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Heidegger's Gods: An Ecofeminist Perspective

Susanne Claxton

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HEIDEGGER'S GODS: AN ECOFEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

BY

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B.A., Letters, University of Oklahoma, 2000
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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to address the importance and significance of Heidegger's engagement with the Greeks and the ways in which his views are commensurate with ecofeminism and the insights that a study of that intersection provides. I defend the thesis that a proper return to myth and art as a means by which the transcendental realities that constitute the phenomenology of our embodied existence may be better understood is what may allow us to truly dwell in the Heideggerian sense and live full lives rich in meaning and value. My methodology might best be described as a look at certain issues of contemporary significance through the creative examination of historical texts using a phenomenological hermeneutics of comparative philosophy. By examining key concepts in Heidegger's thinking and their role in ancient philosophy, as well, I establish an alternative conception of truth and what that concept reveals. This is further made clear by examining Heidegger's thoughts on the poet and poetry and the role and purpose it should play. I then bring in the ecofeminist critique, highlighting the relevant intersections with Heidegger, then lay out criticisms raised by Nietzsche and compare differences in thought between Nietzsche and Heidegger as explained by Iain Thomson. A look at the mythological figure of Lilith and how the thought of Giorgio Agamben provides further insight and an undeniable co-incidence of relevant concepts further

solidify the common goal and project of both Heidegger and Ecofeminism, especially as articulate by Trish Glazebrook. I conclude with a call for the overthrow of our strict system of binaries, and I advocate that in the discipline of environmental philosophy there is a third alternative to the binaries of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism that answers the objections and shortcomings of each of the binaries. This I call Daseincentrism.

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Introduction

Numerous attempts have been made and are made daily to understand our current realities, to make sense of our human existence, our experiences both collective and individual. Such attempts, made in earnest and with the utmost sincerity, can easily overwhelm even those with the most adept powers of reasoning and the most resilient emotional being, and even more so if one considers the vast number of approaches, disciplines, thinkers, traditions, and perspectives from which one might begin such thinking. Thoughtful persons tend to agree that in some way or another human existence seems sorely afflicted. Things are just not right or as they should be, ought to be, might be, or could be. Something is amiss, something is missing, something is wrong. Human beings, it appears, either have never known or have forgotten how to truly and fully dwell upon the earth, how to meaningfully exist as that which we are in the context of all that exists and to which we are intimately related. This project presupposes this to be a readily observable and recognized phenomenon to which the project itself is a response, both in the sense of providing understanding and exposition and in the sense of possible amelioration. While I will not argue for the theoretical supremacy of my approach, I do hope that the approach will speak for itself in terms of its being meaningful, useful, illuminating, and perhaps even somehow making a difference.

The path down which we will travel in this undertaking takes its start from Martin Heidegger's passionate engagement with the Greeks, his understanding of their unique mode of and relation to being and the resultant glorious existence that the Greeks experienced. In our exploration of Heidegger's thought, we will discover the hints and

suggestions that will, if we are able to allow them to assist and direct us, set us on our way to possibly achieving a mode of being in the world that will not be the mode possessed by the Greeks but may be understood as even more glorious. For, as we will see, greatness and fulfillment of being is neither something found in some linear past now gone forever, nor is it something found in some linear future toward which we inevitably move, but rather it is always and continuously present, awaiting revelation by means of a special negation, the negation of our nihilistic mechanistic materialist mindset, our long-entrenched ways of conceptualizing self and other, our denial of immanent divinity, our reduction of humans, animals, and nature to mere resources waiting to be optimized, in short, our “modern” mode of being. This negation, this saving cessation, brings about that which we can understand in one sense as an emptying of mind, the creation of the necessary condition for the flowing-in of that which is itself the source of meaning and glory, and the cultivation of what Heidegger calls “meditative thinking,” a thinking that is the necessary condition for our attainment of true dwelling as mortals, upon the earth, beneath the sky, and in communion with divinity. This negation may be understood to be synonymous with Heidegger’s “clearing” [*die Lichtung*] that allows being to reveal itself and understanding to take place. Through the explorations involved in this project, we will come to more fully fathom why it is that Heidegger esteems the poet and the artist in the way he does and why indeed he sees art and myth as not just necessary tools for better living but as means that are glorious ends in themselves. (Here just let me point out that the use of terms like “means” and “ends” is somewhat misleading in that it presupposes a metaphysics that, as we will come to see, places a limitation upon what is in essence a fullness beyond measure.)

Our journey will begin with our exploration of Heidegger, his ideas, and some of the most relevant ancient ideas with which he engages. We will then be introduced to the philosophy of ecofeminism and get acquainted with each of its four core tenants and various insights each provides. We will then proceed to examine some of Nietzsche's ideas that resonate with and reflect thinking similar to ecofeminism. From there we will turn to look at a specific figure in Judaeo-Christian mythology, the figure of Lilith, through the lens of philosopher Giorgio Agamben and his interesting and illuminating concepts of *homo sacer* and *the state of exception*. We will make connections with our previously laid out ideas and employ Agamben's insights throughout the remainder of our query. We will then find our way back to Nietzsche and Heidegger and an important difference between them that when understood properly easily lends itself to the ecofeminist project in offering us a *transcendental ethical realism* and a resultant *humanistic perfectionism* that is not your average anthropocentrism. Next we will revisit the ecofeminist perspective by acquainting ourselves with some specific terminology relevant to this project via an engagement with the ecofeminist thinker and Heidegger scholar, Trish Glazebrook. We will then bring together some ideas to help us move beyond the binary. We shall wrap up our journey by coming round full circle to connect back again with Heidegger and ideas laid out early on. In doing so, we will hopefully see the ways in which we have indeed gained a clearer and more concrete sense of what "meditative thinking" looks like, its importance for *dwelling*, its connection to myth, and the role that myth and art can and do play for us, all such that we are able to envision a possible new world in which we may fully *dwell*.

Is our path then to be linear and to the point? No. It cannot be. But, as will hopefully

become clear as we meander, by no means are any of our steps wasted. There is not a simple and straight path by means of which we can make this journey, as I hope to show via the various vantage points from which we will be taking in the view along the way, a view that, when seen from the differing vantage points, reveals how our understanding is increased through multiple perspectives and demonstrates the need for continuous augmentation, organic and dynamic as it is. In discussing the views and ideas of various thinkers and traditions, it will be done with an aim toward taking what is most enlightening from each and putting it to use in order to better illuminate a new pathway of understanding. In other words, “Rather than endlessly restaging the old debates between the masters, however, we do better to follow the spirit of the eco-phenomenological movement by working creatively to appropriate their thinking for ourselves.”¹

¹ Iain Thomson, “Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy,” 400.

Heidegger and the Greeks

II.1. A-letheia

The Greeks, for Heidegger, are exemplary. Their way of life and existence, as Heidegger understood them, was ontologically unique. They existed and lived with and within something exceedingly vital, perhaps even best understood as superlatively vivifying, yet they did so without explicitly articulating it. They did not analyse it, nor did they seek to conceptualize and intellectualize it as a modality of existence, since that would require the existence of other modalities as well as a consciousness of them. The Greeks, as Heidegger understood them, were blessed with what we can think of as an innate situatedness in being that allowed them to experience existence in the fullest possible way, yet this paradoxically required them to be subject to a special oblivion of sorts, as well. It was this very special oblivion that allowed them to exist in such close proximity to the source of intelligibility which Heidegger understands as having been in continuous withdrawal from humankind since the time of the Greeks. This vital thing that has continued to retreat into the realm of the obscure has by no means, however, ceased to exist. Rather, it has become concealed, hidden, occulted, obscured, but in a very real sense is it no less immanent to the intelligible order that it continues to make possible.

The idea of something existent yet hidden is, in fact, central to the Greeks' own conceptualization of truth. The idea of that which is present yet concealed is what constitutes the Greek concept of truth understood as *a-letheia*, literally translated as un-forgetting or un-concealing. The myths involving the river *Lethe* can be instructive on understanding this, and I will explore these elsewhere. This particular understanding of

truth, this metaphysics of truth, this understanding of the nature of reality, is of paramount importance to Heidegger's thinking, derived as it is from a phenomenology of existence. The idea of that which is real and present yet occulted, I contend, is in fact a single thread which runs throughout and unifies a great deal of Heidegger's most original thinking. This essential notion of concealed and unconcealed, as that which characterizes all that is most central to our existence, is integral not only to the concept of truth, or *aletheia*, but also, as I will attempt to show, to virtually every other of the most intriguing concepts in Heidegger's thought, such as the relationship between "earth" and "world," the *fourfold* of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals, his understanding of *poiesis*, art, poetry, and the poet's relationship to the divine, to the thinker, and to humanity as a whole, as well as myth itself, and its rightful place, according to Heidegger, as that which is central to human life in our attempt to attain to real dwelling.

In the spirit of Heidegger's emphasis on the active receptivity of *Gelassenheit* or "releasement," I believe that our endeavor to make sense of some of the more seemingly esoteric strands of Heidegger's thought is made easier if we first open ourselves to receiving this concept of the integral nature of concealment with unconcealment, and thus allow it to be our guiding word, so to speak. Again, this concept that we are attempting to fathom in a general way, if understood and accepted, will in turn allow us to see how it permeates, inheres within, or otherwise weaves together in essence the various aforementioned important concepts in Heidegger's thinking. Perhaps before attempting to spell out what it is, we should be clear on what it is not. This idea of concealed and unconcealed should not be thought of as a pair of opposites. It should not be thought of as thesis and antithesis, nor as a proposition and its negation. Rather, it may be thought

of as a pair of interdependent complements but without the notion of a distinct dividing line between the two which constitute the "pair." Perhaps a more realistic imagistic conceptualization would yield something like a circular continuum on which at each of the two 180 degree points one would find what we call "concealment" and "unconcealment" while in between would be all manner of degrees of the two in their intermingling and integral interrelatedness.

In more physical and material terms, one may try to better grasp truth as *a-letheia* or un-concealing in a practical manner in the following way: imagine you are standing in front of a tree. You want to know about the tree, let's say. You want to know the *truth* about it. Well, you can undertake to very diligently pursue a view of all its parts, inside and out. However, notice that when you are looking at one part of the tree, a different part of the tree is not available to your view. It isn't any less true or any less real, but it is concealed. When you move to bring a concealed part of the tree into view, thus bringing it into unconcealment, the other part becomes concealed from your view. The roots may even remain concealed. Of course, we must keep in mind that the crucial difference (if indeed there be one) between a tree and truth is that the former is finite, and the latter, as will be explained in more detail soon, is infinite.²

Heidegger's embrace of and emphasis upon the Greeks and their concept of *a-letheia* is important to him because his own understanding is one in which everything is

² One might respond here by asking, "Isn't the intelligibility of the tree also infinite?" My point was not so much to get a final answer on the finitude or infinitude of the tree per se but to make clear that truth, as it is being set forth, is to be understood as infinite. One can see, I believe, that the tree as a material object is finite, at least in certain very real practical regards. Of course, were we to venture off into new physics and atoms and particles and wave collapse, etc., things are more complicated. We could also make the case that there are infinite ways in which the tree may be understood.

ultimately constituted by this essential reality of concealed and unconcealed. Of course, for Heidegger, the Greeks were special not only because this essential fullness was their lived reality, but because they lived it without making it explicit, analyzing it, and setting it forth conceptually in conscious opposition to something else. That very unique and special situation that the Greeks occupied in relation to this matter, although it can never be recovered now that it has been lost, is a situation that Heidegger believes may be approximated by means of proper understanding and effort--albeit with a few obvious differences. Regarding the unique situation of the Greeks in terms of their relationship to *a-letheia* or concealedness and unconcealedness, Heidegger says:

[F]or the Greeks the mutual counter-essence of *aletheia* and *lethe* was experienced originally. We might therefore expect that this essential correlation between *aletheia* and *lethe* would also, in a correspondingly original way, be thought through by the Greeks and posed in thinking. This expectation is not fulfilled. The Greeks never did explicitly think through *aletheia* and *lethe* with regard to their essence and the ground of their essence, since already, i.e., prior to *all* thinking and poetizing, these pervade the to-be-thought as its "essence." The Greeks think and poetize and "deal" *within* the essence of *aletheia* and *lethe*, but they do not think and poetize *about* this essence and they do not "deal" with it. For the Greeks it suffices to be claimed by *aletheia* itself and to be encompassed by it. It is a sign of the necessity ruling its essence that Greek humanity, at its inception, does not need to think about the essence of *aletheia* (and of *lethe*). And when, at the time of the close of the Greek world, in a certain sense a thinking "about" *aletheia* is inaugurated, then this inauguration is precisely a sign of that imminent closing. But the history of the modern world and its generations is much different.³

Here we see that Heidegger understands the Greeks as having existed in intimate relatedness to this central aspect of existence, but in a way that we might best describe as an existence of purely *unreflective awareness*. In other words, the Greeks were not

³ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 8.

engaging in reflecting upon their unreflective awareness and experience. In this regard, they could better be described as simply being in flow with that reality. The distinction between what I am calling “being in flow with that reality” versus being engaged in a reflective awareness of it may be understood by thinking of what it is like to engage in an activity of embodiment versus what it is like to reflect upon that engagement. For example, it is one thing to ride a bicycle. It is quite another to think about riding a bicycle. Moreover, riding a bicycle may well be made more difficult if one attempts to think about it and do it at the same time. The same can be said for any number of embodied activities of a certain sort, such as snow skiing, skating, snowboarding, dancing, swimming, etc. It is here that we should probably refresh ourselves with something from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* to help make clearer our meaning:

The world is there before any possible analysis of mine, and it would be artificial to make it the outcome of a series of syntheses . . . When I begin to reflect my reflection bears upon an unreflective experience; moreover my reflection cannot be unaware of itself as an event, and so it appears to itself in the light of a truly creative act, of a changed structure of consciousness, and yet it has to recognize, as having priority over its own operations, the world which is given to the subject, because the subject is given to himself. The real has to be described, not constructed or formed. Which means that I cannot put perception into the same category as the syntheses represented by judgements, acts or predications.⁴

There are many activities of embodiment that, as such, are really best understood not as "judgements, acts or predications" but as "perceptions." The aforementioned activities of skiing, dancing, etc., may certainly fall into this category. For a better understanding of

⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, x.

the idea of an activity of embodiment being a "perception," let us look at something else Merleau-Ponty says about using a cane or walking-stick:

Learning to find one's way among things with a stick, which we gave a little earlier as an example of motor habit, is equally an example of perceptual habit. Once the stick has become a familiar instrument, the world of feelable things recedes and now begins, not at the outer skin of the hand, but at the end of the stick.⁵

In the same way that one encounters the world as unreflective experience or engages in an activity of embodiment without reflecting upon it or habitually uses a stick as an extension of the hand as means of simple perception, the Greeks lived within *a-letheia* and *lethe* without reflecting upon it, it was simply part of what Merleau-Ponty would call their perception. This, I believe, is what Heidegger has in mind when he stresses that the Greeks thought and poetized within the essence of *a-letheia*. There was no reflecting upon that unreflective experience, no conceptual analysis thereof, and no attempts to understand and articulate it. *A-letheia* was the real, as Heidegger put it; it was the world which was given to the Greeks. And that is precisely what Heidegger means when he says that the Greeks did not "deal" with *a-letheia* but dealt within it. Of course, for us, being already engaged in reflection, the best we can do is try to imagine what it would be like to not so much deal with concealedness and unconcealedness but to deal within it, for clearly in our modern and late-modern worlds, we have already been subject to that "changed structure of consciousness" and put in a position where we must "deal" with it. The key, I contend in agreement with Heidegger, and as I hope to show, is to return as

⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, 152.

best we can to an encounter with the real so as to describe it as it is and take our start from there.

In an attempt to approach more closely this concept of concealedness and unconcealedness as it appears in Heidegger, it may well be instructive to consider ideas regarding “truth” set forth by Jean-Paul Sartre in his *The Anti-Semite and the Jew*. In the piece, Sartre attempts to explain what it is that makes an anti-semite an anti-semite, or more generally, what makes a bigot a bigot. His explanation involves the workings of a cluster of specific fears that together serve to create a bigot by means of the bigot’s own response to them. Central to his explanation, however, is the very concept of truth itself, and the way in which a bigot fears truth. Sartre explains that the bigot longs for impenetrability and stasis due to his fear of change and his subsequent need for something immutable. But to say that the bigot fears truth in general is to miss the more subtle but crucial reality of the situation, the phenomenological experience of truth itself. Sartre explains that the bigot fears not the content of truth but its very *form*, for the form of truth, according to Sartre, is infinite.⁶ Here, we can understand the encounter with the infinitude of truth as phenomenologically akin to facing death or to gazing into the abyss, in that each of these are encounters with something necessarily beyond comprehension and adequation. By contemplating such things, we can gain some perspective as to how one experiences existence itself.

The bigot, for Sartre, is someone who wishes to be in possession of complete and immutable truth because he cannot deal with the prospect of the truth not being finite.

⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Anti-Semite and the Jew*, 18.

His basically fear-driven modality of being simply cannot entertain the prospect of the truth not being something which he may possess in totality in so far as he desperately needs something unchanging upon which he may rely to quell his fears and anxiety. As Sartre explains, the bigot is afraid of freedom and longs for the security that he believes comes from submission (enslavement?) to an unwavering truth. Sartre makes clear that a bigot will even ignore evidence that points to an error in his beliefs or thinking, so frantic and thoroughgoing is his need to be right and in possession of the truth. Thus, he may well be said to forego authentic being-toward-death and to refuse "to learn." Of course, understanding and accepting truth as infinite presupposes an acknowledgement of the finitude of human existence, and that acknowledgement entails the idea that what would constitute being rational, as Sartre explains, is that a man have an attitude of openness toward truth, understanding as he does, that truth exceeds him necessarily. This dynamic experience which is the emergence of truth as content from truth in its infinite form is the very play and movement that constitutes the unconcealing and concealing that is *aletheia*. Such dynamism and mutability are the conditions that allow for truth as that which is infinite in its form to perpetually reveal itself in new and different ways. This idea is captured nicely in Iain Thomson's *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* when he explains: "For, it remains possible for being to continue to become newly intelligible only if it cannot ever become fully intelligible."⁷

As mentioned above, Sartre explains that the reaction of the bigot, when faced with truth as infinite, is to misuse reason. Sartre stresses that a bigot, as such, misuses reason

⁷ Iain Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, 76.

in a very real sense in that he takes his hypothesis as truth and interprets all evidence in its light, ignoring and outright dismissing any evidence that would call into question his own beliefs. Sartre states: "[T]hey wish to lead the kind of life wherein reasoning and research play only a subordinate role, wherein one seeks only what he has already found, wherein one becomes only what he already was."⁸ This reduction, what can be understood as an erroneous simplification of infinite truth to finite knowledge, is precisely what Heidegger seeks to avoid in developing the various concepts that are most central to his thought, all of which are tied to the concealed and unconcealed. Thus, Sartre, in his understanding of both truth as infinite and healthy reason as something "open" and "receptive," is in perfect keeping with the views articulated by Heidegger. They are both in full awareness of the inestimable importance of understanding truth as essentially constituted by the concealed and unconcealed. To live in accordance with such truth is to learn.

Sartre's description in *The Anti-Semite and the Jew* of what constitutes a "reasonable man" is itself very much in keeping with a description of what it is to be able "to learn" set forth by Heidegger in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Sartre explains that a reasonable man is open, tentative even, in his point of view, in that he recognizes that his held opinions and views are continually subject to revision given new experience and discovery. This proper use of reason, for Sartre, is in grave contrast to the way a bigot employs reason.⁹ The subtlety and nuance of this same idea is developed in a different way in the thought of Heidegger. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger writes:

⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Anti-Semite and the Jew*, 18.

⁹ Ibid.

But to know means to be able to stand in the truth. Truth is the openness of beings . . . Merely to have information, however wide-ranging it may be, is not to know . . . [T]o know means *to be able to learn*. Of course, everyday understanding believes that one has knowledge when one needs to learn nothing more, because one has finished learning. No. The only one who knows is the one who understands that he must always learn again, and who above all, on the basis of this understanding, has brought himself to the point where he continually *can learn*. This is far harder than possessing information.¹⁰

The notion of truth, once understood as *a-letheia*, makes incredible sense in that it resonates with so much of our lived experience. It provides a key to understanding certain phenomena of existence in that it reveals how things that we may merely sense as being connected are indeed interwoven despite our inability to see and touch each thread. Hence, there is the sense one may have that there is indeed a connectivity between things but that it is seemingly existent behind a veil, just out of reach, and beyond the possibility of any prehensile capture that would render it fully and completely comprehended or apprehended in a manner fitting a “modern” understanding.

There is a particular word used by Heidegger that seems to capture much of that to which we thus allude; that word is *Innigkeit*. While standard translations of the term include “sincerity,” “ardor,” and “intimacy,” much thought has been given to the ways in which Heidegger uses the term and the ways in which we might best translate it in order to capture his meaning. In an interesting essay, “Translating *Innigkeit*,” in which various strands of thought relevant to this project seem to merge, Peter Warnek offers an extended treatment of the concept. In the context of discussing Heidegger's views regarding translation and interpretation, Warnek calls to mind the important distinction

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 23.

made by Heidegger between “earth” and “world” when he writes, "What is at issue in such translations is not simply the experiences these words should convey, but rather the world itself for which these words and the experiences opened up by them play a constituting role."¹¹ This notion that “world” is conditioned and so never reveals to us everything is a key part of understanding *Innigkeit* as “the belonging together of the strange,” according to Warnek. Moreover, this understanding of the world as conditioned allows us to see how the concept of *Innigkeit* captures what I believe is the core of Heidegger's thought regarding the reality of Da-sein as explained through the concept of concealed and unconcealed. Warnek speaks to this when he writes:

It thus cannot be said that the goal of the translation of this word consists simply in rendering the word familiar or comprehensible. The goal of the translation cannot consist in rendering clear the meaning of the word because the saying power of the word has to do with the way in which obscurity can become manifest, precisely *as obscure*. The Word says or reveals a necessary concealment in the becoming manifest of things."¹²

Warnek tells us that, for Heidegger, *Innigkeit* is a *Geheimnis*, and that it is not to be understood simply as the "mystery" of being but "also as the way in which human dwelling is *grounded* in a hiddenness, or, said otherwise, the way in which the human world belongs to the earth."¹³ The notion that human dwelling is grounded in a hiddenness can perhaps be illustrated further by looking at Heidegger's discussion of the fourfold, its “oneness” and its relationship to dwelling, to which we now turn.

¹¹ Peter Warnek "Translating Innigkeit: The Belonging Together of the Strange,"59.

¹² Ibid., 63.

¹³ Ibid.

II.2. Dwelling and the Fourfold

In his essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," Heidegger tells us: "By a *primal* oneness the four—earth and sky, divinities and mortals—belong together in one."¹⁴ Heidegger emphasizes the "primal oneness" here because, as he goes on to explain, no one part of *the fourfold* is ever thought without the other three, yet we might easily forget to give thought to "the simple oneness of the four."¹⁵ Heidegger explains to us that mortals assume their rightful place in the fourfold by means of *dwelling*. He goes on to make clear that the mortals indeed have a unique role to play in their dwelling in that they "safeguard the fourfold in its essential unfolding."¹⁶ His meaning here will perhaps be clearer after some further exploring of the essay.

In dwelling, Heidegger tells us, mortals *save* the earth. He says: "To save properly means to set something free into its own essence . . . Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it."¹⁷ This notion of *saving* as setting something free into its own essence may be understood more fully in light of something Heidegger says in his "Letter on Humanism." There he says: "To embrace a "thing" or a "person" in their essence means to love them, to favor them. Thought in a more original way, such favoring means the bestowal of their essence as a gift. Such favoring . . . can let something essentially unfold in its provenance, that is, let it be."¹⁸ To save the earth, mortals must first orient themselves toward it in such a way that the essence of the earth is recognized. In order to recognize the essence of the earth, mortals must understand

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 351.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 352.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 241.

that the earth does have an essence. The first step in doing this involves an understanding of the earth as an endless source of meaning that is nonetheless inherently beyond complete comprehension. Here we find the relevance of *a-letheia* yet again and the application of the concealed and unconcealed to the concept of earth, for the earth, as such, is beyond the comprehension of mortals in their finitude, and while we can indeed and inevitably do seek to know more and more, those who may be said to be *in the know* are some of the first to assert the limits of what is and can be known. We can see a similar idea at play in the following from Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*:

The ordinary citizen today assumes that science knows what makes the community clock tick; the scientist is equally sure that he does not. He knows that the biotic mechanism is so complex that its workings may never be fully understood. That man is, in fact, only a member of a biotic team is shown by an ecological interpretation of history. Many historical events, hitherto explained solely in terms of human enterprise, were actually biotic interactions between people and land. The characteristics of the land determined the facts quite as potently as the characteristics of the men who lived on it.¹⁹

Leopold here makes a few different and relevant points. He says that an average citizen may mistakenly hold as true the scientific claims that (1) science has a monopoly on truth and (2) science has or can have all the answers regarding the earth. This scientific error in thinking on the part of many is related to the hubristic idea discussed earlier in terms of truth being understood as something finite and wholly attainable. Leopold also points out that the scientists themselves know their limitations. It is not uncommon to hear those in the various fields of science say that in answering one question, ten others arise. And Leopold's idea that what has formerly been understood as merely the results

¹⁹ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 240.

of human actions is now understood to be the result of a dynamic interaction "between people and land," or for our purposes, between earth and mortals. This is of course quite apropos to the ideas under discussion from Heidegger's own thinking. For the "earth" is not merely a set of resources to be optimized, despite numerous attempts by mortals to make it so. We can think through this more deeply by looking at what Leopold says in the following excerpt, continued from the above quote. I believe we can indeed understand how earth, as concealed, is to be distinguished from world, as unconcealed:

Consider, for example, the settlement of the Mississippi valley. In the years following the Revolution, three groups were contending for its control: the native Indian, the French and English traders, and the American settlers. While historians wonder what would have happened if the English at Detroit had thrown a little more weight into the Indian side of those tipsy scales which decided the outcome of the colonial migration into the cane-lands of Kentucky, it is time now to ponder the fact that the cane-lands, when subjected to the particular mixture of forces represented by the cow, plow, fire, and axe of the pioneer, became bluegrass. What if the plant succession inherent in this dark and bloody ground had, under the impact of these forces, given us some worthless sedge, shrub, or weed? Would Boone and Kenton have held out? Kentucky was one sentence in the drama of history. We are commonly told what the human actors in this drama tried to do, but we are seldom told that their success, or the lack of it, hung in large degree on the reaction of particular soils to the impact of the particular forces exerted by their occupancy.²⁰

We can see what happened in Kentucky as an example of that which was concealed and hidden within the earth becoming unconcealed and emerging as a new world through the dynamic interaction of mortals and earth. Indeed, the idea that land, or "earth," is not merely a thing but is itself a being that interacts with other beings is an idea quite common to much of the literature in ecological and environmental philosophy. We have also come to understand that many of the diseases that afflict human beings are also the

²⁰ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 240.

direct result of actions taken by human beings that degrade, damage, devastate, or otherwise violently or carelessly affect the earth, and they must be understood as the result of the interaction of the two. By bulldozing and thus uprooting trees in a rainforest, humans have unleashed deadly viruses that had lain dormant for centuries, possibly millenia. A recent article in the New York Times on the ecology of disease said, "AIDS, Ebola, West Nile, SARS, Lyme disease and hundreds more diseases that have occurred over the last several decades — don't just happen. They are a result of things people do to nature."²¹ The concealed is unconcealed, for good or ill as humans would evaluate it, when the four of the fourfold interact. I shall suggest that Heidegger's urging us to the attainment of proper dwelling can be understood as "the cure" for such dis-eases, or at least the elimination of conditions that may give rise to them. The proper orientation toward the earth entails, at the very least, an attitude of reverence toward nature, and an appreciation and understanding of nature, of the earth, as being made up of both unconcealed and concealed truth, and a desire to stand in appropriate relation thereto so as to experience the emergence of significance. Thomson puts this point nicely when he explains that for Heidegger "earth" is that which does "give rise to our worlds of meaning without ever being exhausted by them."²² Awe and wonder are no doubt inherent in existence when we truly dwell.

The attitude toward the earth which preserves its status as an endless source of meaning is one readily embraced by many ecologists and environmental thinkers,

²¹ Robbins, Jim, "The Ecology of Disease," The New York Times, accessed November 1, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/15/sunday-review/the-ecology-of-disease.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

²² Iain Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," 387.

including proponents of deep ecology. As deep ecologist Warwick Fox explains, such an attitude is understood to be an intuition, that is, a view that itself cannot be proven, although it should be understood to arise from and be grounded in phenomenological experience. Fox writes, "[T]he central vision of deep ecologists *is* a matter of intuition . . . it is a matter of trusting one's inner voice in the adoption of a view that cannot itself be proven or disconfirmed."²³ In other words, deep ecologists, as such, share an understanding of the value of nature that results not from a process of reasoning but rather is the result of direct experience of nature and an inescapable sense of appreciation and connectedness with nature. As Fox explains: "The experience of commonality with another entity does imply a sense of similarity with that entity, even if this similarity is not of any obvious physical, emotional or mental kind; it may involve "nothing more" than the deep-seated realization that all entities are aspects of a single unfolding reality."²⁴ The realization that all entities are aspects of a single unfolding reality seems akin to what it is for a mortal to dwell and safeguard the fourfold in its unfolding. The view of deep ecology is indeed one that preserves the earth and safeguards it. Such a view acknowledges the earth as an infinite source of meaning and denies anthropocentrism. It recognizes the interrelatedness of all beings and the limits of our human finitude. Thinking which arises out of a phenomenological experience of the world and in turn gives way to such intuitions is further evidenced in something written by Theodore Roszak:

Ecology stands at a critical cross-roads. Is it, too, to become another anthropocentric technique of efficient manipulation, a matter of

²³ Warwick Fox, "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of Our Time," 256.

²⁴ Warwick Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism*, 231.

enlightened self-interest and expert, long-range resource budgeting? Or will it meet the nature mystics on their own terms and so recognize that we are to embrace nature as if indeed it were a beloved person in whom, as in ourselves, something sacred dwells?²⁵

The question posed by Roszak seems to ask if we will adopt the kind of view that Heidegger sets forth in his explication of what constitutes *saving the earth* by means of true dwelling and forego the common anthropocentric views that have long been standard by embracing that which is held dear by the “nature mystics” and return to an understanding of the essential oneness of the four of the fourfold.

In true dwelling, as Heidegger explains to us, mortals also “receive the sky as sky. They leave to the sun and the moon their journey.”²⁶ Heidegger explains that in dwelling the mortals open themselves to the sky and its movements as the integral part of the fourfold that it is, accepting what it is in itself and accepting it as part of the One of which they themselves are also part. They do not seek to exert control over it, but, as Heidegger tells us, “They leave to the seasons their blessing and their inclemency.”²⁷ In dwelling, mortals tune into the flow of the natural world and adapt themselves to it. In receiving the sky as sky, mortals bring themselves into harmony with the natural world. They attune themselves to the rhythm of existence, the ebb and flow of natural phenomena. By means of an attitude of openness, an attitude that allows for the reception of reality, mortals are able to recognize the patterns and movements in the sky. Such an understanding allows for the harmonious existence of the mortals within and as part of the fourfold. Possession of the proper attitude toward earth and sky, an attitude that we

²⁵ Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends*, 400.

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” 352.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

will later come to see is comprised of what Heidegger calls *knowledge* and *tenderness*, is what ushers in the possibility for a greater understanding of existence. Regarding the divinities and the mortals' relation to them, Heidegger tells us:

Mortals dwell in that they await the divinities as divinities. In hope they hold up to the divinities what is un hoped for. They wait for intimations of their coming and do not mistake the signs of their absence. They do not make their gods for themselves and do not worship idols. In the very depth of misfortune they wait for the weal that has been withdrawn.²⁸

Most fundamental to this relationship, it seems, is the way in which mortals are essentially in subjection to the divinities. We must be careful that we do not construe this subjection as some kind of enslavement or demeaning degradation. Rather, mortals, by their very nature and essence, are subjects of the divinities and subject to their divine rule. This way of capturing the nature of reality is indeed metaphorical, hence the central importance of myth, yet it is representative of the phenomenological experience of an embodied being when he or she reflects upon any of a number of unreflective experiences which make up the repertoire of human experiences, experiences which seem to emerge independent of choice or will, experiences that seem to seize the individual, like a possessing spirit, experiences such as rage, passion, joy, etc. One does not reflect and thus choose to experience joy. When one experiences joy, one experiences joy as a being in subjection to joy. I will delve further into this idea in a subsequent chapter and look at other important things said by Heidegger on this matter.

