Technē and *Poiēsis*: On Heidegger and Film Theory

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> But will not saying both yes and no this way to technical devices make our relation to technology ambivalent and insecure? On the contrary! Our relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed. We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. I would call this comportment toward technology which expresses "yes" and at the same time "no," by an old word, *releasement toward things* [*Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*].[1]

Heidegger's challenge to the philosophy of subjectivity and his re-thinking of the "question of Being" have transformed modern thought. A number of movements in 20th-century philosophy, such as existential phenomenology, hermeneutics, deconstruction, and French poststructuralism, all owe a debt to Heidegger's work.[2] Yet Heidegger does not seem, at first glance, a philosopher with much to offer contemporary film theory. Heidegger's few explicit remarks on the subject make it clear that he considered cinema (and photography) to be forms of image-making that signify the "end of art" in modernity.[3] As Heidegger asserts, for example, at the end of his essay "The Turning": "we do not yet hear [the call of Being], we whose hearing and seeing are perishing through radio and film under the rule of technology."[4] In *On the Way to Language*, we read that cinema cannot reveal an authentic sense of world since it is "captured and imprisoned [...] within the objectness of photography," a fact that reflects the forgetting of Being typical of the "Europeanization" of humankind and the world.[5] And in Heidegger's *Discourse on Thinking* [*Gelassenheit*], we are told that the "uprootedness" of post-war Europeans is being exacerbated by the ubiquity of the mass media, leading to a generalized condition of "homelessness," an existential "worldlessness":

> Hourly and daily they are chained to radio and television. Week after week the movies carry them off into uncommon, but often merely common, realms of the imagination, and give the illusion of a world that is no world.[6]

This rather unpromising start has not deterred some philosophers and theorists from finding in Heidegger an ally for philosophical thinking in relation to film.[7] In his 1979 foreword to *The World Viewed*, for example, Stanley Cavell remarks on the difficulties presented by the relationship between Heidegger and film.[8] He refers explicitly to Terrence Malick's DAYS OF HEAVEN (1978), a film whose images are not only beautiful but acknowledge the self-referential character of moving images, the way they manifest the play of presence and absence that is inherent in our experience of the world viewed.[9] As Cavell remarks, DAYS OF HEAVEN displays a metaphysical vision of the world, but "one feels that one has never quite seen the scene of human existence – call it the arena between earth (or days) and heaven – quite realized this way on film before."[10] This raises a difficulty for the philosophically minded viewer of film. To ask film theorists to think about Heidegger, as Cavell observes, is to ask them to endorse an "embattled" perspective in Anglophone intellectual culture, one "whose application to film is difficult to prove."[11] On the other hand, to ask academic philosophers to think about film through Heidegger is to ask them to grant film "the status of a subject that invites and rewards philosophical speculation, on a par with the great arts," a concept that is itself brought into question by film, as Walter Benjamin observed long ago.[12] Yet it is undeniable, for Cavell, that the films of Terrence Malick – scholar of phenomenology and translator of Heidegger – have a beauty and radiance that suggest something like a realization of Heidegger's thinking of the relationship between Being and beings, the radiant self-showing of things in luminous appearance.[13]

Cavell was not alone in identifying Malick as a filmmaker whose work could be described as "Heideggerian," even though what a "Heideggerian cinema" might be remains an open question.[14] Heidegger has even inspired a Chris Marker-style documentary-essay film, THE ISTER (David Barison and Daniel Ross, 2004), based on his 1938 lecture course on Hölderlin's poem of the same name.[15] Nonetheless, Heidegger is known as one of the great critics of the modern age, which he famously called the age of the world-picture or world-image [*die Zeit des Weltbildes*], when all of reality is increasingly rendered as an ontologically degraded representational resource on standby for use and consumption.[16] Given Heidegger's evident skepticism concerning photography (and by implication, cinema), what is the significance of his thought for contemporary film/media theory and philosophy of cinema? There are two approaches I shall develop here in response to this question: Heidegger's influential response to the "question of technics" in modernity and its implications for audiovisual media; and the idea of a Heideggerian *poetics*, of modern art as having the poetic power to disclose new horizons and worlds, an idea with fascinating implications for re-thinking what cinema can be.

Heidegger on Cinema

The only passage where Heidegger explicitly discusses a particular film is re- markably suggestive. In "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," two interlocutors, the Inquirer and his Japanese guest, converse on the relationship between Western rationality and its dominance over the East Asian sense of art and world.[17] They are concerned, in particular, to explore the meaning of the Japanese term *iki*, which turns out to have a much broader and deeper meaning than the Enlightenment concept of "aesthetic experience." In the course of their discussion, the Inquirer warns against the tendency to follow Western conceptual thought, for all its technological achievements, because this will blind us to the increasing "Europeanization of man and the earth [which] attacks at the source everything of an essential nature."[18] As an example of this all-consuming Westernization, the Japanese guest suggests, surprisingly, Akiro Kurosawa's RASHOMON (1950). The inquirer is perplexed, for he found RASHO- MON utterly enchanting, above all its subdued gestures: "I believed that I was experiencing the enchantment of the Japanese world, the enchantment that car- ries us away into the mysterious."[19]

Fig. 1: RASHOMON (1950): "The enchantment of the Japanese world."

