long as the ground of the truth of Being stays in mystery, the truth about Dasein itself cannot be fully explicated because Dasein’s most essential determination – its “knowing” of being – belongs intimately together with Being’s nature

³¹ Ibid., 4.

of “self-showing.” Just as the clearance of Being and the seeing of Dasein belong to the Same, the enigmatic grounds of both are also linked together. For fundamental ontology to be fully realized, one has to step outside the sole realm of phenomenological Dasein’s analysis and leap directly into the question about the concealed ground for Being’s self-unconcealing nature. The unconcealedness of Being itself, which was admitted as a “fact” in *Being and Time*, is covered over by obscurity and requires further thinking. If the meaning of “truth” is understood as “unconcealment,” then this task of unconcealing the unconcealedness of Being, essentially translates into disclosing the essence of the Truth of Being. This is why *Being and Time* inevitably invite a “turn” towards the explication of the essence of the Truth of Being.

This task was preliminarily acknowledged in the lecture on Plato’s doctrine of Truth³² given in 1931. On the surface level, the lecture merely appeared to be an elaboration of the initial platonic vision of truth centered upon the metaphor of “luminosity.” The main thesis concerning the question of Truth in this lecture is that an essential turning happened in the history of people’s understanding of Truth³³. Initially, Truth was understood to be the unconcealing sun-like center itself, which unconceals other beings. Its principal image is a sun-like illuminating center, which illuminates what lies under its realm. Plato himself also relies on this understanding of Truth, (the understanding of the Truth of Being) to develop his cave allegory. Yet, with the development of the allegory itself, Plato gradually turns his focus away from the search for the ultimate illuminating center itself into the search for the true images of beings

³² Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 155.

³³ *Ibid.*, 153.

illuminated by this center. Heidegger concludes the change implied by Plato's thesis of Truth expressed in the cave allegory with the following statement: "And yet the fact remains that this 'allegory' contains Plato's 'doctrine' of truth, for the 'allegory' is grounded in the unspoken event whereby *idea gains dominance over Alethia*."³⁴ The determination of "idea³⁵ gains dominance over Alethia" indicates that the visible forms of what is lighted outweigh the central source of illumination. In other words, the being of beings (the manifold things in the state of unconcealedness) outweighs the being itself (the light-emitting "one" that originally made possible all kinds of unconcealment). The platonic interrelation of Truth naturally leads to the later understanding of Truth as correctness, which denotes the correspondence of the true image of something and our knowledge about it. But such an understanding of Truth is already secondary for Heidegger. This is because for something to "have an image," it must already be placed in the openness where it receives illumination. On the other side, for us to know, to gain sight of something, we must also be already standing in the field of luminosity. Therefore, such "correspondence" presupposes a pre-existing field of unconcealment and our status of standing out in the openness. The original meaning of Truth, as unconcealment, thus expresses the essence of both the true image of something and our knowledge of it. Yet, the more we incline toward the dominance of ideas over Alethia, the more the original ground of Truth becomes forgotten. The forgetfulness of the original meaning of Truth brings forth profound results. For example, it fundamentally shapes the modern theory of knowledge grounded in the correctness of assertions. It also

³⁴ Ibid., 176.

³⁵ Ibid., 173: "The 'idea' is the visible form that offers a view of what is present."

let arise the prevalence of Idealism, the possibility of which is the predominance of “idea.”

Following a train of thought as such, it seems reasonable to consider that Heidegger’s chief purpose of laying out this hidden history about the understanding of Truth is to advocate a return towards the original meaning of “truth” as *Alethia* (also as *Agathos*, the enabler which enables things to show themselves from themselves) the unconcealing center that illuminates the totality of being. Yet, if this is the case, the fundamental position regarding the Truth of Being is unchanged from the phase of *Being and Time*, since it is still understood only in terms of its luminosity and its nature of self-showing presencing.

What truly marks a pivotal development in this lecture on the question of truth does not solely rest in clarifying the ancient Greeks' initial conception of truth but rather in unveiling a previously unexplored dimension within the experience of truth: the phenomenon of original hiddenness. It is only based upon the experience of an original hiddenness that the process of “un-concealment” can be understood to occur. The ancient Greek notion of Truth (*Alethia*), with the so-called “alpha-private” can only achieve its most proper meaning through the acknowledgment of an equiprimordially “hiddenness” of which the “alpha-private” deprives: “Truth originally means what has been *wrested* from hiddenness.”³⁶ Just as the openness of an “outside” is posited at the very beginning by Plato in his allegory, the presence of the “cave” - a domain with the aspect of “self-closing” is equally acknowledged in the very beginning. What, is implied by this “cave”

³⁶ Ibid., 171.

that is “walled of and enclosed by the surrounding *earth*?”³⁷ Why does Plato consider the “cave” to be the original site of people’s “dwelling”? These traces of thought are briefly mentioned yet do not receive full explication in this lecture. At this stage, although Heidegger already gained a view upon the inherent negativity within the experience of truth and he also sensed the necessity of thinking “more original” than the Greek philosopher, because he lacks a proper way or a proper language to imagine it and fully brings it out, this aspect of Truth and the fundamental experience of Being, receives only limited illustrations. Such an understanding is further suppressed and limited by the dominant Greek understanding of “Untruth” only in the sense of disguise, distortious “covering over”³⁸. Such interpretation of “Untruth” necessarily pushes the self-showing side of Truth to the center because, as is realized by Heidegger himself, even the existence of semblance depends upon a basic level of manifestness grounded in unconcealment. In this sense, as long as the meaning of “Untruth” is understood in terms of “semblance,” it must have already been in the secondary position, and the original negativity within “Truth” can never be fully admitted.

In this respect, the other lecture “On the Essence of Truth” delivered roughly at the same period, more expressively reveals the potential for a more complete picture of the “Untruth” inherent in Truth. The main thesis of this lecture is the statement that “freedom is the essence of Truth itself.”³⁹ Here, “freedom” denotes “freedom for what is opened up in an open region lets beings be the beings they are.”⁴⁰ It refers to the

³⁷ Ibid., 172.

³⁸ Ibid., 171.

³⁹ Ibid., 143.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 144.

existential capacity of the human being to be exposed to the self-opening of Being and thus to place beings in the realm of openness. “Letting be” signifies “to place beings in the realm of Being.” But for the “to let beings be,” (to place beings into the openness of Being) to happen, “beings” must not have been properly in the realm of openness in the first place. In section six of the lecture, Heidegger proposes the so-called “concealment of beings as a whole”⁴¹ to describe this original situation before the happening of the Truth. This original “concealment of beings” is more easily forgotten than the openness of Being itself, because it is precisely the appearance of self-sameness and constancy in pure manifestness that conceals this original concealment. The imagination of the Truth of Being in terms of its luminosity (with the imagination of the “sun” that shines outside the cave), as a *constant* illuminating center blocks any consideration of a “before” where illumination has not yet occurred at all. Heidegger thus says the following two statements: “The concealment of beings as a whole, un-truth proper, is older than every openness of this or that being. It is *older* even than letting-be itself, which in disclosing already holds concealed and comports itself toward concealing.”⁴² The expression of “older,” for the first time, dislodges the presupposition of the *constancy* of the self-presence of Being – the presupposition that it is always already “there,” which is taken for granted as a “fact” in *Being and Time*. This unquestionable constancy is destructed here by the releasement of a “past” of “Being,” which opens the realm of the history of Being itself. As we have disclosed, the main thesis about the history of Dasein is this nature of repetition: the history of Dasein is the repetition of the Same. Here, the history

⁴¹ Ibid., 148.

⁴² Ibid.

of Being has rather an entirely different meaning: it refers to a previous stage that is fundamentally different from the current stage: the stage in which the self-opening of Being has not yet happened. Such historicity is thus non-repeatable. This sense of radical difference and non-repeatability is further radicalized by the fact that the primordial stage of concealment is blocked, in a somewhat absolute way, by what happens afterward: the unconcealment of the totality of beings. As long as unconcealment happens, it achieves a certain level of “self-sameness” and an unquestionable certainty. It is able to stand on its ground and can never be shattered by thinking which must always depart from something with self-explicatedness and aims at a higher level of certainty⁴³.

Within this framework, if the even more primordial “past” is considered to precede the level pure self-showing and thinking is understood as “seeing” that accord with “showing,” this level of “Untruth” should be not just inadequately conceived but inherently “unthinkable”⁴⁴ in itself. Unless “thinking” is understood in a radically different way: it cannot be confined to the paradigm of “luminosity” that underpins the ancient Greek tradition, where thinking and understanding are equated with “seeing” while Being is understood as self-showing presencing. If “thinking” (knowing) is primarily imagined as “seeing,” it naturally leads back to the primacy of pure self-revelation, leaving the original “past” excluded. But how it is possible to imagine another way of “thinking” (knowing) that fit the primordial level of concealment? Here, we are

⁴³ Even for “questioning,” the mode of thinking that predominates the analysis of *Being and Time*, the presupposition of the principle “manifestness” still holds sway. The proposition states that to raise a question effectively, one must already possess a pre-understanding of what is questioned. This principle fully expresses the unchallengeable status of the self-sameness and self-constancy of pure phenomenality – self-showing in itself. Questioning is grounded in knowing and knowing presupposes the self-showing of what is known. The level of pure self-showing is therefore the unquestionable unassailable where the principle of pure self-showing even underlies the act of questioning.

⁴⁴ Unless the meaning of “thinking” is understood in a different way.

only anticipating the repercussions of releasing the “history of being.” However, it’s crucial to recognize that as the interpretation of “truth” evolves and the history of Being unfolds, a transformation in the concept of “thinking” (knowing) becomes inevitable. The meaning of “being,” the meaning of “truth,” and the meaning of “thinking” (knowing) always intimately belongs together. Changing one of these principles necessitates significant adjustments in all these related concepts.

2.3 The Question of Artwork

The discussion about the essence of Truth has made the self-concealment aspect of the Truth of Being more and more noticeable. This insight challenges us to go beyond the traditional view of “Being” as a constant self-showing presence and urges us to leap into the history of Being with increasing urgency. However, as we have stated about the connectedness between Being, Truth and thinking, the fulfillment of this requirement also seems unattainable if one is confined to the traditional interpretation of “thinking” and “knowing” in the sense of “seeing.” Such interpretation implies that “knowing” and “thinking” can only move within the self-same realm of self-showing manifestness. They can only access what initially shows itself yet is forever blocked from what loves to hide itself in the first place. Such hiding, as we have laid out, is not a secondary “covering up” waiting to be seen through, but rather, as the original concealment that conceals itself by making the self-showing manifestness prevalent and predominant. If the history of being is to be fully released, one’s mode of “knowing” must move beyond the realm of self-same manifestness into a fundamentally different sphere.

Following this implicit development of the problem, question of “art” gradually comes to the forefront. It’s crucial to recognize that Heidegger’s interest in “art” does not

point towards the field aesthetics. In the lecture “The Origin of the Works of Art,” Heidegger’s primary interest in “art” rather centers around artworks’ potentiality of disclosing and preserving the dual nature of Truth.” “Art” in itself represents a particular way of “knowing” within which one is able to overcome the previous limited of view of Truth.

The Heideggerian conception of “art” is deeply influenced by the ancient Greek notion of “τέχνη” (techne). “τέχνη” translates “art”: “It has often enough been pointed out that the Greeks (who understood a thing or two about works of art) used the same word, τέχνη, for both handicraft and art, and used the same term, τέχνης, to refer to both the craftsman and the artist.”⁴⁵ Nonetheless the essential meaning of “τέχνη” moves beyond “skills” or “acts of creation.” Within the context of the ancient Greek culture, “τέχνη” is a way of “knowing”: “Rather, τέχνη (techne) designates a way of knowing.”⁴⁶ In this sense, Heidegger’s discussion of the origin of the work of art - “τέχνη” – might be essentially seen as an effort to reshape the method of “knowing,” orienting it towards the aforementioned undiscovered aspects of Truth, especially its dual aspect of simultaneously self-concealing and self-revealing. What’s more the “knowing” implied by “τέχνη” is not passive perception, but rather an act: the act of *bringing forth* the *presence* of something. This understanding still preserves the traditional conception of “knowing,” for the bringing forth of the presence of something can also include the bringing forth of what is to be known. But it suggests even more. The practice of

⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, Julian Young, and Kenneth Haynes, *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 34.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

“bringing forth presence” is not just limited to the field of theoretical knowledge. The bringing forth the actual presence of a “work” is also “τέχνη.” This is why Heidegger emphasizes that a “τέχνης,” is not just an artist but also a craftsman. He not just passively “seeing” the unconcealed outlook of his work to be completed, but also, he holds himself in such state of resoluteness and brings its actual presence forth with his hands. “τέχνη,” in the context of this lecture, implies a combination of both the practice and knowledge. It indicates a possible synthesis between the “eyes” and the “hands.” In the art-making process, the “τέχνης” (artist) needs to constantly work upon a matter according to the “form” (εἶδος) that he sees at heart. The initial apprehension of the unactualized “form” (εἶδος) in one’s heart can be indeed conceived as a passive “seeing” of that form, but the act of holding this image consistently in one’s mind and actualizing it in reality is no longer a passive perceptive experience. It is rather grounded upon a certain decisive action to start and a resoluteness to carry out the task to its end. Art creation, in the sense, of “τέχνη,” therefore exemplifies a mode of thinking where the profound integration of knowledge and action occurs. The two are inseparable not only in the field of artwork but even in the most fundamental experience of knowing and understanding. “Seeing” has itself a “practical” ground because keeping one’s “eyes” open is itself an inconspicuous act and decision. It is only by holding oneself in such a decision that the world is opened to him. The concept of “τέχνη” implicitly re-addresses the aforementioned dilemma in *Being and Time*: the irreconciled separation between the ontological knowledge and the moral-ethical ground that conditions such knowledge.

Despite the preliminary explication of the meaning of “art,” as “τέχνη,” however, we remain distant from revealing the mystery of Being and Truth. “Art” is only a “way”⁴⁷ of knowing, but an insight into the problem of Truth has to do with what is revealed at the end of this path. It is, thus, insufficient to focus solely on the process of “art” itself. If “Art” is believed to possess the possibility of bringing forth a true knowledge of the Truth, we must further examine how such knowledge is presented within its end product: artworks.

Here we come to the main thesis of this lecture: artworks express the essence of truth through the strife between the “world” and the “earth”⁴⁸. “World,” according to Heidegger, is explained as “The all-governing expanse of these open relations is the world of this historical people.”⁴⁹ “Earth,” on the other hand, describes “that in which the arising of everything that arises is brought back - as, indeed, the very thing that it is - and sheltered.”⁵⁰ About the meaning of “world,” Heidegger adds the following:

World worlds, and is more fully in being than all those tangible and perceptible things in the midst of which we take ourselves to be at home.....By the opening of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their distance and proximity, their breadth and their limits.⁵¹

“World worlds” – “world” unfolds by the expanding certain kind of self-sameness. Such self-sameness is rooted on the principle of pure manifestness grounded on the model of

⁴⁷ This means, the essential twofold nature “art” (τέχνη) also arises from Truth. This idea about the true origin of “τέχνη” would appear much more clearer in the latter lectures on the question of “technology”.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 23.

“luminosity” that we have mentioned before: the self-showing presence always tends to show itself and the more it shows itself the more it intensifies its being. With this understanding, “World” thus represents the domain of luminosity, a traditional realm of truth where things show themselves in their distinct figures and forms. As “we,” Daseins, always stand in the openness of Being, the “world” is opened to us and is thus where “we take ourselves to be at home.”⁵² In this discussion, the introduction of the term of “world” is not new in Heidegger’s system. Its meaning is basically unchanged from “*Being and Time*.” The fundamental accentuation of this term is still on the dimension of clearing and disclosedness, coming directly from the old interpretation of “Truth” as pure “unconcealedness” which is centered on the “luminosity” side of Truth. “World” means nothing else than the realm of illuminated, the realm where things and human beings are able to show themselves and this essential meaning extends to our everyday understanding of “world” as a totality of entities and relations: the same nature of “self-showing” possessed by everything in the world endows a level of basic connectedness to all the beings in the world, based upon which all sorts of accessibility, significations, communications, and relationality are possible.

What strikes the reader is rather the proposition of the other concept of “Earth.”

Heidegger explains its meaning with the following phrases:

Earth is the coming-forth-concealing [Heworkommend-Bergende]. Earth is that which cannot be forced, that which is effortless and untiring. On and in the earth, historical man finds his dwelling in the world. In setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth.⁵³

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid 24

Perhaps, we have already witnessed its silent appearance in a variety of forms. In *Being and Time*, it lies behind the inexplicable resoluteness towards openness, the mysterious origin of the ontological position of Dasein and the unfreedom (fate) that grounds the existential freedom⁵⁴ of “Dasein,” the hidden historicity – the one and only “fate” that Dasein hands over to itself all the time; In the lectures on Truth in the early 30s, something of similar kind is expressed as the self-concealing concealment of the truth, the mystery resulting from the “un-truth” that precedes the very happening of unconcealment as the forgotten “history” of Being. All of those connotations seem to converge, ultimately, in the metaphor of “Earth,” representing “the essentially self-secluding”⁵⁵ in opposition to the principle of “self-showing.” It captures the essential “darkness” in Truth, the aspect of self-concealment that has been long suppressed. “World” stands for that which loves to show itself, while “Earth” stands for that which loves to hide itself. But this differentiation does not translate to a conceptual separation. Self-showing is the utmost form of self-hiding because in self-showing the very hiddenness hides itself from view. This is why Heidegger says: “Rather, this illuminating center itself encircles all beings - like the nothing that we scarcely know.”⁵⁶ The “World” and the “Earth” are two sides of the Same: A-ltheia and “lethia” is itself integral to the Truth experience. Initially in *Being and Time*, “unconcealment” has been understood solely in terms of “self-showing,” in terms of a pure “clearness.” What is negated by the

⁵⁴ The freedom to “stand out”.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁶ Ibid 30

alpha private prefix was priorly conceived as the secondary coverage of the initial disclosedness. Yet, it appears that “unconcealment” can also be interpreted as the “un” of “concealment” – the “concealment” of “concealment.” When “concealment” fully releases the intrinsic negativity, it conceals itself, it also gives rise to the state of unconcealment. In this sense, both the principles of “self-showing” and “self-hiding,” unfolding within their own natures, can arrive at the same result of unconcealedness.

However, it is important to differentiate from a possible Hegelian interpretation when grasping the relation between the aspects of “self-showing” and “self-hiding” inherent in Truth. The principle of “negation of the negation” in the Hegelian dialectics, understood in the most ordinary sense, implies a possible “progression,” in which the higher notion eventually replaces the original tension between the two opposing sides. In the case of the opposition between concealment and unconcealment, we may say the following from an ordinary Hegelian standpoint: concealment follows its nature of negativity to conceal itself, and its self-negation leads to unconcealment. Therefore, “unconcealment” is proved in the end to be the higher and truer concept, while “concealment” only appears as one transitory phase through which “unconcealment” achieves its victory. Such thinking suppresses the self-concealing side of Truth, just implicitly supporting the whole metaphysical tradition based upon the centrality of pure “luminosity.” This is why Hegel is considered, in some places by Heidegger⁵⁷, confined to metaphysical tradition to ignore the enigmatic of Truth.

⁵⁷ See the lecture “Hegel and the Greeks” in *Pathmark*, 332.

The contrast with Hegelian dialectics enables us to see more concretely the meaning of Heidegger's notion of "strife," with which he depicts the relation between the self-revealing and the self-concealing:

The opposition of world and earth is strife. We would, to be sure, all too easily falsify the essence of the strife were we to conflate that essence with discord and dispute, and to know it, therefore, only as disruption and destruction. In essential strife, however, the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion [Selbstbehauptung] of their essences.⁵⁸

A "strife," instead of "sublation," is devoid of reconciliation which implies an effacement of opposition. Neither of the sides fully cancels out or completely wins over the other. Rather, the reconciliation between self-showing and self-concealing is absent. Truth as self-showing unfolds purely in accordance with its own positive principle, while Truth as self-concealing unfolds purely in accordance with its own negative principle. Despite their arrival at the Same, both sides follow their own principles and neither of them loses their self-dependency. Therefore, the "difference" between the two should be acknowledged as indeed real. They are really the "opponents" to each other, as is described by Heidegger at this stage. But "strife" also negates absolute "separation." The "strife" is itself a perhaps extremely form of communication. The very fact that the two are in "strife" precisely proves that they are speaking the same language. Only the two are originally close to each other and are involved in a certain relationality can they be in "strife." Both self-showing and self-concealing, following different routes, are unified in

⁵⁸ Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 23.

the Same: the un-concealment, the phenomenon of Truth. In this sense, although “strife” often expresses itself in the form of “splitting” or “dispute,” its essence is made up of a fundamental intimacy or closeness between the two parties in strife.

However, because of this close relationality, the “difference” between the two opposing sides is not always conspicuous. Pure self-concealment (in which concealment conceals itself) manifest as the highest level of luminosity. But in the center of illumination, there is also the highest level of concealment that resists the seeing of the eye. In ordinary understanding, therefore, it is very usual for us to overlook the dual principles standing behind the same phenomenon of Truth (unconcealment), and let “self-concealing concealment” subsumed by “self-showing.” The differencing gap between the two thus becomes inconspicuous.

