

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

ART AND TECHNOLOGY

NATHANAEL J. DOHERTY
Spring 2012

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Mathematics
with honors in Philosophy

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Dennis J. Schmidt
Professor of Philosophy
Thesis Supervisor

Vincent Colapietro
Professor of Philosophy
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

Abstract

The question that lies at the heart of this thesis concerns what the essence of technology and that of art consists of, where they are similar (and how), and where their paths diverge. To ground this discussion I have taken up Heidegger's perusal of these matters in his essay "The Question Concerning Technology" where it is mainly the essence of technology that is considered. However, in that same essay he also presents a view of the essence of art as both a way of gathering insight concerning the essence of technology and also as presenting a challenge to that essence which to Heidegger seems fundamentally coercive and constrictive. From Heidegger's remarks on art I move on to consider those of Gadamer who while not having precisely the same agenda as Heidegger serves, like Heidegger, to present the realm of art as a realm of self-coherent truth and as such resistant to the overbearing encroachments of technology. Next I proceed to a reading of Simone Weil's essay entitled "The Iliad, or the Poem of Force" considering what a juxtaposition of force and the essence of technology share. This look at Weil's essay also provides an avenue to look at the *Iliad* itself as a work of art and to consider how it bears out the claims of both Heidegger and Gadamer.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Introduction: The Realm of Technology and that of Art	1
Chapter 1 Heidegger on Technology	7
<i>Techne</i>	7
<i>The Essence of Technology</i>	9
<i>Reappraisal of Technology: The Counter-movement of Art</i>	16
Chapter 2 Gadamer and the Work of Art	23
Chapter 3 Weil on Force and the Iliad	31
<i>Force and Destruction</i>	31
<i>War and the Representation of War</i>	35
<i>The Iliad: An Artful Question Concerning Force</i>	38
Conclusion	52
List of Abbreviations	54
Bibliography	55
Academic Vita	

Introduction: The Realm of Technology and That of Art

Technology in all its myriad forms, from nano-engineered medical devices to megaton military aircraft carriers, is so prevalent and all-pervasive in this epoch that in many ways it has ceased to be seen. That is, unless it malfunctions. In this way it rather resembles the negative-feedback loops of the human body: while everything is properly balanced and functioning smoothly one is unaware of all the many processes synergistically and simultaneously carried out. But one becomes acutely aware when something is not functioning properly. Most of the technology encountered on a daily basis is so familiar and has been so completely absorbed into the daily rituals and perfunctory procedures of existence that it evades notice until it stops functioning as it was designed.

This helps to foster the notion that technology is something which lies under human control; after all it is we humans from whom originate the judgments of whether technology is correctly functioning, whether it is fulfilling the end for which it was created. However, increasingly, judgments on the correct functioning of technology are handled by other technologies which themselves then make an assessment and alert our attention. Humans are therefore still involved in this loop but at an increasing distance. One could easily imagine technology eventually reaching the place where it functions in a realm entirely outside of our cognizance. The Holy Grail of technology is no longer the perpetual motion machine as such but the intelligent self-perpetuating machine, the machine that can duplicate itself without the intervention of humans.

Literary critic and media theorist Katherine Hayles, in her book *Electronic Literature*, comments on this very fact:

Increasingly human attention occupies only the tiny top of a huge pyramid of machine-to-machine communication, including cell phones, networked computers, ATMs, and RFID (radio frequency identification) tags that give every indication of spreading faster than mold in New Orleans. Often these digital machines, ranging from the obvious to the nano scaled, are coupled with sensors and actuators that carry out commands, from something as mundane as raising a garage door to the world-shaking launch of a nuclear missile. (Electronic Literature, 182)

Physicist and futurist Michio Kaku, co-founder of string field theory, in his book *Physics of the Future*, concurs with Hayles assessment and assures us that in the none too distant future “we will have tiny sensors in our clothes, body, and bathroom, constantly monitoring our health and detecting diseases like cancer years before they become a danger” (Physics of the Future, 186). This notion of the inevitability of the proliferation of technology will lead some media theorists, such as Friedrich Kittler and novelists such as Don DeLillo and Thomas Pynchon to question just how much technologies exist for our purposes and how much we for theirs.

The purpose of this essay is to not explore any particular technology but what, as Heidegger will say, is the essence of technology and how art might provide a sort of counter-movement to the monadic presuppositions about the universe that form

technology's core (a claim that will have to be considered). Despite technology having existed among humanity as far back as history and artifacts extend in at least some form however primitive, the philosophy of technology is a relatively new development and as such it has been argued in more recent years by philosophers such as Don Ihde that treatments of technology as a whole have proven inadequate to dealing with technology in all its protean forms. Ihde has further argued in his book *Technics and Praxis* that in order to effectively question technology one must engage with it in particularities. While there is much to be said for this legitimate position, it seems that questions concerning the overall essence of technology are equally important despite their inevitable tendencies toward totalizing claims. For proportional to the growing ubiquity of technology, concerns over its ultimate ends have also grown. And this requires a thinking of technology as a whole.

Tied to the forward march of technology seems to be the belief that progress can be engineered because it *is*. That is, with the mounting sophistication and proliferation of ever cheaper technologies, more and more amenities and capabilities have indeed come our way whose sum total is somehow assumed to have inevitably increased our happiness index. But does it? Does increased productivity and enjoyment of novel labor saving devices contribute to a happier existence? This is an age old debate that can be traced back to Plato's *Republic* (book III) where he has Socrates decrying the new science of medicine that allows individuals to die hard i.e. it provides artificial means to prolong an unhealthy and unnatural lifestyle. Instead of changing one's habits and cultivating health, one is provided the dubious ability to simply live a diseased life longer.

While one cannot gain true or absolute objectivity upon the milieu within which one subsists, the effort to understand that world, to recognize the latent assumptions and prejudices inherent in it, seems increasingly necessary as the milieu takes on more and more unstated assumptions about the world and existence simply as it progresses. There seems to be a force inherent in technology which takes on its own imperatives as it increases; where the very possibility of something being done mandates its being effectuated, regardless of the consequences. The motto seems to be: what can be done must be done. And since it is a fact of life that the larger something becomes, the more power it allocates to itself, modern technologies have accrued vast powers whose ultimate ends are often unknown.

This essay is not written on the premise that technology is anything inherently: good, bad, or ugly except perhaps that it is totalizing in its claims and does not admit of any way of being outside itself. Like any good virus, it refuses to leave any organism untouched, any space uncolonized. And it is precisely because technology is so very integral to our natures as humans to create and produce, and because it is so inextricably bound to us and us to it, that it seems imperative to our future, as well as our present, to question just what the essence of technology is. And this leads to the question of its relation to art.

Traditionally the arts have been the place where from within culture to critique culture. Yet it seems absurd even to suggest that the juggernaut of modern technology would ever even notice the criticism of a field as marginalized as art. But if the claims of Heidegger, Gadamer and others included in this essay are true, then technology, despite its salient contrasts with art actually shares some very striking similarities with it as well

so that thinking them together might provide a way to gain some insight into our current civilizational situation.

At the end of his 1954 essay “A Question Concerning Technology,” (henceforth denoted QT) Heidegger makes these final remarks:

Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. (QT, 35)

He will go on to say: “Such a realm is art. But certainly only if reflection on art, for its part, does not shut its eyes to the constellation of truth after which we are *questioning*” (QT, 35).

From these passages come the impetus for my thesis: is art this realm from which to reflect upon and confront the essence of modern technology? And if so, how? What is it about the work of art that makes it stand at once close to the essence of technology and also to stand against it, to differ markedly from it? Of what does the essence of technology consist? What is the difference between technology as it confronts us in our everyday existence and its essence? Is there a difference?

In the pages that follow I examine how Heidegger arrives at this singular claim concerning the essence of technology and its relation to art and endeavor to put his assertion to the test. I will further continue the “reflection on art” with Gadamer who like Heidegger views the work of art as occupying a unique place among the productions of

which humans are capable. To this end, to test Heidegger and Gadamer's claims about the work of art I will consider the *Iliad* to see if and how engaging with it bears out or challenges their views that the work of art by its very nature presents a powerful challenge and proves a sort of counter-movement to technology; opening horizons where technology closes them, multiplying meanings where technology limits them.

To begin upon this quest concerning what the work of art is and how it presents itself as a challenge to the essence of modern technology, it is imperative to gain an understanding of precisely what that essence of modern technology consists of. To do this I begin with a consideration of Heidegger's essay on technology.

Chapter 1 Heidegger on Technology

Techne

Before I begin to delve into Heidegger's argument concerning what the essence of modern technology consists of, it is worth while, following Heidegger's own lead, to consider the primal unity that art and technology shared in the Greek world in contrast with our own. In this current age where modern technology is seen as inhabiting a sphere altogether separate from that of art, it is important to recognize that though the hostile and hermetic dichotomy that exists between them is in many ways a reality of our world, it was not so always; technology and art were once inextricably interwoven under the single modest heading of *techne*. This fact will be important in order to understand how modern technology differs from that of previous ages and how this difference points to the essence of technology.