Count Kuki explains that the film was overly realistic, particularly in the battle scenes, which makes it far removed from the tradition of Japanese art and drama. He hastens to add that it is not the realism of metaphysics but a realism pertain- ing to the ontology of the cinematic image. As Kuki observes, it is not so much the film's dramatic or cinematic aspects but that the Japanese world is filmed at all, "captured and imprisoned at all within the objectness of photography," that

makes RASHOMON an example of Western techno-rationalization.[20] Regardless of the film's undoubted aesthetic qualities, Kuki explains to the Inquirer that "the mere fact that our world is set forth in the frame of a film forces that world into the sphere of what you call of objectness."[21] And this "objectification" of the world through photography and film, moreover, is "already a consequence of the ever wider outreach of Europeanization."[22] The Inquirer (a stand-in for Heidegger, one presumes) thus begins to understand Count Kuki's concerns:[23] far from presenting the "enchantment of the Japanese world," Kurosawa's RASHOMON shows us the incompatibility between this Eastern sense of world, still replete with a sense of Being, and the Westernized, "technical-aesthetic product of the film industry" that suffers from a nihilistic loss of Being.[24] In short, cinematic art intensifies, rather than reverses, the "objectification" of beings that is symptomatic of the Western forgetting of Being. The conclusion drawn from this brief episode in the dialogue is stark: movies are symptomatic of our Western nihilistic desire to "objectify" reality, to reduce the world, in its richness and mystery, to representational images, to an aesthetic "resource" for our manipulation and consumption.

While intriguing, this passage is hardly a promising start for thinking about the relationship between Heidegger and cinema. Indeed, it suggests that cinema is nothing but a pernicious manifestation of the technological "enframing" of the world (what Heidegger calls the "essence" of modern technics as the reduction of reality to a stockpile of available resources).[25] It is also a curious discussion of Kurosawa's work, given the latter's explicitly hybrid character, fusing Japanese with Western literary traditions (Shakespeare, for example), and its revitalization of the Western action genre by combining it with martial aspects of Japanese drama.[26] Its importance, however, lies in the way that Heidegger underlines the metaphysical importance of the image in modernity, which is defined by the reduction of the world to what can be represented directly, objectified by technical means, and thus to what corresponds with the cognitive interests of the human subject. Both of these ideas have profound implications for thinking about the cinema.

Heidegger and the "Question of Being"

To explore Heidegger's significance for film theory, however, we must begin, albeit briefly, with Heidegger's fundamental question. Heidegger's entire body of work is an extended meditation on this question: what is the meaning or sense of Being [*Sein*] as distinct from beings or entities [*das Seiende*]? Traditionally, in the history of philosophy, this question concerning Being took the form of an inquiry into the Being of beings or entities as such and as a whole;[27] a decision that, according to Heidegger, has had profound effects on the subsequent history of metaphysics from Plato to Nietzsche.[28] In *Being and Time*, Heidegger points out

that the various "prejudices" concerning the meaning of Being – that Being is the most "universal" concept, that it is an indefinable concept, and that it is self-evident – indicate that the question of Being not only lacks a coherent answer but remains problematic and obscure.[29] On the other hand, something like "Being" is always already understood in our everyday language and in our practical comportments toward the beings or entities we encounter in the world. This obscurity of the concept of "Being," along with our everyday pre-understanding of it, points to a fundamental difficulty in our philosophical understanding. Hence the need for an explicit repetition of the inquiry into the meaning of Being, unfolded through a preparatory interpretation of the Being of that entity which we ourselves are – what Heidegger calls "Da-sein."[30]

We are familiar with useful beings in our everyday comportment toward items of equipment in our environment. We also have a "preontological" understanding of Being in the sense of grasping the familiar beings that show up in our shared being-in-the-world. But do we understand or have an intuition of the "clearing," "horizon," or "lighting of Being" [*Lichtung des Seins*] through which beings show up as intelligible at all? We might gloss this clearing or lighting as the event of presencing or of originary *world-disclosure*. An experience of the clearing of Being, for Heidegger, is precisely what we have lost in modernity, an epoch defined, since Descartes, Kant and Nietzsche, by the metaphysics of human subjectivity. Being, however, cannot be reduced to what is present or representable for a human subject. Being is not something that we grasp only thanks to the thought, language, or action of human beings. Rather, the thought, language, and action of human beings show up as meaningful only within the clearing of Being. We must not think of temporal "projection" and understanding in terms of a "representational positing," otherwise we are taking these, in accordance with modern metaphysics, to be the achievements of self-grounding subjectivity.[31] Indeed, if we take as our guide the manner in which Being is intelligible for us, we end up "subjectifying" Being: mistaking the limits of human meaning-making for the limits of Being as such. Heidegger thus proposes that we investigate the way of Being of that entity which we ourselves are: self-interpreting, finite, historical beings for whom our own existence is an issue. *Dasein*'s way of Being, namely *existence* [*Existenz*], turns out to be complex. *Being and Time* thus goes on to interpret the fundamental "structures of existence" in terms of three interconnected ontological levels: pragmatic *being-in-the-world*, existential *care*, and "ecstatic" (phenomenological-existential) *temporality*.