By contrast, only when the two sides are singled out and put in stark contrast, the different, opposing characters of the two become immediately manifest: the self-showing always seeks to disclose the final mystery, while the self-concealment always resists such attempts. Each side thus establishes its character in ever-more clearness. This might explain why Heidegger considers that only within the “strife” the dual character of the truth would be ever highlighted.⁵⁹ If one is to gain a true view of the two-sided essence behind the phenomenon of Truth, the “world” and the “earth” have to be put into “strife.” What makes such “strife” happen, for Heidegger, is precisely the work of art: “To the essence of the work there belongs the happening of truth.”⁶⁰ Truth, un-concealing in the sense of both self-concealing concealment and self-showing manifestness, unconcealed

⁵⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 33.

itself through the work of art. The work of art sets into works the “strife” between the two sides of the Truth. This, perhaps, is how “art” can bring forth the “knowledge,” encapsulated in the artwork, that traditionally evades us.

To illustrate this point, Heidegger discussed one exemplary artwork: a Greek temple. Firstly, Heidegger illustrates the principle of the “world” manifested within this work:

The temple and its precinct do not, however, float off into the indefinite. It is the temple work that first structures and simultaneously gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire for the human being the shape of its destiny. The all-governing expanse of these open relations is the world of this historical people.⁶¹

The temple, as an artwork, has its distinct measure and determinacy. It is characterized by determinate outline, structure, and contours, embodying a defined “form” rather than being shapeless. Thus, Heidegger says the temple does not float off into the “indefinite.” This aspect of the temple renders it discernible and tangible to us. By presenting specific designs and demarcating lines, it introduces recognizable differentiation to our eyes, thereby becoming something visible. In contrast, without any contour, any outlines, any distinctions, we barely see anything. Things are uncleared in a state of formlessness. In this sense the temple, with its determinate visual structure, demonstrates the principle of the “world,” which essentially means the realm of visibility- self-showing where “all things gain their lingering and hastening, their distance

⁶¹ Ibid., 21.

and proximity, their breadth and their limits.”⁶² This “wordly” aspect of the temple further relates to the paths of “birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline.” All these possibilities are presented in binary oppositions⁶³. They are configured by a perceptible boundary between them: there is no sense of birth unless it is opposed to death; there is no sense of disaster unless it is in distinction to blessing; there is no sense of victory unless it is in distinction to disgrace. Such lines are “paths” – “path” divides the realm of one side and the realm of the other side. The existence of the paths on the landscape of Being thus transforms the landscape itself into a certain structure, with which it reveals itself with distinct measures and configuration. The presence of these paths within the landscape of Being thus transforms it, endowing the landscape with a defined structure that reveals itself through distinct dimensions and configurations. The temple, by its delineated contours, gathers these paths and distinctions towards itself. It heightens the world’s “gestalt”: the separating paths, the demarcated structure, the manifold possibilities. Through this aspect of the artwork a totality of manifold, different, beings is present to us.

Following the passage, Heidegger illustrates another aspect of this temple:

Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws out of the rock the darkness of its unstructured yet unforced support. Standing there, the building holds its place against the storm raging above it and so first makes the storm visible in its violence. The gleam and luster of the stone, though apparently there only by the grace of the sun, in fact first brings forth the light of day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of night.⁶⁴

⁶² Ibid., 23.

⁶³ Here, the focus, I thinking, is on laying out the manifold possibilities themselves, instead of the question of making decisions.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Here, it is the principle of the “earth” that takes dominance. “Earth” first and foremost manifests as the standing “there” of the temple. The “there” denotes a facticity, a self-evidence, an impenetrable and inexpressible presence. It orders a refusal to be rationally explained or expressed. It is just undeniably resting “there,” the fact of which is not for us to understand at all. This dimension of facticity stays constantly unchanged. It does not suddenly appear and then disappear but rather has a constancy in itself. It endows the work sustaining existence. But the source of this constancy is also beyond explication. It only demonstrates itself as a certain self-evident fact that one cannot explain but only accept. This level of facticity, precisely because of its undisclosable self-evidence, contains the highest self-concealment in the form of a refusal to all sorts of exposition by humans.

With the presence of the artwork, the aspect of “Earth” comes into explicitness. In contrast to the aesthetic category of “form” inherent in the delineation of the worldly aspect of the work, what is strengthened here by the term “Earth” is rather the “materiality” and physical presence of the work. This aspect of the work grants it constancy. Its ability to stand constantly as “resting” comes from the stillness of the material in which it is made, while the material comes from the field of Nature. Nature exhibits itself the utmost form of “Earth”: initially, is just “there,” and it is always “there” no matter how the world structure changes. Its realm is older than the occurrence of the human world and it has its essential nature in coming from itself and coming back into itself.

The silent declaration of “World” and “Earth” within the artwork is the “knowledge” that “art” ultimately presents to us. We may, for ourselves, imagine the experience of visiting a Greek Temple. We first see its form, its shape, its style, from which we perceive a wider culture context in which all these stylistic ideas emerge. We may also imagine how the Greek people unfold their life in relation to the Temple. How the city was organized surrounding this temple. From the temple, we see the manifoldness of life and culture, from which we sense the distinct character of the ancient Greek period which showcases a different spirit, and a different mode of life from other periods in history. Such experience is the experience of the “worldly” character of the work. We may, at the same time, take another type of glance at the work. This time we focus on this physicality and facticity. It is unimaginably old but it still stands there before us. The stones that subsist its existence stand firmly. They came from the Nature thousands of years ago. Its being there is simply a fact that we do not and cannot understand but only accept.

What is particularly remarkable in this artwork, is that it makes manifest both sides without allowing one to overshadow the other. This distinction is what separates an artwork from a piece of equipment: in the equipment, its materiality is often covered up by its functionality – its ability to enter into a breath of relations as a means to an end that belongs to the shape of the “world.” Similarly, an artwork is differentiated from a purely formless natural being like a stone. The presence of a stone indeed contains a fundamental level of self-concealment. No matter how deeply we attempt to comprehend its existence through thought, there is always a level of impenetrable meaninglessness in the simple facticity of its “being-there.” But a stone is just too self-concealing that its

own character of self-concealment even escapes our recognition. We are seldom shocked by this meaninglessness itself. The self-concealing of the stone functions so well that we simply overlook it.

Only in the artwork, both sides stand out expressly and neither of them covers up the other, because they are put in “strife,” in which the two heighten their own character through the confrontation towards the other. In the work of art, when the materiality is juxtaposed with forms and distinction, its nature of self-concealing, steadfastness, and meaninglessness comes to be fully experienced. “Self-concealment” comes to the fore in the strife with “self-showing.” As is suggested by Heidegger, “The work moves the earth into the open of a world and holds it there. The work lets the earth be an earth.”⁶⁵ On the other hand, without the support of materiality, the “form” is never able to hold up itself. Its self-presence would never receive a constancy if it is not grounded upon an “Earth,” a self-relating, self-contracting concealedness. It is the principle of the “Earth” that brings firmness and constancy to the presence of the “Worldly” character of “form”: we can still experience the Greek Temple because it is made of very heavy yet meaningless stone; we can still hear the ancient poems because they are made of very long-standing, yet impenetrable sounds⁶⁶; we can still see the patinating because they are created by fade-resistant pigment coming from enduring minerals. All of the self-present manifestness, the outlines, and forms of the artworks, have to be grounded upon the “Earth” to persist.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁶Ibid., 25: “To be sure, the poet, too, uses words, not, however, like ordinary speakers and writers who must use them up, but rather in such a way that only now does the word become and remain truly a word.” Here words are considered by Heidegger not merely as a product of culture but also something essentially physical that arises from nature. Language is also grounded upon the “earthly” materiality or physicality. The principle of the Earth is a “materialist” view of language.

The coexistence of the two principles relates further to the human realm. They underlie the understanding of “freedom” that we have previously mentioned: although the distinct possibilities, the choices, the manifoldness is laid open to us, the urge that propels the very decision that we make is not grounded upon any sort of manifestness but rather a silent, dark resoluteness that we cannot even explain to ourselves. In this case, the “World” represents the tangible possibilities laid out before oneself while, “Earth” represents the inexplicable ground of deciding one of them.⁶⁷ Also, the practice of art creation, “*techne*,” is equally dependent upon the interplay of the two principle. The positing of “form” in one’s mind as a “representing” of what initially presents itself is derived from the principle of self-showing manifestness. Yet, the practice of working it out, in reality, is rather grounded in an “earthly” resoluteness and decisiveness to deal with the very obstructiveness of the materials. The sculpture carves a stone very decisively to bring present a form; a painter sketches lines very carefully to make manifest a figuration; the poet hammers upon a word forcefully to knock out its unrealized meaning. These shall be the images of artists that Heidegger envisioned. For him, the process of art creation does require knowledge, insight, and intelligence, but also deep dark strength and mysterious resoluteness. For him, doing philosophy requires the same: a firm resoluteness to enforce destruction and violence to shake up the well-established traditions to enable the concealed side to come to the fore⁶⁸. The positing of

⁶⁷ Ibid., 31., as is suggested by Heidegger: “Every decision, however, is grounded in something that cannot be mastered, something concealed, something disconcerting.”

⁶⁸ However, is such fundamental attunement necessitated within the case where a certain negativity is assigned to the origin? In Chinese culture, we see that the belonging together of negativity and positivity in the origin does not necessarily leads to a fierce, violent attitude in oneself. It rather implies a peacefulness, emptiness and stillness.

principle of the “Earth” is already a “violence” done to the Platonic metaphysical tradition that understands being, knowing, and truth solely in the direction of self-showing, visibility, and luminosity. Admitting the equiprimordially status of the “Earth,” the unchallenged self-evident principle of “self-showing” and the platonic “World” of forms and ideas become assaulted, and this assault is something “earthly” itself.

Viewing from a metaphysical perspective, the “Earth” is not posited externally to the traditional principle of “self-showing.” Rather, perhaps the necessity of including the principle of “Earth” is inherent in the metaphysical determination of Being as *constant* self-presence itself. If “presence” denotes a principle of “self-showing” from which derives all the optic-centric ideas regarding being, knowledge and truth, then its very nature of being “constant” is precisely a sign of another principle working in the initial understanding of being. The inherent steadfastness of Being, its deliberate decision to show itself, and its impenetrable self-relation—its self-contracting nature—that affirms Being’s uniqueness are all beyond the simple principle of “showing.” The origins of these elements are never completely disclosed, just like how the light from a flashlight cannot illuminate the device itself. The idea is intimated in *Being and Time*: “Thus being the ground means never to gain power over one's ownmost being from the ground up. This not [Nicht] belongs to the existential meaning of thrownness. Being the ground [Grund-seiend], it itself is a nullity of itself.”⁶⁹ The very moment Being is elevated to its primacy, it simultaneously becomes enveloped in mystery. Darkness is an essential aspect of

⁶⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 273.

Being. Thus, the principle of the “Earth” is not externally added to the principle of the “world”; they share a fundamental connection.

Nonetheless, the suggestion of their belongingness also challenges the metaphorical system endorsed by Heidegger himself: if the possibility of “strife” is grounded essentially upon an intimacy – the linguistic connectedness between those who are in “strife,” then is it still necessary to insist the ontological value of the notion of fight, conflict and self-assertion at all? Isn’t it true that the insistence to the model of opposition is still a sign of confinement within the metaphysical tradition of visibility and luminosity which highlights the clear-cut structure distinction? As the subsequent discussion will show, the very sense of belongingness in “strife” releases a more fundamental principle that conditions its possibility, pointing towards the realm of language which Heidegger only turns towards in his later stage of thinking.

2.4 Art, “Origin” and Language

Until now, the “strife” between the “World” and the “Earth” has received preliminary elucidation, highlighting the binding-differing relation between the principle of “self-showing” and the principle of “self-concealing.” This dual nature of Truth, as unconcealment, is shown to govern not only the essence of artwork and human artistic creation but also fundamentally underpins all domains of theory and practice. With an illustration as such, it seems reasonable to conclude the answer to the question asked in the title of the essay: what is the origin of the work of art? The answer would appear to be: Truth, the strife between the principle of “self-showing” and “self-concealing.” However, Heidegger points us in a different direction: “Artist and work are each, in themselves and in their reciprocal relation, on account of a third thing, which is prior to

both; on account, that is, of that from which both artist and artwork take their names, on account of art.”⁷⁰ The “third thing” where artwork and artist originates, is not Truth, but rather: “art” itself. If in artwork and the practice of artist Truth occurs, then, the “art,” as the origin of both, must be more original than Truth itself. But how can we imagine it as something even more primordial?

To disclose the reason for art’s primary primoridality in this context, we must revisit the previous discussion of “τέχνη.” Traditionally, it is understood merely in the category of knowing, in other words, a “seeing” of “εἶδος” in one’s heart. Such interpretation suggests that “τέχνη” is essentially derived from the sphere of “knowing,” and the initial seeing of an “εἶδος” is more primordially important. This view is deeply rooted in the Platonic doctrine of truth, which emphasizes the luminosity of Being and the human capacity to perceive this illumination. To counter such interpretation, Heidegger emphasizes the practical side within “τέχνη” which is unrulled by the principle of “εἶδος,” but rather a hidden decisiveness and resoluteness that has an “earthly” character in opposition to the otherworldly tendency of Plato. Building upon formulation, the strife between the world and earth is not just placed into the work of art but also, happens within the process of art creation itself. It “working” of an artwork. The “process” where “τέχνη” unfolds also expresses such “strife.”

Even this explication, however, does not capture the essential meaning of “τέχνη.” The work of art comes from the process of working, while the process of working is the happening of the “strife” between “knowledge” (connecting to the sphere

⁷⁰ Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 1.

of the “World”) and “practice” (connecting to the sphere of the “Earth) within the artist himself. What precedes the installment of “strife” by the artwork, in the broadest sense – human Dasein, is the process where he must initially invite the “strife” into himself. Here, the question is not just about the autonomous function of the art work itself, nor the mysterious aesthetic state in which the artist must come into to be an artist, but rather the broadest question of the duality of being that humans must endure in general.

The guiding concept to examine this problem might be the notion of “rift” [Riss]. With regard to the relation between “rift” and “strife” and “artwork,” Heidegger says the following:

Truth establishes itself as strife in a being that is to be brought forth only in such a way that the strife opens up in this being; the being itself, in other words, is brought into the rift-design [Riss]..... This strife which is brought into the rift-design, and so set back into the earth and fixed in place, is the figure [Gestalt].... The structured rift is the jointure [Fuge] of the shining of truth. What we here call ‘figure’ is always to be thought out of that particular placing [stellen] and placement [Ge-stell] as which the work comes to presence when it sets itself up and sets itself forth.⁷¹

“Rift” refers to the rupture, standing in-between the opposing sides, which organizes “strife.” But as we said, the two parts in strife are also in extreme intimacy, so this rupture does not purely separate the two, it is a binding boundary at the same time. It is just like the distance (not only physical but also mental) standing between two people who are debating against each other. Without such distance, no debating would happen. With such distance, the two can be involved in an opposing relationality which heightens

⁷¹ Ibid., 38.

the distinctiveness of both sides. But debating is itself an extreme mode of communication. It proves at the same time how intimate the two are related to each other within the same realm of language. This is why a rift is at the same time a “jointure” (“fuge” in German). As the “rift” forms the very condition for a “strife,” to bring forth a “strife” into artwork, or even into the artist itself means the establishment of the “rift” – the establishment of a boundary, a rupture. In the process of artwork creation, such establishment takes its form by the placement of “gestalt.” We may imagine how a painter draws lines on his canvas or how a sculpture carves out his sculpture. The form-generating “lines” created by the artists are the “rift.” As it binds and separates, figures come into appearance.

But to establish a line on the canvas requires one to establish a “rift” in one’s heart in the first place. How are we able to imagine this “rift” being established by the artist? For Heidegger, such establishment is not a human invention, but rather, a reception and a wrest of what is initially there in Nature. The “rift” is already in Nature: for example, the Great Rift Valley in eastern Africa. As “rift” is also understood the basis of “figures,” the presence of “rift” in Nature also applies to the perhaps appearance of all-natural beings: the shape of a flower, clouds, trees, etc.. For this reason, Heidegger quoted the remark by the painter Albrecht Dürer about the true origin of art creation “For in truth, art is found in nature; whoever can wrest it from her has it.”⁷² The lines, the shapes, the figures, which are based upon the “rift” originally existing in Nature, are not invented by humans themselves, but are rather learned from Nature. Such “learning” is

⁷² Ibid., 43.

also a “wresting,” because it requires a certain sharpness of one’s apprehension: even though the “rifts” exist in themselves, they are not evident unless one recognizes those “rifts” with great care. Such care is not restricted to the “art” understood in the modern sense, but also the “art” of medicine, science, and architecture, as they are all founded upon the “art” of knowing the difference and establishing boundaries.

Here, the theological color underlying the discussion about “art” and “origin” gradually emerges. As Heidegger shifts from the “artwork” in human realms to the “artwork” of Nature, the key concern of the discussion is no longer human creation anymore, but rather it has something to do with the original creator, the divinity who shapes and gives form to Nature itself. “Art” has its essence in installing (ge-stell) such a “rift” by divinity. This is why “art” is more original than “Truth,” conditioned by the “strife” whose happening is itself conditioned by the installment of this “rift.” “Art,” here, refers not just to the human practice, but rather, the act of “origination,” in other words, the most primordial “act” by the divine to establish (Ge-stell) the “rift,” to initiate the openness, to make possible all sorts of the differentiation. Such creation establishes not just all the manifold “rifts” existing in nature, but the very possibility of having a “rift” at all.

To characterize in more detail the original act by the “creator” upon Nature, the art as origination, Heidegger informs us to look at “poetry”: “All art, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of beings, is, in essence, poetry. The essence of art, on which both the artwork and the artist depend, is truth’s setting-itself-into-work. From out of the poeticizing essence of truth it happens that an open place is thrown open, a place in

which everything is other than it was.”⁷³ Why, then, is poetry taking the primacy in the question of art?

To interpret from an etymological aspect, the relation between “poetry” and “Art” has to be grasped through the Greek term “ποίησις.” “ποίησις” means “making” in general, and it bears etymological relation to the word “poetry.” What is implied in such an etymological relation is the sense that “poetry” is the original “making” of all making. As all practice of art relies upon the “making” (establishment) of the “rift,” all arts are essentially poetry. But the proposition of “poetry” as the original form of art has a more profound connotation. It points us toward the very sphere where “strife” is grounded: language. Every “strife” is already a form of discourse belonging to the field of language. The word “strife” implies that the principal form of the dynamics between the “earth” and the “world” is not merely based upon visibility, but rather linguisticity. The terminological change into the “strife” more and more shifts the initial opposition that defines the “world” and “earth”: self-showing and self-hiding into another mode of relations: the calling and hearing and speaking and responding. This introduction of the metaphor of “sound” thus opens another interpretive model of explaining the dynamics in the experience of Truth.⁷⁴

The primacy of linguisticity in the experience of Truth is reflected particularly evident in the unique realm of linguistic artworks. Among all forms of “art,” only the art

⁷³ Ibid., 44.

⁷⁴ As we can see, this model based on linguisticity is already latent in *Being and Time*. However, it is suppressed by Heidegger’s ambiguity towards the Greek metaphysical tradition. The more Heidegger reflected upon the basis of metaphysics, the more such suppression becomes shattered. The theological motives also play a crucial part in facilitating this turn: it offers a model to conceive the primal event of origination in the form of an announcement of word instead of showing up of light.

of “language” – poetry - eminently foregrounds the “eventfulness” of the “strife,” its sudden happening, and its becoming, in which Truth sets itself to work. It brings to experience the whole process of establishing an opening (of one’s mouth), letting the words unfold their manifesting power, and also holding oneself in the state of “saying” until the poetry is finished. Poetry is never something constantly present like a paint. It entails the process of vocalization, always occurring as an event. Its existence can never be categorized by the rigid, formalistic dichotomy of “presence” and “absence.”⁷⁵ .

Rather, it involves the whole organic process of “happening” and “becoming”: originating from “absence” into “presence” and coming from “presence” into “absence.” It is this aspect of poetry that positions it to be the utmost art form best suited to recall the art of origin, which is also the ultimate theme this lecture rested upon. (In the end, the question of the “origin of the work of art” appears to essentially concern the question of “the art of origin.”)

In an event as such, an original opening is set forth, and then, such opening becomes the “rift” that gives rise to the “strife” between the “World” and “Earth.” The whole colorful world of Nature then comes into presence. This process is re-encountered within the experience of poetry: the opening of the poetic mouth, the sudden occurrence of sounds, the shining forth of manifold imageries, and the mysterious passing away of the initial moment of silence. In comparison, in all the other forms of works, the “event” nature of the Truth is rather implicit. Very often, the first stage of the event- the establishment of the openness upon which the strife takes place – is overlooked. A

⁷⁵ It is easy to see that such opposition is fundamentally based upon an visualized imagination of sounds. Rather, very sound has its nature in eventfulness, its occurrence.

painting seems to stand there and is always already there. This means that one is blocked from experiencing the transition from the “non-strife” into “strife,” but rather the “strife” is always already working in itself. Also, we are unable to read out the possibility of a “past” of silence when the “strife,” the “truth,” has not yet happened.

