Bonds Beyond Heidegger

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“But where danger is, grows the saving power also.”
Abstract: Our modern world is one ever increasingly dominated by technology. As such, our relationship to it has become more complicated than one would normally assume. As a byproduct, modernity has conditioned us to value practicality and efficiency above all else, an idea that encourages those involved to miss out on opportunities to create meaningful bonds with entities in both the material and social worlds. It is the goal of this thesis to explore how history suggests that the way we are, our way of being, can be thought of as a fluid phenomenon that need not stay the same. From there I explore how the physical spaces themselves are part of brings a way of being into existence and how engaging with risk and ritual is what opens us to these meaningful connections. I then turn to how Heidegger understands ourselves as beings alongside technology, how the essence of modern technology has done something detrimental to our current way of being, and lastly, how to save ourselves from this condition by engaging with risk and ritual appropriately.
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I. Introduction

The way that we understand ourselves as part of the world we’re in may seem like a primary, solid foundation, but according to Martin Heidegger this is not necessarily the case. In his work *Being and Time*, Heidegger discusses our way of being as something that both penetrates and embodies all we do. It is the way that we orient ourselves as the types of beings we are. To say it is how we think is to privilege our rationality more than he feels appropriate. It is how we make decisions, how we exchange information, how we relate to the world, and how we ultimately live our lives. According to Heidegger, our current way of being, in the modern technological age, has been growing closer to a profound danger. This is a danger that Heidegger fears will result in humanity eventually believing itself to have a complete grasp and control over all that it encounters, an attitude that he feels will keep us from appreciating the world as we appropriately should. It is the aim of this work to support Heidegger’s claims and, with Hubert Dreyfus working alongside, point to a more concrete possibility of where this freshly recognized understanding leads us.

Heidegger’s emphasis on human labor and craftsmanship provide an excellent foundation for understanding of this sort. His respect for the woodcarver and those who spend their days communicating with the physical world is impressive and will be relevant to our discussion, but the emphasis of this work is to bring out a broader value in appreciating the connections between ourselves and rest of existence. The bonds between ourselves, the physical world, and the social relationships we surround ourselves with are what provide us with the most fulfilling of experiences.

To enter the argument, I turn to well-known interpreters of Heidegger, Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Kelly. Through their work, *All Things Shining*, Dreyfus and Kelly draw a line from ancient Greece across history. Along this line, a series of moments are supposed to illustrate how
various *ways of being* have existed and influenced each other, right up to our current understanding of being. With this sort of understanding of history, I will step back from their broad picture of philosophical history and explore an area of the modern world that gestures to the more central problem that Heidegger is concerned with. From there I will draw heavily on various works of Heidegger, including *Being and Time* and *The Question Concerning Technology*, and point to a new *way of being* that could bring out an appreciation for the world by living authentically.

II. History and Cultural Paradigms

When we do things in this world, our actions, whether conscious or subconscious, are guided by the values and practices of our time and place. These values and practices only make sense in a certain framework and they are what, according to Heidegger, narrow, solidify, and focus society to appreciate and strive toward certain things. It is the aim of this chapter to show how different types of *ways of being* could have existed throughout Western history, what they could have looked like, and how they have been part of our growth into modernity and our current *way of being*.

From a historical perspective, our current understanding of a *way of being* is only the latest in a long line of understandings. What holds individuals to a certain way of being are the cultural paradigms that shape their understanding of the world. There have been other cultural paradigms in the past that have served as the focal point of a person’s way of being. According to Sean Kelly and Hubert Dreyfus, past understandings of our ways of being have transformed and grown into the ways of being of the future. While *All Things Shining* reads like a history, I am less concerned with historical accuracy and more with the possibilities that these examples open us to. As Heideggerian interpreters, Dreyfus and Kelly paint a picture of our being in the
world that situates us as part of a flowing force, and not as individuals discovering and understanding the world through themselves.

**Greeks & Romans**

In *All Things Shining*, Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Kelly look at history from an interesting perspective. The way that we think of ourselves and the world we live in today is notably different from the way ancient Greeks thought of themselves in their own time. While it is impossible to know exactly how these people thought, the assumptions made in many ancient texts show how societies understood themselves. While these assumptions make sense in a certain time and place, they simply do not at others. Something has changed between the people of then and the people of now. As Dreyfus & Kelly show, moments within some of the most influential societies throughout the ages paint a picture of how people understood the world. At its heart, their book is a discussion of what is sacred in a society, what deserves notice, and how that sacredness has been transformed through the ages.

As told by Dreyfus, there is a scene from Homer where mythic Helen serves dinner as the wife of Menelaus and is asked about her famous adventure to Troy. Unabashed, she tells her famous story and impresses all present, including her husband. While the moral implications of Helen’s famous actions would make us hesitate in a similar setting, Homer sees her as an exemplary woman who was driven to act by Eros, the goddess of love. In essence, she had no choice, she was driven to act the way she did by a power that was not her own. There is something about this we find perplexing, not only for the lack of guilt, but in the celebration that comes with it. Dreyfus and Kelly propose that Homer’s understanding of the world could actually be an opening to understanding the world in a far more profound sense than we recognize.
Indeed, Homer's world should neither be patronized as primitive with respect to our modern philosophical and psychological notions of moral agency, nor be celebrated as somehow standing at the origin of our now more fully developed Western culture. Rather we must recognize that our modern attitudes and philosophical theories have concealed the real attractiveness of Homer's view (Dreyfus, 2007: 60).