In his later thought, Heidegger observed that the quasi-transcendental project of *Being and Time*, indebted to the phenomenology of Husserl, was a necessary starting point for inquiring into the question of Being but still remained embedded within the modern metaphysics of subjectivity. The existential analytic of *Dasein*, which Heidegger also called "fundamental ontology," failed to make the transition to a genuinely post-metaphysical mode of inquiry into the truth of

Being. It fails to make clear Heidegger's famous "turning" [*Kehre*] to "this other thinking that abandons subjectivity," since it remains framed within, and described through, the language of the "metaphysics of the subject."[32] This "turning" toward the question of the truth of Being – the meaning of Being independently of beings – is what Heidegger undertakes during the 1930s and after WWII, when he turns away from more traditional philosophical discourse, embraces a "poetic" manner of thinking, and poses "the question concerning technology" as the fundamental challenge facing the modern age. As we shall see, cinema, as the technological art *par excellence*, presents important challenges for Heidegger's account of modernity, technology, and art.

The Question of Technology

In the essay "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger attempts to think through the essence of technology in order to "prepare a free relationship to it."[33] The ethical dimension of this project is clear: through developing a thoughtful relationship with the essence of technology, we might experience the possibility of a freer relationship with the technological world. Such a relationship will open up our human existence to the essence of technology, which now dominates our experience of reality (nature, culture, and history). It would mean that we were no longer "enslaved" to technology, and thus more able to find a way of inhabiting the technological world that no longer does violence to our own nature (which is to "dwell" as thinking beings) or to Nature as such. The motivation and aim of Heidegger's questioning of technology is therefore *ethical*, in that it aims to clarify how we should best live in a free and fitting manner within our technologically disclosed world.

   Heidegger begins by pointing out that the essence of technology, meaning that which enables technology in the ordinary sense to hold sway, is not itself anything technological. When we think of technology we might think of machines, technical apparatuses, modern science, cybernetics, computers, the Internet, and so on. In short, the technical amplification of human power to control our natural and cultural environments and possibly to enhance human life (though technology harbors both productive and destructive potentials). While these phenomena are certainly relevant, they do not really capture the essence of technology. They do not tell us how technology *is* the way in which Being is disclosed in modernity. Indeed, Heidegger is at pains to insist that there is nothing to be gained by rejecting technology (as though that were possible) or denouncing it "as the work of the devil."[34] The point is to understand our current relationship of enslavement and misunderstanding in order to better prepare for the possibility of a free relationship to technology. Heidegger is therefore not engaged in any "neo-Luddism"[35] or nostalgia for a pre-modern age, despite his penchant for Black Forest mountain huts and solitary forest paths. What matters is to think

through the essence of technology so as to no longer experience it in a "metaphysical," that is, a totalizing and instrumentally ordered way.

An obvious definition would be to say that technology is the product of human activity, the application of knowledge to provide a "technical means to a human end."[36] This instrumental definition is certainly correct; yet Heidegger argues that it does not capture what is truly essential about modern technology. To grasp this we must attempt to uncover the deeper phenomenological dimension of *poiēsis* or "bringing-forth" that underlies our inherited understanding of causality and instrumentality (the producing of technical means to achieve a desired end). We must endeavor to understand *poiēsis* in its originary meaning, which neither refers merely to "handicraft manufacture," nor just to "artistic and poetical bringing into appearance and concrete imagery."[37] Rather, *poiēsis* or bringing-forth includes the understanding of Nature as *physis*: as self-blossoming emergence, the "arising of something from out of itself."[38] This bringing-forth of something into appearance means bringing it out of unconcealment and into the realm of what is manifest to perception and available for practical use. In other words, poetic bringing-forth reveals beings in the light of *truth* or *aletheia*, where truth is understood in a Greek sense as a revealing or an unconcealing rather than as correspondence between propositions and states of affairs.

Modern technology must be understood, then, in terms of *revealing*, that is, as a way in which beings are made manifest for practical manipulation and theoretical contemplation. But we need to clarify the difference between modern technology and other forms of technology. What kind of revealing is at play in modern technology? How does it make beings manifest for theoretical knowledge and practical use? Modern technology does not reveal in the mode of poetic bringing-forth, revealing something and allowing it to reveal itself as it is (a self-generated process in the case of natural phenomena; an assisted process in the case of cultural artifacts). On the contrary, modern technology reveals beings in the mode of an excessive or violent *challenging-forth*: "The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [*Herausfordern*], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such."[39] Modern technics refers to our way of inhabiting the world and using our environment as revealed, mediated, and propelled by technology.

One might respond that surely all technology, even the most rudimentary, functions in this manner. There are surely some forms of technology – so-called "primitive" technologies, or ecologically sustainable technologies – that do not function by means of a "violent" challenging-forth. Such ecological forms of technology certainly use environmental energy resources, but they do not forcibly extract it and store it into as an available but exhaustible resource. In fact it is not the extraction and storage of energy resources that is the problem. Rather, it is the reduction of Nature to *nothing but* a stockpile of potential resources that Heidegger regards as characterizing the violence of modern technology.[40] Modern

technology *forcibly* and *exclusively* transforms all natural beings into potential resources: "Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium, for example; uranium is set upon to yield atomic energy, which can be unleashed either for destructive of for peaceful purposes."[41] To which we might add that language is set upon to yield informational resources, genetic material is set upon to yield biological resources, chemical and biological entities to yield industrial, medical, and military resources, human energy, action, and ingenuity are harnessed for economic purposes, and so on.

