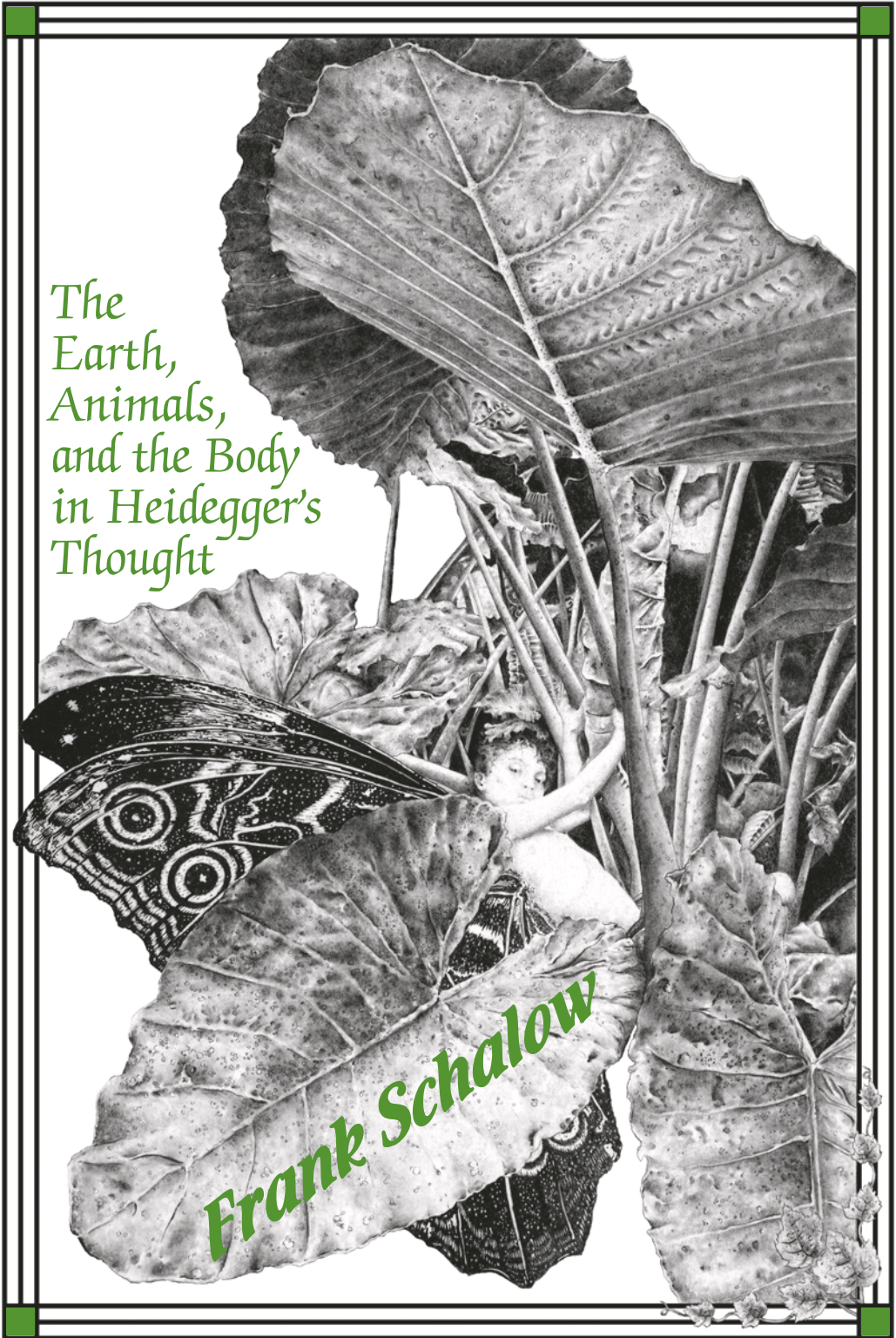


# The Incarnality of Being

The  
Earth,  
Animals,  
and the Body  
in Heidegger's  
Thought

Frank Schalow



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SUNY series in Environmental Philosophy and Ethics  
J. Baird Callicott and John van Buren, editors