Bearing in mind Heidegger's assertion that the fourfold is itself one, we may contemplate the interdependence of and essential link between each of the four of the

²⁸ Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 352.

fourfold. The nature of this interdependence between mortals and divinities is such that it can be understood as on a par with the operation of nature itself. In other words, we should understand that there are natural “laws” that determine the ways in which the interdependence between mortals and divinities plays out. To say that, however, is not to imply that we are able to necessarily discover and catalogue all such “laws.” For any such “laws,” being another part of truth or *a-letheia*, would also be subject to the concealed and unconcealed. And what's more, if we do indeed grasp this interrelatedness and understand things in this way, we must forego any conceptualization of the divinities as *supernatural* or *otherworldly*. The divinities, as one of the four of the fourfold, are not outside, above, or beyond the other three of the four. The fourfold is itself one, as Heidegger tells us, and yet it is four: earth, sky, divinities and mortals. To conceptualize the divinities and their operations as supernatural or otherworldly is to fundamentally fail to understand Heidegger, as well as lessons brought to light earlier by Nietzsche that will themselves be further explored in a later chapter.

In thinking a little more about what it is for mortals to “await the divinities as divinities,” it is helpful to think through the idea of mortals being in subjection to the divinities and what that means. In being in subjection to divinity, the mortal should not be understood as a *subject* in relation to an *object* that is divinity, which would imply a relation between them that sets up the mortal as a consciousness and the divinity as a thing to be represented therein. Nor is the conception rendered correct by positing that the divinity is a *subject* that relates to a mortal as an *object*, and for the same reasons. To say that mortals are in subjection to the divinities is best understood by thinking more deeply about how we should understand the term *subject* and the way it is defined. If we

look at the very meaning of the word, we see that *to be subject* to something is simply *to be open or exposed to the force* of that something. Thus, mortals are open or exposed to the force of divinity. Mortals, in recognizing this as true, are able to wait for the *intimations* of the divinities, as Heidegger tells us. In other words, they wait for those manifestations by means of which the divinities make themselves known. Such manifestations will be *intimate* in that *intimacy* is the nature of the relationship that holds between mortals and divinities. In reflecting upon the word *intimate*, its forms and its etymology, we can perhaps better understand what is being proposed here.

The infinitive verb *to intimate* means *an act by which someone or something makes itself known*. One may *intimate* in hopes of being intimate or achieving intimacy. The Latin *intimare* means *to make known, to impress upon*, and *intimus* means *the most inward or most within*. For Heidegger, in the German, it is *Innigkeit*. More will be said about this term a little later. For an *intimate* relation to hold between two beings or things, there must exist on the part of both beings both the active and the passive element. The active aspect may be understood as being willing and able to truly *intimate* that which is most inward to the other. In the case of conscious beings, one must be *intimus* in one's own thoughts, words, and actions and thus truly reveal that which indeed is *the most inward* and offer it to the other, thereby having a be-ing toward the other that is *intimare*. The passive aspect may be understood as assuming an orientation toward the other such that one is able *to be impressed upon* by the other's be-ing, a being that is itself *intimare*. One must be open to the knowing of the *intimus* of the other, that is, one must be open to receiving that which is *the most inward or most within* the other. Thus, the reciprocal relation that is intimacy is achieved. Much more will be said about what it

looks like for this to play out between a mortal and a divinity in a subsequent chapter. And as we will see, the characteristics that Heidegger terms *knowledge* and *tenderness* are crucial for the occurrence of *intimacy*, and for Heidegger they are given their fullest expression in the person of a poet and his unique relation to divinity.²⁹

Heidegger also reminds us in the above quoted passage that the divinities are in no way *made* by the mortals. Rather, we should understand the divinities as being given as what they are, and, as we will see, the clearest articulations by means of which the divinities are disclosed is found in myth. Mortals do not *make* the divinities. Nor do mortals worship idols, Heidegger tells us. The divinities are rightly said to not be idols in that they are not *mere appearances* or *representations*, either mental or material, manufactured by the imaginations of mortals. As will hopefully become clearer as we proceed, it is the divinities who bring to mortals an abundance of rich experiences by means of their existence as transcendental realities, elements, or principles. Thus, when Heidegger says, “In hope they hold up to the divinities what is un hoped for,” he puts us in remembrance of the wisdom of Heraclitus.³⁰ For it was Heraclitus who wrote, “Unless he hopes for the un hoped-for, he will not find it, since it is not to be hunted out and is impassable.”³¹ The implicit truth in this statement is, once again, the assertion of that fundamental idea of inexhaustible meaning, of the always partially concealed nature of reality, of the importance and meaning of the finitude of mortals and their relation to the infinite form of truth, to being itself. Thus, this fundamental recognition of the finitude of mortal existence and the acknowledgment of the existence of something greater,

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Holderlin's Poetry*, 192.

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” 352.

³¹ Heraclitus, Accessed November 2, 2014.

http://home.wlu.edu/~mahonj/Ancient_Philosophers/Heraclitus.htm

something which is itself a source of meaning, coupled with an orientation of openness toward that which is greater, is what allows for the very possibility of more than what Heidegger calls in the quote below the *merely actual*. The divinities are the source from which flows all that comprises mortals' past, present, and future, both known and unknown. The very notion of the *unhoped-for* points us toward that which is concealed yet is very much in the realm of possibility. It would seem that what is most relevant in what is said by both Heidegger and Heraclitus is that that which is in the realm of the possible necessarily exceeds all our expectations, for the realm of the possible is infinite and we, as mortals, are finite. Thus, not even in our most vivid imaginings can we ever conjure up an expectation fit to match our anticipation. This is precisely how it is that we can and should, as mortals, hope for the *unhoped-for*. We could say that it is against the loss of the *unhoped-for* that Heidegger makes his plea for us to understand the danger of average everydayness in *Being and Time*, when he writes:

This leveling off of Dasein's possibilities to what is proximally at its everyday disposal also results in a dimming down of the possible as such. The average everydayness of concern becomes blind to its possibilities, and tranquilizes itself with that which is merely 'actual'. This tranquilizing does not rule out a high degree of diligence in one's own concern, but arouses it. In this case no positive new possibilities are willed, but that which is at one's disposal becomes 'tactically' altered in such a way that there is a semblance of something happening.³²

What Heidegger is describing here is not only the loss of hope for the *unhoped-for*, but a fundamental foregoing of real dwelling that occurs in such a way that one is unaware that it is happening since one is operating under an active illusion of sorts. One becomes highly involved in the day to day realities of existence, so much so that nothing beyond

³² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 239.

those mundane cares and concerns is even possible, yet one feels like one is working hard, moving forward, living.

Regarding dwelling, Heidegger tells us that mortals, “initiate their own essential being—their being capable of death as death—into the use and practice of this capacity, so that there may be a good death.”³³ Heidegger explains that we are not to understand him here as saying that death is some “empty nothing” that is for all mortals the goal. Nor are we to understand Heidegger as casting some sort of nihilistic wet blanket over the whole of dwelling itself. Rather, if we recognize *death* as the actuality and capacity that he understands it to be (an integral part of *physis*) and we understand in the proper way his meaning of its “use and practice,” we realize that death is simply an integral part of those inevitable transformations that occur in mortal existence for mortals in their being as mortals. A simple way of capturing his thought is the idea that *Life is Death*. In other words, life itself depends upon and is made up of death, and of course this is most easily observed in the cycles of nature: day into night into day, spring into summer into autumn into winter into spring again, the process of growth, fruiting and flowering, withering, then dying that is the essence of all living things. And as will be elaborated upon further a bit later, life itself in all its parts is made up of continuous changes that may themselves be understood as “deaths” in that something that was no longer is. Death, as a regular occurring event, may well be thought to be the most fundamental manifestation that is the play of the concealed and unconcealed. When one understands death for what it is, accepts it, and accustoms him or herself to it as the necessary and

³³ Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” 352.

recurring event of ek-sistence, as the event that not only brings to an end a path, a plan, a project, a phase, a relationship, or a life, but that also by its very nature makes possible the birth of something else, then one is on his or her way to *a good death*.

If we are to grasp the concept of dwelling in its fullness, understanding the centrality and importance of death in Heidegger's thought is crucial. One need not read more than a few choice lines of Heidegger here and there to know that he has something much broader and deeper in mind when he uses the term "death" than the simple expiration of a life. While elaborating on the oneness of the four of the fourfold, he writes: "The mortals are the human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies, and indeed continually, as long as he remains on earth, under sky, before the divinities."³⁴ For Heidegger, mortals, as Dasein, are in an utterly unique position (this becomes relevant and discussed in a different way in the final chapters). Mortals are the only beings for whom existence itself is an issue. Mortals have as central to their existence care, finitude, and an awareness of the way in which they are thrown into existence to travel through potentiality toward an inevitable end.

Heidegger says:

Death is a possibility-of-Being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This is a possibility in which the issue is nothing less than Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Its death is the possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there.³⁵

And so it appears that while all living things perish, mortals alone have a capacity to put into practice their ability to honestly and openly confront death in all its manifestations

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 352.

³⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 294.

and occurrences and in doing so make themselves able to attain “a good death.” And as he stressed when he said that doing this was in no way to “make death, as empty Nothing, the goal,” putting this capacity into use and practice ensures fuller and richer dwelling in that the practice itself is a necessary means to it. This idea will be illustrated in the final section of this chapter when we look at Heidegger’s description of the dwellers within the Black Forest farmhouse.

Heidegger tells us that the four of the fourfold is one. In order to facilitate our understanding of the idea of the fourfold as parts of that which is primally one, Heidegger’s explanation of the Greek term *peras* may be helpful. About the Greek *peras*, or *boundary*, he says, “A boundary is not that at which something stops, but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its essential unfolding*.”³⁶ If we apply this idea to the concept of the fourfold, we can see that Being, as the primal one that is the fourfold, could not *begin its essential unfolding* as the fourfold without the *boundaries* that mark the four of the fourfold into the four that they are. In undertaking to better understand the Greek *peras*, I sought to explore related Greek terms. The various words which share in the root, be they verb, noun, adjective, adverb, or participle all involve the notion of that which is finite, limited, with a distinct end or a finish.³⁷ The participle *peperasmēnos*, for example, is a word that appears often in Aristotle, such as in his *Physics*. In a discussion of Aristotle's use of the word in his critique of Zeno, Cherubin and Mannucci write, "Similarly, *peperasmēnon* is often translated as "finite," but it may equally well mean "limited," "definite," or

³⁶ Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” 356.

³⁷ Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 620-622.

"determinate."³⁸ This is in important contrast to *apeiron*, that which is indeterminate, indefinite, and without limit. And thus if we conceive of *peras* as that which makes something determinate or delineates something as such in contrast to *apeiron* as that which is indeterminate, we can see why Heidegger would emphasize the importance of such a boundary as that which allows something to unfold and become that which it is.

Seeing that the boundary is that which marks out each of the four, we can understand that the boundary is not something to be understood as separating, dividing, cleaving, or severing into four what was one, given that that which is one, as such, is determinate, definite, and finite. Rather, the *peras* or boundary should be understood as that which allows form to be given to what would otherwise be limitless and thus without form, it is that which allows Being to unfold in its essence as beings, as the fourfold. Let us turn now to a discussion of concepts during which this idea itself will be discussed more fully.

II.3. Boundaries, Chaos, and Intimacy

In order to gain a better understanding of the way in which Heidegger intends us to understand *peras*, I believe it may be instructive to turn our attention to another concept, the concept of *Chaos*. In his essay, "First of All Came Chaos," Drew Hyland offers some insights and ideas that can assist us in our thinking. Beginning with the claim that Heidegger's work should, above all, teach us to think, Hyland undertakes to show that the real impact of Hesiod's claim that "first of all came Chaos" is experienced only when the original Greek conceptualization of the word Chaos is understood. He argues that while

³⁸ Cherubin and Mannucci, "A very short history of Ultrafinitism," 190.

our modern English understanding of Chaos as a "primal soup" or "an unintelligible, undifferentiated, unarticulable condition" is one that fits nicely with accounts from other cultures and even seems to prefigure the ideas of Anaximander, such an understanding of the word is not really in keeping with its original Greek meaning. Making use of the research and work of Mitchell Miller, John Bussanich, and others, Hyland explains that the word Chaos means something like *a gap, a yawn, a separation*.³⁹

Hyland proceeds to make the case that the questions and assumptions that seem to naturally follow from such an idea, however reasonable they and the presuppositions they indicate seem to be, are nonetheless in error. Hyland says: "Almost from the time the original meaning of Hesiod's *chaos* as gap or separation was taken seriously, the question was asked, and answers ventured, as to what the entities were that *were separated* by Chaos."⁴⁰ Hyland goes on to work his way through the different proposals that have been made regarding the idea of pre-existing entities separated by Chaos and to show how each one, however long-held and dearly loved it may be, simply does not fit with Hesiod's actual words.

In attempting to diagnose the widespread error, Hyland cites the work of three different scholars of ancient Greek philosophy: Miller, Bussanich, and Cornford. About the three, Hyland says, "[T]hese views assume that if Chaos is a gap or a "between," it must be a gap in something that *precedes* (or is at least co-primordial with) Chaos, and that "something," Miller suggests, "implies a pre-existing undifferentiated field."⁴¹ It is this very notion, the notion that a gap or separation necessarily presupposes the existence

³⁹ Drew Hyland, "First of All Came Chaos," 10.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Drew Hyland, "First of All Came Chaos," 12.

of an undifferentiated field, Hyland believes is an error, for Hesiod asserts that "first of all came Chaos." Hyland says:

Difficult as it may be to understand, however counter to our intuitions that if Chaos is a gap or separation it must somehow *separate something*, I suggest we should take Hesiod's Greek in the passage under consideration to be indicating this truly remarkable thought: that Chaos, gap, separation, *comes before, is prior to, any pairings that it might subsequently separate. Difference precedes and is the condition for sameness or identity. The "between" somehow precedes the binaries that it distinguishes.*⁴²

Before I follow up on this notion of a "between which precedes the binaries it distinguishes," I wish to first follow up on Hyland's earlier suggestion regarding the view he attributes to Bussanich via a quote from Bussanich that Hyland employs in his essay. In Hyland's reading of Bussanich's essay, I think Hyland slightly misrepresents the view developed by Bussanich.⁴³ I believe Bussanich articulates his main point when he says, "The name Chaos symbolizes the initial stage of pre-cosmic reality--a yawning chasm or abyss. Since it stands at the beginning of things, it cannot be envisioned according to the laws of perspective or dimension."⁴⁴ As Bussanich fleshes out his view in his essay, I believe his understanding of Chaos is more nuanced than what Hyland allows and is somewhat at odds with Hyland's view in a subtle yet important way. While Hyland seeks to put forth an understanding of Chaos not as a thing itself nor as a something that presupposes the existence of any *things* but rather as something like the very concept of

⁴² Ibid., 13.

⁴³ Hyland quotes from 216 of Bussanich's essay "A Theoretical Interpretation of Hesiod's Chaos": "Relying on a literal reading of the text and on later conceptions of Chaos, many scholars have identified Chaos with the gap between heaven and earth. But it is unlikely that a gap between two cosmic masses could exist before the masses themselves," serves Hyland's purpose but does misrepresent the overall view articulated by Bussanich in the essay because Bussanich does not ultimately hold that Chaos is to be understood in such a way.

⁴⁴ John Bussanich, "A Theoretical Interpretation of Hesiod's Chaos," 214.

difference that would itself in turn allow for the existence of things, Bussanich seems to develop an understanding of Chaos that makes it neither a thing (or a something that presupposes any other things) nor Hyland's concept of *difference*. Bussanich writes, "Since its function is cosmogonic, Chaos must be defined as undimensional or principial space, an articulated nothing: it is the barest indication that there is a qualitative something, from and in which cosmic differentiation occurs."⁴⁵ And this is where we can see what may well be the most important difference in the respective views of Hyland and Bussanich, and where, as it will turn out, Bussanich seems to more fully heed the call to thinking in that he thinks further than does Hyland.

For Hyland, Chaos is difference. For Bussanich, Chaos is the opening up that allows for difference. It seems to me that certain ideas that are so centrally important to modern philosophy, such as that of *substance*, serve to render even more difficult our attempts at understanding of Chaos in this context. In his essay, Bussanich does offer us an assessment of the situation that is very much in keeping with certain ideas being developed overall in this project when he writes, "Speculation on the first things is the response of the imagination when finite experience confronts a transfinite reality, in this case the origin of the cosmos."⁴⁶ That which is referenced by the designation *transfinite reality*, I believe, is intimately tied to that which comprises the very heart of this project and to the very notion of truth as *a-letheia* and its essence of concealed and unconcealed. Furthermore, we could say that it is the response of the imagination when finite experience confronts a transfinite reality that gives rise to the articulation of myth itself,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ John Bussanich, "A Theoretical Interpretation of Hesiod's Chaos," 214.

for many of our phenomenological experiences in existence as human beings point us to the concealed and unconcealed, and in response, we are given naturally to imaginative speculation.

In thinking about the understanding of Chaos attributed to Hesiod and explored by Hyland, it is understandable how some might see it as unreasonable to propose that *difference* itself precede everything else. However, such thinking, when scrutinized, is the result of metaphysical presuppositions that themselves should call out for further thinking. Someone may thoughtfully ask, "Well, how can a concept, the concept of *difference*, coming into existence, be the necessary condition for the coming to existence of beings/things? Wouldn't there need to be a being from which beings come?" The ultimate point, however, is missed with such questioning in that it matters not whether there was a being or whether there was nothing since beings can only emerge once there is *difference* itself. This seems to me to be very much entwined with the Greek concept of *peras* explained earlier in that distinction and difference are themselves the necessary conditions for plurality itself. Thus, I believe we can accept that Chaos came first and recognize that it doesn't matter whether there was being or whether there was nothing before that time in that either way it was a homogeneity about which such a designation as *one* or *sameness* would not even apply since that concept itself presupposes plurality and difference, if not as prior, then at least as cotemporal/coprimordial. You must have at least two to say that they are the same, and in order to have two, there must exist *difference*. Moreover, the designation "one" cannot exist except in contrast to "not one" and the "not one" cannot be "nothing" in that that does not present a contrast to "one" since both are homogenous. There must be at least "two" in order to recognize "one."

And this is where, I believe, Hyland's thinking stopped too soon in that he only reasoned up to the necessity of *difference*, which was an important discovery but itself did call out for further thinking.

This very interesting concept of *difference* as the condition under which differentiated being may manifest does tie in quite nicely with the concept that we set forth at the outset as central to so much of Heidegger's thinking, the concept of *a-letheia* or the concealed and unconcealed. The concept of the concealed may be understood as analogous to the concept of difference in that there is a tendency of reason, it would seem, to draw an inference from the assertion of either of these concepts that then, as an assumption, is taken as a presupposition, albeit in error.⁴⁷ That is to say, just as one might take the positing of *Chaos as first* as indicating the preexistence of an undifferentiated field or a holistic entity or undifferentiated substance that subsequently is made to possess difference by means of the establishing of the existence of its parts, one may likewise take that which is *concealment* as indicating the preexistence of *unconcealment* as some kind of holistic entity or undifferentiated substance that is made to possess concealment by means of the establishing of the existence of its parts. They then might possibly feel compelled to believe and to pursue, albeit in vain, the acquisition of the truth in total unconcealment, much as they would the establishment of a so-called undifferentiated field, and perhaps even then proceed to build great edifices of knowledge on such a false belief.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ This particular kind of error in reasoning, i.e., taking an assumption and errantly presupposing it as a necessary premise is given treatment by Plato in his simile of the line in the *Republic*.

⁴⁸ This is reminiscent of points made by Trish Glazebrook in her essay, "Gynocentric Eco-Logics," to be examined later. She puts forth a critique of what she calls "phallic logic" in that, as a system, there is a

If we return now to that understanding of Chaos which Hyland referred to earlier as “a between that precedes the binaries which it distinguishes, and consider also the concept of *peras*, along with Warnek’s take on *Innigkeit*, we can see connections that may have otherwise been concealed begin to move into unconcealment. Hyland’s conceptualization of Chaos as “a between that precedes the binaries which it distinguishes” is an illuminating idea and for a number of reasons. It is very much amenable conceptually to Heidegger’s understanding of *peras* as “that from which something begins its essential unfolding,” and it relates quite nicely to another concept central to Heidegger’s thought, that of *Innigkeit*. Holding in mind the idea of *Chaos as first*, it is interesting to look at something said by Warnek in the essay, “Translating *Innigkeit*.” Warnek writes:

The task of translating *Innigkeit* thus demands the translation of the movement of translation itself, the thought of the *difference* that joins all things together . . . the translation of *Innigkeit* as the belonging together of the strange already says the difficulty of thinking and saying this word . . . The strange, therefore, has to be thought neither as what belongs nor simply as what does not belong; the strange is rather strange precisely in the belonging together that would preserve the strange, the strange as strange . . . *Innigkeit*, according to Heidegger, does not simply name all things, but names the granting of things in their discrete difference and oppositional relation, the difference as it holds all things together.⁴⁹

“The difference as it holds all things together,” it would seem, is closely related to the concept of Chaos understood as *a gap or separation* that itself came first. Thus it appears that Hesiod’s conception of *Chaos*, as spelled out above by Hyland and understood as *difference*, is that which allows for the coming into being and the holding together thereof

presupposition of truth as a totality, a finite something capable of being fully penetrated, dominated, and subsumed by that given system of logic and thus is rejected all possibility of the existence of something which might actually exceed its totalizing apprehension.

⁴⁹ Peter Warnek, “Translating *Innigkeit*: The Belonging Together of the Strange,” 65.

of all things by means of the establishing of *peras*. This, I believe, would be central to understanding *Innigkeit* as *the belonging together of the strange* in that all things would take their being from the coming into existence of this primordial *difference* and thus it would be correct to say, as Heidegger does in quoting Hölderlin, "All is intimate."⁵⁰

From what we have looked at thus far, it would seem that Chaos, understood as the gap, the yawn, or the separation, in its coming-into-being, is like the coming-into-being of emptiness or an empty space so that some *thing* or *things* can come into being. And thus it is not that Hyland is wrong, but he stops thinking too soon when he sees Chaos' coming-into-being as merely the coming-into-being of difference itself; in fact, Chaos' coming-into-being is actually the condition for the emergence of both difference and sameness. He was thus actually correct to say: "The between somehow precedes the binaries which it distinguishes." He did not recognize that the binaries were difference and sameness and that the between, as Chaos, was what allowed them both to emerge. And this way of thinking, it seems, is in keeping with the line of thought articulated by Bussanich. Something written by Heidegger in his *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* supports and further clarifies my point:

Nevertheless, *Χαος* signifies first of all the yawning, gaping chasm, the open that first opens itself, wherein everything is engulfed. The chasm affords no support for anything distinct and grounded. And therefore, for all experience, which only knows what is mediated, chaos seems to be without differentiation and thus mere confusion. The "chaotic" in this sense, however, is only the inessential aspect of what "chaos" means. Thought in terms of nature *Φύσις* chaos remains that gaping out of which the open opens itself. Nothing that is real precedes this opening, but rather always only enters into it.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations on Holderlin's Poetry*, 224.

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations on Holderlin's Poetry*, 85.

And so it seems clear from what Heidegger says here that Χάος is, as I said earlier, something like the emptiness which is necessary for anything to enter therein and thus subsequently be understood by means of concepts such as difference and sameness. This *gaping* is the idea at work when Bussanich says: "Chaos must be defined as undimensional or principial space, an articulated nothing: it is the barest indication that there is a qualitative something, from and in which cosmic differentiation occurs."⁵²

II.4. All Together

We can now attempt to weave together in a more simple yet meaningful way the different and important concepts we have been examining in order to establish the conceptual groundwork for the ideas regarding poetry and the gods to be explored in the next chapter. Χάος, as the gap or yawn which allows for the coming into being of the "real" came first. Only after Χάος can things about which we could make the designation of "same" and "different" come into being. All that comes into being is enabled to do so by the *peras* or boundary that makes possible differentiation and allows things to begin their essential unfolding. Their emergence into and out of existence is *physis* and the reality of *physis* itself dictates what constitutes the essence of *a-letheia*, truth understood as the perpetual dynamic of concealing and unconcealing. And thus it is true to say, as Heidegger does, that "All is intimate" despite our mortal inability to see all at once the interconnectivity of all things. Yet, if we are to attain to real and true dwelling, we must recognize these things, understand, honor, and acknowledge them, and although we

⁵² John Bussanich, "A Theoretical Interpretation of Hesiod's Chaos," 214.

cannot do it in the way that the Greeks did, we can comprehend the meaning of what it is to dwell within the fourfold and live accordingly.

If we turn now to something from Heidegger's "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," we can perhaps experience it with something of an enhanced perspective on the matter and thus see more clearly the intimate relation that holds between the four of the fourfold. We can see more clearly in Heidegger's description of the little farmhouse in the Black Forest how the important concepts we have been exploring are at play as they manifest in the dwelling of mortals. Heidegger writes:

Here the self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and sky, divinities and mortals enter *in simple oneness* into things ordered the house. It placed the farm on the wind-sheltered mountain slope, looking south, among the meadows close to the spring. It gave it the wide overhanging shingle roof whose proper slope bears up under the burden of snow, and that, reaching deep down, shields the chambers against the storms of the long winter nights. It did not forget the altar corner behind the community table; it made room in its chamber for the hallowed places of childbed and the "tree of the dead"—for that is what they call a coffin there; the *Totenbaum*—and in this way it designed for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time.⁵³

The proper dwelling of the mortals who built and arranged their little house is indicative of their understanding of their place within the fourfold. Demonstrated is their receptivity to the fourfold and their willingness to work with it rather than against it. They did not build their house in such a way as to deny nature or to attempt to master it. Rather, they worked with nature in such a way that they both love and preserve it. They did not choose the site upon which to build their little house based upon their preference for a particular view that would require even more insulation and fuel to combat the cold.

⁵³ Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 362.

Rather, they chose a site which would naturally afford them protection against cold winter winds and designed the little house itself and the pitch of its roof to accept the snow and make the best use of it. Likewise, they chose a site near to a water source rather than insisting that water be somehow directed to come closer to them by means of elaborate mechanisms.

We see also that their things speak of the reality of Being as the fourfold and the reality of the fourfold as *physis*. Their things acknowledge and pay tribute to the stages and phases that make up mortals' lives, to the central role that death plays in existence, as well as the intimate relationship that holds between the four of the fourfold. The presence of both childbed and tree of the dead point toward the awareness and acceptance of the continual changes that comprise existence. By making explicit and honoring death as an integral aspect of life, life is more fully understood and therefore more fully lived. The various rites of passage, the little deaths and changes that can and will occur, are revered and cared for and thus real dwelling is made possible.

In our own time, such an approach to living is scarcely found. While we very much talk about and emphasize all the new beginnings in life, rarely is acknowledgement given to the death or ending that made each new beginning possible. Whether it be the death of a childhood fantasy, such as comes when one learns that there is no Santa Claus or tooth fairy or that occurs when one finds out that one's own parents are finite and imperfect, or the death that is the loss of one's virginity, or the death that is becoming an adult by means of turning eighteen, or the death that is high school graduation, or the death that is the loss of that first love, or the death that is the giving up of a dream, or the death that is a divorce, or the death that is a layoff, or the death that is becoming a parent, or the death

that is the loss of youth, few if any of these things are ever acknowledged, honored, mourned, and incorporated into an understanding of life as the intrinsic parts of life that they each may be. Much less do we truly honor death as that ultimate and final happening in a mortal's life. Our practices of draining blood, embalming, applying makeup, extracting eyes, and sewing shut lids and lips belie our professions to any real acceptance and embrace of the reality. To place a body that itself has been preserved in a wood and metal strongbox and then place that into a vault in the ground so as to stave off the natural, the inevitable, is upon reflection not only sad but really quite hideous and most assuredly indicative of a complete failure to embrace death as the natural part of life which it is. In assuming their own proper place within the fourfold, the dwellers of the little Black Forest farmhouse create the necessary conditions for a seamless unfolding of their essence, for the safeguarding of their abode, for the receptivity to the movements of the sky, for the manifestation of the un hoped-for and for their initiation into a good death. And as we will see as we proceed, mortals are not left alone to make their way alone and on their own, but they are provided with encouragement, insight and edification by means of myth, art, and poetry as they make their journey upon the earth, under the sky, and in relation to divinity.

Poetry and the Gods

III.1. "What is the Poet's Own?" The Poet as Yoked to Divinity

Let us begin to think about Heidegger's ideas on poetry and the gods as we continue our endeavor to see more clearly the role these play in mortals' pursuit of *dwelling* within the fourfold. Some important writings from which we can take our start and that will greatly assist us in gaining insight into our topic are found in Heidegger's *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, as well as his lecture *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister."* I will approach this task by taking my cues from Heidegger in the way he follows Hölderlin's lead in

selecting the pertinent questions that should be asked and answered. In explaining how he plans to proceed in the undertaking, Heidegger first cites lines from Hölderlin's poem

“The Archipelago”:

But because the present gods are so near
I must be as if they were far away, and dark in the clouds
Must their name be for me, only before the morning
Begins to glow, before life glows in its midday
I name them quietly to myself, so that the poet may have
His own, but whenever the heavenly light goes down
I gladly think about what is past, and say--go on blooming!⁵⁴

Heidegger follows his recitation immediately by saying: "We are inquiring into the proper character of the poem. It can be experienced if we submit ourselves to the following questions: What is the poet's "own"? What proper element is allotted to him? To where does the decree compel him? From where does it come? How does it compel?"⁵⁵ I will approach these issues by using the five questions that Heidegger himself poses as a guide and starting point for the endeavor.

The first question he poses and with which we too will begin is, “What is the poet’s “own”?” For Heidegger, true poets, as such, bear a special relationship to the divinities and serve a special role in the operation of the fourfold. Heidegger makes several statements throughout the essay “The Poem” that indicate the nature of the relationship that holds between poets and divinities, such as a poet being a poet due to his destiny, and the idea that a poet and his poetry are determined and that the character of the poet’s poem is allotted to him. While poets in general have a role to play and serve a unique

⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Holderlin's Poetry*, 212.

⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Holderlin's Poetry*, 212.

purpose, Heidegger sees Hölderlin as unique and hence of particular significance because of the fact that Hölderlin's poetry not only "names the holy" but also engages in a kind of poetry that is about the poet, his poem, and *poiesis* itself. Heidegger tells us, "Hölderlin has devoted his poetic activity to the poet and his destiny, and thus to the poem's proper character, its own unique nature."⁵⁶ While Heidegger's conception of his own role as thinker may be understood as analogous to that of the poet in certain regards, it is markedly different in others. While Heidegger sees Hölderlin as a poet who "touches upon the fundamental experience of his poetic activity," Heidegger sees himself, as a thinker, as rendering this fundamental experience accessible to any who are capable of thinking along with him. He tells us, "Until now, thinking has not yet been able to think this experience properly, or to ask about the realm in which the experience is at play."⁵⁷ And this is precisely why Heidegger chose to call what he is doing with Hölderlin's poetry *Elucidations* [*Erläuterungen*], a word which has the sense of the reverberating sound of a bell which has been rung. Heidegger does see himself as *making clear* Hölderlin's meaning and not merely interpreting him. A most relevant distinction when we keep in mind the ideas discussed in the previous chapter regarding the unconcealed and concealed nature of *a-letheia*. For if meaning and its source, as such, are inexhaustible, possible interpretations are, as well. And Heidegger is not merely offering an interpretation of Hölderlin's poetry but rather sees himself as intimately linked to the meaning of Hölderlin's poetry *as* Hölderlin's poetry. This is accomplished by means of the connection between the two within the fourfold. As Keith Hoeller points out in his *Translator's Introduction to Heidegger's Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, "[I]t is

⁵⁶ Ibid., 210.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 219.

Heidegger's intent to question the text in terms of the one question which, according to the later Heidegger, no science can ever ascertain: the question of Being.⁵⁸ There is undoubtedly an element of revelation that occurs with such elucidations. Hoeller quotes Heidegger as having said during a lecture given a year before the publication of the *Elucidations*, "The poetic turn toward his [Hölderlin's] poetry is possible only as a *thoughtful* confrontation with the *revelation of Being (Seyn)* which is successfully accomplished in this poetry."⁵⁹ As I hope will become clearer as we proceed, a thoughtful confrontation with the revelation of Being is precisely what is possible between the philosopher and the poet, both of whom fulfill their respective functions by means of a comportment that is best characterized as receptive and appreciative and thereby open themselves to receiving new meanings from that inexhaustible source of meaning itself.

III.2. "From Where Does It Come?" A Calling from Beyond Time

Heidegger explains to us that the poet's *calling* or *vocation* is to serve in the capacity of poet in the operation and being of *the fourfold*. The poet is to carry out the task of his *poiesis* and thus mediate between the divinities and the mortals. It is the shouldering of this burden that necessitates the poetic saying, Heidegger tells us. "Until the words are found and blossom, it is a matter of bearing one's burden."⁶⁰ It is the poet's very *being* as poet that compels him to his *poiesis*. Heidegger calls this compulsion a *decree*.⁶¹ We

⁵⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Holderlin's Poetry*, 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Holderlin's Poetry*, 214.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 213.

should be careful to understand that when we speak of the poet as being compelled, we are emphasizing two important things: the poet cannot choose to not carry his burden and the burden is one placed upon him and not one he assumes. The decree that is issued to the poet, Heidegger tells us, comes to him from the "sphere of the gods" or "the arriving gods who are present to him"⁶² as well as from "the present gods who are distantly nearing."⁶³ Using a phrase of Hölderlin's, Heidegger tells us that essentially the poet is "compelled by the holy" to a *poiesis* that names.⁶⁴

In Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister," there is an extended discussion in which we can find help in answering the question "from where," as well as some of our other questions.

