# On Value:

# A Journey from a Word to a World

Degree of Master of Science (Two Years) in Human Ecology: Culture, Power and Sustainability**,** 30 ECTS

CPS: International Master's Programme in Human Ecology
Human Ecology Division
Department of Human Geography
Faculty of Social Sciences
Lund University

Author: Oscar Krüger
Supervisor: Pernille Gooch
Term: Spring Term 2015

| | |
|---|---|
| Department: | Human Geography |
| Address: | Lunds Universitet, Kulturgeografi, Sölvegatan 10, 223 62 Lund |
| Telephone: | +46 46 22 2000 |


| | |
|---|---|
| Supervisor: | Pernille Gooch |

| | |
|---|---|
| Title and Subtitle: | On Value: A Journey from a Word to a World |
| Author: | Oscar Krüger |
| | |
| Examination: | Master's thesis (two year) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Term: | Spring 2015 |


Abstract

While there is little overlap in its use and meanings, the concept "value" is often central within the texts of human ecology. But it is seldom clear what the word really means even at a particular instantiation of it, neither what ontological commitments would let that which the meaning refers to exist in the world. This thesis takes *one* use, found in Alf Hornborg's discussion of unequal exchange, and asks: What does "value" mean at this instance? How is it possible for something like it to exist? The thesis proceeds by reading the concept towards its conditions of possibility, and then those conditions towards theirs. This creates a path which eludes determination within the works of a single author, and instead leads from Hornborg to the value theory of David Graeber to the works of Martin Heidegger. The thesis lets Hornborg's work defines what values do, Graeber where they come from, and Heidegger how they can have that origin and what that itself implies. This particular path is not advanced as the only possible one, but the thesis demonstrates how it's a possibility which would tell a compelling story of equity, freedom, and the possibilities such freedom contains.

# Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge the following people, who directly or indirectly have contributed to making this thesis what it is:

I thank everybody from CPS batch 3 for the joy of learning which made the questions animating this thesis feel important. Special thanks go to Cornelia Helmcke and Linda Dubec, who each read the thesis and provided commentary at different stages of its composition.

I thank everybody at the Human Ecology department at Lund University, whose work nourished that joy and made the Master's program so exciting. Special thanks go to Richard Langlais and Anders Burman, who each led one of the two courses which planted the seed for the present thesis. And, of course, great thanks go to my supervisor Pernille Gooch, for her patience when that seed kept sprouting in all directions at once.

Above all, I thank Corinna Burkhart for the countless discussions we've had and the invaluable help she has provided throughout the entire genesis of this thesis. Her presence is felt here from the first word to the last, and none of it would have been possible without her.

# Table of Contents

# 1. Setting Forth

A footprint lies before us at first light, left behind by a visitor in the night. The trace is a word written as *value,* and we do not know where it comes from, where it leads to or what has left it behind. It is familiar, and intuitively we might share a sense for what the experience of worth is like. But there is something which resists our grasp of it. And this is true even if we restrict ourselves to asking what the concept actually means in this or that specific context, for also there the answers will vary greatly. But can we at least know something about the actual places where we find it? The basic structure of the ground on which the imprint is encountered is something which can be thought, in a manner adequate for Human Ecology to this day, by following the cue of Torsten Hägerstrand's suggestion to imagine "humans, plants, animals and things all at once" to see how "[h]umans and their society is just a pattern in the big tapestry of Nature which history is weaving" (Hägerstrand 1976: 332). Within this manifold of beings moving and interacting as if locked in a dance, one could then think the manner of their movements as being "the tips of trajectories […] sometimes being pushed forward by forces behind and besides and sometimes having eyes looking around and arms reaching out, at every moment asking 'what shall I do next?" (ibid.). If so, then the word *value* is a trace found at the point in this weave where that question is answered.

But the word is not in itself the value, since as a word it refers to something beyond itself. This is what makes it merely an imprint. And here is drawn an important distinction between a concept and that which it speaks of – whereas for instance "values" might exist in situations, the actual *word* value exists only in articulate claims being made *about* such situations. The situations where values exist would take place where the question "what next" is answered, while the word "value" would instead be found in claims being made *about* how the question is – or should be – answered. And thus, by virtue of the distance implied in any referral, the concept simultaneously remains detached from that moment of decision in itself. In this thesis, the primary concern is the situation where we find the *word*, rather than that which its referral leads to. And in regards to those situations, the question here becomes – about *one* of these instances where we come upon it – what the word really *means* at that specific place. Or, where the answer threatens to trail off in different directions, what *could* it mean there? The meaning of this question requires careful elaboration.

First of all, the question is intended to lead neither to the experience of value nor to what that experience is an experience *of*. Focusing on the *concept* value then, in contrast to the claims

themselves, I do not presume to be carried out into our common world as much as I attend to a line of reference in itself and what kind of world this reference *would* have us move towards. In other words, the "meaning" which I seek is one which is internal to the concept. By attending to the context of specific claims, one can always find them belonging to specific constructions of what the world is like. Instead of moving along the words reference towards a transcendent reality, the present concern is that of interpreting what structures of reality are presupposed by the claim made. This world would contain certain possibilities for values to *be* something or other. And rather than taking that construal in order to match it onto a horizon of the real, the basic task here is to establish which specific horizon would make a certain meaning of value possible. In essence, this question has us attend to what "value" signifies at a certain point, what the conditions are for its use there to make any sense, and finally what new questions these very conditions give rise to.

The nature of this commitment marks the structure of this thesis and gives it a different shape than what might be immediately familiar. First, since a transcendent reality is the condition for arbitrations to be made about the adequacy of one claim over another on basis of correspondence, the disavowal I present here of any direct concern with such reality leaves no basis for arbitrating different claims. And, recursively, this makes it possible to limit our concern to a *specific* claim, without undertaking the impossible task of engaging the whole literature which deals with "values". That literature would present us with a great variety of uses and claims, sometimes in direct contradiction to each other but (worse) often with too little overlap for there to even be a contradiction. But engagement is only necessary when trying to establish facts for arbitration, and such arbitration only becomes necessary in a situation of conflict. Such conflicts can emerge only around a shared concern with a reality common to the contending claims, and this is exactly what the introverted nature of the present question simply does not bring us to. Instead, for the question we have taken up here, for other claims to become relevant they need not only be directly contending, but they also become interesting as contenders only insofar as they help us follow the specific trace we are already committed to.

It might first appear that this thesis would then disavow speaking about our common world, giving rise to puzzlement what it is supposed to help us understand. But such objections fall victim to forgetfulness that, even as a concept speaks the meaning of worldly entities, any claims in which it occurs are themselves events spun within the world which they make claims about. With this in mind, then it would be apparent that this thesis does indeed deal

with something real, and also *itself* constitutes a real event which construes a new understanding of that which it engages. Further, despite what might appear to be the case, its focus on a particular claim does not fixate this thesis to its starting point. This is because the search within ideas for the structural conditions which lets them be put forth is not *merely* exegetical. Ideas have an autonomous life of their own which overspills whatever intentions the author which puts them forth might harbor – ideas are not the property of authors as much as these authors are cultivators of environments where ideas can grow under conditions determined by these ideas themselves. As an idea blooms into an event where it is put forth, these conditions are not wholly encompassed within it. And they might very well escape the attention also of the one who cares for the lands from whence it grows. When our attention to these conditions then reveals the necessity to construct a path across the porous boundaries of one garden to another – from one author to the next – then that very movement across is a creative event where this thesis brings something new into the world.

This thesis contributes to the pursuit of an elusive beast called "value" by attending to one specific site and how the structure of some environments *could* be what lets a certain trace of "value" be laid down there in a certain manner. The direction in which we proceed is not up to ourselves, as much as to the conditions we encounter along the path ahead. But perhaps it is necessary to already give an outline of where the search of this thesis leads: Rendering a thesis which is unapologetically theoretical, we take our beginnings within a body of claims occurring within the field of Human Ecology itself, in a domain of thinking cultivated by Alf Hornborg. Given the nature of our question, this starting point is one which we move on from not by demolishing what is left behind, but by preserving and deepening it along a journey which goes through the increasingly wild forests cared for by David Graeber.[1] Then at last we finally enter a land where the air is thin and the ground a maze of jagged rocks where nothing is as it first appears. At those heights we will have to proceed with utmost caution lest we lose our footing, like the caretaker Martin Heidegger himself did in a fall he never fully recovered from.

This renders the following structure to this thesis: It is divided into three main parts corresponding to the three authors disclosed in the preceding paragraph, and these three parts are framed by this introduction as well as a concluding discussion. The main parts are each

[1] Such "deepening" is not a verdict on the relative profundity of the respective bodies of text, but rather an effect of the sequence in which these layers are brought together here. In another context, the deepening might very well have proceeded in the exact opposite direction.

dedicated to an exegetical interpretation to the aspects of these writers' works as related to our concern with value. But each such part then concludes with a section titled "Leaving …" which critically engages that which the preceding interpretation has revealed. Where the chapters leading up to these discussions extract and interpret a coherent story from a body of writing, these concluding sections directly discuss some limits which the logic of that story runs up against. This is not to show those logics wrong, neither to argue that the limits I discuss are absolute. Rather I demonstrate how, in regards to the specific task of this thesis, there are these particular limits which belong to the very logic which lets a certain story be told. While those logics might very well have carried us further in other directions, it does not bring us quite where we need to go here. Still, the fact that a text bring us to such limits is itself an achievement to which we need to give thanks as we then move on – not by displacing that which is left behind, but to let it interlock with other logics.