Poetry, the art of language, appears as Heidegger’s response to the search for the essence of truth and the history of being. It highlights the principle of “happening” and “becoming” that has been long suppressed by the metaphysical principle of constant presence, a concept deriving from the metaphor of the luminosity of Being. Poetry expresses, in the most comprehensive way, the essence of art: “Art is, then, a *becoming* and *happening* of truth.”⁷⁶ The poetic “becoming” from “no sound” to “sound,” the “becoming” from “no strife” to “strife,” makes manifest again the history of “un-truth” to “truth.” By demonstrating the full process, it fully let emerge the other type of “un-truth”: the “pre-truth” - the original state of “concealment” before all the “unconcealment” happens which is inaccessible through traditional “thinking,” which relies on visual-based “seeing” and adheres to the principle of luminosity. This conventional type of “thinking” can only move within the field of manifestness – what tends to show itself - yet is never able to move beyond the realm of darkness. By contrast, the experience of hearing a poem offers a chance for us to experience the darkness through the moment of silence that precedes the following openness of a mouth and the transitory shining forth and passing away of words and sounds.

⁷⁶ Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p44

The lecture of “Origin of the Work of Art” is itself a sign of turning into another way of thinking. The previous way of thinking – dominated by the metaphysical language is entirely based upon a model of luminosity and visibility. As is expressed through Parmenides’s thesis: seeing (thinking) and presence (Being) is the same, the tradition relies heavily on the play between the illuminating source, the images, and the eyes. Following the narrative of Heidegger concerning the history of Western philosophy, this mode of thinking initially gives rise to the metaphysical interpretation of Truth as a sun-like illuminating center. It further leads to the Platonic doctrine of “eidos” - the correct images of things. As the Platonic doctrine of truth reigns, the essential question about Truth is no longer asked by in the direction of “unconcealment” but rather “correctness.” This further gives rise to a group of problems that implicitly determines the fate of modernity: the world is turned into an “image,” the world is grasped through “worldview,” the human beings rise into the center of beings as “subject” which originates from their ability to posit and representing.

Heidegger, in his early and middle stages, appeared to be implicitly determined by this tradition as well. His discussion in *Being and Time* is based upon the principle of “phenomenality” of Being which means: the self-showing manifestness of Being. He also takes “seeing” and “sight” as the most principal model of describing Dasein’s correlation with Being: Dasein is in an ontological uniqueness because it holds a sight (understanding) of Being. The domain of time is also interpreted as “horizons”⁷⁷ in which Being is viewed inherently determined by the principle of eyes. The truth about the

⁷⁷ Therefore, the discussion about “time” is also, essentially in a metaphysical direction.

methodology of “phenomenology,” in this sense, is the suppression of “phenomenon” over “logos”: visuality over linguistically. The dislodgement of this suppression happened only gradually and subtly through the investigation into the nature of metaphysics, but also perhaps the Christian theological motivation played a significant role. In the lectures about Plato’s doctrine of Truth, although some limitations from the Platonic model are recognized, Heidegger is still under the influence of this tradition. His focus is not to dislodge the well-established faith in “seeing” and “showing” but rather to ask for a turn of the direction towards which we cast our look. In the lecture of “on the Essence of Truth,” Heidegger first realizes that the Truth of Being might have a “past” preceding to its “constant presence.” But this “past” is totally “unthinkable” because “thinking,” interpreted as a form of “seeing,” is only able to touch upon what is “present,” what is self-showing, and what is always already there. The mystery in the Truth, although exposed, no find solutions, it rather announces a certain impenetrability of the question itself. Only in this context can we fully understand the intent of the discussion about the “origin of the work of art.” As is mentioned, the discussion of artworks itself ultimately leads to the discussion of “Art” as an origin, whose meaning, in Greek, is intimately linked to the word “knowing.” One must admit that the relation between Heidegger’s thinking and the predominant Greek metaphysical tradition of thinking is still quite ambivalent in most of the parts. The determination of the world, following the principle of Truth’s “self-showing,” and the determination of the earth, following the principle of Truth’s “self-hiding,” is still based upon a metaphysical language of “phenomenon” and “vision.” But the characterization of their relation, as “strife,” as well as returning the source of the meaning of “art” from “technical

knowledge” to “ποιεῖν,” ultimately takes us to another path: the path of language and sounds. Here, the centrality of the discussion no longer rests on self-showing, self-presence, representing, positing of forms, etc.. It is rather about calling, hearing, answering, and the organic process of “becoming” in which something passes from absence to presence and from presence to absence again. Also, this model introduces serious considerations about the existence of “distance” and “difference” which are necessarily suppressed in the luminosity model which is inclined towards the aspect of the sameness between the self-showing presencing center and the state of being present within its illuminating sphere. The experience of Truth, interpreted within this framework, always appears as a sudden clearance of the entirety which is altogether exposed in the same light of truthfulness. Within the linguistic model, by contrast, the notion of “distance” is necessarily included: “saying” unfolds along with the distancing of the temporal and spatial distance between the caller and the hearer. It never indicates a direct immediacy but is always linked with an experience of deferral and differentiation. Inherent in it is a rather looser relationality instead of a distanceless homogeneity. It also informs another way of considering the relation between human thinking and Being: not based upon the sameness of seeing and self-showing, but instead the distance and intimacy between sounding and hearing, found perhaps in the words of Heraclitus⁷⁸ about Logos.

⁷⁸ See the lecture on Heraclitus in Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995).

2.5 Turning towards the Thinking of the Dao and Logos

The aforementioned demonstration perhaps sheds light upon the drive for the final “turn” of Heidegger, from the path of questioning the essence of Truth to the path of discussing language. Underlying the change is the gradual awareness and dismantling of “the metaphor”⁷⁹ that dominates Western metaphysical thinking: the metaphor of “luminosity” centered upon the sameness between seeing and showing. By introducing the discussion of poetry and language, Heidegger is ultimately able to reduce the importance of the metaphor of “light” with the metaphor of “sound.”⁸⁰ The lecture “Language”⁸¹ might be seen as an example of unfolding discussion on this renewed framework of linguisticity. Now, Heidegger proposes another way of explicating the experience of the truth of Being with guide word: “calling” (Rufen)⁸². “Calling,” instead of “illuminating,” is able to reformulate the relation between the unconcealing power and what is unconcealed. On the one hand, “calling” calls the things into the self-expression of their own manifestness: “As the calling that names things call here and there, so the saying that names the world calls into itself, calling here and there. It entrusts world to the things and simultaneously keeps the things in the splendor of world.”⁸³ “Calling” is

⁷⁹ Jacques Derrida and Marguerite Derrida, *Heidegger the Question of Being and History*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Chicago, Ill: The University of Chicago Press, 2019, 189.

⁸⁰ But this practice should not be viewed as a simple replacement because the for emphasis on the aspect of materiality (the meaninglessness of sound itself), eventuality, and organic temporal-spatial structure inherent in the experience of language already transcends the level of phenomenality (self-showing in itself) that constitutes the essential meaning of the “metaphor” itself. Also, the turn is not a substitution in that aspect of “vision” and the aspect of “sound” actually belong together - the latter concerns the process of “making” a “rift,” the act of opening while the former has its possibility dependent on the already existence of this “rift”. Thus, the two “metaphorical” systems are not in opposition to each other. Rather, the reorientation only reflects an intention towards a more original level of thinking.

⁸¹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 187.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 199.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

here imagined as a wave-like vibrating power that gathers everything into the state of vibration. As they vibrate within the same realm of waving, they are gathered into a universal resonance with each other, as well as a relationality with “calling” itself within which the manifold things sound off their unique physicality and distinctiveness. The manifoldness of the self-sounding of things within the universal “calling” is called the “splendor of world”⁸⁴. As the totality of things and beings vibrate together in this universal-sounding relation, they are also considered to be gathered in the same “Saying”

“Calling” also introduces a dimension of distance, both spatially and temporally, between what is calling and what is called. The happening of the “calling” lets distance unfold in the sense that it creates the preliminary level of relationality which grants meaningfulness to the very notion of “distance.” Without a certain level of relationality, there would be no measure of the distance. Rather, things are under indifference and distanceless as if they don’t recognize each other. “Calling,” by installing a universalized linguistical dimension of relationality, grants things a dimension of remoteness and closeness at the same time: “The calling here calls into a nearness. But even so, the call does not wrest what it calls away from the remoteness, in which it is kept by the calling there.”⁸⁵ However, this nearness and togetherness does not mean homogeneity. When they are being called and gathered into the calling, they are rather admitted with a self-standing nature, as is suggested by Heidegger: “The intimacy of world and thing is not a fusion. Intimacy obtains only where the intimate—world and thing—divides itself cleanly and remains separated. In the midst of the two, in the between of world and thing,

⁸⁴ Here, self-showing is somehow grounded by Heidegger upon self-sounding.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 96.

in their inter, division prevails a difference.”⁸⁶ “Calling” is not “fusing.” What is called is called into the relationality where difference can unfold. This explication is closely aligned with our own experience: the moment when someone is called, a sense of distance emerges, but at the same time the calling creates a pulling tendency for the called one to come over into nearness.

Based upon the principle of “calling,” Heidegger redefined the essential position of human beings and its relation to Truth by considering its relation to language: the jointure between human and “calling” in the sense that he possesses the ability to “call” in the form of “naming.”⁸⁷ Traditional thinking might consider the naming as an act of substitution: the presence of the thing is replaced by the presence of the symbol that always points towards what is outside itself. But such thinking that overlooks the facets of “calling” is also inherent in “naming”: when someone names something, it is first and above all, invites a linguistical relationality which connects but also admits the distance between the thing and the caller himself. This level of linguistical relation precedes the level of representation: only when the thing is first called forth into a certain “homologos”⁸⁸ could it be subsequently laid over against oneself as a represented being. The function of “calling” in “naming” prepares the very dimension upon which symbolic relations can unfold. For this reason, human’s fundamental positions within the realm of beings, is thus not their ability to re-present or symbolize, but first and foremost: to call things into nearness. But we must also see that everything is already in the

⁸⁶ Ibid.199.

⁸⁷ Ibid.,196.

⁸⁸ See the discussion of Heraclitus fragment on “Logos”

aforementioned primal universal “Calling.” Men’s ability to “call” is thus only a derivative one, learned from the primal “Calling”⁸⁹ working by itself. It is reliant on the hearing of the primal calling and it makes the reply⁹⁰. The original “Calling,” as it is not yet manifested through human voicing, is the “the peal of stillness”⁹¹. When a human speaks, “the peal of stillness” becomes manifest, expressed sounds. The inherent closeness, as well as the remoteness of all things, comes into sustainable and concrete presence in human speaking.

What has thus taken place, human being, has been brought into its own by language, so that it remains given over or appropriated to the nature of language, the peal of stillness. Such an appropriating takes place in that the very nature, the presenting, of language needs and uses the speaking of mortals in order to sound as the peal of stillness for the hearing of mortals. Only as men belong within the peal of stillness are mortals able to speak in their own way in sounds.⁹²

What’s more, the discussion of man’s relation to the primal calling also introduced a renewed perspective, not only on imagining the human’s relation to being, but also on the question of what is poetry. In the previous discussion, “poetry” is defined as the establishment of the “rift” in the work of art. Here, its scope expands: all sorts of “speaking” are considered to be dependent upon the unfolding of the “rift.” But the early view on poetry is not entirely forsaken. Heidegger also says: all human language is grounded upon “poetry,” understood as the activity of letting unfold the “dif-ference”⁹³.

⁸⁹ Ibid.,203.

⁹⁰ This is meant to substitute the “seeing” of the original illuminating and the “represent”.

⁹¹ Ibid.,205

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ See the essay “Poetically Man Dwells,” Ibid., 221.

The term conveys the same sporting-binding mechanism inherent in “rift.” but it is discussed, not solely in the spheres of artwork, in a wider scope. Everything has in itself a dimension of “dif-ference,” as it is called by the primal calling which initially introduces a distance between the calling voice and the called thing itself. This distance reveals their relatedness, but it also releases the thing into a sphere of its own since the distance from the most primal universal calling is still preserved. The “dif-ference” thus is not invented or created by man’s activity, it rather exists in Nature itself. As Heidegger grounds the practice of poetry upon the act of sounding off “dif-ference,” he reconnects poets to the hearer and responder of the universal calling. Every poetry is at the same hearing and resounding.

Finally, the discussion of “calling” reformulates formula about Being and Thinking. Different from the original Parmenides statement which states that seeing (thinking) and showing (Being) is the Same, here, the formula is rather: hearing (thinking) and calling (Being) are the Same. But the meaning of “sameness” here already involves a crucial difference: the sameness between seeing and showing leaves no place for a sensible distance, either temporally or spatially. This sameness implies formal, static self-identicalness, an absolute agreement. Such tendency already involves the danger of interpreting Being in the sense of constant self-presence, thinking in the sense of representing the self-presence, and Truth in the sense of correctness between the representation and original self-presence. But when the original belongingness between thinking and being is grasped within the model of “Calling,” a “distance,” a “dif-ference” or a “rift” is incorporated into the understanding of “Being”: within the calling, what calls and what is called belongs together, but their relationality means not

homogeneity, not absolute fusion, but always includes differencing: a separating-bindingness⁹⁴.

This idea of “Calling” may serve as a pivotal point that connects up all aspects of late Heideggerian thinking. If the poetry is itself the activity of unfolding the “rift,” the binding–separating distance, and human poetry is learned through hearing the sound of the primal “rift” in the first place. Thinking is precisely hearing. Therefore, poetry and thinking stay essentially in closeness⁹⁵. The most important question regarding thinking also becomes: “What calls for thinking?”⁹⁶ As “Calling” involves the unfolding of a “distance” both temporally and spatially between the caller and what is called, it entails a discussion of the questions of original temporalization and spatialization⁹⁷.

Simultaneously, the acceptance of such “distance” is at the same time the acceptance of an absolute gap and time-lagging. Such an idea thus involves a new mode of imagination about human’s relation to the things, creatures, and people other to them.

Following the thread of the question of the Truth, we roughly outlined how the variation of the interpretation of Truth and Being influenced the development of Heidegger’s thought. We are also able to highlight the distinct role played by the “Earth” within the landscape of Heidegger’s philosophy. As we examine the relation between

⁹⁴ See the lecture “Identity and Difference” in Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*. Translated and with an Introd. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969, n.d.).

⁹⁵ See the lecture: the thinker as poet. The statement shall be understood in contrast to the other “closeness” between representational thinking and technology which determines the symptom of modernity. At the beginning of the essay “The Thing,” Heidegger says: “All distances in time and space are shrinking.” What unfolds distance is Being as calling and saying. Such distance is like the gap unfolding between two people in discourse: in listening and responding, temporal distance unfolds; in standing face-to-face, spatial distance unfolds. When Being is no longer experienced in the way of “saying,” when it is only grasped as constant self- presence and the task of thinking becomes “representing,” the original distance in the dynamics of Being is lost.

⁹⁶ See *What Is Called Thinking?*

⁹⁷ See the lecture “Time and Being” in Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper Row, 1972).

Heidegger's relation to the Greek philosophical tradition, a theme underlying the successive "turns" made by Heidegger gradually comes into the foreground: the shift from the language of "luminosity" into the language of "calling" in the discussion of the meaning of Being. This shift signifies more than a mere reimagination of Being itself, but a reconsideration of how human beings should position themselves in the world and how they should conceive the relationality between them and all sorts of beings.

However, we have also indicated that Heidegger's philosophical journey is marked by a continuous struggle with the influence of traditional metaphysical language, particularly the model of "luminosity" and the visual-centric experience. This fact casts an obscuring shadow over the truth about the motivation that drives the shift. On the surface, this shift seems to be solely propelled by Heidegger's increasing attention toward the concept of "Logos." But upon a closer reading, this cannot be the sole factor. The increasing attention towards "logos" does not happen through the deepening of his understanding of what "logos" actually means. Rather Heidegger always already had an understanding of "logos" in the beginning, not in correlation to the dimension of "calling" and "saying," and he reinterprets the meaning of "logos" only later along with the change of his thought. In *Being and Time*, Logos is understood still within the framework of "presence" and "showing." It is described in an Aristotelian way of "being present together [Zusammenvorhandensein]"⁹⁸, a concept of which is deeply rooted in optical experience, assembling a group of images appearing synchronically under the sunlight. This explanation involves neither the temporal and spatial "distance" nor the

⁹⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 153.

uniqueness of the linguistical relationality between the speakers. This imagination about “logos” is thus still limited within the metaphysical tradition and consequently, the originary significance of “language” is not acknowledged, but is rather conceived as one existential constitution of “disclosedness” among others, emerging from Dasein’s exposure to the illuminating realm of Being. In the lecture “The Origin of the Work of Art,” the language of “luminosity” and the language of “calling” is co-present (implicitly supported by a Christian theological motif). In some places, the former metaphorical system takes dominance: for example, the determination of the world as “self-showing” while the earth as “self-hiding” follows the measurement of “visibility” which has its root in the experience of the eyes. Following this tendency, the linguistic connotation of the term “strife” is suppressed and it is rather interpreted in the direction of “Gestalt” into a more static imagination of the “rift” exemplified in the painting⁹⁹. Yet, at the end of the lecture, poetry, the art of language is raised into the most privileged state compared to all arts, and it is especially linked to the phenomenon of “origin”: the sudden happening of Truth. Here, language is repositioned to bear more primacy than the Truth in its working. In the concluding part, the requirement for a more profound understanding of language comes to the announcement: “To see this all we need is the right concept of language.”¹⁰⁰ However, the alliance between language and luminosity is still preserved within an implicitly theologically-colored description of language experience: “Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. This naming nominates beings to their being and from out of that being. Such saying is a

⁹⁹ Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 39.

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 45.

projection of the clearing in which announcement is made as to what beings will come into the open as.”¹⁰¹

This ambiguity only receives clarification in the latter lectures about “Saying” and “Calling.” The dominance of the metaphor of “luminosity” becomes manifestly overcome. The principle of “showing” is not discarded at this phase but it loses its primacy in comparison to “saying” and “calling.”

At the same time, “Logos” is no longer understood in a mere Aristotelian or Platonic way. Its relation with “presence” is downplayed. Instead, Heidegger gives more and more emphasis on the connotation of “speaking” “saying,” “discourse” and “way,” placing it together in juxtaposition with the Chinese term “Dao.” In the lecture “On the Way to Language,” Heidegger sees the Chinese term “Dao” as the word that expresses the mystery of “Saying”: “Perhaps the mystery of mysteries of thoughtful Saying conceals itself in the word “way,” Dao, if only we will let these names return to what they leave unspoken, if only we are capable of this, to allow them to do so.”¹⁰² In the lecture “Identity and Difference,” Heidegger touched upon the word “Dao” again: “The words event of appropriation (ereignis), thought of in terms of the matter indicated, should now speak as a key term in the service of thinking. As such a key term, it can no more be translated than the Greek logos or the Chinese Dao.”¹⁰³ In Chinese, “Dao” means both “Saying,” “way” and “method.” Heidegger firstly juxtaposes the word “Dao” in order to evoke the connectedness between “saying” and “way.” “Saying,” understood

¹⁰¹ Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 45.

¹⁰² Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 92.

¹⁰³ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, 36.

in the sense of Dao, is now more evidently presented as a way-making movement that moves everything into a universal relatedness. But it also implies a movement of the unfolding of a distance. The nearness and distance are the two aspects of a “way”. In this sense, Dao installs the possibility of accessibility but at the same time the dimension of remoteness and emptiness. In the same paragraph, Heidegger further elaborates: “Yet Dao could be the way that gives all ways, the very source of our power to think what reason, mind, meaning, logos properly mean to say-properly, by their proper nature.”¹⁰⁴ This interpretation suggests that the faculties -reason, logos, mind- that enable us to access things outside ourselves are all forms of the “way” originating from the “way-making” movement. Furthermore, it stands behind “the enigmatic power of today’s reign of method.”¹⁰⁵ This intimation indeed resonates with the Chinese, as “Dao” can also refer to supersensible rules and principles through which one is able to accomplish his task. It also implies the meaning of “abstract methods” and “abstract techniques.” Heidegger compares “Dao” to the Western concept of “Logos,” which similarly originates from the idea of “saying” and extends to “reason,” granting them equivalent significance.

This observation might suggest that the interpretation of Chinese “Dao” might have played a unique role within the course of Heidegger’s thinking, in the sense that it introduces perhaps certain number of “un-Greek” elements that facilitate the shift towards the uniqueness of the linguistic experience in the context of ontological discussion, other than the sole focus on optical experience as has been dominant in the traditional discourses. In Heidegger’s own words, the focus then is “to experience

¹⁰⁴ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 92.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

language itself,” which perhaps implies: without the mediation of the model of “seeing,” but rather directly onto the “way of language.” At the same time, the Daoist principles contain a changing power of the fundamental disposition of thinking: as what is required for “Dao” is no longer decisiveness, resoluteness, or the willpower to win the strife, but rather something more peaceful: to let go of the subjective will to power as knowledge to fully experience the elusive closeness being of “language.” These aspects more and more frequently occur in the late Heidegger’s thinking, although, the deep sense of destiny and worriedness towards the situations of humanity has never been fully absent.

