



MARTIN HEIDEGGER'S ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

Martin Heidegger is widely recognised for his contributions to metaphysics and existentialism, yet his philosophy also offers valuable insights into environmental philosophy. While he did not develop a formal environmental ethic, his critique of Western metaphysics and technology provides a foundation for rethinking humanity's relationship with nature. Rather than adopting a normative ethical approach, Heidegger examines the human-nature relationship from an ontological perspective, arguing that the environmental crisis stems from a metaphysical framework that reduces nature to a mere resource for human exploitation. His concept of techne as a mode of revealing, along with his later reflections on dwelling and releasement, offers an alternative framework for understanding sustainability beyond instrumental rationality. This study employs textual analysis to critically examine Heidegger's environmental philosophy and its relevance to traditional environmental ethics. By highlighting Heidegger's critique of anthropocentrism and technological nihilism, the research explores how his thought contributes to contemporary environmental discourse. Despite concerns regarding his lack of explicit ethical guidance and potential ecofascist interpretations, Heidegger's work remains influential in radical ecology and deep environmental thought. This study ultimately argues that Heidegger's ontology provides a meaningful foundation for rethinking human embeddedness in the natural world and developing a more sustainable environmental philosophy.

Keywords: Martin Heidegger, *Enframing*, Environmental Philosophy, Environmental Ethics.

Introduction

The growing concern for the environment as a result of the various global ecological challenges has made a philosophy of the environment pertinent today. Environmental philosophy is a relatively new intellectual enterprise that continues to gain popularity and prominence in global and regional politics. The global awareness of the dangers of human activities on the environment finds credence in the notion of "intrinsic value". This idea that all entities in the ecosystem have inherent worth is the basis for justifying the extension of ethics to the environment in traditional environmental philosophy. However, Martin Heidegger takes a different approach by his use of ontology, and a rejection of normative ethics in his environmental thought (Glazebrook, 2013). Heidegger is known for his contribution to ontology, hermeneutics and existentialism, and he adopts these methods in his environmental thought paving the way for his unique perspective.

One of the first insights to Heidegger's environmental philosophy is Hwa Yol and Petee Jung's 1975 article, "To Save the Earth," where they explored Heidegger's concept of care



(*sorge*), dwelling and letting beings be (Jung & Jung, 1975). The study explored Heidegger's ideas as it relates the environment and encouraged further studies of his work. The growing interest in environmental philosophy inspired an examination of Heidegger's thesis on nature and the environment. Many scholars continue to analyse Heidegger's ideas and its alignment with traditional environmental thought. Scholars like Seidel began to consider Heidegger as a viable philosopher for ecologists, with his focus on "authentic knowing" (Rentmeester, 2015). Another prominent interpreter of Heidegger's environmentalism was Zimmerman who argued that Heidegger's thought supports radical environmentalism, showing its similarity with Naess' deep ecology (Zimmerman, 1993). Using Heidegger's analysis of Western metaphysics, Foltz traces the conceptual roots of contemporary environmental crisis (Foltz, 1995; Glazebrook, 2013). Drawing from Zimmerman, Westra used Heidegger's concept of care to argue for intergenerational environmental justice (Glazebrook, 2013). Heidegger's work also influenced the field of eco-phenomenology, the field of environmental philosophy that adopts phenomenological methods to engage the relationship between Heidegger and environmentalism. Scholars like Evernden and Langer, both adopted Heidegger's methods in their different approaches to eco-phenomenology (Rentmeester, 2015). McWhorter and Taylor both considered Heidegger's environmentalism from the interpretation of language, emphasising the connection between humans to nature (Rentmeester, 2015).

The notion of being also plays a fundamental role in Heidegger's environmental philosophy like other aspects of his thought. For Heidegger, "... it becomes evident that the ancient interpretation of the being of beings is oriented toward the "world" or "nature" in the broadest sense ..." (Heidegger, 2010, p. 24). This implies that the term 'nature' contains an interpretation of beings as a whole, and this wholeness could be considered the world in its entirety (Glazebrook, 2013). This view of nature and his critique of technology provides the basis for his analysis of the human-nature relationship. Technology, also plays an important role in Heidegger's environmental philosophy because of the role it plays in severing the human-nature connection (Heidegger, 1977). Heidegger considers enframing (*gestell*) as the attitude of reducing nature to a resource to be exploited and the reason for the estrangement of humans from nature. This estrangement further exacerbates the environmental crisis because of the neglect of nature that is as a result of the distortion in the human-nature relationship.