If each author here tells a story of a world, these construed worlds are revealed to be undetermined in critical ways, so that in their structures there are elements which cannot be accounted for given the terms in which the world is set out. In each case the nature of these limits tells us which direction to proceed, while the reasons for the precise path which we follow (i.e. why Heidegger follows Graeber follows Hornborg) is discussed as we commence upon it with the introduction to the given section. But why these three authors rather than others? Beyond the starting point, the structure of the chosen method forces us to discover these reasons as we go along – they belong to conditions still to be uncovered, and only once we have endeavored to make them appear can it truly be seen where they point us. It should be noted already, however, that I make no claim that the paths I choose are the only possible ones. A body of text cannot fully determine the direction in which we ought to proceed from it, and there's an unavoidable degree of arbitrariness involved in that decision. But the very unexpectedness of the paths opted for is itself an important achievement of this thesis, since it means that it for the very first time reveals the possibility of the particular path it creates. Seeing how it connects not only three authors but also what can most strictly to be understood as ecological economics (Hornborg), social anthropology (Graeber) and philosophy (Heidegger), then if we understand Human Ecology as a project of transcending disciplinary borders which preclude an understanding of the human being in relation to its world, this is itself an achievement wholly in its spirit.

What then about the *method* of engaging these texts. Does it have a name? To be sure, despite the concern with texts, it would not be "discourse analysis". Nor would it be any other name

which refers to a pre-packaged method, and this for the following reason: Such methods would impose a strict separation of the formulation of the question, the data gathering and the analysis of the data. And while there's a security to following such protocols in that one result or another is always guaranteed, the irreversibility of the sequence means that a definite limit of possibility is set already before the actual engagement with the material. These materials would be made to answer a pre-defined demand imposed on them by the initial question and, thus bereaved of their own voice, texts could no longer themselves tell us where to go. And then we wouldn't be able to find the unexpected connection which makes an engagement with them so worthwhile to begin with. Here, while we already have a question, the most significant demand from it is put not on the texts but on *ourselves* – that we undergo the transformations required in order to pursue each text further on its own terms. This renders an approach which at least in spirit is most closely akin to the "poor pedagogy" of Jan Masschelein, which "constitute a kind of research practice, which is about being attentive, that is open to the world, exposed (to the text) so that it can present itself to us in a way, which commands us" (Masschelein 2010: 46. parentheses in original), and where this command is not "directing us, not leading us to the promised land, but pushing us. It does not tell us where to go, but pushes us to move from where (and who) we are" (ibid. parentheses in original).

There are many advantages to such an approach, not least that it lets us adopt our manner of proceeding to the qualities of the text at hand. Working *with* them rather than against them from out of determinate expectations, the manner by which the interpretations below are actually composed will differ according to what is appropriate to the given author. But in certain contrast to what we gleaned from Masschelein, there is a limit to how much transformation we can undergo, due to the fidelity maintained here to an initial question. In this, maybe an even better way to understand our method would be by noting the primordial meaning of the very word "method": The word is composed by the word *meta* (after) and *hodos* (way), meaning to follow in pursuit along a way. The trace of value has put us in pursuit of the beast which left it, and the mission for this thesis is to understand the landscape in which a particular imprint lies. Such a task can then interact with circumstances along the way in a manner which, unlike the case if a text is itself the object of an inquiry rather than its site, makes it possible to tell when detours away from texts at hand are helpful. For while each land has a limit defined by authorship, such authorship is but cultivation of a place constituted by flows from far beyond what the texts make immediately present. Thus, to really understand

what we are at each time dealing with, we shall have to make detours towards these sources, often guided by other travelers who are more experienced with these lands than we are.

Finally, to receive the rewards which this thesis has to offer requires the reader to undergo the changes which occur along the way ahead, and this requires becoming prepared for their arrival. Turning once more to the primordial meaning of words for some guidance, the word *thesis* means to put something forth into the open. Without pre-packaged methods, there is no guarantee of exactly what will be put forth. Instead, understand this introduction as an invitation to lay down any hurries to that goal or another, and to rather linger a while in this open. There the thesis will gradually be laid down, not as a prey brought back from the hunt but as the hunt itself told in story. This story can then perhaps put the reader on a path along which he may himself carry on in the quest for what the word value *could* still mean if it were to really help us understand the human place in the cosmic dance in which we are ever carried along. In this spirit, the thesis puts forth its *method,* and to this method the reader is invited to become a *hodites* – wayfarer – along its wild and unpredictable path.

# 2. Alf Hornborg

> "Other" and "same," then, are opposed in this way; but "difference" is distinct from "otherness." For that which is "other" than something need not be other in a particular respect, since everything which is existent is either "other" or "the same." But that which is different from something is different in some particular respect, so that that in which they differ must be the same sort of thing (Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1054b)[2]

*

## 2.1. Ecological Unequal Exchange

The Introduction above positioned us within the great weave of Nature and there directed our attention to something present at the edges of where the question "what next" finds its answer. Where is this place? The actions of those beings which are merely pushed from behind does not require explanation of anything like values, and these values thus appear only in proximity of beings which *have* a future and thereby comport themselves towards a "next" at all. This would make their primary habitat belong to the beings called human. Obvious as this may

[2] Aristotle (1933) 1989. Metaphysics. In *Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vols.17, 18*, transl. by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd.

seem, approaching these beings from the outside is itself significant for what then appears a good place for our journey to begin. For when the beast roam the inside of that territory, it weaves it together with that domain's outside – we encounter human values as referring also to something present as "valuable" rocks, trees, and animals. The appearance of values there then orients those human actions which transform both the actors and the non-human world surrounding them. Coming upon human values from the outside like this raises the question of the limit we somewhere pass over, and the question of the relation of humans and their values to the rest of nature. And then we are ourselves already dealing with questions at the heart of a field of study known as human ecology.

Once upon that field, we find one in many ways central thinker to be Alf Hornborg. Publishing on a variety of topics, the perhaps most central concern of his work remains that of advancing a specific model for how to think international patterns of production and exchange so that their connection to unequal distributions of environmental risk is brought to light. This project involves doing so on a global scale whereby it enfolds the entirety of that which for humans are an environment, and further calls upon the concept of "values" at a critical instance of interrogating the connection between accumulation and the natural world. The use to which the concept is put in this context is what becomes the starting point for our journey ahead.[3] Attending first to what Hornborg writings lets values *be*, I then move towards the conditions which let them be such. But this does not mean moving towards a confrontation with other uses of "value" belonging to other worlds, and at no point does it therefore become necessary to argue that the model is (or is not) "correct" in any manner of correspondence with the external world. While I personally believe that it does speak a fundamental truth, and that this is what makes the model so worthwhile to attend to, the reader will have to search elsewhere to find that point argued. What is disclosed here is rather the conditions which are really required both for the specific model and its family of related approaches, and it is what is shown to really be at stake there that then move us towards a different order of questioning.

## 2.2. Arbitrary Values

What is the place of values in Hornborg's ecology? At one instance, we find him insisting that in his thinking "[h]uman evaluation is viewed, as it were, from the outside, as a component in socio-ecological systems" (Hornborg 2001: 48). With this view, according to Hornborg, we

[3] What is pursued below is not intended to be exhaustive of all Hornborg's thinking, but rather of a relatively distinct argument within it. I return to some other writings by Hornborg in the discussion on Heidegger (section 4.7).

"can achieve a clearer grasp of the way in which economic institutions allow human subjectivity to impinge on objective processes" (ibid.). And already here we encounter a commitment to a detached view which from its vantage point sees the world according to a fundamental bifurcation. The exact place of this bifurcation is further at ample display in the aptly titled text "In Defense of the Nature/Culture Distinction" (Hornborg 2009), where Hornborg insists that despite the world being unified on an ontological level, it is still important to retain an *analytical* distinction between Nature and Culture. This distinction would in effect separate phenomena so that they belong to one or the other domain, thereby sorting those phenomena which are wholly arbitrary from those whose behavior is fully predictable for anybody possessing a description of the laws of nature (ibid. 96). Our primary concern in this section is with this divide, and what it means for values. What it is purported to do is, in Hornborg's words, to let a "grasping" happen. But how does an analytical divide like this accomplish that task, and what does it really grasp for? These are questions I approach by first attending to *why* the grasp takes hold of what it does.

While the terms in which Hornborg presents his discussion on values and unequal exchange vary, the basic argument is constant enough to be traced towards one central structure which lets it be put forth. Here it is helpful to attend to the context where this putting forth happens, as this marks a specific confluence in the terrain of what may (somewhat awkwardly) be called the "unequal exchange tradition", wherein the concept of "values" would belong to a strategy of critique which is most poignantly directed against capitalism and its markets. Where the unequal exchange tradition first proceeded in a Marxist-inspired fashion which measures commodities in terms of the human labor they embody, the site where we find Hornborg's model positioned lies closer to a stream which attempts to measure the *material* requirements of production. To take some illustrative examples: in close proximity to Hornborg's work we find Jorgenson and Rice (2007) comparing weighted export flows so to demonstrate how richer countries sustain higher levels of consumption (with levels measured by the ecological footprint) by importing resources from poorer ones; and we find Weisz (2007) showing that if one adds "intensities" (in sense of various indirect requirements considered as measurable environmental burdens) then one can again show how relatively poorer nations stand in a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis richer ones in terms of such tradeflows, despite how these flows cannot appear but equitable insofar as they are measured only in terms of price. Turning to Hornborg's own work, we find him using different measures at different times, presenting the exchange sometimes as being of "energy, matter, embodied

land" (Hornborg 2011: 9) or occasionally even of "embodied labor" (ibid.). But looking closer at these differences we find them to be but different refraction of what is sometimes explicitly called the *productive potential* of things (e.g. Hornborg 2003: 5).