There Heidegger says:

[T]his hymnal poetry is in an essential respect river poetry. The spirit of the river is the poetic spirit that experiences the journeying of being unhomely and "thinks of" the locality of becoming homely. As river, that is, as the journeying, the river can never forget the source, because in flowing, that is, in issuing from the source, it itself constantly is the source and remains the locality of its own essence. What is to be said in this hymnal poetry is the holy, which, *beyond* the gods, determines the gods themselves and simultaneously, as the "poetic" that is to be poetized, brings the *dwelling* of historical human beings into its essence. The poet of such poetizing therefore necessarily stands between human beings and gods. He is no longer merely a human being. Yet for the same reason he is not, indeed never is, a god. From the perspective of the "between" between humans and gods, the poet is a "demigod."⁶⁵

It is the holy which compels the poet, and it is from there that the decree does issue. And although the poet will be compelled to name the gods, it is the holy itself which is to be poetized and is itself beyond the gods and does, in fact, determine them. To simplify yet

⁶² Ibid., 214.

⁶³ Ibid., 217.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 214.

⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Holderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, 138-9.

retain the flow or chain that is thus far established, there is first the holy or the source, then the gods, then the poet or demigod, then human beings or mortals. Later, we will come to see that Heidegger does seek to make a further distinction in terms of “the gods” by means of employing the Greek terms and distinguishing between *theoi* and *daimones*.

We should also take note that, according to the above passage, the poet, as river, cannot forget its source because in its flowing it is its source. This is indeed a rich assertion, and there are many aspects that need to be addressed. The spatio-temporal notions that are present in phrases such as *distant gods are nearing* and *the locality of its own essence* point us toward an aspect of Heidegger's thought that appears throughout a great deal of his work. By fleshing out at least a little the way in which we should conceive of such phrases, much may be gained in terms of understanding. To state it simply, we conceive of his meaning most readily when we think of “the holy” or “the source” and “the gods” as existent in some sense outside of space and time, although the gods, and perhaps only in their aspect as *daimones*, do manifest in time. Thus, they may be spoken of as *near* or *distant*.

In attempting to think through these particular matters, I find certain ideas in the thought of phenomenologist Erazim Kohak of interest and potential import in understanding Heidegger. By looking at Kohak's ways of conceptualizing certain phenomena, some light may be shed on how we can piece together the ways in which being, space, time, the holy, gods, poets, and mortals can all hang together in Heidegger's thought. In his book *The Embers and the Stars*, Kohak undertakes to give an account of how we might understand that which is the source for the phenomenological experience of what we call “the beautiful, the good, and the true.” While he acknowledges and even

gives an account of how it is we might come to think of being and time as the same, albeit in error, he then endeavors to set forth a way of understanding reality that accounts for the phenomena that give rise to that error but also gives place to those other phenomena which make up existence, as well, and thus clearly undercuts the notion that being and time are indeed the same. Kohak writes:

The categories of the “temporal” and the “eternal,” though barely philosophically intelligible today, remain indispensable. The temporal perspective of a sequence of events, the preceding determining that which comes after, does create the illusion of being as wholly contained in time, merely natural in the reductive sense of that term.⁶⁶

He believes, however, that proper reflection upon experience and the phenomena which constitute it reveal such an illusion for what it is. In speaking about what he calls “the fact of being, the flow of time, and the vision of eternity,” Kohak makes the case for what he calls the *three orders of reality*. He stresses that distinguishing between the three is crucial in giving an account of the diverse phenomena of experience. He writes, “Whenever in its long history, philosophy confounded them, it ended up in a dilemma, just as it when it sought to isolate one of them alone as real.”⁶⁷

To summarize simply his three orders of reality, he says there is the *order of being*, the realm in which it is correct to say *it is better to be than not to be* or *it is better that there be something than that there be nothing*. This is the realm of *whatever is, is*. Existence is preferable to non-existence in and of itself. There is also the *order of time*, that realm which has come to dominate our thinking in that it is what is most familiar to us in our average, everyday consciousness. It is the realm in which utility becomes

⁶⁶ Erazim Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars*, 103.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

relevant and in which relative value may appear. It is in the realm or order of time that a conflict may arise between two beings such that it appears that one must be valued or chosen over the other in some way. Kohak explains that because of our phenomenological experience of existence as being in time, we tend to recognize only this one particular order of reality. There is also what he calls the *order of eternity*.

Kohak says:

Eternity is not an "other" realm, discontinuous with the order of time, nor an infinite prolongation of it. It really does ingress in time, reorienting the moment from its horizontal matrix of the before and after to a vertical one of good and evil.⁶⁸

While I propose we forego the term "evil" in order to avoid unsavory and irrelevant connotations of religious ideology or any kind of Manichaeian metaphysical presuppositions, the notion that eternity is an *order of reality* or a realm in which what we might call *the good* exists outside of time is not an unfamiliar idea. For Kohak, it is the realm of eternity ingressing in time that allows for an experience of non-relative value and meaning that is not merely instrumental. This idea it seems to me could be otherwise captured by speaking about it as the way in which earth manifests as worlds. Such ways of describing experience are very much in keeping with the kinds of experiences alluded to in the previous chapter in discussing the *intuitions* of deep ecology and their experientially-based notion of the sacred as immanent within nature, always available to perception, yet necessarily exceeding our human capacity for a full and totalizing comprehension. For Kohak, the realm of eternity is to be understood as that realm in which exists the beautiful, the good, and the true and from which those things manifest

⁶⁸ Erasm Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars*, 102.

within space-time. That which exists in the order of eternity remains concealed in itself but is unconcealed in its manifestation within the order of time.

Kohak, much like Heidegger, emphasizes the uniqueness of humanity. Humans are the ones who can recognize in the flow of time the intersecting dimensions of eternity and time in that they are themselves a nexus of being, time, and eternity. Kohak says, "A person is a being through whom eternity enters time."⁶⁹ This is in perfect keeping with the way in which mortals operate within the fourfold. It seems Warnek, too, understands human beings in this way, and it is captured in his discussion of *Innigkeit* when he says:

What is at issue, therefore, in the *Innigkeit* proper to human life is the way in which that life belongs ecstatically to the nature both that it is and that exceeds it.⁷⁰

If we return to and reflect upon the words of Heidegger quoted from the *Ister* lecture at the beginning of this section when we undertook to answer the question, "From where does the decree issue?" and we keep in mind Kohak's articulation of ideas as just discussed, there is an illumination. For it would appear that Heidegger's "source," his "holy," points to the same reality as that to which Kohak's "eternity" points us. This is further supported by something Heidegger says in Lecture II of *What is Called Thinking*:

Its [the poetic word's] statement rests on its own truth. This truth is called beauty. Beauty is a fateful gift of the essence of truth, and here truth means the disclosure of what keeps itself concealed. The beautiful is not what pleases, but what falls within that fateful gift of truth which comes to be when that which is eternally non-apparent and therefore invisible attains its most radiantly apparent appearance.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁷⁰ Peter Warnek, "Translating Innigkeit: The Belonging Together of the Strange," 79.

⁷¹ Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, 19.

I contend that that which is signified by Kohak's term "eternity" and that which is signified by Heidegger's phrase "that which is eternally non-apparent" are in essence the same and should be understood to transcend time yet appear within them. This idea is in keeping with Heidegger's understanding of "earth" as transcendent, as already mentioned, in the sense of earth being that which in-forms yet exceeds our conceptualizations of it. Whether we are examining the relationship between eternity and time or the relationship between the holy and poetry or between truth and beauty or between earth and world, what rules in each and every case is an intimacy, an *innigkeit*, a *belonging together of the strange*.⁷² And the fundamental truth of this *innigkeit* is *aletheia* and the unconcealment and concealment. In other words, a full and total comprehension of that which is signified by the terms under discussion is not possible by virtue of the very essence and nature of these things and their relationship to one another. Any kind of intellectual repugnance one might feel in response to this is likely the result of a bias that has come to dominate thinking. This bias, which will be examined in much greater detail in the next chapter, makes the irrational demand that, in the name of reason, one must be able to render something in totality in order for it to be comprehended or otherwise grasped. As should already be apparent from our explorations of Heidegger's own thought, such a demand is in error and is a great stumbling block to real thinking. The idea that we can somehow fathom the *innigkeit* and what it signifies and properly appreciate it for what it is, despite our ability to subject it to a purely analytic reduction, is what Heidegger emphasized in the appendix to the *Elucidations* when he says:

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:

⁷² Peter Warnek, "Translating Innigkeit: The Belonging Together of the Strange," 62.

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.⁷³

This reality with which we are contending, this notion of that which is transcendent, of that which is unconcealed and concealed, of *a-letheia*, of that which sustains our experience yet necessarily exceeds it, of that which holds all things together is itself from where the poet's decree does issue.

III.3. "To Where Does the Decree Compel Him?" Naming

As a poet, Hölderlin is compelled to name the holy in his poetry.⁷⁴ Hölderlin engages in a naming that should not be understood as the bestowal of a name. Rather, it should be understood as a naming that is itself the giving account of an essence recognized for which Hölderlin *knows* the name. This is a very important distinction. Hölderlin, in naming these gods, is not *calling* to them in the ordinary sense of *invoking* them. He does not seek to make them arrive or to hasten their arrival. Rather, he *names* and *calls* them because they are to him, as poet, already present. He names them in a way that is indicative of both the revelation to which he is uniquely privy and the inherent obscurity that is entailed in such a revelation given from where the decree to name itself does issue. Thus, in order to "preserve the distance," he engages in a naming that names but does so darkly. This is why Heidegger describes the *naming* as both an "unveiling" and a "veiling." We should not think of Hölderlin as attempting to hide something or

⁷³ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Holderlin's Poetry*, 225.

⁷⁴ Hence, we can see the relevance of Heidegger's discussion of the relationship between the Greek words for "name," "naming," and "knowing." (EHP, 215) It is interesting to note that the Greek word for "mark" which is "gnoma" is related to these words, as well. There is also some connection between "onoma" and the word which is translated into English as "law" which is "nomos."

attempting to make obscure what need not be so. Again, Heidegger holds that the poet is compelled to name the holy, it is his burden, his calling, his vocation. In naming the holy, the poet simply offers up what is available to him as poet, and thus the naming veils and unveils not due to efforts or motivations on the part of the poet but rather due to the very essence of that which he is naming, an essence which when unconcealed keeps hidden and safe its essence in that its source is inexhaustible in concepts, time, and intelligibility.

The decree itself and the place to which it compels the poet may be understood as applicable not only to the poet but rather to all who are called to *poiesis*. In other words, all true artists are mortals who are themselves channels or conduits for the gods, and the gods connect with the mortals via the realm of the daimonic in order to manifest in the material world. It may perhaps be helpful to consider the metaphor Heidegger employs to shed light on the situations of both poet and thinker. The poet and the thinker are understood as existing on different mountain peaks separated by an abyss, or perhaps we should say separated by *Χάος*. Hölderlin, as poet, views the approach of the gods from a lofty vantage point that is accessible to him as poet but inaccessible to others. Hölderlin is compelled to express the gods' imminent arrival based on their immanent presence to him, and their immanent presence to him is itself due to his being as poet. Here we should recall how Heidegger said that the poet, as river, issues from the source and in flowing *is* the source. Moreover, Hölderlin is compelled to the naming due to what Heidegger would call Hölderlin's *knowledge*, a *knowledge* to which Hölderlin is uniquely privy by means of what Heidegger would term Hölderlin's *tenderness of being*. This is that very special mode of being attributed to the ancient Greeks by both Hölderlin and

Heidegger and that Heidegger, I believe, perceives himself as possessing as well. Explanation of the concepts of *knowledge* and *tenderness* are found in the essay “Hölderlin’s Heaven and Earth” and are used therein in part to explain the operation of the fourfold.⁷⁵ Put simply, *knowledge* is the capacity for thinking that is truly *reflective*, that is, thinking that mirrors what *is*. *Tenderness* is an orientation toward that upon which one reflects that is open, receptive, and appreciative. Heidegger describes *tenderness* as a “gladdening-bestowing and a simply-receiving.”⁷⁶ This is indeed that orientation toward being articulated earlier in the discussion of the dwellers of the Black Forest farmhouse from the essay “Building, Dwelling, Thinking.” The orientation in and toward the fourfold that is receptive and responsive to what is, one that does not seek to conquer and control but to harmonize and to flow is an orientation that does not confine itself to the merely actual but is inherently open to the possible. It is the orientation or comportment toward being that accompanies the practice of what Heidegger calls *meditative thinking*. Toward such an orientation toward and engagement with being is precisely where the decree which issues from source compels the poet go.

III.4. "How Does It Compel?" A Destinal Sending

Regarding the decree that compels Hölderlin to his *poiesis*, Heidegger states, “What speaks is the claim which holds sway everywhere in its unspokenness, the claim under which his own poetic activity stands.”⁷⁷ We may understand the claim as something like

⁷⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Holderlin’s Poetry*, 192.

⁷⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*, 92.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

Hölderlin's destiny, that is, his *being* as poet. The claim does not need to be spoken in order to hold sway. The claim inheres in Hölderlin's very being as that which is his ek-sistence. In his "Letter 'On Humanism'," Heidegger says:

Metaphysics closes itself to the simple essential fact that the human being essentially occurs in his essence only where he is claimed by being. Only from that claim "has" he found that wherein his essence dwells.⁷⁸

The essence of a human being it seems cannot be understood as something purely resultant from his or her own control or will. Rather, it is manifest only in the human being in his or her receptivity, in his or her capacity to be claimed by being. And perhaps this is why the claim speaks in its unspokenness. Heidegger explains what he means by ek-sistence:

As ek-sisting, the human being sustains Da-sein in that he takes the *Da*, the clearing of being, into "care." But Da-Sein itself occurs essentially as "thrown." It unfolds essentially in the throw of being as a *destinal sending*.⁷⁹

This idea of a *destinal sending* is the lot of mortals in their relationship to divinities in the fourfold that is one, but it is also the role of mortals in their relationship to the earth and sky. The ways in which any given mortal is interconnected to the other three of the fourfold is not a matter over which he or she has ultimate control regardless of the desire to believe otherwise. Each and every mortal is "thrown" and therefore has his or her own *destinal sending*. Each and every mortal finds himself existent in and among things not of his own making or choosing and possessed of an orientation toward existence that has care as its essence. In other words, none of us chose to which set of parents we would be

⁷⁸ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 247.

⁷⁹ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 249.

born, our sex, the era of our birth, the county of our origin, the language we would be taught as children, or the number of our siblings. And we did not choose to care but rather could not help but care. Hence, there is indeed a destinal sending but not in the sense of some one specific predetermined way in which the mortal should be or should act but rather an inexhaustible array of possibilities which may be accessed by means of proper *dwelling*, by an orientation of receptivity and openness to the realm of the possible, and by a comportment toward being that does not confine itself to the *merely actual*. Both the poet and the mere mortal, as Dasein, in their *thrownness*, find themselves already among things, between earth and sky, and intimately bound up with the divinities, subject to them, and capable of intimacy with all of it, capable of taking that clearing of being into care and fulfilling the destinal sending. In order to fulfill the destinal sending most effectively and successfully, one must possess those characteristics, that particular comportment and attunement toward being, that Heidegger has called *knowledge* and *tenderness*. For a receptivity to the very space and time in which one finds oneself is indeed that which is required not only for harmonious existence within the fourfold but to even begin to engage in what Heidegger calls “thinking.” For it is in the practice of real thinking that we can recognize and overcome the tendency to totalization that is built into intelligibility and that disposes each understanding of being to take itself to be the whole story. For as we will later see, it is that faulty mode of thinking, that tendency to totalization, that has thwarted our attainment of real *dwelling* thus far and instead brought us to a place where our annihilation may be imminent. Let’s look at some of Heidegger’s ideas on thinking.

To better understand what Heidegger has in mind regarding thinking we can look at something he says in his *Discourse on Thinking*. There Heidegger tells us that man is *in flight from thinking*.⁸⁰ He goes on to make the important distinction between what he understands as the two modalities of thought which are possible. He calls these *calculative thinking* and *meditative thinking*. About calculative thinking, he says: "This calculation is the mark of all thinking that plans and investigates. Such thinking remains calculation even if it neither works with numbers nor uses an adding machine or computer. Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next . . . [It] is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is."⁸¹ In terms of various concepts and ideas already explored, we might think of calculative thinking as the kind of thinking that occurs when one confines oneself to the merely actual, given that it is clearly a modality of thought reckoning with what is useful, efficient, and productive, while meditative thinking would be the kind of thinking that occurs when one does not confine oneself to the merely actual but opens to the possible, to what was spoken of in the previous chapter as what Heraclitus and Heidegger called the "the unhopd-for." Additionally, calculative thinking would clearly deal only with the unconcealed, those prospects that are known and understood, while meditative thinking would be open to the whole of *a-letheia*, to the unconcealed and concealed. Considering Heidegger's own words that meditative thinking is "thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is," it could only be meditative thinking that is open to *a-letheia* as such. Meditative thinking necessarily

⁸⁰ Martin Heidegger, "Discourse on Thinking," 151.

⁸¹ Martin Heidegger, "Discourse on Thinking," 152.

involves that capacity to mirror or reflect that which exists, what Heidegger calls *knowledge*, as well as that particular orientation of appreciation and openness that Heidegger calls *tenderness*. We can also see the relevance of the particular locale of the thinker, the particular place in space and time in which he finds himself, that clearing of being which is taken into care, for this is the point at which and in which meaning gathers, as is clear when Heidegger says:

Yet anyone can follow the path of meditative thinking in his own manner and within his own limits . . . It is enough if we dwell on what lies close and meditate on what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history.⁸²

This quotation brings us round yet again to the very notion of *dwelling* and the way in which building, *dwelling*, and thinking go together. Heidegger's distinction between calculative and meditative thinking may be understood to also be at work in his discussion of the role and place of thinking in relation to building and *dwelling*:

Building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for *dwelling*. The two, however, are also insufficient for *dwelling* so long as each busies itself with its own affairs in separation instead of listening to one another . . . The real *dwelling* plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of *dwelling*, that they must ever learn to dwell. What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the real plight of *dwelling* as the plight? Yet as soon as man gives thought to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that calls mortals into their *dwelling*. But how else can mortals answer this summons than by trying on their part, on their own, to bring *dwelling* to the fullness of its nature? This they accomplish when they build out of *dwelling*, and think for the sake of *dwelling*.⁸³

⁸² Martin Heidegger, "Discourse on Thinking," 153.

⁸³ Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 363.

Heidegger explains that we are to build out of *dwelling* and think for the sake of *dwelling*, and so it seems that thinking for the sake of *dwelling* would entail that mode of thinking called meditative thinking in that it would only be in meditative thinking that man could think of the real plight of *dwelling*, his “homelessness,” as the plight. We might even venture to say that calculative thinking as a mode of thinking engaged in by mortals who do not also engage in meditative thinking is what Heidegger has in mind in the above passage when he says: “The two, however, are also insufficient for *dwelling* so long as each busies itself with its own affairs in separation instead of listening to one another.” Mere calculative thinking is thinking that is done for some sake other than *dwelling*. For the notion that building and thinking can listen to one another and only in doing so can *dwelling* be achieved seems to point us to the way in which the two modalities of thinking, meditative and calculative, can and do serve the cause of *dwelling* when employed in the way proper to each. The above passage also reminds us once again of the necessity for mortals to be ever able “to learn.” And as Heidegger makes clear in the above passage, real *dwelling* is not to be attained until both building and thinking are carried out in the proper way and in proper relation to one another.

The responsibility to attain to proper *dwelling* falls upon the shoulders of each mortal as a part of the fourfold. When we link this understanding up with the distinctive way in which a poet bears his unique burden, we see that the poet and the mere mortal, while different in certain very important respects, are best understood as not being different in kind but different in degree. What is relevant to the one as Dasein is relevant to the other. The poet, as such, may be understood to carry a burden that is different than that carried by the mere mortal, positioned as the poet is closer to the source and to the gods. These

ideas appear clearer further still when we recognize the way in which the poet serves the fourfold as a whole, serving earth, sky, divinities and mortals in his role as poet. And although the poet and the philosopher may stand on different mountain peaks separated by an abyss, separated by *Xáoç*, *Xáoç* as explained in the preceding chapter as that very separation that allows for difference and sameness, they are intimate, they belong together, they are bound together in being, by the fourfold that is one, and they both have their own roles to play in service thereto. Something Heidegger says in his essay "Remembrance" seems to fittingly sum this up: "The *dwelling* near the origin that prepares a foundation is the original *dwelling*, in which the poetic is first grounded, upon whose ground the sons of earth are then to dwell, at least if they are to *dwell poetically upon this earth* . . . Destiny has sent the poet the essence of poetic activity, and chosen him to be the first sacrifice."⁸⁴ And our guiding question is thus answered: the poet cannot escape his destiny for it is how the poet is compelled.

III.5. "What Proper Element is Alotted to Him?" Feeling for the Gods

We arrive now to what may well be the most interesting question of the five posed by Heidegger in terms of what I take to be his answer, although that answer, as one might suspect, is not so obvious. However, as I will attempt to show, Heidegger does have an answer in mind. One that I believe has not been adequately revealed before. And while a measure of obscurity and vagueness cannot be escaped entirely if we are to remain true to

⁸⁴Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, 171.

Heidegger's thought and the nature of *a-letheia*, I will attempt to make clear what is revealed to me in his thinking.

For Heidegger, Hölderlin is himself like the Greek gods in that he does not command but points and gives signs. In fact, in Heidegger's thinking, the poet is himself a *sign*. Earlier we quoted Heidegger in his lecture on *Hölderlin's "The Ister"* proclaiming the poet a "demigod" of sorts. Let us consider something he says there: "A sign, human in kind, and yet not merely human, conditioning at the same time the belonging together of the gods, and yet not a god--something between humans and gods, a demigod, then?"⁸⁵ Within the fourfold, the poet has a role to play, a vocation that is crucial to the interplay and interconnectedness of all that is part of the fourfold. In seeking to gain further insight into the nature of the relation that holds within the fourfold between divinities and mortals and more specifically divinities and poets, let's look at some lines from Hölderlin.

From *The Rhine*:

. . . For since
The most blessed in themselves feel nothing,
Another, if to say such a thing is
Permitted, must, I suppose,
Vicariouly feel in the name of the gods,
And him they need ⁸⁶

From *The Archipelago*:

Always, as heroes need garlands, the hallowed elements likewise
Need the hearts of us men to feel and to mirror their glory ⁸⁷

From many lines later in that same hymn:

For the Heavenly like to repose on a human heart that can feel them ⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* 150.

⁸⁶ Friedrich Holderlin, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Poems and Fragments*, 415.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 227.

These lines from Hölderlin's poetry assert the intimate relationship between divinities and mortals and set forth the idea that there is indeed a mutual dependency, an interdependency, that holds between the four of the fourfold. In my attempt to make plain the way in which I think Heidegger understands these things, it is important to make clear that the explanation I will be exploring is one resultant from a phenomenological approach to the question. On the one hand, there is the explanation that arises purely from phenomenological experience, an experience that calls out for thinking, an experience that calls out for the thinker's thinking of being, the philosopher's surmising as to the metaphysical nature of reality that gives rise to the phenomena constituting the experience. On the other hand, this explanation that arises from our phenomenological experience is one that is also a creative response, a *poesis* we might say, akin to the poet's naming of the holy, or the artist's rendering of what the holy would look like in manifestation. For if we are to truly understand the way in which all things are intimate in the four of the fourfold that is one, as well as the all-pervading nature of *a-letheia*, that is, the way in which unconcealment and concealment rules, then we must open ourselves to undertaking the endeavor in this way. Otherwise, we resign ourselves to an understanding that is less than it could be.

In attempting to think about the divinities, to speculate upon the nature of the reality pointed to in speaking of them, it is best to conceive of them not as personalities with histories, nor as independently existing discrete beings, but rather quite simply as *affective aspects of being*. In other words, we should conceive of the divinities as principles or elements, as transcendental realities, as modes or moods, as archetypes that may be known by various names, names which themselves point to or indicate these

elemental principles, principles such as Courage, Passion, Wisdom, Mercy, Fear, Love, Strife, etc. For once we understand the nature of divinities in this way, and can conceptualize their operation within the fourfold, and the resultant tender encounter between divinities and mortals, we render the place and importance of myth easily comprehensible as that which creatively results from the point of view that is the phenomenological approach to human existence, and, in turn, allows mortals an enhanced understanding of their place and purpose in the fourfold as they ever learn to dwell. In this way, we see that myth serves as something like a handbook to existence. Myth is a way of conceptualizing experiences, experiences that are felt by mortals to be encounters between the mortal and an outside force perceived as acting upon them. We also gain an even greater understanding of Heidegger's love of the Greeks, the centrally important function of myth as enlightening, edifying, and educative in the ancient world, and Heidegger's conviction that only in a conscious return to myth and art, to poetic *dwelling* upon the earth, will humankind not destroy themselves and die meaningless deaths. For as he puts it in an interview:

Philosophy will not be able to bring about a direct change of the present state of the world. This is true not only of philosophy but of all merely human meditations and endeavors. Only a god can still save us. I think the only possibility of salvation left to us is to prepare readiness, through thinking and poetry . . .⁸⁹

While our future is yet concealed from us, we are able through thinking and poetry, through philosophy and art, through contemplation and myth, to make ourselves ready for whatever may come, and in doing that, we make possible our salvation, even as the

⁸⁹ “*Der Spiegel* Interview with Martin Heidegger,” 1966, <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~other1/Heidegger%20Der%20Spiegel.pdf>

unhoped for, for it is only by assuming our proper place within the fourfold and attaining to proper *dwelling* that a god could “save us.” Stated in another way, it is in our cultivation of both the practice and appreciation of the aforementioned activities that we enhance our perceptual awareness of our place and purpose as one of the four of the fourfold and thereby “practice death,” as Heidegger has spoken of it, which is the means by which we are made able to achieve “that good death,” whether that be our annihilation or our transmutation via “a saving god.” Change is essentially what we are speaking of here. Unless and until we are made able to practice our capacity for receptivity and fully embrace mythos, ethos, and logos, there is no chance for survival. Unless and until we assume our place in harmonious interrelatedness and forego our conqueror mentality, not even a god can save us.

And what of these gods, these divinities? From a phenomenological approach to the matter, how is it that we should understand them in terms of their interactions with us once we conceptualize them as elemental principles or transcendental realities? While Hölderlin tells us that the divinities “feel nothing in themselves,” we must attempt to be clear about what this means. Most simply, we can take this to mean that the divinities, as such, are without sentient experience; they are not beings or entities. It would be incorrect, however, to assume that because these principles feel nothing in themselves that they are without affective purpose and power to manifest in concrete material reality by means of influence upon and instantiation through mortals. Here it is important to keep in mind how both divinities and mortals are part of that which is itself one, according to Heidegger. While we may conceptualize mortals as discrete and separate beings, to stop thinking there is to stop thinking too soon. The divinities, as elements or

principles, may be understood in a certain sense to purpose manifestation of their essence insofar as each is what it is and inclines to be so in the nexus of the fourfold that is one. In other words, in their interrelatedness with mortals, mortals are their feelings. And so it is correct to say that the divinities have *need* of mortals so that mortals may *feel* on their behalf in the sense that the divinities as elements or principles intend toward manifestation as an embodied expression thus experienced, thus fulfilling that which is appropriate to each as a given element or principle. These *daimones*, these gods and goddesses, these elements, these principles, these divinities express the aspects of being that they are, and it is only through mortals that they do so. Only through mortals do the *daimones* have their share of earth and sky and partake of the gathering of meaning that occurs in the clearing of being that is taken into care by the mortals. It is in that clearing, taken into care by a mortal, that the divinities may express as that which they are by means of the *knowledge* and *tenderness* of a mortal whose comportment toward being is such that his heart be one that can indeed *feel* and *mirror* the glory of the divinities as the transcendental realities which they are, whether they be Fear, Courage, Passion, Lust, Envy, Joy, Sorrow, etc., for there are no divinities apart from mortals and there are no mortals apart from the divinities, and neither of these exist apart from earth and sky.

The very idea of a mortal human being as conduit for something divine is quite commonplace, whether implicit or explicit, and seems to have always been so to some degree or another if we take a look at language, literature, art, and myth throughout history and across cultures. Moreover, if we just simply consult people on their experiences as spectator of what we might categorize as feats of human greatness or if we reflect upon our own experiences of such, we find that virtually everyone has indeed been

witness to something *glorious*, something that may be described as the glorious manifestation of divinity of which we speak. For example, imagine what it is like to witness a great runner doing that at which he is great, or a spellbinding dancer whose movement entrances and reveals the spirit that moves her limbs, or a mesmerizing pianist whose playing sweeps us away into that other realm, the realm from which his or her own inspiration comes, the realm which may be understood as that which is indicated by Kohak when he speaks of *the order of eternity* in that the phenomena of the experience point to that transcendental or timeless realm, that aspect of being that we rightly call divine. Such experiences are ones that we describe as “inspired” in that we perceive and feel what we can only describe as a spirit coming into a body. So many experiences are of such a kind; consider the monumental bravery and heroism of a great warrior as manifested in the heat of battle, or the captivating words and gestures of a powerful orator or teacher, or the grace, speed, and agility of an athlete on the field. All such experiences of human greatness may be understood as experiences of the glory of divinity manifesting in the flesh. Again, if we confine ourselves to the phenomenology of certain experiences, if we attempt to simply describe the experience, we can get in touch with that element of the experience of greatness in another that is experienced and felt to be an encounter with divinity. Of course, even the more mundane expressions which occur in human life can be understood as expressions of the divine principles, elements or divinities, especially if one attunes oneself to this aspect of existence. While the experiences we categorize as sensational, epic, monumental, profound, and highly moving may be those that most easily render us able to see Heidegger’s ideas at work, what he has in mind has its place also in the more commonplace and ordinary parts of

existence. The divine is present in the ordinary. Divinity is truly immanent. If we keep in mind Heidegger's assertion that anyone can engage in meditative thinking in his own way and in his own manner on his own patch of home ground as we proceed here, it should become clearer. For Heidegger, Being is omnipresent. And as he is fond of pointing out, that which is closest to us is that which we have the greatest difficulty recognizing. As he is prone to do, Heidegger seeks to make clear his ideas on the way in which being presents itself in, through, around, and amongst beings by examining language. Consider in this light something Heidegger says in his *Parmenides*:

What shines into beings, though it can never be explained on the basis of beings nor constructed out of beings, is Being itself. And Being, shining into beings, is τὸ δαίον—δαίμων. Descending from Being into beings, and thus pointing into beings, are the δαίοντες—δαίμονες. The “demons,” so understood, are altogether “undemonic”: that is, judged in terms of our usual murky representation of the “demonic.” But these undemonic δαίμονες are anything but “harmless” and “incidental.” They are not casual additions to beings, which man could bypass with no loss of his own essence and could leave aside and could consider solely according to his whims and needs. In consequence of this inconspicuous unsurpassability, the δαίμονες are more “demonic” than “demons” in the usual sense could ever be. The δαίμονες are more essential than any being. They not only dispose the “demonic demons” into the disposition of the horrible and frightful, but they determine every essential affective disposition from respect and joy to mourning and terror.⁹⁰

Heidegger tells us in this passage that the *daimones* are more essential to being than any being. The *daimones*, according to Heidegger, are all “affective dispositions” known to mortals. He mentions joy, respect, mourning, and terror. Thus, we can see how the affective dispositions such as envy, courage, strife, love, and passion mentioned earlier in the context of the discussion of divinities as elements or principles are indeed the very

⁹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 106.

things to which Heidegger is here referring. Heidegger also makes clear that the affective dispositions determined by these *daimones* are not to be avoided, set aside, or otherwise rendered to be without consequence. He stresses that they are not “casual additions” to mortals who could otherwise still fulfill their essence as beings. No, the *daimones* are more essential to being than any being. The inescapability of the *daimones* as affective dispositions is an idea that sheds light on that which was being shown to us in the lines from Hölderlin’s poetry. A given god, as such, can feel nothing and thus it is said by Hölderlin that he needs a mortal to feel for him, and it is only in the coming together of the two that the fullness of experience is achieved. We will see as we continue that Heidegger’s understanding of this is more nuanced and complex, and it is grounded in what he understands to be revealed by a close study of ancient Greek thought and language.

In his *Parmenides* lectures, Heidegger emphasizes the way in which his own understanding of a thinker is in keeping with that of Aristotle as set forth in his *Nicomachean Ethics* in the discussion of what the achievement of happiness or *eudaimonia* requires and what a life of contemplation looks like. For Aristotle, a thinker, by virtue of his being as thinker, is privy to being in a way that the ordinary person is not since the ordinary person is not engaged in the type of thinking in which a thinker engages. The thinker, through his activity as thinker, through the activity of contemplation, is able to achieve *eu-daimonia*, that is, he is able to have a *god good within*. In his book, *Daimon Life*, David Farrell Krell explains, “Heidegger eschews the “Christian” understanding of the daimonic as demonic, of *daimones* as minions of evil.

