

When the Beautiful *IS* the Good: Towards Linguistic Revealing and the Fitting Order of *Ethos* in T.S Eliot's "Four Quartets"

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Abstract

Outside the politics of environmental justice which imbue the world with false responsibility, the ontology of technological subjectivity masks a drive to deplete and subjugate. The question then becomes: how is it possible to be ecologically just knowing that nature is conceived as an organism? More so, how can language be ethically restorative whilst the relationship between the 'word' and the 'thing' is grounded on the logic of representation? The palimpsest of ontological subjectivity, arising from Platonic eidos and cascading to Nietzsche's will to power, reproduces a hierarchical system. The purpose of this study is to administer a trenchant critique of ontology rather than merely engage in ecological compassion and political power games. This essay defends the argument that the poetic realm preserves the long-forgotten essence of nature as physis, chiefly as that which evades the technological worldview of objectification. Instead of locating the salvation of nature in the subjectivity of the romantic lyricist or the ecological moralist, dwelling poetically demands a form of linguistic revealing and an ethos of response that lets nature be. First, Eliot's image of the 'matrimonie' allows earth to appear as a gathering force. Second, the 'river' gathers the 'land's edge' and the 'gods' radiance' around the precinct of natural guardianship. It so happens that Eliot's depiction of nature exhorts human beings to live amid the sprouting of trees, the supporting of soil, and the streaming of the river. This restorative act advocates an incisive critique of technological logic and an avowal of meditative thinking.

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1. INTRODUCTION, ECOLOGY, RESOURCE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Previous research on environmental ethics espouses the practice of ecological preservation through sustainable practices and legal policies. In "Conserving Ecosystems Locally", Len Broberg (2003) states that "Attaching a legal or policy standard to the ecological perspective relates the scientific information to the decisionmaking criteria used by planning bodies" (p. 671). The implementation of a legal governing body in local milieus might be effective in creating personal responsibility. Nevertheless, ecological practices of this sort forget that deontological systems can be averted and rescinded for ideological reasons. More so, a simple aversion to impoverishing the land implicitly ascertains that land depletion is a legitimate cause of natural enfeeblement. In "Enhancing ecological integrity while preserving ecosystem services", Casper Leeuwen et al. (2021) propose a renovative approach that produces an artificial archipelago (*Marker Wadden*) as a viable source for preserving bio-diversity and confining the degradation of the ecosystem. This singular approach emanates from both a human need for nourishment and a natural need for recreation. Much to Leeuwen and Broberg's accord, environmental

ethics chastises the practices of human depletion by failing to critique the anthropocentric or human-centered views that tarnish ecological interventions.

In this sense, the paradox lies in the idea that environmental ethics rehash the ontological grip of technological thinking in its ecological practices. More so, the gargantuan processes of using nature as a power station for modern science and technology have made it almost impossible to forge a righteous ecological kinship. First, in some convoluted sense, the pollution of lands, the emission of gases, and littering as a rudimentary form become the essential conditions for environmental ethics to be a matter of moral appraisal. Second, language imposes a debilitating practice of objectified thinking, which regards nature as the by-product of human acts, practices, and operations. Third, instead of allowing nature to be abundant in the production of human artefacts, much like a river with its streaming force, the hydroelectric power plant interferes with the 'streaming' of the river, thereby forging an ecology that bends nature to human will. It so happens that it is an in-depth understanding of nature and its relationship to technology that can avail the ecological ills of our modern society.

Until we know how technology frames our natural world, then it is possible to forge a system of morality. This is what Martin Heidegger insinuates in his critique of technology. The world of nature can only be accessed morally once human beings understand how technology conditions our thinking about nature. This is evident since Peter Alawa (2014) in "Kant and Heidegger on Environmental Ethics" maintains that "In understanding Heidegger properly, one must live an authentic life and it means one should not bend nature to his own will through science and technology because it will make one not to be the "guardian of Being" (p. 95). This article is an attempt to decipher how technology dovetails with the logic of representational thinking and metaphysical objectification. More so, and through this meticulous reading, this study proposes a novel approach to ecological preservation, chiefly by gauging how poetry – in the Heideggerian-Greek sense - regards nature as a self-abiding force. In brief, nature is perceived as that which emerges out of itself (*physis*), and an immaterial force that retains its radiance in the world of human practices.

Heidegger never formulated a philosophy of nature as such. Yet, after his death, a myriad of thinkers has unveiled venues for ecological reflection in his later philosophy. Outside the ecological attempts to 'save' the earth, Heidegger's phenomenological approach locates environmental depletion in the duplicitous revolt of the will to power and technological logic. The intellectual history of the West began with the Greek interpretation of nature and culminates in the essence of technology. What Heidegger calls care (*Sorge*) when misconstrued individualistically, becomes a "careless thought in man's domination or will to power over nature and the earth" (Jung & Jung, 1975, p. 111). Excluding the ideologically ingrained *pseudo-morality* that besmears ecological sustainability, the risk of reproducing the subject-object schism is more palpable knowing that the ontological foundation of human history veers towards technological calculation. In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger (1977) bespeaks this concern:

Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological. On the other hand, all those things that are

so familiar to us and are standard parts of an assembly, such as rods, pistons, and chassis, belong to the technological. (p. 20)

Heidegger's rebuttal against technology ascertains that technological logic (*enframing*) is a way of perceiving the world as a resource for human use. Within this mode of thinking, Rauno Huttunen and Leena Kakkori (2021) state in "Heidegger's Critique of Technology and the Educational Ecological Imperative" that "Calculative-technological thinking has become the dominant way of thinking and, through it, everything has come to be perceived as measurable and calculative" (632). This turning of the world into a resourceful machinery is pervasive in art, religion, and culture. The essence of technology is *nothing* technological since the logic of *enframing* is the grounding horizon of Being. On such a basis, the godhead is now altered into the worshipping of machines. The divine, as such, is ensnared in the tenacious clench of technological ordering. Starting from Platonic *eidos* to Cartesian *cogito*, technological logic has already set off as the objectifying of the world. Technology, as *enframing*, is merely an exhaustion of the subject's objectifying power. Heidegger's (1977) analysis of this occurrence runs thusly:

The world changes into object. In this revolutionary objectifying of everything that is, the earth, that which first of all must be put at the disposal of representing and setting forth, moves into the midst of human positing and analyzing. The earth itself can show itself only as the object of assault, an assault that, in human willing, establishes itself as unconditional objectification. Nature appears everywhere because willed from out of the essence of Being-as the object of technology. (p. 101)

This is why, according to Heidegger in *Being and Time*, nature appears as a ubiquitous object for human use. In this convoluted sense, what is present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) appears first as ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*). As ready-to-hand, nature delineates the line of products that are at the gracious disposal of human beings. Nature also appears as a subjective experience, much like the Romantics seem to adumbrate in their poetic works. More so, nature appears as a present-at-hand, chiefly in tandem with the natural sciences that establish the natural world as an objective organism. However, and this is where Heidegger's interpretation of the world is indispensable:

The 'scandal of philosophy' is not that this proof has yet to be given, but that *such proofs are expected and attempted again and again*. Such expectations, / aims, and demands arise from an ontologically inadequate way of starting with *something* of such a character that independently *of it* and 'outside' *of it* a 'world' is to be proved as present-at-hand. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 249)

With the advent of technological thinking, nature is reified into a thing and the world becomes an external realm that has to be delimited and calculated. To this end, the scandal of philosophy persists even more gravely now that technological logic has exhausted metaphysical thinking. The world is neither absorbed into a higher consciousness nor fragmented as an external reality. Nature, as such, has nothing to offer besides being inundated in a chain of ordered significations. Mark Blitz (2014) is cognizant of this technological attitude when he asserts in "Understanding Heidegger on Technology" that "a hydroelectric plant and its dams and structures transform the river into just one more element in an energy-producing sequence" (p. 73). In this sense, no element is valuable in itself. While the object stands *against* us as severed, nature, at this

juncture, stands *for* us as a chain of something more efficient. Heidegger (2008) is quite crude about this truncating gesture in his appraisal of theory:

The theoretical, one says, colours all other domains of value, and it does this all the more obviously in so far as it is itself conceived as a value. This primacy of the theoretical must be broken, but not in order to proclaim the primacy of the practical, and not in order to introduce something that shows the problems from a new side, but because the theoretical itself and as such refers back to something pre-theoretical. (p. 47)

Man's domination of nature arises out of the metaphysical attitude of objectifying human experiences. Though measures can be taken to act 'justly', justice is still intrinsically associated with rules of behaviour, which can be rebuked at any given moment. This entails that there is an impending risk of reproducing an objectifying ontology. Culminating with technology, nature is perceived as a resource for human use. This delimiting gesture ascertains that the human self "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." (Heidegger, 1977, p. 19). *More* like a resource and *less* like an object, access to nature happens as a consequence of rendering the world a 'standing reserve'. As a detached entity, nature exists as an 'object' that can be described and theorized for the 'in order to'. In modern technology, however, nature is *objectless* – that is, it does not have anything to offer besides being a 'standing reserve' for human utility.

In *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, Heidegger distinguishes between 'process' and 'event'. His concern is directed towards the abstemious use of theory as a source of human reasoning. Suspicious of theoretical reasoning, Heidegger (2008) shares his rejoinder:

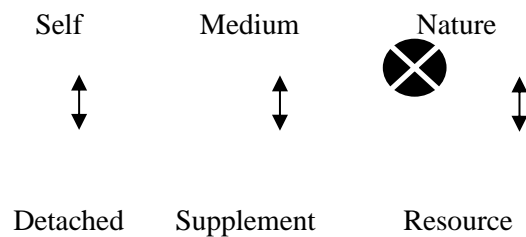
The objective occurrence, the happening as objectified and known, we describe as a *process*; it simply passes before my knowing 'I', to which it is related only by being-known, i.e. in a flaccid I-relatedness reduced to the minimum of life-experience. It is in the nature of the thing and thing-contexture to give themselves only in knowledge, that is, only in theoretical comportment and for the theoretical 'I'. In the theoretical comportment I am directed to something, but I do not live (as historical 'I') towards this or that worldly element. (p. 59)

As long as our relationship to nature is seen as a 'process' of an 'I' interpreting an 'object' in the 'outsidedness' of the world, nature will always be experienced as an inconsequential entity. Perceiving a tree as an ensemble of leaves, a trunk, and branches inculcates a 'descriptive modality' that reduces what is *lived* into what is *theorized*. This is where nature becomes a detached phenomenon which passes over as a thing. This theoretical attitude can only be viable once it surpasses the *lived*; it does so by forcing the 'I' into a detached observer. Perceiving the tree as a laying place for the poet or providing shade for a matrimony is more *ethical* than sustainable solutions for environmental preservation. In this sense, the earthly character of the tree surpasses the objectifying tendencies of technological logic. The tree, as it stands, cannot be reified into a thing because of its abstemious earthly character.

Insofar as the tree is revealed as a resource for harnessing material, it proves that the tree is perceived as a resource. The earthly element of the tree is used up and thereby prevented from revealing its inexhaustible character. Using Heidegger’s example, the temple’s rocky support preserves the Greek’s worshipping practices since it always calls forth human wonder and interpretation. The temple presents a world of worship and at the same time does not exhaust ‘earth’. Instead, the rocky structure preserves the heaviness of earthly material in the temple. This gesture is indicative of what technology fails to probe, namely a revealing that lets *things* be. In this sense, for Heidegger, truth can either appear technologically or poetically:

This producing that brings forth-e.g., the erecting of a statue in the temple precinct-and the challenging ordering now under consideration are indeed fundamentally different, and yet they remain related in their essence. Both are ways of revealing, of *aletheia*. In Enframing, that unconcealment comes to pass in conformity with which the work of modern technology reveals the real as a standing-reserve. (Heidegger, 1977, p. 21)