Looking back on history with a linear idea of moral progress is dangerous. Instead of dismissing Helen and the acceptance of her actions as primitive, Dreyfus sees a value in Helen's world that he thinks is hidden from us in modernity. This hidden value comes from an attunement to the world that Helen was open to. This is not to say that Homer's world as a whole is to be reverentially honored, but that a part of it could be.

In one sense, Homer understood himself as part of the public as a whole, subject to "beings swept up into public and shareable moods." (ATS, 60). These moods were not under any one person's control and so society understood them as being dictated by the Olympian gods. By understanding this way of thinking, when the ancients said that they needed the gods, we can understand them instead as saying that the credit and cause of an action does not belong to humans and them alone.

One example of this is the story of Ajax bragging at the edge of the sea that he alone had survived a shipwreck despite Poseidon dashing his ship to the rocks. As the story goes, Poseidon sees his disrespect as an affront and so breaks off a large rock above Ajax and kills him. The moral of this story was not that angry gods will reach down and smite you, but that Ajax's attitude was inappropriate. When things go very well for a person, the appropriate response is gratitude, not brazen self-congratulations. So when Menelaus and company accept and even praise Helen for her story, we can understand it as society recognizing that Helen was caught in a moment that arose from the world (Eros) pulling her along.
At this point we have looked at two stories from the ancient world. These stories may not express historical truths, but it's their existence as stories that provide me with what is needed to make the argument. Dreyfus' fresh narrative of humanity's history doesn't need to be correct. It needs to open us to understanding our world in similar terms. If we are able to imagine how someone from ancient Greece can be so thoroughly caught up in their being in the world that society doesn't even blame them for their actions, then that would mean we have tapped into an understanding of another way of being where people think about their role in the world in a fundamentally different way. With this in mind, I turn to two pivotal moments in history that Dreyfus is concerned with.

**Articulators & Reconfigurers**

To connect the way of being in the ancient worlds to our current one in modernity, Dreyfus lays out the concept of two roles of certain people that sparked substantial challenges to the ways of being of their time and place. He calls these people *articulators* and *reconfigurers*. Articulators are those exceptional individuals who, through some medium or other, capture what the current age is feeling in a pure and clear manner. They are the people who caught a glimpse of a way of being of someone else and are able to articulate what that other way of being could realistically look like.

Dreyfus & Kelly's example of this type of person is the Greek playwright, Aeschylus. Aeschylus, an influential playwright, pinned down what the Homeric gods meant to Athens hundreds of years after Homer wrote about them. In his plays, the gods were no longer personified beings or moods, but guiding forces that penetrated all of Athenian life. This wasn't an unheard of concept, in fact society at his time probably already more or less accepted this. There wasn't an Aphrodite walking around seducing men and women, but an invisible force.
This type of understanding had been creeping into Greek society, but it took someone to stand up and articulate exactly what their society now thought. By expressing the feelings of sacredness of his society, Aeschylus stepped into the philosophically important role of *Articulator*.

While not emphasized by Dreyfus as one, Friedrich Hölderlin would likely have taken on the role of Articulator from Heidegger’s perspective. Hölderlin (1770-1843) was a German poet who, while not a professional philosopher, tapped into an understanding of the world that resonated with much of the Romantic and German Idealism movements. Heidegger brings Hölderlin into his discussion of modern technology through the line, “But where danger is, grows the saving power also.” The danger Hölderlin is alluding to is the very same danger Heidegger describes in his work nearly 100 years later. It didn’t take a lengthy argument or reasoning for Hölderlin to back it up. But by articulating this thought in such an elegant fashion, the meaning from it resonated with Heidegger in such a way that it brought out clarity and purpose for moving forward.

*Reconfigurers* have a different role. According to Dreyfus & Kelly, “the work of the reconfigurer would be so radical that people could not understand what it called them to do. People would need an articulator - something or someone that made sense of what the reconfigurer was up to and spelled it out as a paradigm incarnating their new world.” (ATS, 105). Dreyfus & Kelly point to two of the most pivotal figures in history, Jesus & Descartes, and label them *reconfigurers* because of the way that they reshaped and configured the world according to a new ideal.

**Christianity**

Regardless of a factual basis or not, the Jesus recorded in the gospels reconstituted what it meant to lead a good life. He became a beacon for a new way to live and, just as Dreyfus
describes reconfigurers, he was unable to communicate his ideas to others. The inability to immediately connect with most of his peers is a prerequisite for a reconfigurer. Something about the way a reconfigurer is oriented in the world, something about their way of being keeps them focused on a set of priorities that they rest of the world doesn’t recognize as important. Instead, a reconfigurer is someone who steps forward to take the lead. This is why his lessons needed articulators to convey his meaning to the rest of the world. A leader needs a first follower.

A notable feature Jesus supported was this conception of God being everywhere yet invisible, penetrating all of society. Interesting to think that this should sound familiar to the gods that Aeschylus wrote about in his plays. However, the primary shift that Jesus conditioned the world into was towards a focus on our inner, private desires. No longer was it good enough to keep your hands off your neighbor’s wife. Now you had to maintain a pure mind at all times in order to lead a proper life. Interpreters would hear this message and try to connect it back to the Roman gods, but they would fail. They were unable to free themselves from the dominance of the gods but also from the philosophical dominance of Plato’s conception of ‘eternal forms’ that are forever out of reach of man. For Plato, the Good and all it encompasses existed outside of temporality as perfect, abstract, eternal truths that humans were able to theorize about through contemplation. From this, it makes sense that people would have trouble accepting the idea that a man named Jesus was at the same time an embodiment of the eternal God. Jesus was supposed to be the bridge, but without accepting that a man-made bridge leads somewhere other than another physical place leaves us with a disconnect.