An important aspect of this inappropriate challenging-forth in modern technology is that it is always geared toward *expediting*, that is, *unlocking and exposing*, the latent energies in nature in the service of maximizing efficiency: "i.e., toward driving on to maximum yield at the minimum expense."[42] But this process is not only discernible in the technological approach to Nature; it is also present in the challenging-forth of energies in our social, cultural, and political environments. Here we could mention the production of energy resources and commodities for technical use and market consumption, the endless circulation of investment, stocks, and information within the networks of global capital, but also the manipulation of so-called "human resources" available for deployment within social institutions, commercial enterprises, and economic processes.

Modern technology must therefore be understood as a way of revealing that has the character of a setting-upon both nature and culture; one that functions by the excessive challenging-forth of energies to be extracted and stored. The technological mode of challenging-forth is a dynamic process of unlocking, transforming, storing, and networking energies in an endless cycle of production and consumption whose aim is self-perpetuation and immanent expansion (for example, the global economy). This endless cycle of technological production and consumption involves constant *regulating* and *securing*, the "chief characteristics" of the technological mode of revealing the world.[43] The kind of truth revealed in this way Heidegger calls *Bestand* or "standing-reserve"; that is, modern technology reveals beings in the world exclusively in the mode of *resources* available for use. "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."[44] *Bestand* designates the technological mode of revealing the world through the violent challenging forth of its energies, transforming reality into a permanently ordered and available stock of resources.

A jet airliner standing on the runway, to use Heidegger's example, is no longer just an object but a technical resource ordered "to insure the possibility of transportation."[45] As a whole and in each of its (technical and human) parts – crew and passengers, pilots and air traffic controllers, computer navigation systems, jet engines, engineering staff, ground crew, security, and so on – the airliner is revealed as a resource permanently "on call for duty, i.e. ready for takeoff."[46] Heidegger's claim that we no longer inhabit a world of subjects confronting ob-

jects "standing" over against us is attested by the contemporary trend toward de-objectified, networked resources. The computer is an information interface, the mobile telephone a "personalized" communication resource on permanent standby; we too become communication resources permanently "on call" within social, electronic, and economic networks.

What is the role of human beings within the technological disclosure of reality as a stockpile of resources? Are we responsible for this technological ordering and stockpiling? Or do human beings themselves belong to the standing resources ordered and available for use? Heidegger's point is that technology is not simply a human invention; rather, it orders human beings within its systemic process of revealing, producing, and managing resources. Indeed, the social and economic consumption of "human resources" is now routinely accepted as an unalterable fact of modern life. This linguistic usage is evidence of a real transformation occurring in our self-understanding as much as in the technological ordering of the modern world. The epoch of modern technology is not simply the handiwork of human beings; rather human beings are themselves part of the general technical process of revealing and transforming reality into a totality of stockpiled resources. This process is how Being presents itself or manifests historically in modernity, which is not simply a matter of human action, although it requires human action in order to take place.

Heidegger thus arrives at his provisional answer to the question concerning the essence of technology. This violent challenging that gathers up human beings in order to reveal actuality as available resources is what he calls *en-framing* or *Ge-stell*. What does this mean? *Gestell* is an ordinary German word (meaning frame, apparatus, skeleton or framework) which is used to designate the essence of modern technology: the gathering of human beings along with other beings into the forced revealing of actuality as a totality of available resources.[47] Heidegger's "definition" of *Gestell* reads as follows:

> Enframing means the gathering together of the setting-upon that sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve.[48]

Let us unpack this obscure remark a little further. The essence of modern technology refers to the systemic process by which human beings are integrated into the violent transformation of nature (and culture) into productive resources available for use. Human beings, however, are not solely responsible for this technological transformation of the world. Rather, we are "challenged forth," through technological enframing, to contribute to the revealing of entities, via scientific and technical means, as a stockpile of potential resources. Modern technics as enframing, in short, amounts to the "resourcification" of reality (to coin an ugly term): the reduction of beings as a whole to a totality of resources. As Heidegger

remarks in his *Discourse on Thinking*: "Nature becomes a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry."[49]

Heidegger's term enframing or *Ge-stell*, however, is ambiguous: it not only evokes the sense of setting up and setting upon; it also evokes the sense of producing [*her-stellen*] and presenting [*dar-stellen*]. En-framing thus points to two kinds of revealing: 1) the violent challenging-forth characteristic of modern technics, and 2) the artistic or creative bringing-forth of *poetic making*. If we remember that the Greek term *technē* refers to craft, skill, and know-how, the point becomes clearer. Technological enframing refers to the "violent" challenging-forth characteristic of modern technology, which threatens to reduce all beings, including human beings, to available resources. Poetic making, by contrast, refers to the gentler, creative mode of bringing-forth manifest in art, craft, practical skills, and "ecological" forms of technology that do not violate the integrity of beings but rather enable them to presence in different ways. This essence of technology, Heidegger argues, must therefore be understood as *fundamentally ambiguous*. The "danger" in technological en-framing, however, is that the "violent" mode of challenging forth will become all pervasive. The danger lies in the capacity of modern technology to *obliterate all other forms of revealing*, above all the poetic bringing-forth characteristic of art and non-violent forms of technology.