Despite a growing body of literature exploring Martin Heidegger's philosophy and its relevance to environmentalism, a gap exists in understanding how Heidegger's abstract ontological concepts can be translated into practical and effective strategies for addressing specific environmental issues. While existing research highlights the positive impact of Heidegger's thought on environmental theory and ecological practices, concerns remain regarding its anthropocentric nature, rejection of normative ethics, and practical effectiveness.

The challenge lies in bridging the gap between Heidegger's theoretical framework and the pragmatic demands of environmental action. Therefore there is a need to explore how Heidegger's concepts—such as *Dasein*, Being, dwelling, technology, care, and *aletheia*—can be applied to real-world environmental problems. This requires addressing criticisms of anthropocentrism and lack of normative ethics to develop a Heideggerian-informed approach that promotes environmental sustainability and responsible decision-making in specific contexts, which faces significant environmental degradation due to technological practices. The central question is how to translate Heidegger's ontological insights into actionable



strategies that foster a more sustainable and ethical relationship between humans and the environment.

The study considers Heidegger's view of technology and how it affects our interaction with the environment. Thus, the research tries to bridge the gap between theory and practice in relation to environmental philosophy. Heidegger looks beyond the instrumental value of nature, rejecting the normative and utilitarian approaches of traditional environmental ethics. But rather, he considers the impact of technology on the environment and our well-being. The study contributes to the discuss concerning environmentalism and sustainability from a metaphysical perspective. Heidegger's philosophy, illustrates the importance of ethical reflection in environmental affairs and how it can influence policy changes. The study promotes holistic environmental awareness and the consequences of the neglect and exploitation of nature.

This paper examines Martin Heidegger's environmental philosophy, particularly his critique of technology and concept of *dwelling*, to explore its implications for contemporary ecological thought. The Introduction outlines the research problem, objectives, and significance of Heidegger's ideas in environmental ethics. The Theoretical Framework situates his philosophy within existentialism, phenomenology, and ecological thought, clarifying key concepts like *dwelling*, *fourfold*, and *care*. The section on Technology and the Enframing of Nature analyzes Heidegger's critique of modern technology, particularly *Gestell* (enframing), which reduces nature to a mere resource. This critique sets the stage for Heidegger's Environmental Philosophy, which explores his alternative vision of human-nature relations through *dwelling*, poetic thinking, and the interplay between *earth* and *world*. The Philosophical Implications discuss how Heidegger's ideas challenge mainstream environmental ethics, emphasizing a deeper ontological relationship with nature beyond conventional solutions. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes key insights, underscores the need for an ontologically grounded environmental ethic, and suggests directions for further research.

Theoretical Framework

According to Warren "a framework is a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one's world. A conceptual framework functions as a socially constructed lens through which one perceives the world" (Henning, 2023, p. 46). The theoretical framework for this study includes; Hermeneutics, eco-phenomenology and ecocentric theory.

a. Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the translation and interpretation of concepts and experiences and allows for a deeper understanding of Heidegger's ideas. It delves into the layers of meaning within a text, and enables an understanding of the historical and cultural contexts of ideas. Heidegger himself considered hermeneutic phenomenology as a structural analysis describing the structure of being-there (Heidegger, 1999). Hermeneutics is important to understanding Heidegger's philosophy because of his tendency to revisit the use of concepts in their original form. For example, he uses this method in his analysis of being and *techne*, by going back to their roots. He uses this approach because of his belief that the meaning of being has been distorted overtime, affecting metaphysics.

b. Eco-phenomenology



Eco-phenomenology merges ecological thinking with phenomenology to tackle environmental issues (Brown & Toadvine, 2012). It is regarded as a new phase of environmental philosophy (Utsler, 2024). Influenced by Heidegger's philosophy, eco-phenomenology is an interdisciplinary exploration that examines the relationship between organisms and nature (Abram, 1988). This approach employs both metaphysics and axiology, providing an alternative perspective on environmentalism. The movement contends that our ecological predicament necessitates both ecological consciousness and phenomenological insights. Eco-phenomenology aims to transcend the constraints of environmental ethics by emphasising an authentic relationship with nature. Inspired by Edmund Husserl, scholars such as Max Scheler, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Emmanuel Levinas have further developed this environmentalist approach (Brown & Toadvine, 2012). Ecophenomenology focuses on relationality and intentionality in our perception of the natural world, striving to articulate its meaning (Fritsch, 2018). It seeks to describe the forms and structures of experience to uncover the significance of these phenomena and their relationship to the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