He embraces Aristotle's definition of the thinker."⁹¹ It is interesting and very relevant that the Greek word which is most commonly translated as "contemplation" and sometimes as "study," which is the activity of the thinker or philosopher, does not at all involve the idea that there is some problem to be solved or some answer to be discovered. Rather as translator Terence Irwin explains in the glossary of his translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: "*Theorein* is study in the sense in which I study a face or a scene that I already have in full view; that is why the visual associations of *theorein* are appropriate."⁹² Thus, the thinker contemplates or studies something that is present to him and able to be viewed, seen, and gazed upon.

This idea that the thinker simply holds in view or looks upon something already present and known links up well with Heidegger's ideas of *knowledge* and *tenderness* and the way in which a person possessing those characteristics simply mirrors reality by means of their receptive and appreciative capacities. In other words, the thinker simply engages in phenomenology, that is, he or she describes that which is present, and that is in keeping with Heidegger's very definition of what he calls "meditative thinking." The ordinary person, on the other hand, as Aristotle explains, is chiefly concerned with his or her own perceived good, that is, that which is good for a human being. Thus, that which occupies a thinker seems somehow astounding or even foolish to the ordinary person. And here we could think of the ordinary person as being caught up in what Heidegger has called *calculative thinking*, and therefore he or she has essentially concerned himself or

⁹¹ David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life*, 301.

⁹² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 427.

herself with the *merely actual*. Such a person is operating in “average everydayness.”⁹³ They are enacting that tendency to totalization previously mentioned, a tendency which leads the person to think not in terms of the possible or the un hoped for but to think in a way that is in its very essence confining and restrictive and that ultimately prevents the mortal from attaining to that state in which the good god dwells within. These various ideas seem to be the essence of what Heidegger says in *Parmenides* when he remarks:

Aristotle, Plato’s disciple, relates at one place (NE, Z 7, 1141b 7ff.) the basic conception determining the Greek view on the essence of the thinker, “It is said they (the thinkers) indeed know things that are excessive, and thus astounding, and thereby difficult, and hence in general ‘demonic’ - but also useless, for they are not seeking what is, according to straightforward popular opinion, good for man.” . . . Δαιμόνια is used here as an all-encompassing word for what is, from the point of view of the ordinary busy man, “excessive,” “astounding,” and at the same time “difficult.” On the contrary, what is current, what a man is doing and what he pursues, is for the most part without difficulty for him because he can always find, going from one being to the next, a way of escape from difficulty and an explanation. The many and all too many pursue only the beings that are current; for them, these are real, if not precisely “the” reality . . . They could never be busy with beings without having Being in view. Thus “the many” see Being and yet do not see it. But because they always have Being in view, although not in focus, and only deal with, and calculate, and organize, beings, they ever find their way within beings and are there “at home” and in their element. Within the limits of beings, of the real, of the “facts,” so highly acclaimed, everything is normal and ordinary. But where, on the contrary, Being comes into focus, there the extraordinary announces itself.⁹⁴

That which is closest to us is often not noticed. Being is not in focus for “the many” who are busy organizing and dealing with the “facts,” the real. Yet being is right there and in clear view of the thinker who engages in *theorein*, the thinker who studies that which is in full view but is thought to be “excessive” or “astounding” by the many who cannot see

⁹³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 69.

⁹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 100.

what is right there in front of them. The notion of *the extraordinary* announcing itself is indeed what we are talking about in terms of the nature of the relationship that exists between divinities and mortals, whether it be manifesting in that which we describe as glorious or the more ordinary and mundane. This is the interrelating of the four of *the fourfold* and its manifest being of *physis* (a notion I will soon elaborate more fully). However, as Heidegger emphasizes, the *extraordinary*, although it is that which is closest to us, is that which we too often cannot see, in that it is easily covered over by our tendency to average everydayness. The *unheimlich* or *uncanny* is the very nature of our being and signals our richest possibilities, yet is that from which we flee into “The They” (*das Man*) to content ourselves with calculation and the merely actual. If we examine something Aristotle says, he seems to be asserting something very similar:

If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything. This would seem, too, to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him. It would be strange, then, if he were to choose not the life of his self but that of something else. And what we said before will apply now; that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to reason is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else is man. This life therefore is also the happiest.⁹⁵

Aristotle clearly has a conception of man as intimately interrelated with divinity in an essential way. Moreover, like Heidegger, he sees man’s highest possibilities as achievable only in purposeful relation to divinity, divinity understood as inherent within

⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177b30, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.10.x.html>

man, that is, immanent divinity. Conceptions of divinity that locate divinity outside of and independent of mortals fundamentally misunderstand the nature of the relationship between the two and in the displacement of divinity necessarily prevent happiness, from Aristotle's point of view, in that mortals cannot thus fulfill their function, now could they engage in *dwelling*, from Heidegger's point of view, since *dwelling* requires real thinking which presupposes a recognition of divinity as one of the four of the fourfold. Aristotle even asserts that for a man to forego this is for that man to forego himself. Yet, as both Aristotle and Heidegger understand, all too many do forego it in their excessive occupation with what is conceived as being the domain of concern proper to man as such. They miss what is right there in front of them, what is right there inside of them.

This ever-present yet extraordinary nature of the daimonic, as has already been mentioned, is not to be understood as in any way supernatural or otherworldly, and despite its being extraordinary, it is also exceedingly ordinary. Regarding this David Farrell Krell writes, "The daimonic is not diabolical. It has to do with the *Ungeheur*, the vast, colossal, un-common and un-familiar . . . The daimonic, passing strange, is actually the nearest of the near, the most intimate and natural thing in the world. It is Φύσις itself."⁹⁶ And while it seems it is only the thinker who concerns himself with such matters, according to Aristotle and Heidegger, those very matters are everywhere and always present, continuously available to any who care to see. Once seen, they are understood as that which they are. They are *physis*, that is, nature. Heidegger writes:

We may call the δαιμόνιον the uncanny, or the extraordinary, because it surrounds, and insofar as it everywhere surrounds, the present ordinary state of things and presents itself in everything ordinary, though without

⁹⁶ David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life*, 19.

being the ordinary. The uncanny understood in this way is, with regard to what is ordinary or natural, not the exception but the “most natural,” in the sense of “nature” as thought by the Greeks, i.e., in the sense of Φύσις.⁹⁷

In different places in his writing, Heidegger stresses the way in which Φύσις (*physis*) or nature is related in the most fundamental way to *a-letheia*. In fact, they are really one and the same in a certain sense. While, as discussed earlier, Heidegger points out that the Greeks did not “deal with” *a-letheia* in that they simply dealt within it, they understood it by means of, or as, *physis* or nature. Another way of understanding this is to say that the Greeks’ concept of truth, that is, *a-letheia*, was determined by nature and its operations. It is important that we here attempt to understand what is meant by *physis* in the Greek sense. A helpful way to conceptualize what is meant by the term is to imagine a time-lapsed video that depicts a patch of ground, a seed falling thereupon, rain taking it down into the dirt, days passing, the seed sprouting, growing, blossoming, fruiting, withering, dying, and the process then happening again and again.⁹⁸ It is the entirety of this dynamic and cyclic process in terms of both that which is available to our sight and that which occurs beyond the scope of our vision, as well as the spirit which animates it all, that is indicated by *physis*. Likewise, all cycles that we experience as mortals here on earth beneath the sky reveal to us truth as *a-letheia* if we simply look upon nature. These perpetual and unending cycles, such as day into night and night into day, the waxing, full, waning, dark, and new moon, spring into summer into fall into winter, and the cyclical changes the seasons themselves spur within the myriad beings, are all the continuous process of concealing and unconcealing played out endlessly in our view, and in them is

⁹⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 101.

⁹⁸ Iain Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 37.

revealed to us an intentionality or purposiveness that is inherent in the natural world and all its processes. This is *physis* and *a-letheia*.

I believe that we should understand Heidegger's view of *physis* and *a-letheia* as equiprimordial in thinking being, and as he makes clear in the following passage, it is that which permeates all of existence yet exceeds it, as well, and this is, of course, in keeping with his distinction between earth and world. In elucidating one of Hölderlin's poems, Heidegger states:

Nature is present in everything that is real. Nature comes to presence in human work and in the destiny of peoples, in the stars and in the gods, but also in stones, growing things, and animals, as well as in streams and in thunderstorms . . . From where does nature take her power then, if she is prior to all that is present? Nature does not have to borrow her power from somewhere else. She herself is that which bestows power . . . She is present in everything, even in the gods . . . That she is present in all does not mean a complete, quantitative comprehension of all that is real, but rather the manner of permeating the real things that, according to their kind, seem to mutually exclude each other. This omnipresence holds in opposition to each other the extreme opposites, the highest heaven and the deepest abyss.⁹⁹

Physis permeates nature. Nature permeates the real. Nature encompasses the fourfold. All is intimate through nature. The divinities get their power from nature, as do the mortals, and so does earth and sky. And while it would not be incorrect to perhaps say that nature and being are the same, perhaps it is better to understand nature as being unconcealed.

Here I want to propose an idea that I hope will help us gain deeper insight into and understanding of the various things under discussion. I propose that we conceptualize the

⁹⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, 75.

operation of unconcealment and concealment as functioning something like a fractal in the following manner: at each level of being there is a replication of the previous level. If we conceive of being as itself being made up of the concealed and the unconcealed, and we then move to the unconcealed of being, we find that within the unconcealed of being there is both the concealed and unconcealed, and so on it goes at each new level. Put another way, if being is primary, and is itself made up of the concealed and unconcealed, and we understand the unconcealed of being as what we call nature, then we see when we look at nature that it is made up of both the concealed and unconcealed, and if we then look at some part of nature that is unconcealed, say, for example, an oak tree, we see yet again, that an oak tree in its essence is both concealed and unconcealed, and this process of concealing and unconcealing can be viewed throughout the seasons of a year or over the course of many years. This pattern is repeated over and over in all things. This indeed corresponds with the idea set forth in my first chapter that Heidegger does indeed see unconcealment and concealment as present in all of reality, and yet we can also acknowledge that in some metaphorical way, the way in which being manifests is as something of a gradient, that is, it reveals itself in layers or levels, with a repetition of form yet a difference of content.

Keeping in mind this idea about the way in which being unfolds as layers or levels, each having its own concealed and unconcealed aspect, I want to turn to what is a very important distinction in Heidegger's thinking between the *gods* and the *daimones*. As I hope will become clear, Heidegger holds that in terms of understanding the gods, we must understand that they, being concealed, have their share of unconcealment by means of the *daimones*. The *daimones* are the aspect of the gods that are unconcealed or

revealed to mortals. Looking at something Heidegger says in *Parmenides* about this issue may be helpful:

Being—ἰδέα—is what in all beings shows itself and what looks out through them, the precise reason man can grasp beings as beings at all. That which looks into all that is ordinary, the uncanny as showing itself in advance, is the originally looking one in the eminent sense: τὸ θεάων, i.e., τὸ θεῖον. We translate “correctly,” though without thinking in the Greek manner, “the divine.” Οἱ θεοί, the so-called gods, the ones who look into the ordinary and who everywhere look into the ordinary, are οἱ δαίμονες, the ones who point and give signs. Because the god is, as god, the one who looks and who looks as the one emerging into presence, θεάων, the god is the δαίων-δαίμων that in the look presents himself as unconcealed.¹⁰⁰

While the *daimones* may be ontologically identical with the gods, they are to be distinguished from them ontically in that they are the *aspects* of the gods or of being, according to Heidegger, that are unconcealed in the look. Being shines into beings, Heidegger has told us, and as that which looks out through beings, being is the gods, but as that which offers itself to be seen, being is the *daimones*. In commenting on Heidegger’s discussions of this matter, Krell writes about Heidegger:

He is more intent on showing that the root of δαίω is identical to that of θεάω, “to look,” in the middle voice “to offer something to the gaze” or, better, “to offer *itself* to a sighting.” The gods, οἱ θεοί, are those who are seen to gaze. Daimones are those who indicate, signal, and show themselves.¹⁰¹

We see again in these ideas about the gods and the *daimones* the dynamic interplay of the unconcealed and concealed. We also see the way in which this is linked up to Heidegger’s neo-Aristotelian philosophy in that the very activity that both Aristotle and

¹⁰⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 104.

¹⁰¹ David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life*, 20.

Heidegger says that the province and domain of the thinker involves this awareness of and openness to that which offers itself to be looked at, gazed upon, studied, and contemplated (*theorein*), and, as hopefully has been becoming more clear, is best seen by the thinker in the person of the poet or artist, for they are the richest conduits for this expression, according to Heidegger. Hence, his idea regarding the special and important relationship between the poet and the philosopher. Being or source reveals itself to the Poet, who is closest to it, the Poet in turn reveals what he sees, and the thinker sees what is revealed and elucidates so as to reveal to others, and so on. If we understand this dynamic properly, we can see how in the ancient world the writers of the tragedies, and the thinkers who explored them, and the performance of them in theater, and the people's experience of them, and the resultant edification and illumination attained thereby exemplify this process, and again the importance of myth and art and experience thereof is understood.

I wish to turn now to thinking a bit more deeply about the very idea of vision and the visible, this centrally important phenomenon of seeing and being seen. If we consult ourselves and our own personal experiences of the phenomenon of eye contact, much insight may be gained. Likewise, if we really consider, in terms of the phenomenological experience, the important place that eyes and eye contact hold in myriad situations, disciplines, art, and literature, as well as in our daily lives, it is hard to deny Heidegger's ideas. A quick look at language reveals a wealth of expressions, clichés, and idioms built upon the phenomenology of eye contact. The phenomenon of eye contact is in human experience a unique and powerful experience thought to be unlike any other. Eyes are the windows of the soul, so the saying goes. A French proverb tells us that the first love

letters are written with the eyes. Myriad expressions such as “turn a blind eye,” “eyes in the back of your head,” “a roving eye,” “the evil eye,” “bedroom eyes,” “feast your eyes upon,” “more than meets the eye,” and many other such sayings affirm the unique and powerful place of the experience of eye contact. Silent and sustained eye contact between two human beings is a profound and moving experience that seems to inevitably result in strong surges of emotion. The fact that an important part of training soldiers to kill is to train them to avoid all eye contact is not surprising. If we reflect honestly upon our own experiences, we can begin to recognize certain patterns that point us toward Heidegger’s ideas. Many people will agree that the appeal that is made to them in the silent eye contact of a child, for example, is virtually impossible to ignore. Likewise, many people will openly acknowledge that they avoid eye contact either because they sense it as intrusive to the other or feel it as the other intruding. People will avoid eye contact in an attempt to keep hidden their thoughts and feelings. Often people who work together in various capacities will describe how there is an ability for unspoken communication that develops by means of eye contact. Likewise, in improvisational art forms, eye contact amongst participating members can be the sole means of communicating. And some people will even acknowledge that they find it exceedingly difficult if not impossible to be overtly dismissive or unjustifiably cruel to someone while looking that person in the eye. And what of that well-known phrase, “It was love at first sight”? Many people describe their experience of eye contact with certain others as jolting, electrifying, soul-stirring, etc. Perhaps, when under the gaze of another, we sense the presence of being, the presence of divinity, and, perhaps, when gazing at one another, we are experiencing being looking out at and into itself. It may well be that when we are

making eye contact and feel the need to look away, we are retreating so as to avoid the overwhelming *daimon* that is glimpsed in the eyes of the other. Put another way, when we gaze into the eyes of another person, we do so either calculatively or meditatively. If the latter, we are open and receptive to the other and to being itself. If the former, we are closed off from being and likely do not wish to have the encounter.

Returning now to our thinking about the *daimones* and the gods, it is instructive and interesting to explore the ways in which certain ideas expressed in Plato's *Symposium* are in keeping with an understanding of the *daimones* as either beings in their own right that exist between gods and mortals or as aspects of the gods themselves that might appear to mortals as beings in their own right in that they are that which show themselves to us while the gods do not. In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates relates to the others that which was told to him by Diotima regarding the nature of Eros or Love. Diotima explained to Socrates that Eros, being desirous of the beautiful and the good, cannot himself be a god. Rather, he is a very powerful spirit which exists halfway between gods and men. About such spirits, it is said:

They are the envoys and interpreters that ply between heaven and earth, flying upward with our worship and our prayers, and descending with the heavenly answers and commandments, and since they are between the two estates they weld both sides together and merge them into one great whole. They form the medium of the prophetic arts, of the priestly rites of sacrifice, initiation, and incantation, of divination and of sorcery, for the divine will not mingle directly with the human, and it is only through the mediation of the spirit world that man can have any intercourse, whether waking or sleeping, with the gods. And the man who is versed in such matters is said to have spiritual powers, as opposed to the mechanical powers of the man who is expert in the more mundane arts. There are many spirits and many kinds of spirits, too, and Love is one of them.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Plato, "The Symposium," 555.

Much in this passage fits with Heidegger's own discussion about the nature of the relationship between gods and *daimones*. While in Plato the *daimones* are the intermediaries between the gods and men, and would thus appear to be beings in their own right, in another sense, given that it is said that it is they that "weld both sides together," we can fit them into the view expressed by Heidegger in which he sees the *daimones* as the aspect of divinity that "communicates" or "interacts" with mortals in that they "point and give signs."

Heidegger's idea of the *daimones* as they that "point and give signs" may be further connected with Plato in that Socrates himself was said to be attended by such a *daimon*. We find references to this in various of Plato's dialogues.¹⁰³ While there is not a great deal of discussion about it in the dialogues, I contend that its somewhat regular appearance as a fact about Socrates is significant. Furthermore, words spoken by Socrates in the dialogue *Cratylus* is very much in keeping with Hölderlin's poetry and his description of how the mortal and god are united through mutual need and interdependence. In *Cratylus*, Plato has Socrates say: "And I say, too, that every wise man who happens to be a good man is more than human (*δαίμωνιον*) both in life and death, and is rightly called a daimon."¹⁰⁴ In proclaiming the good man as more than human, Socrates affirms that there is an intimate relationship between the mortals and the divinities, and Socrates' good man appears to be on a par with Heidegger's demigod poet in the sense that both are felt to be closer to Source and privy to some deeper and more

¹⁰³*Apology*, 31c-d, 40a. *Republic*, 496 b-c. *Symposium*, 175.

¹⁰⁴ Plato, "Cratylus," 435.

meaningful understanding and modality of being. Likewise, for both of them, such a person has a role to play as such in terms of what we could think of as “pointing and giving signs” to the common people. To be such a mortal no doubt carries with it its own difficulties, burdens, and travails. To further explore this idea, let us look again at lines from Hölderlin’s poem *The Rhine*. We will then look at what Heidegger says about them in *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister."* From the poem *The Rhine*:

Yet of their own
Immortality the gods have enough, and if one thing
The heavenly require,
Then heroes and humans it is
And otherwise mortals. For since
The most blessed feel nothing of themselves,
There must presumably, if to say such
Is allowed, in the name of the gods
Another partake in feeling,
Him they need; yet their own ordinance
Is that he his own house
Shatter and his most beloved
Chide like the enemy and bury his father
And child beneath the ruins,
If someone wants to be like them and not
Tolerate unequals, the impassioned one.

In elucidating these lines of poetry, Heidegger writes:

An Other must be, who is other than the gods and in his being other must “tolerate unequals.” This Other is needed to “partake in feeling” in the name of the gods. Partaking in feeling consists in his bearing sun and moon, the heavenly, in mind and distributing this share of the heavenly to humans, and so, standing between gods and humans, sharing the holy with them, yet without even splitting it apart or fragmenting it. Such communicating occurs by this Other pointing toward the holy in naming it, so that in such showing he himself *is* the sign that the heavenly need . . . The poet is thus beyond human beings and yet unequal to the gods, and to humans as well.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* 155-6.

Let's focus first on Hölderlin's words. The immortals, the gods, have need of mortals so that the mortals may feel in the name of the gods since the gods themselves can feel nothing. This idea we discussed earlier. We can see from what is said that the very nature of the relationship between gods and mortals is one in which the gods themselves in their relating to mortals "tolerate unequals" for some further good, and it appears from what Hölderlin tells us that if a mortal who has been impassioned by a god fails to retain his own humility and recognition of his proper place and wishes to be like the gods yet is unlike them in that he does not "tolerate unequals," he will be made to bring about destruction to his own house, his own kin. That is the ordinance of the gods, says Hölderlin. Harmony and balance are achieved only when each part of the whole, in doing its own part, does so with an aim toward accepting and tolerating lesser and greater beings, we could say. To avoid the destruction of one's own house, one must, if impassioned by a god, "tolerate unequals." Of course, for Heidegger, the specific role that the poet plays is his primary concern, the ways in which the poet serves, as poet, to "weld together" gods and humans. The poet serves the humans by "sharing the holy with them." The poet is he or she who facilitates or provides for mortals access to and experience of the "holy." The poet serves the gods by being the sign they need. As Heidegger writes, "The poet is the sign that is in such a way that its mind has sun and moon in view . . . The sign ("the besouler") bears everything originarily in mind in such a way that, in naming the holy, the sign lets the heavenly show itself."¹⁰⁶ The poet, as such, being unequal to the gods and unequal to the humans, would need to tolerate

¹⁰⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Holderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* 156.

unequals in his efforts to both offer the mortals an “unfragmented” experience of the holy and be the sign the heavenly require.

Let us return now and think further about the distinction Heidegger makes between the gods and the *daimones*, the idea that the gods as such are hidden or concealed while the *daimones* are unconcealed. This conceptualization, as we can see, fits the pattern of the unconcealing and concealing nature of being. It preserves truth understood as *a-letheia*, that strange, seeming-antinomy that is truth's simultaneous revelation and hiddenness. About it, Heidegger says, "concealedness and unconcealedness determine beings as such. That means: disclosedness and concealment are a basic feature of Being."¹⁰⁷ We are reminded yet again of the idea that this feature of reality, this concealedness and unconcealedness, is constant. The nature of the concealedness itself is given treatment by Heidegger in a discussion about truth and the ways in which the Greek's conception thereof differs from the modern conception which supposes that truth is rightly to be understood in opposition to *falsity*. Heidegger suggests that the *hiddenness* or *concealment* that is a part of the Greek conception of truth should be understood as sanctuary or safe-keeping. He explains, "There is also, however, a kind of concealment that does not at all put aside and destroy the concealed but instead shelters and saves the concealed for what it is. This concealment does not deprive us of the thing, as in cases of dissembling and distorting, withdrawing and putting aside. This concealment preserves."¹⁰⁸ To understand the hiddenness as something inherently good in that it “shelters” is in itself already at odds with the modern conceptualization of truth and its

¹⁰⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 71.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

tendency to a scientism of thought which would suppose that only truth that makes known can be understood as good since only what is known can be made useful.

When we apply Heidegger's understanding of the hidden as that which is kept safe and preserved to our understanding of the gods as concealed, we see that it is a concealment which preserves and shelters the gods as the aspect of being that they are while that which they are does come into expression and unconcealment in the *daimones* who offer themselves to a sighting in their pointing and giving of signs. As Heidegger explains, it is the poet who, as perfect channel or conduit for the *daimones*, becomes the sign the gods need so that their concealed and preserved essences may come to expression and manifestation in the nexus that is earth, sky, divinity, and mortal.

The distinction between the unconcealed and concealed and their interrelatedness is expressed nicely in one of Vincent Vycinas' books on Heidegger when he writes, "Moreover, Maet is not the rays of the sun nor is Ra the sun itself; they merely are manifested by these entities which are backed up by these deities or permeated by them. What really are gods in themselves remains concealed; they break through into disclosure by way of things."¹⁰⁹ This idea that the god as such is concealed yet comes into presence by way of *daimones* or things is precisely what Heidegger has in mind when he speaks about the importance of the poet as one by means of which the gods can be made manifest. Being, as such, is both concealed and unconcealed. Being manifests as *physis*, and *a-letheia* is understood on the basis thereof. The power that may be said to belong to the gods is itself derived from *physis*, as Heidegger earlier articulated, and that power is

¹⁰⁹ Vincent Vycinas , *Search for Gods*, 21.

manifest by means of *daimones*, poets, beings, and things. If we think again about the idea that the divinities are aspects of Being that themselves may be understood as principles or elements or affective dispositions, and that they are a part of *physis*, an experienced reality, we can more fully understand what Vycinas has in mind when he writes:

These realities [gods as powers of Being] can be considered as the basic articulation of *logos*, the natural language of *physis* . . . In the worlds of two different gods, a thing is not the same in each because by reflecting a different essence of a god, it itself becomes different . . . love in the world of Hermes and in that of Aphrodite are different loves. Love in the world of Hermes is a matter of luck or opportunity. It is the kind of love a traveler knows—suddenly coming and going, found, enjoyed, and forgotten. A love in the world of Aphrodite is a blissful unification breaking all bounds and upsetting the former mode of living. Such a love brings a revolutionary change in human life, like a sudden spring in which meadows burst into blossoms overnight . . . Gods as worlds never merely dominate or support a section of reality; they dominate everything whatsoever.¹¹⁰

The divinities, operating as elements or principles, determine the affective dispositions of the mortals over which they rule. A lover ruled by Hermes is very different than a lover ruled by Aphrodite. As Vycinas points out, one mortal's experiences as lover may vary, depending upon in which divinity's *world* his actions as lover are unfolding.¹¹¹ When we keep in mind Heidegger's own distinction between earth and world, earth as hidden, and worlds as manifest, and the idea that earth is inexhaustible while any given world may collapse, it allows us to see how we may understand the truth Vycinas points us toward in

¹¹⁰ Vincent Vycinas, *Earth and Gods*, 187-8.

¹¹¹ It can be well argued that the view put forth by Vycinas that "gods as worlds dominate everything" is an idea present in ancient texts such as Euripides' *The Bacchae* or Aeschylus' trilogy *The Oresteia* but with the understanding that it is from the point of view of the mortal that such would be understood to be true. Here, too, Telemakhos in *The Illiad* comes to mind. Such would make sense with the unavoidable clash of fates that make up the stories that are Greek tragedies, as well as much of mythology.

the above passage. We can with relative ease imagine how a mortal who may be understood as existing in the world of Hermes happens to meet someone who introduces him to the world of Aphrodite and there is a subsequent collapse of that former world. If we think of an individual mortal as being attuned to being by virtue of the god or goddess he or she presently “serves,” and thus the world he or she occupies, we can see how something such as love is indeed very different in those two lovers or worlds. This makes sense when we reflect upon the phenomenological experience of meeting someone who introduces us to a new way of understanding an old concept. Worlds collide. One collapses and another emerges. A new world is disclosed. An epochal shift occurs. One vision dies and a new one is born. There are many other things besides a conception of love which we can imagine changing in like manner, and we can see how those things are indeed different in different worlds and how they may be altered by any of the various connections and encounters that are possible in the fourfold. If we think about a person, for example, who identifies with the myths of Hermes upon learning of them, when can understand that he does so due to his own phenomenological experience of existence and the resonance that exists between that and the myths of Hermes to which he has been made privy. Thus, we can see that in acquiring a fuller knowledge and appreciation for myth, the individual's own life is made richer by means of the understanding and insight that is provided by the myth, by the god himself, by being. And here we can perhaps begin to see yet again the important place myth, art, and poetry hold for Dasein as a mortal in the fourfold.

The importance of the attunement of the individual is not to be diminished and thus again is emphasized the importance of real *dwelling* for Heidegger. The divinities cannot

simply express through and with just any human being. They appear to need mortals who hold within their finitude and orientation toward being the capacity for acting as a conduit, as a clear channel for glorious manifestation of divinity. The divinities manifest most beautifully through those who, like Hölderlin, are possessed of what Heidegger calls *knowledge* and *tenderness*, that is, mortals who are open, receptive, appreciative and able to reflect the reality that is divinity. Such mortals, it may be said, are truly loved and favored by the divinities in that they make of themselves a vessel fit for the *indwelling* and operation of these elements, principles, *daimones*, or divinities. This is precisely what Heidegger appears to be saying when, in reference to the above quoted lines from Hölderlin's *The Archipelago*, he explains that we should understand the word *glory* as it appears in the poem in the Pindaric sense as a *letting-appear*.¹¹² In order for glory to manifest, the divinities, the hallowed elements, the gods and goddesses, need mortals, mortals who will *let-appear* their glory. Here, again, would be relevant those examples of human greatness mentioned earlier: great musicians, dancers, orators, athletes, and warriors. Indeed, the artist who possesses the characteristics of *knowledge* and *tenderness* is the fertile ground for the springing forth of the divinity that itself as principle or element manifests only through the artist in the material world as art. We find that we have now answered our guiding question as to what is the proper element allotted to the poet. Feeling for the gods is the proper element allotted to the poet.

Keeping in mind how both Vycinas and Heidegger emphasize that what the gods are in themselves remains concealed, we should note that in his essay, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," Heidegger tells us that the mortals "do not make the gods." Vycinas, in his

¹¹² Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations on Holderlin's Poetry*, 219.

Search for Gods, writes, “According to mythical understanding, the gods are not to be seen as founded on wholly human grounds, but *vice versa*: man on the transcendental grounds of gods. Man’s holiness, his beauty, his greatness, his wisdom, are the outcomes of his serving the gods in their play.”¹¹³ While there may be differences to be understood, I believe it is important to emphasize that from the phenomenological point of view, both Heidegger and Vycinas understand the experience of mortals in relation to divinity in this way. Hence Heidegger’s assertion in *Parmenides*, quoted earlier, that “the *daimones* are more essential than any being.” We are left to attempt to grasp as best we are able the nature of the inescapable and inexorable bond that holds between divinities and mortals, for it is most intimate. Such a bond is representative of the relationship that holds between all four of *the fourfold*. And while the manifest and experiential operation of the fourfold is *physis*, it is not inaccurate to say that the fourfold is one. The myths by means of which we learn about the divinities preserve within themselves, albeit in a somewhat hidden way, the various truths of human being, profound phenomenological insights into the workings of being as it manifests in and through beings and each of the four of the fourfold. The undeniably powerful elements that operate in the lives of all human beings, elements which are referred to as *daimones* by Heidegger, can be recognized, appreciated, understood, and thus revered for what they are by the return to and the embrace of myth and the acknowledgment of the role and place and purpose of art in our mortal lives in our pursuit of real *dwelling*. The attunement that opens us to hear the truths found in art and myth, as well as nature itself, is indeed an attunement to the earth itself, it is a kind of thinking, and thus can it enable our harmonious *dwelling*

¹¹³ Vincent Vycinas, *Search for Gods*, 22.

within the fourfold through the building of new and different worlds. Keeping in mind the concealed and unconcealed nature of truth, let us seek further unconcealment. We will now look at these very ideas and other important related ones from a different vantage point.

Our Loss of Dwelling

IV.1. Our World

Our world is fraught with crises, disorder, injustice, suffering, exploitation, oppression, degradation, and destruction. Most people, even if unaware of details and specifics, have a deep and abiding sense of things simply not being “right,” and they suffer a lack of meaning, happiness, and peace. Whether they are focusing on individual, collective, societal, or global situations, many people long for guidance, for direction, for someone to show them a different way or to simply give them hope that a different way is possible. A very small sampling of some of the crises we are facing may serve to get us properly oriented: 8% of the world’s population controls 79% of the wealth, and 31% of the world’s population controls 96% of the wealth, the U.S. has only five percent of the world’s population yet uses 33 percent of all non-renewable resources and 25 percent of the planet’s commodities, globally, 1.2 billion people lack safe drinking water, currently, the U.S. has lost all but 10 percent of its ancient forests, 40 thousand children starve to

death on our planet each day, animal agriculture produces two billion tons of waste each year.¹¹⁴ Additionally, there are all the problems, issues, and horrors related to fracking, famine, mountain top removal, prison as a for-profit industry, oil spills, coral bleaching, homelessness, ocean acidification, desertification, starvation, hunger, and malnutrition, the Pacific ocean garbage patch, neglected veterans, Fukushima, colony collapse disorder and the loss of bees, seemingly endless war and religious strife, and the list goes on and on. We could conceive of each and every one of these things as a discrete and separate problem or issue and engage in a thoroughgoing investigation of it, no doubt gaining understanding of the details and perhaps even hitting upon things relevant to causation. Perhaps, however, we should consider an approach that attempts to understand these things more holistically with an eye toward finding the underlying reality or realities that give rise to each and every one of these problems.