These efforts appear similar, but what is it more precisely that constitutes the similarity? An answer can be given by noting the presence of a shared *aim* of these efforts, which imposes certain conditions on analysis if it is to be fulfilled. And this aim is to demonstrate – behind the perceived utility which price expresses a by-definition equitable meeting point of – hidden inequalities in the thing which the exchange transfers. This means establishing a frame of juxtaposition for alternative "measures" of what is nevertheless the very same commodity transferred, which creates the formal necessity of a second *measure* to be present. The thing *measured* is summoned to answer this call. Each of these alternative measures is *of* requirements for a commodity, and their common function is to let these requirements be contrasted to the equity implied by price. And on this wholly formal level, it is to an extent incidental what the commodity is said to be in addition to whatever the price reflects, as long as it fulfills a set of requirements: It needs to be universal enough that it is present at the very least in the commodity flow taking place between poorer and richer nations (or similarly separated spheres), and it needs to be measurable in such a linear and quantitative way that it can be juxtaposed to the linear quantity of a price, while simultaneously qualitatively independent from the price in such a way that a divergence between the measured quantities can be demonstrated to begin with.

Where we find Hornborg diverging from many other writers in this tradition is exactly in his use of the concept of values, as seen in his strict refusal to use it to describe anything other than the price. "Values", as well as "price" and "meaning", are in no way concepts avoided in his writings. But when they appear, they do so in the context of two functions that they perform in the world to which they belong: To make the exchange of things possible, and to represent these things in a manner which distorts the underlying productive potential of them. Money, for example, is described as an expression of the idea that everything is exchangeable for anything, so that in the domain of its influence we find that rainforests can be swapped for Coca-Cola (e.g. Hornborg 2001: 170). This is what "values" *do* in the world, according to the writings of Hornborg. And at the same time, he dismisses attempts to account for why the value expressed by price happen to be what it is, instead insisting that "valuation is an altogether cultural phenomenon" (ibid. 47), which would here mean that "[w]e can completely disregard the subjective 'utility' of the products, which is more or less arbitrary

and ephemeral anyway – *arbitrary because it is culturally defined*" (ibid. 45. emphasis added). A fundamental reason for insisting on this is, I believe, found in the formal conditions of critique which are identified in the preceding paragraph. If we look closer at what he faults predecessors such as Marx and Odum for doing (e.g. Hornborg 2001: 40), we find his point being primarily that one cannot find a "correlate" of price in any objectively measurable property in commodities or the material world (ibid. 47). Holding that value means price and that speaking of the alternative substance in such terms would therefore imply a desire to find "correct" prices for commodities, he writes elsewhere that "[i]t would be nonsensical to offer an 'exergy theory of value'" for the *reason* that "it would systematically contradict the valuations which people actually make" (Hornborg 1998: 134). The demonstration of inequity (which is the "why" for the grasping of the model) requires the divergence of two measured quantities – it does *not* require that one is the "real" value which the actual price diverges from. To keep insisting on establishing a "real" value would lead to more confusion than clarity.

Let's first think the possibilities granted by thinking the world in accordance with this bifurcation between cultural and natural, contingent and necessary. First, we find Hornborg being able to go beyond a demonstration of unequal exchange taking place in specific situations to rather argue for its place as a structural *necessity* of production as such. This is because that which is now measured as parallel to price is so general that *any* production is subject to its conditions, and those conditions are given by universal physical laws which are taken to be both specifiable and unbendable. Among such laws is found the second law of thermodynamics, which becomes especially important for Hornborg's project: its statement that the entropy of a closed system will never decrease until thermodynamic equilibrium (maximum entropy) is reached lets it be argued that the entire productive system can be conceived (in terms adopted from Prigogine) as a *dissipative structure* which avoids this equilibrium only by means of importing high quality energy from the surrounding environment while simultaneously releasing low quality energy back into it (e.g. Hornborg 2010: 191). Reading trade of commodities in terms of such a structure lets it be argued that the flow wherein resources are sold from extractive peripheries to productive centers only to be returned in the form of finished commodities is in fact a circulation where high quality energy is exchanged for energy in low quality forms. This is perhaps the primary process that an "exergy theory of value" would simply obscure, for it is only once wholly liberated from culturally projected meanings such as value that we are confronted with something so wholly

subject to universal laws. And only on basis of such universality can it then be concluded, with Hornborg, that if we would ever opt to live in an equitable world, we should also better temper our hopes of ever being able to build spaceships for traveling the stars (Hornborg 2014a: 93).

Not only does the model for thinking unequal exchange set limits to what can be done in the future – such as building spaceships in an equitable world - it also lets us see retroactively what must really have been going on in the past. After the delimitation of a typology for modes of accumulation, we find the mode operative in trade to be contingent on dissipation of resources being rewarded with the symbolically mediated ability to lay claim to more resources for dissipation (Hornborg 2001: 45). This is a situation Hornborg describes by recourse to the concept of *fetishism.* The "fetish" is traditionally construed – as discussed more extensively below (section 3.5) – as a man-made divinity presenting itself as the source of wealth which it gives as long as its need for sacrifice is satiated by humans. From a position outside its influence, it is apparent that this divinity is not a source of anything at all but rather gives back to a group of people what they themselves offer to it, only now redistributed so to benefit one group of people over others. Its function is thus simply to put a ruse into effect which distorts real sources of wealth, which helps the external theorist explain why people consent to what (for the theorist) is obviously inequitable circumstances. In Hornborg's case we find him doing exactly this to examples ranging from tractors to the king of the Incas (e.g. Hornborg 2001: 150), which turns out to be as illuminating for understanding his own approach as it is for the phenomena he describes.

But this also hints at the problems which Hornborg's unequal exchange model, when taken on its own, offers no satisfactory solution to. A "fetish" is related to a specific accomplishment, which can then implicitly be assumed to not be accomplished without the interference of the fetish. What this fetish accomplishes is exchange, and exchange is (ideally and formally) an event which happens when actors feel their interests have been met. And since the fetish accomplishes this by disguise and counterfeit representation then, at least on some level, the actual target of these actors' interests has become identified as that which the fetish misrepresents. What is misrepresented in Hornborg's case is the "productive potential" embodied in the commodities of an exchange, to the extent that the model of unequal exchange never admits the form which this potential takes when realized as something specific – as a tractor or as an Inca king. Everything is represented only as its lowest requirements of production, which is qualitatively common to everything. While such

flattening of interest in relation to one common source is a necessary condition for it to be possible to demonstrate inequity by means of revealing transfers of unequal *proportions* of one limited and common totality, this would not let us think the *difference* between how these fetishized humans are (as assumed here) comporting themselves to a "next", and the way a tractor moves forward only by being pushed from "behind" by its engine.

Only persons are oriented towards "value". Positing values as "arbitrary" emphasizes a necessary division between representation and reality, where it is the humans orientation to the former which makes fetishism possible to begin with. But note that the model still requires values not to be arbitrary in a strict sense, for the misrepresentation accomplished through fetishism needs to be a *systemic* inversion, lest production would come to a halt. This brings us to how there are two general ways to think about values – either in a normative sense, or as something which occurs in the world and there has certain effects. Hornborg insists on a strict separation of the two, and the model for unequal exchange concerns only an interrogation of the effects and conditions for the latter. But what this evaluative interrogation renders as its result is an evaluation of the necessary conditions pertaining to certain practices, meaning that even *if* we confine ourselves to thinking value in the second sense there is still something missing: What it is that has made values what they are, and thereby brought about the evaluated practices to begin with. Even if goods exchange *as* productive potential, then since potential is only "potential" insofar as it refers to something beyond itself, we would find that already here there is "interest" in it only insofar as it is *for* something else. In this case the "for" might be accumulation, but it still only translates to such when made into something desirable for a consumer. And we still have little clue about the formation of those desires.

What brings about the processes which are measured and evaluated by the model of unequal exchange are the actions of persons – how they are made to answer the question of "what next". But two crucial things escape these evaluations: any inquiry which could tell us *why* a person would actually choose to exchange his rainforest for Coca-Cola when the opportunity presents itself, as well as why we should care in the first place. These are two points which have the same reason. In regards to the first point, human needs are met not by mere potential but rather by realizations of potential into specific forms, brought about in relation to exactly such goals and projects which belongs to the *cultural* domain which, as far as the present model can take us, we need to regard as merely arbitrary. The second point goes beyond such missing explanations, and has to do with the results which the model renders, which follow wholly from Hornborg's very own commitment to objectivity. And that is because also

speaking of "environmental degradation" remains a normative activity which, no matter how objective its methods, still require a "*cultural*" conception of what should count as degradation (such as Escobar's (1998) problematization of the seemingly neutral measure of "biodiversity" demonstrates). If this is disregarded, and this goes for the whole unequal exchange tradition, whatever its juxtapositions actually measure would tend to be misconstrued in line with what Moran (1990) criticizes as the "calorific obsession", meaning the way in which scientists "took great pains to measure energy flows through ecosystems under the assumption that energy was the only measurable common denominator that structured ecosystems and that could serve to define their function" (ibid,. 17). Flows of energy is part of any ecosystem, and if a demonstration of the mere existence of an unreciprocated transfer is enough to call out a relation as exploitative then surely a cloud of suspicion would fall on the earth itself in relation to the sun. This is not to say that the model would prevent us from doing either, for that remains wholly possible. But what it means is that this can only be done by making its results inform judgments made on some basis wholly *external* to itself.