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*The Earth, Animals,  
and the Body in Heidegger's Thought*

Frank Schalow

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*To Michael E. Zimmerman*

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## Introduction

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In recent years, contemporary continental philosophy has increasingly come to appreciate the importance of the problem of embodiment. And yet among those thinkers who have had the greatest influence on shaping this tradition, Martin Heidegger stands out as having neglected this problematic, even though he devotes considerable attention to the importance of humanity's "dwelling" upon the *earth* and develops a *radical* concept thereof.<sup>1</sup> This tension between emphasizing the earth and downplaying the body becomes never more evident than when we reflect upon a single parenthetical statement from the first division of Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1927). Upon addressing the lived character of our spatial comportment, directionality, and orientation, he remarks: "This 'bodily nature' hides a whole problematic of its own, though we shall not treat it here."<sup>2</sup> Can we, by drawing upon the entirety of Heidegger's thought, recover the body as an explicit concern of his phenomenology? In this book, I will attempt to answer this question affirmatively, and, in the process, show the environmental, ecological, and ethical implications of transposing the issue of embodiment into the forefront of Heidegger's thinking.

To develop this problematic, it will be necessary to address the omissions in Heidegger's earlier thought, which his discussion of the earth in the "Origin of the Work of Art" (1935) begins to make apparent.<sup>3</sup> Specifically we must counter a trend in *Being and Time* that he attempts to rectify in *Contributions to Philosophy* (1938), namely, the tendency to overplay the importance of temporality at the expense of addressing the corollary occurrence of spatiality.<sup>4</sup> While in the late 1920s Heidegger appeals to time as the key to uncovering the meaning of being, in *Contributions* he more concretely addresses the dynamic of temporality by considering its occurrence in conjunction with spatiality, that is, as the interdependence of "time-space" (*Zeit-Raum*). Space reemerges as the place (*Ort*) where being discloses itself within the scope of human existence's (*Dasein*'s) historical sojourn on the earth. In his 1962 lecture, "Time and Being," Heidegger reflects upon the importance of addressing his earlier omission: "The attempt in *Being and Time*, section 70, to derive spatiality from temporality is untenable."<sup>5</sup>

In the following, I will observe Heidegger's self-testimonials and develop the clues that he leaves, by his hermeneutics of facticity, that embodiment constitutes an important permutation in how being becomes manifest to us. By developing this theme of the *incarnality of being*, I will open up a range of pivotal topics whose exploration will bring Heidegger's thinking to bear on various provocative questions of contemporary philosophy: sexuality, the intersection of human and animal life, the precarious future of the earth we inhabit,<sup>6</sup> and the implications that reclaiming our embodiment has upon an ethics and a politics that take into consideration the current ecological crisis. Because sexuality is among those issues that Heidegger seems to have neglected, my appeal to our embodiment and tie to nature (*physis*) assumes a provocative character.

In chapter 1, I undertake the task of "repeating" Heidegger's analysis of everydayness within the context provided by the facticity of our contemporary existence. I expand this analysis to include the way that the computer age has altered the concept of the everyday work world, as well as the ubiquitous problems that bring our own "embodied" condition into question (e.g., the plight of addiction from "substance abuse" to Internet gambling). In chapter 2, I bring the issue of embodiment into the foreground by addressing that aspect of human existence that perhaps most epitomizes it—but that Heidegger ignores—the predisposition toward sex. I thereby take the initial steps to confront objections to Heidegger's tendency to discount the problem of embodiment, as advanced by such critics as Hans Jonas and David Krell.<sup>7</sup> In chapter 3, I raise the question of what ethics means for Heidegger at the historical crossroads where we balance the prospect of the earth's destruction with the possibility of safeguarding it for future generations. In the oblique form of a series of questions from *Contributions*, Heidegger expresses concern about the problem of exploiting nature for the purpose of our leisure and diversion. As a prelude to his influential critique of technology in the early 1950s, he emphasizes for the first time the *danger* of machination and the corollary prospect of destroying the earth:

And finally what was left [of nature] was only "scenery" and recreational opportunity and even this still calculated into the gigantic and arranged [through machination] for the masses? And then? Is this the end?

