

Heidegger: Towards a Poetry Beyond Technological Perfection

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"No prophecy is necessary to recognize that the sciences now establishing themselves will soon be determined and regulated by the new fundamental science that is called cybernetics. This science corresponds to the determination of man as an acting social being. For it is the theory of the regulation of the possible planning and arrangement of human labor. Cybernetics transforms language into an exchange of news. The arts become regulated-regulating instruments of information. The development of philosophy into independent sciences that, however, interdependently communicate among themselves ever more markedly, is the legitimate completion of philosophy. Philosophy is ending in the present age. It has found its place in the scientific attitude of socially active humanity. But the fundamental characteristic of this scientific attitude is its cybernetic, that is, technological character."

(Martin Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", *Basic Writings*, 434)

"'Poetry,' I answered, confident of my argument, 'is the beginning and the end of philosophical knowledge. Like Minerva from the head of Jupiter, philosophy springs from the poetry of an eternal, divine state of being. And so in philosophy, too, the irreconcilable finally converges again in the mysterious spring of poetry.'"

(Friedrich Holderlin, *Hyperion*, 93)

"Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of existence, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it arises and to which it returns"

(Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 487)

CAVEAT

Today, humankind may have the technological sophistication and material resources to provide (via robotic labor) most basic human needs without human labor: absolute leisure. And tomorrow, the perfection of bio-mechanics promises to provide the option of ever-lasting life (not to be confused, by the way, with eternal life!). Ever-lasting leisure? Technology provides the opportunity for alleviating many of life's greatest worries, and one must ask— what stands in the way of a technologically perfected society? But also, would we want it? No doubt, robotic labor is not being used to feed the poor— it is displacing workers; the dream of absolute leisure can be overtaken by perfectly efficient exploitation. This notion of technological perfection must bring fascism to the minds of some. The military strives to mold humans into "lean green machines"— the precise and efficient execution of maneuvers. Fascism goes hand in hand with the militarization of a society structured for efficiency— maybe this is what informed Heidegger's notion (quoted above) of cybernetics as "the theory of the regulation of the possible planning and arrangement of

human labor.” What Heidegger failed to note in his comment was that technology offers more than the mechanization of labor by humans, it offers to relieve humans of labor through mechanization! (Yet, today, both mechanized aspects are often incorporated for the profit of a few.) This association of Heidegger with fascism is important given the debate over his Nazi activities.

I would not simply excuse Heidegger as being someone too timid (and comfortable) to rock his local boat—he often lent his poetical and philosophical voice to the cause of National Socialism. What is perplexing, however, is that much of Heidegger’s ground breaking exploration of “existentialism” questions going with the flow. To the very core, Heidegger’s philosophy is really a working out of Plato’s allegory of the cave— which itself pivots on non-conformism! One should not forget, however, that Plato’s own Republic could be construed as fascist— and no doubt this romantic dream of a state philosophically perfected enticed Heidegger. Yet, how Heidegger could close his eyes to the horrible atrocities of his present time, hoping it would bring something better in the future, a sacrifice for some promised land— this is obviously despicable. Heinous crimes are heinous crimes, and ends do not justify a means— especially when the ends themselves are highly questionable, and the means are monstrous. This talk of ends and means is an ethical issue— did Heidegger see ethics as part of philosophy? Did the end of philosophy include the end of ethics? Maybe Heidegger failed to see the irony employed by Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil. Nietzsche himself rarely failed to address ethical issues.

I hope I have distanced myself from Nazism and fascism here clearly enough. Yet, Heidegger’s thought has been too influential to ignore. And, as a poet, I must admit that much of what he has to say has some resonances with my own poetic experiences. His writings offer insights into many important areas of thought, e.g. freedom, interpretation, and ontology. Does his Nazi affiliation banish him from the “philosophical cannon”? Should we deny his insights, and banish him to historical obscurity? Should we paraphrase all his good ideas in a book that would allow us to ignore his writings, or simply trace all his sources? One should not forget, however, that many great writers of the past were slave owners. The simple fact is that much of our history is clouded with unethical commitments; possibly someday our present time will be looked at with equal dismay. But we cannot dispose of all of history, it is how we have become who we are; and one should not throw out the entire bushel because of a few rotten apples. Thus, it is my suggestion that we read Heidegger critically— some material is good, some not.