This danger manifests itself more concretely in two related ways: by the *disappearance of free-standing objects*, now construed as resources for use; and by the *self-interpretation of human beings* who come to experience each other merely as exploitable resources. This twofold danger Heidegger articulates as follows:

> As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve.[50]

Part of the danger of modern technology is that we seem blissfully unaware of this threat to our nature as dwelling or thinking beings. Instead, this threat is neutralized by the self-assertion of human power and the belief in technological progress. In this way, as Heidegger presciently observes, "the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct."[51] The danger posed by technological en-framing thus amounts to a twofold threat: a threat to other ways of revealing the world, notably to poetic bringing-forth as accomplished by art; and a threat to our "human essence" as dwellers within the clearing of Being (beings with an ethical responsibility toward those entities we contribute to revealing and using for our own purposes). Far from glibly celebrating the "post-human" condition, Heidegger underlines the danger inherent in the metaphysical-technological misinterpretation of hu-

man beings, and of all other beings, as manipulable resources. This ambiguity of modern technology is not simply a matter of human decision, nor can it be eradicated by the application of technical reasoning, rational planning, or utilitarian calculation. It remains an historical "destiny," a sending or destining [*Geschick*] that defines our historical experience of modernity; it is the way that Being reveals itself through the ambiguous processes of technological en-framing.

Art as "Saving Power"

What positive potentials are there within modern technology? How might we develop a "freer" more ethical relationship with it? Heidegger cites in response the poet Hölderlin's now famous lines: "But where danger is, grows/The saving power also."[52] This "saving power" indicates the possibility that technological enframing might harbor the possibility of a different way of revealing truth; a non-instrumentalist, no longer "metaphysical" experience of "poetic revealing."[53] "Poetic" is taken here not in the sense of a romantic nostalgia, but in the sense of a bringing forth that allows things to appear in their truth, to show themselves in radiant appearance: a *poiēsis* paradigmatically found in the *work of art*. To clarify this thought, Heidegger emphasizes the "originary" character of the Greek artwork as a way of revealing truth, of setting truth to work in an ontological sense (revealing the truth of a being through the work, and experiencing the work as an expression of truth).[54] Such *ontological* revelation of truth through art, Heidegger maintains, occurred in ancient Greece, "when the bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful was called *technē*," when art "illuminated the presence [*Gegenwart*] of the gods and the dialogue of divine and human destining."[55] Archaic art, which was *poetic art*, set truth to work in the dynamic conflict between world and earth (roughly speaking, culture and nature).[56] Art manifested or revealed Being by bringing forth and presenting beings through sculpture, drama, poetry, and architecture (the temple). Taken in its broadest sense, art in its archaic form "therefore belonged within *poiesis*."[57] Within the ambiguous condition of technological modernity, Heidegger intimates, the saving power can be found in the way the *poietic* work of art can still reveal the truth of beings: disclosing aesthetically their distinctive ways of Being as what we come to experience through the work.

The problem is that Heidegger appears at times to exclude the *modern* work of art – including cinema and photography as the technological art forms *par excellence* – from any such poetic revealing of truth. Indeed, he explicitly contrasts the degraded character of the modern artwork with the authentic *poiēsis* or bringing-forth of the (auratic) artwork that is capable of setting truth to work.[58] For the Greek world, unlike in modernity, art is still enchanted: "The arts were not derived from the artistic. Artworks were not enjoyed aesthetically. Art was not a sector of cultural activity."[59] In contrast with modern art, or the aesthetic prod-

ucts of the culture industry, the authentic archaic artwork was a *technē* in the service of *poiēsis*. Heidegger's emphasis on *poiēsis* thus suggests that only a return to *auratic* art, to an archaic mode of poetic revealing, will be capable of "fostering the saving power" in modernity.

Heidegger's recourse here to a *pre-modern* conception of art, however, indicates a tension in his thinking on modern technology. As Walter Benjamin points out, technological artworks no longer possess an *aura* – a singular presence and uniqueness – due to radical changes in the historical, cultural, and social meaning of art wrought by the advent of technical reproducibility.[60] According to Benjamin, technically reproducible, post-auratic artworks liberate art from the rigidity of tradition, dissolve the claims of originality, unique presence, and take on an ambiguous political function.[61] The technological art forms *par excellence*, namely photography and cinema, shatter both the modern aesthetic conception of expressive art and the archaic conception of the sacredness of the artwork as cultic object. Yet for Heidegger it is this auratic conception of the artwork, represented by the cultic work (poem, temple, tragedy), that might "expressly foster the growth of the saving power, may awaken and found anew our vision of, and trust in, that which grants."[62] Heidegger's thinking in regard to film, from this point of view, remains overly restrictive. Only auratic works of art, Heidegger seems to suggest, harbor the "saving power" that could keep open other ways of revealing the truth of beings. Can a Heideggerian way of thinking about cinema help foster the "saving power" in modernity?