With technology at the forefront, nevertheless, there is a tacit idea that the figure of the human being is not enough; in other words, the Cartesian all-knowing ‘I’ changed into an excessive ‘I’. The technological ‘I’ dovetails with Nietzsche’s ‘overman’ whose will to power exceeds his/her own subjectivity. This gesture has been reinforced by the intrusion of the technological *medium* as an indelible part of human inquiry. As befits the Platonic appraisal of art, it seems that the technological age has supplemented the ‘self’ with a *mediating principle* that neither validates the subject nor affirms the world. This Platonic gesture, coupled with the upheaval of technological logic, produces the following experiential order:



As befits this experiential order, the self’s subjective control is supplemented by the ‘medium’, which in turn removes nature from the immediate moment of experience. Inverting Plato’s famous aesthetic caveat, nature – with the advent of technology – is *doubly* removed from human experience. In this sense, nature is neither encountered as ready-to-hand nor envisioned as a subjective experience. Since the ‘medium’ operates as a mediating principle, nature’s point of reflection occurs as a consequence of renewable energies, energy efficient machines, or recycling processes. Since there is no authentic encounter with the world, the self becomes an object for the ‘medium’ and the world becomes a resource for the ‘medium’. Since the ‘medium’ is the holy figure, the self is absorbed into the machinery of technological logic. In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Heidegger (2001) purports the following in this regard:

By building the world up technologically as an object, man deliberately and completely blocks his path, already obstructed, into the Open. Self-assertive

man, whether or not he knows and wills it as an individual, is the functionary of technology. Not only does he face the Open from outside it; he even turns his back upon the "pure draft" by objectifying the world. (p. 113)

What is *paradoxical* about these sustainable practices is that they only operate under the conspicuous conditions of human pollution, trash disposal, emitted gases, and energy exhaustion. This goes to show that nature as a resource is an ontological category which technological logic *cannot* comprehend, much less rebuke for restorative reasons. This is the single *existential* threat that human beings face, notably defying the debacle of nature as a resource for ecological practices. With all the advanced technologies, nature seems to be driven to oblivion by pseudo-moral practices. As long as nature is not conceived of *ontologically*, and as a consequence, explained along these lines, the reproduction of *enframing* would be a constant hazard.

This would entail that any restorative vision of ecological practice risks rehashing this experiential order. That is, the only visible incentive towards ethical prowess is to be *just* to nature as a resource (*standing reserve*). Any minute attempt at ecological preservation rehashes a capitalist mode of thinking. Electricity is repackaged into the car industry as a parody of ecological preservation. Pollution is diverted towards the pseudo-moral practice of false responsibility. Both of these restorative practices threaten the very fabric of ecological preservation. It is for this reason that ethical practices collapse, chiefly because they spurn the governing ontology of Being. Insofar as the governing horizon of grasping the world is resource (*standing reserve*), ethics – as a restorative practice – would indelibly construe an antagonistic ecology.

The question, therefore, is not – albeit abruptly – how can human beings preserve the natural world? Instead, and rightly so, Heidegger prompts us to ponder over the horizon under which nature is conceived, and through this, unveil our relationship towards it. Seen this way, two overarching questions come to the fore: how is nature interpreted in today's technological age? And, more veraciously, how is our being-*in-the-world* usurped in favor of a being-*contra-the-world*? This is a purely hermeneutic gesture since it delves into the interpretive character of human agency. Only when these questions are meddled with diligently is it possible to address the ethical horizon under which nature can be restored. For thinking to transform, Heidegger's call for art has to become the center of world revival. The poet, hinged by poetic language, deprives technology from turning the world into a calculable object:

This time of technology is a destitute time, the time of the world's night, in which man has even forgotten that he has forgotten the true nature of being. In such a dark and deprived time, it is the task of the poet to help us see once more the bright possibility of a true world. That is what poets are for, now. But it means that, as poets, they must free themselves completely from bondage to the time's idols. (Heidegger, 2001, p. xv)

The poet is indeed the 'savior'; however, Heidegger's concern is not aesthetics or poetic criticism. Both of these realms reproduce the subject's objectifying motive. Heidegger's concern dovetails with poetic thinking, which has been lost since the Greeks. Poetic thinking allows the thing to be. In the introduction to *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Albert Hofstadter (2001) claims that "Heidegger finds in language the thought of the thing as thing, that is, as gathering and staying a world in its own special way. Hence he is able to use "thing" as a verb" (p. xvii). This linguistic gesture conceals the abstemious approach of the poet to language, chiefly the pre-reflective attitude of allowing a thing to *be* a living gesture. This pre-linguistic revealing is coterminous with the Greek understanding of *physis*. In *The Question Concerning Technology*,

Heidegger (1977) elucidates this intricate relationship between art and *physis* in relation to art's poetic power:

Not only handcraft manufacture, not only artistic and poetical bringing into appearance and concrete imagery, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* also, the arising of something from out of itself, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* is indeed *poiesis* in the highest sense. For what presences by means of *physis* has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself (*en heautoi*). (p. 10)

Art, or more acutely, poetic thinking seems to accomplish this authentic task. Heidegger, here, speaks of Greek art since it alone has the capacity of making things appear in their living motility. To be a thing for the Greek poet is to be the precinct wherein the world abides as a living relationality. For the Greek poet, the concealment of gods, the streaming of the river, the communion of citizens, and the reign of rulers are indelible parts of one's *ethos*. Antigone never denies her transgression of Creon's rule since she comprehends the reign of rulers in her community. Yet, she also cannot name what motivates her decision since the gods are concealed in their divine abode. Concealing, streaming, communing, and reigning underscore the pre-reflective modes of poetic thinking that build a 'world' and by the same token veil what is 'encountered'. It is this veiling character that prevents human beings from leaping over the finitude of reason into the pervasive logic of technological ordering.