Techne is the Greek word from which the word technology is derived and as Heidegger says: *techne* "is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Techne* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiesis*; it is something poetic" (QT, 13). The reason for this is that "it reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another" (QT, 13). Thus, *physis* (nature) being the only realm wherein something is brought forward of its own volition as it were, "arising of something from out of itself" (QT, 10) and does so consistently, *techne* is the mediated

bringing-forth by someone who possesses knowledge or know-how and can make a work “now one way and now another.”

And hence in this way *techne* is more than skill in crafting or mere cerebral conception or even excellence in creativity. Both the able craftsman and the creative artist shared in *techne*. They both participated in this revealing that brought something forth. Because, as Heidegger states: “It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *techne* is a bringing-forth” (QT, 13). And so, looking into the essence of technology and art, it will be fruitful to bear in mind that they once coexisted beneath the aegis of a single title. For all their vast current differences they continue to be ways of bringing-forth something that is unable to bring itself into existence but which is really there. The great difference will lie in how they bring forth and to what end.

As Heidegger states: “Once the revealing that brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearance was also called *techne*. There was a time when the bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful was called *techne*. And the *poiesis* of the fine arts was also called *techne*” (QT, 34). Hence *techne* ought to be thought as the primal unity from which art and technology descend into the separate entities that now present themselves with the endeavor to see how these two ways of “bringing-forth” (which will be further elaborated below) might, if possible, be brought back into a fruitful dialogue; or barring that, how art might prove a challenge to the leveling demands of technology.

This raises the question of what the demands of modern technology consist of. Does it make demands? And what does Heidegger mean by “revealing?”

The Essence of Technology

Most often when technology is considered today it is thought of in terms of the fact that humans engineer it for their own purposes. This prompts Heidegger to say:

Modern technology too is a means to an end. This is why the instrumental conception of technology conditions every attempt to bring man into the right relation to technology. Everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means. We will, as we say, 'get' technology 'spiritually in hand.' We will master it. The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control. (QT, 5)

Heidegger goes on to argue that the reason technology "threatens to slip from human control" is because it is no mere matter of creating instruments to be controlled by humanity but is instead a matter of unconcealment, of truth. This seems a strange claim to make and hence requires elaboration. In this will also be seen what Heidegger means by revealing.

On the surface modern technology is indeed a matter of instrumentality but as Heidegger will argue, its essence is hidden, and hidden in plain sight as it were, so that technology is actually a way of relating to and judging existence; a stance towards the world which treats all matter as simply so much resting potential, resources to be exploited, "standing-reserve." This "standing reserve" is such that "everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so

that it may be on call for a further ordering” and “no longer stands over against us as object” (QT, 17). So that:

When man, investigating, observing, ensnares nature as an area of his own conceiving, he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve. (QT, 19)

This objectless, denuded world is at least a familiar experience to modern humanity which has grown accustomed to having a use-value attached to everything and everyone. Objects, individuals are not seen for what they in themselves are but for what can be extracted from them, to what use they can be put. “Standing-reserve” is a concept so pervasive as to have become invisible. It has become second nature to treat all matter as something potentially useful, to assume that matter exists to be exploited regardless of whatever arbitrary form it might inhabit: rock, plant, animal, etc. This becomes most apparent when considering the realm of nature. And while Heidegger is primarily concerned with the coercive constriction of revealing that modern technology presents, it is impossible to fail to see the destruction wreaked on nature due to the conception that nature is simply a realm of so much “standing-reserve.”

Thus coming to “nature” with predetermined notions of what it is (and for whom it is), one is co-opted, as it were, by one’s own preconceptions into a specific and limited view of nature which in the end precludes any other possibility than simply treating

nature as a realm to be exploited. A realm wherein individual objects have lost all singular value and been converted into so much energy or means or “standing-reserve.”

This is how the essence of technology is a matter of truth, of revealing. Its manifestations reveal what exists in nature. They reveal, bring forth something that lies hidden into unconcealment. But what they bring forth is an image of the world as existing to be exploited. The danger that Heidegger sees in this conception of nature that challenges humanity to exploit and extract from it its energies is that “if man is challenged, ordered, to do this, then does not man himself belong even more originally than nature within the standing-reserve? The current talk about human resources, about the supply of patients for a clinic, gives evidence of this” (QT, 18). This co-option of the very one who co-opts Heidegger terms “Enframing.” By this term he means “the gathering together of the setting-upon that sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve” (QT, 20). And this “Enframing,” that constrains humanity to see and order all that exists within such narrow terms as “standing-reserve,” Heidegger claims is the essence of modern technology. Yet, since it is humanity who further develop technology and are “challenged more originally than are the energies of nature, i.e., into the process of ordering” (QT, 18), Heidegger argues that humanity is never quite reduced to the level of “standing-reserve.” But being challenged by modern technology and its ineluctable “Enframing” propensity, humanity, the more it is coerced, the greater becomes its need to question that which coerces it. Yet, paradoxically, the greater becomes this need, the less is it perceived because on the surface technology is so palpably a matter of instruments and machines that are engineered by humans for humans, regardless of whether that be for good or ill. And so

what is required is a consideration not so much of technologies themselves, but of their essences which lie in “Enframing.”

And so, since Heidegger thinks that “questioning builds a way” (QT, 3), he will go on to say that simply conceiving of the essence of technology as “Enframing” is not enough nor does it answer the question concerning technology “if to answer means to respond, in the sense of correspond” (QT, 23). In order to do this one must inquire into the nature of “Enframing” itself which “is nothing technological, nothing on the order of a machine. It is the way in which the real reveals itself as standing-reserve” (QT, 23), that is, as a limiting and constrictive unfolding of truth.

And again, the danger Heidegger sees in so coercive and limited a presencing of truth by the demands, the challenging essence of modern technology is that it leads, “destines” humanity unwittingly upon a course whose end is unknown. And yet in this precarious position of one who is oneself in danger of becoming if not exactly “standing-reserve” than an unwitting or unwilling agent of its implementation, “man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself and postures as lord of the earth” (QT, 22). This is obviously to mistake the essence of technology and its “destining.” Where by “destining” Heidegger means “that sending-that-gathers, which first starts man upon a way of revealing...” (QT, 24). Yet it is not “destining” itself that Heidegger sees as the problem because, as he will go on to say: “man becomes truly free only insofar as he belongs to the realm of destining and so becomes one who listens and hears, and not one who is simply constrained to obey” (QT, 25). Thus one must belong, and invariably does, whether one realizes it or not, to a way of “revealing,” a process that uncovers truth. Yet in this being “destined,” being propelled along a certain path, one must continually

question because there is a way in which questioning continually refines one's preconceptions and allows one to approach closer to the truth. This is why Heidegger will end his essay by calling questioning "the piety of thought" (QT, 35).

Heidegger continues with the relation of "destining" to "Enframing":

But when we consider the essence of technology we experience Enframing as a destining of revealing. In this way we are already sojourning within the free space of destining, a destining that in no way confines us to a stultified compulsion to push on blindly with technology or, what comes to the same, to rebel helplessly against it and curse it as the work of the devil. Quite to the contrary, when we once open ourselves expressly to the essence of technology we find ourselves unexpectedly taken into a freeing claim. (QT, 26)

It is then through coming to terms with the essence of technology, not as a matter of instruments or a mere means to some end but as the experience of "Enframing as a destining of revealing," as a certain constricted manifestation of truth, that the appropriateness of its aims can be challenged and its values questioned. The essence of technology is then a matter of truth, of the limiting of truth. And this is why before anything can be effectively done concerning technology it is imperative to have a correct understanding of its essence.

This is hence why Heidegger argues that:

Enframing blocks the shining-forth and holding sway of truth. The destining that sends into ordering is consequently the extreme danger. What is dangerous is not technology. Technology is not demonic; but its essence is mysterious. The essence of technology, as a destining of revealing, is the danger. (QT, 28)

It is in this way that technology is dangerous; not primarily in its admittedly vast capacity for destruction, both insidious and overt, but in its essence of “Enframing” which narrows the unfolding of truth and obscures it so that it becomes only that which orders all existence including humanity itself to be a part of “standing-reserve.”

And it is precisely in this way that the essence of modern technology differs from the technology of previous ages because:

The revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology does not unfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of *poiesis*. The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging, which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such. (QT, 14)

Hence modern technology, while still a matter of revealing, of truth, brings forth a strangled, half-formed truth and does not engage with nature so much as seek to domineer over it. And in the process of subduing and controlling nature, subjugates humanity to being mere cogs in a vast coercive machine, one which they mistakenly think exists for their own ends and one they equally mistakenly think they order.