With this disconnect between the old world and the one Christianity pointed towards, Dreyfus and Kelly recognized the need of an articulator, who they suggest was St. Paul. Perhaps St. Paul was successful where others failed because he reported on how Jesus’ teachings worked
without trying to connect them to the Homeric gods or Platonic ideals. This could have been because he started out as Jewish or for any other reason. Whether or not St. Paul as a person actually did what Dreyfus suggests is not important. What’s important is not how he did it, but that someone like him was required to help brush away the old gods and embrace Christianity.

Countless notable figures contributed to the path humanity ended up following. With Jesus, society shifted towards an attitude that focused less on a connection to the physical world and worldly power and more on conscious, individual self-discipline. Someone like St. Augustine’s would take this idea and solidify it further through his insistence that finding God’s truth lies in the individual’s heart, thus defining the foundation of the human condition as an inner domain. And so the orientation of more individuals ways of being build upon each other and end up pulling all of those in contact with it into a converging cultural river.

*Descartes*

Descartes is a second *reconfigurer* that Dreyfus & Kelly attribute with dramatically reshaping the world. Like Jesus, Descartes was not merely influential, but a foundation builder stuck in a world that, to him, was built on poor foundation. To get his message across required leveling the previous understanding of the world and building his own. To understand his message required a discarding of part of the understanding Christianity established. While he yet embraces God as a philosophical entity, he had to discard the religious side of God.

Descartes was the first to deconstruct the world into terms of personal agency. Jesus’ reshaped world was centered on the inner relationship that individuals have with God. The importance of maintaining a pure soul was revolutionary, but Descartes took an important step further. What made him a reconfigurer and not just an articulator of Jesus was the move he made
against the very idea of God. Meaning and importance as determined by Jesus were actually determined by the religious image of God. God’s will was the will of the world.

By the time Descartes came around, that God had died and using Him as an explanation for value and understanding of the world wouldn’t do. Instead, the void that the religious God left was filled by the profound, philosophical idea of a god. Our understanding of the world no longer had the structure of religion at its core. Instead, Descartes understood that moods and feelings were not public affairs (unlike Helen) that other people can pick up on or identify, but are deeply individual and hidden, even from the idea of God. The clearest distinction that he made was dividing the world into subjects and objects. As Dreyfus describes it, “Under Descartes’ influence, then, we have come to understand ourselves as subjects - sites of inner thoughts, desires, and volitions - while “the external world,” according to Descartes, consisted of meaningless objects - those non subjective entities that stand over against me.” (ATS, 139). Not only was the human condition private to the individual, but everything else out in the world was void of value unless someone decided to place value on it. This was one of the most profound moments in philosophy, not necessarily because no one had ever thought this way before, but because these ideas were expressed and then articulated at a certain time and place. A time and place where, for whatever reason, these ideas found fertile ground and grew a new perspective of the world that much of the western world would adopt.

From Then to Now

Instead of understanding this as a history lesson of what actually happened, these points in time are meant to point to one of the possibilities of our history. How historically accurate they are is beside the point. Long ago, one understanding of the world led people of Athens to believe that the Homeric Gods controlled their actions through publicly recognized moods and
forces. In another moment, Jesus moved the sacred out of communing with the gods in public society and into our inner relationship with the one God. From there, Descartes stood up and claimed that relying on any exterior mysterious force is ridiculous and instead told us to rely on our own human thinking. This need not be a complete or categorically “true” story, but recognizing these various moments as part of the world helps us understand ourselves as a part of the world in a way that is often overlooked.

**Importance of the Spaces**

There was something about the physical spaces in the world that allowed for and inspired all of these various ways of being. As Dreyfus interprets Heidegger, in the ancient world, “the temple held up to the Greeks what was important, and so let there be heroes and slaves, victory and disgrace, disaster and blessing, and so on.” (Dreyfus, 1995: 31). Without the temples devoted to the gods, there could not have been champions. What would they have been championing without the gods? Similarly, Cathedrals are what allowed for sinners and saints, heaven and hell. The physical structure that these entities possess is not separate from their role as a cultural paradigm, it is central. The power to create a space where certain types of stories are honored and other types of stories are not is a defining feature of any cultural paradigm. Because of the temple, Greeks could pursue politics and go to war. Because of the Churches and Cathedrals, Catholics could canonize and excommunicate. The ways of being that Reconfigurers and Articulators lead us to can only arise alongside the sacred places in the world. It is these sacred physical places and things combined with a way of being that allows this certain reality to take hold.

Do we have an equivalent to the Greek temple? It could be argued that television events have evolved into something of a similar nature. The World Cup Final was watched by more
than 750 million people in 2010. At first a television event would seem to be missing out on the importance of physical spaces because all of the viewers are spread out across the world. This is true, but there is certainly something about the way that the game is watched that puts the experience in a shared perspective and inspires a respect and appreciation for the sacredness of the event. Viewers pack into sports bars, drink beer, wear the appropriate jersey to show support and become part of a world that roars and cries at the movement of a ball on a screen. These patterns are then repeated to lesser degrees for other games and before it's realized, the rituals surrounding the experience have contributed to fostering a connection between yourself and those entities that exist alongside you. Whether that entity be a special jersey, the walk from your apartment to the pub, or the people you surround yourselves with, the possibility of connecting to them is encouraged through the ritualistic way of approaching the world.