And here I will appraise Heidegger by his philosophical writings— his theoretical texts are the Heidegger that I know as a philosopher. And there, in his philosophical writings I have read, I have seen no explicit advocacy of Nazism. There have been some comments by him claiming the superior spirituality of the German language. I must ask here, is there any place for racial pride in academic studies? Can someone be proud simply by being different, and not by being better? I hope so.

At any rate, in this paper I hope to give a brief summary of what I see to be Heidegger’s main project. I will focus on how he has set up the concept of Dasein, and then show how this relates to his later comments on technology. Again, far from advocating some sort of technological fascist regime, we will see that Heidegger largely advocates non-conformist self-discovery, and warns against the possibility of technology overtaking poetry. With this in mind, I will be including some references to Holderlin’s *Hyperion*, as Holderlin was obviously Heidegger’s favorite poet.

Hyperion, like *Being and Time*, is divided into two parts. The first part documents (in the form of letters) the narrator Hyperion’s enthusiastic journey into adulthood as he learns

from his mentor Adamas and his friend Alabanda, and finally falls completely in love with Diotima. Through his journeys and letters, Hyperion advocates peace and non-conformism, and learns about life while manic-depressively considering many conflicting points of view:

“We pity the dead as if they felt death, yet the dead have peace. But the pain, the pain that no pain equals, is the incessant feeling of utter annihilation when our life loses its meaning, when our heart bids itself ‘Down! into the depths! there is nothing left of you; you have planted no flower, built no hut, so that you might say: I leave a trace behind me on earth.’ Yet, oh! the soul can always be so full of longing, even when it is so cast down!”

(*Hyperion*, 56)

“What is all that men have done and thought over thousands of years, compared with one moment of love? But in all Nature, too, it is what is nearest to perfection, what is most divinely beautiful! Thither all stairs lead from the threshold of life. Thence we come, thither we go”

(*Hyperion*, 68).

In the second, more dreary part of *Hyperion*, Hyperion is called off to war; he leads soldiers in hopes of liberating Greece, yet is disillusioned when his own men commit war crimes; and before he returns home, the story tragically closes with the death of his beloved Diotima. It is hard to reconcile Heidegger’s Nazism with his fondness for the the peace advocating Holderlin. With the romantic Holderlin we see a precursor to many of Heidegger’s interests, including ancient Greece, the meaning of life, and love. For, as Holderlin holds love above all, we shall find that Heidegger finds *care* lying at the heart of Dasein.

DASEIN

But, what exactly is this Dasein? To approach this question, we must first understand that Heidegger’s primary work, *Being and Time*, is dedicated to formulating the question of the meaning of being. Heidegger never provides a direct answer to this question, which might crudely be reformulated, “why are we here”, or “what does it all mean”, questions which now are widely known as “existential”. His project is rather one of determining how one might be able to even begin an attempt at answering it. He begins his analysis by studying the structure of the type of beings that would be able to pursue this question.

Now, when one thinks about one’s being in the world, there are several ways that one could talk of “things” existing. First, there are the objects and what-not that we find in the world— these things exist, and we can reach out for them. They are, using Heidegger’s terminology, “present-at-hand” in nature. But, contrasted with this, there is our own perspective; contrasted with all the “whats” in the world, there is the being of the “who.” Heidegger calls the being of being a “who” Dasein. Dasein (“da” “sein” meaning in German, “there” “being”, or “being there”) is our own personal being in the world, a being which is both wrapped up factually in the “everydayness” of the world, as well as being outside of the world enough, along side of it, to observe it. This aspect of being alongside the world, observing it, has often been called subjectivity. Dasein is not classical subjectivity, however, in that Dasein includes the phenomenal qualitative presence of one’s consciousness. The spatial being of one’s Dasein extends to all that one senses: as far as you can sense, you are. When one looks at a sunset over mountains, the sun, the mountains and all the trees and the birds chirping behind (the entire “environment”) are equally near in that they are present in the immediate presence of one’s Dasein. This extension of personal consciousness Heidegger calls “de-severing”— the space cut between

you and an object is closed, for there is no distance between you and the object in your conscious perception of the object: there is only one conscious perception, with no split between subject and object. This phenomenally aware Dasein, which is both in the world and alongside it, also has a “directedness” about it— one is usually aiming somewhere, or focusing on something. One is “concerned” about things in the world; an aspect of conscious-being which in contemporary cognitive science is often called “attention.”