As Heidegger goes on to say:

The essential unfolding of technology threatens revealing, threatens it with the possibility that all revealing will be consumed in ordering and that everything will present itself only in the unconcealment of standing-reserve. Human activity can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone can never banish it. But human reflection can ponder the fact that all saving power must be of a higher essence than what is endangered, though at the same time kindred to it. (QT, 34)

Thus although Heidegger does not offer a method of dealing with modern technology itself in its multitudinous and evolving manifestations as it is actually encountered in the world, he argues that the solution should be sought by correctly understanding its essence and questioning its final aims. It is no simple problem and hence leads Heidegger to state that “the essence of technology is in a lofty sense ambiguous. Such ambiguity points to the mystery of all revealing, i.e., of truth” (QT, 33). And woe betide the individual who thinks to control the revealing that orders all to become standing-reserve: “Man can indeed conceive, fashion, and carry through this or that in one way or another. But man does not have control over unconcealment itself, in which at any given time the real shows itself or withdraws” (QT, 18). It is when one thinks one controls that one is indeed controlled, ordered by the very ordering one thinks one orders.

So the essence of technology is not itself anything technological but a way of ordering all existence according to a limiting and coercive regimen that reduces everything to the level of “standing-reserve.” This reduction limits and distorts humanity’s highest dignity which Heidegger thinks exists “in keeping watch over the

unconcealment—and with it, from the first, the concealment—of all coming to presence on this earth” (QT, 32). This “coming to presence” is the revealing of truth which modern technology severely limits but which art embraces and enhances.

Reappraisal of Technology: The Counter-movement of Art

This leads to the question of the relation between art and technology in which it is helpful to consider another text by Heidegger. In doing so I will also begin to look at the nature of art itself and why Heidegger argues that it is a revealing that allows truth to “shine forth” in a way that contrasts sharply with the revealing of technology that challenges everything to be “standing-reserve.”

In his lectures on Nietzsche entitled “The Will to Power as Art” (henceforth denoted WA), Heidegger lays out a reading of Nietzsche as the philosopher who inverts Plato’s claim in the *Republic* that art is thrice-removed from truth. Nietzsche, according to Heidegger, presents art as the distinguishing characteristic in the presentation of Being. By this he means “art, as transfiguration, is more enhancing to life than truth, as fixation of an apparition” (WA, 216). He goes on to say that the discordance Nietzsche sees as existing between art and truth (according to Plato’s conception) is due to their belonging together:

The unity of their belonging-together is granted by the *one* reality, perspectival shining. To it belong both apparition and scintillating appearance as transfiguration. In order for the real (the living creature) to *be* real, it must on the one hand ensconce itself within a particular horizon, thus perduring in the illusion

of truth. But in order for the real to *remain* real, it must on the other hand simultaneously transfigure itself by going beyond itself, surpassing itself in the scintillation of what is created in art—and that means it has to advance against the truth. While truth and art are proper to the essence of reality with equal originality, they must diverge from one another and go counter to one another. (WA, 217)

It lies outside the scope of this essay to give a detailed recounting of how Heidegger arrives at this interpretation of Nietzsche but even a quick survey of his results proves fruitful to the present aim of this essay which is to show what the essence of art and technology consist of, their relation and where they diverge.

Beginning with the idea of the perspectival, which is a concept of Nietzsche's, Heidegger states that "what lives is exposed to other forces, but in such a way that, striving against them, it deals with them...in relation to possible incorporation or elimination" (WA, 212). Thus every living creature is faced with its own perspective of things and how they stand in relation to itself where "the angle of vision, and the realm it opens to view, themselves draw the borderlines around what it is that creatures can or cannot encounter" (WA, 212). The "perspectival preview" is thus simply the way in which "something can come forward into appearance" (WA, 212) for the living creature. Labeling any particular appearance as "true" stamps that appearance with a rigidity that renders it effectual for a time: "being, the true, which logic 'firmly locates' (petrifies), is but semblance; a semblance, an apparentness, that is essentially necessary to the creature...his establishment of self amidst ceaseless change" (WA, 214). And all living

creatures must and do actually perform this activity of nailing down, as it were, and setting off perspectives as “true.”

But this very possibility of appearance itself points to something which comes forward and shows itself. And this is what Heidegger argues is the perspectival: “that is what genuinely radiates, bringing something to show itself” (WA, 215). This is what Heidegger means when he says that perspectival shining *is* the one reality of which both art and truth are competing manifestations where art is “scintillating appearance as transformation” and truth “apparition.” Further, this is why to *be* real is to belong to a limited horizon but to *remain* real is to be constantly revaluing its calcified “truths,” transforming them by going beyond oneself, one’s initial perspectives. This gets at the ultimate meaning of life, for Nietzsche, which is not simply a matter of survival but of exuberance and thriving and is why for him art has more worth than “truth” because the essence of art is this powerful will to life; as Heidegger says: “will is resolute openness toward itself, as mastery out beyond itself, because will is a willing beyond itself, it is the strength that is able to bring itself to power” (WA, 42). And so inasmuch as art wills, it remains open to the real, to Being and continually renews itself as it constantly reaches for what is outside itself, beyond itself. Hence art is will to power for Nietzsche.

The introduction of Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s perspective on art is not intended to be taken as implying that in this essay I consider art as will to power. What I aim to show is the continuity between certain characteristics of art here in Heidegger’s Nietzsche lectures and the language Heidegger uses for art in his essay on technology.

To this end can be seen the discordant dialogue that exists between art and “truth” in Heidegger’s lectures on Nietzsche. And this in turn relates to Heidegger’s claim in his essay on technology, that art is the realm from which “essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it” (QT, 35) can take place.

To begin with, we must not confuse Nietzsche’s view of Platonic “truth” with Heidegger’s. For Heidegger, truth (*aletheia* in Greek) is the revealing, the bringing forth of something out of concealment into unconcealment. And in this way one sees the parallel between the perspectival shining of his Nietzsche lectures and revealing in his essay on technology. They are clearly one and the same reality: “The poetical brings the true into the splendor of...that which shines forth most purely. The poetical thoroughly pervades every art, every revealing of essential unfolding into the beautiful” (QT, 34).

Thus Heidegger sees art as the “more primally granted revealing that could bring the saving power into its first shining forth in the midst of danger, a revealing that in the technological age rather conceals than shows itself” (QT, 34). For all art is a concealment that shows itself and yet also an unconcealment that masks itself, that hides in plain sight, requiring one to orient oneself properly towards it in order to divine its presence and decipher its meaning. Hence, art is the “more primally granted revealing,” the revealing that not only shows forth truth (*aletheia*) but transfigures and transforms reality. It does this in such a way that, as Gadamer says, “the being of the representation is more than the being of the thing represented” so that Homer’s Achilles, i.e. the representation of Achilles in art, is “more than the original” (Truth and Method. Henceforth denoted TM, 114). And this representation is indeed a “bringing forth.” Contrary then to the “Enframing” of technology which limits all “bringing forth” to the truncated state of

being “standing-reserve,” art does not co-opt or coerce those exposed to it but instead opens up further horizons for them wherein meanings are multiplied. Art opens where technology closes. This is their fundamental difference. Both are ways of revealing reality but art brings forth in a way that provides for new ways of the presencing of truth whereas modern technology is a challenging that brings forth in accordance only with the need to reduce everything to being “standing-reserve.”

Another way of getting at this distinction is to consider the further parallels that exist between Nietzsche’s “truth” and Heidegger’s notion of the essence of technology. Both are legitimate though limiting ways of the presencing of reality for in both, limited horizons are presented solipsistically as being the final and absolute way things are. Hence, their totalizing claims lead inevitably to coercive actions and to the limiting of life’s horizons, which is ultimately a limiting of the presentation of Being, truth. Both technology and “truth” need to be countered by the work of art which by its very nature transcends itself because it is scintillating appearance ever reaching for more reality, more truth.

Heidegger continues this argument in his essay on technology:

At the outset of the destining of the West, in Greece, the arts soared to the supreme height of the revealing granted them. They illuminated the presence of the gods and the dialogue of divine and human destinings. And art was called simply *techne*. It was a single, manifold revealing. It was pious, *promos*, i.e., yielding to- the holding sway and the safekeeping of truth. (QT, 34)

And this is why, in pointing out the original unity between art and technology that is apparent in the single encompassing Greek word *techne*, Heidegger concludes his essay by saying, as was quoted above: “essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it” (QT, 35). Art and technology were once part of a single way of revealing but in modern times technology has allocated to itself prerogatives and usurped authority that does not truly belong to it. Modern technology is of the conceit that all things exist merely to be used not to be understood or appreciated for what in themselves they are such that the understanding of reality that modern technology does clearly exhibit is merely the understanding of how to manipulate and utilize those properties inherent within the object. This is a legitimate and true knowledge but is a knowledge that has meaning only in terms of use-value.