In essence, both the models meaningfulness as well as the explanations for the events which the analysis evaluates refer to something which has yet to be accounted for – the cultural goals and projects only in which *values* really emerge to begin with. Again, these considerations are not meant to imply that the model and all that which it can tell us about the world are *wrong*. Instead, it is exactly what it shows the world to be like which first reveals the presence of something which arrives from a domain escaping the purview it offers. This then prompts the need to trace their origins towards that which they arrive from, which we find in a direction given already by the model itself.

## 2.3. Leaving Hornborg

A story has now been laid down in writing, telling of a pursuit of the concept of values through the writings of Alf Hornborg. The story began by condensing the tradition to which this thinking belongs to down to its essential structure which, in consisting of juxtapositions, was shown to require two independent scales to measure in different respects what nevertheless needs to be the same one thing. Hornborg is then read as endeavoring to present his readers with a "view" of the world which – and this is the crucial thing for his theory – renders the things within this world such as to be always available for measuring according to

the scales he employs. More specifically, we find that one scale measures a certain cultural meaning and the other a purely objective materiality. Thereby, the thing in question becomes split in two, with one side answering to a cultural meaning and the other to natural laws – a hidden side made visible for a scientific gaze which dissolves the thing into the objectively measurable requirements of its existence. But the way which the model interpolates the two-faced artifact is then shown to generate problems as to its ability for explaining that which it evaluates.

Every model for thinking requires access to something construed in such a manner that its constitution renders the model applicable to it. What the model above is applicable to are human artifacts, where materials measurable as space and time have been gathered together into socially meaningful forms. And, thus being produced through human activity, it is an "interest" in those forms which brings about the evaluated entity to begin with. The existence of that thing which the model is applied to – its presence in the world – relies on something which it is *not* applicable to. More specifically, actual *interests* and whatever reasons these interests have for being what they are. And why, then, does the model not apply? This is not simply about something overlooked, but rather something belonging to the orientation which gives the model all its positive possibilities to begin with. For bringing into view the point where "human subjectivity […] impinge on objective processes" (Hornborg 2001: 48; see p. 8 above), it turns towards what is but a trace of desires which have already been met. Thus, it looks where an impact occurs, not to where the ideas which make that impact take shape.

As implied already by Hornborg's critique of those who attempt to identify some objective property as the "real" value of the artifact, "values" do not refer to anything which is simply present. The subjective values that impinge objective processes do not originate at the point where that impact happens, they arrive to it. But might there not be another ground – another point of origin from whence they come – which could help us understand what these values nevertheless really are and what makes them be as they are? Hornborg himself points to the domain in which we might find that point of origin – that of *culture*. But let's specify what this might mean, in a manner which helps our orientation through the later parts of this thesis (in particular, the third part): The manner which Hornborg posits the location of the "culture" to which values belong stems from a tradition encountered already in Socrates' proposal that the word *ánthrōpos* itself comes from *anathrōn ha opōpe,* meaning the being who (unlike

beasts) directs its being *upwards* (Cratylus 399c).[4] Taking our cue from Socrates' proposal, what it means to be human would be defined by what it means to relate to beings by a certain way of seeing. This being which sees might be standing among other beings, but its way of relating to the others nevertheless goes through something beyond whatever it is that they are in themselves. In another dialogue, Socrates presents this doctrine in the following terms:

> [Socrates:] Well, what about this? When you call all admirable things admirable, bodies, for example, or colors, shapes and sounds, or practices, is it with nothing in view that you do so each time? Take admirable bodies first. Don't you call them admirable either in virtue of their usefulness, relative to whatever it is that each is useful for, or else in virtue of some pleasure, if it makes the people who look at them get enjoyment from looking at them? (Plato *Gorgias* 474d)[5]

Insofar as beings are valuable, they are so only in view of something beyond themselves. And the eye which sees belongs to the *anathrōn ha opōpe*, which reappears again in Aristotle and then the subsequent western tradition as the *zoon logon echon.*[6] More literally this means the being equipped with reason and/or language, in a sense where the meaning of such "reason" is woven in metaphors of vision directed to what is above. None of this appears explicitly in the works of Hornborg, but it is nevertheless implied in the very existence of a domain of culture – uniquely accessible by humans – which bestows *onto* beings their "meaning". "Ecological footprints" and the like are left behind in a stride crossing the earth, but its direction is given by what lies in the complete opposite direction. Something kept in view and hence in front, and perhaps not on the ground so much as above.

If we contrast Hornborg's model with Socrates' doctrine we find the main difference (in these respects) to be the insistence by the former that such meanings are "arbitrary". This is probably not meant in the strictest sense. Rather it emphasizes both that, since it is wholly culturally defined, it is hopeless to search for a *real* correlate of it in the natural ground below, as well as that this very ephemerality means that the regime of values which structures (for instance) capitalism might one day be made a thing of the past. At the same time, in not taking on the actual formation of "values", the model discussed in this part of the thesis would be confined to mapping various constellations of different skies, so to then measure what impact

[4]Plato 1997a. *Cratylus* .transl. by C.D.C Reeve, in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited, with introduction and notes, by John M. Cooper, Indianapolis: Hackett, 101-156.

[5]Plato 1997b. *Gorgias.* transl. by Donald J Zeyl, in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited, with introduction and notes, by John M. Cooper, Indianapolis: Hackett, 791-869.

[6]The term *zoon logon echon* does not occur anywhere in Aristotle's corpus, but is a common paraphrase of notions found in places such as Aristotle's *Politics* [1253a].

the acts of the humans that take their bearings from a particular sky leaves on the earth below. By contrast, in the next part of the thesis I turn our path around from that which the being which has values leaves behind, and instead towards that which it keeps in front – searching there an answer to what has brought the stars to shine in the first place. Where the texts by Hornborg which we encounter above hold that values are cultural and therefore arbitrary, we here move towards texts proposing the notion that that exactly in being cultural they are in no way arbitrary. Thereby we find the limit hereto simply "between" opening up a horizon enfolding both the "nature" and "culture" of any artifact which is made, delivering us to what the value really *is* which the thing both carries and springs from.

To emphasize again: This is not a move from one notion of what value is, now deemed inadequate, to another notion which might be better. Our starting point in Hornborg's work still stands, and we bring it with us towards a horizon which is itself opened up only through the event constituted by his writings. The following move from one body of text to another is made wholly on terms set out in the interpretation above, for only that one really brought us to the being orientating itself to above in this manner. And that creature is the human, bringing us in direction of the modern field of *anthropology* in order to see what it can tell us about values.

# 3. David Graeber

> The greatest wizard would be the one who bewitched himself to the point of accepting his own phantasmagorias as autonomous apparitions. Wouldn't that be our case? – Novalis
>
> If fetishism is, at root, our tendency to see our own actions and creations as having power over us, how can we treat it as an intellectual mistake? Our actions and creations do have power over us. This is simply true. (Graeber 2005: 431)

*

## 3.1. From Ecology to Anthropology

Along a path where values were deigned cultural and culture deemed proper to humans, the emerging concern with the *ánthrōpos* leads our path to the modern field of *anthropology.* As we first arrive there, however, we find a space about which it can even be argued that the last decades have at all not seen any "significant attention to values" (Robbins 2013: 99). Now, while it is indeed telling that such a statement is even advanced, it is perhaps not entirely accurate. For as the anthropologist David Graeber replies, this would disregard not least that

tradition in which he himself was reared as an anthropologist (Graeber 2013: 236). But even Graeber is forced to admit that these concerns remained subaltern and that until very recently the concern with "value" was a marginal concern in anthropology. Recent developments have nevertheless stirred this complacency, such as the journal issue which both these articles are published in is a prime testament to.[7] Now, we bring Hornborg's work with us as we forge a possible path through that context. Where do we bring it, more precisely? To that marginal tradition which Graeber mentions, of which he himself has remained the most prolific acolyte. His work then becomes even more interesting for us due to how it not only belongs to that tradition, but endeavors to confront and enfold the whole body of anthropological work on value which took place before the topics fall from grace, meaning that it offers a possible synthesis of that whole tradition. Committing ourselves to whatever answers can be gathered from that specific site, our *method* thus leads into those texts where Graeber both gathers and transforms his materials.

The more concrete question for which we search answers in Graeber's writings is the one we bring with us from the section on Hornborg: What *are* values, and where do they come from? Finding the answer requires constructing an original interpretation of Graeber's work, which together with the demonstration of a possible path into it from Hornborg is to be the central achievement of this part of the thesis. It is important, however, not to project the answers we attain here onto Hornborg himself and assume that Graeber answers for him. Instead, the contention here is that, from the particular model of thinking which the previous section explored, a line of *possible* agreement can be drawn in direction of Graeber's work. That path ultimately overspills also the work of Graeber, and brings both with it along a journey where their lines of thought might interact perhaps not always harmoniously but, as is my contention, at least constructively.

As long as we remain within the confines of this part of the thesis, we shall proceed somewhat differently than before. For if the lands we are leaving behind were open fields which we could cross with relative ease, the trail ahead leads through increasingly dense woodlands. There, the trace of value sometimes vanish, reappears someplace else, then to disappear from view yet again in what appears a completely different direction. This means that in order to succeed in our tracing we will need to gain an understanding of the forest itself - what streams nourish it and what hopes lead the caretaker of its lands to channel these sources into his own work. Doing so is a possibility granted to this thesis by the flexible method adopted at the

[7] *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory, Vol 3 no. 1 and 2.*

outset, and with it our our *method* leads a circle which, in search for the basic animating principles of what is found within the territory of Graeber, moves far beyond what is contained within the pages of his own work. The direction and necessity of undertaking these excursions need to be encountered in the texts themselves. But as they make the relevant principles familiar to us, it becomes easy to understand how the track moves, which let us move towards a discussion of what it really is that would let it move like that.