This “concern” brings us to the things in the world, which Heidegger says are always first “ready-to-hand.” What this means is that in our concern with the world, we first come across things as “equipment”; e.g. (referencing the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*) one grabs a bone and kills an enemy, or one puts a stick into an insect nest and pulls it out for an insect pop-suckle. It is not until our use of these tools becomes unfamiliar, “conspicuous,” that we come to see them as things in the world which are present-at-hand in nature. What we see here is that our equipment is largely seen at first as extensions of ourselves. When such items fail to instantaneously yield to our concern, we begin to see them as separate from ourselves— as things involved with an external world; e.g., if one has a finger chopped off, it no longer seems to be an extension of one’s self, but is an object in the world. Indeed, Heidegger even sees the signs that we use for communication as being equipment; signs are things that we use to point to the world. Signs, like all things that are ready-to-hand, are given a purpose by Dasein, a “for-the-sake-of-which” which is involved with their relationships to all the other things in the world that Dasein concerns itself with. Indeed, later we shall see that this entire interconnection among things and signs which compose the world past, present, and future have always already been preconceived by Dasein in that its knowledge of the world is always brought forth from itself. It seems problematic however, to place the ready-to-hand prior to the present-at-hand, for often things are awkward when we first encounter them; an automobile becomes an extension of the self (the ego revving the unmuffled exhaust pipe) only after one learns to drive.

Besides things, there are also other living beings in the world— other people are not ready-to-hand or present-at-hand for Heidegger; they too have their own individual Daseins. Our own individual Dasein is born into a world full of other Daseins. However, this world we are born into is already full of ways of seeing things, attitudes, knowledges, and beliefs. Through being raised and educated, etc., we become culturally intertwined with the others around us. This society that has been here before us, and which we are shaped by, Heidegger calls the “they”. We, as Daseins, are “thrown” into both the phenomenal world and the society of the “they.” This “they” society is hopelessly superficial for Heidegger— its knowledge is for the most part “uprooted” from real truth in a “groundless floating”, and is passed on like gossip: an “idle talk” which sees everything as familiar and is “curious” only for the sake of fads. This “they” perspective is “tranquilizing” in its familiarity, but is “inauthentic” through and through— the entry of Dasein into this inauthenticity is called “fallenness” by Heidegger. Heidegger comments that all this should not be seen as bad— one has as yet no notion of there being something good outside of the “they” by which to condemn it. In contemporary terminology, we could say that the “they” is wrapped up in a differential/coherence type of knowledge where the knowledge of the community becomes largely self-referential, severed from primordial reality in a floating off propelled by its own smug self-satisfaction. One must imagine Tolstoy’s Ivan Illych and the superficial prestige mongering society he was a part of.

Returning to the individual Dasein, we can see that we approach the world with various “states-of-mind”— emotional attitudes— e.g. fear. Along with these states-of-mind we also have the ability to “understand” the world— but this understanding is always thrown from our own Dasein in a type of “projection”. As noted earlier, Dasein is that which bestows a

purpose on the things which are around it: a cave may become a home because I will it—the cave is known as a home by me, and not by the birds outside. This projection of the understanding operates through the “possible”: through the understanding items in the world have many possible uses and interconnections with other items which may be projected. When this understanding takes itself into consideration “interpretation” arises—with interpretation, one does not simply comprehend, one sees into relationships. With the understanding, one only knows that the cave is one’s home; with interpretation one knows that one is seeing the cave as a home. (This seeing “something as something” (*Being and Time*, 189) seems akin to Nietzsche’s discussion of metaphor.) Interpretation is the way in which our world becomes explicit to us— through Dasein things in the world are already interconnected, and our use of things already accounts for such implicitly:

“When something is understood it is still veiled, it becomes unveiled by an act of appropriation, and this is always done under the guidance of a point of view, which fixes that with regard to which what is understood is to be interpreted. In every case interpretation is grounded in something we see in advance— in a fore-sight.”
(*Being and Time*, 191)