Unpacking the sources that influenced Heidegger’s thinking presents an extremely difficult task which is not intended within the breadth of this work. What I would rather point out is the possibility of the dimension, informed by Heidegger’s thought, where cross-cultural thoughts converge, and undergo an experience of thinking together. This exploration is particularly relevant to the question of modernity when considering the interplay between “Dao” and “Logos,” as is already hinted by Heidegger himself: “Perhaps the enigmatic power of today’s reign of the method also, and indeed preeminently, stems from the fact that the methods, notwithstanding their efficiency, are after all merely the runoff of a great hidden stream which moves all things along and makes way for everything. All is way.”¹⁰⁶ The question of “method” belongs together with the question of science¹⁰⁷ and it eventually connects to the fundamental symptoms

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ In this regard, Heidegger quoted the Nietzschean diagnosis of our modern period in the opening of *the Will to Power*, Ibid., 72: “It is not the victory of science that distinguishes our nineteenth century, but the victory of scientific method over science.”

of modernity.¹⁰⁸ This reflection suggests us look beyond the mere reign of methods, but to consider how it stands with regard to original the “way-making” movement suggested by the term of Logos and Dao.

This train of thought concerning the question of modernity following discussion will unfold through the analysis of the film “Yellow Earth.” The work brings out a cinematic presentation of the “Yellow Earth” of the Chinese losses plateau. Its image in the film profoundly resonates with Heidegger’s characterization of the “rift-structure” in the essay “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Our primary approach to interpreting the work sees it as an addressing “call,” which addresses its audience and interpreter, even including its creator, whose message is, however, ambiguous. Oriented towards this level of “calling” we think about its visual traits, its theme, its technological approach, and its effects on reception. This way of viewing allows us to discover the way where the encounter of technology, poetry, and modernity, as well as the cross-cultural dialogue between East and West, unfolds.

¹⁰⁸ Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 57.

3. *Yellow Earth*, Technology and Cross-Cultural Dialogue

In 1984, Chinese filmmaker Chen Kaige captured the attention of international audiences with his debut film “Yellow Earth.” This marked a significant moment in which viewers outside of China, for the first time, were introduced to the unique cinematic aesthetics of the Fifth Generation Directors. The encounter with “Yellow Earth” elicited a dual response¹: on the one hand, it generated immense international fascination due to its distinct aesthetic style, with the massive exposition of the landscape image of the Chinese Loess Plateau, the subtle and restrained portrayal of Chinese peasants, and the integration of folk songs and ritualistic elements. On the other hand, the film also posed a significant challenge in interpretation for international viewers. The analysis by Esther. C.M. Yau, highlighted the difficulties posed by the “Eastern” nature of the film to Western mode of thinking: “Finally, how does this non-Western text elude the logocentric character of Western textual analysis as well as the sweeping historicism

¹ The principal works under consideration are the discussions between Esther C. M. Yau and Rey Chow. Yau’s essay on “Yellow Earth” exposes the challenge of identifying an appropriate “method” for interpreting what she categorizes as a “Non-Western Text.” Despite the practice of trying the so-called Western analytic methods upon the film work, the author also calls upon a Daoist approach that might more faithfully work out the film’s Chinese essence. On the other hand, Rey Chow’s work “Silent Is the Ancient Plain: Music, Filmmaking, and the Conception of Reform in China’s New Cinema” presents a critical response to Yau’s perspective, revealing that despite a level of theatrical self-awareness is present in Yau’s thinking, the inherent “Chinese-western” dichotomy still operates beneath her framework which facilitates the production of “Chineseness” of “China”. There also exists a wide array of analyses read the film politically, positioning the work in the concrete context of the Chinese Communist revolution and post cultural-revolution context, to ponder upon questions including nationhood, Social Reform, Communist Revolution, etc. To look at the political readings, we may turn to, for example, Stephanie Donald’s essay “Landscape and Agency: Yellow Earth and the Demon Lover;” or Zhang Yingping’s “From “Minority Film” to “Minority Discourse”: Questions of Nationhood and Ethnicity in Chinese Cinema”. Other scholars approach the work from a more or less cultural perspective, positioning it in the entirety of Chinese cultural tradition. In this respect we may look at: Jerome Silbergeld’s essay in *China Into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* and also H. C. Li’s *Color, Character, and Culture: On “Yellow Earth, Black Cannon Incident,” and “Red Sorghum”*. Finally, I find Paul Clark’s “Reinventing China: The Fifth-Generation Filmmakers” particularly informative in that it provides important factual information about the film’s historical, social, and political background, which is important for the audience to learn further about the context of this film.

of cultural criticism?”² After practicing the range of Western interpretative methods in the work, including “cine-structuralist, Barthesian post-structuralist, neo-Marxian culturalist and feminist discursive” at the end of her essay, Yau expresses the presence of some still-existent impenetrability of the film eluding to all Western modes of reading, which may only be resolved within the framework of Daoist philosophy: “With this philosophy, perhaps, we may be able to contemplate the power(lessness) of our reading of the text.”³

As we can see, Yao encountered difficulty in finding the right “method” to decipher the film work regarded as a “text.” The problem of method may also be viewed a question of finding a *way* through which the meaning of the film work, which is the goal of the interpreter, can be accessed. However, before the discussion of the proper “way” of accessing the work, a fundamental question arises: what propels us onto the search for the *way*? Is it what lies on the other side of the way or is it a *will* to assimilate the otherness lying at the end of the way into one’s own domain of understanding?

When Nietzsche says, “It is not the victory of science that distinguishes our nineteenth century, but the victory of the scientific method over science”⁴ what is meant in this statement is rather the unstated title in the sentence: “The will to power as knowledge.”⁵ The activity of knowledge pursuit in is by no means purely objectivitive and value-free but is driven by an essential subjective element– the “*will* to know” aiming. Being a *will*, it always desires self-preservation and self-enhancement. It

² Esther C. M. Yau. “‘Yellow Earth’: Western Analysis and a Non-Western Text.” *Film Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1987): 22.

³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴ Walter Kaufmann and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 262.

⁵ *Ibid.*

unconditionally seeks to expand its own domain and is wary of any threats to its existence. Appearing in the form of “knowing”, the *will* thus seeks to avoid all sorts of unknowns and seeks the unconditional expansion of clarity and visibility in the process of knowledge pursuit, which testifies and asserts its power.

For this reason, the “will to know” acts as the driving force behind our fascination and anxiety with methodologies. Since “method” can ensure the possibility of accessing and mastering what is not yet grasped and bringing it into the light of understanding, it plays a privileged role in the production of modern knowledge. The possession of a variety of “methods” enables one to be always capable of affirming his intellectual strength, as a form of self-assertion. As is expressed by Nietzsche: “Tracing something unknown back to something known gives relief, soothes, satisfies, and furthermore gives a feeling of power. The unknown brings with it danger, disquiet, worry—one’s first instinct is to get rid of these awkward conditions. First principle: any explanation is better than none.”⁶ This process of seeking a sense of security and the self-assertion by a knowing subject perhaps expresses the essence of the “Western Analysis” proposed by Yau. The activities exercised by the literary interpreters, are propelled precisely by this constant expanding “will to power as knowledge” which seeks to turn all the “unknown” into “known” and to sustain and enhance its capability of explanation and elucidation as much as possible. In this way, they are able to preserve and enhance the status as a subject of “knowing” and remain to be “powerful” in the process of modern knowledge production. But we also need to look at the other half of Nietzschean statement “It is not

⁶ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer* (Oxford World’s Classics), trans. Duncan Large (Oxford University Press, 1998), 29.

the victory of science *that distinguishes our nineteenth century*, but the victory of the scientific method over science.” This “will to power as knowledge” is not a specific problem limited to the literary realm, but it something crucial that defines the nineteenth century - *the beginning of the age of modernity*. Our discussion of the methodological issues involved in the reception of the “yellow earth” is therefore by no means a mere critique of methodological thinking in the field of literary or film analysis. But instead, we seek to move over to the dimension where the key elements of modernity and the key nature of modern subject, the purview of which Nietzsche’s thought operates, converge with the problems of literary analytic methods. As will be indicated in the following analysis, the issues of modernity are also represented within the narrative level of the film itself, and the two dimensions, both extrinsic and the intrinsic shares the same domain of problematics which points towards a unthought landscape.

The explication above indicates how the role plays by the modern literary analyzer, the holder of methods, potentially demonstrates the fundamental logic of a modern subject defined by his “will to power as knowledge.” However, does Nietzschean conception of methods explains all the important necessities entailed by the methods themselves? How can the modern knowing subject, the holder of methods that imposes frameworks to the world to produces his position of centrality, be overcome? Perhaps, if we focus on the potential correlation between “method” and “way” can also inform us a different understanding of human engagement with “method.” When someone embarks upon a way, they may be unsure about what lies ahead but are willing to engage in this risky situation behind which stands an uncertain relationality to an “other” they are yet to grasp. Different from the “will to power,” such “willingness” is rather “willingness to

dialogue,” to incline toward a relatedness to another but also fully accept an undiminishable distance at the same time. The relationality facilitated by the “way” is thus not a relation centered on the self-expansion of the subject, but instead a “face-to-face” dialogic relation in which one concedes his will for absolute self-certainty and accepts the risks from his exposure to another. The articulation of this model may be found in Gadamer’s explanation of his inheritance from the standpoint of the late Heidegger:

“The dialogical character of language, which I tried to work out, leaves behind it any starting point in the subjectivity of the subject, and especially in the meaning-directed intentions of the speaker. What we find happening in speaking is not a mere reification of intended meaning, but an endeavor that continually modifies itself, or better: a continually recurring temptation to engage oneself in something or to become involved with someone. But that means to expose oneself and to risk oneself.”⁷

Despite the potential existence of a self-assertive will, this dialogical willingness is not something absent in the analysis by Yau. It is already intrinsic to her original formulation — when the film work is understood as a “text” that calls for a hermeneutic response and when the analyzer is willing to embark upon the path of interpretation, the operation of will to dialogue is already at work, appearing in the form of knowledge pursuit, whose essence, however, is the unfolding of a genuine process of thinking – the true engagement with an otherness that calls for one’s thoughtful response.

⁷ Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 26.

Yet, this “willingness to dialogue” does not originate from a desire for self-assertion or self-expansion: the assertion of the “correctness” of one’s stance or the expansion of one’s power of “knowing.” But neither is it initiated through a subjective will to form or to create a “dialogue”. Rather, it belongs to the structural nature (design) of language itself. Slightly different from perhaps the position of Gadamer whose views on the nature of this “dialogue”, as a different prototype (from Nietzsche’s power-oriented explanation) that explains activities related to thinking and knowing, are heavily dependent on the interpretation of Plato, we adhere to a Heideggerian-Daoist perspective, understanding it with a focus on the presence of a “third party” in the dialogue, the speaking of Logos, or Dao itself, whose influence is beyond the control of either side. It appears as a gravitational center characterized with sudden occurrence and an irresistible, perhaps violent, power of gathering, making happen the encounter of the two sides. Without the momentum created by this dimension of Language, even if one deliberately sets up the stage for discourse and invites two sides to join, a dialogue may not truly happen, as is showcased, for example by the encounter between Gadamer and Derrida often considered “improper debate”⁸ by commentaries. In contrast, with the occurrence of such “eventfulness”, even the dialogue considered most impossible would happen beyond the expectation of all sides. This is what we have witnessed in the creation and the reception of the “Yellow Earth”: the fifth-generation directors, somehow, are responding to an unexplained need to present China to the world in a new way, and somehow, the international viewers were gathered into the same eventful face-to-face encounter⁹ with

⁸ Ibid., 162.

⁹ Being face-to-face also means: maintaining an unsurpassable distance.

the work they created. Subsequently, the intensity of the force of attraction activated by the work attracts the attention of film scholars. They also start to look towards it and think toward it, looking for a “method” to engage more fully into the dialogue – as a response to the “call” of the event. With this formulation, the creator, and the viewer, as well as the analyzers, are no longer being seen as self-expressing atheistic subjects, or self-asserting subjects of knowing, but rather as different responders replying to the same “call” which brings forth the possibility of the dialogical encounter of the so-called “East and West,” whose underlying significations, however, remain hidden. Because the “call” seems to be originated from neither side but rather the middle sphere of language itself, it is considered as a silent speaking that appeals to both side to enter the realm of dialogue. In this sense, it, the “call” of gathering that summons the happening of dialogue, could be translated with the words “Dao” and “Logos”, whose meaning, however, will be gradually disclosed in the following arguments. Within this horizon, the original level where the cross-cultural dialogue becomes generated is not even on the dimension between Western and the non-Western people, but rather, between the incomprehensible eventful “call” and its responders from both East and West.

The film work, interpreted from this perspective, is thus not just seen as a work of “representation” or a “reproduction.” It rather originates from a domain of open within which the call for encounter announces itself. It is the establishment that holds up this openness with its distinct dialogue-forming structure. To think about the essence of the work, therefore, means to look for the same open-ended “call” that concerns both the creator and the international audience. To apprehend the work means to see the structural design of the encounter brought forth by the “call” placed within the work. To evaluate

the work means to assess to what degree is the eventual power of the “call” released to its fullest. In summary, we base all the aspects the work on the ground of “linguisticity” – the essential nature that determines and constitutes the call -which holds sways every corner of the world which we are part of.

From this aspect, we think towards “Yellow Earth” together with the name of its original script “Echoes of the Deep Valley.” The name already hints at how the sounding of a “call” shall be brought to the presence within the work: the “call” resounds within a deep valley, which is constituted by an “opening,” a “rift” and a “rupture.” In the opening sounds the call and, in the call, unfolds ways and relationality. As has been theorized in the last chapter, the establishment of an opening is the practice of “poetry.” The consideration of the establishment of an opening within which “echoes” resounds opens up the purview of the poetic dimension of the film work. But a figurative dimension can also be derived: the figure is the “fixed” image of the “rift.” It is the contours of the faces of those who are in a “face-to-face” discourse. Concerning the film, we can somehow sense the configuration of this fixed “rift” through the movie's name (instead of the script name) “Yellow Earth.” At first glance, “yellow” is the modifier of the “earth.” But this combination tells us even more: we are never able to perceive the yellowness of the earth unless it is exposed under the sky. Without the exposure of the light from the sky, and its yellowness would never emerge. This suggests that when we are thinking towards “yellow earth,” we are never thinking solely upon the Earth itself but always already thinking it together with the presence of a Sky. Symbolically speaking, yellow represents the paddy and the harvest, the Yellow River, and the yellow skin. The name of the first emperor in China was documented: the Yellow Emperor. The term “yellow” thus

embraces the widest breadth of Chinese history and culture – its historicity and “worldliness.” On the other hand, the Earth is the self-concealed supporter and the bearer of all things. Its locality stays unchanged, regardless of whether the cultural world above the earth is prosperous or barren. To draw a link to the Greek vocabulary, the “earth” is closely linked with the feminine noun “φύσις,” which supports the self-standing of manifold things but also takes everything back into itself.¹⁰ In Chinese, the concept of the “Earth” is connected with the idea of “kun,” translating similar natures: thickness, inclusiveness, and self-concealedness. The name “Yellow Earth” does not just express the concept of “yellow” and “earth” separately, nor their seamless combination, but rather, it already involves the intimation of an essential confrontation between them – a “rift” (Riss) - through which “Yellow Earth” becomes what it is. “Yellow Earth” already points towards a certain type of relationality, crystalized in the figure of the “rift” between the Earth and the sky.

In the film, the figure of the “rift” is obviously a central visual element of the image of “Yellow Earth.” At the beginning of the film, when the image of “Yellow Earth” is first presented, what is emphatically exhibited by the camera is not the yellow soil nor a flat land, but rather the clefts, gullies, cuts and trenches that spreads across the earth’s surface. The portrait captures the essential geological form of the “Yellow Earth,” the Chinese Loess Plateau, a terrain shaped by the erosive forces of rain and wind over thousands of years. The rain falling from the sky and the wind blowing above the ground thrusts and carves the earth into its current shape. The phenomenon of “erosion” at the

¹⁰ See Heidegger’s theorization about the concept of the earth and its relation to “φύσις” in the essay “the origin of the work of art” in *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

heart of this landscape is essentially a process of “wresting”: the earth bears the scars of loss inflicted by the rain and wind, which carve and mold its form and appearance. This form and the shapes are wrested out by the erosive force, just like an artist carves and thrusts its material to “wrest” out a form he seeks to accomplish. The undulations of this loess land are also like the strokes sketched out by a painter's brush which tears open the homogenous surface to let the gestalts arise. In many senses, the mere image of the “yellow earth” is already telling us something about the original connection between nature and the “art.” The rifts, the ruptures, and the geographical forms of the Loess Plateau figuratively express the connection between “art” and “Nature”: it is itself a work of art from Nature.

The presentation of this landscape is dependent upon the working of the camera. It is the camera that initiates and sustains the manifestness of the “rift” design of the “Yellow Earth.” Yet, for the “rift” to emerge, the “whereto” into which the projection targets is neither the sheer earth nor the sheer sky. What the camera truly points towards is actually the very boundary, the very limit, the dividing line that separates (but also binds) the earth and the aerial spaces. It is this boundary that gives defining shapes to both the earth and the spaces above the earth. Yet, the existence of the boundary is devoid of any tangible materiality and perceptibility. Compared to the actual existence of the soil on the ground and the air up in the sky, the dividing line is rather an imperceptible “nothing.” But it is precisely this “nothing,” that makes present the shapes of the whole landscapes – without it the earth and the sky would simply merges into indistinguishability, making the whole configuration of “yellow earth” inexistent. It is precisely the camera that keeps open the emptiness that brings forth the whole figuration.

The camera sustains the openness to set the boundary into work so that figures are let emerge, releasing the radiance of their forms and shapes. What the camera has accomplished, is thus not just a “representation” of what is already showing itself by meting out on the invisible threshold – also it itself help to establishes and sustains an opened realm through which figurations can radiate. As well be explicated later in the text, this process thus underscores the “poetic” function of the camera: its function of founding a realm of openness that gathers and allows for the manifestation of figures.

Nonetheless, the “nothing” does more than delineate the earth from the sky. It also announces the presencing of a primordial relationality between them. The visible marks of erosions – the cracks, the gullies, and the ruptures (all sorts of formed “nothingness”) – bear witness to the willingness of the earth to be imposed by the sky. Yet, no matter how drastically the earth bears those forces, its very inert materiality remains there steadfastly, rising high into the sky. On the other hand, the very act of erosion by the sky, a form of “wrestling,” is at the same time “thrusting”: it seeks to thrust open the self-closed surface of the earth by the force of the rain and the wind. In this sense, what the “nothing” attests to is not an indifferent separation, but also a tendency between the two to be drawn towards the other on the basis of being-away from each other: the yellow earth shows an essential inclination towards the sky in the sense of its tendency to absorb and rise towards the sky despite being worn away; the sky exhibits a resolute inclination towards the earth in the sense of its will to thrust forms and shapes downward despite the very obstructiveness in the being of the earth. Within the process through which the “rift” is shaped, both the repelling force and the attracting force come into play. Seen from this perspective, the portrayal of the losses plateau is, therefore, not

just a static shot of what has happened or what is always there, but rather what has been happening: the ongoing interexchange, the intense strife, and the intimate dialogue between the Earth and the Sky, resounding across the valley.

It is the unfolding of this dialogue – a geographical dialogue of Nature - between the earth and the sky that shapes the landscape of the yellow earth. But just as all form of dialogue, this geographical dialogue does not even originate from either the Earth or the Sky. It is rather a silent third-party call that gathers the two together into a relationality as such. It appears before any dialogue is heard and is able to reach and call both sides, asking them to join the dialogue. The silent “call” for a dialogue that precedes the actual dialogue may be conceptualized with the idea of “soundless sound.” It is “soundless” because it is the initiating force that precedes the actual happening of the dialogue. Yet it is still considered as a “calling,” that draws together both sides into the structure of the “rift.” As the “rift” structure persists, the power of the call still reigns in the area. It resounds and echoes, perpetuating the ongoing dialogue between the earth and the sky, making its presence known through the visual motifs of “rift” and “rupture” that so distinctively mark the “Yellow Earth.” This silent call is what produces the “Echoes of the Deep Valley.” (the original title of this film)

What follows is a scene where an individual man is walking in the middle space in-between the sky and the earth. Half of his body thrusts upwards the sky and the other half thrusts downwards the earth. In this scene, we cannot discern what he looks like and how he dresses. His identity remains ambiguous. This figure is a general symbol of the structural position of humans in the dialogue between the earth and the sky: they are the ones who stands in the in-between space where the abovementioned original dialogue

happens. Therefore, they are not only unable to avoid being integrated into the dialogue but also must experience it most intensively because their position of existence lies precisely at the gravity center of the gathering force – the in-between liminal space. The abrupt thrownness situation of humans into the grand dialogue is intimated by the overlap of images of the walking human and a close-up shot of the loess land as if the human is deeply inserted into the landscape.

As the individual walks closer towards the camera, the view of both the earth and the sky disappears. What is presented is rather a half-length close-up portrait of the man, a modern soldier dressed in military uniform against the background of an empty, homogenous space. This transition expresses the symbolic message that as the modern individual rises into the center of beings, as he or she positions themselves to be the referential center towards which everything else points, the original relationality in which they are positioned becomes blurred. Everything, including time and space, earth and sky, stands somehow to be the same to them.