Perhaps a metaphor and analogy is useful here to understand this difference in approach I am proposing. In traditional Western medicine, illness and the body have been approached in a very non-holistic way. You have your general practitioners, but most of the heavy lifting is done by specialists who have devoted themselves to the understanding and study of one specific part or system of the human body in isolation from the rest. Today, more and more people recognize the limitations of this approach despite the seemingly entrenched modes of practice that constitute the industry and institution that is medicine. The rise of interest in and appreciation for alternative approaches that view the body holistically and acknowledge the interrelatedness of not only different systems within the body but the different facets that make up a human

¹¹⁴ Gaard and Gruen, "Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health," 276.

being speak to this shift in conscious awareness of the integral nature of well-being. If we were to conceive of our world in the same way we conceive of an individual human being, recognizing that it is indeed sick, has many, many symptoms, and acknowledge that while it has various different systems that operate within it, all the systems are ultimately interrelated and integral to the healthy functioning of the being as a whole, we can get a sense for the approach I am proposing.

To get us started in reflecting on things, I will offer a summary of the philosophy of ecofeminism and examine some of the most meaningful contributions of this philosophy for the gaining of understanding about much of our current human situation and our current world. Inherent within the ecofeminist framework is theorizing as to how we arrived at this point, how the current global crises came to be, how we might best understand the interconnected nature of these crises and the causes that might otherwise be construed as separate and discrete. As I see it, there is within ecofeminist theorizing an insightful articulation of the interrelated explanations for the present functioning of global oppressions and for what I am calling “a general loss of dwelling,” as well as many other valuable insights pertinent to ideas central to my project. Perhaps most importantly, however, there is an orientation of openness toward thinking, toward any and all thinking that takes as its concern the health of the earth, human well-being and flourishing, and aspires to think toward the eradication of oppression and exploitation and the cessation of destruction and suffering by cultivating what Trish Glazebrook calls “an intellectual climate of solidarity, connection and intersection” through the maintenance of

an “inclusivity that seeks introduction over reduction, emergent growth over confining and common denominators.”¹¹⁵

IV.2. Ecofeminism and what it Unconceals

Ecofeminism has its roots in the French tradition of feminist theory. Early on, Simone de Beauvoir made the case that patriarchal reasoning relegated both nature and women to the realm of *other*.¹¹⁶ Later, French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the term “ecofeminism” when she called upon women to bring about ecological revolution in opposition to the overpopulation and destruction of resources that resulted from patriarchal rule. In North America, various writers such as Rosemary Radford Ruether and Carolyn Merchant began to lay the foundation for the much fuller approach that ecofeminism has come to be today. While there is some disagreement among various ecofeminists regarding certain issues, there are some basic viewpoints shared by virtually all ecofeminists, and it is from those that we will take our start.

As its name implies, the philosophical approach that is known as ecofeminism begins with the supposition that historically there has been a very clear link between the subjection, domination, and oppression of women and the conquest, destruction, and exploitation of nature. In attempting to understand the conditions that gave rise to the mutually reinforcing oppressions of certain humans along with the natural world, specific

¹¹⁵ Trish Glazebrook, “Heidegger and Ecofeminism,” 172.

¹¹⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 114.

ideas and institutions continually came to the fore. Put most succinctly, ecofeminism holds that it is the separation between culture and nature that is at the root of all these current crises. However, that answer, as accurate as it may be, is somewhat vague and abstract, and itself calls for more thinking. In responding to that call, ecofeminists focus in on four specific things which provide us with a fuller and more in-depth understanding and explanation for most if not all of our current crisis situations. The majority of those claiming to be ecofeminist see each of the four explanations as playing an important role in the unfolding of our global and human situation in that they are historically and culturally intertwined and mutually reinforcing in various ways. Metaphorically, these four things may be conceived as making up the four sides of a frame, the frame of ecofeminism, through which we are better able to see and understand our world and its realities in terms of both accurately diagnosing problems and their causes and offering prognoses. The four things that make up the ecofeminist framework of critique are: the scientific revolution, capitalism, patriarchal religions, and self and other dualisms.

The first explanation we will look at is that of the scientific revolution and the spread of the *mechanistic universe* world view.¹¹⁷ While this shift did not occur overnight, it was an epochal shift that did indeed occur and involved some serious changes in the dominant mindset of humanity, or at least in those who wielded power over others and over what would come to be understood as conventional wisdom. Prior to this epochal shift, nature was seen as alive. With the shift into the mechanistic materialist model, nature came to be seen as simple, dead, and inert matter. Nature was increasingly viewed

¹¹⁷ Gaard and Gruen, "Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health," 278.

as a machine whose laws could be known and understood. What was formerly seen as a forest, alive and full of life, came to be seen merely in terms of its usefulness. A former sacred wood became only so many potential square feet of lumber. Thanks to the work and thought of Descartes, Francis Bacon, and others, both nature and animals, the very earth itself, came to be understood on the model of a machine, and the entire universe was taken to be something that could be comprehended mathematically, its laws discovered and documented, and ultimately manipulated and controlled through analysis, reason, science, and technology. All of the natural world was thereby reduced to something to be conquered, dominated, and controlled. Of course, it followed that nature and all within it existed so as to be used, instrumentalized, and optimized. Under such a mechanistic, materialist conception, the only ethics that were applicable were the ethics of utility and perhaps a Hobbesian egoism.

The next explanation for the culture/nature separation that will be addressed is the rise of capitalism and its accompanying colonialist/imperialist practices. Some ecofeminists see the rise of feudalism in Europe and the enclosing of the commons and the creation of private property as bringing about the hierarchy that is endemic to the culture/nature division by creating the land-owner class and the landless peasants. Engels himself is often cited, for in 1884 he wrote, “The overthrow of mother-right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude, she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children.”¹¹⁸ While the role and place of women can certainly be

¹¹⁸ Friedrich Engels, “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,” 108.

argued to have been fundamentally altered with the rise of capitalism, it was not only women who found themselves oppressed, exploited, and denied equal value but anyone for whom the designation of “other” seemed to apply.

What followed in the colonialist-imperialist expansion was the enslavement of indigenous peoples, the capturing of land and resources for use and profit by an elite few, and what came to be a kind of systematic underdevelopment in those places that further perpetuated not only the twin dominations and exploitations of both women and nature but also people of color. While it is indeed recognized that indigenous men suffer, the practical fact is that the domestic responsibilities in such places fall primarily upon women. Women are the ones responsible for growing and preparing food, gathering wood for heating and cooking, collecting water for the household, and so on, and this means that there is an even greater burden placed upon the women since the changes brought about by the colonizers and imperialists often made these tasks much more difficult if not sometimes impossible.

The pattern was that indigenous people were forced to stop growing the crops that they had traditionally grown so as to grow cash crops for export, which of course translated into very little compensation for the people themselves, and they no longer were growing the food they needed to survive. Practices such as the clear-cutting of forests so as to increase crop yield resulted in massive erosion of the soil, and growing the same cash crop year after year depleted the soil of its nutrients. Thus, these peoples soon found themselves truly poverty-stricken and in debt to their colonial lenders.

According to Gaard and Gruen:

The affluence of the North is founded on the natural resources and labor of the South . . . One debtor nation, the Philippines, is among 70 countries which annually remit over \$50 billion in interest alone to First World creditors. At this rate, the Third World will be perpetually indentured servants of the industrialized nations, an outcome well-suited to the goals of capitalism.¹¹⁹

Perhaps what is most ironic and symbolically telling is that the lifestyle these indigenous peoples had been living prior to the arrival of the Europeans, although viewed as “impoverished” and “uncivilized” by the invading Europeans, was in fact what is now understood as “subsistence living,” and the so-called improvements in material existence that were supposed to have followed from the civilization and industrialization foisted upon these people by the Europeans has actually resulted in real material poverty far worse than ever known before.¹²⁰

Another crucial and important element of the capitalist paradigm is the way in which the West established that a nation’s wealth is to be measured by its GNP and GDP. The logic is that if you consume what you produce, you don’t produce. Thus, production must be greater than consumption. This imposition rendered the work and product of most women around the world of zero value in so far as what they produced, they consumed. Likewise, nature’s own production and destruction are not accounted for in any way or granted value unless and until they somehow enter the cash economy. As Gaard and Gruen point out, “A clean lake which offers women fresh water supplies has no value in these accounting systems; once it is polluted, however, and companies must be paid to clean it up, then the clean-up activity itself is performed by men and recorded

¹¹⁹ Gaard and Gruen, “Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health,” 281.

¹²⁰ Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive*, 13.

as generating income.”¹²¹ The failure of capitalism to accord value properly is well-articulated by Vandana Shiva in many of her books, essays, and articles. She sums it up well when she writes:

Thus nature’s amazing cycles of renewal of water and nutrients are defined into nonproduction. The peasants of the world, who provide 72% of the food, do not produce; women who farm or do most of the housework do not fit this paradigm of growth either. A living forest does not contribute to growth, but when trees are cut down and sold as timber, we have growth. Healthy societies and communities do not contribute to growth, but disease creates growth through, for example, the sale of patented medicine.¹²²

Once we are made able to see what is right in front of us, it does quickly come into focus. These ideas are not foreign in any way to our own popular culture, as evidenced by bumper stickers and memes on facebook even that say, “There is no profit in the cure of cancer.”

The third ecofeminist explanation offered is the advent of patriarchal religion. Another epochal shift, this one occurring long before the scientific revolution, began roughly 4500 BCE. Around that time, there was a shift away from long-standing, earth-based, goddess-worshipping religions, in which both the earth’s and women’s fertility were seen as sacred and revered accordingly, in favor of the worship of sky gods who were distant and removed from the earth and its people yet ruled over them nonetheless. Various cultures that had long existed without gender hierarchies now esteemed man above woman. Cultures in which divinity had been understood as immanent and present

¹²¹ Gaard and Gruen, “Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health,” 280.

¹²²Vandana Shiva, “How Economic Growth has become Anti-Life,” *The Guardian*, November 1, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/01/how-economic-growth-has-become-anti-life>

in both nature and humanity came to conceive of divinity as merely transcendent. Many cultures made the transition when they fell under the rule of leaders and/or invaders who had such ideologies, myths, and religions and imposed their views upon the conquered people, the native tribes of the North American continent and their subordination to invading Europeans and their beliefs being perhaps one of the most recent examples of this type of occurrence. Such patriarchal religious views entailed that the earth and all therein were created by a god or gods who created and ruled from outside. This conception of a distant and masculine authority paved the way for the role of the male to be elevated above that of the female in reproduction; the female was compared to a barren field awaiting the planting of male seed. Of course, this change occurred over time and at different rates in different places but certainly was in full effect by the time of both the Jews and the Greeks. Within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, man's dominance over both women and nature is entrenched and, moreover, is reinforced by a mythology of divine command.¹²³

Some ecofeminists approach this issue from an anthropological perspective, and thus they see patriarchy itself as the result of developments in human evolution. They argue that once male hominids began hunting for food and interacting with other hominids outside their specific group, the realm of *culture* was conceived, and it was one involving men's death-oriented activities, while women, who were weaker and smaller and whose reproductive capacities and obligations prevented them from engaging in the hunting activities of the men, were relegated to the realm of non-culture, along with animals and

¹²³ Gaard and Gruen, "Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health," 278.

nature.¹²⁴ This distinguishing of the realm of *culture* from the realm involving domestic and reproductive activities is one that is common to ancient Greek thought and made evident by a study of language, as we will see in the following chapter. The emphasis, however, even for those thinkers who approach these issues from the human evolution standpoint is upon the division between men and women that is intimately linked up with the division between culture and nature.

The fourth and final explanation, that of *self and other dualisms*, is conceptual one and is the most abstract of the four and in many ways is itself an aspect of each of the other three. Nonetheless, ecofeminists see it as important to distinguish it as a separate idea, and its usefulness as a tool of analysis and criticism will hopefully make itself apparent as we go along. Self and other dualisms are also sometimes referred to as *value dualisms*.¹²⁵ Essentially, these dualisms may be understood as valuations that esteem all things associated with the self and devalue all things associated with the other. Oppression and domination are built in to such thinking in that the other by means of negation is the means for defining or understanding the self as powerful, good, and the like. This idea that an individual or a group will use another individual or a group as a means to his or their own identity or “goodness” is not a new idea or one confined to ecofeminism or feminism for that matter. The writings of various existentialists, for example, and other thinkers are rife with such discussions.¹²⁶ From the ecofeminist point of view, women have been systematically rendered as the other and linked up with nature in that

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Gaard and Gruen, “Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health,” 278.

¹²⁶ Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Shelby Steele, Bell Hooks, W.E.B. DuBois, Levinas, De Beauvoir, et.al., all explicitly speak to this phenomenon.

designation throughout the epoch of history known as patriarchy. The systematic devaluing of all things deemed non-masculine or “feminine” has served to create an entrenched mode of thinking that has resulted in the ever-increasing loss of an entire section of the spectrum of the possible. Dualisms such as self/other, culture/nature, reason/emotion, practical/impractical, civilized/wild, white/non-white, heterosexual/homosexual all serve to establish value hierarchies and determine what constitutes the norm. Moreover, I contend that in the process of defining what’s normative, what may rightfully be understood as being “masculine” comes also to determine what is seen as “neutral.” A good example of this idea is found in the use of type-face or fonts. Seldom, if ever, does a font get described as “masculine.” Rather, such fonts that from a critical view might be termed “masculine” are more commonly referred to as “standard” or “ordinary” or “business” fonts. Such fonts would include Times New Roman and Arial. Fonts that are not “standard” may be termed “frilly” “feminine” or “artsy.” Such fonts would include Monotype Corsiva, Papyrus, Perpetua, and any of the scripts. The identification between the masculine and the neutral was acknowledged by de Beauvoir when she wrote, “In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of *man* to designate human beings in general.”¹²⁷

I believe that it is worth taking a small detour here and looking at some of Heidegger’s thoughts on the loss of handwriting with the rise of the use of the typewriter. I think that

¹²⁷ Simone deBeauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 255.

we can see definite points of intersection between Heidegger and ecofeminism by looking at this particular and interesting issue. Heidegger says:

Man himself acts through the hand; for the hand is, together with the word, the essential distinction of man . . . The hand exists as hand only where there is disclosure and concealment . . . The word as what is inscribed and what appears to the regard is the written word, i.e., script. And the word as script is handwriting. It is not accidental that modern man writes “with” the typewriter and “dictates” into a machine . . . The typewriter tears writing from the essential realm of the hand, i.e., the realm of the word . . . In the time of the first dominance of the typewriter, a letter written on this machine still stood for a breach of good manners. Today a hand-written letter is an antiquated and undesired thing; it disturbs speed reading. Mechanical writing deprives the hand of its rank in the realm of the written word and degrades the word to a means of communication. In addition, mechanical writing provides this “advantage,” that it conceals the handwriting and thereby the character. The typewriter makes everyone look the same.¹²⁸

Making everyone look the same is of course the essence of a “neutral” means of communication, no doubt, and a “neutral” font would be requisite. The mechanical writing that Heidegger speaks of is itself the result of the implementation of scientific and technological advances, and of course the efficiency of this mechanization is well-suited to the goals and purposes of capitalism. Heidegger’s assertion that the concealment of handwriting is a concealment of character is perhaps the most important, for in that assertion we can tie together many of the important ideas that span the breadth of this project. Modern humanity, having been shaped by the ideals of the scientific revolution, patriarchal religion, capitalism, and enslaved by the reigning value dualisms, not only assent to a reduction to the same via mechanical writing but may well enjoy the anonymity and concealment of character that it provides. Loss of dwelling presupposes

¹²⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, 80.

loss of self, and if self is lost, there is no substantial character to come through in one's script. Just as one may be all too content to be a merely calculative thinker, one may be content to be merely a façade, an optimized resource, a shiny exterior that conceals the absence of the fourfold within. It should not be surprising that human beings who are subjected from birth to systems of existence which operate on the principles of denigration and domination opt to forego the depths and tread only the surface.

Regarding the *self and other dualisms*, Gaard and Gruen point out, "Domination is built in to such dualisms because the other is negated in the process of defining a powerful self."¹²⁹ Certain ideological underpinnings that connect women to nature and/or animals thus configuring them as other are often revealed when a closer look is taken at language itself. Any close critique of language, as Mary Daly has shown in numerous works, uncovers the rampant and widespread use of words and phrases that perpetuate ideologies which serve to reinforce the inferior status of women and nature. An examination of this phenomenon with an openness to seeing what it reveals, coupled with Heidegger's idea that although humanity wishes to believe itself ruler, it is language that is master, proves helpful in understanding further the ecofeminist viewpoint. Moreover, as ecofeminists often point out, any group of people who are deemed as other will be subjected to this same process of animalization, feminization, and naturalization via the language employed in reference to them in the process of subordinating them. This process may be observed in an analysis of the metaphors of language that are used to describe a given individual or group. Gaard and Gruen point out just a few instances of this by referencing such terms and phrases as 'virgin forest,' 'rape of nature,' 'bitch,' 'old

¹²⁹ Gaard and Gruen, "Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health," 278.

hen' and 'sow.'¹³⁰ In terms of animals having their names applied to humans, I would add to the list 'cow,' 'hog,' 'pig,' 'chicken,' 'dog,' 'cougar,' 'tiger,' 'wolf,' 'snake,' 'squirrel,' 'worm,' 'rat,' 'mouse,' 'alley cat,' 'fox,' and 'beaver,' although that last one is used in reference to a particular body part of a woman. In each instance, regardless of which animal name is being used and regardless of what traits are being alluded to as existing in the human referent, there is clearly a value hierarchy that is implied in the animalization of the human being and a configuring of that human being as an other.

There are many terms and phrases employed in language whose ideological underpinnings may call for close examination. Here I want to take a look at a couple of very contemporary terms that have since their introduction into common vocabulary struck me as very relevant: "douche" and "douchebag." I noticed the entrance of these terms used in their current fashion about three years ago. According to Merriam Webster online dictionary, "douche" is defined as "a liquid that a woman squirts into her vagina to wash it; also: an object used to squirt such a liquid into the vagina."¹³¹ I found it very interesting that while the online free dictionary called Dictionary.com offered the following definition for "douche bag": "a small syringe having detachable nozzles for fluid injections, used chiefly for vaginal lavage and for enemas,"¹³² the Merriam Webster online dictionary only provided the current slang meaning for the term: "an unattractive or offensive person."¹³³ The contemporary usage of the terms as forms of slang is

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ The website of Merriam Webster, accessed December 31, 2014, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/douche>

¹³²The website of Dictionary Reference, accessed December 31, 2014, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/douche+bag>

¹³³The website of Merriam Webster, accessed December 31, 2014, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/douche%20bag>

rampant; a quick googling of the terms shows that forth undeniably. The slang meaning of both terms is spelled out on urbandictionary.com, a site that itself is a veritable gold mine for further proving ecofeminist theses about language. On urbandictionary.com “douche” is defined as “a word to describe an individual who has shown themselves to be very brainless in one way or another, thus comparing them to the cleansing product for vaginas.”¹³⁴ Urbandictionary.com also defines “douchebag” as “someone who has surpassed the levels of jerk and asshole, however not yet reached fucker or motherfucker. Not to be confused with douche.”¹³⁵ By all means, let’s do avoid being “confused.” First, there is the perhaps obvious misogynistic and degrading putting-to-use of these terms in these new and contemporary ways in order to describe specific persons and attribute to them specific characteristics. There is an entire ideology of the vagina as something “dirty” and “unclean” built into the terms themselves along with the even more degraded means by which such “filthy things” would be cleaned. Then there is the fact that actual douching is now widely understood and scientifically verified to be not only completely unnecessary but often unhealthy and potentially dangerous.¹³⁶ Yet, as is reported by the National Institute of Health, douching continues to be practiced, and even more so by poor women and women of color.¹³⁷ These terms then are not only great

¹³⁴ The Urban Dictionary website, accessed December 31, 2014, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=douche>

¹³⁵ The Urban Dictionary website, accessed December 31, 2014, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=douchebag>

¹³⁶ US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health website, “Vaginal Douching: Evidence of Risks or Benefits to Health,” accessed December 31, 2014, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2567125/>

¹³⁷ “Douching in the United States is more common among African-American women. Independently of race, associations between douching and poverty, less than a high school education, a history of pelvic inflammatory disease, and having between two and nine lifetime sexual partners are reported. A lower educational level, many sexual partners, and poverty are also risk factors for sexually transmitted diseases and bacterial vaginosis, making it especially complicated to assess causality since women might douche secondary to infection-related symptoms rather than for routine purposes,” <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2567125>

examples of the *self and other dualisms* present within language but are easily linked up with all four of the main areas of concern that constitute the ecofeminist critique: the mechanization and technologization of the body and all natural processes, the commodification of the body and its clinicalization so as to render it in need of product and service by a capitalist industry, value dualisms imposed that impart the female body's less-than status, and the patriarchal mindset that feels justified in imposing the other three in so far as women's bodies are considered their territory and ultimately under their purvey and control. Language is indeed the master, a medium for the sedimentation and consequent reinforcement of these somewhat subtle yet undeniable forms of oppression.

This ecofeminist frame, made up of the close and critical examination of these four phenomena of the scientific revolution, capitalism, patriarchal religion, and self and other dualisms, and an understanding of the role and function of each and their mutually reinforcing interrelatedness, will enable us as we go along to develop clearer means of surveying our world and to more clearly see the very real ways in which human beings are experiencing what I am calling "a loss of dwelling."

IV.3. Nietzsche's Insights: Patriarchal Religion and the Otherworld

While "Patriarchal Religion" is not an explicit theme in Nietzsche's work, we can examine certain of his ideas from an ecofeminist point of view and see that his ideas do indeed express insights to which we could make appeal in a critique of many of the concerns central to the ecofeminist point of view. In his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche speaks of the attachment of the

resentful to the “otherworldly” (überirdischen, literally, the “over-earthly” and sometimes translated as “supernatural”), and he emphasizes that within the Judeo-Christian worldview there is an overemphasis upon and an overconcern with a “true world,” a place other than this world, a place above, beyond, or outside of the earthly realm that we can experience. Nietzsche takes serious issue with the fact that they embrace a metaphysics that is “hostile to the senses.”¹³⁸ Nietzsche, speaking as Zarathustra, says, “I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Despisers of life are they, decaying and poisoned themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go.”¹³⁹ Those who would focus upon an otherworld are betrayers of life, it seems, and being decaying and poisoned themselves, they seek to poison others. Let’s look at the points of intersection between Nietzsche’s thought and the ideas of ecofeminism.

Nietzsche’s assessment of the Judaeo-Christian worldview as primarily responsible for the rise in attachment to the “otherworldly” and the concomitant loss of intimate connection with and care and concern for the earth is much like the ecofeminist idea that the rise of patriarchal religion is responsible for many of the current ills of our planet due to their rejection of immanent divinity and their profaning of the flesh and of nature itself and their embrace of a belief in a merely transcendental divinity. The Judaeo-Christian worldview, by overthrowing the earth-based, goddess-worshipping religions and emphasizing a male-centered cosmogony, once spread via the Roman Empire and then

¹³⁸Friedrich, Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 468.

¹³⁹Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 425.

the Roman Catholic Church, may be understood as one of the most crucial events in history in this regard. Nietzsche argues that those who are focused on the otherworld become haters or despisers of life itself. In their embrace of and emphasis upon the otherworld, they reject life as its own justification and demand something outside of life to justify it. Nietzsche's idea thus resonates with the ecofeminist assertion that in foregoing a belief in immanent divinity in favor of a belief in divinity as transcendent only, there is a fundamental loss of reverence for life itself and the life-giving power of the earth, nature, and the feminine. Life is no longer sacred but must require sanctification from outside itself.

One may also see Nietzsche as coinciding with ecofeminist thinking in terms of concerns about the paradigm created by the scientific revolution and the consequent issues arising therefrom. For as Nietzsche argued, religion had provided answers regarding ultimate purposes, and science then ushered in the doubt and progressive overthrow of religion. But while science may try to fill the void created by the death of god, and people may even come to worship science as the new religion, science cannot actually achieve that end. Science as such has no consideration for ultimate purposes.¹⁴⁰ The "death of God," or nihilism, may be understood as this lack of any ultimate reasons for being. In the opening of his work *Will to Power*, Nietzsche writes, "What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devaluate themselves. The aim is lacking: "why?" finds no answer."¹⁴¹ For both Nietzsche and ecofeminist thinkers, the mindset belonging to the mechanistic materialist model of the universe is one that deprives

¹⁴⁰Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 58.

¹⁴¹Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 9.

existence of ultimate purposes, denies inherent or intrinsic value, and ultimately reduces everything to meaningless resources awaiting optimization.

We can further develop this important intersection between Nietzsche and ecofeminism in terms of the ways in which Nietzsche speaks about *self* and *other*. In the *Genealogy*, he states:

Whereas all noble morality grows out of a triumphant affirmation of oneself, slave morality immediately says No to what comes from outside, to what is different, to what is not oneself: and *this* No is its creative deed. This reversal of the value-positing glance--this *necessary* direction outward instead of back to oneself--is of the nature of *ressentiment*: to come into being, slave morality requires an outside world, a counterworld; first an opposing world, a world outside itself. Psychologically speaking, it requires external stimuli in order to act at all. Its action is basically reaction.¹⁴²

Nietzsche's point in this quotation is an excellent example of the concept central to the ecofeminist critique of *self and other dualisms* or *value dualisms*. Nietzsche argues that the very system of valuation which is contingent upon dualities is itself flawed in that the *self* in such a system does not see itself *first* but only sees itself subsequently and through others.¹⁴³ The existence and conceptualization of the other is the necessary condition for the existence and conceptualization of the self, one might say, at least for those Nietzsche would label "slaves." Of course, it is this very type of evaluative system that ecofeminists see as operative and at play in the twin dominations of women and nature. Patriarchy, as a way of thinking, emerged in the thinking of men who sought to develop their self-understanding by means of contrasting themselves with the other as embodied

¹⁴²Friedrich Nietzsche, *Toward a Genealogy of Morals*, 451.

¹⁴³This is much like Sartre's description of the anti-semitic or bigot in his *Anti-Semite and Jew* as one who lacks the capacity for introspection and thus can only see himself through the eyes of others and who conceives of himself not as an individual but as a member of the group, part of a tradition.

in both women and nature. It is in the event of the conceptual linking of women with nature in the thinking of men that men conceive themselves as linked to culture. This is an idea, as explained earlier, that is embraced by those ecofeminists who look to developments in human evolution to understand the rise of patriarchy. Woman's physical weakness and reproductive capacities were a reason to separate her from man. "Her life-bearing activities stood in sharp contrast to the death-oriented activities that underlie culture."¹⁴⁴ Other ecofeminists, not so anthropologically oriented, see the ascendancy of patriarchy as involving men taking over all determinations of value, and regardless of what their motives may have been, relegating woman to a less-than status in establishing themselves as superior, rational, logical, productive, and conquest-seeking. Men defined themselves in self-conscious opposition to women as they perceived them. The tendency to think in terms of *self* and *other* has been argued by many to be basic to the functioning of human thinking. Even de Beauvoir said that, "The category of the *Other* is as primordial as consciousness itself."¹⁴⁵ However, this tendency, no matter how primordial, has also been argued to be something that can and should be overcome or at least recognized and resisted, contextualized, and rendered contingent and thus less oppressive, all the more so when it is understood to be motivated from power-seeking impulses such as fear and aggression. Nietzsche's own assessment of the motivation for the thinking typified by the slaves is that they are essentially fear-driven. This fear prompts them to define themselves as good or superior by means of denigrating the other. This is the precise kind of thinking Nietzsche describes when he writes, "Imagine "the

¹⁴⁴ Gaard and Gruen, "Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health," 278.

¹⁴⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 255.

enemy" as conceived by a man of *ressentiment*--and here precisely is his deed, his creation: he has conceived "the evil enemy," "*the evil one*"--and indeed as the fundamental concept from which he then derives, as an after-image and counterinstance, a "good one"--himself."¹⁴⁶ We would understand this as applicable in the sense that it is only in his defining "woman" or "the feminine" that he can then define himself as an "after-image." In his defining of woman and nature in this way, he necessitates that both be dominated and controlled, for the after-image created is one of a rightful conqueror and ruler. With these ideas in mind, let us turn our attention now to look at the mythological figure of Lilith, representative of women and the feminine in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, using as tools for our analysis some enlightening ideas of Giorgio Agamben on how sovereign power is constituted.

¹⁴⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Toward a Genealogy of Morals*, 452.

Lilith and Agamben

V.1. Ideas

Taking seriously Foucault's idea that power should be thought of in terms of the concrete ways it penetrates not only the lives of subjects but their very bodies, Giorgio Agamben develops an interesting set of critical ideas in his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. I shall endeavor to explain these ideas and then appropriate them in an attempt to provide an ecofeminist perspective on a seemingly timeless conception of a certain aspect of the feminine found in the mythological figure of Lilith. The concepts Agamben develops and employs that are relevant to this undertaking are: *zoē*, *bios*, *homo sacer*, *bare life*, *sovereignty*, and *the state of exception*.

In the spirit of Foucault and looking at power and power structures in terms of the ways in which they directly play upon the very physicality of a subject's being, I shall demonstrate how Agamben's ideas may be appropriated and used to better understand certain ideas surrounding a particular conception of the feminine, particular beliefs and practices that were developed in relation thereto, as well as specific phenomenological experiences that, I believe, are not confined to any particular place or time but that perpetually recur so long as a given society is conceived of as being under the control both politically and religiously by what, for our purposes, I will refer to herein as *the sovereign masculine*.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. In this first section, I will attempt to lay out the meaning and use of the relevant terms developed and employed by Agamben, with the understanding that I will take them up again in further discussion and application of the concepts in the third section of the chapter. In the second part of the chapter I will introduce and discuss the character of Lilith, an ancient she-demon found in the teachings and myths of various cultures but one primarily developed in Judaism and more extensively in the mystical branch of Judaism known as Kabbalah. In the third section of the chapter I will show how Agamben's ideas may be used in an analysis of Lilith, as well as her counterparts, Adam and Eve, and how the insights gained from that analysis demonstrate the applicability of the ecofeminist critique.

My intent with the undertaking in this chapter is threefold: I want to demonstrate via an examination of a mythological figure the way in which myth does indeed reflect human beings' understanding and interpretation of their lived phenomenological experiences. Whose experiences are being reflected in any given myth will be an

important question to ask ourselves. I also want to demonstrate via an examination of this mythological figure the ways in which the ecofeminist framework, in good Heideggerian fashion, may assist us in seeing something that has been right in front of us all along but was nonetheless unseen. Finally, I want to demonstrate how Agamben's ideas, giving us insight as they do into the underlying structure and operation of political power, provide us yet another means of better understanding the way in which the four core areas of concern in ecofeminism intersect to bring about real material disempowerment for certain human beings as bodies in the world and citizens of a polis, this being relevant in itself and as an integral part of our loss of dwelling.

One further thought: from the phenomenological point of view, discussions of the feminine, it seems, are often reductive. The feminine, as a phenomenological experience that is concretely described is not often enough recognized as more than one-dimensional in the course of analysis and inquiry. And too often, when an analysis of the feminine is undertaken and the feminine is approached as something complex or multi-faceted, it is done with a view toward the reintegration of the parts into a neat and tidy unity that misses the crucial and necessary division of the feminine into different aspects that, I hope to demonstrate, are what allow for the usurpation of sovereign power by the masculine.

In the "Introduction" to his work *Homo Sacer*, Agamben examines two concepts, *zoē* and *bios*, the understanding of which is crucial to the further and related ideas he develops, those of *homo sacer*, *bare life*, *sovereignty* and the *state of exception*. Relying upon his study and understanding of the classical tradition, Agamben explains how the ancient Greeks conceived of life in two distinct and separate ways. He writes:

[The Greeks] used two terms that, although traceable to a common etymological root, are semantically and morphologically distinct: *zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group.¹⁴⁷

Agamben explains that *zoē*, as such, was excluded from the *polis* proper in the Greek tradition and was restricted to the domestic sphere or home in that it was understood as merely reproductive life. *Bios*, on the other hand, is a life that aims toward the good, it is a life with a particular *telos*, a life to be lived and fully realized in the *polis*. *Bios* is the kind of life to which only man can attain in so far as man is that which is able by means of his possession of certain capacities to realize *logos* within himself. Of course, for the Greeks, “man” does here mean “men” only. Women were not included as members of the *polis* thus understood.

This distinction that Agamben directs our attention to is indeed in keeping with the distinction that ecofeminists hold to be so crucially important, that is, the distinction between nature and culture. Additionally, in investigating the terms *zoē* and *bios*, Agamben discovers a division that seems predicated upon what anthropologically-minded ecofeminists feel is so important, a division that is predicated upon reproductive activity and the consignment of those caught up therein to the domestic sphere only.

Agamben offers further insight into the interesting way in which these two kinds of life are connected and how they should be understood as a standard pair in the West when he writes:

The fundamental categorial pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoē/bios*,

¹⁴⁷Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 1.

exclusion/inclusion. There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion.¹⁴⁸

For Agamben, bare life, in a very real sense, is that which by means of being included through its exclusion forms the very foundation of the entire political system. In other words, bare life is held to be without place in the political realm, but because the very notion of *bios* entails bare life as that to which it opposes and distinguishes itself, it is included as what establishes the fundamental boundaries of the political domain by means of its exclusion. This is a crucial point to be understood. So, it is by the very act of making the distinction between bare life and *bios* and asserting that only the latter is rightfully to be found in the political realm that bare life is nonetheless included in the realm of the political by means of its being excluded. Speaking further to this point, Agamben writes:

At once excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order, the state of exception actually constituted, in its very separateness, the hidden foundation on which the entire political system rested.¹⁴⁹

The idea that the *state of exception* constitutes the very foundation for the political system is an important idea we will be looking at often throughout this chapter.¹⁵⁰

Agamben goes on to explain to us that the very “force” of law is comprised by the ability of law to assert itself in relation to that which is exterior to it.¹⁵¹ One way we may

¹⁴⁸Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 9.