The way in which we come to understand and interpret “entities” in the world is predetermined by a type of expectation, yet Heidegger is unclear as to what extent this expectation and fore-sight is shaped by: (1) the way the world is:

“Dasein, in so far as it is, has always submitted itself already to a ‘world’ which it encounters, and this submission belongs essentially to its Being.”
(*Being and Time*, 121)

Or (2) by the attitudes of the “they” whose community we are born into:

“Dasein-with is already essentially manifest in a co-state-of-mind and a co-understanding. In, discourse Being-with becomes ‘explicitly’ shared; that is to say, it is already, but it is unshared as something that has not been taken hold of and appropriated.”
(*Being and Time*, 205)

Or (3) by the “disclosing” of Dasein itself:

“only Dasein can be meaningful or meaningless”
(*Being and Time*, 193)

In any case, Heidegger notes that the problem of the hermeneutic circle arises here:

“if interpretation must in any case already operate in that which is understood, and if it must draw its nurture from this, how is it to bring any scientific results to maturity without moving in a circle, especially if, moreover, the understanding which is presupposed still operates within our common information about man and the world?”
(*Being and Time*, 194)

Heidegger does explain, however, that it is with “assertions” (communications that point out facts) that those things that used to be ready-to-hand become present-at-hand:

“Something ready-to-hand with which we have to do or perform something, turns into something ‘about which’ the assertion that points it out is made. Our fore-sight

is aimed at something present-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand. Both by and for this way of looking at it, the ready-to-hand becomes veiled as ready-to-hand.... this discovering of presence-at-hand, ...is at the same time a covering-up of readiness-to-hand"

(Being and Time, 200)

And as language and discourse are shared in the world as ready-to-hand, they too can become present-at-hand. However, Heidegger is careful to point out that:

"Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, ...dwells alongside what is ready-to-hand within-the-world; it certainly does not dwell proximally alongside 'sensations'; nor would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations."

(Being and Time, 207)

In other words, although we can think of speech and writing as sounds and marks, Dasein's being alongside them ready-to-hand understands them immediately without a moment of interpretation:

"Even in cases where the speech is indistinct or in a foreign language, what we proximally hear is unintelligible words, and not a multiplicity of tone-data."

(Being and Time, 207)

Heidegger's insight here seems to imply that as soon as we begin to analyze language and discourse, bringing them from usage as ready-to-hand to an appropriated present-to-hand, they lose their usability— what we know about language can never coincide with how we use it, for one way blocks the other.

It was noted earlier that it takes a "problemitization" that makes something ready-to-hand conspicuous for us to possibly know it as something present-at-hand. And, moreover, it should be recalled that the world of the inauthentic "they" was one of comfortable familiarity. If we keep both of these notions in mind, then we will see how both the possibility for an authentic Dasein and the disclosure of new understanding is possible. For Heidegger claims:

"Dasein's absorption in the 'they' and its absorption in the 'world' of its concern, make manifest something like a fleeing in the face of itself— of itself as the authentic potentiality-for-Being-its-Self."

(Being and Time, 229)

And:

"Being-in-the-world is a basic state of Dasein. That in the face of which one has anxiety is Being-in-the world as such."

(Being and Time, 230)

The state-of-mind of anxiety is intertwined with defamiliarization— anxiety is the turning away from the comfortable fallenness of the "they":

"Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about— its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-World. Anxiety individualizes Dasein for its ownmost being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially

upon possibilities.... Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its Being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-Being— that is, its Being-free.”
(*Being and Time*, 232)

The moment of anxiety is one where Dasein solipsistically (233) turns away from the “they” self and discovers the possibility of free individuality— and this is a turning back to something more primordial than fallenness. This turning would be towards an original authentic Dasein as being-a-whole (all being), but such is limited by death, the limit of our own existence. However, it is the anticipation of death itself which initiates the anxiety of turning away from the “they” self, the turning of Dasein towards itself in response to the call of care.