The subsequent reemergence of the portrayal of yellow earth, now featuring a long path with a line of people walking along it, introduces a stark contrast to the image of the precedent individual abstracted from his background. These people, whose existential situation is vastly different from that of the modern soldier, are still deeply embedded within their environment and governed by a shared destiny. They understand themselves not as free-standing modern individuals who can penetrate everything with the power of rationality, but rather as finite human beings dwelling upon the incomprehensible ground upon which they unfold their relations with other things and other people. Their images may resonate with the Heideggerian depiction of the so-called

“historical people”: “The world is the self-opening openness of the broad paths of simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people.”¹¹ In the context of our discussion, we may define “historical people” as the ones who are not yet liberated from the bonds of tradition, deeply installed within the traditional modes of production. But what is meant by Heidegger in the sense of “history” perhaps refers not to the history of humanity itself, but also goes far beyond to the aforementioned primal event of Nature in which the dialogue between the Earth and the Sky occurs and continues, through which humanity is positioned into the structural position of “in-between.”

Presenting the two types of people facing entirely different existential situations, the theme of the “rift” (also a dialogue) between the modern individual and the so-called historical people is thus anticipated at the beginning of the film. But one must not view this dialogue, following our theorization, isolated from the universal “calling” – the echoes in the deep valley – already happening in nature, as if it is just the opposition between two worldviews: one is a traditionalist and the other is modern. With the term “destiny,” what is indicated by Heidegger is the idea that manifoldness, the divisions happening within human history - belong to the same inner logic. Thus, it is not that the human invention of technological thinking or the reign of modernity fundamentally changes the relationality in which human was originally, but rather, the very structural position in which human is placed within nature itself engenders the possibility of technology and modernity which leads to a shift of how humanity understands itself concerning the world. However, how could this level of connectedness be possible? Is

¹¹ Ibid., 26.

this insight illustrated by the film? Departing from this question, we start discussing the “encounter” between the modern soldier and the historical people. We seek to reveal their different mode of existence, but also, to expose the underlying “destiny” within which both types of people: both “modern” and “pre-modern” are gathered. As will be disclosed later, in this “destiny” underlies an important hint about the human’s relation to the “call” – the silent speaking of language, and the mode of this relation casts a profound influence on the fundamental situation of modern humanity. Here, we need to roughly summarize the narrative of the film first in order to fully bring out our own thematic about the correlation of language and the situation of the modernity. Following an introduction by a local villager, we learn that the soldier, Gu Qing, is a member of the Eighth Route Army, the Communist Party's military force during the cooperation between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party in 1939. He arrives in the Losses land with the mission of collecting folk songs. The purpose behind this endeavor is to adapt these songs in a way that promotes the political ideals of his organization. Having stated his purpose, he receives a warm welcome from the villagers and is hosted by a peasant family. Initially, Gu Qing attempts to encourage the peasants to sing, but these efforts are met with little success. An elder peasant explains to him that the singing of these songs cannot be compelled; it emerges spontaneously, driven by deep feelings of joy or pain. Gu Qing thus spends more time dwelling and laboring together with the peasant family, in the process of which he gains a deeper understanding of their lives: these peasants are hardworking, silent, and simple, but they are also deeply constrained by traditionalist ideology, patriarchal social structures, and scarce natural resources. Through the course of their coexistence, Gu Qing gradually shares the prospects of living in Yan An area in

which people receive education equally and enjoy more freedom concerning the choices of their life. He also teaches them army songs that spread modern, communist ideas. The words of Gu Qing deeply influenced the mindset of the girl, Cui Qiao, from the peasant family. Before Gu Qing leaves, Cui Qiao expresses her wish to follow Gu Qing to join the army. Yet, Gu Qing rejects the idea because this would/does not align with the rules of his organization. He promises to apply for Cui Qiao's enlistment and to take her into the army after it is permitted. Yet, Cui Qiao knows she would not be able to wait any longer because her arranged marriage is drawing near, a time in which she would lose all her freedom. At this moment, she sings out the most beautiful and painful tone in the movie. However, this time Gu Qing does not take any notes and he just keeps walking without looking back. Ultimately, when Gu Qing makes his way back to the village, he finds that Cui Qiao has vanished: it appears that she resolved to brave the crossing of the Yellow River alone in her quest to join the army, only to be met by the rising river and encounter an unforeseen tragedy. In the story's conclusion, Cui Qiao's singing echoes across the yellow earth, her presence no longer visible. What remains is a stark portrayal of the deep rifts and gullies that scar the landscape of the Losses land, exposed under the sky.

3.1 Question of Modernity

The different visual elements that characterize the soldier and the peasants anticipates a “rift” between the standpoints of the modern individual and the historical people, but in most parts of the narrative, it remains imperceptible. Despite being an outsider in the village, the soldier's integration into the peasant community is notably successful. He adapts himself to the life of the peasants, participating in their labor,

sharing their living spaces, and engaging in their conversations. Although there appears to be a significant distance between the soldier and the peasants, highlighted towards the end of the story in which Gu Qing exhibits a detached concern for Cui Qiao's fate and his initial refusal to hear the meaning behind Cui Qiao's songs, the soldier's underlying care for her is undeniable, as is evidenced by his eventual return to the village to keep his promise to take Cui Qiao with him. For this reason, the source of the tragic ending of Yellow Earth and its moral message is ambivalent: we can neither blame the death of Cui Qiao solely upon the Gu Qing, nor upon the “unenlightened” peasants since they are also entrapped by the constraints imposed by nature and traditions.

However, a significant “rift” that determines the core of the dynamics between the peasant and the soldier indeed exists. This is revealed through their different attitude towards the question of folk songs. As mentioned, Gu Qing’s principal mission is to collect folk songs from the inhabitants dwelling in Yellow Earth and to transform them for revolution. The mission itself entails an instrumentalized view of the folk songs: they are treated as objective “materials” standing there to be collected and repurposed. In this sense, Gu Qing’s fundamental standpoint towards the folk song follows the logic of “objectification.” He grasps these folk songs standing over there as “objects.” Following this logic, the peasants are taken to be the “possessors” or “holders” of those “objects.” This is why Gu Qing initially held an oversimplified vision of his mission. He thought that those songs could be performed at any moment and on any occasion since they were always already “there” to be collected. One just needs to “represent” what has already been present “there” already. Contrastingly, the peasants exhibit a different understanding of folk songs. When Gu Qing tries to elicit the singing of the peasants, the old peasant

replies: “Why shall we sing when there is no sorrow or happiness?” For them, the songs, these so-called “sour tones,” are not disposable materials that are available for use at any moment. Rather, they are only sung when the singer senses intense emotions as the being of those songs is intimately and organically linked to the inner being of the singer embodying probably the spirit of Wordsworth, as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful passion.”¹²

The aforementioned contrast thus delineates the difference between the soldier's and the peasant's viewpoints towards the phenomenon of folk songs. The former adopts a more neutral, detached, objectifying attitude, while for the latter those songs are the natural overflow of their innermost feeling. The former tends to instrumentalize those works, while the latter retains an organic, natural relation to them. The practice of folk song collection, thus, implies an “uprooting” of those songs from their original backgrounds to serve for the reproduction of political propaganda. From this perspective, the peasant's commitment to singing only in moments of genuine emotional experience—either of joy or sorrow—is a powerful testament to “authenticity” and “spontaneity” and forms a direct challenge to the soldier's utilitarian logic. As the peasant's words eminently express this idea, it implies that director Chen Kaige himself may share this critical stance towards the logic of objectification, advocating for a Romantic valorization of natural and emotional authenticity.

However, this type of analysis overlooks a fundamental commonality underlying both the logic of objectification and the logic of self-expression. The process of

¹² William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Warwick J. Owen, *Lyrical Ballads: 1798* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 237.

objectification presupposes an act of positing through which an object is placed in opposition to oneself so that a dividing distance is secured. Through this process, the positing one becomes the subject and what is posited becomes the object. In this sense, no object is pre-given but objectivity itself is a constituted accomplishment. The distance which determines the separation between the subject and the object is itself non-original but rather a formed relation by that which who posits.

To have something as an object before oneself, therefore, does not mean to detach oneself from that being, but instead, to relate this being towards oneself in a specific manner. The formation entails an active process of self-positing, self-doubling, and self-othering., and when the object is posited, either the subject forces it into service for his self-increase, or the object surmounts the subject with its power. Yet in both senses, as the subject and the object are essentially a doubling of the Same, the result is the self-assertion and the self-heightening of the Same. This logic of self-assertion precisely lies at the core of both objectification and self-expression.

For example, according to the theorization of Hegel, the subject may eventually take back that which it posits outside itself so that it achieves the highest level of actualization, which forms the motif of the development of Spirit in *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

Further, the living Substance is being which is in truth Subject, or what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself.....Only this self-storing Sameness,

or this reflection in otherness within itself an original or immediate unity as such the True.¹³

The substance – the primary being that makes up the existence of all beings– is not static to Hegel. It rather involves a tendency of self-othering and self-movement. In this sense, the Substance is “in truth Subject.” It moves itself by positing part of itself as an object towards itself and then takes back the object to restore itself. In this process, it becomes more actual – the state of Hegel calls “the True.” This process of the negation of negation thus demonstrates how the positing of an object can lead to the self-assertion and the self-increase of the subject.

But even when the subject, succumbs to the object it posits to itself, he still overpowers himself since the object also originates from himself. Its ability to create a even more powerful copy than its original self attests to its ability to surpass itself. This aligns closely with Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche's “will to power”:

Will strives for what it wills not just as for something that it does not yet have. Will already has what it wills. For will wills its willing. Its will is what it has willed. Will wills itself. It exceeds itself. In this way will as will wills above and beyond itself, and therefore at the same time it must bring itself beneath and behind itself.¹⁴

Conventionally speaking, “Will” and “what is willed” are distinct. The former belongs to our subjective power while the latter is the object of this power. But Nietzsche, under the interpretation of Heidegger, challenges this dichotomy. For him, this

¹³ Hegel Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, A. V. Miller, and J. N. Findlay, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 10.

¹⁴ Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 175.

separation is not essential because the more what is willed is distanced from the will, the more this will grow stronger. The very ontological structure of the “will” turns the distance between the will and its object into a mechanism for its self-amplification. In this sense, what is willed increases the intensity of the will. The more this posited “other” wins over the original will, the more it becomes a testament to the powerfulness of the original will since it possesses the power to posit something even more powerful than itself, fully demonstrating its capacity of self-surpassing. This is why Heidegger says: “Will wills above and beyond itself, and therefore at the same time it must bring itself beneath and behind itself” in the above-mentioned passage. Self-surpassing and self-succumbing are essentially the same. They both work for the self-increase of the initial subject.

In the case of folk songs collection, the subjectivity of the soldier predefines and prearranges the folk songs’ objectivity, endowing them *readiness for collection*. This level of readiness is not originally present in the object’s own right but is rather constitutively accomplished by the subject. The acknowledgment of the objectivity of the folk songs as ready-to collect materials presupposes their being “fore-possessed” by the subject, whose structural position predetermined these folk songs into the mode of being as objective presences, just as Heidegger says “Will already *has* what it wills.” Therefore, even if the folk songs appear to stand over against the soldier, they are always already appropriated by the subject in prior, the act of which endowed them this nature of “objectness.” Also, after those songs are collected, they will be transformed and serve for political use. In this sense, the “pre-possessed” objects, after being posited, and othered, become taken back into the subject itself to increase its power. In this way, the political

subject asserts and heightens itself. On the other side, the idea of the so-called “authenticity” and “spontaneity” in peasants and their “natural” view of the folk songs as “self-expression” adhere to the same logic. From this Romanticism perspective, to which Chen Kaige somehow embraces by himself, these songs are seen as the natural expression of the inner emotions of the singers. In performing these songs, he does not undergo any changes through the experience of singing but only expresses what already exists within. In this sense, this viewpoint, disregarding the dialectics of “self-othering,” is simply a more straightforward way of accentuating the self-assertiveness of the human subject, the singer. Essentially, the songs become extensions or manifestations of the singer’s pre-existing emotions, essentially serving as “expressions” of feelings like joy and grief.

This is why, as is elucidated, both two standpoints - either the more mechanical, technological one, or the more romantic spontaneous one, are supported by the same logic: *the logic of self-assertion and self-heightening of the subject*, whose essence is, as has been mentioned, “will to power”: the desire of to preserve and increase itself. In the study by Rey Chow on this film, she has already pointed out that the question of recording and representing music in *Yellow Earth* always indicates a power struggle: “The symbiotic relationship between representation and recording suggests that it is always a power struggle. Ultimately, that mode which repeats and which derives its power not from ‘spontaneity’ but from mechanicity is the one which has supremacy over the other.”¹⁵ For a power struggle to happen, however, both of the two sides must be

¹⁵ Chow, Rey. “Silent Is the Ancient Plain: Music, Filmmaking, and the Conception of Reform in China’s New Cinema.” *Discourse* 12, no. 2 (1990): 82–109. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41389154>.

already involved in the structure of will to power in the first place. In this sense, on the plane of “power” – that which aims for and produces self-aggrandizement and self-increase - the two positions exhibit no difference. Whether the folk songs are seen as objects ready to use or the expression of inner emotions, they essentially work in line with the same logic of self-assertiveness and self-increase of the subject.

The self-assertiveness of human subject has a profound implication. Drawing from the insight of Heidegger, this impulse of the human subject to assert himself constitutes the kernel that produces the phenomenon of modernity:

The essence of modernity can be seen in humanity's freeing itself from the bonds of the Middle Ages in that it frees itself to itself. But this characterization, though correct, is merely the foreground.....What is decisive is not that humanity frees itself from previous bonds but, rather, that the essence of humanity altogether transforms itself in that man becomes the subject.¹⁶

Although we initially posit that there is a distance between the “modern” soldier – the free-standing individuals already liberated from the bonds of traditionalism and the “historical people” – those who have not yet freed themselves from the previous bonds, our analysis eventually discloses that a difference as such is not fundamentally essential. Both types of people, as is reflected in their views towards the question of folk songs, are defined eventually by the same self-assertive subjectivity: either the “spontaneous” self-assertiveness of the peasants or the more indirect “technological” self-assertiveness of the soldier. The former type of self-assertiveness pushes the folk songs completely into the realm of human mastery, just as the latter’s standpoints turn the its being into an

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 66.

“opposing” object ready to use. The two types of people, therefore, are gathered within the same “destiny” of “becoming assertive subject” – the founder and precursor of modernity.

However, the root of this *fateful* “self-assertive subjectivity” that characterizes both the soldier and the peasants remains in vileness. A self-obvious, pregiven fate, does not translate to a givenness that we can easily take for granted, but it only appears to be a more intriguing enigma. Where does this tendency of “becoming subject”, as well as its byproduct – the rise of modernity - originate?

To fully unpack its implication, we may have to follow the reasoning of Heidegger on the question of modernity with greater care: the origin of modern subjectivity is traced back by Heidegger to the thinking of Descartes in the essay “The Age of the World Picture.”¹⁷ For Heidegger, Descartes’s principle *ego cogito (ergo) sum* ensures the unconditional self-certainty of a human about his being through the indubitable certainty of the principle of “thinking.” “Thinking,” in this context, is equated with the act of “representing” which means setting something before oneself. To ensure the self-certainty of human’s being, one has to in the first place set his being over against himself as an object for examination. But this act of setting over against is already an act of representing which belongs to the capacity of thinking. Thinking in this sense, appears to possess absolute self-dependency and it can bring forth itself from out of itself before itself without relying upon anything external to it. As thinking is considered as a central capacity to human nature, this indubitable principle of thinking (representing) is thus able

¹⁷ Ibid., 74.

to serve as the unconditional ground of human's freedom - his self-dependency, which becomes subsequently the measure of all things.¹⁸

However, despite indicating a fundamental shift from the original Greek understanding of human to the modern Cartesian understanding, Heidegger highlights the connection between them with the following:

But how far removed is Descartes from this beginning of Greek thought, how different is the interpretation of man which represents him as a subject? In the concept of the subiectum, there still lingers on the sound of the Greek essence of being in the form of a presencing that has become unrecognizable and unquestioned (namely, that which lies permanently at hand).¹⁹

The interpretation of “being” in the Cartesian principle is deeply rooted in the Greek metaphysical tradition that connects being with “presence.” To assure the certainty of one's being thus means to assure the “presence” of oneself. And as one's thinking stays active by representing different things, through the representations he creates by thinking, he can be assured about the fact that his thinking is always at work. The representations created by the constant activity of thinking are seen as a testament to the constant presence of oneself. Given that we innately perceive our capacity to think as an integral aspect of ourselves—our presence—we thereby secure confidence in our existence through the indubitable presence of our thinking. In this sense, the Cartesian discussion still works within purview of the Greek tradition that equates being as presence.

¹⁸ Ibid., 82.

¹⁹ Ibid., 80.

Yet, despite the indication of their connectedness, Heidegger also emphasized that the essential *divergence* between the age of the ancient Greeks and the age of Descartes is centered on their different views on the meaning of thinking. For the former, thinking means apprehending what is initially self-showing from itself, while for the latter, thinking takes on more of its meaning of “re-presenting” – to *forcefully* place the presence of something from one’s thinking before oneself and over against oneself. Heidegger states that the change establishes the subject position of humans because the latter understanding emphasizes more on the agency of humans itself while the former still concedes part of the agency to the self-showing things. For ancient Greeks, it is not human power that makes present the beings but rather the inner tendency of beings to show themselves. Human perceives beings only by letting this natural self-emerging tendency in the being of things unfold in and by themselves. For this reason: “Every subjectivism is impossible within Greek Sophism since man can *never*, here, become subiectum.”²⁰ “Subiectum” signifies an absolute self-relatedness. For the Greeks, the self-showing of beings, an element of “otherness” is not up to the will of human, is always affirmed as an essential part of one’s apprehension. Therefore, being a Greek subject might mean to be *close* to other beings but it never means to relate everything to oneself and making oneself an absolute grounding and a relational center.

Heidegger, at this stage, believes that the change from the Greek framework to the modern framework was driven by a need to liberate man himself from the diminishing influence of the Church from that specific historical period: “The demand springs from

²⁰ Ibid.

the liberation of humanity from the bonds of the truth of Christian revelation and the doctrines of the Church, a liberation which frees itself for a self-legislation that is grounded in itself.”²¹ Nonetheless, this explanation looks abrupt in Heidegger’s own philosophical system since it does not emerge from the examination of the immanent change in the interpretation of Being. Instead, it relies upon an isolated religious event, which stands in opposition to Heidegger’s stance towards the question of history²², that seeks to explain both ancient and modern, within a unified grand narrative about the history of Being. This somehow contradictory gesture is a sign of a deep-rooted empathy with the ancient Greek epoch at that period, which propels his endeavor to differentiate the Greek period from the modern, overlooking the essential ways the former inevitably prepares for the latter. Consequently, the critical discussion on the inevitability of the shift from the Greek conception of Being to the modern Cartesian interpretation of Being is significantly underplayed in such analyses.

Departing from a more original standpoint, we shall be able to see that the separation between the modern view of thinking and the Greek view of thinking is not essential: both two views follow the idea that understands “being” in terms of the idea of “presence” and “thinking” as the act of “bringing forth” of “presence”: in the ancient Greek context, this “bringing forth” means “apprehension”²³ of what is showing itself. The term expresses itself with more modesty and passivity but is not completely passive.

²¹ Ibid., 81.

²² As we have mentioned in the introduction: a “totalizing discourse of history” centered on an inexplicable negativity.

²³ Ibid., 80: “Precisely because of this, we can recognize in this concept of presencing the transformation of the fundamental metaphysical position. It is one thing to preserve the always limited sphere of unconcealment through the apprehension of what presences (man as μέτρον). It is something different to proceed into the unlimited region of possible objectification through the calculating of the representable of which everyone is capable and which is binding on all.”

“Bringing forth” in the sense of apprehension can be interpreted as the act of “letting forth.” This “letting” seems to convey a dimension of passivity of letting something pass into one’s view. But this passivity is also conditioned by a fundamental level of activity: a resolute effort to remove what blocks the view of the presentation of the self-presencing being. It means to see through, with an attitude of decisiveness, the semblance and distortions. It also implies a decision of the eye towards clarity over unclarity. The accentuation of “letting” as an active move is also informed in the Heideggerian elucidation about the meaning of practicing “phenomenology” which we have reiterated in the first chapter: “Hence phenomenology means: ‘to *let* what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself. That is the formal meaning of the type of research that calls itself ‘phenomenology’.”²⁴ The verb “let”, sounding effortless and light, actually conveys the full weight of phenomenological endeavors practiced by phenomenologists.

“Letting forth,” despite its undertone of certain passivity, is essentially a manner of the *acting out* the “bringing forth” – bringing forth something in accordance with its own principle of wanting to stand forth. It resembles the endeavor of cultivating a plant. The plant harbors an inherent tendency to grow and blossom by itself, and the planter only facilitates this preexisting tendency by removing the obstacles that impend its growth.