Nature has to be thought of as *physis*; as that which gives itself forth from its own accord. Only in this sense can nature be saved from the technological grip of *enframing*. Human beings, or most likely the poet, are the only figure who are capable of 'listening' to the silent call of nature. In crude terms, we only seem to act technologically towards nature if the flower 'blossoms', the river 'streams' and the tree 'sprouts'. There is a pre-reflective realm that human beings have to inhabit, which technological logic cannot access. Heidegger's (1977) concern is more than palpable in the following quote:

Enframing conceals that revealing which, in the sense of *poiesis*, lets what presences come forth into appearance. As compared with that other revealing, the setting upon that challenges forth thrusts man into relation to that which is, that is at once antithetical and rigorously ordered. Where Enframing holds sway, regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing. (p. 27)

More than merely a mastery of style or verse, *poiesis* is a practice of 'thinking' that allows things to be. *Poiesis* reveals the living nature of things in language. That is, in *poiesis*, neither is the word a unit nor is the thing an object. Poetic thinking responds to the living capacity of things in the word. It is for this reason that words become 'experiential' verbs that involve the self in meaning-making rather than strenuously detach the thing from world-involvement. The use of the 'thing' as a *verb* instead of a noun divulges the pre-reflective nature of language and its pre-reflective relationship to the world. As long as our relationship to language remains constrained by *techne*, nature cannot thrive as a self-arising revelation.

Taking the example of the 'river', it can appear in four different facets, each owing to an antagonistic mode of thinking:

- The river is a living organism, chiefly as a present-at-hand.
- The river is a teleological entity, chiefly as a ready-to-hand.
- The river is subjective pathos, chiefly as assailing a lonesome poet.
- The river is a resource, chiefly in tandem with technological logic.

Though these facets of experience determine *something* about nature, yet they ignore the relational appearing of the river. What the river is in these three realms is merely an object that stands outside the tarnished logic of the human subject. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1962) is clear about this gesture when he claims the following:

thematizing modifies and Articulates the understanding of Being, then, in so far as Dasein, the entity which thematizes, exists, it must already understand something like Being. Such understanding of Being can remain neutral. In that case readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand have not yet been distinguished; still less have they been conceived ontologically. But if Dasein is to be able to have any dealings with a context of equipment, it must understand something like an involvement, even if it does not do so thematically: *a world must have been disclosed to it.* (p. 415)

Moreover, perceiving the 'river' on such basis leaves no room for ethical judgment since, in either experience, the 'river' is a secondary order in nature that can only be understood if subdued. The river, in the industrial machinery of the city, depletes the 'streaming' character and produces electricity dams and water parks for leisure. Once this phase is reached, the 'streaming' no longer persists. The presence of what is absent presses on the morality of human experiences. In *Insight into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, Heidegger (2012) provides an acute example of how art preserves the self-revealing of earth:

The carpenter produces a table, but also a coffin....[He] does not complete a box for a corpse. The coffin is from the outset placed in a privileged spot of the farmhouse where the dead peasant still lingers. There, a coffin is still called a "death-tree." The death of the deceased flourishes in it. This flourishing determines the house and farmstead, the ones who dwell there, their kin, and the neighborhood. Everything is otherwise in the motorized burial industry of the big city. Here no death-trees are produced. (p. 25)

The premise thus far asserts that an ethics of nature can only be formulated if we are able first to divulge how technology regards earth as a resource. If not, ecological interventions will only be directed towards recycling, conservation, and reducing smoke emissions. The ontology of nature is saturated by technological logic to the extent that any form of ethical prowess unequivocally reproduces a practice of hierarchical depletion. Justice, therefore, calls for a transformative understanding of nature as the self-secluding and the self-arising. Only through this radical gesture can nature be a matter of ethical resonance in today's technological upheaval. If justice is to *return what is owed* as Socrates would have us envision, it would be along the lines of being virtuous towards nature. One feature of this understanding is to unconceal the self-arising facets of the natural world. Another feature is to allow human morality to dictate the relationship towards nature. This kinship, as Blitz (2014) pinpoints, reestablishes the priority of reverence in accordance with "gratitude, thankfulness, and restraint." (p. 78)

2. THE HISTORICAL IMPERATIVE AND ELIOT'S POETIC DWELLING

Our analysis thus far is not limited to the conventional coding of words, the description of phrases, and the metaphorical approach to stylistic analysis. Heidegger's greatest insight on language resides in the notion of 'listening' that he attributes to language. Since we do not see language as separate from the pre-reflective world, our interaction is always second-hand. For this reason, part of interpreting a phenomenon is to respond to how beings unconceal themselves, albeit linguistically. Therefore, our concern is to disclose a readable approach on the basis of Heidegger's treatment of language. This approach is of primacy since it permeates the interpretive exegesis of Eliot's "Four Quartets".

Insofar as Eliot's "Four Quartets" bespeaks the ethical prowess of finite life, one should be aware that the event of linguistic revealing has to be expressed through language. For Heidegger, language is the house of Being and words name beings in their relation to Being. Thus, language is not a mere system of indications and abrupt descriptions. Instead, language *essences* as it names the pre-reflective horizon of human relations, i.e., language names historical being; It is for this reason that Heidegger (2001) purports in *Poetry, Language, Thought* that:

In the tragedy nothing is staged or displayed theatrically, but the battle of the new gods against the old is being fought. The linguistic work, originating in the speech of the people, does not refer to this battle; it transforms the people's saying so that now every living word fights the battle and puts up for decision what is holy and what unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly, what lofty and what flighty, what master and what slave (cf. Heraclitus, Fragment 53). (p. 42)

It is no wonder that language occupies an overarching position in Heidegger's understanding of art. Much to its credit, art – poetry to be exact – treats language as the 'originary' expression of human experiences. First, it allows the things expressed to construct a world. Second, it gives primacy to the use of words. Third, it allows the things expressed to articulate their living moments. Fourth, it lets the reader wrestle with the meaning of words. Fifth, it forces the reader to see how words occur in a particular 'space' and 'time'. Sixth, it does not allow us to see things as objects of description. Seventh, and last, poetry, or art to be poignant, is the precinct of perpetual hermeneutic interpretation.

Looking at Eliot's poetic vocation closely, one can make transparent his idea of recovering tradition as inherently akin with the hermeneutical study of artworks. In particular fashion, the re-interpretation of historical voices, for both poet and thinker, is an instantiation of a perpetual tradition that can be ceaselessly interpreted in the present. In "The Waste Land", Eliot's fragmentary vocation, brings about voices from history, including Baudelaire, Shakespeare, Dante and Heraclitus in order to alleviate the world's psyche, though it can be seen as a deliberate stance to instantiate that past voices plunge into the malaise of modern destitution. In such a vision, aside from Eliot's epic poem "The Waste Land", one can also claim that "Four Quartets", as Eliot's last great achievement, resists the conformity to a single and ready-made interpretation.