Why does earth keep silent in this destruction?<sup>8</sup>

In this ominous way, Heidegger provides an occasion to address the incarnality of our being-in-the-world, the manner of our dwelling on the earth, as well as our kinship with all organic life. Given this emphasis on incarnality, the *ethos* of our being-in-the-world broadens to include our stewardship of the

earth and our conservatorship of animals, as well as our concern for the welfare of other human beings.

In chapter 4, I consider the possibility of extending ethics to include a concern for the welfare of animals, the translation of Heidegger's "original ethics" from his "Letter on 'Humanism'" (1947)<sup>9</sup> into a "*transhuman ethics*."<sup>10</sup> In chapter 5, I explore the multifaceted character of Heidegger's concept of freedom, which is presupposed in his formulation of an original ethics. In this way, I will extend his vision of an original ethics so it can address the problems arising from the *contemporary ecological crisis* and thereby provide the cornerstone for any forum of political exchange, the "body politic." In chapter 6, I show how the entire sweep of Heidegger's thinking, or what can be construed as the "turning" (*die Kehre*), points to "incarnality" as a distinct permutation of being's manifestness, as exemplifying the diversity of its appearances. The incarnality of being, then, becomes a gathering point for the development of language that is sufficiently nuanced and concrete to address the most provocative issues of our era, including the impact that our *stewardship of the earth may have upon future generations*.

Does Heidegger's critique of technology provide the prototype for today's ecological awareness?<sup>11</sup> As this book demonstrates, how we answer this question depends to a large extent on how radically we develop the problem of embodiment as a central focus of his phenomenology. Ultimately, my thesis about the incarnality of being proves compelling, because it enables us to enter the debate about Heidegger as a protoecologist precisely at the juncture where concerns about today's ecological crisis intersect with the expanding frontiers of ethics and ontology.

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# Chapter 1

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## The Materiality of the World

What do we mean by “embodiment,” by the “human body,” by “physicality?” Can the body become for Heidegger, as it was for Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a “cardinal *ontological* problem?”<sup>1</sup> Could this question provide another avenue for raising a perennial question, which due to its historical forgottenness Heidegger sought to re-ask, the question of the meaning of being? Following in Heidegger’s footsteps, any concern for “meaning” must, after all, take a hermeneutical form. The “hermes” of interpretation is the intermediary that guides us in rendering the indeterminate determinate, in addressing something *as* something, in this case in allowing being to become manifest in terms of physicality. But the formulation of any such meaning-question must assume a historical character, because human understanding is historically situated and is *always concretely enacted through one mode or another*, for example, “everydayness.” Thus when we ask the preceding, we are asking what is distinctive about our historical circumstances that could allow us to translate the perennial question of being into an enigma pertaining to the fact of embodiment? Indeed, we are seeking the “between” (*Zwischen*) that would enable us to address the manifestation of being in terms of the permutations of physicality and materiality.

In this chapter, I will take the initial steps to mark the crossover between the historical presuppositions that govern Heidegger’s selection of a point of departure for re-asking the question of being and the chasm, the *chiasmus*, that separates us, emerging on the cusp of the twenty-first century to criticize his thought. Only by marking the historical variables that shape the relevancy of our point of departure can we, as inquirers, take up Heidegger’s task and pursue it through the opening provided by our era.<sup>2</sup> I will begin by identifying the common thread interweaving our lives into a “global” culture, the engine

propelling technology in all of its facets, whose impact Heidegger never foresaw despite condemning its Americanized expression, namely, the economic system of capitalism. More specifically, I will show how the emergence of capitalism as the center of the dominant contemporary “lifestyle” provides a historical backdrop against which to recast Heidegger’s *analysis of everydayness* and retrospectively confirm his account of the everyday “they-self” as prevalent in various cultural forms. Specifically, the downward plunge into the cycle of production/consumption, which occurs under the technological rule of capitalism, epitomizes the tendency of falling inherent in human existence. This manner of falling into the grips of technology makes explicit a latent concern for materiality, which is determined less by the physical processes of production as by their global linchpin, namely, the medium of exchange (e.g., currency and money). As this medium makes explicit, humanity’s experience of materiality is always “translinguistic” or linguistically mediated, if only at a prearticulated level of a gesture (e.g., a wink).