Merleau-Ponty employs this method to transcend Cartesian or anthropocentric limitations in environmental discourse through phenomenological traditions (Brown & Toadvine, 2012). This approach regards the natural world as a coherent and holistic phenomenon, or a singularity, by revealing the structures of experience and their significance to organisms. Consequently, Levinas contends that the ethical imperative emerges from the singularity of experience, challenging naturalism and its reductive mode of thinking (Brown & Toadvine, 2012). A fundamental contribution of phenomenology to environmental philosophy is its reverence for and emphasis on experience, viewing the act of experiencing the world as an integral whole.

Eco-phenomenology aims to overcome entrenched tendencies that restrict inherited perspectives. Wood argues that eco-phenomenology is a middle ground between phenomenology and naturalism, as well as between intentionality and causality. This encompasses recognising relationalities that cannot be reduced to either simple intentionality or simple causality. Wood argues that our understanding of nature is transformed by contemplating the complexity of time (invisibility, finitude, rhythms, and interruptions) and by reflecting on the role of boundaries in defining thinghood (Brown & Toadvine, 2012). Eco-phenomenology addresses critiques of anthropocentrism and the fact-value dichotomy. It seeks to articulate our engagement with the natural world, emphasising relationalities and advancing beyond traditional notions of intentionality (Brown & Toadvine, 2012).

c. Sustainability

Sustainability could be defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Clingerman et al., 2013). It involves ensuring that the present realization of needs or values does not threaten future realization. The term sustainability originates from the Latin term "*sus tinere*," which means to sustain, support, uphold, or endure (WCED, 1987). Sustainability involves the conservation and preservation of nature and its resources for future generations. That is why sustainability is often considered as intergenerational justice, which emphasises environmental justice between current and future generations. It involves the concept of intergenerational equity, emphasising the need for the current generation to preserve and conserve Earth's natural resources for future generations (Fritsch, 2018). It encompasses various disciplines and three



of such areas include, the economic, social and environmental. These three areas could be considered the pillars that ensure a holistic approach to sustainability. The economic aspect involves balancing financial gains with long-term environmental and societal impacts. The social aspect involves the notion of equity, equality and well-being, while the environmental perspective involves protecting ecosystems, promoting biodiversity, and mitigating climate change (Zagonari, 2023).

The sustainability debate also involves the notion of strong and weak sustainability (Fritsch, 2018). Strong sustainability is conserving a steady supply of natural capital for future generations, while weak sustainability is the substitution of natural resources with other alternative resources (Fritsch, 2018). Generally, sustainability goes beyond the conservation of natural resources. It includes the conservation and preservation of stable institutions, just legal systems, knowledge, and positive relations between individuals and nature (Fritsch, 2018). Sustainability also includes the systems theory which considers sustainability as the ability of a system to reproduce itself without unjustly consuming external resources (Hale (editor) et al., 2022).

Technology and the *Enframing* of Nature

Heidegger's treatment of the concept of enframing (*gestell* in German) is drawn from the group of essays in the book, *The Question Concerning Technology (Die Frage nach der Technik)*. Heidegger defines enframing as a mode of revealing, a destining of Being even though Being remains concealed. According to him, the ordering characteristic of enframing occurs through man (Heidegger, 1977). Man and Being confront each other in enframing as they meet themselves in estrangement. For Heidegger, the purpose of the questioning concerning technology is to uncover the essence of the relationship between man and technology. For him, the essence of technology reveals itself to us through this enframing; it is the way reality reveals itself through technology. Hence, the essence of modern technology resides in the notion of enframing.

For Heidegger, enframing is the essence of technology because essence means what something is or what he considers the 'whatness' of the thing. This "whatness" is the generic term that describes entities that share certain similar characteristics; for example, the concept tree includes species like oaks, beeches, birches, firs, etc. The whatness takes the form of treeness, the genus or universal concept that accommodates all real and possible trees. Enframing is a way of unconcealing, bringing forth (*poiesis*), or destining. By destining, Heidegger implies that enframing is a process that reveals and determines how things exist and are understood in the world. It is through enframing that technology shapes our understanding of reality, defining what is valuable, meaningful, and useful in our lives. This destining of technology has profound implications for how we relate to the world and ourselves, as it influences our actions, values, and even our sense of identity. However, he asserts that it is technology that makes us conceive of its essence in a distorted way. He uses the German term *wesen*, which is translated as essence, which is derived from the German term *wahren*, meaning to last or endure. This is similar to Socrates and Plato, who consider the essence of a thing as that thing which endures or persists through space and time (Heidegger, 1977, p. 31).