This does not of course preclude the fact that there exist many who employ the rigorous and legitimate discipline of science to understand the nature and structure of the universe simply in its own right not for the sake of exploitation. But as Gadamer points out, this response to nature comes not from the employment of any scientific method so much as a hermeneutic approach which remains open to the essence of what phenomenon or object confronts one. As will be seen, Gadamer seeks to present the discipline of science as a specific manifestation and limitation of the hermeneutic process and not something outside of it. And of course though there are some who do not study nature with the will to domineer, the knowledge they amass is still of the sort which categorizes and explicates nature in a way that others after them can and will be coerced by the

essence of technology, knowingly or unwittingly, and employ their knowledge to reduce nature to the level of “standing-reserve.”

But to return to the meaningful confrontation between modern technology and art, as Heidegger continues, this dialogue is possible “only if reflection on art, for its part, does not shut its eyes to the constellation of truth after which we are questioning” (QT, 35). Thus, even as a questioning of technology meant a responding to and correspondence with it, so too with art. There must be dialogue, a true engagement with the work of art. As will be seen in the furtherance of this discussion with Gadamer, who takes up the question of art where Heidegger leaves it, as a matter of truth, of unconcealment and not simply a subject for aesthetic analysis. As Heidegger says: “the arts were not derived from the artistic. Artworks were not enjoyed aesthetically. Art was not a sector of cultural activity” (QT, 34). And to this end Gadamer endeavors to show that a true engagement with the work of art entails being impacted, affected by the work and not simply treating it as an aesthetic object to be analyzed.

Chapter 2 Gadamer on the Work of Art

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer takes up the question of art from where Heidegger leaves it at the end of his essay on technology: as being a matter of truth. Gadamer will further argue that there is a certain kind of knowledge and understanding that is gained through a transformative experience with the work of art and not through the employment of any sort of scientific method to analyze it. Gadamer's aim in *Truth and Method* is a bold challenge to "the dominance of modern science in the philosophical elucidation and justification of the concept of knowledge and the concept of truth" (TM, xx). He argues that the spirit of the scientific method that has come to dominate all claims to truth and knowledge itself rests on foundations other than the narrow and systematic application of methodology. Gadamer further argues: "that the one-sidedness of hermeneutic universalism has the truth of a corrective. It enlightens the modern viewpoint based on making, producing, and constructing concerning the necessary conditions to which that viewpoint is subject" (TM, xxxiv). Thus in rehabilitating a broad and far-reaching theory of hermeneutics which concerns itself with "the phenomenon of understanding and of the correct interpretation of what has been understood" (TM, xx), Gadamer both challenges the sort of understanding that limits itself to a methodological approach that closes down the horizons of meaning and champions the sort of understanding that embraces the fusion of horizons wherein meanings are multiplied. And it is precisely in this context of expansive understanding that Gadamer talks about art.

Gadamer argues that:

Since we meet the artwork in the world and encounter a world in the individual artwork, the work of art is not some alien universe into which we are magically transported for a time. Rather, we learn to understand ourselves in and through it, and this means that we sublimate the discontinuity and atomism of isolated experiences in the continuity of our own existence. (TM, 83)

Here Gadamer is attacking the limited view of art that is born of a theoretical framework he calls “aesthetic consciousness,” born from the spirit of scientific rationalism and its schemes of differentiation which treat the artwork primarily as an object for scientific analysis and not as an event of being, an event whose unfolding of meaning is participated in by whoever engages with the work of art. The work of art belongs to this world we ourselves are a part of and as such engaging with it is an engagement with our own being since it is the continuity of our existence that allows the knowledge of the world in the artwork to shine forth. In this way the work of art exists independently of us and we of it, but in the encounter it is almost as though there were an actual exchange: the attentiveness which we give to the being of the artwork enables us to receive knowledge from the artwork and so there is a sort of give and take. Thus Gadamer argues that an encounter “*with the language of art is an encounter with an unfinished event and is itself part of this event*” (TM, 85). For this reason no interpretation or understanding of a work of art is ever definitive because as long as the artwork continues to exist and people to engage with it, the unfolding of the world within the artwork ever continues.

Gadamer will go on to argue, from a consideration of the essence of the nature of play, that the mode of being of the work of art is the presentation of something which in

turn is a representation for someone. Without going into a full explanation of this it is necessary to gather a sense of how Gadamer arrives at this conclusion if we are to fully understand the revealing in which the work of art participates and how this truth is expansive and transformative in contrast with the revealing in technology that is a challenging and a constriction of truth.

Gadamer says that play contains in itself “it’s own, even sacred, seriousness” (TM, 102). And that it is a seriousness that the player is not consciously focused upon or even aware of while playing. Indeed to be truly playing one must be lost to everything but the enclosed, prescribed boundary, the sacred precincts of play itself. For play does not exist for any other purpose other than its own. It has no ends, no tasks to perform outside of itself. The tasks a game sets are not really there to be solved but to order and direct the movement within the game itself. In the successful performance of the task is found a presentation of the task and the game itself. This is why “first and foremost, play is self-presentation” (TM, 108). Thus, the tasks to be performed within a game show off the ordering and structuring of play.

But in order for play to be more than a self-absorbing game, it has to be the presentation of itself *for* someone and hence becomes a representation. Gadamer calls “this change, in which human play comes to its true consummation in being art, *transformation into structure*” (TM, 110). This “structure” consists in the fact that what is being represented is “detached from the representing activity of the players and consist[s] in the pure appearance of what they are playing” (TM, 110). And so play takes on “the character of a work, of an *ergon* and not only of *energeia*” (TM, 110). This taking on the form of a work, something independent of those enacting it, is what Gadamer means by

transformation. No longer is it simply play that is of central importance but that which takes shape within play. And this leads Gadamer to say that this “transformation into structure means that what existed previously exists no longer. But also that what now exists, what represents itself in the play of art, is the lasting and true” (TM, 111). And this precludes the representation that comes forth within the play of art from being measured against outside standards of reality because “above all, what no longer exists is the world in which we live...” (TM, 111). This is due to the fact that the structure into which play has been transformed is “its own measure and measures itself by nothing outside it” (TM, 111). In this way, as Gadamer will go on to say, that which is represented is more of the nature of a religious rite wherein the divine presence manifests and presents itself than of that of a copy to an original. This also coincides with what Heidegger above said about art among the ancient Greeks: “the arts soared to the supreme height of the revealing granted them. They illuminated the presence of the gods and the dialogue of divine and human destinings” (QT, 34). Art was the realm wherein the most intimate and prescient of revelations took place concerning the nature of our existence and our place in the cosmos.

Gadamer further argues that:

Transformation is a transformation into the true. It is not enchantment in the sense of a bewitchment that waits for the redeeming word that will transform things back to what they were; rather, it is itself redemption and transformation back into true being. In being presented in play, what is emerges. It produces and brings to light what is otherwise constantly hidden and withdrawn. (TM, 112)

Hence transformation is a revealing of what actually is and so is not the mere fancy or arbitrary creation of an individual artist. The artist him/her-self, as artist, participates in the play of art which takes untransformed, ordinary reality and presents the essence, the truth that is hidden within it. This also seems quite close to what Heidegger had to say about the nature of art in both of his works considered above where he stated that art is the shining forth, the “scintillating appearance as transfiguration” (WA, 217) where the truth presents itself “in the scintillation of what is created in art” (WA, 217).

Hence, emerging from this discussion of the structure of the play of art is the concept of truth. As Gadamer will continue:

In these cases, where reality is understood as a play, emerges the reality of play, which we call the play of art. The being of all play is always self-realization, sheer fulfillment, *energeia* which has its *telos* within itself. The world of the work of art, in which play expresses itself fully in the unity of its course, is in fact a wholly transformed world. In and through it everyone recognizes that that is how things are. (TM, 112)

This transformed world presents the recipient with its own self-coherent reality and in this self-unity of the artwork one sees the truth of what is presented.

Gadamer further adds: “Thus the concept of transformation characterizes the independent and superior mode of being of what we called structure. From this viewpoint ‘reality’ is defined as what is untransformed, and art as the raising up of this reality into

truth” (TM, 112). And so this transformation into structure that is the essence of play as art creates a work that never ceases to transform itself because its being relies on representing a reality, a truth for someone. As Gadamer said previously, art is an unfinished event since each encounter with it by each individual who genuinely engages with it is a whole new unfolding of the artwork’s reality. This is why Gadamer states that “it is universally true of texts that only in the process of understanding them is the dead trace of meaning transformed back into living meaning” (TM, 156) and is hence why art can be spoken of as both a “shining-forth” and a “bringing-forth.” It reveals the essence of something hidden in plain sight.