After addressing the issue of materiality, I will identify an “aberration” of mass society that both has its roots in falling and illustrates a predicament to which the fact of our embodiment makes us vulnerable, namely, addiction. Heidegger provides the key to exploring the unique dynamic of this phenomenon, in its manifold dimensions, in such a way that addiction appears as a basic “modification” of Dasein’s being as care, or an existential tendency inherent in everydayness.<sup>3</sup> Why should we turn to a phenomenon such as addiction in order to address our manner of embodiment? The answer lies in how human existence always discloses (or conceals) itself from the side of one modality or another, including that shaped by the distinctive historical-cultural-environmental climate in which we already find ourselves. By undertaking these concrete analyses, we will “repeat” the account of everydayness that Heidegger undertakes in the first division of *Being and Time*, and, indeed, according to the dictates and design of his own hermeneutical methodology. The outcome of this repetition will be to raise the problem of rethinking spatiality in conjunction with, rather than in subordination to, temporality, which correlates with the precedent set by Western philosophy to privilege the soul over the body, spirit over materiality.

## WORK, EXCHANGE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Rilke once exhorted us to “resolve always to be a beginner.”<sup>4</sup> In executing his hermeneutical method, Heidegger follows this mandate in setting an example for future philosophical inquiry. No matter how far we progress in such inquiry, we never abandon the beginning but instead recover it and reaffirm its

possibility. In selecting everydayness as his point of departure, Heidegger emphasizes that his inquiry into being must always return to this starting place, in order that its “presuppositions” can be further clarified by the questioning already undertaken. By clarifying the totality of these presuppositions, or what Heidegger calls the “hermeneutical situation,” the inquiry yields to the openness that all along has provided it guidance. The opportunity then arises to “repeat” the beginning through its inception within this openness. As we reenact this beginning, the inquiry’s pattern of development—of an advance predicated on the counter-movement of return—can appear as an instance of temporalizing itself whose historical concretion provides the backdrop for re-asking the question of being. The circular movement of this return—the hallmark of the hermeneutical circle—stems from the historical character of human understanding and thereby testifies to its finitude.

Heidegger does not dictate the terms of the hermeneutical circle, however, as does the circular character of understanding, whose potential for disclosedness originates from the ecstases of temporality. The more diligently we employ the hermeneutical method, the more we come to appreciate our place within a concrete historical situation. If as inquirers we adhere to his mandate of “repetition,” then the reinception of everydayness as the point of departure for inquiry must incorporate the changes in the historical situation in which the inquirer finds himself or herself. We must reconcile the analysis of everydayness with the specific facticity of the inquirer, in such a way that the contingencies of our historical situation in the twenty-first century reinform our experience of the everyday use of tools, and so on. In this regard, the insights of Heidegger’s subsequent inquiry into technology can be redirected to illuminate the everyday realm of work, because it is only by anticipating the era of “globalization” in which we reside that his discussions acquire the contemporary relevance they do. Accordingly, the analysis of everydayness must bring to light how the *modus operandi* of work comes to be redefined by these contemporary forces of globalization. In this regard, we would follow the example set by Heidegger’s own hermeneutics, in which the insights of later discussions serve to illuminate the presuppositions of earlier ones to permit the continual widening of the circumference of the hermeneutical circle.