Cinema as *Poiēsis*

In conclusion I would like to explore some ways of thinking about cinema that Heidegger's thinking on technology makes possible. Despite his critique of photography and cinema, there are insights in Heidegger's thinking that allow us to understand cinema as *poiēsis*, as a medium of "poetic revealing."[63] As Heidegger goes on to observe, technological en-framing opens up the possibility of new ways of revealing the world. Modern technology, understood as enframing, harbors the possibility of a creative "bringing-forth," a poetic revealing of truth, even a new way of experiencing the "event of Being" (the latter is what Heidegger calls *das Ereignis*: the appropriative event of world-disclosure that relates human beings, beings, and Being in historically distinctive ways).[64] The essential point to note is the fundamental *ambiguity* of modern technology: since it is not possible that *all* of reality will be reduced to a totality of resources, "precisely the essence of technology must harbor in itself the growth of the saving power."[65] The question concerning technology thus turns out to be a question concerning *truth*: a question of "the constellation in which revealing and concealing," that is, "the essential unfolding of truth," happens as an event.[66] This means that we must look to technological enframing, examining the ways in which modern technol-

ogy reveals the world, in order to find new ways in which truth might happen, different ways we might experience the "worlding of the world." What appears, from one perspective, as the "danger" posed by modern technics also opens up, from another, the possibility of new ways of being and thinking: "the essential unfolding of technology harbors in itself what we least suspect, the possible rise of the saving power."[67]

Cinema is the technological art form *par excellence*; one that participates in the very ambiguity of modern technology, its danger and its saving power. It is not simply an instrument of representational objectification, or a means of reducing art to an aesthetic resource designed to elicit sensation. Rather, it has the capacity to construct and reveal worlds, virtual and fictional, that can disclose different aspects of our own being-in-the-world. Cinema is a technological medium of poetic revelation with the capacity to reveal the truth of beings, even our own experience of world-disclosure (the "worlding of the world"). This is an insight that many other theorists have intimated, albeit from different theoretical perspectives. Whether through the "mummification" of time and consciousness (Bazin), the "redemption of physical reality" (Kracauer), or uncovering the "optical unconscious" (Benjamin); whether as a series of "automatic world projections" that both express and undo skepticism (Cavell), or as the presentation of perception, affect, and thought through assemblages of movement- and time-images (Deleuze, phenomenology); cinema can be also understood, following Heidegger's account of the essence of technology, as a technological medium capable of the poetic revealing of truth, a creative bringing-forth, the disclosure of virtual worlds by audiovisual means.

In other words, we can think of cinema, adapting Heidegger, as a medium of *poiēsis*: a medium of the "poetic revealing" of beings, worlds, and different aspects of existence. By "cinematic *poiēsis*" I mean a revealing or bringing-forth of complex virtual worlds; the technologically mediated projection and disclosure of a world through audiovisual images. Cinematic *poiēsis* articulates film's "truth-disclosing" power to present time, capture movement, express meaning, or reveal aspects of our experience of world that might otherwise remain obscured or marginalized. This "Heideggerian" conception of cinema can supplement the more traditional representational and narrative focus on film as presenting objects instrumentally within the action-directed schemas of psychologically motivated subjects. One need only compare, for example, a film like Malick's THE THIN RED LINE (1998) with Spielberg's SAVING PRIVATE RYAN (1998) to see the contrast I am proposing here. Many of Malick's films perform this kind of cinematic revealing of world, staging the poetic difference between saying and showing, between the horizons of the world revealed through mood and the particular finite existence of individuals acting within these world horizons. THE THIN RED LINE, for example, enacts a cinematic *poiēsis*, revealing different ways in which we can relate to our own mortality, the "happening of Being" or

Fig. 2: Revealing worlds: Malick's The New World *(2005).*

radiance of Nature. Malick's The New World (2005) projects a cultural and historical clash of worlds, exploring the (Western) desire for conquest and domination, the ambivalent power of romantic love, and the need to acknowledge a deeper (spiritual) unity with nature. Through images of non-human nature, which both frame and interrupt the clash between Old and New Worlds, The New World discloses cinematically and poetically the sublimity of nature understood as elemental earth, that which underlies and supports any historical and cultural form of human community.

The Tree of Life (2011) also engages in "poetic revealing," capturing an aesthetically transfigured reality – attentive to contingency, nature, and mood – through radiant images of place and duration. As a number of critics have noted, Malick's films express a cinematographic fascination with light, what one might call his films' Neo-platonic equation between light and life. Such "theophanic" cinematography is a way of using the technology of cinema to express the intimate relationship between human beings, nature, and the complexity of everyday experience. We might call this the luminous "realism" of Malick's cinema; its Bazinian power to capture an aesthetically transfigured reality – attentive to contingency, nature, and mood – through radiant images of place and duration. Almost every outdoor shot in The Tree of Life , for example, displays the setting or rising sun, in the background yet shining brilliantly through trees, radiating across faces, a poetic disclosure of the everyday world: images that express the ontological, or better, the *ontopoetical* power of beauty to reveal the truth of beings, to manifest the beauty of "all things shining." This poetic revealing in Malick's work is enacted not only at the level of narrative content, visual style, and musical expression. It involves the very capacity of cinema to reawaken different kinds of attunement or mood through sound and image, revealing otherwise concealed aspects – visual, aural, affective, and temporal – of our shared cultural and historical being-in-the-world. In this sense, Malick's films enact a

Fig. 3: Cinema as poiēsis: Malick's THE TREE OF LIFE *(2011).*

poetic revealing that shows the capacity of cinema to reveal truth and disclose new worlds; a *technē* that, in Heidegger's words, expresses a "revealing that brings forth into the splendor of radiant appearance," a poetic "bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful"[68] – or cinema as *poiēsis*.