In its own terms, "Four Quartets" is a hermeneutical practice that forges an originary way of seeing the poet incubate a philosophical dialogue with place, time, death, divinity and nature, creating, as such, an almost impenetrable piece of poetic genius. Following this, Wit Pietrzak (2011) delineates the following in *Myth, Language and Tradition*:

Four Quartets is thus regarded as a poem in which thinking in its purest form happens in the sense that it chooses to reveal itself to the poet. As an ongoing poetic thinking, the poems are hermeneutically in perpetual motion; there is no stasis as there can be no end to interpretation. Therefore the tradition, the images that have been employed before, the more or less obvious allusions to Eliot's earlier texts as well as the texts of others, are collated in order to be overcome in the familiar sense of "built on." (p. 277)

In his most celebrated essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", Eliot articulates his poetic vocation. He focuses on the revival of the different voices in history, claiming that tradition marks the disinterested sense of a poet whose voice is deemed unheeded without his immediate predecessors. Tradition, for Eliot, includes novelty instead of a hazardous call for what is past; that is why, in a hermeneutic of moral experience, one does not advocate for a fixed tradition but a fruitful dialogue with history. In such terms, Eliot (1917) claims that "Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense" (p. 14). Although, in Heideggerian terms, one's adherence to a given tradition is fundamentally preconditioned by one's historical belonging, Eliot's 'historical-sense' can be viewed as a conscious hermeneutical practice of re-igniting the conversation with the past voices of literary and philosophical genius.

3. NATURAL GUARDIANSHIP AND THE SAVING POWER OF POIESIS

The word 'guardianship' determines the kind of phenomenological experience that Eliot's encounter with nature crystallizes. Eliot treats nature as a living body that discloses the materiality of earthly elements. In true phenomenological practice, Eliot does not describe nature as such; he, however, articulates the living impact of nature on life. Thus, his poetic language interacts with the ubiquitous presence of nature. What he sees is not the bird and the garden. However, the poet affirms the 'appearing' of the bird *as* it calls forth and the garden *as* it gathers. This is precisely what Heidegger (2001) vouchsafes in "The Origin of the Work of Art":

The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing. World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through world. But the relation between world and earth does not wither away into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another. The world, in resting upon the earth, strives to surmount it. (p. 47)

Eliot, in this phenomenological sense, names the 'calling' of the bird and the 'gathering' of the garden. This experience with nature is phenomenological since it evades sensory apprehension, higher forms of being, and theoretical suppositions. Nature is allowed to manifest ungraspable *materiality* in the world. Mark Wrathall (2010) explicates this experience in *Heidegger and Unconcealment* by claiming that "the poetic presentation of material nature is

thus not an embellishment of what otherwise already exists. The poetic presentation allows the thing in question to show itself as relational” (p. 97). The ‘calling’ is both familiarity and withdrawal since it is almost impossible to name what is underway. It is only possible to disclose the life relations that the ‘calling’ engenders in Eliot’s encounter with nature.

This experience with nature is primordial since it discloses the living primacy of earthly presence. There is no separation between the ‘I’ and ‘nature’ as an object. There is, however, an embodied experience that encounters nature as a lived-thing. It is also not an ornamented aesthetic experience, which pertains to art for art’s sake. Heidegger speaks of this aesthetic ‘shining’; and, he correlates it with how the artworks ‘intensify’, or more poignantly, ‘vivify’ people’s historical existence. This ‘shining’ is not, as Kant would have it, a disinterested presence of aesthetic beauty. Heidegger (2001) purports the following:

The standing of the statue (i.e., the presence of the radiance facing us) is different from the standing of what stands over against us in the sense of the object. "Standing"—(cf. p. 35)—is the constancy of the showing or shining. By contrast, thesis, antithesis, and synthesis in the dialectic of Kant and German idealism mean a placing or putting within the sphere of subjectivity of consciousness. (p. 82)

Heidegger critiques Hegel and Kant’s theory of aestheticism. He sees in their theory a correlation between beauty and a higher form of consciousness. Beauty, as it were, shines only insofar as the subject treats the artwork as an object of aesthetic experience. Heidegger; however, has a different conception of ‘beauty’. For him, ‘beauty’ is how the text reveals a world of life relations. These life relations are inexhaustible in the sense of ever-flowing historical meaning whenever encountered anew. ‘Shining’, as it were, is concealed in artworks so that every encounter does not exhaust the historical breadth of art.

In hermeneutic practice, the ‘calling’ and ‘gathering’ can only be interpreted as an event of natural kinship. The poet is pathically involved with the familiarity of nature around him. He allows nature to transport him without instilling descriptive enunciations. Eliot divulges the *factual/*everyday meanings that accompany his natural encounters. That is, there is nothing as ‘uninterpreted’ phenomena. The poem allows for disclosing the everyday and oftentimes extraordinary moments that evade human reflection. This pre-reflective attitude is characteristic of how the moments of everyday life unveil the totality of human involvement with the world.

This hermeneutic-phenomenological gesture is coterminous with the ethical phenomenality of finite experiences. The hermeneut divulges the poet’s ethical kinship with the natural world and the demand of finitude, both as a ‘corrective virtue’ and a ‘capacity for allowing death to enshrine what is living. To be ethical, in this sense, is to allow earthly materiality to uncover the poet’s encounter with nature. His encounter allows nature to be a *lived-thing* – that is, a phenomenal event that express how the ‘river’ sways, how the ‘sea’ tosses, and the how the ‘land’ welcomes the living. This phenomenal experience can first be seen in “The Dry Salvages”:

The river is within us, the sea is all about us;

The sea is the land's edge also, the granite

Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
Its hints of earlier and other creation:
The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale's backbone;
The pools where it offers to our curiosity
The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.
It tosses up our losses, the tom seine,
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar
And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices
Many gods and many voices. (Eliot, 1943, p. 191)

As befits this phenomenological experience, Wrathall (2010) asserts that “For the thing to be a thing of the sort described, it must surrender itself into a play of relations, exist as a cluster and conglomeration of relations” (p. 12). This is first and foremost a phenomenological attitude. Each thing lives, and as it does so, unfolds a happening that is intrinsically worldly. The sea is known not for what it ‘tosses’, but for the ‘tossing’. The sea’s ‘tossing’ is neither utilitarian nor descriptive; it simply ‘gives’. The beaches, as it were, ‘welcome’ the ‘tossing’. The sea’s phenomenal reality resides in such an earthly experience. The ‘tossing’ articulates an *event* that cannot be expressed thematically, for it is ‘underway’, making itself known by oscillating with the land’s edge and the granite.