While philosophy, unlike other disciplines, is distinguished by its preoccupation with beginnings, Heidegger differentiates his interest in the same from other philosophers—whether Plato or Aristotle, Descartes or Kant, Hegel or Husserl—by his desire to arrive at the least presumptuous of all beginnings. That is, Heidegger seeks a point of departure that is most removed from a concern for the perennial topic of philosophy, being itself. Indeed, he selects everydayness as his point of departure in order to identify the basic tendency of human existence to neglect the question of being. By

beginning at this prephilosophical level of indifference, Heidegger proceeds from the most innocuous presupposition of what each of us, as Dasein, already understands about himself or herself. Given this orientation, hermeneutics can avoid prejudging the inquiry with the introduction of pre-fabricated concepts about “being,” which may be derivative and thereby allow Dasein’s pre-understanding to point the way to the emergence of a primordial understanding of its being, and, correlatively, of being itself. By entering the inquiry at the juncture where a consideration of being remains most withdrawn, hermeneutics can then allow the dislocations and omissions in everyday existence to indicate, by contrast, the origin of ontological understanding, and, thereby, of the manifestation proper to being itself. But, most importantly, by tracing the emergence of the question of being from a prephilosophical level, Heidegger establishes the wider significance of this question, the scope of its relevance; he thereby marks the experience of “wonder” that summons each individual to engage in philosophical inquiry and to make that endeavor the foremost consideration of all.

We seem to state the obvious in saying that philosophy must begin where we already are, with the pre-understanding of everyday existence. But is the concept of “everydayness,” which Heidegger outlines in the first division of *Being and Time*, set in granite, or, instead, is it open to revision as the historical circumstances of the inquirer change?<sup>5</sup> Before attempting to answer this question, we must recall that part of what is involved in the self’s facticity is its embeddedness in a culture oriented toward change and development. In light of this observation, I will attempt to show that a revision of Heidegger’s analysis of everydayness is not only possible, indeed, it is necessary, for this revision fulfills an explicit hermeneutical mandate of retrieving the point of departure for ontological inquiry, that is, of “repeating” the earlier analysis in order to uncover its presuppositions within a wider historical context. As Heidegger states at the conclusion of *Being and Time*—quoting an earlier passage—“philosophy is ‘universal phenomenological ontology,’ and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of *existence*,” has made fast the guiding line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it *arises* and to which it *returns*.<sup>6</sup>

## A.

The fact that we are immersed in history means that the variables that govern our consideration of the equipmental whole of everydayness may be much different than those that first led Heidegger to undertake such a phenomenological analysis in the 1920s. The facticity that distinguishes those who live

in the “information age” of computers and e-commerce is different from that which defined our predecessors who inhabited the industrialized realm of typewriters and corner markets. If everydayness is simply the routine by which we adapt to changes in *technē*, then awareness of the global character of this change defines modern technology as such. Thus the *technē* of technology and everydayness become two sides of the same coin, insofar as the latter maps on a global scale the practical dealings that preoccupy us in the immediate proximity of our everyday environment. For Heidegger, then, the question of technology springs from the soil of everydayness; conversely, a change in our experience of technology—the historical unfolding of its possibilities—requires altering our concept of the everyday world of equipment. Insofar as Heidegger equates the *technē* of technology with production, which in turn comes to light in its nascent form in the everyday work world, a change in the face of contemporary technology implies another axis along which the significance of equipmental relations unfolds. Given this new axis of the work world, the basic *modus operandi* of everydayness is no longer production but exchange.

In this section, I will show how the issue of exchange remains latent in Heidegger’s critique of “productionist metaphysics” as providing the *Gestalt* for proliferating technology on a global scale.<sup>7</sup> Then I will establish how “exchange” has an ontological meaning, which in turn can be interpreted in light of the dynamics of the disclosure of being itself. Finally, I will argue that reintroducing economic issues compensates for Heidegger’s neglect of them, *insofar as it interweaves the concern for our condition as embodied beings into the composition of everydayness*. For this reintroduction yields the key to retrieving his earlier analysis of the everyday work world—where embodiment becomes as much a dimension of “world” as it is of the “there”—albeit now recast in light of his insight into technology. Thus a new hermeneutic circle emerges in which a reexamination of Heidegger’s critique of technology returns us to his analysis of everydayness, and, conversely, the repetition of this analysis (with an emphasis on exchange versus production) both sharpens and expands his portrait of technology.