III. Roles of Production

With the previous sections we are now able to look at history and not only how the role of a way of being can change, but that these changes can be interpreted as transformations of our way of being that have had influenced on our current one. There could very reasonably be a different, more accurate description of the philosophical history, but the idea that this type of story can exist is all that is necessary to step into the argument. From there I explored the role that the physical spaces play in this process through an appreciation for the sacred.

At this point, I skip to my current place and time (Western Philadelphia, 2015) and look to the systems of production that build and create the goods that the modern world consumes. When it comes to craftsmanship, Heidegger’s poetic view of the art is evident. The respect and attention given to the work a person does with their hands is something that I will explore in the following section.
Creating and exploring have been recognized as practices of humanity since the beginning. The way that we should build and interact with the world has been the subject of ancient philosophy, the enlightenment, and countless religions. In *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, David Pye writes of the modern condition of production, of its limitations and of its very nature. Pye, a respected theorist and practitioner of craftsmanship, reveals a certain deficiency by contrasting a type of craftsmanship with general mass production. A deficiency that is symptomatic of the larger problem that Dreyfus and Kelly interpret Heidegger to be dealing with.

David Pye is not writing to add to a philosophical history. Situated at the Royal College of Art in London, the approach that he uses in *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* does not engage directly with the philosophical tradition, much less with Heidegger himself. Instead, he has identified a deficiency in the production systems of our modern world and seeks to articulate it. Pye utilizes a wealth of personal experience to practically address the past, current, and future role of human’s need to generate products for use.

If the types of production were imagined as a spectrum, on one end would be the painstaking and careful process that requires practice, understanding and patience, e.g. producing a Stradivarius Violin. On the other end is a process that does not depend on individual care or understanding at all. For example, automated factories. Pye does not claim one method of creation is better than another, but that a creation involving more attention and risk throughout its production brings something out in the world that is left untapped in more regulated productions.

Pye is concerned with a deficiency that modernity’s production pushes on us. For him, this is due to the vast majority of all production today arriving from mass-production. This implies that the phenomenon Pye is trying to address is how mass-producing can be deficient of
something, even though it generally uses resources more efficiently. Pye believes the deficiency of mass-production comes about because...

    The range of qualities which mass-production is capable of just now is so
dismally restricted; because each is so uniform and because nearly all lack depth,
subtlety, overtones, variegation, diversity, or whatever you choose to call that
which distinguishes the workmanship of a Stradivarius violin, or something much

In this view, the subtlety, variegation, and depth of a product are held up as something worth exploring. If mass production means we miss out on these qualities then it makes sense to talk about mass production as an act of creation that is deficient of something. How valuable that something is is the real question. If practicality demands a certain standard for a certain value, what can we use to measure the value of a production of this kind? For Pye, it’s not that these qualities can be quantified and officially recorded, but that they can only be achieved through a certain type of production called *craftsmanship*. Through this type of production, a value arises that is not for anything, but one that is more intimately connected to the parties involved.

**Craftsmanship**

    It is from this point where we’ve been introduced to the idea of a deficiency in the world
of production and a special power of craftsmanship that Pye proposes we understand the process
of creation. So what exactly distinguishes mass-production from *craftsmanship*? To answer that,
it helps to have a clear definition of *craftsmanship*. As he describes it, *craftsmanship* is a species
of workmanship that uses...

    Any technique or apparatus, in which the quality of the result is not
predetermined, but depends on the judgment, dexterity and care which the maker
exercises as he works… It may be mentioned in passing that in workmanship the
care counts for more than the judgment and dexterity; though care may well
become habitual and unconscious (Pye, 1968: 20).

There are two important parts to this definition. The first is that work that has been
predetermined thoroughly is the kind of workmanship that lacks the depth and diversity that Pye
honors. The second part is that the way to draw out significance, depth, and diversity from a production is through an intense personal connection to the work, a connection that relies in a significant part on the craftsman’s individual presence.

Workmanship of Risk & Certainty

From this we see how the care the workman undertakes is the distinguishing factor between Pye’s Craftsmanship and mass-production. But how can producing tables, computers, books, or anything else foster or limit this connection? Pye believes it lies in the degree of risk involved in the process of creating.

For Pye, what characterizes the craftsman as craftsman is this relationship to risk. That means that production which engages with the risk factor is what Pye calls craftsmanship. “The essential idea is that the quality of the result is continually at risk during the process of making; and so I shall call this kind of workmanship ‘The workmanship of risk’. To engage in a workmanship of risk is to make use of materials and tools that do not heavily regulate the work that is being done. Imagine a medieval blacksmith’s use of hand bellows and rough edges compared to a modern blacksmith’s advanced laser-guided workspace. The lack of regulated structure in the former pushes the craftsman to engage with his practice with a certain amount of care and patience that is generally non-existent in highly-regulated mass-productions. These highly-regulated productions can be described as workmanships of certainty because of the safety and predictable nature of the production.

“With the workmanship of risk we may contrast the workmanship of certainty, always to be found in quantity production, and found in its pure state in full automation. In workmanship of this sort the quality of the result is exactly predetermined before a single salable thing is made. In less developed forms of it the result of each operation done during production is pre-determined (Pye, 1968: 20).”
Along with clarifying the terminology, this quote points to the reality of “less developed forms”
of productions that are not ‘pure’ workmanships of risk or certainty. Indeed, all processes fall
somewhere within, and not at, these two poles.