¹⁵⁰ I also see possible connections with *peras* or boundary as understood by Heidegger and explained in chapter two of this dissertation. The drawing of a boundary allows for what is within to unfold in its essence, according to Heidegger. It seems that this notion of “distinction” that Agamben is setting forth does the same.

¹⁵¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 18.

render his meaning here is to say that the force of the *same/self* is made up of its capacity to assert itself in relation to an *other*. The *other* is crucial to the operation and function of the *same/self*. Without the *other*, the *same/self* could not exist. Again, Agamben is articulating an idea, a dynamic that is in perfect alignment with the ideas articulated by both ecofeminism and Nietzsche. In explaining further the interdependence of and intimate connection between that which is included and that which is excluded, Agamben writes:

Here what is outside is included not simply by means of an interdiction or an internment, but rather by means of the suspension of the juridical order's validity—by letting the juridical order, that is, withdraw from the exception and abandon it. The exception does not subtract itself from the rule; rather, the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception and, maintaining itself in relation to the exception, first constitutes itself as a rule.¹⁵²

The exception does not subtract itself from the rule; rather, the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception. This idea is a crucial aspect of his theory and important for our purposes, as well. Agamben asserts that that which gets excluded in no way is excluded by means of something intrinsic to it or as a result of something that it itself does or asserts. Rather, that which gets excluded, for Agamben, is best seen as a non-actor, a non-agent, a pure passivity, in the sense that what happens to it is precisely *that which happens to it* as a result of the action and agency of something else that asserts itself as the rule. The actor or the agent in this event is that which is *the rule*. The rule, in suspending itself, creates the exception to it. Thus, what is outside the realm over which the rule is operative is so by means of the very rule itself, and the rule, in

¹⁵² Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 18.

maintaining itself in relation to the exception it created, renders itself the rule. This sounds very much like Gaard and Gruen's observation in explaining ecofeminism's concern with *self and other dualisms*, "Domination is built into such dualisms because the other is negated in the process of defining a powerful self."¹⁵³

To illustrate Agamben's idea of how the rule makes of itself the rule by establishing the exception, I offer the following analogy: imagine there are a group of children playing together. Now, one child determines for whatever reason that she no longer wishes to speak or interact with one of the other children. She henceforth engages in what we would call *the silent treatment* in regards to the rejected child. In so far as she maintains her position and refuses to speak or be engaged by the rejected child that she has chosen to shun, under Agamben's theory, she simultaneously creates both herself as the rule and the other child as the exception. The other child is indeed included in the shunning child's realm of power by means of being excluded. The shunned child in this situation was indeed a non-actor, a non-agent in this unfolding. The shunned child, as Agamben would say, did not subtract herself from the rule but was abandoned or made an exception by the actions of the shunning child who asserts herself as the rule by means of suspending herself in relation to the other child.

Agamben explains that the dynamic does not simply end in the rule and its exception, but rather in establishing itself by means of delineating that which is excluded, it finds its power so as to make a further distinction. To explain this, he appeals to the literal historical figure in Roman law of the *homo sacer*. This is not just some abstract area of

¹⁵³ Gaard and Gruen, "Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health," 278.

intersection between bare life and *bios* to be analyzed in order to understand the concepts, but the concrete and very real example through which the ideas may be understood is the *home sacer*, the one abandoned, exiled, and cast out. Drawing upon a number of classical sources, Agamben offers a sketch of *homo sacer* that tells us of his uniqueness in that he is the person, “who may be killed and yet not sacrificed.”¹⁵⁴ Here Agamben speaks of the simultaneous abandonment of the person of *homo sacer* by both the juridical realm and the divine realm by means of the withdrawal of the law from *homo sacer* in each of those two realms:

What defines the status of *homo sacer* is therefore not the originary ambivalence of the sacredness that is assumed to belong to him, but rather both the particular character of the double exclusion into which he is taken and the violence to which he finds himself exposed. This violence—the unsanctionable killing that, in his case, anyone may commit—is classifiable neither as sacrifice nor as homicide, neither as the execution of a condemnation to death nor as sacrilege. Subtracting itself from the sanctioned forms of both human and divine law, this violence opens a sphere of human action that is neither the sphere of *sacrum facere* nor that of profane action. This sphere is precisely what we are trying to understand here.¹⁵⁵

The figure of *homo sacer*, for Agamben, is one that sheds light on the very structure and nature of politics and the operation of sovereign power. Agamben goes to great lengths to demonstrate how *homo sacer* should not be understood as the result of some ambivalence of the sacred. Rather, *homo sacer*, as a figure who is beyond both penal law and murder as well as divine law and sacrifice, is “the originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban and preserves the memory of the originary exclusion through which the

¹⁵⁴Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 8.

¹⁵⁵Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 83.

political dimension was first constituted.”¹⁵⁶ Thus, *homo sacer* is a concrete manifestation of the reality of a dimension of existence that is neither sacred nor profane, a zone of indistinction whose very existence is that which allows for the possibility of the distinction itself and the consequent naming and constituting of those two realms in which sovereign power is operative, that is, the juridical realm and the divine realm.¹⁵⁷ This dimension of existence, this zone of indistinction between sacrifice and homicide, this zone from which is made the distinction between bare life and sacred life, between *zoē* and *bios*, is that which constitutes the first content of sovereign power.¹⁵⁸

Homo sacer is the person who has effectively been abandoned by both the juridical and the divine orders. The sovereign, in both of those realms, whether he be the same or different, exercises his sovereign authority by virtue of *the withdrawal of the protection afforded by being included in his realm of dominion*. However, the withdrawal of the protection and the resultant abandonment are nonetheless themselves supreme exercises of sovereign power. Thus, the realm in which *homo sacer* finds himself is a realm that, although *a state of exception*, is nonetheless a realm in which sovereign power is manifest in its own absence. Doubly excluded from both the juridical and divine realms, *homo sacer* is neither fit for sacrifice nor worthy enough to be a victim of homicide. He or she may be killed with impunity. The realm in which *homo sacer* exists is not a realm merely devoid of law but is a realm that results from the exercise of sovereign power in its highest form, according to Agamben. *Homo sacer* finds himself abandoned, cast out,

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Agamben’s “zone of indistinction” in being what allows for distinctions to be made seems to me very much like the definition of *Xáος* discussed in chapter one in terms of *Xáος* being that “gap” which allows for difference itself to exist. And just as I linked Heidegger’s *peras* with Hesiod’s *Xáος* in chapter one, I see all of these as perhaps pointing us to the same idea.

¹⁵⁸Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 83.

excluded, and under ban by means of sovereign power's fullest exercise of power, that is, sovereign power's ability to rule by suspending the very law it creates.

V.2. Lilith

Lilith is a character who has appeared in a range of times and places, such as the Sumerian epic poem *Gilgamesh* from around 2400 BCE, the Babylonian Talmud, which was compiled ca. 500 CE, Aramaic incantation bowls that date between the 5th and 7th centuries CE, the Dead Sea Scrolls ca. 3rd century BCE through 1st century CE, as well as various Kabblistic sources from the medieval period, including *The Zohar* ca. 1270 CE.

While particular details may vary from source to source, there are nonetheless some central features that are essential to her across place and time. While an attentive and thoughtful student of folklore, myth, and religion will see similarities between Lilith and other feminine mythological figures, for my purposes, I will be offering a sketch of certain of Lilith's central features that render us more easily able to make sense of her in relation to the various concepts and ideas under discussion here in this chapter and in this dissertation as a whole. My purpose here is not to prove that there exists this particular understanding of Lilith nor to provide extensive documentation for this understanding of Lilith throughout various times and places but rather to acquaint the reader with the mythological figure in general.

As is well known, in the book of *Genesis* there are two separate accounts of creation, *Genesis* 1:1-2:3 and *Genesis* 2:4-25. These two accounts differ in that in the first account humans are said to have been created after the animals were created, and male and female

human beings were created simultaneously, both being made from the dirt of the earth. In the second account of creation, which is the more widely known account, human beings were created before the animals, and the female human being was created after the male and from his very flesh, specifically from his rib.

It is believed that it was this difference in the two accounts of the creation myth that first gave rise to the stories of Lilith. It is thought that Jewish biblical scholars, in an attempt to make sense of the existence of two differing accounts of the creation of woman, developed the understanding of Lilith as the first wife of Adam. Lilith, like Adam, was created by God from the earth and was thus equal to Adam. Viewing herself as equal to Adam, she was reluctant to submit to him. When he sought dominion over her, she was quarrelsome and contentious. She did, however, provoke in Adam much desire for her. Yet, she refused his advances and did not wish to lay under him for the sex act. The story goes that when Lilith saw that Adam was determined to overpower her, she uttered the name of God, rose up into the air and flew away to live at the Red Sea, a place full of lascivious demons with whom she was said to have acted out her lust and passion, giving birth to more than a hundred demons daily.¹⁵⁹

Once Lilith was gone, God made Adam a second wife, Eve. This wife God made from Adam's own flesh, and Adam found her more properly submissive to his authority. However, it was not too long before Lilith made her presence felt again in Adam's life. In the Garden of Eden, Lilith appeared to Eve as a serpent and seduced her into eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Lilith then prompted Eve to tempt

¹⁵⁹ Raphael Patai, "*Lilith*," 296.

Adam with this fruit, as well. Here we can see that the aspect of the feminine represented by Lilith in the myth is not without intimate relation to the aspect of the feminine represented by Eve. Although Eve is a version of the feminine that is perhaps “less evil” than Lilith, she is still, in her being as woman, susceptible to the influence of Lilith. Eve must, therefore, be kept under tight rein so as to prevent Lilith being a further corruptive influence.

Adam, after succumbing to the temptations of Eve that were instigated by Lilith, separated himself from Eve for 130 years. He imposed this period of penitence upon himself once he realized that through the weakness he had experienced as a result of the beguiling and seductive feminine he had brought the curse of mortality to mankind. During this period, in which he abstained from sex with Eve, Adam found that on occasion he would have involuntary nocturnal emissions. Such events were understood to be the result of the work of Lilith, who would visit and seduce him in the night so as to use his semen to create more demons and evil spirits. It was from this understanding of the biblical text that, in the first century AD, Rabbi Hanina was prompted to issue a warning that forbade men from sleeping alone in a house since, under such conditions, Lilith would likely seduce them.¹⁶⁰ Lilith, as the seductive lust-inspiring aspect of the feminine, is an ever-present threat to men:

And she [Lilith] goes and roams at night, and goes all about the world and makes sport with men and causes them to emit seed. In every place where a man sleeps alone in a house, she visits him and grabs him and attaches herself to him and has her desire from him, and bears from him. And she also afflicts him with sickness, and he knows it not, and all this takes place when the moon is on the wane.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ *Babylonian Talmud*, 151a.

¹⁶¹ *Zohar*, 19b.

The sexually seductive power of Lilith is so strong that there can be no doubt that it has its source in evil, and, as such, it must be countered by any means necessary. While Lilith succeeds all too easily at seducing men in their sleep, she is also a danger to the wide awake as well. Consider the following:

She adorns herself like a despicable harlot, and takes up her position at the crossroads to seduce the sons of man. When a fool approaches her, she grabs him, kisses him, and pours him wine of dregs of viper's gall. As soon as he drinks it, he goes astray after her. When she sees that he has gone astray after her from the path of truth, she divests herself of all ornaments which she put on for that fool. Her ornaments for the seduction of the sons of man are: her hair is long and red like the rose, her cheeks are white and red, from her ears hang six ornaments, Egyptian chords hang from her nape and all the ornaments of the Land of the East, her mouth is set like a narrow door, comely in its décor, her tongue is sharp like a sword, her words are smooth like oil, her lips are red like a rose and sweetened by all the sweetness of the world, she is dressed in scarlet, and she is adorned with forty ornaments less one. Yon fool goes astray after her and drinks from the cup of wine and commits with her fornication and strays after her. What does she thereupon do? She leaves him asleep on the couch, flies up to heaven, denounces him, takes leave, and descends. That fool awakens and deems he can make sport with her as before, but she removes her ornaments and turns into a menacing figure, and stands before him clothed in garments of flaming fire, inspiring terror and making body and soul tremble, full of frightening eyes, in her hand a drawn sword dripping bitter drops. And she kills that fool and casts him into Gehenna.¹⁶²

One of the implications of the above passage is that only a fool allows himself to be tempted by the Lilith aspect of the feminine and does so at his own peril. For despite alluring appearance and the promise and even fulfillment of sensual delight, this aspect of the feminine is dangerous, deadly, and inherently destructive to man as such. By no means, however, are we to understand Lilith, as an aspect of the feminine, to only be

¹⁶² *Zohar*, 148a-b.

present in the person of a prostitute or any other woman of so-called “loose morals.” Lilith, we will see, is always ready to make an appearance when there are any activities of a sexual nature taking place or even being contemplated, even between a legally wedded man and wife. Lilith, it seems, is responsible for and lurks behind all perceptions on the part of men that are of a sensual, erotically appealing, or enticing nature. The following illustrates this idea:

And behold, that hard shell, Lilith, is always present in the bedlinen of man and wife when they copulate, in order to take hold of the sparks of the drops of semen which are lost—because it is impossible without such. But there is an incantation for this, to chase away the Lilith from the bed and to bring forth pure souls.¹⁶³

and

Lilith, God preserve us, has dominion over children who issue from him who couples with his wife in candlelight, or with his wife naked, or at a time when he is forbidden to have intercourse with her.¹⁶⁴

A man who feels desire for his wife, or any other woman, desire that is in any way beyond the scope of what is legally, religiously, or morally permissible, feels such desire because of Lilith. It appears that erotic desire itself is the result of Lilith’s presence and evil-doing. Lilith is the source and cause of all incarnate sexual desire and lust.

There is another important aspect to Lilith besides her seductiveness and role as the source of all sexual sin and that is her role as child-killer. Lilith is seen as ultimately responsible for all barrenness, miscarriages, stillbirths, infant deaths, and any other manner of affliction having to do with reproductive capacity, pregnancy and childbirth.

¹⁶³ Hertz, Naftali, *Emeq HaMalekh*, 19c.

¹⁶⁴ Hertz, Naftali, *Emeq HaMalekh*, 84b.

It is held that she is motivated to do these things out of spite, hatred, jealousy, wrath, and envy. Women are understood to be especially susceptible to the influence of and harm from Lilith during certain times, such as prior to the loss of virginity, during menstruation, and the hours before childbirth.¹⁶⁵ Thus, it appears that all things uniquely feminine in the embodied sense are themselves “evil” in being intimately connected to Lilith.

Inscriptions found upon many of the Aramaic incantation bowls make evident the perceived power of Lilith. The bowls also illustrate the great lengths to which people would go to try and keep Lilith at bay. Rituals, incantations, amulets, edicts, proclamations, prayers, fastings, and even the drawing up of legal documents, such as a Jewish *get* or divorce document were actions taken against Lilith. Some Rabbis went so far as to pronounce Lilith under ban or *herem* by their respective Jewish community. One such inscription is translated as follows:

. . . because it is announced to you that Rabbi Joshua bar Perahia has sent against you the ban. . . . A divorce-writ has come down to us from heaven and there is found written in it your advisement and your terrification, in the name of Palsa-Pelisa [“Divorcer and Divorced”], who renders to thee thy divorce and thy separation, your divorces and your separations. Thou, Lilith, male Lili and female Lilith, Hag and Snatcher, be in the ban . . . of Joshua Bar Perahia.¹⁶⁶

Raphael Patai explains in his essay on Lilith that it was believed that Lilith and her entourage of demons would seek to attach themselves to their human hosts by means of sexual seduction in order to produce more demonic offspring. If Lilith or one of her

¹⁶⁵ Raphael Patai, “Lilith,” 298.

¹⁶⁶ James Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, 155.

demons was successful in doing so, it was thought that they then acquired all the rights of cohabitation and must therefore be expelled by legal means.¹⁶⁷ It seems that Lilith was conceived of as more than a mere idea or a myth; she seems to have been understood as something very much a part of concrete, embodied existence, something that, as an aspect of reality, founded by means of its very existence an order and a system that created itself in self-conscious opposition to and separation from this aspect of reality, this aspect of the feminine represented by Lilith. If Lilith is desire incarnate in all its reason-defying power and persuasion, then she was what gave rise to an order and system that constituted itself in purposeful opposition to her as a means of protecting itself from her, and that order and system would indeed, having found her and what she represented to be evil, frightful, and immoral, deem itself good, righteous, and moral. This is reminiscent of ideas found in both ecofeminism's thought on *self and other dualisms* as well as Nietzsche's discussion of slave morality and what gives rise to it.

Lilith was possessed of the ability to inspire great lust and desire, as well as fear and terror. Understanding Lilith as such speaks not only to the tremendous nature of her purported powers but to the perceived extreme powerlessness of those who feared her. As I will demonstrate in the next section, the mythology of Lilith, understood through the lens of Agamben's concepts, illustrates the way in which this particular aspect of the feminine has existed in a perpetual *state of exception* that, having been established by the masculine, founded the masculine as sovereign.

¹⁶⁷ Raphael Patai, "Lilith," 298.

V. 3. State of Exception

Agamben's view is that the very foundation of political life as such is the distinguishing of a life that may be killed. It is through its capacity to be killed that it is politicized.¹⁶⁸ In other words, it is by means of the drawing of this distinction that the realm of the political comes into existence. Agamben writes, "What is decisive, however, is that from the beginning this sacred life has an eminently political character and exhibits an essential link with the terrain on which sovereign power is founded."¹⁶⁹ It is from within that zone of indistinction that the juridical realm is established and distinguished from the divine realm, but it is into that zone of indistinction that *homo sacer* finds himself abandoned. Thus, *homo sacer* is a *state of exception* due to the ruler's suspension of himself in regards to him, due to the withdrawal of protection by the sovereign, due to being abandoned by the ruling power. *Homo sacer* cannot be sacrificed nor murdered, but he may be killed. This is the founding of sovereign power for Agamben. He writes:

At the two extreme limits of the order, the sovereign and *homo sacer* present two symmetrical figures that have the same structure and are correlative: the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *homines sacri*, and *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns. The sovereign and *homo sacer* are joined in the figure of an action that, excepting itself from both human and divine law, from both *nomos* and *physis*, nevertheless delimits what is, in a certain sense, the first properly political space of the West distinct from both the religious and the profane sphere, from both the natural order and the regular juridical order.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 89.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁷⁰Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 84.

This fascinating inverted proportionality that exists between the sovereign and *homo sacer* illustrates the complete and total power of the one and the complete and total powerlessness of the other. Moreover, as Agamben points out, it establishes a political space that is unique in that it is neither the religious domain nor the natural domain, a space where neither man's nor God's law applies. The person who is sent there is in essence beyond any hope, mercy, help, redemption, or care; such a person is abandoned and stripped of all personhood, left for dead. In terms of the application of these ideas to the aspect of the feminine represented by Lilith, Lilith is the *homo sacer*.

Lilith is exiled, under ban, abandoned, cast out. It is in the very distinction that is made between the aspect of the feminine represented by Lilith, the aspect of the feminine that is represented by Eve, and the realm that is the masculine that there is established the sovereign power that may then be understood as being embodied and carried out by Adam as sovereign, as the representative of the masculine itself, which is, of course, justified by appeal to the ultimate masculine who deemed it all so, God. God, it may be argued, is the projection of sovereign masculine power onto a supposed transcendent reality. Of course, this ties in very neatly with ecofeminism's concern regarding the rise of patriarchal religion and its rejection of immanent divinity in favor of a merely transcendent divinity that was masculine. However, because there is a need for and the necessity of woman, or the feminine, the realm of *zoē* is established and the aspect of the feminine as represented by Eve is consigned thereto. Here we may also wish to call to mind some of the value dualisms that seem applicable, especially rational/non-rational. *The rational* or masculine is the sovereign power that is established by means of delimiting an aspect of the feminine that is held to be *non-rational*, an aspect of the

feminine that, in being designated as such, founds the very realm from which it is then excluded but nonetheless included thereby. Lilith, in all her non-rationality, is wild sexuality, untamed, like nature itself, unpredictable, and therefore threatening. The aspect of the feminine represented by Lilith is, in its essence, and has been described as, beyond comprehension or subordination to reason. Such is the very essence of the affects of *desire* and *lust*. They defy reason, do not submit to it, and as such, they are attributed to Lilith. This, it may be argued, is precisely why she is perceived as so dangerous.

If we look closely at the way in which Agamben distinguishes *homo sacer* from *zoē*, we are more readily able to see the applicability of this to the distinction that is made between the two aspects of the feminine represented by Lilith and Eve. Consider Agamben's words:

[Look at] the situation of the *patria potestas* at the limit of both the *domus* and the city: if classical politics is born through the separation of these two spheres, life that may be killed but not sacrificed is the hinge on which each sphere is articulated and the threshold at which the two spheres are joined in becoming indeterminate. Neither political *bios* nor natural *zoē*, sacred life is the zone of indistinction in which *zoē* and *bios* constitute each other in including and excluding each other.¹⁷¹

For Agamben, *homo sacer* is *the hinge* on which each of the two spheres are articulated; it is the *threshold* at which the two spheres are joined. Likewise, the aspect of the feminine that is represented by Lilith serves that same function. Lilith, like *homo sacer*, is *the hinge* on which the two distinct spheres understood as represented by Adam and Eve are articulated. Eve, like *zoē*, represents reproductive or biological life, the realm of “nature,” the non-rational aspect of life of the species whose purpose and place

¹⁷¹Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 90.

is to be distinguished from and made subject to Adam, Adam being he who exemplifies *bios* or life in the polis, the realm of “culture,” that is, rational life with a telos that is more fitting to his superior nature and power, and Lilith provides the hinge on which each of these two is articulated via the rule of sovereign power.

The analogy between *homo sacer* and Lilith in terms of their role as hinge is a very fruitful one, I believe. Just as *homo sacer* is the hinge that joins *domus* and *polis*, nature and state, divine and juridical, and animal and human, so is Lilith the hinge that joins Adam and Eve, sacred and profane, good and evil, that which is made by and in the image of God and that which is made from man. Lilith is the zone from which these distinctions are possible and in which they are joined. It is by means of the very act which designates the realm of the feminine that is represented by Lilith and makes of her the *state of exception* that sovereign masculine power is founded and the other two realms, that is, the tolerated because necessary feminine realm represented by Eve and the masculine realm represented by Adam, are established, and the nature of their political structure created.

Agamben reiterates the uniqueness of the zone where bare life/*homo sacer* exists, its relationship to the two other realms, and its importance to his theory of politics and sovereign power when he writes:

The time has come, therefore, to reread from the beginning the myth of the foundation of the modern city from Hobbes to Rousseau. The state of nature is, in truth, a state of exception, in which the city appears for an instant *tanquam dissoluta*. The foundation is thus not an event achieved once and for all but is continually operative in the civil state in the form of the sovereign decision. What is more, the latter refers *immediately* to the life of the citizens, which thus appears as the originary political element, the *Urphänomen* of politics. Yet this life is not simply natural reproductive life, the *zoē* of the Greeks, nor *bios*, a qualified form of life.

It is, rather, the bare life of *homo sacer* and the *wargus*, a zone of indistinction and continuous transition between man and beast, nature and culture.¹⁷²

If we carefully attend to the above in terms of its application to the analogy I am making, we can see even more clearly the applicability and instructiveness of this ecofeminist appropriation of Agamben's ideas. We may think of the "myth of the foundation of the modern city" as analogous to the myth of creation wherein the aspect of the feminine understood as represented by Lilith is analogous to *the state of nature*. The assumption of power by the masculine, as represented by Adam, is like the formation of the state or modern city. This would be, of course, from a Hobbesian point of view, in line with the dictates of reason and rationality. However, if we apply Agamben's insight, we can see that what is posited by Hobbes as a *state of nature* which he contends precedes the coming into being of the state and is that from which the state sets us free, is really itself a creation of the state and that founds the state's sovereignty in that the state makes of the *state of nature* a *state of exception*. This *state of exception* is something integral to sovereign power itself. As Agamben explains, it is that which results when sovereign power exercises its power by withdrawing or suspending itself. Likewise, the aspect of the feminine represented by Lilith is not really that which precedes and from which the zones of *Adam* and *Eve* help us escape, but rather, it is that which is created so as to found the very realms designated by "Adam" and "Eve" and establish sovereign power in doing so. Lilith, like the state of nature, is a construct that allows for the foundation of a politics and the establishment of a sovereign power that maintains its sovereignty by means of its very ability to suspend its rule in *the state of exception*,

¹⁷²Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 109.

which is that realm of the feminine represented by and personified in the figure of Lilith. The idea that Lilith is that which represents sexuality in its purest form, sexuality as that which exists independently of the realm of reason, as a pure phenomenological experience of an embodied being has been argued well by many, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty.¹⁷³ This unreasoned sexuality, this Lilith, does not subtract itself from the rule, but rather finds itself abandoned by the rule, as represented by the sovereign masculine. According to Agamben's analysis, it is by the sovereign masculine's suspension of itself as reason and rule and its subsequent maintenance of this relation to the aspect of the feminine represented by Lilith as that which is excluded that the masculine's sovereignty is founded and maintained.

Just as Agamben tells us that "The foundation is thus not an event achieved once and for all but is continually operative in the civil state in the form of sovereign decision," so do we see the way in which the tensions generated in the positing of these three distinct realms of Lilith, Adam, and Eve with Adam in the role of the civil state continually make themselves felt in terms of the *sovereign decision* that perpetuates and reinforces these distinctions, as evidenced not only by the contents of any number of the sources cited in Section 2 of this chapter but by a host of contemporary realities that concern feminists and ecofeminists alike, such as unequal pay for equal work for women, the pornography industry, sex trafficking, prostitution, lack of maternity leave for most working mothers,

¹⁷³ "Erotic perception is not a cogitatio which aims at a cogitatum; through one body it aims at another body, and takes place in the world, not in a consciousness. A sight has a sexual significance for me, not when I consider, even confusedly, its possible relationship to the sexual organs or to pleasurable states, but when it exists for my body, for that power always available for bringing together into an erotic situation the stimuli applied, and adapting sexual conduct to it. There is an erotic 'comprehension' not of the order of understanding, since understanding subsumes an experience, once perceived, under some idea, while desire comprehends blindly by linking body to body." Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, 157.

continued denial of complete reproductive freedom for women, rape culture, slut-shaming, domestic violence, and various other afflictions, some far more horrifying than the ones faced by women in the more affluent countries. If it be conceded that erotic perception, desire, lust, and sensual longing are inescapable human realities, then the ways in which these three realms represented by Lilith, Adam, and Eve, once distinguished as such, will interact will indeed be a continual and constant laying and maintenance of this foundation.

Agamben tells us that the “sovereign decision” in the state always refers to the bare life of the citizens, that is, in each sovereign decision there is either implicitly or explicitly asserted the fact that each citizen is a potential *homo sacer*. In other words, in each sovereign decision there is a threat. Likewise, there is in the operation of the masculine, as represented by Adam in his sovereign power to make decisions, the continually reestablished fact that each woman, as an instantiation of the feminine, is a potential Lilith. Just as Agamben points out, this is the originary political element, and it is neither *zoē* nor *bios*. It is bare life; it is the *homo sacer*. It is neither Eve nor Adam. It is Lilith.

Agamben says that the *wargus* is also a *homo sacer*. In a true Heideggerian fashion, Agamben excavates the term *wargus* to demonstrate how the *wargus* (*vargr*, werewolf, wolf-man) was originally the bandit and the outlaw, one who had been banned, cast out, exiled, and Agamben explains how such a person upon being banned was considered dead and thus could be killed with impunity. Agamben thus sees the *wargus* as the historical precursor to *homo sacer*. And I contend that Lilith shares much the same fate. I also see in the *wargus* another way in which the ecofeminist critique rings true for, as

Agamben explains, the *wargus*, as wolf-man, is understood to be neither man nor beast but something inbetween, and it is only from within this inbetween place that the relevant conceptual distinctions may be made. Lilith, like *homo sacer* and the *wargus*, is representative of “a zone of indistinction and continuous transition between man and beast, nature and culture.”¹⁷⁴

Agamben’s use of the concept of *the ban* in formulating his ideas lends itself to appropriation for our purposes here, as well. Agamben, in explaining *homo sacer* as he who is abandoned and in explicating the nature of that abandonment, writes:

The relation of abandonment is so ambiguous that nothing could be harder than breaking from it. The ban is essentially the power of delivering something over to itself, which is to say, the power of maintaining itself in relation to something presupposed as nonrelational. What has been banned is delivered over to its own separateness and, at the same time, consigned to the mercy of the one who abandons it—at once excluded and included, removed and at the same time captured. . . . The ban is the force of simultaneous attraction and repulsion that ties together the two poles of the sovereign exception: bare life and power, *homo sacer* and the sovereign. Because of this alone can the ban signify both the insignia of sovereignty and expulsion from the community.¹⁷⁵

Lilith, as the aspect of the feminine which represents sexuality in all its non-rationality, is abandoned to the (non)status of the nonrelational. However, a relation of power is maintained with Lilith by the sovereign masculine in all its rationality, as represented by Adam, by delivering Lilith over to her own separateness. Lilith is consigned to the mercy of the one who abandons her. Like *homo sacer* and the sovereign, the simultaneous attraction and repulsion ties together this aspect of the

¹⁷⁴Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 109.

¹⁷⁵Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 110.

feminine represented by Lilith and the sovereign masculine as represented by Adam. Our contemporary phenomenon of slut-shaming is a perfect example of “the ban” in action.

We will recall that in one of the Aramaic Incantation Bowl inscriptions there was the issuing of the ban against Lilith. The ban, or *herem* as it is called in Hebrew, is an act that clearly indicates the exercise of sovereign power, and, in its employment, there is most assuredly the complete abandonment of the one against whom the ban is issued. To proclaim something or someone to be under ban is to establish it as existing outside both the juridical and the divine realms; it is to deem it as completely and utterly forsaken. In the act of forsaking, however, there is the operation of the sovereign power. Thus, that which is banned is nonetheless included under the rule of sovereign power by virtue of being excluded from it. Agamben, in quoting from William Robertson Smith’s *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, notes the relevance of this:

Another Hebrew usage that may be noted here is the ban (Heb. *herem*), by which impious sinners, or enemies of the community and its god, were devoted to utter destruction. The ban is a form of devotion to the deity, and so the verb “to ban” is sometimes rendered “consecrate” (Micah 4:13) or “devote” (Lev. 27;28ff.). But in the oldest Hebrew times it involved the utter destruction, not only of the persons involved, but of their property.¹⁷⁶

That aspect of the feminine which is represented by Lilith, sexuality itself, or that power that incites lust and desire, that power to entice to sensual indulgence, and the willingness to engage in such, is declared to be under ban, forsaken, abandoned, rendered life incapable of being murdered yet not capable of being sacrificed but open to being killed. Having designated it as such, the foundation is created upon which the respective realms of Adam and Eve, or the sovereign masculine and the subjugated feminine, may

¹⁷⁶Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 76.

be distinguished, determined and developed. The carving out of the realm designated by Lilith founds the sexually political, and the sovereign masculine power of Adam, as representative of the masculine and of reason, is established thereby. We can see that if Agamben is correct in his analysis, the positing of Lilith as an aspect of the feminine that must be distinguished and consequently abandoned is the necessary condition upon which the sovereignty of the masculine depends. For Agamben says, “The relation of the ban has constituted the essential structure of sovereign power from the beginning.”¹⁷⁷

The positing of the inferior other and the establishment of the superior self is undoubtedly at work in the establishment of all systems of domination and all systems of human intercourse that center on power and control. Contemporary discussions, dialogues, and debates regarding the environment and environmental issues often are hinged on a distinction between approaches that are said to be “ecocentric” or “biocentric” and approaches that are said to be “anthropocentric.” If we take what we have learned from an examination of Agamben’s ideas, in particular the need for that which constitutes the hinge as that which allows for the distinction to be made and the respective realms designated, perhaps we can hit upon a different conceptual understanding such that some kind of reconciliation could be achieved between the idea of human being as separate/unique/superior to nature and the idea of human being as mere part of nature like any other. I believe that such a different conceptual understanding may be found in an examination of some of the ideas of Nietzsche and Heidegger through the lens of eco-phenomenology and ecofeminism. Additionally, in returning to ideas of Nietzsche and Heidegger, we will have occasion to put to use the

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 111.

insights of Agamben in a further analysis of important concepts and their intersections with ecofeminism.