Heidegger affirms that in a sense, technology is ambiguous, and this is because of the notion of unconcealment or truth. The essence of technology is nested in this notion of enframing, and the essence of modern technology is revealed through it. The purpose of the questioning



concerning technology for Heidegger is to uncover our relationship to the essence of technology. For Heidegger, technology enforces a structure that distorts the true nature of Being, and this structure inhibits pure access to Being. Modern man seems to be alienated from the awareness of his essence and estranged from Being because he has given technology dominion (Heidegger, 1977).

Therefore, man does not know himself in relation to the world and never encounters himself or his essence. This results in man adopting either of two attitudes, according to Heidegger. The first attitude portrays a man trying to master technology and using it as a means to control all aspects of his life. The second attitude is that he flinches at the control technology having over him and considers other ways of living without it. What man needs for Heidegger is an awareness of his place as *Dasein* and the essence of Being and the power that lauds over all phenomena in this age of technology. Freedom for him is the ability for man to open himself in awareness to Being and its dominion. Technology limits this ability of man to open himself up to the pure awareness of Being. This truth of modern man's predicament appears to him veiled; this revelation comes upon him even though it is not instantly accessible. Hence, enframing is the mode of revealing the destining of Being even though the truth of Being remains unconcealed or unhidden. This implies that the idea of man as *Dasein* (openness-for-Being) may be lost to the notion of man "as a merely self-conscious being knowing himself only as an instrument ready for use." The question is, who or what is using man?

Enframing remains a mode of revealing even though, as a mode of revealing technology, it manifests itself in the withdrawnness of Being. The concept of enframing carries with it two consequences, either as an instrument that endangers man and commits man to the estrangement from Being or as an instrument to commit him to the essential relationship with Being. Hence, he considers enframing as both a danger to man and also having the ability to save man. Within the essence of technology is the covering of the truth of Being because Being reveals itself entirely out of itself in such a way to reach man. This is because it cannot come into the open without man; the notion of unconcealment or concealment relates to Being and man. This implies that Being and man confront themselves in enframing and also meet themselves in estrangement because man and Being are inseparably bound together (Heidegger, 1977).

Martin Heidegger's inquiry into the essence of technology provides an important, thought-provoking analysis of how technology influences our understanding of the world and shapes our existence. At the core of Heidegger's examination lies the concept of "enframing" (*Gestell*), which serves as a pivotal point of departure for understanding the implications of technology for human existence. The essence of enframing, as Heidegger conceives it, is not a mere reference to the physical machines and gadgets that surround us. Instead, it signifies a way of revealing or disclosing the world, constituting the essence of technology itself. Enframing presents the world as a standing-reserve, a stockpile of resources and raw materials waiting to be ordered, manipulated, and optimised for human ends. In essence, technology does not merely serve as a means to an end; it fundamentally transforms our relationship with the world, rendering everything a potential resource.

Heidegger's elucidation of enframing challenges conventional views of technology, which predominantly emphasise its instrumental character and its utility in serving human interests. He contends that such a limited perspective obscures the deeper, ontological dimensions of



technology. Enframing, in contrast, beckons us to recognise technology's profound influence on our perception of reality, highlighting that it is not just a neutral tool but a framework that shapes our understanding of the world. Heidegger raises concerns about the dangers inherent in enframing. When technology becomes the predominant mode of revealing the world, it can lead to a reductionist and one-dimensional perspective. This singular lens casts everything in the light of efficiency, calculability, and utility, potentially obfuscating the richness and complexity of existence. Furthermore, Heidegger contends that enframing might alienate us from our essence, leading to a kind of existential isolation where we lose touch with the deeper meaning of being and our authentic selves.

Heidegger does not advocate for a rejection of technology but instead calls for a reflective engagement with it. He urges us to confront enframing and recognise its influence on our lives. Such awareness, he believes, can enable us to make more deliberate choices, fostering a more authentic relationship with technology and with the world. Authenticity, in Heidegger's philosophy, entails an active engagement with our existence, a confrontation with the prevailing destining of our age, and a striving to disclose a deeper understanding of being. Martin Heidegger's concept of enframing constitutes a profound and challenging exploration of technology's impact on human existence. It compels us to reevaluate our relationship with technology beyond its utilitarian function, encouraging us to recognise the ontological shift it introduces into our lives. The danger of enframing lies in its potential to reduce our understanding of reality to mere resources, obscuring the richness and authenticity of human existence. Heidegger's call for reflection and authenticity is a poignant reminder that our engagement with technology should be conscious, deliberate, and rooted in a deeper understanding of our being. In today's technologically driven world, Heidegger's insights into enframing remain as relevant and thought-provoking as ever, inviting us to navigate the challenges of technology with a heightened awareness of its existential implications.