It is in this way that art is seen as differing from technology. Heidegger’s discussion of the essence of technology concerned what is everywhere present in modern technology but nowhere perceived i.e. its “Enframing” nature. This propensity of modern technology is not perceived or questioned since it is seemingly obvious that technology’s essence has to lie in its utility for humans. But as Heidegger argued, this is not the case. For the truth, the reality that modern technology reveals is one which challenges forth and reduces to the level of “standing-reserve.” But it is different in the case with art.

The essence of reality in its natural, untransformed state is not perceived or understood as it presents itself to humanity due to its very ordinariness. It is only when art takes up reality and transforms it, brings it forth as a representation for someone that its essence is understood. Its essence is suffused throughout all reality but unless it is taken up through art and transformed, it remains hidden. This is why Gadamer can say that the imitation and representation that constitute the character of the work of art “are

not merely a repetition, a copy” (TM, 114) because “operative in artistic presentation is recognition, which has the character of genuine knowledge of essence...” (TM, 114).

And again, this knowledge of essence is what constitutes the truth-claim of art: it presents what is, i.e. “what is emerges” as it is represented for someone. And so through the representation of art, one comes to understand the world in which one already lives. As Gadamer previously said, “we meet the artwork in the world and encounter a world in the individual artwork” (TM, 83). Hence through an engagement with the work of art one is brought face to face with a world never before intuited which is precisely the world one already lives within. This ordinary world’s essential nature is overlooked because one’s engagement in it on a daily basis blinds one to the reality of its essence. One often overlooks the importance of what lies directly at hand. And it is this strangeness of the familiar that the work of arts serves to present.

Hence it is seen that art is a bringing forth, a revealing and in this way, similar to modern technology which too is a revealing. Art brings forth a “scintillating appearance as transformation” and has its essence in being a representation for someone which requires a sort of dialogue or play between artwork and spectator. Modern technology as “Enframing,” however, brings forth or rather challenges forth a “destining of revealing,” challenges everyone and everything which comes in contact with itself, whether willingly or unwillingly, to serve its totalizing and constricting claims which seek to reduce all matter to the level of “standing-reserve.”

Thus far I have shown what for Heidegger and Gadamer the essence of technology and the essence of art consist of and how they are both related to one another

and yet widely separated in their aims. But how can art as play ever hope to challenge technology as “Enframing?”

Chapter 3 Weil on Force and the Iliad

Force and Destruction

With the subsequent look into an essay by Simone Weil is found a juxtaposition of the two modes of production of art and technology which serves to show how the very mode of being of art proves a decisive challenge to technology as the work of art shows forth a way of being that is not centered around the coercive dominance of “Enframing.”

In her 1945 essay “The Iliad, or the Poem of Force,” (henceforth denoted PF) Weil, true to her title, claims that “the center of the Iliad is force” (PF, 3). She continues by saying: “In this work, at all times, the human spirit is shown as modified by its relations with force, as swept away, blinded, *by the very force it imagined it could handle*, as deformed by the weight of the force it submits to” (italics added: PF, 3). Weil goes on to define force as “that x that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a *thing*” (PF, 3), devoid of power and lacking volition, relying upon the force itself to make of it what it will. In other words, force co-opts for its own ends whatever comes under its sway. Weil will go on to say that “the truth is, nobody really possesses it” (PF, 11). Or to render it in a Heideggerian fashion: “truth *is*, nobody really possesses it.” No one is the final arbiter of what truth is nor can anyone control its unconcealment.

This brings Weil’s argument on force quite close to that of Heidegger’s on the essence of technology which *forces* upon all matter the reduced, truncated status of standing-reserve. For Weil, force reduces everything to the status of the thing, the inert, that which is without volition; and hence, she argues, does the logically impossible and

reduces a person to “being a thing” (PF, 8) even while still alive. Heidegger takes it a step further by saying that even the very status of object is precluded so that things no longer exist in themselves but are alternately vitiated and hyper-inflated to the point of becoming standing-reserve, i.e. the legitimate stance as object is torn from things and instead some utilizable part of them is arbitrarily raised to the level of being their essence. And yet both Heidegger and Weil share the sense of something or someone being overcome by the employment of the very force or thing one thought one controlled. In Weil’s case force itself and in Heidegger’s case technology.

The purpose of this essay is not to conflate the two claims as synonymous but to use Weil’s claim about force as a lens through which to view Heidegger’s conception of the essence technology and to concretize, as it were, what it means to be reduced to the level of “standing-reserve.” In addition Weil’s essay also serves to bring to a head the disparate actions of the work of art and the essence of technology and how art, as representation in the Gadamerian sense, can serve to transform the reality, the horizon that technology seeks to fix and petrify.

Weil continues by saying that there is an intoxication in force (PF, 23) that numbs the pain, occludes all rational thought or reflection that might encroach on the domain of force whose ultimate end, while not necessarily being synonymous to death, inevitably leads all who are touched by it, both willing and unwilling, “those who use it and those who endure it,” to be “turned to stone” (PF, 26). Thus, due to the ubiquity of force Weil argues that within the *Iliad* “whoever, within his own soul and in human relations, escapes the dominion of force is loved but loved sorrowfully because of the threat of destruction that constantly hangs over him” (PF, 33). And so, while Weil does not grant

force a *telos*, she renders it unambiguous that force serves nothing but the totalization of itself which means the ultimate destruction of anyone or anything which falls beneath its alternately tantalizing and coercive jurisdiction. This too coincides with Heidegger's insight that it is precisely when one thinks the control of technology is safely and securely within their grasp that the imminent peril of being engulfed, co-opted by the essence of technology is most real. For, as was seen above, it is not technology itself that is so much the danger as the "destining" inherent in the essence of technology which limits the horizon of truth, unconcealment.

Since for Weil force is the maximization of destruction, how is one to avoid it? At least with Heidegger there is the sense of hope that if one questions aright the essence of technology, grapples aright with what it is and what it means, salvation might be worked out. But with Weil, though her essay is itself quite *forceful* in its denunciation of force, she leaves little room for hope in the precarious venture of the resistance to force since even "a moderate use of force, which alone would enable a man to escape being enmeshed in its machinery, would require superhuman virtue which is as rare as dignity in weakness" (PF, 20). And so, it would seem that there is no escape from "force's vast kingdom" (PF, 27) since as the sparks fly upwards so is man, "by the very act of being born...destined to suffer violence" (PF, 14).

While Weil does not say explicitly that there is any way of escaping the terrible effects of force, nor any certain rehabilitation for one who has undergone its scourge, she holds out the quietly redeeming prospect that "grace can prevent this touch from corrupting him, but it cannot spare him the wound" (PF, 36). And this is essential to Weil's approach to the resistance of force, a resistance of a different caliber entirely to

that of force and its monstrous barrages; a resistance after the fact of suffering and not a denial that the suffering occurred nor a direct resistance to the dehumanizing force itself. This notion will be important in considering the nature of the work of art whose essence revolves around the representation which serves to transform, to redeem reality and as Gadamer said, to raise it to the level of the true.

But even here, the prospects of eluding the denigrating effects of force are grim:

The relations between destiny and the human soul, the extent to which each soul creates its own destiny, the question of what elements in the soul are transformed by merciless necessity as it tailors the soul to fit the requirements of shifting fate, and of what elements can on the other hand be preserved, through the exercise of virtue and grace—this whole question is fraught with temptations to falsehood, temptations that are positively enhanced by pride, by shame, by hatred, contempt, indifference, by the will to oblivion or to ignorance. (PF, 35)

And so while there is grace, it is a grace born of hopelessness, of accepting misery as a fact of life and not erecting facades of illusion that suffering can be avoided with the avoidance of force. Only when we “learn that there is no refuge from fate, learn not to admire force, not to hate the enemy, nor to scorn the unfortunate” (PF, 37) can the negatively transforming, deforming effects of force be mitigated; not by denying their dehumanizing effects but precisely by acknowledging them because “the sense of human misery is a precondition of justice and love” (PF, 34).

War and the Representation of War

With the discussion of force in Weil we are led to consider both war itself and its representation in the *Iliad*, a distinction that is of great importance. War itself stands as the most stark exemplar of force for it is that which sets out to systematically annihilate one's enemy, to batter them into submission.

It seems apropos at this point to introduce Freud's 1915 essay "Reflections on War and Death" (henceforth denoted RWD). Therein he argues that war strips humanity of the deluded notion that civilization has eliminated or at least mitigated the brutal primitive urges to destroy and despoil one's enemies. War shows, Freud argues, that what the accretions of civilization have done is merely to repress the more primal elements of our natures which leap with irrepressible profane jubilation to the fore when a war is commenced. He further argues that war, in unleashing the primal maenadic fury that lives on just beneath civilization's cosmetic veneer of moral and ethical restraints, brings civilization to the place where its members are stripped of their illusions and forced to face the reality of their situation: that one cannot conceive of one's own death and intensely wishes the death of others. And in this way, Freud argues that for all the horror and great destruction unleashed in war, it presents the true reality of civilization's condition.