Beyond the Binary

VI.1. Eco-phenomenology: Two Different Realisms

The central aim of the eco-phenomenology movement in environmental ethics is the undoing of those metaphysical presuppositions that have brought us to our current state of environmental devastation. In an examination of the lines of thought within eco-phenomenology, Thomson uncovers two different approaches, approaches that result in two different realisms, and thus two different ethical perfectionisms, and involve distinctions and insights with great relevance to this project.

Returning to the insights Nietzsche provides us regarding humanity and its orientation toward the earth (first discussed in IV.3), we can see there that Nietzsche was very concerned with what he perceived as an emphasis on the “otherworld” that entailed a demeaning of this world; the otherworld is superior, this world inferior. We can

understand this binary way of thinking which Nietzsche criticizes as yet another example of the *self and other dualisms* that concern ecofeminists; in this instance, the analogy would be that the *self* (understood as transcendent in its true essence, a disembodied “spirit”) is being identified with the otherworld, and it is this world, Nietzsche’s “earth,” that is being identified as the *other*. This conceptualization in which *self* is identified with the otherworld is relevant from an ecofeminist point of view in that the otherworld is conceived of as a world of spirit, a world free of flesh, while this world is a world of flesh and matter, and the desacralization of the flesh is one of ecofeminists’ concerns. We see this idea at work in Nietzsche’s thought when he says, “Lead back to the earth the virtue that flew away, as I do—back to the body, back to life, that it may give the earth a meaning, a human meaning.”¹⁷⁸ As I explained in IV.3, Nietzsche’s conviction was that in the esteeming of the “otherworld,” there was a loss of esteem and proper reverence for this world, for our very human, bodily existence itself. This is a dualism that clearly devalues this world, our humanity, and our bodily existence. Moreover, a mindset in which this world is conceived of as a machine and held to be inferior to an otherworld would undoubtedly lead to the nihilism that Nietzsche saw as being the inevitable result. Such a dualism or binary may reveal even more to us if we consider it in conjunction with other relevant ideas such as Agamben’s analysis of sovereign power.

Agamben’s idea is that sovereign power is predicated upon an abandoned realm that itself as *state of exception* serves as a hinge for the two created spheres in which sovereign power rules. Agamben’s conceptualization can be understood as operative in Nietzsche’s scenario. We can think of the abandoned realm or *state of exception* as being

¹⁷⁸Friedrich Nietzsche, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” 188.

the very one to which Nietzsche calls for us to return, that is, Nietzsche's "earth," and the two sovereign realms created by means of this state of exception are the otherworldly realm and the mechanistic-scientific world of matter. We will later see how Agamben's analysis may be applied in a critique of Nietzsche's own views and how that critique can help elucidate further the superiority of Heidegger's view.

While Nietzsche provides us with some extremely important insights into the devaluation of this world that is entailed in the esteeming of an "otherworld," when his ideas are viewed through the lens of eco-phenomenology, he still falls short of offering us an understanding that could lead to an amelioration of our contemporary ills. Heidegger, however, may be understood as offering us something more promising. If we approach the ideas of these two thinkers from the point of view of eco-phenomenology, we are able to achieve a clearer understanding of their thinking and how it may be argued that Heidegger's thought does provide us a solution.

In his paper "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," Thomson distinguishes between two competing approaches within eco-phenomenology. He starts by setting forth what we could understand as something like a "vision and mission statement" of eco-phenomenology: by undermining the theory/practice distinction, mind/world dualism, and the division between facts and values, eco-phenomenology seeks to dig up and replace those ethical and metaphysical presuppositions that are the conceptual roots of our environmental crises.¹⁷⁹

Recognizing that all eco-phenomenologists are ultimately committed to some form of

¹⁷⁹Iain Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," 381.

ethical realism, Thomson discerns two different approaches within eco-phenomenology, and he spells out what it is that sets the two approaches apart in terms of both the attendant metaphysics and the consequences thereof, both practically and conceptually understood. Thomson labels the two approaches as *naturalistic ethical realism* and *transcendental ethical realism*. The means by which Thomson lays out these key distinctions is primarily through the juxtaposing of the views of Heidegger and Nietzsche regarding "earth." By carefully exploring the two philosophers' use and understanding of the term, Thomson uncovers what can be seen as the very essence of the distinction between the two competing ethical realisms at issue. As we will see, it is as if Nietzsche, in his own critique, first pointed the way for us but yet fell short of forging the path due to the limitations inherent in *naturalistic ethical realism*. It is in the thought of Heidegger and the tools with which his thought provides us, in the form of what Thomson calls *transcendental ethical realism*, that our path forward may actually be cleared. The two types of ethical perfectionism that result from the different realisms, according to Thomson, are *eco-centric perfectionism* and *humanistic perfectionism*. The two perfectionisms will be dealt with further in the third section of this chapter.

The approach and methodology that is employed in arriving at both ethical realisms, naturalistic and transcendental, is phenomenology. As mentioned earlier, it is understood by eco-phenomenologists that this approach can uproot the problematic concepts underlying our current environmental crises. How will this occur? By means of which ethical and metaphysical principles? Thomson writes:

The 'metaphysical' principle holds that phenomenological approaches reunite mind with world, or, more precisely, that phenomenology's

descriptive approaches begin from - and so return us to - the experience of a pre-differentiated mind-world unity.¹⁸⁰

The ethical principle is connected to the metaphysical principle in that it is because the mind/world dualism is overcome that we are able to see our environmental “values” as already existent in the world. As Thomson puts it, “certain pro-environmental values are ‘always already in the world,’” and this grounds our approach to discovering these values and acknowledging them as the basis for a new environmental ethics.¹⁸¹ In other words, it is in our unreflective awareness of the world around us, an awareness that is itself indicative of the intimate connection between the human being and the world, that the inherent values of this unity are encountered (and all the more readily when we are properly attuned to our environment and possessed of the appropriate comportment), and it is in reflecting upon that unreflective awareness that those values are made able to be articulated given that they are then understood to be that which they are, more than mere facts.

According to Thomson, although “earth” is central to the thought of both Nietzsche and Heidegger, it signifies something very different for each of the thinkers. In the quote from Nietzsche cited earlier in chapter IV where Nietzsche admonishes us to “remain faithful to the earth,” we saw that Nietzsche called for a return to the earth, he called for us to remain true to it, to serve its meaning, to keep our gift-giving love and knowledge directed there. Again, for Nietzsche, the earth is to be understood in contrast to the

¹⁸⁰Iain Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," 381.

¹⁸¹Ibid., 383.

“otherworldly” in that the earth is what is real and the otherworldly only a poisoning illusion that robs us of our willingness and ability to make the most of what we have here on earth. The ultimately unattainable goal of the otherworldly, to Nietzsche’s way of thinking, serves to only cripple humanity further by causing the resentment that leads to nihilism. Thus, Nietzsche beseeches us to “remain true to the earth,” as Thomson explains, by “maintaining ourselves within the bounds of the knowable.”¹⁸²

According to Thomson, it is this very notion of “maintaining ourselves within the bounds of the knowable” that grounds the conceptualization of a Nietzschean eco-phenomenological approach as one that results in a *naturalistic ethical realism*, for in such an approach, “good” and “bad” are ultimately matters of fact, and values should be grounded thereupon. This is quite different, Thomson explains, than a Heideggerian eco-phenomenological approach which yields a *transcendental ethical realism*. Thomson writes:

[Here] we can discover what really matters (hence *ethical realism*) when we are appropriately open to the environment, but what we thereby discover is neither a 'fact' nor a 'value' but rather a transcendental source of meaning that cannot be reduced to facts, values, or entities of any kind (hence *transcendental ethical realism*).¹⁸³

Thus, unlike the Nietzschean approach, or any other approach for that matter in which the discovery of the ethical is something grounded in facts, reason, or utility, etc.,

¹⁸²Iain Thomson, “Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy,” 387.

¹⁸³Iain Thomson, “Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy,” 385.

transcendental ethical realism sets forth the idea that in order for the meaning to be experienced there is the prerequisite and necessity for persons to be possessed of a proper attunement or comportment toward their environment so that the experience of meaning can occur. For example, if a person wants to know what should or should not be done with a particular forest, the first step in answering such a question will be to determine if said person is *open* to the forest in the requisite manner: Is said person able to *sense* the possible meanings that are present within the forest? This notion of attunement to or comportment toward environment is a centrally important idea. On the surface level, one could explain what it means to be *open* to an environment by means of certain ideas that are quite commonplace, such as *paying attention, being present, not being distracted*. And while those phrases do indeed point us in the right direction, the concept of attunement is best and more thoroughly explained in terms of Heidegger's own ideas of *knowledge* and *tenderness* as discussed in III.3. As explained there, for Heidegger, *knowledge* and *tenderness* involve both the capacity for open receptivity and a kind of meditative and reflective thinking that may be explained as a thinking that mirrors what *is*, as well as a modality of being that is gratitude-laden and appreciative. One can encourage or cultivate an enhanced or increased perceptual sensitivity that in turn allows for the discovery of something in nature already present but heretofore unnoticed. Such an idea is embraced by many thinkers, philosophers, and scientists, and across different disciplines. One such thinker is Roger Walsh. Researching for over 30 years in areas including neuroscience and the effects of meditation, Roger Walsh, M.D. and Professor of Psychiatry, Philosophy, and Anthropology writes:

As human perceptual sensitivity increases beyond a certain threshold, we penetrate beyond the realm of our ordinary experience of the world and its

concomitant "reality" and obtain a fundamentally different view of nature. This view may be obtained through any of the epistemological modes of acquiring knowledge: sensory perception, intellectual conceptual analysis, or contemplation. Heightened sensitivity may be obtained either through direct training of awareness as in meditation or other consciousness disciplines, through refinement of conceptual analysis, or by augmentation and systematization of sensory perception through instrumentation and experiment as in advanced science. But no matter how it is obtained, enhancement of sufficient degree may reveal a different order of reality from that to which we are accustomed.¹⁸⁴

The idea that perceptual sensitivity may be increased and thereby reveal a different order of reality is precisely what is involved in the notion of attunement and the modes of being indicated in Heidegger's *knowledge* and *tenderness*. In my own experience teaching at Green Mountain College for the past six years, I have witnessed first-hand the dramatic difference in perception that is possible from even the simplest of alterations in behavior done with an aim toward heightening sensitivity. As part of every environmental ethics class that I teach, regardless of fall or spring semester, I have my students participate in what I call a "phenomenology walk." This walk takes place on Cerridwen Farm, a small working farm that is a part of this environmental liberal arts college. I and the students walk through the farm, stopping at different locations, and often walk along the back field which is bordered by the Poultney River. It is common for some students to already be familiar with the farm, field, and river. Some even work on the farm either as part of other coursework or as work-study students. Although we do not read any material in the environmental ethics class that is straightforward phenomenology, I take the time to briefly explain phenomenology at the point in the

¹⁸⁴Walsh, Roger, "Emerging Cross-Disciplinary Parallels: Suggestions from the Neurosciences," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 17 (1995): 1-32, <http://www.drrogerwalsh.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/Emerging-cross-disciplinary-Parallels-Suggestions-from-the-Neurosciences.pdf>

semester when we read material on ecocentrism, deep ecology, and ecofeminism. I explain that phenomenology may most simply be understood as the practice of approaching experience such that the aspect of the mind that is geared toward evaluation and judgment is first recognized and then “bracketed” off to whatever extent possible so that a fuller openness to simple experience with an aim to pure description thereof may occur. Armed only with this most simple of understandings of phenomenology, we go for our “phenomenology walk” on the farm, field, and river’s edge, purposely spending time encountering the different animals there on the farm. Students are not allowed to speak during this entire practice (for whatever reason, students seem to invariably obey my instructions). Without fail, students report an incredible difference in their experience of the animals, the trees, and the river, and they report dramatically increased perceptual sensitivity to not only the animals they encounter but to the environment in general, citing things such as noticing sounds and smells not noticed before, or the movement of tree limbs or leaves, as well as noticing relationships among parts of nature that they had not noticed before, such as how the sheep tend to gather at the bottom of the hill where the grass is greener and thicker due to the creek that runs there. Some students have even reported that in this exercise they felt they encountered certain animals as *beings* for the very first time. “I have never experienced goats in that way before. I felt like they were trying to communicate with us. That was amazing,” a student once said, after our class had stood silently for several minutes watching a small herd of goats, various members of which were insistently bleating at us in different ways with different pitches of voice.

Likewise, in a class I created and teach at the college called Body and Being, the curriculum for which includes explicit study of phenomenology in addition to other

philosophy as well as actual yoga, dance, and movement, I have students participate in a couple of different “phenomenology exercises” that I created. The response from students in terms of their experience and their awareness of alteration and enhancement of their perceptual sensitivity is quite amazing. In one of the exercises, I first have everyone engage in ten minutes of silent, slow, deep breathing so as to lower their heart rates and calm their minds. I then have the students pair up, sitting cross-legged on the floor, knees almost touching, facing one another. For the span of a 4-5 minute song that is ambient and soothing, I ask them to maintain with one another silent and unbroken eye contact. I explain to them that in the act of truly holding eye contact, the looker is gazing directly into one eye of the face of the other person, and thus they should not be shifting their gaze from eye to eye since that breaks the gaze. I tell them that after the exercise I will want to hear from them about their experiences. In the course of doing this for several years now with many different sets of students, I have found that some fascinating occurrences are quite commonplace and others nearly universal. Not only do the students report seeing and feeling things they have never seen or felt before and being in a state of heightened perceptivity (many will even go on to reproduce the experience with other people on campus outside of class, so struck are they by the profundity of the experience), but certain interesting phenomena are reported time after time. Most will report the desire or urge to laugh, giggle, and break the gaze. They describe the desire as arising from feeling nervous and feeling uneasy at first (inevitably now and then someone will giggle, but I’m always impressed with how many students fulfill the directive and remain silent). The students report that in holding the gaze they begin to experience surges of emotion, especially love and sadness. They report that, although they are

looking straight into the eye of the other person, in their peripheral vision it will seem that the other person's face will begin to morph. The changes most commonly reported as observed are that the person's face shows different emotions such as fear, sorrow, surprise, and joy and also that the person's face will begin to age and then become young again, over and over. Students inevitably report that in participating in the experience they feel a bond with the other person even if the person is a stranger, as well as feeling what they often refer to as a feeling of "universal love." The other phenomenology exercise I have them do involves the same setup but instead of eye contact they close their eyes and take turns giving and then receiving touch from elbow to fingertips. Many will invariably report how they never before realized how soothing simple soft touch can be. Many will report that the exercise put them in awareness of their own mind, their thinking, and that they are made aware of issues and blocks surrounding touch and intimacy. Many will describe it as feeling good but struggling to just be present with the sensation due to biases and judgments surrounding flesh to flesh contact. The insights gained are many and quite powerful.

My own understanding of the various things taking place within these exercises is one that involves Heidegger's notions of *knowledge* and *tenderness*. The receptivity and openness with which the students enter into the experience allows for them to have an experience that they would not have otherwise. Their attunement, whether it be to their environment, to animals, or to another person, opens up a dimension of perceptual experience that reveals something that is indeed already there but that likely would have otherwise been missed. They are able to mirror what is and to appreciate that reality. These ideas, of course, are all in keeping with the earlier discussion of the meaning,

importance, and powerful nature of eye contact in III.5. Ultimately, however, the most relevant point to this is the fact that perceptual sensitivity can indeed be augmented, human beings can indeed attune themselves so as to approach their environments and their world in a more profoundly phenomenological manner and thus encounter “a transcendental source of meaning that cannot be reduced to facts, values, or entities of any kind.”¹⁸⁵ For Heidegger, this transcendental source of meaning is “earth.”

Understanding the earth as the transcendental source of meaning is revealed when we look at the way in which Heidegger understands “earth” as contrasted with Nietzsche's understanding of “earth.” As discussed, Nietzsche's definition of “earth” is developed through the contrasts he articulates between “earth” and the “otherworld.” In those expressions, he makes clear that the earth is that which may be known by means of the five senses. For Nietzsche, in “remaining true to the earth,” we will be “maintaining ourselves within the bounds of the knowable.”¹⁸⁶ Heidegger's own understanding of “earth” is quite different from Nietzsche's, and is articulated in contrast to his understanding of “world.” Thomson explains that Heidegger's understanding of “world” is that it is “not the totality of physical objects, but rather the holistic nexus of intelligibility organized by our identity-constituting life projects.”¹⁸⁷ Understood in this way, we can see how one's world may change or collapse in myriad ways and a new world emerge. One day a man is married to a particular woman and holds a particular

¹⁸⁵ Iain Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," 385.

¹⁸⁶ Iain Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," 387.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 384.

job, and he has a particular understanding of his life and its purpose. The next day any one or all of those things may change. His world may collapse. A new world and understanding of self and purpose may emerge. The very possibility of a new world emerging is due to the nature of earth, as Heidegger understands it. The way in which Heidegger differentiates between “earth” and “world” allows for this transcendental ground of inexhaustible meanings to be discovered. Thomson explains:

For Heidegger 'earth' refers to something cognitively unattainable, or something that can never really be *known* . . . *Earth*, on his analysis, both sustains this meaningful world and resists being interpretively exhausted by it . . . 'Earth', in other words, is one of Heidegger's names for that which gives rise to our worlds of meaning without ever being exhausted by them, a dimension of intelligibility we experience primarily as it recedes from our awareness, eluding our attempts finally to *know* it, to grasp and express it fully in terms of some positive content. Heidegger contends, nevertheless, that we can get a *sense* for the 'earth'...¹⁸⁸

That which we are unable to ever fully grasp yet can undeniably get a sense for is that which becomes available to us when we practice phenomenology with both *knowledge* and *tenderness*. This “realm,” if you will, is precisely the realm missing from Nietzsche’s view. Its absence, one may argue, is why the *naturalistic ethical realism* that results therefrom is inadequate to the tasks at hand. I want to note here that if we apply Agamben’s analysis to Nietzsche’s own ideas, we can see how Nietzsche’s binaries of “earth” and “otherworld” may be understood to be founded upon the realm he excludes or abandons, the realm that Heidegger embraces and calls “earth.” We will explore further in the third section of this chapter the importance of this “hinge” in terms of moving beyond the binary in a pursuit of true *dwelling*.

¹⁸⁸ Iain Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," 387.

A further aspect of *transcendental ethical realism* that is relevant to how meaning arises in experience is explained by Thomson as the way in which Heidegger historicizes Kant's *discursivity thesis*. The idea is that intelligibility is the result of a subconscious process in which there is a spontaneous organization of input from a "sensibly overwhelming world to which we are fundamentally receptive."¹⁸⁹ Heidegger, as Thomson explains, understands that the implicit organization that takes place, however, is not achieved by means of historically-fixed categories as Kant would have it but rather by means of a dynamic and changing historical understanding of being of entities, which is itself established and stabilized by the reigning metaphysics of a given era or epoch.¹⁹⁰ This understanding of the dynamic and non-static nature of "categories" is central to ecofeminist thought, as we will explore further in the next section. The notion of a dynamic and changing historical understanding of beings is in keeping with the relevant and important distinctions Heidegger makes between "earth" and "world" in that it is in the nature of "earth" as source of inexhaustible meaning to allow for the emergence of different "worlds." "Earth," as that which both overflows and exceeds and withdraws and hides in darkness, makes possible the changing historical understanding of the being of entities in that it makes possible the different and various eras and epochs themselves by allowing for changes in the metaphysics that shape a given era or epoch as such. Given these features of existence, we can see the importance of a perpetual and continual attunement to being, along with a comportment of openness and appreciation toward

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 396.

¹⁹⁰Iain Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy, 396.

those things by means of which being reveals itself, according to Heidegger, things such as art, poetry, and myth, things that can assist us in our pursuit of true *dwelling*. For it is the multi-layered and polysemic nature of myth that allows for its “adaptability” to changing circumstance and thereby renders it able to retain its relevance throughout different epochs in that it is, like Heidegger’s “earth,” a source of inexhaustible meaning. These traits of myth, like nature, are revelatory of *a-letheia* and thus an important part of what the pursuit of *dwelling* entails.

As we have seen, the trait of “earth” to remain always partially hidden, always somewhat out of reach, is what constitutes the very essence of truth understood as *a-letheia*. In exploring further Heidegger's understanding of “understanding” as something conditioned by and occurring within time, we find something relevant he says in *What Is Called Thinking?*:

Historical science may thoroughly explore a period, for instance, in every possible respect, and yet never explore what history is. By way of history, a man will never find out what history is . . . The essence of their sphere - history, art, poetry, language, nature, man, God - remains inaccessible to the sciences . . . The essence of the spheres I have named is the concern of thinking.¹⁹¹

Each of the areas mentioned by Heidegger is conditioned by time and the reigning metaphysics of the given epoch or era in which it is operative. Each is constrained in the sense of being what it is by virtue of existing within a larger context and configuration of realities and metaphysical presuppositions that are themselves subject to something operative within something greater that is mutable, transitory, and in flux. As Thomson explains, “Metaphysics, as ontotheology, temporarily secures the intelligible order both

¹⁹¹ Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 33.

ontologically, from the inside-out, and theologically, the outside in (so to speak), thereby supplying the most basic conceptual parameters and ultimate standards of legitimacy for each of history's successive *epochs* or constellations of intelligibility."¹⁹² Thus, when Heidegger says that a man will never find out what history is by way of history it is much like saying that a fish will never find out what water is by way of water. Why? The fish exists in the water. Only if there is access to a given thing from outside of the given thing is it even possible to gain access to any greater understanding of the thing. This *outside* may only be had via thinking. To suppose that one can be *outside* in this way is to recognize the mutability of what may seem immutable from inside, it is to acknowledge the essence of *a-letheia* as the concealed and unconcealed in flux. Such a vision of the very nature of truth and understanding is indeed the one embraced by ecofeminist thinkers such as Trish Glazebrook who seek to forego the model of truth as immutable, objective, and universal in favor of a model of truth that is organic, dynamic, and natural. The differences recognized in making the distinctions that Thomson does between the two realisms and between Nietzsche's and Heidegger's understanding of *earth* are important differences crucial to various elements of this project, including the way in which ecofeminist thinker Trish Glazebrook distinguishes between what she calls "eco-logics" and "phallic logic." To that we now turn.

VI.2. Phallic logic and Eco-logics

¹⁹² Iain Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," 396.

Many of the insights gained from our discussions thus far coincide with ideas articulated by Trish Glazebrook in her essay, "Gynocentric Eco-Logics." A number of the points made by Glazebrook in the essay are specifically Heideggerian and ecofeminist and thus are most apropos to this inquiry and help shed further light on matters central to this project as a whole, such as the nature of truth and the limits of scientific objectivity taken as paradigm of truth. Glazebrook sets forth her understanding of Heidegger on the notion of truth and its applicability to understanding nature and hence environmental issues when she writes:

For Heidegger, truth is never complete; rather unconcealment always has concealment at its heart. Applied to the question of nature, Heidegger's *aletheia* suggests any interpretation of nature cannot be exhaustive but rather is a partial insight in which other possibilities for understanding are precluded. Nature is never present to the thinker as a totalized whole but is experienced in a play between concealment and revelation.¹⁹³

Glazebrook provides as an example of this idea the practice of dissection. She explains that while the informative scientific practice of dissection yields us knowledge of the inner workings of the subject under study, the principle of life itself withdraws in the face of dissection. She posits this as analogous to the way in which one cannot cut open a stone in an attempt to understand why it is affected by gravity. She concurs with many thinkers, including others referenced in this project such as Sartre, Kohak, Walsh, Gaard and Gruen, that the truly astute thinker will always remain mindful of the limitations of his or her approach and subsequent findings and remain open to other possibilities.¹⁹⁴

I believe that in undertaking to understand some of Glazebrook's most central ideas and to link them up with insights we have gained thus far, we can see even more clearly

¹⁹³ Trish Glazebrook, "Gynocentric Eco-Logics," 85.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

both the issues that plague us and impede our *dwelling* as well as how a return to *dwelling* may be accomplished and what such a return may look like. Some of Glazebrook's central contentions are captured when she states:

I suggest therefore that nature can be eco-logically understood as that which always exceeds interpretation, that which is always more than the account to which it is reduced. Accordingly, scientific and technological interpretations of nature [resultant as they are from "phallic logic"] have no epistemological privilege as the final word, as complete understanding, as the "real" truth. They are truths, but not the only ones. Hence their logic is not a tumor that needs to be cut out, but an excessive infestation that needs to be cut back to make room for other logics, especially eco-logics that promote wholeness and balance in this epoch of eco-destruction, that make the physical environment relevant to knowledge claims by modeling themselves upon its diversity and inexhaustibility.¹⁹⁵

Glazebrook's conception of nature as that "which always exceeds interpretation" is of course in keeping with Heidegger's distinction between "earth" and "world," and it does entail those characteristics specific to Thomson's *transcendental ethical realism*.

Glazebrook's main argument in the essay is that "phallic logic" is, as a disease of modernity, a root cause of most current environmental crises. She sees the cure for this not in the complete foregoing of phallic logic but in there being made a place for what she is calling eco-logics. The way in which she construes eco-logics is via specific ideas belonging to Heidegger. The term "phallic logic," as she explains, is the logic of modernity. The term "logic" is not being used in the sense of a discipline in which rules are employed to manipulate abstract statements. "Logic" is being used as an epistemological term, that is, a description of the way understanding is structured. Glazebrook's claim is that phallic logic is what undergirds and reinforces patriarchy.

¹⁹⁵Trish Glazebrook, "Gynocentric Eco-Logics," 86.

That is to say, patriarchy as the model of sovereign power makes appeal to objective truth as that which founds its power. It is interesting to note here how we can apply Agamben's analysis and see that the binary realms of "subjective" and "objective" which are operative in patriarchal thinking may well be analogous to Agamben's "divine" and "juridical" realms in that they are the two realms established by means of the exclusion or abandonment of another realm, the abandonment of that realm being what founds sovereign power in Agamben's analysis. Agamben's abandoned realm or "state of exception," in this case, is the phenomenological realm, the realm which precedes any division between subject and object. This is the realm whose reclamation can indeed bridge the fact/value divide and, as Thomson said, "undermine the theory/practice distinction."¹⁹⁶

As Glazebrook explains, phallic logic takes scientific objectivity as its paradigm, thus ultimately imposing upon all phenomena limitations and structures which themselves obscure or otherwise distort our perception of reality such that truth itself is corrupted, damaged, limited, or otherwise rendered incomplete. Glazebrook argues that it is due to the exclusive use of this phallic logic that we are facing many of our current crises. She makes very clear that the call for alternative "logics" comes from within the scientific community as well as from without. Quoting various scientists, ecologists, geologists, and others, Glazebrook makes the case that there is little doubt within the scientific community that the objective model of modernity does not provide us with all that we

¹⁹⁶ Iain Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy," 381.

need and require. In summing up the thoughts and ideas of these various scientists and thinkers to which she makes appeal, Glazebrook says:

Science is therefore best practiced as phenomenological conversation . . . environmental science uncovers natural processes in order that human being can adjust to them and be at home in the world . . . Our knowledge of the environment is not just rational but also involves responsive, emotional engagement . . . [Many scientists are] arguing for ecologically functional models to replace dispassionate objectification, for emotional and spiritual connection to the earth, and for an epistemological validity to knowledge that cannot be fully articulated according to the demands of objectivity, they appeal to the limitations of knowledge and its fragmentary situatedness.¹⁹⁷

Glazebrook tells us that there is a call from within the sciences themselves to make room for new approaches to understanding nature that take into account the limitations of human knowledge, our continuously unfolding experience and observation of nature and natural processes, as well as our intimate connectedness to nature as manifest in the physical, emotional, and spiritual realms. All of this is in keeping with the ideas central to this project spelled out thus far. There is the concept of truth understood as *a-letheia*, that is, truth understood as being in its very essence beyond full and total apprehension by finite human beings and manifesting itself in the continuous movements of unconcealment and concealment. There is the monumentally important endeavor of human dwelling, and the two kinds of thinking as well as the building that constitute it. There is the recognition and understanding of the place and purpose of the human being as mortal in relation to each of the other three parts of the fourfold. There is the centrally important power and purpose of art and myth and their role in the realization of dwelling as mortal in the fourfold. There are those mechanisms of power by means of which

¹⁹⁷Trish Glazebrook, "Gynocentric Eco-logics," 79.

certain aspects of our lived reality are abandoned and exiled and thereby made the grounds for the establishment of a sovereign power that excludes them and prevents our attainment of real dwelling. All of these things, when viewed through the framework of ecofeminism, provide us the means by which we may begin to think differently about our current realities, long-standing modalities, and future possibilities.

The alternative approach Glazebrook sets forth and terms "eco-logics" is an approach, as mentioned, grounded in certain explicitly Heideggerian theses. In explaining eco-logics, she states, "I propose that such new eco-logics, that is ways of thinking about nature, take their guidance from the physical environment. If nature informs knowledge claims, then knowledge itself is construed organically: it is finite and changing rather than fixed and eternal."¹⁹⁸ Knowledge is alive, we might say. It will grow and alter and change. All of that which can be known does not remain static, fixed, eternal, and unchanging. Wisdom acknowledges this. As Glazebrook says, "The claim is not that truth and falsity are irrelevant, but that they are insufficient."¹⁹⁹ Truth will reveal itself in actions of concealment and unconcealment through nature and over time. In this way, we can see clearly the conceptual link that Heidegger makes between *a-letheia* and *physis*. Nature is the greatest teacher of truth and the nature of truth, we might say. Heidegger emphasizes that if we attend to nature, we can learn about truth. Just as a given oak tree unconceals and conceals different aspects of itself, all of which may be said to be "true" over time and throughout the seasons, so does reality and being itself do the same. This is precisely why truth and falsity are insufficient. They presuppose the nature of truth as

¹⁹⁸Trish Glazebrook, "Gynocentric Eco-Logics," 76.

¹⁹⁹Trish Glazebrook, "Heidegger and Ecofeminism," 191.

fixed and static, and anyone engaged in a phenomenological encounter with reality would not see this to be the case.

Just as the view articulated by Thomson, which he termed *transcendental ethical realism*, recognizes and gives place to the realm that is constituted by “facts” while maintaining that reality ultimately exceeds it, so, too, does the approach Glazebrook calls “eco-logics” give place to the realm properly governed by phallic logic while maintaining that reality ultimately exceeds what that realm can provide us. Glazebrook states, “Rather than simply inverting phallic logic, they [eco-logics] instead orchestrate an openness to and respect for differences that displace any logic of domination. Thus they make a place for phallic logic, but resist its excessive claim to universality.”²⁰⁰

In fleshing out her point of view, Glazebrook makes reference to early thinkers who conceived themselves as operating under the paradigm of objectivity yet who were clearly from our current understanding and point of view engaged in this phallic logic of homogenization, conquest, and domination in the very ways explained in chapter four’s discussion of ecofeminism. Francis Bacon's alignment of women with nature, his use of the pronouns “she” and “her,” and his description of his undertaking as one in which he hopes to “conquer nature in action” is one such example.²⁰¹ Glazebrook is very careful to make clear that she is not in any way arguing for the abandonment of phallic logic, or for throwing out Bacon's taxonomy or Newton's physics or any other such thing, nor is she assuming that they are somehow useless or wrong; rather, she is simply arguing that their

²⁰⁰Trish Glazebrook, “Gynocentric Eco-Logics,” 77.

²⁰¹*Ibid.*, 81.

claim to exclusive access to truth is in error, that it is a dangerous scientism that eclipses a broader and more encompassing understanding of the matters at issue.

In contrast to those thinkers whose claims to universality ultimately undermined their quest for truth, Glazebrook highlights Goethe's practice of science and the way in which it is now understood as a phenomenology of nature (quite influential on Hegel) that refuses to leave the object behind. About Goethe's approach to understanding nature, editor of the book *Goethe's Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature*, David Seamon, writes:

Goethe's method teaches a mode of interaction between people and environment that involves reciprocity, wonderment, and gratitude. He wished us to encounter nature respectfully and to discover how all its parts, including ourselves, belong. In this way, perhaps, we come to feel more care for the natural world, which answers back with meaning.²⁰²

Seamon speaks of Goethe's practice of science in a way such that we can see quite plainly the ideas of eco-phenomenology, Heidegger's *knowledge* and *tenderness*, and Thomson's idea of *transcendental ethical realism*. As discussed in chapter three, the concepts of *knowledge* and *tenderness* have crucial importance for Heidegger in terms of his understanding of what is required for proper *dwelling*. In a discussion of Heidegger's proposed alternative to representational thinking, Glazebrook explains:

The truth originally experienced by the pre-Socratics, the truth of modern science, and the truth of technology are ways in which human being knows nature. But *Denken* and *Besinnung* are thoughtful, respectful, and thankful relations to nature, rather than its reduction to object and resource. Heidegger's vision is an ethic of reciprocity and care, the very vision for which ecofeminists call, a vision that stands in marked contrast

²⁰²David Seamon, *Goethe's Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature*, http://www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/book%20chapters/goethe_intro.htm

to what has been diagnosed and rejected as a logic of domination by both.²⁰³

Such an approach is the one attributed to Goethe by both Glazebrook and Seamon. Goethe's approach to nature seems to exemplify Heidegger's ideas perfectly in that the hallmarks of the approach are a continual receptive openness and an abiding care for that which is being encountered and received. The nature of nature, as something which exceeds any in-the-moment phenomenological experience thereof and is the means by which our understanding of *a-letheia* is best understood, is respected as such by the scientist who, like Goethe, conceives of the self as part of what is being encountered and observed. This inclusion of the self as part of that which is under observation is made apparent when Glazebrook writes:

The Goethean scientist is scrupulously self-critical not just in terms of validity of conclusions reached, but in terms of method. She or he must guard against the danger that hypothesis may hinder reconsideration of the object under study, and instead be open to letting the natural phenomenon continue to speak for itself.²⁰⁴

To allow the natural phenomenon to "continue to speak for itself" is to acknowledge the dynamic and non-static nature of nature, it is to be open to a continuing concealing and unconcealing, it is to practice descriptive phenomenology and so to distinguish *meditative thinking* from *calculative thinking* and pursue the former both for its own sake and the most proper application of the latter, and it is to be aware of and attuned to a *transcendental ethical realism* and the *humanistic perfectionism* that results therefrom.