When Heidegger developed his analysis of everydayness in the mid-1920s, he was undoubtedly influenced by the cultural milieu of his time. His examples from the first division of *Being and Time* bear this out: the appeal to the hammer and nail to distinguish the matrix of instrumentality, or the car, turn signal, and road sign to outline the totality of signifying relations which makes explicit the disclosure of world.<sup>8</sup> By the same token, Heidegger undertakes a phenomenological description of everydayness in order to delineate a structure intrinsic to any culture. He establishes a common thread in how we face the regimentation of daily life or the fact that in any cultural context

human beings become embroiled in certain routines and succumb to the pressures of social conformity. In any event, the work-a-day-world arises in conjunction with a nexus of social relationships, in such a way that world admits different variations to accommodate a diversity of cultural dealings and pursuits (even within a single culture).

For Heidegger, “everydayness” is first and foremost an existential-ontological structure. While his own vision of instrumentalism includes components of twentieth-century industrialized society, he also acknowledges from the opposite pole how the routine concerns of everydayness pervade even “primitive” mentality. In chapter 6 of the first division of *Being and Time*, Heidegger recounts the “fable” of care that exemplifies the concerned awareness that so-called “mythic” Dasein displays about its “thrownness” into a situation, its relation to others, and the purposiveness of all activities. While the thread of everydayness traverses both the worlds of industrialized and mythic Dasein, its texture of composition changes from culture to culture and historical epoch to historical epoch. And since philosophy is essentially a historical enterprise, it is equally necessary to reopen the question of the composition of everydayness, as it occurs, so to speak, “today.” Through the exercise of hermeneutic phenomenology in *Being and Time*, Heidegger unfolds the minimal set of presuppositions that governs the development of philosophical understanding from its origin in everyday life. Conversely, upon entering a new millennium, we must reconsider how the routine of everydayness as displayed in twenty-first-century America both extends Heidegger’s analysis and incorporates nuances that reflect contemporary society.

When placed within its wider context, Heidegger’s discussion of instrumentality coincides with his attempt to address the being of “intra-worldly” things. In *Being and Time*, he coins the term “ready-to-hand” (*zuhanden*) to describe the being of equipment. When immersed in everydayness, the self’s preoccupation with the ready-to-hand leads it to forsake larger concerns about the “meaning” of human existence. The familiarity of routine has the indirect effect of rendering human existence as unproblematic as possible. Thus only through the interruption of this “security” does Dasein take the initiative to question itself, to defer its interest in “mastering” things in favor of addressing the larger concern for who it is.

By contrast, the self’s preoccupation with instrumentality goes hand in hand with its tendency to become absorbed in the concerns of the impersonal “they-self,” the ubiquitous crowd.<sup>9</sup> An indifference to the meaning of human existence and ultimately to being itself follows from Dasein’s identification with the “they-self.” What remains ambiguous for Heidegger, however, is whether the importance of instrumental dealings stems from the inordinate importance that the “they” places on them, or instead whether a preoccupation

with the things of instrumentality is already inherent in Dasein's tendency to "fall." While this ambiguity may not have been problematic for Heidegger, it nevertheless may be symptomatic of specific limitations in his analysis of everydayness, namely, an emphasis on "production" to the detriment of the "exchange" side of the equation.

In addressing equipmentality in *Being and Time*, Heidegger incorporates Aristotle's portrait of the ends-means continuum that culminates in the project of "that for the sake of which," of some possibility of human existence as care. To a large extent, this Aristotelian vision remains intact more than 2,000 years later, even as industrialization replaces an agrarian society, and the "information age" replaces industrialization. Yet the succession of paradigm shifts that have transpired over the centuries may make the Aristotelian view inadequate to address the different axis on which the world turns today. Among Heidegger's students, Herbert Marcuse was among the first to relocate the roots of everyday instrumentality—whether approached economically (Marx) or even phenomenologically—in the "technological work-world."<sup>10</sup> Yet even Marcuse's understanding of technology lagged dramatically behind the advances of the information/digital age.