A "Heideggerian" approach to cinema can embrace many ways of being, from phenomenological depictions of different modes of existence, a questioning of the dangers and promises of modern technology, to exploring poetic ways of disclosing new worlds.[69] All of these approaches, moreover, presuppose that we have considered the ontological question of the nature of the cinematic image and its capacity to provoke thought; a question that Heidegger's challenge to modern philosophy and confrontation with technology helps us to appreciate, experience, and think anew. At the same time, and in keeping with Heidegger's account of the *ambivalence* of modern technology, it is important to temper Heidegger's critique of the representational capacity of cinema and to acknowledge the interplay between representation and poetic dimensions of cinematic world-projection. A cinematic world has, on the one hand, a *representational* aspect of identifiable objects, places, characters, actions; on the other, it has a *poetic* or expressive aspect that is revealed in mood, affective attunement, sensuous aesthetic engagement, and our experience of temporality. Heidegger's critique of modern technology can help us acknowledge this often neglected dimension of cinematic *poiēsis* as an important supplement to representationalist theories of cinematic experience. From this point of view, cinema is the technological art form that most intimately reveals the ambiguity of modern technology as both a danger to our nature as thinking beings and as a "saving power" that might point to new ways of inhabiting the technological world. It can help us experience and

cultivate an attitude of detached engagement: a *releasement* [*Gelassenheit*] toward things or a "letting be" of beings, a shift in sensibility and attitude that might open up a more "free" relationship with the technologically mediated worlds in which we live. Despite Heidegger's warnings about the "danger" posed by audio-visual media, we can think with Heidegger (and against Heidegger) by exploring the "mystery" of cinema:[70] how it can be a poetic medium of projecting and revealing worlds, a radiant bloom in the desert of technology.

50. E. Panofsky, "Original und Faksimilereproduktion," *Der Kreis* 7 (1930): 3-16.

51. E. Panofsky, "On Movies," *Bulletin of the Department of Art and Archaeology of Princeton University* (June 1936): 5-15. On this text, see the important article by Thomas Y. Levin, "Iconology at the Movies: Panofsky's Film Theory," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9, no. 1 (1996): 27-55.

52. Walter Benjamin, "L'Œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproduction mécanisée," trans. Pierre Klossowski and W. Benjamin, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 5, no. 1 (1936): 40–66.

Technē and *Poiēsis*: On Heidegger and Film Theory

1. Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. J.M. Anderson and E.H. Freund (New York: Harper & Row 1966), 54.

2. See Tom Rockmore, *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Antihumanism, and Being* (London: Routledge, 1995), and *French Interpretations of Heidegger: An Exceptional Reception*, ed. David Pettigrew and François Raffoul (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

3. See Robert Sinnerbrink, "Heidegger and the 'End of Art,'" *Literature and Aesthetics* 14, no. 1 (June 2004): 89-109. One Heidegger scholar, for example, claims that it is hard to imagine Heidegger sitting in the cinema because the cinema's sensational images does not allow for proper "dwelling"; for films immerse us in the dispersed, distracted and inauthentic world of 'das Man' ('the anyone'). Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 229.

4. Martin Heidegger, "The Turning," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 48.

5. Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. P.D. Hertz (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1982), 1-54.

6. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, 48.

7. See, for example, Wilhelm S. Wurzer, *Film and Judgment: Between Heidegger and Adorno* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1990).

8. Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), ix-xxv.

9. *Ibid.*, xiv.

10. *Ibid.*, xiv-xv.

11. *Ibid.*, xvi.

12. *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii.

13. *Ibid.*, xv.

14. See Marc Furstenau and Leslie MacAvoy, "Terrence Malick's Heideggerian Cinema: War and the Question of Being in *The Thin Red Line*," in *The Cinema of Terrence Malick: Poetic Visions of America*, ed. Hannah Patterson, 2nd ed. (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 173-185; Robert Sinnerbrink, "A Heideggerian Cinema? On Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line*," *Film-Philosophy* 10, no. 3 (2006): 26-37, available at http:/www.film-philosophy.com/2006v10n3/sinnerbrink.pdf; Martin Woessner,

"What Is Heideggerian Cinema? Film, Philosophy, and Cultural Mobility," *New German Critique* 113, no. 38.2 (Summer 2011): 129-157.

15. A remarkable journey up the Danube river, THE ISTER uncovers the complex layers of history and politics, of time and technics, as revealed by Heidegger and his contemporary interpreters Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy and Bernard Stiegler. Another Heideggerian-inspired documentary, BEING IN THE WORLD (Tao Ruspoli, 2010), explores the phenomena of creativity and skilled performance, accompanied by philosophical discussion and artistic performances, and urges us to rekindle a sense of wonder in our capacity for meaningful and "masterful" being-in-the-world.

16. Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World-Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 115-154.

17. Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," 15-17.

18. *Ibid.*, 16.