We find, however, that no sooner has Dasein turned toward its “ownmost potentiality-for-Being” (236), or free individuality, than that it finds it has always already been in the world; and Heidegger calls this phenomena of being ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-in-a-world “care.” Care is the being of Dasein:

“Care, as primordial structural totality, lies ‘before’ every factual ‘attitude’ of Dasein.... care in its totality is essentially something that can not be torn asunder.”
(*Being and Time*, 238)

Or, to appropriate Holderlin’s words:

“Does not silence dwell in the Land of the Blessed? Above the stars the heart forgets its needs and its language.

I have guarded it sacredly! I have carried it within me like a palladium— the divine that appeared to me! and if henceforth Fate lays hold of me and casts me from abyss to abyss and drowns all powers in me and all thoughts: yet shall this unique revelation outlive myself in me and shine in me and rule me, in eternal, indestructible brightness!—

So didst thou lie poured out, sweet life, so didst thou look up, and arise, and stand there before me in delicate completeness, divinely calm, and with thy heavenly face filled with the serene ecstasy in which I disturbed thee.”
(*Hyperion*, 63-64)

And:

“Man’s perfection— his transformation into that which he can be in Being-free for his ownmost possibilities (projection)— is accomplished’ by ‘care’”
(*Being and Time*, 243).

And also:

“the moments when we are set free, when the divine shatters the prison, when the flame bursts from the wood and wings up over the ashes, ah! when it is with us as if, its sorrows and its servitude forgotten, the unshackled spirit were returning in triumph to the halls of the Sun.”
(*Hyperion*, 65)

“To be one with all— this is the life divine, this is man’s heaven. To be one with all that lives, to return in blessed self-forgetfulness into the All of Nature— this is the

pinnacle of thoughts and joys, this sacred mountain peak, the place of eternal rest, where the noonday loses its oppressive heat and the thunder its voice and the boiling sea is as the heaving field of grain."
(*Hyperion*, 23)

"There is a forgetting of all existence, a hush of our being, in which we feel as if we had found all.

There is a hush, a forgetting of all existence, in which we feel as if we have lost all, a night of the soul, in which no glimmer of any star nor even the fox fire from a rotting log gives us light."
(*Hyperion*, 54)

"I can speak of her only fragmentarily— a word here, a word there. I have to forget what she is in her completeness if I am to speak of her at all."
(*Hyperion*, 72)

"In the altogether unsettling experience of this hovering where there is nothing to hold onto, pure Da-sein is all that is still there.

Anxiety robs us of speech. Because beings as a whole slip away so that the nothing crowds round, in the face of anxiety all utterance of the 'is' falls silent.... In the lucid vision sustained by fresh remembrance we must say that in the face of which and for which we were anxious was 'properly'— nothing."
(*"What is Metaphysics?"*, *Basic Writings*, 101)

"Only on the ground of original revelation of the nothing can human existence approach and penetrate beings.... Without the original revelation of the nothing, no selfhood and no freedom."
(*"What is Metaphysics?"*, *Basic Writings*, 103)

We have, as a society, by and large forgotten the presence of pure Dasein, and the revelation of all knowledge avails itself from the partial fragmentary recollection of oneness. Real truth, for Heidegger, is revealed— it is uncovered:

"Circumspective concern, ...uncovers entities within-the-world.... What is primarily 'true'— that is, uncovering— is Dasein.... In so far as Dasein is its disclosedness essentially, and discloses and uncovers as something disclosed... it is essentially 'true'. Dasein is 'in the truth'."
(*Being and Time*, 264)

"assertion is grounded in Dasein's uncovering, or rather in its disclosedness. The most primordial 'truth' is the 'locus' of assertion."
(*Being and Time*, 269)

Dasein is thus the revealing of its own truth, both disclosing and disclosed. Yet, it must be realized that what Heidegger is postulating here is nothing much more metaphysically complex than Plato's comments on our being fallen from a formally perfect realm of being, with our ability to gain knowledge of this realm through recollection. Heidegger has been, however, much more specific and detailed—in some ways more than Kant was concerning the difference between the "productive" and "reproductive" imagination.

And thus concludes my rather rough summary account of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein. Such an explication should be enough though to situate it within Heidegger's comments in "The Question Concerning Technology."