If there is one aspect of technology that Heidegger underestimated, it is the exponential rate of change that occurs once technology provides the spring for its own innovation. This self-propelling character of technology means that the immediacy of what was originally classified as "ready-to-hand" is now refracted through the optic lens of an artificial system of computer icons and graphics, for example, the mentality of "having the 'world' at your fingertips." Thus your hammer may be broken, but the possibility of its replacement hinges on the presence of an inventory that is registered through a computer at some centralized place of distribution. In chapter 2 of the first division of *Being and Time*, Heidegger points to the breakdown of the nexus of equipmental relations as offering a phenomenological clue to the appearance of world; the unready-to-hand points back to the completeness of the equipmental totality that is presupposed in everyday praxis. But with the advent of information technology, such dislocations exceed the confines of any specific environment and instead interface on many different fronts—like a matrix—cutting across multiple environments simultaneously. Moreover, it is not just the ensemble of equipment that is relevant; instead, what proves pivotal is the anonymous character of the process in which these various items are linked together within a global network—a "transactional" interreality, of which "cyberspace" is the hyperbole. In the spirit of Heidegger's famous description of the "they" (*das Man*), the impersonalization of everyday praxis, lies as much in this transactional dimension (i.e., in exchange, as it does in production). In this process of impersonalization, the production/use of things (e.g., the ready-to-hand) takes a backseat to the

strategies for their marketing and selling as commodities, what Marcuse calls “total commercialization.”<sup>11</sup>

While we may debate to what extent the paradigm of the ready-to-hand has changed, what becomes significant is how this change has made the physical aspect of working depend upon an *artificial mechanism for the mobilization of work itself*—the medium of exchange that connects workers together from every quadrant of the globe. Through his interpretation of Ernst Jünger’s writings, Heidegger was familiar with the concept of the “mobilization of the worker.”<sup>12</sup> But for the most part, work remains an extension of a human being’s use of technological devices in proximity to him or her rather than hinging upon a communicative network of exchange relations. This network creates new synergies that redefine the nature of work itself, transposing the importance of what we do and what we own into a global nexus of transactions on which we all depend for our livelihoods. By the same token, money assumes an ambiguous role both as a way to satisfy material needs and as a token or cipher to communicate the complex synergies and partnerships to which we all belong as members of this “exchange” economy.

As such, money is not merely a numerical measure but is also an “insignia” by which human beings express “concern” about their own welfare as natural and social beings. In this regard, Heidegger’s view of the “mobilization of the worker” seems to suffer from underestimating Karl Marx’s insight into the unique status of money as “capital.” That is, qua capital money is not only a “bartering” tool (having a “use-value”),<sup>13</sup> but is also a vehicle for expressing the confluence of interests among different members of society, a formula for simplifying diverse interests (e.g., of both need and desire) into a common language. As Marx emphasizes, money is more than just the physical currency that we circulate, or, even, as in the case of gold, a representation of the value of that currency. Instead, money as capital is the “declension” of worth that *bespeaks* society’s interest (in the value) of the commodities we exchange—the entire circuit of buying and selling; money thereby “stands for” the process of circulation itself, its social as well as fiscal dynamics.<sup>14</sup>

If we take Marx’s clue about the importance of capital, and transpose it within the macro-context of Heidegger’s critique of technology—rather than utilize that analysis for the purpose of advancing one ideology over another (e.g., communism over capitalism)—another portrait emerges: *exchange becomes part of the composition of the existentials of everydayness*. To the extent that we emphasize the priority of exchange over production, and shift the focus of Heidegger’s discussion of everydayness accordingly, we must then address how this change occurs in ontological terms. No matter in which cultural milieu we may exist, and however everydayness in turn comes to be expressed, in one way or another, care (*Sorge*) continues to define the constitution of human being. And