As the poet divulges, the ‘sea’ is no longer a self-encapsulated entity; a natural object that can be described for its earthly constituents. The ‘sea’ is what ‘tosses’; nestled within a phenomenal reality that is primordially interpreted. Away from enclosing the ‘sea’, the poet does not ‘describe’ what it does, for then we would focus on what *it* tosses. However, the ‘tossing’ is an event that can only be captured if the poet ‘listens’ to the thing *as* it lives in earthly reality. As Wrathall (2010) claims, “Considering the thing a gathering thus precludes any conception of the thing as a steady presence. The fourfold gathers around the thing in a tenuous convergence” (p. 12-13). The ‘tossing’ is what gathers – without reducing – the land, the granite, and the beaches. It gathers by allowing them to evade any descriptive vocation.

In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Heidegger (2001) purports that “The jug's jug-character consists in the poured gift of the pouring out. Even the empty jug retains its nature by virtue of the poured gift, even though the empty jug does not admit of a giving out.” (p. 170). Aside from any pseudo-scientific determination, Heidegger’s jug, as Eliot’s sea, has a primordial character that precedes its object-like qualities. Both things participate in the world as ‘pouring’ and ‘tossing’. ‘Pouring’ and ‘tossing’ are not qualities that can be dismembered for theoretical use. They, however, express a phenomenal reality that attends to the ‘lived’. This is what language names; it names an event that is ‘underway’ in the world.

In the second passage, Eliot’s opening two lines are indicative of a Heideggerian experience. As Eliot addresses the reader, he advises them to withhold their trenchant logic and descriptive enunciations. He – with varying degrees – advises the reader to ‘listen’ and ‘respond’ to the gathering around the ‘open field’. This withholding allows the poet himself to be ‘totally’

involved with the experience. A phenomenological reading, thus, “must stand in awe at the wonder of the thingness of thing as it acquires its meaning in relation to the other things that surround each other in the world” (Wrathall, 2010, p. 52). Eliot’s encounter with the ‘open field’ in “East Coker” divulges this primordial experience:

In that open field

If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,

On a summer midnight, you can hear the music

Of the weak pipe and the little drum

And see them dancing around the bonfire

The association of man and woman

In daunsinge, Signifying matrimonie –

A dignified and commodious sacrament. (Eliot, 1943, p. 182-183)

The poet’s ethical demand is finite since his reluctance to approach underscores the call of finite capacity. His reticent attitude is characteristic of a desire to *finitely* experience the ‘open field’. Doing so, the poet’s finitude becomes a moral capacity to experience the ceremonial rite as it is, namely as opposed to how an ‘I’ might describe or qualify it. Van Manen’s ‘lived-space’ reveals how the ‘open field’ is not only a physical space; it is, however, a ‘gathering’ (*Versammlung*) of people’s historical practices. It is only because the ‘open field’ is a historical gathering that it is possible for us to encounter it as a physical space. The ‘open field’ gathers the totality of human experience; it gathers lived-time, lived self-other, and lived-body. These universal themes, as Manen calls them, appear in the passage as follows:

- Lived-time is a ‘summer midnight’; a time when people dance around a fire. This is not abstract time. It is, however, a time when man and woman feel a sense of belonging to a temporal pattern. This sense of belonging correlates with Heidegger’s phenomenological interpretation of the world’s night. Midnight holds the symbiosis of the dark night and the traces of light. Wrathall (2010), in line with this idea, says that “There is no darkness simply opposed to light. Instead, darkness is the shelter of light. This sheltered trace of a light in the dark is blue” (p. 139). The dark blue in the sky’s midnight gathers man and woman around the holy (*das Heilige*) sacrament.
- Lived Self-Other expresses a living for the ‘other’; an experience that evades the object-oriented consciousness. The self allows the ‘sacrament’ to guide the poet’s encounter. The poet becomes a participant rather than an extraneous observer. This way, the poet encounters the sacrament from the lived-practice of involvement. For this reason, he is able to express the experiential contours its holistic totality.
- Lived-Body is not passed over as insignificant; however, the body is a place of immediate experience. The acts of ‘holding’, ‘leaping’, and ‘lifting’ reveal the

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reliability of earth and the corporeal significance of the gathering. 'Dancing' is mostly felt in the body, chiefly in gestures and motions. Each bodily gesture is expressive of an immediate contact with the sacrament.

As the open field gathers the sanctified matrimony, earth provide support; it is not dispossessed of its earthly materiality. Instead, earth comes to itself as it holds, nourishes, and supports the trampling feet. In the third stanza of "East Coker", earth permeates the living facets of a cultural practice:

Two and two, necessary conjunction,
Holding each other by the hand or the arm
Whiche betokeneth concorde. Round and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
As in their living in the living seasons
The time of the seasons and the constellations
The time of milking and the time of harvest
The time of the coupling of man and woman
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
Eating and drinking. Dung and death. (Eliot, 1943, p. 183)

The matrimony discloses a symbiotic web of life relations. As earth unfolds the materiality of time and space, it also participates in the gathering of people's cultural practices. We, as readers, encounter the living facets of a gathering. Manen's 'lived Self-Other' is expressive of how the poet grasps the 'matrimony' as it is being lived. He involves himself with how the 'others' – the association of man and woman – experience the matrimony as an ordinary expression of their culture. There is an encounter with the 'others' in a way that regards them as 'caring' beings. Here, 'care' is indicative of Heidegger's *Sorge*, which means caring for *how* a being exists rather than *what* it exists for:

there is also the possibility of a kind of solicitude which does not so much leap in for the Other as *leap ahead* of him [*ihm vorausspringt*] in his existentiell potentiality-for-Being, not in order to take away his 'care' but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time. This kind of solicitude pertains essentially to authentic care -that is, to the existence of the Other, not to a "*what*" with which he is concerned; it helps the Other to become transparent to himself in his care and to become *free for* it. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158-159)

This 'care' is what impedes the poet from reducing the 'others' into a mental experience. He encounters how they live, gratify, and experience the gathering. In this sense, the 'others' are not encountered as objects of reflection. Instead, the poet preserves the 'care' of the 'others' by keeping their time, keeping their earth, and keeping their seasons. The word 'keeping' discloses the kind of 'care' that the poet describes in relation to the gathering. In line with Heidegger, 'keeping' is resistant to how a self would be concerned with things in the world. 'Keeping', as it were, is an *event* that embodies the ethos of the gathering.