Heidegger's Environmental Philosophy

Heidegger's environmental philosophy is a complex web of concepts woven into a comprehensive system. This is a vital aspect of his philosophy especially because of his interest in the meaning of concepts. His use of hermeneutics in the questioning of being is the foundation for his questioning of other concepts like technology, nature, care, dwelling, the fourfold, etc. Through hermeneutics, Heidegger hopes to reveal the essence of being through unconcealment. The term unconcealment is equivalent to the notion of truth in Heidegger's philosophy, but his treatment of the concept begins with an analysis of its essence. Heidegger's notion of unconcealment entails the idea that truth is not simply the correspondence between a statement and reality but rather the revealing of Being itself. According to Heidegger, unconcealment involves a process of bringing forth the hidden aspects of existence, allowing them to be seen and understood in their authentic nature. This concept challenges traditional notions of truth and emphasises the importance of engaging with the world in a more profound and meaningful way. Heidegger sought to go back to the original meaning of the Greek term *aletheia* to reinterpret the essence of truth, thereby correcting the distortion of its true meaning. The translation of *aletheia* as truth is an oversimplification of its real meaning. The literal translation of the Greek term means unhidness, from which Heidegger derives the German term *unverborgenheit*.

Heidegger's concept of truth has important implications for environmental philosophy because of its emphasis on revealing. By his emphasis on revealing, Heidegger's concept of



truth invites us to critically examine our relationship with the environment. It prompts us to uncover the truth about the implications of our actions and their impact on nature. If we are to live more sustainably, we need to 'unconceal' the true reality of the environmental crisis in the world. This means facing up to the facts about climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. It also means challenging the dominant worldview, which sees nature as a resource to be exploited for human benefit. Only by unconcealing the true reality of the environment can we begin to address its challenges effectively.

a. Dwelling

In the section titled “Building Dwelling Thinking” in his work *Poetry, Language, Thought* Heidegger tries to answer two questions. The first question is what dwelling entails, and the second is how the notion of building relates to dwelling. He asserts that we attain dwelling through building, but not every edifice is a dwelling in the ontological sense. For example, train stations, roads, dams, and marketplaces are all built, but they are not dwellings, even though they are encapsulated in the greater notion of dwelling. Heidegger aims to delve into the true meaning of dwelling and building from its origin to elucidate its ontological relevance to our existential experience. He opines that the true meaning of the word building, from its Old English and High German origins (*buan*), has been lost. Heidegger believes that the true meaning of the term *buan* has been obscured over time, and he seeks to uncover its original significance. He argues that understanding the ontological connection between dwelling and building is crucial for comprehending our existence in the world. He affirms that dwelling is a fundamental part of our nature as mortals on Earth (Heidegger 2001).

Heidegger infers that to dwell means "to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine"(Heidegger 2001). Although Heidegger considers the overlapping of the concept of dwelling and building, however, building comprises of the activities of cultivation and construction. He acknowledges the distinction between building as cultivating and building as constructing. Building as cultivating entails stewardship towards nature, while building as constructing entails things like building ships or temples. However, the two modes of building are subsumed in the greater notion of building. Heidegger concludes by affirming that building is indeed dwelling and both terms are ontologically inseparable. Dwelling for him is the way mortals inhabit the earth. Building as dwelling manifests through cultivation and construction. Cultivation involves the growing of things, and construction involves the erection of edifices (Heidegger 2001).

Building in the form of cultivation involves the careful nurturing and development of the natural environment, ensuring its sustainability with human existence. On the other hand, building as constructing encompasses the physical creation of structures that serve various purposes, shaping the human-made landscape. Both cultivation and construction are essential aspects of building, reflecting our desire to shape and experience the world. Cultivation focuses on the growth of plants, crops, and ecosystems, fostering biodiversity and providing resources for sustenance. Meanwhile, construction involves the design and assembly of buildings, roads, bridges, and other infrastructure that support human activities.