In comparison, the modern view of thinking understood as “representation,” is another more forcible form of “bringing forth” – a type of “forcing forth.” It can be seen

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010),32.

as “bringing forth something over against oneself from out of one’s ability to represent, disregarding whether the thing itself wants to be forth or not.” This forceful “bringing forth” gives command to beings to order them to stand over themselves so that he affirms his self-certainty. In this endeavor, a hierarchy between human and other beings comes into presence: humanity, the subject who challenges and commands things to stand forth becomes the master while the natural beings that are ordered to stand forth becomes the servant.

Despite different attitudes, however, in the ancient time and in the modern time, towards the beings that are brought forth, the fundamental understanding of being in terms of the idea of “presence” and human as the being who possesses the ability to bring forth (produce) presences, either in a modest, respectful way or in a self-centered, violent way stays largely unchanged. Understood in this sense, the essential implication of both Greek ontology and modern subjectivism culminates in the same principle that centers around the specificity of human’s power of bringing forth presences. This is why, different from Heidegger’s reasoning in the religious direction, we rather assert that the shift from the self-presencing beings themselves to the self-certainty of humans is intrinsic and inevitable. Indeed, for the ancient Greeks, indeed, the relation between humans and Being is characterized by apprehension. But to apprehend in the fullest sense already entails the active removal of what blocks one’s view and the insistence on clarity instead of unclarity which are signs of human’s agency. In the Greek context, “knowing” and “acting” are by no means separate. It also requires a will of the eye toward the state of unconcealment instead of concealment to fully bring forth the presence of what is to be apprehended. This element of “will” already marks the prelude of the age of modern

subjectivity (and also, the aforementioned will to power as knowledge). Following Heidegger's sorting of the history of metaphysics, this element of subjective will is already present in the very dawn of metaphysical thought: in Parmenides's teachings, where it is expressed through the traveler's decisiveness to *decide* between the path of truth and the path of doxa. Also, in Plato's cave allegory, it is illustrated by the notion of παιδεία, requiring one's continuous effort to *orient toward* the illuminating source so that he ensures the clarity of his view. Even Heidegger himself reiterates this intrinsic inclination to underscore human agency in the act of apprehension within Plato's doctrine during his lecture on Plato's cave allegory, stating: "The inquiry into what is unhidden shifts in the direction of the appearing of the visible form, and consequently *toward the act of seeing* that is ordered to this visible form, and toward what is correct and toward the correctness of seeing."²⁵ Following this train of thinking, it logically follows that confirming the validity of the act of seeing, which enables the unveiling of presence, is a critical prerequisite for effective apprehension, which means the correct correspondence of seeing and the self-showing of presence. If one is "seeing" is misdirected or inherently unreliable in the first place, then even if the presence unveiled within this sight lacks truth. Thus, the validation of the act of seeing from the human side becomes an inevitable need. This is how the Cartesian position becomes pertinent within the intrinsic development of history where the meaning of being is understood as "presence." Descartes aims to establish the validity of human apprehending abilities—the capacity to think. He accomplishes this by fully releasing the inherent logic of this faculty: the

²⁵ Martin Heidegger, William McNeill, *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 177.

capability to disclose presences must inherently possess the ability to disclose its presence. The establishment of the self-certainty of thinking raises human thinking into the position where everything is measured. By laying down this essential principle, Descartes not only secures the trustworthiness of human thought but also positions humans as the subject, thereby marking a significant shift towards the epoch of modernity. Yet, this change does not come out of nowhere. Following the observation on the development of the history of being, this transition is already predetermined. The root that produces the self-assertiveness of modern subjectivity is by no means purely modern, but rather something already prepared in the beginning.

3.2 Folk Song, Technology, and Language

Expanding on the previous theory, which identifies the foundation of modern self-assertive subjectivity as well as the ancient Greek's ideas on thinking and being with the same understanding of "being" as "presence," and the human ability to "bring forth presences," we might reevaluate the perspectives of modern soldiers and premodern peasants on the nature of folk songs behind which stands the question of Logos. To collect folk songs is to bring forth the presence of the songs over against oneself so that they stand as objects; to express oneself through singing is another form of bringing forth presence in the sense that one's emotion and feelings are brought to be present in the songs. In both instances, the act of "bringing forth presences" lies at the center of the phenomenon of folk songs.

As we have stated, the act of bringing forth presence has long been connected with "thinking," either in the original Greek sense of "apprehension" or the modern sense of "representation." However, this association renders the question concerning the root of

modernity and its separation from the traditionalism more obscure. To fully understand the implication of the attitudes towards the folk song exemplified by the soldier and the peasants, we must raise a further question about the essence of the act of “bring-forth presence”: in what sense does humanity relate to the capacity of “bringing forth presence” and where does this possibility originate? To further elucidate what is inherent in the essence of “bringing forth presence”, and also to explain the origin of human’s ability to practice this act, the introduction of concepts from a more primordial field is necessary.

We may look for them in Heidegger’s latter²⁶ lecture on the question concerning technology, where he understands the concept that denotes the act of “bringing forth presence” as “ποίησις (poiesis)”: “Every occasion for whatever passes over and goes forward into presencing from that which is not presencing is poiesis, is bringing-forth [Her-vor-bringen] .”²⁷

Our conventional thinking tends to limit “poiesis” to human sphere, but the word “whatever” from Heidegger’s statement implies that the phenomenon of “poiesis” is not limited to the sphere of human, but also, the Nature, as understood in Greek notion “φύσις”: “φύσις also, the arising of something from out of itself, is a bringing-forth, φύσις.”²⁸ Even without the participation of human power, natural things in themselves contain the inner tendency to bring themselves forth, in the sense of self-movement, self-

²⁶ It is important to note that the discussion in this chapter is working within the purview of the late Heidegger where he essentially embarks on the way to language. The same concepts such as poetry, Logos, and techne are introduced again, but with different emphasizes and nuanced connotations. On the other hand, they also share essential links with the earlier exposition. What is important is not the definition of those concepts themselves, but rather the questions and the path of thinking that they points towards.

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 10.

²⁸ Ibid.

growing, self-blossoming, etc. If the breadth of “ποίησις (poiesis)” includes “φύσις (phusis)” it means that the root of the possibility of “ποίησις (poiesis)” is not something peculiar to humanity themselves, but rather a universal force²⁹ of moving and arousing.

Emerging from the concept of “ποίησις (poiesis),” is the concept of “τέχνη (techne),” which denotes: “not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also for the arts of the mind and fine arts. Τέχνη (techne) belongs to bringing -forth, to ποίησις; it is something poetic.”³⁰ Furthermore, “Τέχνη (techne)” extends its meaning towards “revealing”: “It reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another.”³¹ The explications about the meaning of “Τέχνη (techne)” exposes the following: “τεχνίτης” not just passively wait for something to come forth, but also, he enables what has not yet come forth to be forth. With “Τέχνη (techne)”, he actively facilitates the coming forth of the presence of something. Within the ancient purview, this act of facilitation takes place in a gentle, modest, and respectful way, and it aims not at the self-increase of the facilitator but rather the natural accomplishment of what is facilitated.

From the source of “τέχνη,” further emerges the modern technology, whose essence rests on “challenging forth.”³² This implies the one who takes hold of modern technology command other beings to be present for him, issuing his order of presencing from a hierarchically superior position. He now becomes the one who places orders upon natural things, in disregard of their natural inclinations. This is why Heidegger considers

²⁹ As will be shown, it is the Logos.

³⁰ Ibid., 13.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 14.

the practice of modern technology also as a form of “expediting” – unlike the cultivator of a plant who fully respects the inner process of the plant’s growth and shares the benefits from the accomplishment of self-growth of that plant, the modern subject, who relates the other beings to his central position through modern technology forces them to come forth use regardless of their inner rules. Thus, modern technology represents a self-assertive manner of bringing forth presences by human, closely tied to the standpoint of modern humans as self-assertive subjects.

However, in the former chapter, we have already mentioned the essential similarity lying at the core of the modern mode of challenging forth, and the ancient mode of “letting forth” has no difference in the most essential sense. Even in the beginning, “τέχνη” (techne) and “ποίησις” (poiesis) already involve an active form of operation, and if humans are able to facilitate the presence of something other than themselves, he is already situated in a more active and more superior position because everything else, according to the principle of φύσις (arising of something from out of itself), is only able to bring forth the presence of themselves, yet without the ability to intervene the growth of others. They are unable to influence the presence of others, either by facilitating (ancient techne) or expediting (modern technology). In this view, a hierarchical structure is thus entailed in the original concept of “τέχνη.” The capacity of “τέχνη” implies that humans are always already *installed* into a more or less superior position compared to all the other beings. The practice of modern technology, “challenging forth”, is only the full realization of a structure of ranking already inherent in the “τέχνη.”

But where does operation of ranking spring from? This line of thought ultimately brings us to the concept of “Ge-stell” – enframing, the mechanism which is designated by Heidegger to be the essence of modern technology: “En-framing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological.”³³ A conventional way of reading might see “Enframing” as a peculiar character of modern technology, manifesting a sharp contrast to the ancient notion of “τέχνη (techne)”, in that the “Enframing” implies forceful, violent disposal over things by the subject disregarding their nature while the “τέχνη(techne)” seems to imply a more friendly, respectful manner of dealing with other beings. But a closer look at Heidegger’s illustration discloses that “Enframing” is a mechanism that is *even more primordial* than both the “ποίησις (poiesis)” and “τέχνη (techne),” which were previously considered to be the origin of modern technology. This idea is expressed with the following sentences:

Enframing is the gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon which sets upon man and puts him in position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. As the one who is challenged forth in this way, man stands within the essential realm of Enframing. He can never take up a relationship to it only subsequently.³⁴

According to the explication given above, “Enframing” is the original force of “challenging forth” that orders humanity itself into its peculiar position where he can bring forth the presence of other beings, either in the mode of “τέχνη (techne)” or

³³ Ibid., 20.

³⁴ Ibid., 24.

“technology.” It is the hidden, higher mechanism that sends human onto the inevitable path of becoming an ancient apprehender and facilitator and later a “modern subject” throughout the development of history, a process in which human does not decide for himself. For this reason, “Enframing” is considered together with the concept of “destiny,” which Heidegger understands as “sending that gathers,”³⁵ in the sense that humans are gathered by Enframing onto their destined path of becoming modern technological subjects.

Moreover, even “ποίησις” (poiesis) itself follows one and the same principle with “Enframing”:

“Enframing, as a challenging-forth into ordering, sends into a way of revealing. Enframing is an ordaining of destining, as is every way of revealing. Bringing-forth, ‘ποίησις,’ is also a destining in this sense. But these ways are not kinds that, arrayed beside one another, fall under the concept of revealing. *Revealing is that destining which, ever suddenly and inexplicably to all thinking, apportions itself into the revealing that brings forth and that also challenges, and which allots itself to man.*”³⁶

According to the former formulation, “ποίησις” understood as the “bringing-forth presence” is not something imposed upon things but rather a tendency inherent to things themselves. This is why “ποίησις” shares an essential connection with the concept of “φύσις,” (phusis) which means bringing forth one’s presence from itself, in other words, the status of self-revealing. Yet, the very decision to reveal themselves instead of not revealing, the very force that pushes beings into their destined path of growing and

³⁵ Ibid, 29: “Enframing is a way of revealing having the character of destining, namely, the way that challenges forth.”

³⁶ Ibid., 24-25.

blossoming, is not occasioned by the natural beings themselves, but rather it is a decision always already made for them by another preexisting mechanism. Heidegger has made it very clear that “Enframing” stands for the power of “sending” which “sends into a way of revealing”³⁷. This naturally includes the self-revealing of beings within φύσις. The destining power referred by “Enframing” not only orders upon human but also orders upon all the other beings from Nature. It embodies as a pure power of ordering that works upon both human and Nature.

Accordingly, the very possibility of “challenging forth” other beings by the modern human subject does not originate from humanity themselves, nor it is a change that happens accidentally. The “beings” can be demanded, ordered, or be called up to come forth because they are always already ordered by the original force of “Enframing” that sends them into the way of “φύσις” – the distinct life process. The more they proceed upon the path of self-revealing, the more they, at the same time, show a response to this original ordering that moves them into emergence and growth. The “challenging forth” practiced by modern humanity is thus essentially a further realization in service for the pre-existing mechanism of “Enframing” in a more intense and explicit sense. Ostensibly, it is humanity that carries out the act of “Enframing” in modern ages, but in truth, it is still the original “Enframing” that *sets* humanity *upon* the path from which they develop the modern subjectivity, so that they develop the ability challenge forth the other beings in the most eminent way, which forms the implicit response to the order of “Enframing.” The more humanity enjoys freedom as a subject through the power of

³⁷ Ibid., 25.

technology, therefore, the more it is subjected to the power of “Enframing,” unconsciously serving its self-increase. Eventually, the power of “Enframing” would simply overwhelm the mere existence of humans, and all of a sudden, they would discover themselves as fundamentally in the position of the servant who is ordered instead of the actual master who enacts ordering. It is at this point that the “revealing” power enjoyed by human turns out to be turns out to be a source of blockage and obscurity: “Enframing, in a way characteristic of a destining, blocks poiesis.”³⁸ The original experience of “poiesis” as “bringing forth” operates within the purview of the self-emerging tendency of the whole Nature, from which the central power³⁹ that “enframes” and “moves” is still implicitly sensible (although unexpressible). However, when the “Enframing” increasingly situates human into the path as self-assertive subject, this source becomes increasingly concealed. The initial purview offered by “poiesis” becomes lost. Thus, the danger posed by technology, whose root is Enframing, can never be overcome by modern human subjectivity as himself, as a modern subject, is an integral reason for the technological danger.

Where can we find the possibility of being saved from this danger? Heidegger’s answer is ambivalent. He first quotes Hölderlin’s line “but where danger grows the saving power also”⁴⁰ to indicate that saving must be sought within the same realm where Enframing springs out. He then says the possibility of being saved lies in poetry, understood strictly in the sense of *ποίησις*.⁴¹ He finally posits a link between this

³⁸ Ibid, 30

³⁹ As will be indicated: Logos or Dao. The poiesis is close to Logos.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁴¹ Ibid.

possibility to the question of “dwelling” by quoting Holderlin’s line “Poetically man dwells on earth.”⁴² He also mentions the concept of “dwelling” in the subsequent lecture titled “turning” by saying: “Unless man first establishes himself beforehand in the space proper to his essence and there takes up his dwelling, he will not be capable of anything essential within the destining now holding sway.”⁴³ How can these seemingly unrelated concepts come together to form a possible answer that may overturn the danger posed by the inner power of technology? What would be the original realm that engenders both the danger of “Enframing” and the hope of being saved?

The key word, from my interpretation, that gathers all the aforementioned statements, is language (understood in the sense of Logos and Dao): language is the field where the mechanism of “Enframing” first originates: “(en-)Framing (Gestell), as the nature of modern technology, derives from the Greek way of experiencing letting-lie-forth, *logos*, from the Greek poiesis and thesis.”⁴⁴ “Poesis” – whose other meaning is “poetry” - is also the art of language. Finally, the original space where humans dwell is also: language. The kernel of modern technology, “Enframing”, originates from the sphere of language, and to overcome the destiny imposed by “Enframing”, for Heidegger, one must reposition himself towards his relation with language (but not a conventional sense of language). Our discourse thus converges on the need to elucidate the relation between language and the essence of modern technology, “Enframing.” The critical

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 39-40.

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 82.

inquiry then unfolds: How should one interpret the interconnectivity between “Enframing” and “Logos”?

3.3 Language, Building, and Enframing

Agamben’s explanation of Heidegger’s notion of “Enframing” offers valuable insight about the relation “Enframing” and “language”. In the essay, “What is an Apparatus⁴⁵,” Agamben traces the root of the notion of “Enframing,” which is also expressed by the Foucauldian term “dispositive” (apparatus), to the Greek term “οικονομίᾱ” and “οἶκος,” which means “house management” and “house”:

In Greek, οἶκος signifies the administration of the οἶκος (the home) and, more generally, management..... When Heidegger, in *Die Technik und die Kehre* (The Question Concerning Technology), writes that Ge-stell means in ordinary usage an apparatus (Gerät), but that he intends by this term ‘the gathering together of the (in)stallation [Stellen] that (in)stalls man, this is to say, challenges him to expose the real in the mode of ordering [Bestellen],’ the proximity of this term to the theological dispositio, as well as to Foucault’s apparatuses, is evident. What is common to all these terms is that they refer back to this οἶκος, that is, to a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient—in a way that purports to be useful—the behaviors, gestures, and thoughts of human beings.⁴⁶

Agamben’s observation directs us towards an essential linkage between Heideggerian thoughts on technology and Aristotelian thinking on house management. This connection is latent within Heidegger’s lecture on “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.”⁴⁷ Although, on the surface, the lecture appears to focus solely on the discussion of houses, spaces, and

⁴⁵ It is important to note that the expression of “apparatus” is not exclusive to Agamben and Foucault, but also it appears in Heidegger’s own explanation about the meaning of “Gestell”: “According to ordinary usage, the word Gestell [frame] means some kind of apparatus (Gerät), e.g., a bookrack. Gestell is also the name for a skeleton.”

⁴⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 12.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 143.

human habitation, it subtly also concerns another two themes: language and technology. The act of “building” was located, by the very end of the lecture, within the realm of “τέχνη (techne)”: “The Greeks conceive of ‘techne’ producing, in terms of letting appear. Techne thus conceived has been concealed in the tectonics of architecture since ancient times. Of late it still remains concealed, and more resolutely, in the technology of power machinery.”⁴⁸ As previously discussed, the concept of “techne” fundamentally expresses “bringing forth presence” originating from “poiesis.” In this context, “techne” enables the architectural presence. This explains why the practice of building, the “tectonics of architecture” is considered as a form of “techne.”

Considering the architecture brought forth by the act of building, Heidegger subsequently says the following: “The nature of the building is letting dwell. Building accomplishes its nature in the raising of locations by the joining of their spaces.”⁴⁹ The statement conveys the idea that the nature of building is not inert and static, but rather it functions actively. The building’s function of “letting dwell,” “raising of locations,” and “joining of their spaces,” delineates the very essence of the building (architecture) as an “apparatus” (Gerät), operating to install, disposes and governs a home-like space, like the apparatus of “bookrack”⁵⁰ that governs the space of books. By raising a joining center called “location,” the building, instead, settles, let dwells, and frames what Heidegger calls the “fourfold”: the four domains of sky, earth, man, and god: “Cultivating and

⁴⁸ Ibid., 157.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ The Question Concerning Technology, 20: “According to ordinary usage, the word Gestell [frame] means some kind of apparatus, e.g., a bookrack. Gestell is also the name for a skeleton.”

construction are building in the narrower sense. Dwelling, insofar as it keeps or secures the fourfold in things, is, as this keeping, a building.”⁵¹

Drawing a link with Agamben’s explication of “οικονομῖα” as household management whose modern meaning is: economics, the essential function of the building is revealed more lucidly to be the “economical” apparatus (Gerät) which governs the spatial economy of the “fourfold.” With economy, we do not intend to mean a modern form of market economy where commodities are exchanged and consumed through the flow of money, but instead, a primal reciprocal relationality which situates the fourfold. Each of the fourfold benefit the other by giving what it produces and by receiving what is produced by the other. This original “economic” dynamic called “fourfold” can be manifestly found within Heidegger’s lecture: “The Thing” with the example of a man-made “jug” which can take in and pour out the wine:

In the gift of the outpouring that is drink, mortals stay in their own way. In the gift of the outpouring that is a libation, the divinities stay in their own way, they who receive back the gift of giving as the gift of the donation. In the gift of the outpouring, mortals, and divinities each dwell in their different ways. Earth and sky dwell in the gift of the outpouring. In the gift of the outpouring earth and sky, divinities and mortals dwell together all at once. These four, at one because of what they themselves are, belong together. Preceding everything that is present, they are enfolded into a single fourfold.⁵²

The fourfold interact with each other in a primal “economic” relation characterized by “giving” “receiving” and “outpouring.” Within this framework, the jug appears to rather be the pivotal apparatus that installs and upholds this fourfold relationality. Its nature as a

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 149

⁵² *Ibid.*, 171.

“gathering-sending” apparatus closely mirrors the “oikonomical” function of a building. In Heidegger’s philosophy, they are all examples of governing, ordering “apparatuses” or devices that are created by “*techne*.” They function to gather the fourfold into oneness while at the same time sending them into their distinct domain, so that “economic” exchanges (in Heidegger’s words: mirror play⁵³) with each other can unfold. It performs as the market-like structure that regulates and installs the economic system – the “world.” The capacity of building to “dwell” the fourfold within the “economics” (“oikonomic”) fully aligns with one of the central meaning of “Enframing” (*Ge-stell*) in the sense of “gathering that sends forth,”: “Enframing is the gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon (install) which sets upon (install) man and puts him in position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve.”⁵⁴

In this sense, the essential relation between “τέχνη (*techne*)” and “building,” “dwelling” and “Enframing” is that through “*techne*” one can bring forth a regulating apparatus that enframes not just humans but also all other beings into a framework where they are sorted, preserved and disposed to interact with each other. In other words, they are let to dwell by the apparatus of building. This explanation clarifies a deeper relation between “τέχνη (*techne*),” “modern technology” and the history in which human arises as the subject: through “τέχνη (*techne*),” humans bring forth the regulating apparatus –

⁵³ Ibid, 177: “Each of the four mirrors in its own way the presence of the others. Each therewith reflects itself in its own way into its own, within the simpleness of the four. This mirroring does not portray a likeness. The mirroring, lightening each of the four, appropriates their own presenting into simple belonging to one another. Mirroring in this appropriating-lightening way, each of the four plays to each of the others. The appropriative mirroring sets each of the four free into its own, but it binds these free ones into the simplicity of their essential being toward one another.”