I begin with Graeber's interpretation and critique of the use of the value-concept within anthropology (section 3.2) which provides both the material to be synthesized and the problems which his synthesis is intended to overcome. In the next section (3.3) I turn us toward the materialist ontology which specifies the principles which values need to be animated by, insofar as one single theory can then be conjured which accounts for the different senses of value we encounter in section 3.2. This is done when the principles lend phenomena to a certain manner of being explained, and the theory which does the explaining is interpreted explicitly in section 3.4. This theory's manner of accounting for what *is* also implies certain possibilities for us to think how we can *become* something else, and in section 3.5 I make sense of Graeber's thinking on that matter, searching for it in his reconceptualization of the notion of "fetishism". But in that discussion we encounter a limit for how far Graeber's own texts let us understand the conditions of the value theory they propose. Then, in the discussion (section 3.6), we again need to discover how to transform our very question if we are to carry our pursuit even further.

## 3.2. Anthropological Theories of Value

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce Graeber's thinking on value, which I do by explicating it from the place where we find its most focused elaboration – the ambitious work with the now strikingly relevant name *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value* (2001). In that work, the question Graeber sets out to answer is what values really *are*, where his answer eventually requires him to set out a model of human social life as such. But his initial steps are led by the question of how the concept of "value" has really been used within the texts of anthropology. Answering that question requires structuring that huge field according to some delineations, and what Graeber argues is that value is used in three different ways, accompanied by three different paradigms for how social life ought to be approached. The argument is then made that failure to apprehend these differences in what is really at stake for

the concept is to blame for theorists talking past each other. If Graeber's delineation is accurate, however, then what we find in anthropology is less contentions over how one common phenomenon is to be accounted for and more the use of a common concept (value) to account for three distinct phenomena. But with the nature of this division in view, Graeber's argument is that they really *do* refer to one and the same thing. Only now this one thing is something diffracting into three aspects, corresponding to each traditions notion of what value is. If we can get a better sense for what that common thing might be then, Graeber argues, these differences might be overcome in a greater synthesis. The particular model which Graeber advances is the topic for sections 3.3 and 3.4. But before arriving there, we first need to provision ourselves with the background material set out in the present section.

I begin by setting out the three distinct uses of the concept "value" as Graeber finds them in anthropology, so we can then follow them through one by one. These are:

1. "values" in the sociological sense: conceptions of what is ultimately good, proper, or desirable in human life
2. "value" in the economic sense: the degree to which objects are desired, particularly, as measured by how much others are willing to give up to get them
3. "value" in the linguistic sense, which goes back to the structural linguistics […] and might be most simply glossed as "meaningful difference" (Graeber 2001: 1-2)

The first stream takes its source primarily in the works of Clyde Kluckhohn and reached its height of influence in the 1940's and 50's. When pursuing value in this sense, its concern was not primarily with what individuals actually want, as much as with conceptions shared across a group about what they *ought* to want (Graeber 2001: 3-4). And despite what initially seemed like a promise to lay the foundation of a great project that could account for cultural difference in terms of different senses of life's very meaning, this stream quickly faded to a trickle and today lies dried and desolate. Nevertheless, Graeber believes the theory he himself advances holds some promise of being able to reconnect this source to a living tradition, where it would be allowed to mingle with the other two approaches.

The more important of these other two as far as the outside of specifically *anthropological* value theory goes is the one named second on the list above. "Value" is used here as the principle that explains why an actor opts for one decision rather than another when faced with several options, and it does so by applying what is at its basis a seductively simple model for how decisions are processed: Humans consider different options according to what will bring most benefit for themselves, and a decision can be deemed rational as far as it proceeds upon such a comparison made in terms of benefit (Graeber 2001: 6). Living as this tradition may

be, it is nevertheless beset by serious problems at the limits of its applicability. These limits become apparent when one notes the very simplistic manner in which "value" is actually used: "Chocolate cheesecake promises pleasure, but so does the knowledge that others do not consider you obese; rational actors regularly weigh one against the other. It is this promise of pleasure economists call 'value'" (ibid. 9). While appealing due to its simplicity, this focus on how actors process their desires in order to maximize their acquisition of pleasure passes over the question of why one thing would be considered more desirable to begin with. And without a manner of accounting for why these options hold the desirability and meaning that they do – what the self is actually interested in - Graeber insists that such approaches tend to end up merely reaffirming the basic assumption that human actions express calculations based on self-interest (ibid. 8).

So how can the missing aspect be accounted for? This brings us to the *third* tradition in anthropological thinking on value. For Graeber holds that accounting for it requires recourse to some concept of culture, whereby it may become possible to explain how desire emerges in relation not to a desirable object, but in communion with other people. Culture in the sense of systems of meaning is what this tradition has as its concern. Here, rather than using value as the thing which explains how an action springs from a decision, what is to be accounted for is what the valued thing is actually understood to be. "Value" is used in a sense roughly analogous to "meaning" (Graeber 2001: 13). But in doing so, efforts in this vein have tended to proceed much like the structural linguistics developed in the wake of Saussure, where the value is seen as an articulation of a difference in relation to other values. And here Graeber interjects that just like Sausserian linguists tend to create maps of *langue* outside its instantiation in *parole,* once an account for a "value" has been made by researchers of this stream there still remains the difficulty of how that meaning is imported into instances of practical decision making (ibid. 21). Within anthropology, Graeber turns to Marilyn Strathern as his representative of this approach to value, and counters her approach by insisting that (among the peoples on Papua New Guinea among which Strathern has studied) "[i]t is one thing to say that women at a market in Papua New Guinea are likely to see two lumps of apparently identical fish as different. It's quite another to say why, as a result, a given woman will want one and not the other" (ibid. 43).

The fact that it is in these terms that Graeber formulates what he sees lacking in Strathern's "tradition" already tells us a lot about his own. When he claims there to be a problem involved in going from meaning to practice, we see the implicit assumption that there *is* such

a distinction to be mediated, that this mediation ought to go from the former to the latter, and (most significantly) that such translation operates through a moment of evaluation in the face of options. The task of the theory which Graeber strives to develop is that of finding a manner to account for that moment of evaluation, which would also let the three aspects of value play their respective parts. And to do so turns out to require positing *something* as that which the evaluation always takes place in terms of. Graeber initiates his movement towards this something by a passing reference to the works of the anthropologist Nancy Munn (Graeber 2001: 44), from whence he can develop the notion that the mistake which all three paradigms above have in common is that their adherents presume that what values are about (what that something they refer to really *is*) are *objects*. Instead, values are always really about *actions.* So, in a sense, Graeber is here in agreement with Hornborg in regards to the (im)possibility of identifying a substance of value in an object. But Graeber's point is that those who try to do so are really searching in the wrong place, so that we instead need to let the word value lead us elsewhere. What would change if we do so? One answer is found in Graeber's theory, where the human being which takes its bearings from the heavens above becomes that which itself makes the stars glow. Here, the being which mediates above and below becomes a site where both are not only gathered but from whence they are ultimately projected. And the nature of this change is the topic for the next section.

## 3.3. Materialism

In this section, "values" themselves are removed from focus. Instead, it is dedicated to an exploration of the ontology Graeber's value theory relies upon. Values have already been posited as *about* something – actions – in a manner dealt with at greater length in the next section. Now, we take a longer route for the reason that we need to first know what these actions really *are* which values are intimately connected to, as well as where we can expect to encounter them in our world. The ontology that we search, we find to be designated by a name, but not one speaking directly of actions. Rather, it speaks of materiality – for in adherence to the Marxian project which Graeber's theory ultimately stems from, this theory is *materialist*. But what does it mean to be "material" in the sense that this "–ism" is formed from it? Here, this is not to be taken in a directly intuitive sense. Instead, committing to materialism means for Graeber to take on a perspective which "sees society as arising from creative action, but creative action as something that can never be separated from its concrete, material medium" (2001: 54), which he admits might not appear very materialistic at all

(ibid.).[8] This is significant for where following Graeber does *not* lead us, since defining "materialism" in this way precludes the analytic strategy, so often associated with Marxism, which would interpret any "superstructure" of ideas as but a function for distorting awareness of the "material" conditions of production, which would be the *real* heart of a social system. Such conventional materialism renders the task of analysis to reveal a present reality beyond ideological misconstruals. But that strategy also presumes the existence of an ontological dualism which Graeber first denies by his definition, and then goes on to make an object of scrutiny in itself when asserting that "[t]he very idea that either pure ideas or mindless material action exist is an ideology whose operations need to be investigated" (Graeber 2006: 72).