For Heidegger, there is an ontological and causal connection between the concept of building and dwelling - “building is really dwelling” (Heidegger, 2001). Building as dwelling manifests into cultivation and erection of edifices. Cultivation involves the growing of things in nature and the erection of structures. Building as dwelling is an inseparable aspect of



human experience, and his articulation of the concept of dwelling shares a similarity with ecological ethics. For him, “the fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving” (Heidegger, 2001). An interesting indicators of Heidegger’s concern for nature is when he asserts that. “To be set at peace, means to remain at peace withing the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature”(Heidegger, 2001).

According to Heidegger, “to be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell” (Heidegger, 2001). The notion of dwelling represents a primal oneness, which manifests itself in the form of mortals, divinities, earth, and sky. This primal oneness is characterised by a harmonious coexistence between mortals, divinities, the earth, and the sky. It emphasises the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings within their natural environment. This primal oneness is what he calls the fourfold.

b. Fourfold

Heidegger’s concept of the fourfold is elucidated in his work Poetry, Language, Thought in the section titled “The Thing”. The fourfold is the categorisation of dwelling as mortals in space and time. Hence, when Heidegger considers the thing, he is taking a comprehensive look at nature, and its categories. For Heidegger, “mortals dwell in that they save the earth,” saving is means to let something be (Heidegger, 2001). Saving the earth is not exploiting, wearing it out or subjugating it but entails taking responsibility for it.

The fourfold is the coming together of divinities, mortals, earth and sky into the constitution or forming of things. In his description of the four items that constitute the fourfold, he defines mortals as "the humans. They are named the mortals because they can die ". For the earth, he considers " the building bearer, the nurturing fructifying, tending the waters and stones, what grows and the animals". The sky for Heidegger is "the journey of the sun, the course of the moon, the twinkle of the stars, the seasons of the year, light and twilight of the day, dark and light of the night, the favour and the inhospitality of the weather, the drawing of the clouds and the blue depths of the ether". The divinities “are the hinting messengers of godhood", they divinities are not God or gods but those who are god-like and have become messengers by their closeness to the divine (Heidegger, 1976).

c. Care

Heidegger defines care as the ontological structural concept that shows the relationship between Being and *Dasein*. It is how *Dasein* looks out into the world and manifests its existence. Care can be understood as the fundamental mode of being for *Dasein*, where it is always already engaged with the world and concerned with its existence. For example, when we experience concern for something or someone and are attentive and responsive to the needs and possibilities of the world, we are manifesting care. This can be seen in everyday actions such as taking care of loved ones, being concerned about our well-being, or being attentive to the environment around us. Hence, care entails the ontological responsibility of humans to the world; this responsibility is executed by *Dasein* reaching out to Being.

Dasein seeks what is distant to bring it near to himself, and care is a way of reaching out and bringing to nearness Being. For Heidegger, this reaching out is more potent when we are at rest when he says that "care subsides into circumspection which has been set free"(Heidegger et al., 1962) and this level of circumspection is not potent in the "world of work". At rest, we are free from concerns, and "circumspection" is set free. However, this reaching out is not



merely to grasp something as to understand it but, at rest, manifests the possibility of *Dasein* abandoning or surrendering itself to the world. The phenomenon of care articulates the fundamental question of the meaning of Being, according to Heidegger, because *Dasein's* Being reveals itself through care. Care must be properly articulated and cannot be derived from concepts like will, wish, addiction, and urge since these concepts are based on care.

While care may share similarities with concepts like will, wish, addiction, and urge, it is fundamentally different from them. Care is not simply a matter of wanting, desiring, or being driven by impulses. Unlike will, which is often associated with conscious decision-making and deliberate action, care is a more primordial and fundamental mode of being for *Dasein*. It is not something that can be reduced to a specific intention or desire but rather encompasses the entire mode of *Dasein's* existence. Similarly, care differs from addiction or urge, which are often associated with compulsive behaviours or actions driven by external forces. Care, on the other hand, is an inherent and inseparable aspect of *Dasein's* being, always already engaged with and concerned about its existence and the world it inhabits. This culmination of Heidegger's analysis is demonstrated when *Dasein* expresses itself to itself, and then it interprets itself as care pre-ontologically (Heidegger et al., 1962).