As an example, the work involved in turning a grown tree into dimensional lumber can,
theoretically, be undertaken with your fingers, an axe, a broad-axe, or an industrial sawmill.
Using your hands and no tools is the least regulated of these processes. Trying to create and
maintain 90-degree angles on a round log with only fingernails is a very difficult (and likely
painful) thing to do. Doing the same but with an axe would be substantially different. With an
axe, the axe-man would still need to keep the log balanced, work with the grain, and be aware of
knots in the wood, but the weight of the axe and the sharp edge for splitting makes his job far
easier. A broad-axe has an added element of regulation to help the process move along more
smoothly. This added regulation comes from a broad-axe being flat on the backside of the blade,
which loosely tends to split the wood perpendicularly to the ground, thus creating a right
angle. Where a regular axe is tapered on both sides of the blade and seeks to push the grain
away from both sides as it drives into the wood, the broadaxe seeks to push the grain away from
the axe in only one direction. Lastly, we have the most regulated of the examples. In an industrial
saw mill, the tree trunk is loaded into a series of table-saws that slice away the sides of the log
without any degree of awareness of the grain or anything about the wood itself. This action can
be overseen from across a room and hardly depends on attention or care at all.

Of course, if you take a broad-axe and assume that the small amount of regulation it has built
into itself is all you need, you will fail. A craftsman can only really be called a craftsman after he
is able to demonstrate sufficient skill in the area. Pye surely understands this and would likely
agree that an engagement with risk and the development of skill are finely associated. As you
engage the log with your broadaxe, the way that you connect the axe to the wood is constantly changing and teaching you how to be better. Whether that be through the development of muscle memory or in your intuition of how the wood will behave. All of the factors that go into nurturing a skill (patience, practice, taking risks, and spending time) are the same factors that feature in the way of being that this paper points to.

Risk’s Relation to Value?

Pye does not say that a workmanship of risk produces a higher quality or better product. In fact, he admits to the reality that many workmanships of certainty (i.e. mass production) produce the highest quality of a product. For instance a plastic bottle, nail, or light bulb is “as good as it could possibly be.” Just imagine trying to hand-make a plastic bottle the same as an automated factory. However, the point of honoring the workmanship of risk is not to make it the most valuable or efficient. The point is to create these connections between ourselves and the materials and products we surround ourselves with. For Pye, the something special about workmanships of risk is the immense variation and subtlety that can only be achieved through risk.

Pye is searching for the balance. He is not anti-technology. He has seen what mindless automaton produces and is striving to express the significance of it. From his work it can be inferred that he has caught a glimpse of something special about our humanity that is largely overlooked in today’s world. Without engaging and appreciating the workmanship and care taken to create in our world, the rest of our being loses some intensity. This loss of intensity comes from shutting ourselves off from engaging with the world in a way that forces us to overlook the opportunities for creating these connections to the physical world.

Risk and Ritual
Pye is focused on the risk associated with production. Whether cutting the wood one way is guaranteed to work or whether it has the possibility of failure. This possibility for failure is what allows for and encourages the craftsman to forge this bond of care, a potential bond that would be ignored in a world without craftsmen.

More than the world of production, it makes sense to me to apply Pye’s conception of risk to all of human activity. What is meant here can be better understood through the negative version of this argument. When it comes to human activity, if your actions have no possibility for failure, then that would mean you are missing out on an opportunity to connect to the world in a meaningful way. It would then follow that engaging in the practices of your life with the mentality that whatever it is you are doing holds the possibility of establishing a meaningful connection would reasonably lead to a life filled with more meaningful connections.

Risk forces you to care. But it’s not the only way to care. A child being attached to a stuffed animal, a father sitting on the porch after dinner, or a musician struggling through writer’s block are all activities that don’t necessarily involve risk, but still somehow inspires the same type of connection to the world that risk does. The animal, the sitting on the porch, and the song are all identifiable things, but through the connections that come to them, they take on an entirely different category of value. This value comes out of the ritualistic way we are able to approach the world. A father who takes a moment after every day to sit in a certain spot will care for that spot in a way that can only really be justified by the amount of time he spends there.

The bonds we can grow to feel about objects, people, and ideas through engaging with them is central to our being in the world. They come from engaging either with risk, ritual, or both. It’s these bonds, these connection themselves that I believe will open the door to understanding how Heidegger wants us to live authentically in the age of modern technology.
IV. Enter Heidegger

No longer am I concerned with the limited scope of production. Where Pye stops his analysis with the craftsman himself, Heidegger looks to understand how the world that we have grown up in influences each of our most basic understandings of ourselves. While the context of your life largely determines this understanding, there is something about our humanity, regardless of any social or historical setting, that responds to your world and is conditioned into the current way of being. This primordial structure, according to Heidegger, is care. In his work *Being and Time*, Care is an ontological concept that inspires all action and inaction. This concept is at the heart of our being in the world and is what is supposed to unify the three dimensions of our being; Thrownness, Projection, and Fallenness. These three dimensions refer to the different ways our being is connected to existence, to the past, to the present, and to the future.

*Thrownness* refers to the state Dasein finds itself in. Our being is not responsible for the world it finds itself in and is actually already historically conditioned, thus connecting our being to the past. *Fallenness* refers to Dasein existing in the midst of the rest of existence of other Dasein and non-Dasein beings, thus connecting our being to the present. The third dimension of our being, *Projection*, refers to how we interpret and understand the world in terms of possibilities. It is not a conscious plan for the future, rather a skilled way of coping with the unknown (BT, 237). These three dimensions constitute our being and are bound together by means of *care*. This conception of *care* is of a different character than our everyday use of the word and so requires a more careful articulation of what Heidegger means by it. More importantly for me, how this Heideggerian sense of *care* fits into the world of bonds and connection that Pye and I try to honor.
Care Structure

In the everyday sense, care has the connotation of a fairly mild relationship with someone or something. In the Heideggerian sense, care refers to a far more philosophically rooted concept of our being. Care is what unifies our being into something coherent. As Heidegger describes it...