The central point of Graeber's sort of materialism has much less to do with anything "material" than it has to do with creative activity. What it would have us realize is how the (material) artifacts making up the world in which we dwell are not merely made *by* humans, but in some fundamental sense *are* human activity. This would mean, as Marx took so much for granted that he hardly even saw the need to elaborate on it, that an encounter with an artifact is really an encounter with other humans (Elson 1979: 159). Because of this, any encountered artifact must be read back towards its origin in such activity, which when designated *labor* is specified as belonging to one particular being – the human. The human world is human not only because humans are present in it but because it is wholly their own creation. Thus, this world must be grasped in relation to its creator. But what about this creator; what is he really like? In regards to *how* he creates, Marx himself provided the famous analogy of the architect and the bee, where the worst of the former is held to be different from the latter by virtue of how his activity is always oriented towards one *design* or another, which he only then endeavors to realize in the world (Marx 1976: 284). And this means that insofar as entities *are* activity, specified as human labor, then their very existence is somehow directed beyond their own mere presence, along the line of that intention which first makes them be. Now, these are all notions which Graeber needs to hold valid for his theory to take off. At the same time, he presents very little in way of explication and justification for his argument on this level. But here approaching from a starting point in Human Ecology, this topic of the human being's manner of being related to his world is

[8] This conception is close, however, to Martin Heidegger's assertion in the *Letter on Humanism* that "The essence of materialism does not consist in the assertion that everything is simply matter but rather in a metaphysical determination according to which every being appears as the material of labor" (Heidegger 1993a: 243).

something we cannot pass by that easily. So, where to turn in order to know this kind of world better? Graeber himself provides a clue by using the very final paragraph of his value theory book (Graeber 2001: 260) to introduce the Marxian anthropological ontology developed by Elaine Scarry (1985), and with that work here taken as the position which Graeber speaks *from* more than *about,* its nature is what I shall follow up on for the remainder of this section.

While ultimately constructing a heterodox reading of Marx, Scarry's work is on the immediate level concerned with the phenomenon of torture, as interpreted from an account of what the pain there inflicted really is. Her interpretation starts out from the notion that all mental states are directed, so that regardless of whether directed towards a pen or a cloud, awareness will always be awareness *of* something (e.g. Scarry 1985: 161). The phenomenon of pain, then, is given its meaning by being posited as the only exception – as that awareness which is not *about* anything, but which rather "annihilates not only the objects of complex thought and emotion but also the objects of the most elemental acts of perception" (ibid. 54). This is taken to be omnipresent as far as any degree of pain goes, but what happens to the tortured subject is that this process is brought to its extreme completion, where "[p]ain begins by being 'not oneself' and ends by having eliminated all that is 'not itself.'" (ibid.). Now, it is not torture itself which is our concern in this thesis. But what we can already gather from this account is a notion of intentionality as something extending outwards (or contracting inwards) from a center. Contraction is associated with the infliction of pain, and extension with its opposite. And this turns out to be crucial for understanding the very activity of creation, as well as the whole world which such creation brings about.

According to Scarry, the process of creation can be conceived as "making sentient of the external world" (ibid. 281). But what does that mean, and how does it follow from the above? The basic point follows from how creation is something which takes place through labor, which always implies a degree of "pain" in the form of effort. That process would thus inherently be something to be avoided, meaning that now some form of *explanation* for "why" labor takes place is required. And when given on this basic level, the "why" would imply a commitment to the inherent purpose of creation as such, beyond any specific forms it may take on. To return to the "external world", what "sentience" really implies is responsibility: A rock is ignorant of the frailty of the human body, and does not care for the cracking of the skull on which it falls. What the activity of creation does – having now been given its meaning in relation to our capacity for pain – is to make the external world *as if* it was aware of our suffering. And what happens when artifacts are construed for theory in such

terms is that whatever forms these artifacts might take, they can still be read towards the purpose why they have been generated to begin with: All created entities respond to the call of human pain, and their forms are "not the shape of the skeleton, the shape of body weight, nor even the shape of pain-perceived, but the shape of perceived-pain-wished-gone" (ibid. 290).

Since this is taken to be true irrespective of specific forms, those specificities can be disregarded by Scarry in order to conceive of *all* created artifacts as being but levers standing on the far side of a self-recursive, self-amplificatory arc (e.g. Scarry 1985: 307). Creation is explained by its purpose, and its purpose refers back to its source. Coming back to that source, the whole point of the arcs existence is given as an *amplification* in terms recognizable in measures of pain and extension. To take an example of Scarry's (Scarry 1985: 307), the reason *why* a woman may undertake the efforts of sewing a coat is that wearing it in the winter will spare her the much greater efforts of jumping up and down to stay warm. Those efforts – including their *why* – are also the reason for the existence of the coat to begin with, meaning that the reference back to the human creator would be inherent to the very being of the coat itself. And not only is this the case for artifacts like coats, but something which together with the whole structure of creation remains the same on all levels of scale, including that of society as a whole (ibid. 246).

Now, the argument above sets some terms by which we can interpret what goes on in capitalist society. Scarry herself reads the capitalist appropriation of the means of production as what is thereby done is to "[sever] the worker from his own extended body" (ibid. 246). What happens then is that he interrupts the recursiveness of creation, leaving the worker with all the efforts and none of its amplificatory relief, which instead accrues to the exploiter. And speaking of this in terms of the worker's body really emphasizes how that assault is on something completely integral to what humans really *are*, which can then serve the measure of the inadequacy of that social system:

> Because Marx understands men's and women's fundamental human identity to reside in their existence as "creators,", "imaginers," and "makers," the social system that departs from this ground is uncreative, anti-imaginative, destructive, a deconstruction of making. This deconstruction has as its most immediate evidence and outcome the widespread physical suffering of the industrial population, and Marx reacts to the deconstruction with anger, with fury, with embarrassment, and above all, with the metaphysical incredulity of a good craftsman looking at a bad piece of work (Scarry 1985: 258).

Any project of critique requires some sort of standard in order to take off, since there needs to be *something* against which to assess a given state of affairs. In Hornborg's model of unequal exchange, that something was a notion of equity in terms of productive potential in trade; here we find a purpose accorded to creation (and to existence itself *as* creation) as such, so that a motion failing to reach its destination can be judged as being off its course. The goal is Man himself, and then to the extent that the construction of society really ought to be read as having the same general structure as the creation of artifacts, then the figure of that goal would be active in the process of history as such, while also transcending historic specificity. The significance of this insight shall receive due elaboration further ahead. For now, what's important to bring with us for the next part of our journey is the sense of humanity's omnipresence in the lived world, and how that means that what this world *is* might then find an explanation in the "values" which determine the intentions which activity is oriented towards. But how does all that fit together? This is the question with which our *method* moves us first back to Graeber's own work, there to set out again on another detour, before carrying across into the next section of the thesis.

## 3.4. The Value Theory of Labor

"It is value that brings universes into being", claims Graeber (2013). If we take Scarry to have set out the structure of those universes, the reason for the position is clear: Activity does not take place *in* a world as much as it *is* what this world most fundamentally consist of. The specific activity which humans exercise, and which the world in which they dwell consist in, is given another specification: it is directed at purposes. What determines a concrete purpose (such as making a chair) is a value, and with a *theory of* how such values are determined we would have an incredibly powerful theory. But to make such a theory requires values to be referred to something else as their ground for being what they are, and what Graeber's theory fundamentally does is to refer them back to the very activity which they determine. This is a circular model which this section and the next shall explore at greater depth. Where the next section deals with how the phenomenon of fetishism can break that circle, this section deals with the nature of its closure when successful.

But first, what is meant by "value", insofar as the theory here is concerned? While the theory originates in Marx, and it is possible to describe it as a "*labor* theory of value", it is crucial here not to confuse the present construal of Marx' theory with that of Ricardo. Where for

instance Hornborg conflates the two by holding that what the theory is meant to explain is a magnitude of price by reference to a quantity of labor, Graeber repudiates any such connection to Ricardo along with the assumption that a specific *price* was ever really the true foci for Marx's theory (Graeber 2001: 55). It is here completely irrelevant which construal is really correct, but it is still important to keep this difference in mind.[9] Instead, the form in which Graeber takes up the value theory is one which arrives largely intact from the anthropologist Terence Turner, who in turn follows Diane Elson's proposal that the conflation with Ricardo might be avoidable by using the more proper moniker of a *value theory of labor* (Turner 2008: 46). It is this interpretation that we shall explore in this section. I begin with the work of Elson which Turner here makes reference to, before moving downstream towards Graeber through an essay where Turner interprets the structure of Kayapo society in lines with the value theory. This demonstrates the adoption of Marx' argument – filtered by Elson – to the needs of anthropology, and does so thoroughly enough that we can return directly to the three conceptions of value found in section 3.2. Only in the next section (3.5), then, do we make the transition back to Graeber's own advancement of the possibilities which this resolution offers.[10]

So, let's begin with Elson and her interpretation of Marx's value theory. The theory must first of all be understood in relation to the actual riddle it tries to give answers to, and Elson holds most rivaling interpretations to have gone wrong already at this initial step. The most common mistake here would consist in the assumption that the theory is about magnitudes of price, but no less mistaken is the notion that it was meant to prove the existence of exploitation (Elson 1979: 115) or to explain the distribution of labor between the branches of a productive structure (ibid. 124). While these mistakes are wrong in different ways, Elson proposes that they nevertheless have a common reason for going wrong: The mistaken notion that Marx used the term "value" to *explain* one phenomenon or other, and here Elson holds, by contrast, that the word "value" neither explains anything, nor was it ever even intended to do so (ibid. 121)! But what's the point of a theory if not that of providing explanations? Elson is using the

[9] For the record, I believe that while they are indeed attempting to do something quite different things, Ricardo is more important for Marx than Graeber really admits. At least explicitly in his writings. (See e.g. Heinrich 2012).

[10] Even if he is the penultimate source, Marx's own work shall not be dealt with to any great extent in what follows. The reason for this is to avoid becoming entangled in the protracted and ongoing debates about what the bearded prophet *really* meant by this statement or that, when it is really Graeber and the specific interpretation of Marx which he adopts that is our concern in this thesis. Whether that interpretation is correct or not is then ultimately irrelevant.

term rather narrowly here, referring to the process whereby Marx's use of terms like for instance "determination" have become read as if intended to indicate a causal relation between variables (ibid.). Using the word in a more generous sense, there are still things to be explained. But when now having discarded common assumptions what these things would be, what do we then end up "explaining"?