For Heidegger, theory and practice are both possibilities of *Dasein* and cannot be put asunder through this dichotomy. Care is "a primordial structural totality," and the factual attitude and situation of *Dasein* are *a priori*. The substance of man is existence, as care belongs both to the notion of Being-in-the-world and within-the-world. Care is a mode of articulating the truth of existence and also a mode of authentic disclosedness. Heidegger believes that by articulating the phenomenon of care, we have shown the ontological structure of *Dasein* as Being and its ontological relation to itself and the world. Through this concept, we arrive at *Dasein's* primordial state of Being and disclose the ontological state of *Dasein's* existence. Hence, care reveals the entire structure of Being-in-the-world and the phenomenon of existence. Care is the authentic expression of *Dasein's* fundamental Being, and its essential true self (Heidegger et al., 1962).

In Heidegger's philosophy, care is closely linked to Being-in-the-world and Being-with. Being-in-the-world refers to the inherent interconnectedness of *Dasein* with the world, where *Dasein* exists as a being that is always already engaged with and embedded in the world. Care is the ontological manifestation of this Being-in-the-world, as it is through care that *Dasein* is attentive and responsive to the world. Being-with, on the other hand, refers to the social dimension of *Dasein's* existence, where *Dasein* exists relative to others and is fundamentally shaped by these relationships. Care is also intimately connected to Being-with, as *Dasein's* care is not only directed towards the world but also toward others. This interconnectedness between care, Being-in-the-world, and Being-with demonstrates the holistic nature of *Dasein's* existence.

Thus, Heidegger's analysis elucidates the notion of ontological responsibility to others and the world. Care is not just a solitary act but rather a fundamental aspect of our existence that is inseparable from our relationships with others and the world. It is through our care for others and the world that we fulfil our ontological responsibility to be attentive and responsive to the needs and concerns of those around us. This understanding of care as interconnected with Being-in-the-world and Being-with highlights the importance of considering the impact of our actions on others and the world as we navigate our existence. This notion of interconnectedness is particularly relevant to our relationship with nature.



When we recognise that our care extends beyond human relationships and encompasses the natural world, we realise that our actions have a profound impact on the environment. By acknowledging this interconnectedness, we can strive to cultivate a more sustainable and harmonious relationship with nature, ensuring the well-being of both present and future generations.

In conclusion, Martin Heidegger's environmental philosophy is deeply rooted in his ontological inquiries, particularly his concept of unconcealment (*aletheia*), which challenges traditional notions of truth. He argues that truth is not merely correspondence between statements and reality but rather the revealing of Being itself. This perspective has significant environmental implications, as it urges humanity to uncover the concealed reality of ecological crises such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Heidegger critiques the dominant worldview that reduces nature to a mere resource for human exploitation, instead advocating for a more authentic engagement with the environment. His notion of dwelling, explored in "Building Dwelling Thinking," underscores humanity's fundamental way of being on earth. Dwelling is not simply residing in a physical space but involves a deeper, ontological relationship with the world—one that entails care, preservation, and harmony with nature.

Heidegger contrasts building as cultivating (stewardship of nature) with building as constructing (erection of physical structures), emphasizing that both are integral to the way humans inhabit the world. Dwelling is thus closely tied to ecological ethics, as it calls for a way of living that safeguards and nurtures the environment rather than dominating it. Central to Heidegger's environmental thought is the fourfold, a framework that situates humans (mortals) within an interconnected reality alongside earth, sky, and divinities. He argues that to "save the earth" means allowing it to exist in its essence rather than exploiting or degrading it. This notion promotes an ethical stance that recognises the intrinsic value of nature, rather than treating it as a resource for technological domination. Heidegger's concept of care (*Sorge*) is pivotal to understanding humanity's responsibility toward the world. Care, as the fundamental mode of *Dasein's* being, entails an engaged and concerned existence, extending not only to other humans but also to the natural world. He suggests that modern technological frameworks alienate humans from authentic care, leading to environmental neglect. Recognising care as a fundamental structure of existence fosters an ethical responsibility to protect and preserve the environment, reinforcing the necessity of a sustainable and holistic relationship with nature. Therefore, Heidegger's environmental philosophy offers a critique of technological enframing and calls for a more thoughtful and ethical way of being-in-the-world—one that prioritizes care, dwelling, and an ontological harmony with nature.

The Relevance of Heidegger's Environmental Philosophy

Heidegger's environmental philosophy helps us to examine the metaphysical foundations of the environmental crisis, highlighting how dominant Western thought has contributed to ecological degradation. While he did not explicitly formulate an environmental ethic, his ideas provide a framework for rethinking humanity's relationship with nature and fostering a more sustainable way of being in the world. In Heidegger's philosophy he argues that humans have historically treated nature as a mere resource for human exploitation. This "productionist metaphysics," originating with Plato and culminating in Nietzsche's will to power, has led to technological nihilism—an empty, efficiency-driven worldview that



alienates humanity from the natural world. Heidegger's challenge to this perspective calls for a fundamental reorientation in how we relate to nature (Rentmeester, 2015).