⁵⁴ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 20

modern technology - which governs the world they live in and also installs themselves into the position of a modern subject.

However, Heidegger states that the essence of “building” cannot be fully explicated by “*techne*” alone. Rather, he made the statement: “Only if we are capable of dwelling if, only then can we build.”⁵⁵ This sentence introduces much more complexity to relationship between dwelling and building. Initially, the nature of a building is considered to be “letting dwell.”⁵⁶ This “letting dwell” bears a closer relation to the context of household management, whose implication extends to economic regulations and technological dispositions. It implies the practice of situating something within a structure where it is able to receive and exchange gifts with other parties. We have also explained this aspect of “building”, in the sense of world-governing and world-regulating, through the expressions from the field of economics whose etymological root is not unrelated with the notion of “house” and “household.” Yet, in all these cases, the building, the apparatus erected by a human’s act of building, is considered to be the agency that enables “dwelling”, but not vice versa. Nonetheless, here, the statement made by Heidegger reverses this relation. He strangely claims that dwelling rather precedes building. Isn’t it the case that the argument exhibits a circular nature? Only if we build, can we let dwell all things including ourselves; only if we are capable of dwelling, can we build. It is unsure which one of the two comes first. The relation between dwelling and building thus becomes ambivalent again.

⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 157

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 46.

A similar circular motif is also evident within the explication about “Enframing”:
on the one hand, humans build modern technology to “frame” the totality of beings including themselves; on the other hand, human is always already framed (ordered and demanded) by the very origin of the power of Enframing to enframe the world. As the act of “building” is essentially an example of “*techne*,” and as is reminded by Agamben, the “enframing” has its root in “household management” which means “letting dwell” the intricate relation between “dwelling” and “building” alongside the connection between “enframing” and “*techne*,” may actually represent two facets of the same. The circular question of technology is closely linked to the circular question of housing. Solving one puzzle, perhaps, may lead to the illumination of the other.

Is there a shared realm where the “building-building-dwelling” and “*techne*-technology-enframing” spring forth simultaneously? Indeed. This realm is the sphere of language understood in the sense of Logos and Dao. The missing piece to decipher the puzzle lies in Heidegger’s proposition “Language is the house of Being. In its home human beings dwell.”⁵⁷ According to our former understanding, “house” denotes the apparatus that installs, governs, and regulates a relationality (a dynamic, or an “economy.”) It functions by “Enframing” and it is itself a certain type of operative “framework” constituted by “frames.” The statement of “house of Being” in this context thus means that language is the most original apparatus through which Being becomes active, exerting its influence through the apparatus of language. On the other hand, language also constitutes the primal home where man dwells. The house of language is

⁵⁷ Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 239.

not constructed by human hands, but it is the preexisting realm conditioning the staying of humanity in its world. The capacity to dwell within language precedes all the other forms of activities that are peculiar to humanity, even including “building” understanding in the sense of “techne.” This logic explains why Heidegger says “Only if we are capable of dwelling if, only then can we build”: human beings are first “let dwell” by the house (apparatus) of language, positioned into a certain relation with “Being” -the source of presencing and only then do they unfold their own activities of “bring forth presences” in the sense of “techne.”

But what is the essential meaning of “language” mentioned here and why from the dwelling in language derives the possibility of “techne”? Language, strictly understood in the Greek sense of Logos, is defined by its fundamental ability to bring forth the presence of other beings. It functions by “gathering” the presence of something into nearness. It also functions by “setting forth” through which we put forwards our thesis and proposition. The human “techne” is developed from their original experience of Logos. It is through the experience of calling names, putting together words, and building sentences that we learn to gathering materials, arranging forms and erecting edifices. All sorts activities of “techne” originates from the linguistical acts that we perform within the sphere of language. This connection is already suggested in the discussion of the meaning of Logos in a much earlier text “Introduction to Metaphysics”:

Logos means the word, discourse, and legein means to discourse, to talk. Dialogue is reciprocal discourse, mono-logue is solitary discourse. But logos does not originally mean discourse, saying. What the word means has no immediate relation to language. Lego, legin, Latin legere, is the same word as our lessen, gleaning, collecting wood, harvesting grasps, making a selection; ‘reading a

book' is just a variant of "gathering" in the authentic sense. This means laying one thing next to another, bringing them together as one – in short, gathering; but at the same time, the one is contrasted with the other.⁵⁸

The examples of "gleaning, collecting wood, harvesting grapes, making a selection" seems not eminently linked to "language" understood in its conventional sense. They rather represent non-verbal activities of "techne" understood in the conventional sense. Techne conveys the act through which the presence of something (fruit, wood, crops) is brought forth. But as Heidegger positions the fundamental meaning of Logos in the word "legein" which at its core involves the act of "gathering" forth, and as all thus these phenomena of "techne" centers around the process of "gathering," they thus are all considered to be rooted upon "logos" itself by Heidegger.

This way of thinking opens up a fundamentally new horizon of understanding the role of language plays in our everyday life. The function of "gathering and dispatching" is pervasive in every aspect of our experience with language, even in its most elementary form. Consider an infant who, though unable to bring forth the presence of anything else through physical action, can invoke the presence of their parents by crying. The cry of the infant instantaneously draws the parents towards themselves, at the same time installing them into a relationality where they are positioned as caregivers, a role they might not recognize until they unconsciously hear the cry. The cry inherently accomplishes the task of "techne": its occurrence, even in the most simplistic linguistical form, suddenly bring forth a relational structure (apparatus) that gathers all linguistical parties into itself and it

⁵⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 131.

start to regulate their relations, as well as to assign them with distinct positions. A more formal example about this “*techne*” aspect of language can be found discussed in Althusser’s “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” where the root of ideological “apparatuses” is explained in the sense of “interpellation”⁵⁹ whose domain of origination is evidently: Logos. Ideology must function under the rule of Logos. That is, it functioning must involve the participation of linguistic elements and most importantly its essential logic must cohere with the essential function of logos itself – gathering and sending over.

Moreover, even the indicative dimension of language, its function of revealing and showing, is also a form of “gathering” which could be exemplified by the act of “naming.”⁶⁰ The act of “naming,” does not, in the first place, create a copy or substitute of something, but rather it first and foremost gathers the named towards the sphere of language that we dwell. It subsequently allows a closer relationality with the thing being named, starting from which a linguistical⁶¹ (*sprachlich*) interaction can unfold. In this sense, disregarding how the thing is being named, this very act of “naming” is already producing a certain *closeness*, as if someone gathers material and food from outside, sorting and preserving them within the house (which however he does not own). The question of whether the “name” is proper or improper is still irrelevant here. What is

⁵⁹ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 171.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 196: “What is this naming? Does it merely deck out the imaginable familiar objects and events—snow, bell, window, falling, ringing—with words of a language? No. This naming does not hand out tides, it does not apply terms, but it calls into the word. The naming calls. Calling brings closer what it calls. However this bringing closer does not fetch what is called only in order to *set it down* in closest proximity to what is present, to find a place for it there.”

⁶¹ The meaning of “*sprachlich*” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 205: “The word “linguistic” as it is here used means: having taken place out of the speaking of language.”

accomplished by “naming” in prior is the facilitation of *closeness*, by calling for the thing’s participation into one’s surrounding world. In response, the thing shows up with a heightened level of presence. Only after something is gathered close and asked to show itself in this way could it be thematically laid down before oneself to be measured and compared. It is from here the question of “representing (vorstellen)” and the question about semblance arise. Gadamer’s hermeneutic theory has made insightful elucidation of this aspect of language, by expounding its gathering and relation-forming function. He made the observation that in the original experience of language by ancient Greek people, the validity of a name is not measured by whether it accurately reflects the nature of what it refers to (in other words by the degree of accordance), but rather whether it facilitates “call and response” between man and things: “In Greek the expression for ‘word,’ *onoma*, also means ‘name,’ and especially ‘proper name’—i.e., the name by which something is called. But a name is what it is because it is what someone is called and what he answers to. It belongs to its bearer. *The rightness of the name is confirmed by the fact that someone answers it.*”⁶²

Following this understanding, we may actually find out that the possibility of *closeness* enabled by Logos’s primal function of “gathering” is not limited to verbal phenomena. Instead, it permeates all sorts of activities that involve “gathering” and “relation forming.” Things in our most familiar surrounding world are also implicitly “named” in relation to one another and distinguished through silent contrast. We don’t have to, for example, deliberately consider the positions of different letters on our

⁶² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 406.

keyboard in order to type them. Rather, the keys on the keyboard are gathered, as if they are named, into a familiar sphere of perception, within which they are unwittingly assigned with distinct positions. When we are indeed of using them, they are “summoned” by our hands to appear under the finger ready to type. The movement of our hands, in this respect, is not first and primarily an act of reaching out towards an object, but a gathering, a silent calling for the key to show up. And the present appearance of the thing is its response to the call, which awaits further interaction. We may also imagine a pre-modern handworker who fulfills his work by gathering the different materials towards his hand and the envisioned forms towards his mind. He then lays them down before him one next to each other and find means to assemble them. His process of working is like engaging in a silent conversation with the materials through both touch and sight. The work he builds is like the sentence that he created in language, constituted by the appearance of things within the sphere of gathering. This very simplistic act of “techne” thus also demonstrates Logos (the mechanism of gathering) operating on a non-verbal level. By connecting Logos and human labor, we come to a new understanding about the essence of productive (Herstellen) activities, which is inseparable with the arrangement of materials, the use of tools, the bringing forth of product (incorporated with the term “techne”). We are enabled to see the omnipresent “communicative” nature of human acts. Even the speechless acts involve the working of Logos, which enables an internal and invisible dialogue with the beings in our surrounding worlds.

Logos, in this light, is not merely a precursor but the most essential foundation for “techne” – the acts that involves bringing forth presences. Itself, as the “home” in which we dwell, is the most original apparatus that can ensure the very possibility of having

relationalities and interactions of all kinds at all. By dwelling within language, human attains the ability to produce, gather and to arrange for their own lives and spheres of existence. At this point, the statement: “Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build” translates to: only if we are capable of dwelling within language (logos) then can we be capable of the “techne” of building. And our ability of “techne” further leads to the erection of modern technology and the situations of modernity which are also accomplished by humans. This explains why Heidegger states: “Framing (enframing), as the nature of modern technology, derives from the Greek way of experiencing letting-lie-forth, *logos*, from the Greek poiesis and thesis.”⁶³. Human is able to “Enframe” the world with the technological devices because everything, including themselves, they dwell within the original apparatus of Logos where they learn to “Enframe.” Logos also disposes of human’s tendency of applying “techne” – his act of using words, putting forth statements, and interpellating others. Dwelling within language, which also means being installed with language, human calls forth the totality of being into presence and lying before himself. In this process, he is transformed into the position of a modern “subject,” and consciously arranges the whole world by releasing the full potentiality of Enframing within technology originated from Logos.

In this connection, Heidegger’s words about the possibility of saving human from the danger of modern technology require a different hearing: “Unless man first establishes himself beforehand in the space proper to his essence and there takes up his dwelling, he will not be capable of anything essential within the destining now holding

⁶³ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 148.

sway.”⁶⁴ Within the context of our explication, the word “dwelling,” now, has a very specific connotation to the sphere of language. Language (logos) is considered as the primal housing apparatus that shelters, “Enframes”, and defines humanity. The “proper space” in which humanity has established his Being, therefore, must refer particularly to the sphere of Logos, and the requirement of “taking up his dwelling there” means that *human have to consciously repositioning themselves within the house of language and adjust their modes of relationality with language.* Language cannot be simply taken as a possession or invention of humanity, over which they possess mastery. Instead, Language seems to harbor a higher power of enframing humanity and to work in and by itself.

However, how can such a reorientation be realized? Heidegger offers another clue through Hölderlin’s phrase: “poetically man dwells on this earth.”⁶⁵ This line points towards “poetry” as a potential force of salvation. In the lecture titled “...poetically man dwells...,” Heidegger provides another definition to the term “poetry”, other than the meaning of “making” coming from the Greek root “poesis.” He rather refers to Hölderlin’s understanding about what is poetry: “Poetry is this measure-taking— its taking, indeed, for the dwelling of man.”⁶⁶ He then says this “measure taking” is measuring against the “godhead.”⁶⁷ This explanation is almost indecipherable unless we take into account another statement given by Heidegger about the Heraclitus fragment on “Logos”: “Mortal, whose essence remains appropriated in ὁμολογέιν (homologein) are fateful when they measure the Λογος (Logos) as the *Ev Παντα* (panta) and submit

⁶⁴ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 39.

⁶⁵ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 20.

⁶⁶ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 221.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 223.

themselves to its measurement.”⁶⁸ The three Greek terms disclose different aspects concerning humanity’s relation to Logos: the first term “ὁμολογέιν” reveals that there is a certain “co-speaking” between human and Λογος (Logos) in the sense that Logos are in need of human’s listening of its voice and human learns to harness the power of “gathering” originated from Logos itself. On the other hand, however, humanity only becomes “fateful,” as is mentioned by Heraclitus by “measuring” Λογος (Logos). This means that humanity needs to turn towards, not the presences of objects gathered by their capability of language, but rather, to the edifice of language itself -the enframing center that gathers everything into a universal structure of linguisticality. If the important, fateful act of “measure” is targeted at Logos, then the Hölderlin’s godhead against which the poet has to mete out, in the theoretical context of Heidegger, might also refer to the Logos. This connection between Logos and human’s measuring is further suggested in the following illustration about Hölderlin’s “poetically man dwells.....”: “Authentic building occurs so far as there are poets, such poets as take the *measure for architecture, the structure of dwelling*.”⁶⁹ The “structure of dwelling” clearly refers to the linguistical structure that houses humans, as language is the “house of Being.” Humans, with their linguistic capacity heightened by the example of “poets”, gauges the structure of Logos itself. The measurement happens from within the place of Logos where they have already been staying. As Logos has the function of “Enframing”, this experience of gauging enables human to reflect upon the enframing frameworks they are already installed

⁶⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 75.

⁶⁹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 225.

within, and the develop the ability to establish other apparatus⁷⁰ with a clearer understanding.

The archetypal example of this process of “gauging” and “establishing” appears in the realm of poetry. What defines a poet is his ability to hearken to the frameworks of sounds, rhythm and the ontological configuration of sentences sounding in the depth of Logos. This hearing of the structure of language guides the poets to organize his own poetic expressions. Like an architect, he is always sensitive to learn the constitution of the original edifice of language - its frames, its restrictions and its possibility - from which he develops the ability to build his own house – his poetry. This very possibility of gauging the Logos arises from the original dialogical opening of Logos to the poets. This opening up of Logos to humanity is the speaking of language itself towards humans. In this sense both, their subsequent measuring and creation is a form of corresponding. The meta-linguistical interaction between man and Logos is expressed by the term “ὁμολογέιν”, which means “speaking” (λογέιν [logein]) and “together” (ὅμο [homo]). By showing and expressing its “frames”, Language calls the poets; by measuring and building, the poet responds to the call of language. This is why the poet is by no means a lonesome expressor of himself, but primarily a responder and a co-speaker with language (logos). The silent hearing and the poetic response proffered by poet is thus a response back towards the speaking of language which elicits further response from the side of language itself. Just as the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan once says: “*And all speech calls for a*

⁷⁰ In this light, the discussion of art work by Heidegger is also developed by demonstrating its device-like nature: in the sense that the art work *sets the truth to work*. This function of “setting to work” carries an implication of an operative device.

reply. I shall show that there is no speech without a reply, *even if it is met only with silence*, provided that it has an auditor: this is the heart of its function in analysis.”⁷¹ The response by the poet should be seen as a calling for reply. And the language replies by offering words, with revealing and disclosing function, answering to the summon of the poet. This process of hearing, responding and calling captures the essential dynamic, with a dialogical nature, between poet and language in poetic creation, which is implicitly suggested by the following words of Heidegger: “The poet *calls*, in the sights of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed as that which conceals itself.”⁷²

But if all speech calls for a reply and all reply is called up by a speech, then this experience of “speaking together” with language itself is not limited to the practice of poets. It essentially underlies all human verbal or nonverbal language-based endeavors, ranging from the infant crying to the silent arrangement of one’s perception of his surrounding world. All those aspect of activities points towards, not just a linguistical relation between human and other beings around him, but essentially a reciprocity between man and language itself, expressed by the linguistical togetherness - the “ὁμολογέω” - with Logos. In this case, there is never a monologue for human in the fullest sense, because all form of speaking is already a response to Logos. One is able to hear and calls towards Logos, as his reply to the willingness by Logos to form a dialogue with him which elicits further response. Human speaks because he is already being spoken to by language. His speaking is always the response to Logos itself, which

⁷¹ Jacques-Marie Emile Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection* (Routledge, 2001), 30.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 223.

reaches out to him for a silent, long-going conversation that pervades his whole existence and defines who he is. Perhaps, the experience of this irreducible level of co-speaking constitutes an ontological level of universality which philosophers seeks to figure out. This is why the saying of Heraclius highlights the necessity of our listening to language itself: “Do not listen to me, the mortal speaker, *but be in hearkening to the Logos*; first belong to this and then you hear properly, such hearing is when a letting-lie-together-before occurs by which the gathering letting lie.”⁷³

To sum up, Language speaks to human and whenever a human speaks, he is not just expressing himself or reproducing the presence of other beings, but first and foremost, he is in the dialogue with language itself and is responding to the soundless call coming from language, the primal caller that bids his reply. To learn the truth about ourselves and language, therefore, one need to recognize the Logo’s own willingness for a dialogue and positions oneself first and foremost as an interlocuter with Logos. Just as being expressed by Heidegger “What is important is learning to live in the speaking of language.”⁷⁴

We are, of course, always already living in the speaking of language. But the need raised by Heidegger for us to position ourselves “properly” towards language indicates a presupposition that our current position is “improper.” We are not able to hear the speaking of language because we are not accustomed to truly recognizing and affirming the otherness of an interlocutor participating in the same dialogue with us. In Heraclitus words, we are not used to “hearkening to” the speaking of logos. To hearken to

⁷³ Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, 75.

⁷⁴ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 207.

something, one must first and foremost *hold back* his urge of self-expression to allow a moment of silence of his own voice. The practice of “hearkening” implies an acceptance and a recognition of the “dialogical distance” – a sphere of “nothingness” between oneself and the co-speaking other. Only when the distance is admitted and allowed can the dialogue unfold. As Logos is in a constant “co-speaking” with human, it must have already distanced itself from human to make this dialogical opening exist – its withdrawn is precisely a sign of its willingness to dialogue. That is to say, the creation of this dialogical gap forms the most essential part of Logos’s activity, and, thus, the kernel of this act of “measuring” Logos must be concentrated at this sphere of “nothing,” with a gesture of “hearkening.”

However, this gesture of “hearkening” does not happen very often in our everyday conversation. What rather occurs is that one hastily speaks over the other to affirm oneself into the other without allowing a true dialogical gap to occur. He is unable to hear the other’s speaking because of his eagerness for self-affirmation. The similar issue pervades between human’s dialogue with Logos itself: it is very often that Logos is seen as merely a human possession and its function of “gathering”, too, is considered as our innate capacity that we take for granted. Losing touch with the fundamental neighboring⁷⁵ nature, founded on an essential dialogical gap established by Logos itself which characterizes its most essential structure, of our relation to with Logos, the “co” character of humans’ speaking is forgotten, which leads to an adherence to self-centered monologue, which gives rise to the afore-mentioned situation of modern subjectivity

⁷⁵ A closeness with distance.

which blindly works for its self-assertive will. In this case we are only able and willing to hear what we have already understood, the echoes of our self-speaking.

Perhaps, this is why Heidegger considers, as has been suggested, a changing relation with language is going to bring promising possibilities to the existence of modern individuals. The acceptance a certain dialogical gap, with the gesture of “hearkening,” between human and language might be able to liberate modern individuals from the lonesome situation characterized by modern subjectivity which makes everything around him as a copy of his own voice, reintegrating them into a truly reciprocal relationship with their most intimate neighbor: language. Moreover, with this understanding, it is more likely for humans to carry forward the dialogue-oriented mindset not just with language itself, but also with everything around. It facilitates an openness, a gesture of listening by holding back oneself, towards the things that we are related to. From this possibility, the very dimension of *closeness* reemerges, elevating humanity’s relation to what exists into a face-to-face more balanced reciprocity.