²⁰³Trish Glazebrook, "Heidegger and Ecofeminism," 191.

²⁰⁴Trish Glazebrook, "Gynocentric Eco-Logics," 83.

When we understand the binaries of *anthropocentrism* and *ecocentrism* that loom so large in the environmental debates and discussions of our day in light of a different way of thinking that reveals to us how these binaries obscure a third point of view, a point of view that may be seen as an Agambean *hinge* upon which the two binaries of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism hang, we are made able to see what has been hidden in plain sight. This *hinge* is the descriptive phenomenological approach that yields us *transcendental ethical realism* and its *humanistic perfectionism*. To these things we now turn.

VI.3. The Hinge

Thinking is precisely the relation that is at stake in ecofeminism . . . Human being has carved out for itself a special role among beings: no other creature is capable of realizing such wide-scale manipulation of its environment. Acknowledging how human being, though itself part of nature, has singled itself out as steward is the first step in re-establishing that role ethically rather than in the domineering destruction and exploitation that are characteristic of the West. For if human being has a privileged role in the knowing of nature, the Heideggerian account also points out that this human role is made possible by something larger, the very ground upon which human being stands.²⁰⁵

I believe that it is in the recognition of this “something larger” which itself makes possible our unique and privileged human situation that we can escape the confines of modernity’s dualism, move beyond the binary, and begin creating a new world in which we may truly dwell. I believe that *transcendental ethical realism* is a way in which we do recognize this “something larger.” For if we give ourselves over to thinking, to

²⁰⁵Trish Glazebrook, “Heidegger and Ecofeminism,” 188,

meditatively thinking about the very ground upon which we stand, we can see clearly that a thinking relation to nature which is characterized by *knowledge* and *tenderness* grounds us firmly and properly in our place in the fourfold. If space is made for the consideration of all that can be understood by means of phallic logic, gynologic, all eco-logics, then we will be that much more equipped to bring about the changes that are needed. From our place as mortals in this nexus of the fourfold, consciously embraced, we are able to perceive what is without a doubt present to us and we are able to respond to it as the truth that it is, honoring both that which is unconcealed and that which is concealed, aware of its flow and flux. Remaining fundamentally attuned to this continuous flux and change both without and within, we are rendered ever increasingly able to modify and adjust so as to flow more and more harmoniously with the unfolding of being. There should be little doubt for all rational and well-informed beings that a fundamental shift in our paradigm is what is required if we wish to make real changes. Patriarchy and patriarchal religions, capitalism, the mechanistic model of the universe, and entrenched self and other dualisms must all be transformed.

The vision I have articulated is, I believe, a vision of the future that makes possible the survival and flourishing of those things held dear by humanity. The explorations and excursions into the various areas of thought that have been part of this project have in no way been without solid practical relevance to the true telos of the project, and every idea and possibility discovered or imagined has served to flesh out and more fully articulate the vision. As I attempted to show at different points, if we put on our Agamben glasses and take a fresh look at some things, I believe we can see how important such a

perspective as his is in our attempt to move beyond the binary.²⁰⁶ Agamben's idea is that the very nature of sovereign power is that it establishes itself by means of excluding, denying, abandoning, or otherwise exiling something. The something that gets excluded Agamben terms the "state of exception." He says that this *state of exception* is the *hinge* on which the established sovereign realms thereby established connect. His examples were the *homo sacer* and the *wargus* as *state of exception*. From these hinges hang the established realms in which sovereign power operates, realms he distinguished as the juridical realm and the divine realm. He showed how this same system was operative in ancient history with the *homo sacer* and the realms of sovereign power being *zoē* and *bios*. The uniqueness of the *state of exception* is that neither divine law nor juridical law protect or otherwise acknowledge that which is the *state of exception*. I examined the application of Agamben's ideas to the mythological figure of Lilith in chapter five and showed how we can appropriate Agamben's ideas and gain a deeper understanding of some important realities related to the experience of women, the concept of the feminine, and more, all of these things being relevant to the ecofeminist critique and theory that is in-forming this project. Thus, I believe that if we take this concept of Agamben's and use it as a structure for understanding, we can not only see things that may have eluded us before but we may in fact find further means for our liberation from the restrictions of the mindset of modernity.

²⁰⁶In section VI.1. I attempted to show how Agamben's analysis may be applied to Nietzsche's ideas, i.e., the mechanistic world and the otherworld conceived as the sovereign realms connected by Nietzsche's "earth" as the hinge or state of exception to which he called for us to return. I also attempted to show how we could then use Agamben, from a Heideggerian standpoint, to see Nietzsche's "earth" and his otherworld as the sovereign realms whose connection is the hinge or state of exception abandoned by Nietzsche but that constitutes Heidegger's "earth." And I attempted to show that the binaries of "subjective" and "objective" may be seen as the sovereign realms that connect upon the hinge that is the abandoned phenomenological realm.

In my own experience researching and teaching environmental ethics, I have found myself perpetually ambivalent and legitimately torn when it comes to the ideas of thinkers who propose that ethics require us to forego our anthropocentrism. On the one hand, I am always moved by the strength of their arguments regarding the way in which human beings are indeed a part of nature. And there is no doubt, coming from an ecofeminist point of view, that most of the tendencies which have followed from the anthropocentric worldview as operative within a capitalist patriarchy have not in fact been ethical and are not in fact conducive to the survival and flourishing of humanity in general or our ecosystems. Most of the views and arguments of thinkers like Aldo Leopold, Arne Naess, and Paul Taylor are virtually irrefutable in my estimation and no doubt have an important place in discussions of what it would take to achieve true *dwelling*. Yet, I have never felt fully convinced that ecocentrism was the full and proper response. There seemed to me some kind of tension between the idea that we human beings are the ones who have brought the world to its current crisis and the idea that it is only in the complete abandonment of our own projects and interests that harmony may be restored. Thus, when I consider ideas articulated by thinkers such as Heidegger, Thomson, and Glazebrook, ideas that acknowledge the unique position human being holds while acknowledging also that which holds us, and I consider all of this in light of Agamben's ideas, I find my own ambivalence finally answered in a way that had escaped me until now. I see that what we can think of as the realms of "anthropocentrism" and "ecocentrism" must hang on an Agambean *hinge*, and it is that *hinge* that is the realm abandoned so as to establish those two, and I believe that in recovering it, we will be on our way to real dwelling. I see this *state of exception*, this *hinge*, as the very space or

place from and in which thinkers like Heidegger, Thomson, and Glazebrook are located. I know of no one who has articulated a distinct name for this realm, the realm whose exclusion founds the very designations with which we are most familiar, anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. Perhaps no one has even proposed that there is a third realm, but some thinkers have noted that neither ecocentrism nor anthropocentrism, commonly construed works. Thus, I shall deem this realm, this *hinge*, this way of thinking, *Daseincentrism*.

The name doesn't really matter that much to me, but the concept does. This is the realm in which we would find phenomenology and *transcendental ethical realism*. If we return to thinking about the idea of *transcendental ethical realism*, that is, the idea that we are able to discover what truly matters when we are properly attuned to our environment, we are able to see how on the one hand it is our being as Dasein, our being as beings who are constituted by care and for whom being itself is an issue, that allows us to experience being in the phenomenological ways that lead us to posit things *as mattering* and how on the other hand it is also our being as Dasein that has so much more than all those typical and stereotypical narrow and selfish human interests show up to us *as mattering*.

Thomson, in the context of discussing *transcendental ethical realism* and distinguishing it from *naturalistic ethical realism*, explains how the Nietzschean metaphysics results in what we can understand as a mechanistic telos-lacking view of being that is the filter through which reality is conceptualized. As he points out, eco-phenomenologists who embrace a *naturalistic ethical realism* unwittingly reinscribe this metaphysics into their environmentalism and we end up with ecocentric views that do not

give place to human being or human interests and values as such and may in fact advocate such things as “active population control,” and therefore court the charge of “eco-fascism.” Thomson writes:

We late-moderns implicitly process intelligibility through the ontotheological lenses inherited from Nietzsche’s metaphysics, which ultimately understands the being of entities as eternally-recurring will-to-power, that is, as forces coming-together and breaking-apart with no goal other than their own unlimited self-augmentation.²⁰⁷

Such a metaphysics is one that mechanizes being and deprives it of any final causes. Everything becomes mere resources to be optimized. As Glazebrook reminds us, Heidegger’s own analysis of modern science revealed that once causation is reduced to mere efficient cause and all notion of final causes is lost, nature becomes purposeless and is rendered a mere means and instrument for human ends. Glazebrook notes:

Science determines nature as object, underwritten by human subjectivity, and hence human being feels free to dominate and use nature in technology. This Heideggerian tale about the modern ideological and technological exploitation of nature is consistent with the deep ecologist’s diagnosis of anthropocentrism as causal rather than merely symptomatic of contemporary environmental crises.²⁰⁸

The “anthropocentrism” that deep ecologists and others see as a causal part of our current human and environmental crises is perhaps better and more deeply understood when we look at the metaphysics operative therein, as I believe Thomson makes explicit. This is Thomson’s point when he offers his critique of *naturalistic ethical realism* and what he calls *the ecocentric perfectionism* that results, leaving behind, as it does, the place,

²⁰⁷Iain Thomson, “Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy,” 397.

²⁰⁸Trish Glazebrook, “Heidegger and Ecofeminism,” 177.

purpose, and power of human beings, the very place of Dasein, in the all-too-human desire to find solutions to our crises. What Thomson is able to show is that the very metaphysics that gave rise to the kind of anthropocentrism that we see as causally responsible for our current ills is the same metaphysics operative within the *naturalistic ethical realism* of eco-phenomenology that, in turn, gives rise to the kind of *ecocentric perfectionism* of the ecocentric views in question. Both Thomson and Glazebrook, in good Heideggerian fashion, make clear that there are problems with ecocentrism from both a theoretical and practical perspective, and they both endeavor to show that while the answer is certainly not in a continuation of anthropocentric business-as-usual, it cannot be in a complete foregoing of the aims and interests of human beings. On the theoretical difficulties of ecocentrism, Glazebrook writes:

For in Heidegger's analysis, truth cannot occur without a thinker. Dasein's encounter with beings calls for Dasein's presence. Yet the open region is logically prior in the encounter to both Dasein and the beings it understands. Under this account, truth is epochal . . . Human being is always present in the account it gives of nature, for it is human being giving the account.²⁰⁹

One of the theoretical difficulties for ecocentric views is the role and place of the human being as the one holding or articulating the view. Glazebrook sees Heidegger's ideas, including the concept of Dasein, as capable of responding to the concerns of ecocentric theorists without displacing human being. Thomson, in arguing for the Heideggerian approach in eco-phenomenology and thus the *transcendental ethical realism* and its consequent *humanistic perfectionism*, sheds light on both the theoretical and practical when he says:

²⁰⁹Trish Glazebrook, "Heidegger and Ecofeminism," 185.

Being and Time's revolutionary conception of the self not as a thinking substance, subject, ego, or consciousness, but as a *Dasein* (a 'being-here', that is, a temporally-structured making-intelligible of the place in which I happen to find myself) promises us a philosophically-defensible non-speciesist way of making the ethically-crucial distinctions . . . missing from the ecocentric views. Without such distinctions, these positions, we have seen, tend to generate anti-human consequences that render their widespread acceptance extremely unlikely, leading to a practical dead-end.²¹⁰

As Thomson points out, the practical difficulties seemingly inherent to ecocentric views that deny human beings and their aims and values any special status in the overall environmental scheme are ones that are not only detrimental to human beings but may ultimately work against the environmental aims and goals of ecocentrism itself. It is one thing to say that human beings are not superior to the rest of nature and should therefore not be allowed to play the role of conqueror, but it is another thing altogether to say that the lives of human beings, along with their hopes and desires, merit no special recognition, for the reasoning and principles involved in the ecocentric views are often held to lead directly to such "anti-human" consequences. Clearly, while there are those who would and do embrace an ecocentric viewpoint that dismisses the notion that human being is somehow more relevant than any other living thing or life itself and that the things most distinctively human and meaningful to human being merit no special consideration, there are important considerations and insights provided by Heidegger's philosophy that open up a different way of understanding things and help shed light upon the mechanistic metaphysics at work in the ecocentric views that is arguably so close to us that it is not noticed. If we consider that the relevant metaphysics of which we are

²¹⁰ Iain Thomson, "Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Ethics," 401.

speaking is precisely the way this particular binary is generated in the first place, this binary that is the very presupposition that there are only the two approaches of ecocentrism and anthropocentrism (typically understood), we are able to recognize that this metaphysics needs to be supplanted by a much different view, the view I have called *Daseincentrism*. The clearing created for us in our thinking by Heidegger's own thinking is the place from which we may begin our pursuit of true dwelling.

This view I am calling *Daseincentrism*, understood as an Agambean *hinge*, is the realm that, in its exclusion, allowed for the making sovereign of the other two realms of ecocentrism and anthropocentrism, realms between which discord and tension may carry on unceasingly. An examination of the *hinge* that is the metaphysics I am calling *Daseincentrism* yields us an alternative that is far more promising. I think the *humanistic ethical perfectionism* articulated by Thomson joins with the ecofeminist views articulated by Glazebrook to help yield a Heideggerian humanistic perfectionism that relies on the phenomenological mode of being-in, being-with, and being-toward that is Dasein. Final conclusions that may be drawn regarding the way in which we understand the implications, both practical and otherwise, for the various insights gained thus far as well as their implementation in an ethos and an ethic, the goal of which is the attainment of real *dwelling*, I shall set forth in what follows.

Dwelling in a New World

So, we have come round again near to where we started. A line from the movie *Swimming with Sharks* comes to mind. Kevin Spacey's character says, "And now try to follow me, because I'm gonna be *moving* in a kind of *circular* motion, so if you pay attention, *there will be a point!*" I hope you have been paying attention because there have been many points. That's the thing about a circle. The absence of angles, depending on point of view, renders it either pointless or full of an infinite number of potential points. I've tried to keep the points to a manageable number and allow their mutually-reinforcing organization to draw them together. While my positive proposals help resolve some of the problems I have critiqued, I suspect that were I or others to continue to think on these things, given the very nature of some of the most central ideas, further and possibly inexhaustible points do remain to be discovered.²¹¹ And while such a prospect is indeed awe-inspiring, we now hopefully understand that it need only be daunting and overwhelming if one is operating under a view that presupposes the realm of thinking as a finite totality to be grasped in its entirety.

In the previous chapter, we saw how a Heideggerian application of phenomenology could yield us what I called a *Daseincentrism* that itself may be understood as a third

²¹¹A look here at the ideas of Ann Murphy would no doubt yield a great many possibilities. As Murphy puts it in chapter one, "One of the fundamental claims of Violence and the Philosophical Imaginary is that violence is not only that which we see, but it is that which we now see through." I suspect that there is much intersection of thought between ideas discussed in this work, such as Heidegger's *Law of Proximity*, Agamben's *hinge*, and ecofeminism's concern with self and other dualisms, and Murphy's insights. Murphy's also states, "The language we use to deal with bodily violence, for instance, may unintentionally naturalize the relationship between violence and the body and hence perpetuate the belief that as embodied beings, violence is our unavoidable destiny rather than a historically contingent one." Her ideas could undoubtedly be explored in conjunction with the ideas discussed in section two of chapter four about ecofeminism, Heidegger, and language with an aim to fruitful discovery. (See *Violence and the Philosophical Imaginary*, 14-16.)

alternative to the traditional binaries of ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. In our examination of this third alternative, as fleshed out in an exploration of the ideas of Glazebrook and Thomson, we established even further the superiority of Heidegger's view in his embrace of truth as *a-letheia* and what such an embrace reveals. In understanding the limitations imposed upon us by the metaphysics of modernity that takes scientific objectivity as the paradigm of truth, we were able to see beyond those limits and even more deeply understand the role and place of phenomenology in our pursuit of truth and the recovery of real *dwelling*, as well as in our attempts to deal with our current environmental crises.

Important concepts and distinctions were provided by Thomson in his spelling out his ideas and making the important distinction between naturalistic ethical realism and transcendental ethical realism and the ecocentric perfectionism and humanistic perfectionism that result therefrom. We saw the ways in which a transcendental ethical realism preserves the knowledge manifest as "facts" that is had by means of a naturalistic ethical realism while opening up a space or clearing for perception, awareness, and value that is excluded by naturalistic ethical realism and the mechanistic materialist metaphysics that is inscribed therein. Additionally, we saw that the humanistic perfectionism that follows from transcendental ethical realism has the ability to both preserve the place and purpose of uniquely human interests, projects, and values while also acknowledging and addressing the problems and issues that constitute the central concerns of the ecocentric approaches, while avoiding the difficulties ecocentrism necessarily entails, difficulties that, as we have seen, are both theoretical and practical. We have seen that in thinking about the ideas of attunement and comportment toward

being that are central to a Heideggerian phenomenology our understanding of Heidegger's *meditative thinking* is enhanced, and we are better able to grasp Heidegger's important distinction between it and what he calls *calculative thinking*. Having more fully understood the limits of what Glazebrook calls "phallic logic," we are able to expand our thinking beyond the limits imposed thereby. Through conscious awareness of the modes of being signified by Heidegger's *knowledge* and *tenderness* and a purposeful cultivation of such modes of being, we are able to think *meditatively* and move beyond the binary that has been the legacy of modernity.

To move beyond the binary is indeed to embrace Heidegger's understanding of truth which does entail a rejection of phallic logic as *the* logic and a rejection of truth understood merely in terms of "falsity." To move beyond the binary is to go beyond the self and other dualisms that make up so much of our modern conceptualizing. To move beyond the binary is to embrace *meditative thinking* as that which is fundamentally required for the attainment of real *dwelling* in that it is only by means of *meditative thinking* that we can understand what in fact constitutes real *dwelling*, for only then are we able to engage in proper and appropriate *calculative thinking* as the aspect of *building* that it is, whether in the form of cultivation or construction, all of which, according to Heidegger, is to be done for the sake of *dwelling*.²¹² These are the ideas at work in Thomson and Glazebrook in their assertions that Heidegger's approach does not exclude facts or science or technology or phallic logic but rather, when understood, shows that there is a way of being in, toward, and with the world that acknowledges and makes a place for "earth," that which is the inexhaustible source of meaning, of worlds, of truth,

²¹²Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 349.

and of value, while still allowing a place for the knowledge had by those other means. Such an approach recognizes truth as *a-letheia* and respects the reality of the concealed and unconcealed. As I believe I have shown, this recognition and respect for truth as *a-letheia* is crucial to any truly effective response to our current environmental and existential crises. All of these things are necessary if we are to attain to real *dwelling* in a new world.

Recognizing the reality of the concealed and unconcealed is to understand Heidegger's *Law of Proximity* and how it operates. In considering the ideas of Agamben in conjunction with Heidegger, we can, it seems, "unconceal" some of what is perhaps closest to us but has been "abandoned" and "exiled" and therefore rendered "concealed." Upon a proper examination, I believe that we can see how the abandonment and exile allow for the founding of the two sovereign realms of virtually any given binary we may wish to analyze. Applying Agamben's analysis to the deeply entrenched constructs of thinking that may be said to constitute the binary is a way to look for what is hidden, to look for what is being concealed by the very approach (or epoch and its given "categories") that makes the initial reduction in its very act of abandoning and exiling. To purposefully and consciously engage in such analyses would be to put into practice our theoretical understanding of *a-letheia* in such a way that we may think of it as a form of deconstruction that is simultaneously creative in its revealing of that which was hidden. Utilized as a way to examine self and other dualisms, Agamben's analysis, as I am using it, promises an expansion of our understanding by looking for that which is hidden, concealed, abandoned, and exiled and understanding it as that which serves as "hinge" for the binaries or dualisms. But make no mistake. Such an endeavor will in no

way allow us to achieve some totalized and complete understanding, as if truth were something finite. The essence of truth, understood as *a-letheia*, remains. To suppose otherwise would be to fall back into old metaphysics, that modern habit of thinking that has been shown via the explorations of this project to ultimately yield only a partial and limited understanding. Our embrace and pursuit of the “hinge” can help bring forth a new world and set us on the path to real *dwelling*, but it will not reveal to us the earth. Something Thomson says about Heidegger’s “earth” is apropos here. “*Earth*, in his [Heidegger’s] analysis, both informs and sustains this meaningful world and also resists being interpretively exhausted by it.”²¹³ I stress again that I am in no way proposing that Agamben’s analysis or its use somehow trumps or defeats the fundamental nature of “earth” or *a-letheia*’s nature as concealment and unconcealment. Rather, I propose that using Agamben’s analysis is a way to better understand our current world, “earth,” and *a-letheia*, that is, it is a way to more fully and less destructively understand it, and that only in doing so may we move toward real *dwelling*.

In thinking a bit more deeply about this intersection of thought between Heidegger and Agamben and the crucial significance of the “hinge,” we should keep in mind that it is in no way arbitrary or random that certain specific things are concealed while others are unconcealed. As Heidegger’s understanding of understanding has it, what Thomson referred to as the way in which “Heidegger historicizes Kant’s *discursivity thesis*,” that which shows up for us as unconcealed has a specific relationship to that which does not show up to us in its concealment in that the “categories” which are determining our ways of conceptualizing, and thus determining what is unconcealed to us, are themselves

²¹³Iain Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, 90.

determined by the dominant metaphysics of a given era or epoch. Thus, if we successfully undertake to unconceal at least some of that which is presently concealed from us by means of an Agambean analysis of that which is presently unconcealed to us with an eye toward discovering the “hinge,” we are, at least in some sense, somehow a part of a new era, epoch, paradigm, or world, or, at the very least, we are able to perceive one as possible. If in looking out upon our present world we attempt to see what is right there in front of us but somehow occulted, we may well discover that which has been exiled or abandoned, and in uncovering the “hinge,” we may begin a process of reclamation, and this reclamation may be precisely what is needed before we can resume our proper place in the *fourfold* and commence real *dwelling*, for such a reclamation would involve the explicit recognition of the polysemic nature of reality and a conscious foregoing of the mindset of modernity that put upon us the yoke of monosemic exactitude in all our undertakings of understanding.

In an edited collection of Heidegger’s essays, David Farrell Krell notes that when Heidegger delivered his tripartite lecture “The Origin of the Work of Art” in Frankfurt in 1936, a reviewer for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* compared Heidegger’s lectures to “an abandoned landscape.”²¹⁴ I found this meaningful, for if we consider the era in which Heidegger was working, thinking, and lecturing in light of ideas discussed in this project, we can see how a great deal of what Heidegger was attempting to convey may very well be understood as ideas and concepts that had been “abandoned” and “exiled” by and in the founding of modernity. Hence Heidegger’s passionate engagement with

²¹⁴Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 140.

ancient Greek thinking. I want to consider again now briefly a few of the Greek concepts discussed earlier in the project.

Interestingly, our earlier discussions of Χάος may now be linked up with insights and ideas gained from Agamben. Let us recall how in chapter two we looked at Drew Hyland's analysis of Χάος (as in Hesiod's *First of all came Χάος* dictum), and the way in which Hyland proposed that Χάος best be understood as "difference." When considering the idea of Χάος as *the gap, yawn, or separation*, Hyland said, "The *between* somehow precedes the binaries which it distinguishes." We see here the notion of the binary being dependent upon some third. The *between*, as *hinge*, precedes the binaries which it makes possible. As we saw in our earlier exploration, however, Hyland's thinking and reasoning, while good, had stopped too soon in declaring Χάος to mean difference.

Through an examination of John Bussanich's arguments, which, as we saw, had been somewhat misunderstood by Hyland, we came to see that Χάος was not best understood as difference itself but as that which allows for the emergence of both difference and sameness. Bussanich had said, "Since its function is cosmogonic, Χάος must be defined as undimensional or principial space, an articulated nothing: it is the barest indication that there is a qualitative something, from and in which cosmic differentiation occurs."²¹⁵ While there are no doubt ways in which the concept of Χάος differs from Agamben's *hinge* or *state of exception*, I find the similarities very striking and worth noting and considering. As we saw in chapter five, Agamben sees realms in which power operates as being made possible only by the abandonment or exiling of some other given realm. His explanation of this involves the idea that it is only from this abandoned realm, what

²¹⁵John Bussanich, "A Theoretical Interpretation of Hesiod's Chaos," 214.

he calls the *state of exception* and refers to as “hinge,” that the realms of power thus established may be delineated. Agamben’s examples are all binary, whether he is speaking of the realms of divine and juridical law or making appeal to the more ancient realms of *zoē* and *bios* in order to substantiate his theory. Agamben’s description of the *homo sacer* as one who may be killed but not murdered exemplifies the way in which *homo sacer* is neither part of the divine realm nor part of the juridical realm. Were he part of the juridical realm, he could indeed be murdered. Were he part of the divine realm, the same holds true. But, as Agamben explains, being the *state of exception* and not part of either, he may be killed with impunity. The *homo sacer*, in essence, as such, is nothing. But he may definitely be said to be an “articulated nothing,” an “articulated nothing” from and in which differentiation occurs.

Agamben’s characterization of the *state of exception* as the “hinge” upon which the two realms hang and from which they may be articulated understands the “hinge” as the necessary condition for the delineation and articulation of the relevant binaries.

Agamben says, “Life that may be killed but not sacrificed is the hinge on which each sphere is articulated and the threshold at which the two spheres are joined in becoming indeterminate.”²¹⁶ The idea that the hinge is the threshold at which the two spheres are joined in becoming indeterminate is profoundly similar to the way in which I explained Bussanich’s rendering of *Xáος* in that both “sameness” and “difference” depend upon it, that is, without it, one cannot distinguish them as such. Thus, *Xáος* understood in this way as the gap, yawn, or separation functions much like Agamben’s hinge as he describes it.

²¹⁶Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 90.

To what end do I make these connections? Only to the end of further thinking. When Heidegger says about *Xáος*, “Nothing that is real precedes this opening, but rather always only enters into it,” we can perhaps be prompted to consider that an exploration of these ideas and the ways in which they intersect may yield insights otherwise missed.²¹⁷ For it seems that in thinking about things in this way, as I explained in the last chapter, that is, with an eye toward an Agambenian analysis of binaries, we can look for what is concealed and seek to understand it as that whose “abandonment” and “exile” make possible the very delineation of the binaries. In thinking about *Xáος* in light of Agamben, I am intrigued by the idea that what is signified by the term “*Xáος*” may be more than we have even uncovered thus far given the operation of concealment and unconcealment coupled with this notion of exile and abandonment. Likewise, if we think again about the Greek term *peras* and the way Heidegger defines it as “that from which something begins its essential unfolding,” (*Anwesens* ‘presencing’) we can see connections to Agamben’s ideas.²¹⁸ The simple consideration of these ideas appears to me as central to thinking, for even a path of thinking that leads to no particular place is still a *clearing*, and in the *clearing* a new world may emerge and real *dwelling* may commence.

In thinking about the clearing and how it may serve us in our pursuit of real *dwelling*, something Glazebrook notes is helpful, “When Heidegger renamed the open region which he associated with the truth “the clearing” he talked of it as a forest clearing into which the light may come.”²¹⁹ Each of us, hopefully, has had the phenomenological experience of walking through dense woods and coming suddenly into a clearing. The

²¹⁷Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations on Hölderlin’s Poetry*, 85.

²¹⁸Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” 356.

²¹⁹Trish Glazebrook, “Heidegger and Ecofeminism,” 188.

brightness can be temporarily blinding, but there is no doubt that the clearing makes possible things not possible outside of it, such as the possibility of real *dwelling*. It is in the clearing that the event of being (*Ereignis*) takes place, where thinker and thing come together making truth possible. There is for Heidegger a very definite way in which Dasein's way of being in the world, Dasein's capacity for thinking, both meditatively and calculatively can bring "dwelling to the fullness of its essence." Heidegger tells us:

The proper dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell* . . . But how else can mortals answer this summons than by trying on *their* part, on their own, to bring dwelling to the fullness of its essence? This they accomplish when they build out of dwelling, and think for the sake of dwelling.²²⁰

My own thinking is that it is in a synthesis of the ideas and concepts explored in this project and applied thoughtfully and with gratitude and openness that a fundamental shift may occur such that we may attain to the goal of real *dwelling*. Thus, I contend that the embrace of a descriptive phenomenological approach whose metaphysics reflect the infinitude of being as well as the central place of Dasein therein, such as the transcendental ethical realism articulated by Thomson and its correlative humanistic perfectionism, is the approach required in this venture. For it is only with a humanistic perfectionism that the crucial place and purpose of human projects is recognized and safeguarded as that which can promote real *dwelling* by helping us to better understand our place in the fourfold by means of that phenomenological comportment toward existence that is characterized by *knowledge* and *tenderness*. For, as I have shown, such a comportment is the one that allows for the broadest and deepest understanding of existence which makes possible the very experience of embodied participation in the

²²⁰Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 363.

fourfold by means of the enhanced perceptual sensitivity that is gained thereby and the gratitude-laden openness to what those perceptions bring. To practice pursuit of this humanistic perfectionism is to dwell poetically. Our ultimate collective human and mortal *ek-stasis* is the *poiesis* that is real *dwelling*.

The concept of a humanistic perfectionism in itself presupposes human beings as a central area of concern as both agents and end goals of the perfectionism, but it in no way entails the reduction of all else to mere means for human ends and thus avoids the problems inherent to anthropocentrism, regularly understood. I believe that a proper understanding of Heidegger shows us that what it is to be perfectly human is to be in such a way that value, values, are re-cognized, having their source in that which is inherently beyond any complete and totalizing comprehension, they are emergent in the being-in, the being-with, and the being-toward that is our existence. The being-toward is what is represented in its optimum form as *knowledge* and *tenderness* in proper attunement and comportment. This proper being-toward is that which opens up possibilities of intelligibility through greater and enhanced perception and of reflecting upon that unreflective awareness in a way that does in fact honor Heidegger's idea that "higher than actuality stands possibility."²²¹ Within such an understanding of a humanistic perfectionism, truth, that "thing of indefinite approximation," is infinite.²²² To enact the idea that the possible ranks higher than the merely actual is to forego limiting structures which impede our ability to exist in a phenomenological openness to being. It is to consciously allow ourselves that unreflective awareness that precedes reflection, leaving

²²¹Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 63.

²²²Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 19.

us free to experience without bias or prejudice, and thus rendering us able to exist in our bodies, to dwell creatively in the fourfold in receptivity, wonder, and gratitude, open to the full spectrum of affective dispositions that may emerge and express, open to the play of those transcendental realities that we understand through myth as gods. Such a way of existing is the one Heidegger attributes to the poet as discussed in chapter three; it is the way of existing that I propose is possible to each of us to some degree or another via ideas discussed regarding meditative thinking and knowledge and tenderness. It is a poetic way of being, a sacred intersection of nature and human being. Heidegger says, “Only because there are those who divine, are there those who belong to nature and correspond to it. Those who co-respond to the wonderfully all-present, to the powerful, divinely beautiful, are “the poets.”²²³ When we remember how Heidegger’s esteem of the poet is predicated on the poet’s being as such rather than on any poetic product produced, as we saw in chapter three, we understand better the nature of poetic *dwelling*. Poetic *dwelling* is the achievement at which all ideas in this project aim. It would be the synthesis and fulfillment of the aims of ecofeminism as well as the humanistic perfectionism of a transcendental ethical realism. It would understand and give place to myth and art. It would set us to thinking in such a way that we could rightly be said to be building out of dwelling and thinking for the sake of dwelling by restoring us to our place in the fourfold of earth, sky, divinity, and mortal. Perhaps we are entering into, or at least viewing on the horizon, a new era or epoch in which our understanding of being is changed. Perhaps we have been or are in the midst of our encounter with what is foreign to us, what has brought on our feeling of homelessness, but a god does wish to save us.

²²³Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations on Hölderlin’s Poetry*, 78.

“The historical spirit of the history of a humankind must first let what is foreign come toward that humankind in its being unhomely so as to find, in an encounter with the foreign, whatever is fitting for the return to the hearth. For history is nothing other than such return to the hearth.”²²⁴

²²⁴Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* 125.

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