This will lead Freud to remark:

Were it not better to give death the place to which it is entitled both in reality and in our thoughts and to reveal a little more of our unconscious attitude towards death which up to now we have so carefully suppressed? This may not appear a very high achievement and in some respects rather a step backwards, a kind of regression, but at least it has the advantage of taking the truth into account a little more and of making life more bearable again. To bear life remains, after all, the first duty of the living. (RWD, 71)

And hence Freud would have us look on the phenomenon of war with eyes open and minds disabused if perhaps with souls disillusioned with the great artificial edifice and repressive construct of civilization. For only in acknowledging our actual condition does Freud see any hope of overcoming it.

So Freud sees in war the occasion to rethink our relation to ourselves, one another and death. Yet it seems that such *reflections* on war can only come about from being outside the conflict as Freud tacitly acknowledges from the beginning of his essay: “the individual who is not himself a combatant and therefore has not become a cog in the gigantic war machinery, feels confused in his bearings and hampered in his activities” (RWD, 2). Reflection is by and large precluded by action and hence only possible when not caught up and forced to become a cog in war’s machinations. The confusion and feeling of being hampered that Freud mentions, he will argue, stem from the delusions of the civilized that war has been to some degree made obsolete due to the great influences of ordered society.

But what is of interest here is the space that reflection inhabits. Weil, treating just this topic, states that between impulse and act there is a tiny interval only which is inhabited by reflection, where reflection is possible (PF, 14). And so, it is not war itself but the reflection upon it, the representation of it that allows one to absorb all the terrible but true realities it harbors. As can be seen in a perusal of the *Iliad*, what the reader feels and the reflections that blossom within one's mind are quite different from the thoughts of the combatants. Although even here, as can be seen in the work of Modernist poet David Jones, even while entrenched in combat, one is constantly representing the experience to oneself. Witness the following from Jones' 1938 work *In Parenthesis* (henceforth denoted IP):

Feet plodding in each other's unseen tread....blind on-following, moving with a singular identity.

Half-minds, far away, divergent, own-thought thinking, tucked away unknown thoughts; feet following file friends, each his own thought-maze alone treading; intricate, twist about, own thoughts, all unknown thoughts, to the next so close following on. (IP, 37)

So even while bodies move in accord with commands other than interior ones, even while bodies meld into a blind, mute "singular identity," the interior life remains to some quiet but incontrovertible degree one's own and still provides space for reflection even in the midst of forced action.

But still, it is the representation of the experience of war and not war itself that teaches and presents one with great and terrible truths.

The Iliad: An Artful Question Concerning Force

Returning to Weil, for whom the reality of force is presented through the unfolding of characters and actions in the *Iliad*, a consideration of that most renowned of all poems is necessary.

Therein one finds both Hector and Achilles, the chief fighters from each opposing side, unequal to one another and yet each fated to be the undoing of the other either directly or indirectly. These two are fighting for different reasons, Achilles because he is seeking to achieve immortal glory in mortal battle and Hector, also seeking to gain glory for himself but also to stave off the ruin of everything he holds most dear. This will lead Rachel Bepaloff in her 1947 essay “On the Iliad” (henceforth denoted OI) to refer to Hector as the “guardian of the perishable joys” (OI, 43). Bepaloff will go on to draw out the poignancy of Hector’s situation, that while “neither a superman, nor demigod, nor godlike, he is a man and among men a prince” (OI, 43) and as a “resistance-hero” (OI, 48) is the main deterrent, averting the destruction of “sacred Ilion,” though among the Greeks there are not a few heroes who nearly get the best of him in combat: Ajax twice, Diomedes once. So the Trojans have Hector but no one to equal Achilles. And yet the portrait of Hector that Homer conjures in the *Iliad* does not veer away from showing us the truly admirable and noble side of Hector along with his mercilessness in battle and

the almost inhuman, bloodthirsty berserk rage that overtakes him as it does those of many others.

Due to the incredibly moving domestic scene towards the end of book 6 where Hector answers Andromache's propitious pleas that he leave the fighting to others, Hector is made to stand out as one of the most sympathetic characters in the *Iliad*. Andromache tries to persuade Hector by saying that he is everything to her:

Thus you are father to me, and my honoured mother,
you are my brother, and you it is who are my young husband. (*Iliad* Bk 6, 430)

All those she lists (and she had not one brother but seven) are dead either through the hand of Achilles directly or as a result of him. Hector is deeply moved by his wife's fears, not so much because he himself is afraid of her dire prognostications, he says, but because he pities and loves Andromache. Hector then makes the startling pronouncement that in the day Troy is sacked, for he knows in his heart and mind that such is the fate of his beloved city, his chief sorrow is that Andromache will be enslaved and become the menial servant of another. And yet he argues that:

No man is going to hurl me to Hades, unless it is fated,
but as for fate, I think that no man yet has escaped it
once it has taken its first form, neither brave man nor coward. (*Iliad* Bk 6, 487-489)

So Hector re-enters the fray where men's limbs are unstrung and the dark, bitter mist of death veils the eyes. He fights for the best of reasons and yet how quickly those reasons cease to mean anything as the imperative of force takes hold via the temporary favor of ever-changeful Zeus. And so Hector, this man who truly loves his wife and child, becomes an avenging demon intoxicated with bloodlust and unwilling to heed any other counsel than what pertains directly to the objective of bringing fire and sword and loss of life and limb to the Achaians amongst their proud black ships. And in this way, Hector loses any vestige of humanity as he becomes the pawn for devious-devising Zeus in a game that will end in his death and the destruction of Troy. And so despite Bespaloff's attempt to portray Hector as a "resistance-hero," Homer does not allow us to sidestep the horror of the violence that even the "resistance-hero" perpetrates. He is at once an heroic, sympathetic character and he is equally a cog in the vast destructive machinery of war where both sides lose sight of why they are fighting and become a single destructive entity as "war effaces all conceptions of purpose or goal, including even its own 'war aims'" (PF, 23). So if war is a game, the most terrible one humanity knows and yet ironically mimicked with ubiquity by young boys of seemingly all nationalities, it is one in which "playing is a being-played" as Gadamer states (TM, 106). A man takes on the role of soldier and that is who he becomes, the strictures of war effacing, at least for a time, every other characteristic belonging to him. The role of soldier takes over the individual, as the machinery of war absorbs him to such an extent as to make him expendable, just so much "standing-reserve."

A scene from David Jones' *In Parenthesis* addresses with great poignancy precisely this terrible role-playing-become-horrible-reality:

Mr. Jenkins watched them file through, himself following, like western-hill shepherd.

Past the little gate,
into the field of upturned defences,
into the burial-yard—
the grinning and the gnashing and the sore dreading—nor
saw he any light in that place.

In virid-bright illumining he sees his precious charge, singly
going, each following each, fleecy coated, and they themselves
playing the actor to their jackets... (IP, 31)

In this phantasmagoric waste land where “solid things dissolve, and vapours ape substantiality” (IP, 179), men become sheep for slaughter. And their commander, their shepherd, is able to do nothing but mark with sympathy their peril for he himself is leading them towards the fabled place of outcasts, here luridly concretized, spoken of in the Gospels where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. And even the reference to the Gospels is transmogrified and made unholy for here in this place, at this hour, grinning is substituted for weeping in a way that permits only a partial redemption to the moment of trial and only through the transforming representation first of the compassionate leading officer viewing the situation and then that of the poet himself.

But to come back to Besseloff, it is interesting to note that she ends her sketch of Hector by saying:

To condemn force, or absolve it, would be to condemn, or absolve, life itself. And life in the *Iliad* (as in the Bible or in *War and Peace*) is essentially the thing that does not permit itself to be assessed, or measured, or condemned, or justified, at least not by the living. Any estimate of life must be confined to an awareness of its inexpressibility. (OI, 50)

And if not by the living, than presumably not at all since the dead do not engage in analyses of any sort. And all that the living can hope to accomplish in this regard is to present a true account of life, one that embraces to whatever limited extent it is possible the enormity of a reality that escapes us. In saying this, Besseloff would seem to be taking a position counter to that of Weil who represents force as life's great antithesis, its nemesis, arguing as she does that all force leads inevitably to the destruction of that organism either resisting or employing it, ever impartial to whom it co-opts and renders lifeless. But in her harangue against force Weil is attacking not only force but humanity's attachment thereto arguing that "those who have force on loan from fate count on it too much and are destroyed" (PF, 15) and that "this retribution, which has a geometrical rigor, which operates automatically to penalize the abuse of force, was the main subject of Greek thought" (PF, 15).