3.4 The Poetry of the Camera

Arriving at the explication of the dialogue with the speaking of Logos (in Chinese - the Dao of Dao), we return to the question concerning folk songs appearing within the film. As has been implicated, both of the soldier’s view and the peasants’ view on the nature folk songs: either as an object to be collected, or an expression of inner emotion, are grounded upon the same logic of the subject’s self-assertiveness. And we have further stated that the self-assertiveness of human subject stems from their original capacity of “bringing of the presence” referred by the term “*techne*.” However, we have further

stated that it was not anything modern but the long-standing apparatus of Logos that originally endowed human being with this capacity of “techne” and subsequently sent them onto the path of becoming subject. On the most fundamental level, therefore, the source that produces their attitude is the working of “Enframing” which originates from the source of Logos. It operating through the “apparatus” (Geräte) which regulates, orients, and governs the relationality of things and humans. The modern subject is conventionally considered to be more liberated than the premodern, “historical people” as they are free from the traditional bonds. But from this fundamental perspective, they are entrapped in the same type of unfreedom caused by the “enframing” nature of the apparatuses (Geräte) they belong. The tragedy of Cuiqiao at the end of the film can be thus viewed as the doubled levels of “enframedness”: one results from the regulatory power of the traditional patriarchal apparatus, and the other results from the modern universal bureaucratic apparatus. As is shown in the film, the soldier must go through the “procedures” in order to submit the application of Cuiqiao to join the army. The rigidity of the institutional rules as a form of “enframedness” has led to the impossibility of Cuiqiao’s being rescued from the original patriarchal systems, which produces another level of “enframedness” for her. The intense sense of unfreedom her felt results in her hasty departure and disappearance into the yellow river. The end of this film thus implies that humans unfreedom cannot be resolved by simply shifting from one “Enframing” apparatuses to another.

In what way, can the promise of saving be still found? The question receives no direct answer at the end of the film, where only the mere image of the yellow earth, accompanied by Cuiqiao’s sing, is shown. Here, Hölderlin’s words: “but where danger

grows the saving power also”⁷⁶ offers an important clue. According to the former analysis, the fundamental locus of “Enframing” is sought, not in the realm of modernity itself, but rather the original “house” – the apparatus of language. Language⁷⁷ is the caller that invites humans, by establishing a dialogical opening, into a co-speaking with itself, departing from which humans engage in the presence of other beings. By placing the speaking of language to the center of our consideration, the other possibility gradually emerges together with a different understanding about the beings of those folk songs: they are neither merely objects to be collected, nor the subjective expression of emotions. Instead, “folk songs”, like the poetic creation by the poets, are themselves response to the soundless call of Logos or Dao that echoes within the valley, which gathers the sky and the earth into the original “strife” that shapes the landscape of yellow earth. The songs acquire their steadfast existence through the attunement with the firmness of the ground, and their sonic forms through the attunement with the strife-like communication between the sky and the earth. It resonates deeply with the pain of the ground caused by the erosive forces from the sky. It measures the pain of humanities with figurations of this kind, as the carving power that carves out the furrows and ruptures of the land also configures the human artworks on this land. The singing of those songs are themselves the “echoes in the valley” -not just the echoes of human voice, but also the responses, as another form of echoes, of the power that crafts original relationalities in the Nature - Logos and Dao. Their existence highlights an ancient agreement of co-speaking

⁷⁶ Ibid., 34.

⁷⁷ To understand the concept of language in this context, one has to combine the two fundamental metaphorical systems that are correlated: one centered on architecture, the other centered on call and response.

(ὁμολογέω) between humans and Logos or Dao by partaking in this shared dialogue. The partaking into the center of Logos that circulates the whole sphere of the world is the utmost form of “standing out” into the open.

We have once mentioned the source of the predicament of modernity, following a Heideggerian path, has to do with a monologue-like situation of modern subject, caused by his ignorance to the speaking of Logos. The ignorance not only renders him unable to disclose the truth of language and the origin of his position, but more importantly, it entraps human into a profound level of unfreedom by offering him a semblance of self-mastery. The self-speaking of humanity deprives the humanity of the chance to be a face-to-face interlocuter with Logos. He instead becomes subjected to the reticent ordering of Logos to “enframe” the totality of beings around him without knowing the truth about what he is doing. He falls victim to a “destiny.” Within this mode of relation, a hierarchical structure always already holds sway in the depth of Logos’s “Enframing” as is unveiled by Althusser about the apparatus nature of ideology: becoming a subject always means being subjected to a bigger Subject.⁷⁸ The human is commanded to be subject by a higher apparatus of subjectification (a higher power of enframing) so that he has the privileged power to command all sorts of beings other than himself.

By contrast, Cuiqiao’s singing that resonates the sound of the “strife” that spreads over the yellow earth, informs us the speaking of language itself, as well as another possible mode of relating us to the being of Logos: to be faced-to-faced with Logos. However, different from Heidegger’s thinking, the disclosure of this other possibility is

⁷⁸ Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 171.

accomplished through, however, not traditional form of poetry, but the operation of *camera*. In the beginning of this chapter, the inner dynamic nature of the “strife” is illustrated and the preservation of this dynamic by the camera is interpreted through the idea of “poetry,” which is understood as the establishment (building) of a realm of openness where figures and sounds come into presence. Here, with a deeper understanding of what it means to “establish” (to build) a “poetry”, we approach the phenomenon with greater depth.

Central to this poetic nature is the camera’s focus on the liminal “nothing” that exists in-between sky and earth. It as a void “cut” crafts the figure of the “rift” that characterizes the yellow earth’s landscape. The camera, by casting its projection into of this “in-between” middle sphere, sets the dynamic of the “strife” into work. “Strife” suggests more than a will for power struggle and fighting of a fight. It is first and foremost grounded upon a linguistical closeness facilitated through the happening of a communication which is also an inherent response to the gathering call of Logos. The closeness comes from the fact that involved parties of a strife must have reached a consensus to communicate, signifying their unity through the shared Logos. The basis of their “strife” is precisely a form of agreement to speak together, and “strife” is itself a dialogue facilitated by their mutual participation into the Same.

The return of the metaphor of “strife” to its linguistical root enables us to discover and delineate the poetics of the camera with a more in-depth argument. The “nothing,” implicitly targeted by the camera is not merely an invisible dividing line that frames the visual outline of the landscape, but more importantly a differencing dialogical distance based upon which the strife-like dialogue between the sky and the earth can take place.

The figure of this landscape is the visual expression of this language event. The “strife”, from this understanding, does not originate from either side, but rather its possibility of happening appears within the in-between middle sphere of “nothing” upon which the camera is constantly targeted towards. As is mentioned, the “nothing” on the one hand, acts as a formless dialogical distance that separates one from another. Only with this minimum and intangible separation, can there grow the need for a dialogue. By contrast, if the two speakers are already integrated within absolute oneness so that one can transmit his thoughts or ideas instantly immediately to the other, the dialogue would be redundant. The very act of engaging in a conversation with another always presupposes the existence of this dialogical distance. On the other hand, this boundary does not substantiate or actualize itself as an insurmountable divide. Rather, the boundary acts as a channel of connection on a different plane: although dialogue presupposes a distance in-between, it must also create dialogical a connection that draws one side towards another within the same sphere of dialogue. In this sense, although the “nothing” creates a certain level of separation that necessitates the unfolding of the dialogue, it ultimately negates the actuality of this separation by the very dialogical connection it established. This paradoxical tendency of self-cancellation is precisely the way this “nothing” unfolds its own negative nature – as a “nothing”, it is meant to “not.”⁷⁹ The “nothing” is, therefore, indeed a “nothing”: a non-substantial limit that binds and separates at the same time. As “nothing” conditions the formation of dialogical relationality, the most essential constitution of Logos shall be precisely considered to be the region of the “nothing.” The

⁷⁹ See Heidegger’s discussion of “nothing” in the lecture “What is metaphysics?” in *Pathmark*, 90: “The nothing itself nihilates.”

probing into the “nothing” by the camera thus exhibits itself as the most authentic act of “measuring” the utmost constitution that conditions the working of Logos. It embodies an act of “meting out” aligned with Hölderlin’s conception of poetry as the activity that “measure against the Godhead” and also the “hearkening” gesture of Heraclitus where the urge of self-expression is held back. Indeed, the camera produces a picture, an “aspect” of what it captures. But the “aspect” is, in essence, a “face” which grounds the possibility of being “face-to-face”⁸⁰ with something. It enables the viewers to come near into the central negativity of all forms of dialogical relations.

However, we shall not overlook that the nature of the camera tool that gauges the negative kernel of Logos, is also technological. On the one hand, the projection by the camera towards the most essential sphere of Logos can be seen a response to the call of language with that which originates from language, mirroring the poetic saying of a poet who up builds his poetic work with language to respond to the claim by language itself on him. On the other hand, when human holds the technological tool at hand, the Logos lying in the depth of the technological character of the camera also calls for the response from human. Technology, represented by the camera, thus appears not just an instrument or an inexplicable power of domination. Instead, it becomes itself a medium of dialogue, which offers a distinct opportunity for human to engage into the dialogue with Logos by being the “way” towards the dialogical open - the sphere of “Nothing.” This comprehension of the camera’s poetic function enables us to gain a different understanding of Heidegger’s statement perhaps, a step further than Heidegger himself:

⁸⁰ That means we ground the visibility on the dimension of linguisticality.

“Only if we are capable of dwelling if, only then can we build.”⁸¹ The building of a film work through technology may accomplish a similar task of as poetry to respond the call of Logos, by projecting back towards the in-between line of “nothingness” where the kernel of Logos’s activity is located. In this process, we are getting closer to the truth of this universal relation-forming distance that constitutes all types of dialogical relationalities.

3.5 The Dialogue between East and West

The encounter between Western methodologies and Eastern culture once posed a challenging problem to scholars from both sides. *Yellow Earth*’s hermeneutical complexity is just one example of this challenge. Yet, the film work is also a hint that points towards the possibility of reimagining this encounter.

To engage in a dialogue of any kind, one must be open to the “nothing”, with a gesture of hearkening, that distances and connects at the same time. This paradoxical duality of separation and connection, inherent in the nature of Logos, confronts us with a way-like nature. We have mentioned the metaphor of “way” in the former explication about “method” and also the function of camera. Here, we try to expound it more comprehensively. Very often we tend to conceive “way” as merely actual means to reach a destination. But the very existence of “way” implies more. Way is itself a sphere of openness existing by the extension of a spatial and temporal distance. It gathers different position into a relation of closeness, without canceling out their distinctions. It is able to guide the walker towards the encounter of something different from himself. In this

⁸¹ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 157

sense, “way” also illustrates the function of “enframing” - “the gathering that sends”- and it reveals an even deeper connection with the aforementioned region of nothingness unfolding in the depth of Logos. This level of comprehension is fully captured by the Chinese concept “Dao,” which uniquely combines the notions of “speaking” and “way.” This synthesis between “way” and “language” indicated in the Chinese concept of Dao might have led Heidegger to view the essence of language resting in the “appropriation (Ereignis) that makes way”⁸². In the lecture of *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger has mentioned that only the name of Logos or Dao can capture the original gathering-sending event of Appropriation (Ereignis) in which human comes into relation with Being: “The words event of appropriation, thought of in terms of the matter indicated, should now speak as a key term in the service of thinking. As such a key term, it can no more be translated than the Greek Logos or the Chinese Dao.”⁸³

Yet, the explication of the way-like nature of Dao and Logos does not stop at the level of their theoretical connectedness. Instead, this aspect of Dao is posited to be linked with the problem of the “reign of methods.” As modern “methods” present themselves as paths through which we access our research objects and advance knowledge, they also take root in the original way-making of Dao. Initially, we discussed how the “reign of methods” is rooted in Nietzsche’s notion of the “will to power as knowledge,” symptomatic of modern subjectivity’s self-assertive nature which further leads to the kernel of modernity as the victory of “method over science.” The manifold methods serve as pre-existing frameworks through which the modern subject anticipatorily reaches and

⁸² Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 130.

⁸³ Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 36.

masters its object. The acquisition and application of increasingly effective methods ensures the subject's ability to maintain its dominance in anything he encounters. The more he gleans with the method, the more he affirms the validity of the methods themselves and the more he assures his self-certainty as a modern subject. However, following our subsequent explication, which locates the kernel of modern subjectivity within the sphere of modern technology which originates from the ancient spirit of "techne" originating from "Logos", "methods", too, also reveal its deeper root in the "way-making" movement of Logos. They contain the same mechanism of "Enframing" which initiates the emergence of modern technology. In this sense, methods precisely share the same nature with modern technologies. They work in the same technological way by bringing forth its object towards oneself which also organizes, installs it into a specific position. The technological character of literary "methods" is well-explicated in Rey Chow's essay on "Yellow Earth" in which the literary analytic methods, invoked by Yau in her essay, are eminently called "analytic technologies" serving for the "othering of the Third World."⁸⁴ What is implied by the "othering of the Third World" exemplified by the notion of "Chineseness"⁸⁵ is the process of assigning the nature of self-sameness to an "other," which is, also a gathering of the "other" into the framework of "self-other" dichotomy. The production of "Chineseness" in this way can be seen as another example of the "gathering that sends forth" by "Enframing" which holds sway over the technological character of the literary analytic method.

⁸⁴ Chow, Rey. "Silent Is the Ancient Plain: Music, Filmmaking, and the Conception of Reform in China's New Cinema." *Discourse* 12, no. 2 (1990): 82–109. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41389154>.

⁸⁵ See Rey Chow's discussion of the question of Chineseness in the article. "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem." *Boundary 2* 25, no. 3 (1998): 1–24.

Nonetheless, our ultimate explication about the relatedness of “Enframing” and “Logos,” reminds us of a still more primordial origin of the phenomenon of “methods” – the sphere of language (Logos). It is the house of language that primordially gathers and installs different beings. It also gathers humans towards itself⁸⁶. Through this process, Logos facilitates not just the entrapping “frames” but also the relation -forming “frames.” The original relation between method and Logos reminds us of a different perspective of considering its function different from the logic of self-assertiveness. Just as the camera, a technological tool, possesses a potentiality of “measuring out” Logos, in the sense of an authentic response of the call of Logos centered with the gesture of hearkening, “method” also possesses the function of sustaining dialogue and forming relations. Just as an object awaits the application of a method, the method also waits upon its object. It expands its own region of explanation but also contains an inherent piety to the sounding of its futural objects that it wishes to hear. The anxiety for the ineffectiveness of “method”, therefore, is not just a sign of the self-assertive will of the subject, but also can be read as a true sign of nearing towards the “nothing”, constituting any sorts of dialogical relationship, originating from the structure of Logos. This level is inherent in the very being of “method” itself, which foretells and welcomes an unexpected relationality as well as a possibility of crisis and self-transformation, as has already been attested by the “dialogue” between Western interpreters and Eastern works in the case of “Yellow Earth.” The encounter with this negativity, enabled by the guiding of methods, might potentially facilitates the crucial gesture of “hearkening,” which allow the power of

⁸⁶ In Heidegger’s words: language exhibit its needfulness of human.

Logos to fully emanate from the intermediary space that brings two sides together into a relation of co-speaking. This experience of co-speaking towards the same *region of openness* is meant to eventually lead both two sides away from their original stances, through which a mutual transformation can take place. In this sense “methods” are not just instrument but are essentially forms of “thinking”: they thus do not merely affirm what one has already taken hold of, but instead let *what calls for thinking* to sound off ever more radically so that what has been reified would be dislodged. Only in this sense “methods” can become the offsprings of the way-making movement of Logos or Dao.

Continuing this exploration of the profound link between method and “Dao”—a connection deeply embedded in its Chinese connotation— finally leads us to a deeper comprehension of the role that technology and various methods (in our context they are treated interchangeably in the sense that they are equivalently the runoffs of Logos or Dao) play in our contemporary world. The Daoist thinker Zhuangzi once expresses the idea that the highest, most universal (but also emptiest) principle of Dao is to be precisely found in the most vulgar, mundane places: the places of ants, among the weeds, or even in feces and urine. The words of Zhuangzi find striking manifestation in our modern time where the overarching force of “Enframing” takes its shape in modern technology. It is everywhere, permeating into very corner of life. In the era where its power reigns ever more manifestly, the same claim upon the entire world of confronting its essential nature has also grown more and more pressing. On the one hand, this claim appears in a catastrophic form where the challenges and crises caused by modern technology expands ever more rapidly. On the other hand, however, these crises are themselves signs of an unthought negativity lurking within the essence of technology which we have not yet

taken hold off. The nearing of this negativity once again, exposes the distance between the mastery of humanity and the sphere of technology, posing an extraordinary challenge to the monological form of thinking to the modern humans. The more the estrangement from technology is realized, the more the presence of an unrecognized otherness that humans have long been facing but ignored could emerge again. This marks the start of a genuine dialogue of human with technology, as well as what lies behind technology itself.

What's more, the pervasive challenges stemming from technology also forcefully gather the whole world in a more or less the similar endangered situation. The unfathomable influence of modern technologies, presents itself as a gigantic negative center which have the potential to unify the world in a collective confrontation with its indeterminate implications and responsibilities, creating the possibility of "belonging together." As is suggested by Heidegger in the lecture "Identity and Principle," the state of "belonging" does not comes from a preexisting "togetherness," but rather that the "togetherness" comes from the state of "belonging."⁸⁷ – the "belonging" to the same open-ended danger, which invites the same necessity of thinking, acting and dialoguing collectively. As the unfathomable danger of modern technology heightens the unperceived distance between humanity and technology itself, the world gains a chance to belongs together to the same dimension where a world dialogue can unfold.

⁸⁷ Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, 29 :“However, belonging together can also be thought of as belonging together. This means: the "together" is now determined by the belonging. Of course, we must still ask here what "belong" means in that case, and how its peculiar "together" is determined only in its terms. The answer to these questions is closer to us than we imagine, but it is not obvious. Enough for now that this reference makes us note the possibility of no longer representing belonging in terms of the unity of the together, but rather of experiencing this together in terms of belonging.”

The idea offers a deeper understanding of the meaning of “oneness” implied by the words of Heraclius: *Ev Παντα* (all is one). It not only denotes that “all” is under the homogenization of “one,” but also, “all” are calling back towards the same openness in a dialogical relation where distances and connections unfold simultaneously. Returning the root of technology to Logos enables us to discover the salvific possibility within the catastrophes brought forth by technology: the entirety of the world is gathered within a universal dialogue by technological danger in order to co-respond toward the same gigantic *question* calling for thinking – which is essentially also a calling for responsive dialogue. By being underway towards the same open-ended challenges, they develop the possibility of speaking together and of being exposed to the possibilities and risks that dislodge the entrenched frameworks and preconceptions. This potential emergence of “world dialogue” is perhaps a liberating possibility from the problematic issues of Heidegger’s idea of “world picture.”⁸⁸

This other possibility about humanity’s situation in the age of modernity and technology appears to be the ultimate message conveyed at the end of the film, where the visual landscape is dominated by an unyielding expanse of the yellow earth. Cuiqiao’s voice perseveres even with the absence of her physical existence. The way Cuiqiao’s figures disappear and her singing echoes within the valley indicates that her singing eventually participates into the universal dialogue between the earth and the sky that shapes the rifting figuration of yellow earth. Her singing heightens this dialogue (Logos)

⁸⁸ The kernel of “world picture” rests in human subject’s practice of setting the totality of beings over against themselves to affirm their self-assertiveness. See Heidegger’s essay “The Age of the World Picture” in *Off the Beaten Track*, 57.

of Nature by taking its own part in it, and it releases the gathering power by what occasioned the universal dialogue (Logos) to the fullest: itself becomes the echo of the original calling by Logos, deeply attracting the audience, the listeners, and the thinkers from all sides to embark upon his own way of hearkening. The final remarks on the film remind us of the thought-provoking line by Hölderlin: “.to each also is allotted his own, each one goes and comes to the place that he can”⁸⁹ which harmonizes with the concept of physis (φύσις). This notion suggests a dual process where every being - flowers, animals, plants, humans - is allotted to a unique path of life, but simultaneously being united by the same status of being *underway*. They are moved by the moving force of Logos and Dao. The potential unity created by the same status of “being underway” is a true sign of togetherness conveyed by the terms “with-world” [Mitwelt] and “being-with”⁹⁰ [mitseien] in *Being and Time*. It also demonstrates the insight about the recovery of an universal level of closeness brought forth by the change in our relation with language propelled by the experience of technology, meant within another Hölderlin’s line: “*All is intimate.*”⁹¹

⁸⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000), 210.

⁹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 116.

⁹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*, 195: “This means that one is appropriated to the other, but in such a way that thereby it itself remains in what is proper to it, or even first attains to it: gods and men, earth and heaven. Intimacy does not mean the coalescence and obliteration of distinctions. Intimacy names the belonging together of what is foreign, the ruling of the strange, the claim of awe.”

Conclusion

Through the guiding concepts of logos and Dao, which are elucidated through an exploration of Heidegger's evolving focus on language across his career, the study touches upon three related issues: cross-cultural dialogue, language, and technology. The contemplation of the nature of technology unveils its inherent connectedness with language which manifests in twofold dimension: On the one hand; the essence of modern technology -its power of "enframing" – originates from the realm of language. As the "house of being," it sets work the primal "frames" that structure man's relation to Being and the world. On the other hand, our analysis of the film work "Yellow Earth" shows that through technology, the power of "enframing" lying at its root could be ever increasingly gauged, measured, and explicated. The heightened presence of "enframing" manifested in technological challenges and dangers urges the world to think towards a realm of the Same, which creates a chance for them to speak together despite on distinct pathways. This experience of "world dialogue" offers a chance to dislodge the pre-established frameworks and reshape the human's understanding of themselves, of their relation to technology and language, and to the totality of beings on the Earth - the changes that were anticipated by Heidegger.

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