POETRY & TECHNOLOGY

In "The Question Concerning Technology", Heidegger investigates the essence of technology. He begins by noting that we often see technology as being instrumental— that is, technology concerns the equipment, tools, and machinery that we use. Technology is seen as something that we have control over; again, we as humans use technology— it is a means to an end. And, explains Heidegger:

"Wherever ends are pursued and means are employed, wherever instrumentality reigns, there reigns causality."
 ("The Question Concerning Technology," *Basic Writings*, 313)

Technology is employed in bringing something about— it is involved in the causality which brings forth that which was not previously there. Heidegger calls this bringing forth "revealing", and it is at this point that we may begin to discern a relationship between Dasein (the locus of revelation) and technology.

Also, when we look to the origin of the word technology, we find that it stems from the Greek word "techne," which:

"is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also from the arts of the mind and the fine arts. Techne belongs to bringing forth, to poiesis; it is something poetic."
 ("The Question Concerning Technology," *Basic Writings*, 318)

Heidegger notes that the word "techne" has also been linked with the word "episteme"; both designate knowing, which is always involved with revealing. This revealing is contrasted with that of pure "poiesis" though, in that it does not bring some presence forward, but challenges nature to supply energy; concealed energy is to be unlocked, transformed, stored, distributed, switched about, and regulated ("The Question Concerning Technology," *Basic Writings*, 322). Technology calls forth an ordering of nature, it calls humans to reveal nature as "standing-reserve."

Thus, we should see that technology, as a type of revealing, cannot simply be understood as instrumental. The tool connects up with nature and humans only to the extent that nature and humans are already within this realm of the technological: nature and humans already have machine like aspects— the extent to which we recognize this is due to the type of organizing which technology calls forth. Heidegger also calls this "enframing":

"We now name the challenging claim that gathers man with a view to ordering the self-revealing as standing-reserve: enframing."
 ("The Question Concerning Technology," *Basic Writings*, 324)

Enframing is that which, beyond the technological, or the mechanical:

"is the way in which the actual [nature] reveals itself as standing-reserve."
 ("The Question Concerning Technology," *Basic Writings*, 329)

This type of revelation can be seen, however, with any type of knowing that appropriates along the line of mechanics— and indeed, physics, e.g. with quantum mechanics, prevails through chemistry, biology, and cognitive science, the sciences that demand:

“that nature report itself in some way or other that is identifiable through calculation and that it remain orderable as a system of information.”
 (“The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings*, 328)

Hence we can see the important place of cybernetics, the study of information flows, with regard to enframing.

Technological enframing is precisely that which has no centered presence. In its gathering towards orderly information flows, it circumscribes being as with an invisible mathematical line. The repetition of structure everywhere holds consistently. However:

“what is present is present in a representation that has the character of calculation. Such representation knows nothing immediately perceptual. What can be immediately seen when we look at things, the image they offer to immediate sensible intuition, falls away. The calculating production of technology is an ‘act without an image’.”
 (“What Are Poets For?” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 126-127)

The conscious immediacy of being concerned with a thing escapes technology for technology is representational mediation. As we noted earlier, technological enframing is involved in being a means to an end. In this way we can see the difference between techne and poiesis as ways of revealing: poiesis is that which brings forth to presence, while techne simply provides a way of ordering such as informational standing-reserve.

It is with this contrast in mind that Heidegger warns of the danger of enframing:

“the challenging-enframing not only conceals a former way of revealing (bringing-forth) but also conceals revealing itself and with it that wherein unconcealment, i.e., truth, propriates.”
 (“The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings*, 333)

And:

“enframing... blocks poiesis”
 (“The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings*, 335)

These comments can best be understood with reference to the earlier discussion of Dasein. Dasein, in its concerned presence which reveals itself is beyond the scope of technological enframing. Yet, humanity is in danger of interpreting itself wholly in terms of technological enframing— humanity is in danger of drastically misinterpreting itself by not investigating that which lies beyond the technological, the:

“overflow beyond number.”
 (“What Are Poets For?” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 128)

How could one go about investigating beyond calculation? In his discussion of a Rilke poem in "What Are Poets For?" Heidegger writes of those who would venture themselves beyond the venture of being. The poem in question reads:

As Nature gives the other creatures over
to the venture of their dim light
and in soil and branchwork grants none special cover,
so too our being's pristine ground settles our plight;
we are no dearer to it; it ventures us.
Except that we, more eager than plant or beast,
go with this venture, will it, adventurous
more sometimes than Life itself is, more daring
by a breath (and not in the least
from selfishness) ... There, outside all caring,
this creates for us a safety— just there,
where the pure forces' gravity rules, in the end,
it is our unshieldness on which we depend,
and that, when we saw it threaten, we turned it
so into the Open that, in widest orbit somewhere,
where the Law touches us, we may affirm it.
(*"What Are Poets For?" Poetry, Language, Thought, 99*)

A few venture beyond the shieldness of being. The structure of being shields us from the chaos of the nothing; being clears a dwelling space in the nothing. Some venture forth beyond shieldness, as with the prodigal son, and in such crises convert the unshielded into the cleared opening of being— in effect extending the "boundary," or Law. Such extends out from the gravitational center of pure being, towards the "widest orbit," or outer-limit, which boundary itself proves to be the center of division:

"This being, ...is the being who governs the unheard-of center of the widest orbit and causes it to appear. This being... is the Angel"
(*"What Are Poets For?" Poetry, Language, Thought, 134*)

With Heidegger's Rilke, the angel ventures farther than the plants, animals, and humans:

"...the man who is outside all protection can procure a safety by turning unshieldness as such into the Open and transmuting it into the heart's space of the invisible. If that happens, then what is unstilled in unshieldness passes over to where, in the balanced oneness of the world's inner space, there appears the being who brings out the radiant appearance of the way in which that oneness unifies, and who in this way represents Being. The balance of danger then passes out of the realm of calculating will over to the Angel."
(*"What Are Poets For?" Poetry, Language, Thought, 136*).

Going beyond the shieldness of being's venture is the one who turns inward to their heart; as with the discussion concerning Dasein, the one who would reveal their self turns

away from inauthenticity. However, at its limit, the unconcealing of Dasein conceals itself in denial:

"Insight into that which is— thus do we name the sudden flash of the truth of Being into truthless Being" ("The Turning," *The Question Concerning Technology*, 47)

"I am close upon them,' I said, 'The great saying... the one differentiated in itself... of Heraclitus.... Now classification became possible, for the whole was there. The flower had ripened; now it could be dissected'."
(*Hyperion*, 93)

"more venturesome are the poets, but poets whose song turns our unprotected being into the Open.... The converting inner recalling is the daring that dares to venture forth from the nature of man, because man has language."
(*"What Are Poets For?" Poetry, Language, Thought*, 140)

No doubt, it is the poets risking non-orderly confusion who might venture forth beyond technological enframing.

Yet, Heidegger notes that with its danger, technological enframing may have a saving grace:

"It is precisely in enframing, which threatens to sweep man away into ordering as the ostensibly sole way of revealing, and so thrusts man into the danger of surrender of his free essence— it is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost indestructible belongingness of man within granting may come to light, provided that we, for our part, begin to pay heed to the essence of technology."
(*"The Question Concerning Technology," Basic Writings*, 337)

Also, more than aiding in the discovery of the "innermost indestructible belongingness", technology, through its consistency offers that which endures in standing reserve. Noting this potential of technological enframing for both danger and saving, Heidegger claims that humans thus have the task of watching over technology. And it is here, with Heidegger's calling us towards the task of the shepherd that we find the heart of his philosophical ethical stance.

Moving towards a closure of this discussion, it must be noted that I have not ventured to examine many important aspects of Heidegger's thought, especially his discussion of time. Here, I have hoped to give a rough sketch of Dasein with special reference to its technological and poetical modes of revelation. Of course, a full disclosure of being continually withdraws itself from possibility, being that it is that which, through Dasein, throws us into the possible as such. No doubt, much of Heidegger's thought is speculative, and may require further "philosophical-poetical verification." Hopefully, I have not seemed to bring too much of Heidegger into a standing-reserve. Despite his often perplexing philosophical insights (has he not already loaded Dasein's answer to the question concerning the meaning of being with care?) Heidegger remains among those who, with the aid of poetry, would help shield thinking, and guide it beyond the end of philosophy.

Thinking's saying would be stilled in
its being only by becoming unable
to say that which must remain
unspoken.
(*"The Thinker as Poet," Poetry, Language, Thought*, 11)