This raises a difficult question about Weil's conception of the essence of force and the use of it within the context of the *Iliad*. On the one hand Weil seems to be

arguing from an analysis of the *Iliad* that force is never a tenable option because it always ends up destroying those who employ it. But on the other hand, albeit to a lesser degree, she seems to argue that within the *Iliad* it is not so much the use as the abuse of force that destroys:

Conceptions of limit, measure, equilibrium, which ought to determine the conduct of life are, in the West, restricted to a servile function in the vocabulary of technics. We are only geometricians of matter; the Greeks were, first of all, geometricians in their apprenticeship to virtue. (PF, 16)

And it cannot be both ways since the one precludes the other.

Weil starts her essay, as was seen, by giving a sweeping definition of force as “that x that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a *thing*” (PF, 3) which as we know from the end of her essay she considers anathema to the human spirit and considers this to be the reason why the *Iliad* resonates with such bitterness: “Its bitterness is the only justifiable bitterness, for it springs from the subjections of the human spirit to force, that is, in the last analysis to matter” (PF, 33).

Perhaps this is where her statement that a “moderate use of force” (PF, 20), if it could actually be carried out, would be justifiable but since it is next to impossible to limit oneself to the judicious employment of force, it should for all intents and purposes be considered the double-edged device history has proved it to be. And this is why she considers the *Iliad* to be “the purest and loveliest of mirrors” (PF, 3), for it shows with remarkable impartiality the effects of force, both on the vanquished and on the victor.

And in this way despite her diatribe against force, Weil's essay is brought close to that of Bespaloff who, as stated above, thinks that beyond condemning or condoning force "any estimate of life must be confined to an awareness of its inexpressibility" (OI, 50). This seems to be what Weil is endeavoring to get at when speaking of the "miracle" of the *Iliad* which for all it being a vast chronicle of woes there is hardly any sort of love or friendship which is not to be found within its catalogue of terrible deaths. In fact it is precisely in those bitter and terrible deaths, each unique and incalculable, each suffused with infinite sorrow and bitterness and yet, as Weil says, "impartial as sunlight" (PF, 30) that life and love are enshrined. Each death opens to the spectator a world that in life, the poignancy and beauty of which, was concealed before our very eyes.

A consideration of the death of Alkathoos who is mentioned only one other time in passing aside from the passage dedicated to his death illustrates this most effectively:

There was a man, loved son of illustrious Aisyetes,
the hero Alkathoos, who was son-in-law of Anchises,
and had married the eldest of his daughters, Hippodameia,
dear to the hearts of her father and the lady her mother
in the great house, since she surpassed all the girls of her own age
for beauty and accomplishments and wit; for which reason
the man married her who was the best in the wide Troad.
But now Poseidon beat him down at the hands of Idomeneus,
for he bewitched his shining eyes, made moveless his bright limbs,
so that he could not run backward, neither evade him,

but stood like a statue or a tree with leaves towering
motionless, while fighting Idomeneus stabbed at the middle
of his chest with the spear, and broke the bronze armour about him
which in time before had guarded his body from destruction.
He cried out then, a great cry, broken, the spear in him,
and fell, thunderously, and the spear in his heart was stuck fast
but the heart was panting still and beating to shake the butt end
of the spear. Then and there Ares the huge took his life away from him.
(Iliad Bk 13, 427-444)

Alkathoos is born before our eyes only to fall beneath the unfairly strengthened spear of Idomeneus and this while Alkathoos was rendered immobile by Poseidon himself. We know nothing of this hero except that he must be a great man indeed to have married Aineias's sister, favorite of her parents, Aineias who could boast the all-alluring Aphrodite as his mother. And yet in these few lines, a world of meaning is conjured. A wife and family are posited for this man. He has a rich and successful past and a promising future. Until the force of fate in the guise of Poseidon strikes him motionless and helpless, unable even to defend himself or flee. How bitterly is felt the thrust of the terrible spear that strikes his chest and lodges there while piteously his heart beating rattles the end of the brutal honed weapon that has claimed his life and reduced him to the status of a corpse. And this entire world is wiped out by a man who does not even register the deed he has just done. All in a day's killing. Alkathoos is just one more victory stroke for triumphant Idomeneus out to wreak havoc upon mortal life beneath the bloody

patronage of lord Poseidon. But we feel infinite pity and sadness and anger over the injustice of the rape of life.

This is precisely the “miracle” of the *Iliad* that Weil so eloquently evokes; that in a poem devoted almost exclusively to the loss of life at the impartial and all-devouring behest of bellicose force should be found such delicate and compassionate sketches of both essentially unknown soldiers as well as great heroes who possess an entire world that is cut off as their lives are cut short. So that despite force’s dominance within the poem, it is not so much the prowess of skilled fighters that is celebrated, although this is a part; but it is the individuals denuded of the ephemeral breath of life that are made to resound with pathos. For it is life that is the true marvel and mystery, set in relief as it is by the arbitrariness of violence and destruction. Thus while in the events of the *Iliad* force has the final all-leveling say, even within this most martial of epics what is brought to blossom within the recipient’s consciousness is far from a simple celebration of the ingenuity and finesse fostered by war and the endeavor to conquer. What manifests itself is instead a humble bitterness with the unalterable fate of suffering and death and the sorrow these evoke in the hearts and minds of the living. Thus the *Iliad* is preeminently a work valuing the short, peril-fraught spark ever on the cusp of sputtering out that is life.

And so in the case of Patroclus’ death (Bk 16, 790-860) we do not glory with Hector as he vaunts over the dying form of Patroclus, the double of Achilles, the man among the Achaians most like the war-god for skill in death-dealing destruction. Even if our sympathy lies with the Trojans and with Hector, the death of Patroclus is hard to witness because it is so unfair. Like Alkathoos, Patroclus is defeated first by a god, this time Apollo, who is soon to bring about the destruction of Achilles himself. Apollo

strikes Patroclus and then strips him of his divine borrowed armor, for he is wearing Achilles' armor forged by the fire-god himself, so that he stands naked and stupefied. And when he recovers wits enough and tries to withdraw into the ranks of his comrades he is struck ignominiously in the back by Euphorbos who does not even have the courage to face Patroclus, naked and befuddled by Apollo as he is but instead the daring but cowardly assailant retreats from the wounded Achaian hero. Only now does Hector have a go at the wounded double of his arch nemesis. And however much we may admire Hector as "guardian of the perishable joys" we cannot help but wince at the patent absurdity of his vaunting boasts over his helpless fallen victim. Patroclus himself wastes the last of his breath in a vain effort to disillusion Hector, euphoric over his unfairly obtained victory, by telling him that it was not Hector that slew him but Apollo and then "of men it was Euphorbos; you are only my third slayer" (Iliad Bk 16, 850). He also warns Hector that with his death fate draws near to Hector himself, death at the bloody death-wielding hands of unyielding vengeful Achilles. But Hector will have none of it, intoxicated by the heady wine of violent force, and callously withdraws his spear from the dead body of a well-beloved soldier, friend, companion to many a noble Achaian and goes off in search of other prey. Thus ends the life of a gracious and caring man, capable death-dealing soldier though he was.

And yet we also mourn at Hector's death by Achilles for the poignant unfairness of it all. Hector himself, with his end approaching, well aware that his recent victories over the Achaians had been spurious and even Pyrrhic, then becomes the dupe of Athena's treachery. He stands to face Achilles but then is overcome with fear and flees. In his flight from his fate, the direness of his position grants Hector such desperate speed

that even the swift-footed son of the silver-footed goddess cannot overtake him for all his fury over the death of Patroclus.

It was a great man who fled, but far better he who pursued him
rapidly, since here was no festal beast, no ox-hide
they strove for, for these are prizes that are given men for their running.
No, they ran for the life of Hektor, breaker of horses. (Iliad Bk 22, 158-161)

Here the poet evokes a most pitiful, tragic scene. A contest, the prize of which is something ineffable and irreplaceable, no mere object to be given or taken but a fragile, infinitely meaningful essence: life. And both contestants know this. And what makes this scene resonate with such touching bitterness is that Hector has not a chance to win his life, pursued as he is by the better, goddess-born man. Hector is here attempting the impossible, endeavoring with such poignant hopelessness to escape the very thing he so stoically told Andromache was inescapable: one's fate. It is fated that he die yet life does not resign itself peaceably to annihilation. Compounding the pathos of this desperate, lonely race, we are informed by the poet that all this is played out before the tortured eyes of his parents watching with heart-wrenching impotence and despair atop their high-walled citadel as their dearest son and the protector of their city flees in fear and disgrace and hopelessness.