We make some headway to an answer by recalling, from the previous section, Marx's sense of outrage at the conditions facing the workers of the industrial society of that time, together with the assumption (also stated above) that any society is brought about by the very same people comprising it. Why are these people creating a society which brings them nothing but hardship? When we find such situations in ancient societies we might infer a direct answer from the slaver's whip, but the peculiar thing about the workers of capitalism is how there is no such direct coercion in the society in which they live, at least on the formal level of how it ought to operate. Much of Marx' point was then to demonstrate that the abject conditions of these workers were not incidental to that system's formal operations, but rather implicit already in them. On the immediate level, his argument for how that society could become like that is straightforward and well known: Since the activity which creates society necessarily proceeds through (material) means of production, sites are rendered which can be monopolized by categories of people (e.g. the capitalist) which then control the means only by recourse to which humans can secure even their own continued existence. And it is this structure which then implies what Elson holds to be the real riddle for Marx, since a crucial condition for it is that workers no longer sell the creations of their labors on the market, but rather the very labor *itself* in the form of a *capacity* to conduct any kind of labor. In this structure, the capitalist himself only exist as a consumer of labor, which requires the labor to already be present as a commodity. And what the value theory is really about would then be, according to Elson, how that product emerged in that form to begin with (Elson 1979: 123).

But most bewildering for us today might rather be the specific reasons which make such availability appear like a riddle to begin with. Labor is available for purchase – for a lot of people today, the possibility of exchange is simply taken for granted, and the problematic nature of exchange might not be immediately obvious. For Marx, on the other hand, this makes all the difference, since he understood acts of exchange as something not taking place unless certain conditions have been fulfilled. In particular, it would always proceed upon a perception of equivalence (of value) in the thing exchanged. Such equivalence needs to be established, which in turn requires the taking of some kind of measurement of a substance

which the measured entities need to have in common (Elson 1979: 152). If this strikes one as making things overly complex, Elson points out that mainstream economists assume much the same when explaining price in terms of equivalence measured out in terms of perceived utility (ibid. 155). And in terms of these conditions for establishing equivalences, this is also similar to what we found in the interpretation of the unequal exchange tradition (section 2.2), and our familiarity with this tradition makes a comparison helpful if we are to see how the question at stake here is nevertheless something quite *different* from what we found earlier.

That unequal exchange tradition is the one where we found Hornborg, who thinks "value" as price, which he takes to be determined by economic actors' (arbitrary) perception of utility in a commodity. When he also posits money as a cultural idea, which makes rainforests exchangeable for Coca-Cola, then he remains close to Marx. At the same time, his critique consists in a measure-taking of an already available substance ("productive potential") in terms of already available measures (time and space). And the crucial thing here is that this measure is the possession only of himself, as explicitly positioned outside the social system scrutinized. What Marx does, according to Elsons line of interpretation, is something very different. What needs to be accounted for is the development of the measure *and* what it measures *within* the social system which is organized by actions taken in view of the measure. That is, how actors would begin measuring themselves in these terms, so that the measures thereby become immanently active in the social system structured according to them.

To pursue this in contrast to Hornborg's critique, the point is that his model of unequal exchange makes use of a flattened conception of "land" lending itself to measurements in common denominators. This means that it is contingent on concepts and structures which, as Kenneth Olwig shows, only emerged with that modernity which enclosed lands as private property to begin with (Olwig 2005: 27-28). While the use of these concepts today may well refer to something which was significant already before this, they can (according to the present perspective) not be deemed operative *in* the social process at the time. And then, as Elson reads Marx, the concern of the value theory is indeed *price*, but conceived as in itself a problem requiring scrutiny. For what prices measure is labor, and the question becomes how labor has become exchangeable for money to begin with. The crucial difference to Ricardo's theory is thus that it is not a *magnitude* of a price which is the central problem to be resolved, but rather the very phenomenon of price as such.

According to Elson, Marx might even have agreed that the price of a commodity can be explained by reference to perceived utility, but in this context the point is made moot since he

saw the "wants" which determine that perception as too heterogeneous to account for other than the *difference* between commodities, and thus not for the sameness which makes exchange possible to begin with (Elson 1979: 155). And if it is here tempting to interject "labor" as what is the same, this doesn't quite fit the bill either, since Marx held even "labor" to be a much too heterogeneous phenomenon to be measured quantitatively by one single measure (ibid. 138). At the same time, thinking that heterogeneity as a historical condition which "price" overcomes is what eventually leads to the answer provided: For having already accepted that beings really are activity, then there must evidently (given the premises above) be something of staggering universality there to be measured. And after arguing that labor is a complex structure consisting of several aspects, one of these aspect turns out to be that it always *takes time* (ibid. 148). Linear time is countable as an infinite progression of units of equal magnitude, and what price would thus represent is not "labor" as much as this most general and abstract aspect of it – the time which it takes.

In one way, this is not so far from Hornborg's model, since that model relies on measuring nothing but what could be called the *abstract aspect* of land, in the sense that what is measured is really the potential of being put to work for the realization of (in principle) *any* project. The main difference to what we are dealing with here, apart from what might follow the qualitative shift from nonhuman nature to human labor, is that the achievement of the possibility for this exchange is an achievement *in* the world. It is the terms by which people *themselves* measure *themselves* as much as it is for any external theorist, and that they do so is not anything to be taken for granted:

> If I state that work or boots stand in a relation to linen because the latter is the universal incarnation of abstract human labour, the absurdity of the statement is self evident. Nevertheless, when the producers of coats and boots bring these commodities into a relation with linen, or with gold or silver (and this makes no difference here), as the universal equivalent, the relation between their own private labour and the collective labour of society appears to them in exactly this absurd form (Marx 1976: 169)

But if all this really is such an absurd and historically specific achievement, does it really lend itself to any "anthropological" theory of the kind which would transcend specific cultural situations? This is of course exactly what Graeber wants to make of it. Now, the transformations it is required to be put through happen where this argument is mediated by Terence Turner, who draws on a letter from Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann to gain exegetical legitimacy for the notion that also in non-capitalist societies, "despite their differences from capitalism, the fundamental principles of Marx's value analysis in *Capital*, as distinct from its

specific forms, might nonetheless be found to apply" (Turner 2008: 47. Emphasis in original). These fundamental principles hinge on the central notion that "value" is a measure whereby people's labor is represented to themselves as somehow measured in relation to time. And to see what this might mean, I turn to how Turner works his adherence to these principles out in practice, as found in a text where he uses them to interpret the structure of Kayapo society.

The Kayapo are, first of all, an Amazonian people among which Turner has worked for several decades. And while present in the Amazon as a Marxian anthropologist, Turner takes care to distance himself from versions of Marx espoused by some of his colleagues. While agreeing with them to think in terms of production, and to think production (in the Amazon) in terms of production of *persons*, he specifically disagrees with those who then go on to interpret that production as a means for using those persons as labor power with which to appropriate a material surplus. Demonstrating the incoherence of such notions by pointing out how these societies do not even produce material goods in excess of their needs, Turner rather proposes a Marxianism which interprets that very production of persons *not* as means in relation to a value somewhere beyond, but to a value which is the very people produced – *as* the foci of value and *as* they are made to be, realized in the forms of "power" and "beauty" in which value is measured out by the Kayapo (Turner 2003: 11).

By orienting it back to the actual people as they are in themselves (rather than as instruments), this use of Marx's theory would lead to attempts whereby to try to think the manner by which such worth accrues more to some than to others – why some people are simply *more* powerful/beautiful than others are. This more/less juxtaposition implies a comparison in terms of quantity, which thus (given what we learned earlier in this section) would need to be made in terms of some qualitatively common substance. And, by recourse to Marx, the answer is given as *labor* measured by *time*. Now, unlike the workers in capitalist society, the Kayapo do not measure their labors in hours and minutes. Nevertheless, Turner maintains that among them one can indeed find "emically defined units of 'socially necessary production time'" (Turner 2003: 12). These units are found within the life cycles of persons, as the time taken for carrying a person across from one identity to the next, for example when an adolescent is transformed into an adult. And in terms of the labor theory of value, Turner can argue that each transition from one identity to the next requires a certain quantity of labor to be used up, in a process which is completed in the identity of the "grandparent, parent-in-law, and extended family household head" (ibid. 12). The process is thus cumulative and, as Turner maintains, it is this increase which "rather than a few extra scraps of material subsistence

production, are goals worthy of a life project, which can manage to make even growing old seem worthwhile" (ibid. 25).

What can be done now, with this narrative in place? Something which the "value theory" of Graeber pursues in the exact same terms, which the ability to use the concept of exploitation in the context of this society, and to do so in terms resonating with what we encountered in the section on Scarry above (section 3.3). Recall how exploitation was there described as taking place when the self-recursivity of the arc of creation is interrupted, and one "self's" efforts appropriated by another, which can take place when control over the means of production is enforced by some categories of people at the expense of others. Now, the Kayapo world does not spring from a factory such as did the world of the 19th century English. But Turner finds something functionally analogous to the factory in the *domestic household* as that site where persons are, for the most part, produced. As for control over this site, he uses the case of how parents retain a degree of control of their daughters also after these have been married, to the extent that they can refuse to let her move in with her new husband. Read in terms of Turner's Marxian anthropology, this would mean that these parents are in control of the critical means of production whereby that husband would not be able to produce a family of his own so to attain for himself the coveted position of a household head. And this arrangement affords the parents-in-law a control which they use to appropriate the person-creating activity of the daughter's family for themselves, whereby they can attain the increase in "beauty" and "power" which belongs to the heads of extended families (Turner 2003: 14).