19. *Ibid.*, 17.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. Count Kuki in the dialogue is actually Baron Kuki Shūzō (1888-1941), a Japanese scholar and student of Heidegger's who introduced Jean-Paul Sartre to Heidegger's work. See Lin Ma, *Heidegger and the East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event* (London: Routledge, 2008), 12-13.

24. Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," 17.

25. See Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings,* ed. David Farrell Krell, 2nd revised and expanded ed. (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1993), 311-341. I discuss Heidegger's account of modern technics presently.

26. As Julian Young notes, "Kurosawa, who had studied Western painting, literature, and political philosophy, based *Yojimbo* on a Dashiell Hammett novel, *Throne of Blood* on *Macbeth*, and *Ran* on *King Lear*. He never pretended otherwise than that his films were cultural hybrids." Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 149. For a fascinating exploration of both Kurosawa's film and Heidegger's dialogue see Michael B. Naas, "Rashomon and the Sharing of Voices between East and West," in *On Jean-Luc Nancy: The Sense of Philosophy*, ed. Darren Sheppard et al. (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 63-90.

27. See, for example, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, especially Book VII.

28. See Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, 2nd revised and expanded ed. (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1993), 217-265.

29. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 2-3.

30. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 9-12. Heidegger uses the neutral German term *Dasein* (rather than human being, ego, I, consciousness, mind etc.) in order to have a phenomenologically unmarked term to designate our specifically "human" way of

existing without importing various ontological assumptions about the meaning of the "human."

31. Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 231.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 311.
34. *Ibid.*, 330.
35. A point well made in Julian Young's *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, 75-82.
36. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 312.
37. *Ibid.*, 317.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, 320.
40. See Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, 44ff. for an interpretation of enframing along these lines.
41. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 320.
42. *Ibid.*, 321.
43. *Ibid.*, 322.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*, 326.
48. *Ibid.*, 325.
49. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, 50.
50. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 332.
51. *Ibid.*, 332.
52. *Ibid.*, 333. Heidegger quotes Holderlin's hymn, "Patmos" (1802): "Nah ist / Und schwer zu fassen der Gott. / Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch."
53. *Ibid.*, 339-340.
54. See Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-56.
55. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 339.
56. Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art."
57. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 339.
58. See Robert Sinnerbrink, "Heidegger and the 'End of Art,'" *Literature and Aesthetics* 14, no. 1 (June 2004): 89-109.
59. *Ibid.*, 339.
60. See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility: Third Version," in *Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938-1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 251-283.
61. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility."
62. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 340.
63. *Ibid.*, 339-340.
64. Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1969). See also Robert Sinnerbrink, "*Ereignis*, Technology, Art: Poetic Dwelling in the Later Heidegger," *Literature and Aesthetics* 16, no. 1 (July 2006): 81-94.

65. Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 334.

66. *Ibid.*, 338.

67. *Ibid.*, 337.

68. *Ibid.*, 339.

69. Stanley Cavell's *The World Viewed*; Bernard Stiegler's *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), B. Stiegler, *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); and Stephen Mulhall's *On Film*, 2nd ed. (London & New York: Routledge, 2008), are just a few notable examples of the ways in which Heidegger's thought has made its mark in recent philosophy of cinema.

70. Cf. "I call the comportment which enables us to keep open to the meaning hidden in technology, *openness to the mystery*." Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, 55.

Stiegler's Post-Phenomenological Account of Mediated Experience

1. Bernard Stiegler, "An Organology of Dreams," trans. Daniel Ross, *Screening the Past* 36 (2013): paragraph 18 (references will be to paragraphs for this non-paginated online publication). Available at http://www.screeningthepast.com/2013/06/the-organology-of-dreams-and-arche-cinema/.

2. Steven Shaviro in "Post-Cinematic Affect: On Grace Jones, *Boarding Gate* and *Southland Tales*," *Film-Philosophy Journal* 14, no. 1 (2010), available at http://www.film-philosophy.com/index.php/f-p/issue/view/14, uses this term to characterize certain digital film and video aesthetics and the affects they generate in an essay that revises and updates some of the principal themes of earlier work on postmodernist technocultural and aesthetic transformations. I use it here more to characterize the continuity (and transformations) of the technological conditions of mediation of these industrial media forms that developed in the wake of the cinema's establishing of an audiovisual temporal experience designed to coordinate the attention of spectators/users with its unfolding.

3. On disorientation, see Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 92. See also Stiegler, *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1-2.

4. This is not to mention the contribution it makes to what has recently (if somewhat belatedly) been termed the "phenomenological turn" in film studies (see the recent one day symposium held at Queen Mary University, London, with this title, http://filmstudies.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/events/phenomenological-turn). Most of this work has been informed by Maurice Merlau-Ponty's philosophy and to a lesser extent that of Martin Heidegger. In this regard, Stiegler's return to Husserl's efforts to ground a phenomenological inquiry should be approached as a critical rethinking of the nature and stakes of such as "phenomenological turn."

5. Stiegler, *Technics and Time 1*, 177. Stiegler takes the description of the human as "technical life" from Georges Canguilhem, but his principal source for developing this account of the human is the philosophical anthropology of Andre Leroi-Gourhan. Leroi-Gourhan's account of hominization as achieved via the "exteriorization"