Care, as a primordial structural totality, lies "before" every factual "attitude" and "situation" of Dasein, and it does so existentially a priori; this means that it always lies in them. So this phenomenon by no means expresses a priority of the "practical" attitude over the theoretical. When we ascertain something occurrent by merely beholding it, this activity has the character of care just as much as does a "political action" or taking a rest and enjoying oneself. "Theory" and "practice" are possibilities of being for an entity whose being must be defined as "care."
(Heidegger, 1962: 238)

What Heidegger is trying to illustrate here is how the structure of care exists behind and yet always as a part of our Dasein. This means that care conditions both our practical and theoretical actions. It is from this structure of care that we can better understand our ways of being. Various ways of being surely exist, but all ways of being are interpreted through this structure of care.

This care is the unifying feature of our humanity according to Heidegger. I am inclined to believe him, but that is not necessarily needed for the argument. Instead, by recognizing this role of care, we open ourselves to understanding our being in these terms of things "being an issue" for us. With something being an issue for us we make a connection to it. It is these kinds of connections that can be fostered and eventually grow into the meaningful bonds that will add a value to our ways of being.

Technology

Technology has become the defining feature of our age. From large-scale mining to our laptops to styrofoam cups, technology has allowed and encouraged humanity to do things that we would never have before been able to imagine. As a reflex, modern society sees this and shouts
“This is progress! This is development! This must be the future!” With the technology that we have today, people’s bodies can be treated and saved from the ills of the world better than at any other point in history. The cost of technology is generally considered to be the price of the materials and labor needed for the job. To believe this to be the total is to not understand the true nature of technology. The structures, tools, and system that we surround ourselves with have a profound impact on our being in ways that often are, but should not be overlooked.

In the last two hundred years it has become clear that modernity has recognized efficiency as a determiner of most value in a way that overlays and hides the worth of the bonds that I advocate. In this way, the modern world has turned away from religion as the provider of answers. Instead of a god, the pairing of technology and efficiency has become to center of our worlds. To introduce ourselves to this role of technology I turn to Heidegger’s essay, The Question Concerning Technology, and Hubert Dreyfus’ article, Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology. From there, I will explore how it is that modern technology does more than its manufactured purpose, how it has become centered on efficiency, and how we ought to move forward.

To understand how it is that technology does more than its manufactured purpose, it is necessary to clarify what Heidegger understands technology as. The essence of technology is what makes technology, technology. According to Heidegger, this essence is one of instrumentality and needs to be understood in terms of causality. After exploring how exactly technology is supposed to be a bringing-forth, we move to how modern technology has changed this and turned the essence of modern technology into a challenging-forth of the world. Through recognizing this essence and responding appropriately, Heidegger aims to attain a free relation to
technology. The only way to achieve this relation to technology is if our journey “opens our human existence to the essence of technology.” (Heidegger, 1977: 311).

Heidegger describes the essence of technology as one of instrumentality. In other words, the essence of technology is to produce or achieve a goal. In this way, the essence of technology is a means to an end. For Heidegger, “a means is that whereby something is effected and thus attained” (QCT, 313). From here he argues that whatever creates this final product (the means) is termed a cause. More than just the means though, the ends themselves provide a causality through being the final goal itself.

With this understanding of means and ends as causes, Heidegger uses the Aristotelian foundation of the division of four types of causes to break it down. The physical matter itself is one cause. The shape or form that the matter takes is another. The reason for the thing being made is the third. And fourthly, how the thing came about. (Aristotle, Physics, Book II, Part 3). Heidegger employs the useful example of the silver chalice to illustrate this point. A sacrificial silver chalice owes its being to each of the four causes in different ways. It needs the silver material itself in order to be a silver chalice. It needs to be in the shape of a chalice and not in the shape of anything else, like a crown, in order to be a silver chalice. It needs to have a purpose for existing, in this case its purpose is to be a sacrificial chalice, in order to be a silver chalice. And lastly, it needs a force to consider and bring the three aforementioned causes together, which in this case was how the silversmith exists in a world where a chalice was commissioned.

Heidegger then argues that these four causes of a process are actually a bringing forth into the world because they are what brings the thing out and into existence. This bringing forth is not limited to silversmithing, but extends to art, poetry and indeed all human activity. When something like a painting is brought forth, it is revealed to the world. Because of this, Heidegger
uses the term *revealing*. Thus, if the essence of technology is a means to an end, then the means to an end is the series of 4 *causes*. These four causes come together to call something into existence, and so *brings it forth*. Through this *bringing-forth* the thing goes from being concealed to being revealed. It’s important to note that this is a characterization of the essence of technology itself. The essence of our modern technology has shifted in this regard. In modernity, no longer are things *brought forth*, but are demanded and *challenged* to come forth.

**Revealing to Standing-reserve, Enframing, and Clearing**

With this understanding of the essence of technology, it becomes necessary to outline a few other Heideggerian terms before we can discuss the ontological way of being that Heidegger fears we have fallen into. These terms are *Standing-reserve, Enframing, and Clearing*.

In today’s world, we have a view of resources and objects as things to be used and used up. This comes from an attitude that demands society set upon the earth in a way that demands the world crack open and release as much of her resources as possible and relinquish control of those resources to us.