It takes the duplicitous dealing of a goddess to bring doomed quarry to vengeful hunter. Hector is undone when he takes Athena for his dear brother and is persuaded by the deceiving masquerading goddess to stand against Achilles. And then his end is swift.

He makes a valiant attempt to strike Achilles with his spear but is foiled by Athena who callously returns and deposits harmlessly at his own feet the spear he hurled so inefficaciously. Recognizing once again his doom, he draws his sword and rushes Achilles. But Hector is no match for Achilles. And with his parents, wife and fellow citizens we mourn his terrible fate and the inevitable fate that looms large over Troy.

And yet, had Homer continued the *Iliad* to recount Achilles' own death at the hands of pusillanimous Paris and ireful Apollo, we would still have mourned his passing, terrible scourge to many though he was because the poet throughout the *Iliad* has portrayed Achilles himself as one fated to die.

And thus throughout the *Iliad* even where we wish the death of some too powerful temporary concretization or personification of force, Diomedes or Hector or Patroclus or Achilles, because they are destroying far too many men in their headlong pursuit of glorified glory, sponsored by one death-dealing deity or another, when their death arrives we are still made to feel the poignancy of their passing. We are made to feel that they are but human and mortal and so the taking of their life an irrevocable loss somehow. Something ineffable but meaningful is snuffed out even with the passing of a consummate killer who callously denuded many of life and breath. And this impartial sympathy and identification with both the victim and the aggressor, a fluid demarcation that changes with the ever-changeable tides of fortune, constitutes the core of what makes the *Iliad* resonate with such heartfelt bitterness and shows it forth as a "miracle" among works of art. For we cherish even the murderer while alive and mourn his passing because we are all in turn victim and aggressor at different times and under various conditions. We all alike are caught up in this tragedy of destruction and violence and so

must celebrate life wherever it subsists, for however short duration it manages to flourish in whatever inclement climate.

This is why Weil can conclude her essay on force: “only he who has measured the dominion of force, and knows how not to respect it, is capable of love and justice” (PF, 35). For only by at once acknowledging the all-pervasive destructiveness of force and yet not worshipping or respecting it for all its fearful and awe-inspiring vistas, can one arrive at the meaningful ethical stances of love and justice which are born from a recognition of the tragedy of all deaths.

This also brings the essay back to Heidegger and his argument that one must question to discover the essence of technology and only when it is realized that one does not in any real sense control the unfolding thereof that one can hope to escape the fate that failure to question mandates. The essence of technology, left unquestioned, exerts a force-like influence that reduces everything to the status of a “standing-reserve.” And this contrast with the representative nature of the work of art and the way that experiences, particularly tragic ones are transformed through representation, serves to illustrate how art is a counter-movement to technology not by directly opposing it but by showing other, more ethical, more meaningful ways of being. For it is from the *Iliad* that Weil culls this ethical sense of resistance through acceptance not of the rightness of force but of its inevitability. And from the *Iliad* as a work of art is culled this meaning of life in the midst of death. And thus in this way, as a work of art, the *Iliad* can be seen as showing forth a way of remaining unsullied by the ignominious domination of force not through direct resistance but by humble recognition that we are all in this thing called life together. As already pointed out above, one must “learn that there is no refuge from fate,

learn not to admire force, not to hate the enemy, nor to scorn the unfortunate” (PF, 37) if one is to entertain any notion of escaping the tyranny of force not by direct resistance but through rehabilitation brought about by recognition and reflection.

It seems therefore that the work of art is peculiarly suited to this role of setting off reality in such a way that elicits, even demands, attention, sparks recognition and induces reflection. And in this experience of engaging with the work of art, one finds truth and revelation: revelation about oneself, the world in which one lives, what could and should be. And in this way, art show itself as the “more primally granted revealing” capable of providing a space between impulse and act wherein to reflect and even challenge the all-challenging paradigm of technology and its force-like forward propulsion.

Conclusion

Thus, what the essence of technology and that of art consists of has to some extent been shown, where they share common ground and where they stand squarely opposed to one another. As Heidegger said, the counter-movement of art is consummated in that peculiarly representative human reflection that ponders and works from the basis of “the fact that all saving power must be of a higher essence than what is endangered, though at the same time kindred to it” (QT, 34). What is endangered is the unveiling of truth and what endangers it is not technologies as instruments and machines, however powerful, but the essence of technology as a coercive, limiting “destining of revealing.” So that art, as the more “primally granted revealing” offers itself as the “saving power” whose essence is deeper and more profound than that of technology as “Enframing.” It is in this way that art presents itself as the realm from which “essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen...” (QT, 35).

As was seen with a look at the *Iliad*, what the work of art holds out is an experience of truth, a recognition of the core realities of existence: the fleetingness of life and the untenable position of force. And in this way, not by a forceful opposition to the dominion of either the essence of technology or force itself, art presents a challenge more fundamental and lasting because it does not attack mere particulars but the conception that lies at the heart of things. In the words of Theodor Adorno:

Art is not only the plenipotentiary of a better praxis than that which has to date predominated, but is equally the critique of praxis as the rule of brutal self-

preservation at the heart of status quo and in its service. It gives the lie to production for production's sake and opts for a form of praxis beyond the spell of labor. (Aesthetic Theory, 12)

Art, as a production, as a work not only serves as a sort of ambassador for the more original and fundamental revealing of truth, of "scintillating appearance" but also serves by its very nature, as an alternative and more meaningful mode of production, one not predicated on that of fixing horizons and stamping upon all matter a rigorous and restrictive use-value. And as an alternative, art is a challenge to "the spell of labor" which exists at the heart of the essence of technology. So that in a curious way when Gadamer states concerning the work of art that "transformation is a transformation into the true" and is not an "enchantment in the sense of a bewitchment that waits for the redeeming word that will transform things back to what they were" (TM, 112), it seems as though the illusory virtue of production for production's sake that permeates the essence of technology is indeed a spell, an intoxication even that requires breaking, requires the transformative word of truth animating the work of art to shine forth in order to see things the way they truly are. The fetters of use-value appended to one and all by the dictates of "Enframing" cast a malevolent spell whose force can be broken only by seeing beyond its dominion which can best be carried out through engaging with the work of art whose fundamental essence lies in the production of ever expansive horizons for truth to germinate within and perpetually shine forth.

List of Abbreviations

IP = Jones, David. *In Parenthesis*.

OI = Besseloff, Rachel. *On the Iliad*.

PF = Weil, Simone. *The Iliad, or the Poem of Force*.

QT = Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology*.

RWD = Freud, Sigmund. *Reflections on War and Death*.

TM = Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*.

WA = Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Art*.

Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor. *Aesthetic Theory*. Translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor. University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Bespaloff, Rachel. *On the Iliad*. Translated by Mary McCarthy. Found in *War and the Iliad*, New York Review of Books, 2005.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Reflections on War and Death*. Translated by A.A.Brill and Alfred Kuttner. Moffat, Yard and Company, New York, 1918.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall. Continuum, 2004.
- Hayles, Katherine. *Electronic Literature*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2008.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Art*. Translated by David Krell. Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979.
- . *The Question Concerning Technology*. Translated by William Lovitt. Garland Publishing, Inc, 1977.
- Homer. *The Iliad*. Translated by Richard Lattimore. University of Chicago, 1951.
- Ihde, Don. *Technics and Praxis*. D. Reidel Publishing, Dordrecht, Holland, 1979.
- Jones, David. *In Parenthesis*. New York Review of Books, 2003.
- Kaku, Michio. *Physics of the Future*. Doubleday, 2011.
- Weil, Simone. *The Iliad, or the Poem of Force*. Translated by Mary McCarthy. Found in *War and the Iliad*, New York Review of Books, 2005.

Nathan Doherty

548 Davis Road
New park, PA 17352
njd5099@psu.edu
717 968 7912

Academic Vita

Education:

Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mathematics, Penn State University, Spring 2012
Honors in Philosophy
Thesis Title: Art and Technology
Thesis Supervisor: Dennis J. Schmidt

Awards:

Dean's List
Elder Trustee Scholarship
Pell Grant
Bunton Waller Scholarship
SMART Grant
Penn State Tuition Grant
Wynn and Grove Trustee Scholarship
FSEO Grant

Personal Achievements:

In 2003 wrote and self-published a novel entitled *Searchings of a Young Mind*. A quest after identity and an attempt to understand how one is formed by his/her environment.

In 2005 wrote novel entitled *Another Tale Yet to be Told*. (Currently unpublished.) A coming-of-age story about punk artists in Philadelphia.

Currently working on another novel entitled *One Among Many: A Modern Faerie Tale*. A meditation on technology and culture.

Also currently working on non-fiction book entitled *Hard Knocks: Language and Labor*. A memoir of sorts concerning earning a living landscaping and obtaining an education listening to audio books.