Eliot's ethical demand is between nature and a responsible ethical practice. Nature is allowed to gather people around earthly elements. It is precisely this 'allowing' of earth to dictate the matrimonial movement that discloses the inherent ethical demand of Eliot's poetry. It is neither rule-based nor a politically imposed. Earth provides 'support' for the ceremonial activity. It does so by supporting 'the rhythm' of their dancing'. In such an experience, the dancers' ceremonial rite is grounded on earth's supporting abode:

Earth is that which comes forth and shelters. Earth, self-dependent, is effortless and untiring. Upon the earth and in it, historical man grounds his dwelling in the world. In setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth. This setting forth must be thought here in the strict sense of the word. The work moves the earth itself into the Open of a world and keeps it there. *The work lets the earth be an earth.* (Heidegger, 2001, p. 45)

Earth is allowed to be itself – that is, the poet's phenomenal reality resides in how the earth 'supports' the dancing, 'nourishes' the corn, and 'keeps' the time. These 'words' are not seen as linguistic units. They, however, signify the 'relation' that exist between the word and things. Earth is the 'word', but, as word, it is already wrested from its phenomenal and immaterial reality. Earth is the 'nourishing', the 'keeping', and the 'supporting'. The word, therefore, is the 'relation' that foregrounds the intimacy of earth and language. In this respect, earth is not some 'thing' that invites calculation and description. The poet, by virtue of his vicinity to language, attends to the 'how of being' of earth:

we become aware of how language, in speaking, bids to come the entire fourfold world of earth and sky, mortals and divinities, by bidding the things to come—window* snow, house, table—that stay the world, and bidding the world to come that grants things their being; it bids to come the intimacy of world and things. —their difference, which appropriates them to one another. (Hofstadter, 2011, p. xiii)

Certainly, this contact with earth is primordial since it spurns calculative thinking and descriptive jargon. It, however, invites the hermeneut to 'respond' to what is already intelligible.

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In the passage, it is only because earth 'nourishes', 'keeps', and 'supports' that it is possible to freely describe its visible characteristics. This, for Heidegger, is where the proper linguistic gesture resides. It resides in disclosing the prior intelligibility of a thing in the world. With language as an event, earth, in Heideggerian terms, earths – that is, it allows its phenomenal reality to permeate the world. This phenomenal encounter with language divulges the following experiences:

- **The thing-livingness:** earth is 'lived' rather than 'described' in the passage.
- **The thing-contexture:** 'supporting' bespeaks the totality of human experience. 'Supporting' gathers the dancers around earth as it 'supports' the 'heavy feet' of the gathering. This support does not reify the materiality of earth; rather, earth comes to itself as it ordains the time of the 'matrimonie.'

Following Manen's existential methods, the 'body' is summoned to bear upon the earth's unwavering support. As the dancers' feet rise and fall, the gathering is entranced by the matrimonie. That is, the dancers' bodies are not seen in terms of corporeality; instead, as the feet rise and fall, the body becomes a 'lived-body' – that is, the motion of the feet on earth allows the dancers to perfect the dance. Yet, the dancers can only dance as long as earth provides support. In this sense, the 'body' is not, albeit narrowly, a physiological organism. It is, however, the 'body' as it lives in an ordinary world.

The poet's finite capacity divulges how the association is concomitant with the temporal realm of the season and the earthly support of nature. Their trampling with 'heavy feet' keeps the time. Their 'rhythm' ignites the dancers' motions. Their 'leaping' mingles with the flames. This relational realm is a consequence of death's mediation; a mediation that both capacitates and incapacitates. Death capacitates since it allows the mortal to stand beyond itself. It also incapacitates since the mortal does not exhaust what it encounters; the mortal only preserves earth's 'support' in the world of the dancers' matrimonie. As the dancers dance, the time of day measures their movement. The dancing reminds them those 'long since under earth'. It does so by recollecting the memories of those who have trodden on earth.

In line with this claim, Andrew Mitchell (2015) reflects on the existential impact of death on human understanding in *The Fourfold*. He purports the following:

If the human is to be in a relation to the essence of being, to any essence whatsoever, then the human has to enter into a medium of relation. For a relationship to being as such, to the essencing of being— or rather to the essencing of beyng, since its withdrawal character is precisely of concern here— that medium is death. Death harbors the essence of beyng. The refuge gathers together all manner of sheltering the essence of beyng. (p. 235-236)

Finite capacity is seen in how the poet is the mortal whose experience decries the superiority of the 'I'. Instead of observing for the sake of delineating fixed notions, the poet responds to the inexhaustibility of human phenomena. To be a mortal, for Heidegger, is neither to see death as the telos nor spurn life as a futile passageway. Mortality implies the attitude of allowing beings to retreat from the tenacious grip of qualifying practices. Insofar as being the mortal beseeches the arrival of death, encountering beings demands a practice of finitude – that is, a response to how beings dwell in the world. As the passage foregrounds, the matrimonie

allows 'earth' to support, 'time' to keep, and the 'dead' to live. In doing so, the dancers allow death to be the shrine that preserves both Being and nothingness. By allowing earth to support their gathering, earth does not exhaust itself. Similarly, the keeping time of the seasons measures lived-time. As the trodden feet mingle with earth's loam, the dead are remembered for their participation. As Mitchell (2015) rightly underscores, "By providing a refuge for being, death gives it a way of essencing, too" (p. 237). This refuge, so to say, embodies how the dancers respond to the 'supporting', the 'keeping', and the 'remembering'. This response can only be perceived if the poet gives primacy to the lived-moments of phenomenological experience.