“The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon...the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew.” (QCT, 321)

One of the clearest examples of this is the mining industry. A mining company extracts as much coal as possible and then continues to mine, move, refine, and stockpile it with the help of other companies and the various structures of our society. A number of important things are going on here but I would like to focus on how creating these stockpiles encourages us to see the outside world as a *standing-reserve*. By this I mean that coal, technologies, and even people have entered into the modern world as resources to either be actively used or set aside and expected to be available when called upon to work.
This idea of standing-reserve should reasonably bring to mind something like the reserves of Oil or the total number of buses Greyhound can call upon to be used at any moment. The companies in charge are within their rights to hold resources back for the promise of future need, but the act of doing this forces those resources to be treated as unconnected objects. The oil or the buses themselves are normally held at arm’s length, out of use, until demanded. More than natural resources and machinery though, Heidegger notes how technologies such as factories or Airlines have successfully turned human beings into resources to be accounted for and used when needed. Airlines don’t see passengers as humans but as cargo that needs to be comfortably moved from one place to another. It is relevant to note that Heidegger does not think humans themselves can be pure standing reserve, but that they can fill that role in certain cases, just as the rest of the physical world is ‘meant’ to do.

The structural framework that conditions humans to see the world in these terms is what makes it difficult to do anything else. This way of being is open to certain types of understanding but not others. Some things are concealed and some are not. The mentality that is clear to us as humans is what Heidegger says enframes our world. By this I mean, the space of understanding that we are currently in is the same mentality that outlines what types of things we attribute value and what types of things we can understand. This illuminated space is also called the clearing which Heidegger describes in his work The Origin of the Work of Art.

In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing, a lighting... This open center is ... not surrounded by what is; rather, the lighting center itself encircles all that is... Only this clearing grants and guarantees to human beings a passage to those entities that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are (Heidegger, 1977)

This open center is what allows us to understand and judge entities that are not ourselves, while at the same time allowing us to understand ourselves as the types of beings we are. Our way of being is part of this concept. The clearing itself is the space that our way of being calls home. It's
in this clearing that all humans are able to determine what aspects of the world have value and which do not. For example, whether it is noble to die in battle or to die as a freedom fighting martyr, whether you should live in the same place your whole life or see the world. Each person’s clearing may be slightly different, but most in today’s modern 1st world are lit directly or indirectly by the same general understanding. That understanding, as what I can see, is a devotion to the efficiency that modern technology promises us. We go about our lives doing the work that we do, but the presence of greater and more time saving technologies being just around the corner is palpable. We want to save more time, but we end up using that saved time to wait on some other ‘time-saving’ device.

Technologies Themselves vs. The Ontological Condition

At this point it is necessary to step back and draw some distinctions between the technologies themselves and the understanding of our way of being that modern technology has conditioned the world we find ourselves. There are costs to the earth that technologies have contributed to. The most notable of which is the release of hydrocarbons into the air leading to global warming. When this sentence is uttered it elicits the predictable response of “How do we fix it? Is renewable energy the solution?” This impulse is so deeply a part of our understanding of our way of being that any other response to the topic seems ludicrous. How can you not try to think of ways to fix the earth?

Heidegger is aware of this impulse and is begging us to not see our relationship to the earth as a problem that can be solved, but as a condition to be saved from. This word “save” carries an important assumption that needs to be clarified. To save someone from something generally means to erase the harm that is causing their safety to be at risk. In this case, to save us from our ontological condition requires, not an annihilation of the danger, but a transformation of
it into something different. As Hölderlin said, “But where danger is, grows the saving power also.” This opportunity for saving comes alongside the danger Heidegger so fears. Something like the modern environmental movement could reasonably come to mind as the ‘saving power’, but to think so is to limit the magnitude of what we are trying to save. It is not an environmentalist plea to save the rivers and forests, but a calling on humanity to be mindful of all of existence.

Very importantly, instead of seeking out technological solutions such as harnessing the power of the sun and wind, Heidegger needs us to recognize that the part of the nature of man that strives for solution after solution is a profound danger. This danger is that “the approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practices as the only way of thinking.” (Dreyfus, 1995: 2). Only by stepping back from this one way of thinking and recognizing the possibility of something different will we be in a position to move forward with Heidegger.

**Our Technological Understanding of Being**

We now have an understanding of some necessary terms and ideas that lead to the heart of Heidegger’s argument. We also recognize the possibility of different ways of being. But how exactly did we fall into our current understanding of being? Dreyfus provides a useful definition of an understanding of being. “In sum the social practices containing an understanding of what it is to be a human self, those containing an interpretation of what it is to be a thing, and those defining society fit together. They add up to an understanding of being.” (Dreyfus, 1995: 3). Unpacked, our understanding of being is constituted by how we see and value ourselves in relation to the world, how we see and value things that we encounter in the world, and how these
two understandings fit with the society that we live in. This explanation puts an enormous amount of emphasis on the structure of the societal systems that we grow into and which we have little to no control over. These societal systems are the foundation for our understanding of “what counts as things, what counts as human beings, and ultimately what counts as real”.

From this definition, it follows that our understanding of being, which is influenced by technology, is more accurately described as being centered on the essence of modern technology. This is different from Heidegger’s description of technology’s essence being a *bringing-forth*. For Heidegger, the essence of modern technology is a *challenging-forth*. A challenge to make more use of the world, a forcing of growth without regard for what I would like to call the “sacred” nature of being in the world. A defense to this argument is that progress is helpful to everyone and pushing forward in the field of technology is the only logical direction to go.