A central aspect of this reorientation is Heidegger's postmetaphysical understanding of Being, which seeks to move beyond anthropocentrism. He advocates for a "great turning around" (*Kehre*), where humans are no longer positioned as masters of Being but instead grounded within it. This shift offers a way to dismantle exploitative attitudes toward nature and develop a more harmonious mode of existence (Rentmeester, 2015). Heidegger's concept of *techne* as a way of revealing is also significant in environmental thought. He broadens the notion of technology beyond mere tools, emphasizing that technological engagement shapes how we understand and disclose reality (Heidegger, 1977). By recognizing the way technology frames our perception of nature, Heidegger invites a more thoughtful and responsible approach to technological development—one that resists the reduction of the environment to mere resources (Feenberg, 1999). His concept of truth as unconcealment (*aletheia*) is crucial for environmental awareness. Unconcealment involves bringing hidden realities to light, a process essential to confronting the full extent of environmental crises such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. By revealing the concealed consequences of human activity, Heidegger's philosophy encourages deeper reflection on how to live more sustainably.

Heidegger's thought also resonates with non-Western perspectives, particularly *Daoism*, which emphasizes a holistic and nonmetaphysical understanding of human beings and nature (Rentmeester, 2015). This intellectual kinship suggests that Heidegger's environmental philosophy can contribute to cross-cultural ecological thought, moving beyond rigid Western ontologies toward more integrated worldviews. Moreover, Heidegger's eco-phenomenology provides new approaches to environmental issues that navigate between anthropocentrism and biocentrism (Glazebrook, 2013). By focusing on dwelling and being-with-nature rather than imposing rigid ethical categories, his work enables a more nuanced understanding of ecological relationships.

Despite its insights, Heidegger's environmental philosophy is not without criticism. Some argue that it remains too anthropocentric, as his analysis of Being privileges human experience (Rentmeester, 2015). Others point out that Heidegger offers little in the way of normative ethical guidance, making it difficult to translate his ideas into concrete environmental policies. Additionally, concerns about potential ecofascist undertones have been raised due to Heidegger's association with National Socialism and his emphasis on rootedness and homeland (Rentmeester, 2015). Finally, his approach tends to neglect social and political dimensions of environmental issues, such as inequality, capitalism, and power structures that drive ecological destruction.

Heidegger's work has been influential in contemporary environmental philosophy, particularly in radical environmentalism and deep ecology (Thomson, 2004). His emphasis on dwelling and releasement (*Gelassenheit*) has inspired alternative ecological ethics that move beyond exploitative frameworks (Glazebrook, 2013). By challenging the ontological assumptions underlying modernity, Heidegger's philosophy continues to offer valuable insights for rethinking our place within the natural world and developing more sustainable ways of being.



Conclusion

Martin Heidegger's environmental philosophy offers a profound critique of the metaphysical foundations that have shaped humanity's exploitative relationship with nature. By uncovering the historical roots of technological nihilism and productionist metaphysics, Heidegger challenges the dominant worldview that reduces nature to a mere resource for human use. His alternative approach, grounded in ontology rather than normative ethics, invites a fundamental rethinking of how human beings dwell within the natural world. Through key concepts such as *techne*, truth as unconcealment, and the fourfold, Heidegger provides a framework for understanding sustainability that moves beyond anthropocentrism and instrumental rationality.

Despite the criticisms of his work, ranging from allegations of anthropocentrism to concerns about the lack of explicit ethical guidance, Heidegger's thought remains influential in environmental philosophy. His ideas have informed radical ecology, deep environmental thought, and eco-phenomenology, offering pathways to a more integrated and holistic understanding of human-nature relations. By emphasising dwelling, care, and releasement, Heidegger's philosophy suggests that a more sustainable future depends not just on policy or technology but on a transformation in the way we understand and inhabit the world. His work provides a critical foundation for rethinking the environmental crisis and reimagining a more harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. While Heidegger's work does not explicitly develop an environmental ethic. Future studies could examine how his ontological insights might be integrated with contemporary environmental ethical frameworks, such as deep ecology, eco-phenomenology, or bioregionalism.

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