As the poet's 'I' withdraws, the matrimonic becomes the focus of the poetic passage. This experience is rightly expressed in the following passage:

Mortals dwell in that they initiate their own nature—their being capable of death as death—into the use and practice of this capacity, so that there may be a good death. To initiate mortals into the nature of death in no way means to make death, as empty Nothing, the goal. Nor does it mean to darken dwelling by blindly staring toward the end. (Heidegger, 2001, p.148)

This capacity is experiential rather than teleological. It transforms how human beings encounter the world. The mortal, as Eliot's passage crystallizes, 'responds' and 'preserves' rather than 'observes' and 'calculates'. This way, the poet becomes the mortal whose use of language is concomitant with divulging how earth 'supports' the gathering. Since the mortal cannot experience death, finite living treats the human as the 'dead'. The 'dead' are dead only because they respond to the livingness of phenomena. The livingness of phenomena can be perceived in the lived-moments of involvement. It so happens that involvement absolves the 'I' from assuming a superior position over living phenomena.

4. DISCUSSION: THE CALL FOR POETIC THINKING

While previous research focused on the emblematic processes of sustainable practices, personal responsibility, policy implementations, this article calls for a radical transformation of our place in relation to the natural world through an involvement that advocates for a radical turn to the poetic approach to language. It so happens that this article calls for a transformative relationship with nature by heeding the call of poetic thinking. First, technological thinking has made it impossible for human beings to forge an ethical practice of natural restoration. Second, calculative thinking reduces language into a matter of technical usage. In so doing, the use of technology has supplemented the anthropocentrism of human subjectivity with the mediated excess of technological artefacts. Fourth, Heidegger's peculiar understanding poetry as poiesis grants human beings access to meditative thinking. Meditative thinking starts with acknowledging the intrinsic immateriality of beings, language, and history altogether.

In relation to Eliot's poetic passages, the realm of linguistic revealing, which encapsulates the contribution of this article, allows for an involvement with language that takes the 'thing' as a verb rather than a noun. This way, access to natural elements would divulge an inexhaustible immateriality, much like the 'streaming' of the river is of concern. This goes to ascertain that a moral encounter with nature should seek the preservation of nature's abiding force in human production. As the analysis demarcates, the call for poetic thinking through a transformative relationship with language questions the sort of ecological processes that aim at preserving the natural world. From a poetic stance, things have their own intrinsic essence which can be conjured through an apprehension of how words name the living facets of natural elements. It follows that the world of art, if gauged from the premise of linguistic revealing, can transform

the process of natural preservation. The question that seems to be concealed in ecological scholarship is the following: How can one preserve through technological logic something that evades calculative thinking? Or, more acutely, can the ethics of natural preservation escape the process of technological thinking? First, the paradox of ecological preservation lies in the inability of environmental ethics to escape the grip of technological thinking. An ecology, therefore, will indelibly reproduce a logic of exploitation and depletion. As long as nature is a 'standing reserve' – less than a thing – contact with natural elements will inextricably reproduce a parody of calculative thinking.

5. CONCLUDING INSIGHT

Indeed, one might ask (in spite of the moral undertone of this question) whence poetry becomes a saving power? Since the world appears technologically, the response to this pressing question has to occur outside the grasp of technological thinking. The caveat remains in how poetry can illuminate areas wherein the natural world can be revealed as a dwelling place. Though there appears to be multiple ways of access to the saving power, language is the primal source of preservation. Language allows the 'I' to apprehend things as having an inherent linguisticity that is oriented towards the world. Language, nevertheless, allows the 'I' to treat things as having no inherent value. This linguisticity is embedded within the finite structure of human existence. Following Mitchell (2015), language retreats for the sake of disclosing the relation between the word and the thing:

Language cannot be comprehended, objectified, and stored away, reliquated, in a word. This is how one treats a "dead" language. But what if language required our dying? We would not be master of it, it would no longer be at our disposal. Instead, it would show us our death. It does this in part by showing us the world. We die nowhere other than here and from nothing other than that here. But language also allows us to "represent" death. Language lets the death we cannot have appear to us. (p. 242)

This *relation* is what allows us to comprehend the *guardianship* of nature. Neither poetry nor nature is a *thing*; both are allowed to manifest their intrinsic immateriality. This attitude dovetails with the 'verb' like essence of the thing that Heidegger advocates in his idiosyncratic understanding of language. That is why, the *relation* preserves the thing's *living contexture* amid the poet's experiential moments. As long as language is perceived as calculable units and things are treated as detached objects, access to the self-revealing character of nature will ceaselessly be defying. Outside language as a sign system and a means of communication, the phenomenological essence of language lies in the pre-linguistic relationship between words and things that only poetry can access.

Considering our findings, human beings are called forth to unveil how technology changes the way we reveal things. This call is ever more salient since the essence of technology becomes a default way of defying the world. In Greek terms, technology and poetry arise from the ancient term *techne*, which is creation. However, while *techne* in relation to poetry is *poiesis*, *techne* in relation to technology is production. Huttunen and Kakkori (2021) are cognizant of this entrenching problematic when they claim that "Calculative thinking is related to technology and meditative thinking to *Gelassenheit*. Both kinds of thinking are necessary; problems arise when either way of thinking takes on a superior power position" (p. 632). Though fatalistic, this realization prompts Heidegger (1977) to confide the following:

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...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. (p. 35)

As long as we treat the land as a coal resource and the river as a power plant, our relationship with the natural world will be plunged into a cyclical trance. The problem is not with electricity or coal per se; rather, technology forces us to treat nature as a resource for an interminable chain of endless utility. Nature becomes a 'standing reserve' when human beings are challenged by machines to abide by the technological order of production. The absence of an intelligible agent in these aforementioned sentences divulges the paucity of agency in treating natural elements as resources. It so happens that poetic thinking is the saving power that bestows nature with the self-arising character that technological logic evinces.

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