Where Heidegger seems to have a problem with this is in what it has done to our attention span. Driven by the slightest of desires, technology has taken the role of satisfaction machines and conditioned us to live in a reactive, “presentist” way. This type of a way of being is counter to the authentic way that Heidegger imagines and limits our capacity to come to terms with our being at the deepest level. The way that we use technology has overwhelmingly become to discover new technologies. While this can be useful, an image that it calls to mind is of a young child being first introduced to a massive candy shop. Human nature has become characterized by this child that jumps from shining wrapped candy to the next. We have become so focused on the present and discovering the new that we’ve become driven by the fact that, “expediting is always itself directed from the beginning toward furthering something else, i.e., toward driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense.” (QCT, 321). In this way, we have become “presentists”, losing ourselves in the shallowness of temporary distractions. We may be bodily
present, but with the constant pressure to leap into the future we end up never really appreciating the moment. We see our world through a pair of glasses that enframe our world. These glasses were not chosen by us, instead we grew into them by virtue of being born in a certain society at a certain time where a certain type of work is valued. Then comes Heidegger encouraging us to recognize that these glasses are there. That they have frames and that these frames are what condition what we see.

Free-Relation to Technology.

Attaining a free-relation to technology is the primary goal of Heidegger’s work in *The Question Concerning Technology*. To get there requires an acceptance and deep understanding that we have all been born and grown into our various ways of being depending on the way work is done in the time that we were born into. It just so happens that our modern understanding of being is a technological one.

We’ve recognized the possibility for a different *clearing* through Dreyfus’ example of traditional Japanese character. This example does more for us though. The way that this argument has been structured makes it sound like there is no middle ground between the different understandings of being. Instead of this, it makes sense to me that each of our understandings of being maps onto the essence of modern technology only partially. It may be a large part, but a human who thinks entirely in terms of efficiency is unlikely and unimaginable.

Returning to a pre-modern technological way of being is not the answer. Once you have accepted that our current understanding of being has been given to us by virtue of being born into a certain social organization where a certain type of work is valued, Heidegger suggests a more authentic way of treating modern technology...

“We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside ... as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon
something higher [the clearing]. I would call this comportment toward technology which expresses “yes” and at the same time “no”, by an old word, releasement towards things.” (Heidegger, 1966: 50)

Making use of technology while not being compelled to make use of technology is a hard line to define. The releasement that he is referring to the possibility of being free from the constraints of our current way of being. Through releasement and being open to the world we are presented with an opportunity to re-orient ourselves. As Dreyfus interprets it, “Releasement, it turns out, is only a stage, a kind of holding pattern, awaiting a new understanding of being.” (QCT, 31).

V. Moving Forward

Where do we go from here? With Kelly and Dreyfus we looked to history to connect a few of the dots from then until now. As these dots show, our way of being has transformed, and I find myself at an interesting point in time where discussion about it is possible. From there we looked to modernity with David Pye’s work on the state of the modern production system. For him, intensely engaging with risk and the material brings a value to the world that can easily be overlooked in a society focused on efficiency. I then suggest that this value comes from the connection that the craftsman makes with his work and that this bond can be created through ritual practice as well. Using Heidegger we looked at how the essence of technology has been distorted by the advent of modern technology and the danger that comes with it.

The idea that you can ‘choose’ your clearing is off base. As we enter the final stage of the paper I would like to paint a picture for a possible way of being that I think Heidegger, Dreyfus, and Pye would find attractive. The problem is, to talk about abandoning your way of being in favor of a ‘better’ one is indicative of the very problem I am trying to turn from. To actually reach the point I desire isn’t a matter of conscious decision making. It is a matter of being in the world differently, a thing that can only realistically come from reflection. For the sake of the
paper I will continue to treat this topic as an argument to be won or lost, but to wholly embrace what I am saying requires something other than self-discipline or intelligence.

For Dreyfus, our new clearing will center on an appreciation for what he calls marginal practices. “We must learn to appreciate marginal practices - what Heidegger calls the saving power of insignificant things - practices such as friendship, backpacking into the wilderness, and drinking the local wine with friends.” (QCT, 32). Where we used to have efficiency for efficiency’s sake, with marginal practices we have actions that fundamentally oppose the notion of efficiency. For Heidegger, the answer is to approach the world as a poet or artist. This is not to say that everyone should go out and be a painter, but that the appreciation artists have for the world as it is, is an appreciation we should all incorporate into our view of the world. There seems to me to be a common ground between these two and it rests with the connections that both of these suggestions push us into.

These are both part of the answer, but it would seem reasonable to me that the way we would be able to reach each of these goals and be saved from our current ontological condition is through fostering the types of connections David Pye talks about. Engaging and connecting to the world around you is not suited for efficiency. Engaging in practices with risk opens you to the possibility of failure as well as meaningful success. Engaging in practices in a ritualistic way may seem a more mild experience, but it too has the power to bond you with your world. These insignificant things may be buildings, they may be songs, ideas, or they may be people.

Driven by their care-structure, two people who engage with each other, who spend time and share their being-ness create the bond that we recognize as social relationships. By focusing on the ritual ways of being together, we open ourselves to a world not dominated by efficiency. After all, our worlds are worlds with others.
The modern world is a world dominated by technology and our relationship to it is not one of direct control. With efficiency pushing society forward, our understanding of being has become one that attributes value to the speed at which we can move on to the next activity in order to save a little time, which is then spent on some other time-saving activity. The model of efficiency we have adopted has turned time itself into something that is measured, into something it shouldn’t be. When it comes to our being in the world, the care that helps form bonds with the world can have a profound effect on ourselves. These bonds, these connections to the world, they are what could take the place of efficiency as the light of our clearing.