And to then move even further back into the lands we traversed earlier in this thesis, we are now in a position to fully appreciate how the three conceptions of "value" encountered in section 3.2 can be accounted for by this sort of social theory. The initial situation can be described by the conceptions of value working together: The identities of Kayapo persons are meaningful only relationally, in that a parent-in-law is nothing other than a relation to a son/daughter-in-lawn (value 3). Such a relation exists only by virtue of being recognized (through the enactment of an adequate response), which would tend to imply recognition of the conceptions of desirability which make sense of that relation. Where the beauty and power of a father-in-law (over his son-in-law) is no longer recognized, we find the limit between the participants in the social form and its outsiders (value 1). This, in turn, determines the more/less which always inform the decisions whereby meaning is translated into action (value 2). But what has really changed now, if we think this situation in terms of the "labor theory"?

The crucial thing is to see that those actions which (as we know from Scarry) creates the world proceed on a measure-taking in terms of more/less. But what is *measured* here? People's own actions, as part of the common world they create. "Recognition" of value is not the recognition of an already constituted entity (whether the father-in-law or the totality by which he exist) but of something constructed through actions. If what the enacted response really responds to are those actions, then even the recognized entity itself can be conceived as the recognized *meaning* of those actions as part of a whole. But what would this explain? While Graeber never wholly explicates this, the really crucial shift for delivering the world to "explanation" by his theory takes place on the level where that which is to be explained is defined. When society is thought in terms of creative actions, what happens is that it becomes subject to explanatory interpretations in terms of what explains *actions*. And human action is something which needs to be determined by "value" only because the activity of these beings is directed by intentions projected towards a future, which renders their orientation not wholly determined by the present. Each new moment which comes to meet a human being would thus carry with it the threat of undoing all that which he presently is, since that which he is needs to be continuously enacted. That threat posed by time – which as a threat to the present is also an emancipatory possibility for change – is what must first be assumed for the bafflement in face of human *re*-creation to strike, and for a theory to be summoned in response. Any social form would emerge from where its participants decides that they want to go, and what the labor theory then does is to show how actions already taken establish the meaning which calls for the same actions to be re-enacted in the future.

But ultimately, this determination of the future by the past never achieves complete closure. And perhaps that gasp is the most important element for how Graeber then develops his construal of human freedom, in the sense of the human being's potential to make his world different from how it is. And this is what we turn to in the next section.

## 3.5. Fetishism

In the preceding section we found values to be about the re-creation of worlds. At the same time, it was stated above that Graeber holds values to be that which bring universes into being (3.4; see p. 25). That would imply that these values can somehow precede the world to which they belong, and therefore that the one capable of positing them would be in a position of control of what world to realize. In this final section before the discussion of this part of the

thesis, I follow up on how Graeber actually goes on to make that argument, and how it both follows and extends that which we have encountered above. This argument appears in the context of his discussion of the concept of *fetishism*, which therefore becomes our starting point. But again we find his argument hinging on assumptions that lead beyond his own texts. This means that, after letting Graeber's discussion of the historical genesis of the concept "fetishism" introduce his own re-thinking of it, and after juxtaposing this re-thinking to the use Hornborg makes of the concept, then we move toward the texts Graeber makes reference to so to find there the model of human thinking which would let his concept make sense. This leads on to a discussion of logical structures on a formal level which becomes an endpoint to this section, but whose implications we need to follow up on in a transformative *discussion* in the section which follows..

So, to begin with, we follow Graeber back to the historical context where the concept "fetishism" was first coined: With the arrival of Portuguese traders on the African coasts in the 15$^{th}$ century. These Portuguese coined the term in reference to objects they encountered among their interlocutors, but less because of the objects themselves and more in reference to the seemingly inexplicable practice of these interlocutors to worship the objects as gods, even as these objects might have been constructed that same morning by those same people (Graeber 2005: 426). The way these Africans would project the power to create onto something they had themselves created then set the foundations of a concept which developed to refer to any process of inversion where something becomes regarded as the source of something with a completely different origin, The use of the concept in this manner is what we found above in Hornborg's texts, where it is used to make an analogy between tractors and the kings of the Inca (see 2.2). What Graeber then does is to go back to the original historical context so to rethink what was actually going on among the Africans in line with the ontology we now know from above. This does not entail denying that those Africans were actually doing something like what the Portuguese described, but rather that these traders missed the whole point of what was actually going on – a misconstrual of "fetishism" carried over to uses of the concept even today, remaining there for much the same reasons.

The reason for the Portuguese misunderstanding lies, according to Graeber, in their commitment to an ontology where there is "virtually nothing in between God and the world of material objects" (Graeber 2005: 431). That lacking between is the same absence we find also in Hornborg's dual analytical model. But what would be found there if we instead make recourse to the Marxian ontology which Graeber adopts? Answer: the creative process where

both ideas "above" and objects "below" are brought into being. There is a dualism present also in this model, but instead of a divide between heaven and earth, it is one which divides potentiality from actuality. This is also what the actual meaning of the Marxian concept "determination" refers to, as Elson asserts against the misunderstandings she laments:

> The quantity of socially necessary labour-time does not determine the magnitude of value in the logical or mathematical sense of an independent variable determining a dependent variable, (or in the sense of defining the meaning of the term 'magnitude of value'), but in the sense that the quantity of a chemical substance in its fluid form determines the magnitude of its crystalline or jellied form (Elson 1979: 133)

The contrasting uses of fetishism then becomes this: Where Hornborg uses it to describe a mechanism for the disclosure of a false presentation of what *is*, Graeber uses it to describe the mechanism for a false (or insufficient) presentation of what *can be.* Less concerned with the manner in which inequitable quantities of land is transferred when rainforests are exchanged with Coca-Cola, this conception confronts the realization of the forests potential in the form of a soda can to begin with. That form is the realization of our own efforts, but why that form rather than another? The answer must be given in relation to ourselves as form-givers, and here is where this other conception of fetishism enters - as having to do with our forgetfulness about how it really *is* made from our efforts, and that we really *could* have made a completely different world. Even one without such cans.

A very fundamental idea which Graeber wants to advance is that "[h]uman beings do create new social and cultural forms all the time, but [rarely] just in order to further their own personal aims; in fact, often their personal aims come to be formed through the very institutions they create" (Graeber 2005: 408). And in a similar vein elsewhere: "the ultimate freedom is not the freedom to create or accumulate value, but the freedom to decide (collectively or individually) what it is that makes life worth living. In the end, then, politics is about the meaning of life" (Graeber 2001: 88). His notion of fetishism consequently describes something which occurs within the relation of creative freedom to the possibilities which define it. And what the historical data from Africa can be read towards, when taken in this perspective, is that the African fetish-makers were most likely far less "fetishized" than the Portuguese who coined the term to describe what they were doing. A crucial hint Graeber seizes in regards to the Africans is where the most important fetishes actually tended to be located: above marketplaces (Graeber 2005: 416). This would be a site where relations are constantly created, negotiated, and taken apart. And what the fetishes did was often something functionally analogous to that of threatening to strike dead anybody who might dare to bail

out on a deal. But the really important thing is how there was always a process of *making* fetish, where the gods were seen to have that power only once the persons entering into an agreement would *let* it have it. In retaining the notion that gods can be both created and discarded, a notion was also retained that social life and its values are made, and can be *re-made,* by humans themselves. And exactly this is what made it so difficult for the Portuguese to understand it, from a perspective of their own complete projection of the powers of law-making to an immutable God above (ibid. 431).

But all of this remains a mere display of how "fetishism" can be read if we assume that the powers of creation always already belong to the being known as Man. The question still remains why we *forget* this to begin with, as it is necessary that we do if values are to have the determinative force which makes viable the theory of value above. To find an answer, we move away from the question of the world as such and on to the issue of the capacity of our thinking to know this world. And here it is instructive to begin by noting a belief of Graeber's which stands in contrast to much social science, namely how he himself "really doubt anyone, anywhere, is *unable* to question the foundations of their own thought; although it's probably also true that the overwhelming majority of people in the world also don't see any particular reason why they should" (Graeber 2001: 247, emphasis in original). This is important first of all because the centrality which the one doing that thinking has attained in the creation of the world, but also because it's a belief which is crucial for how the possibility of its freedom is eventually construed. For that possibility is given within a certain model of thinking, and in Graeber's brief discussion of this model he clearly points to where it comes from when asserting that fetishism itself is really a form of *Piagetian egocentrism* (ibid. 65).

The construal of Piaget which Graeber adopts is yet again something which come mediated by Terence Turner, and moving this way upstream we find it set out most explicitly by Turner in a review article published in 1973. The basic question for Piaget, as he is construed in that article, is how an organism which orientates itself by inner representations develops its ability to respond adequately to the external world, when that world is made present to it only as disorganized sensory stimuli. And the solution Piaget offers hinges on the insertion of a mediatory environment between inner and outer, where a structure of rules operates. Sensory stimuli are then assumed to be sorted according to the operations of such rules upon it, and "learning" becomes the process whereby these rules develop. And a specific principle is posited for *how* that development takes place – through what Piaget calls equilibration (Turner 1973: 365). As its mediatory structure develops according to that principle, what the

organism develops is essentially equivalent to the ability to use the word "tree" only to indicate actual trees.

Egocentrism, with which Graeber identifies fetishism, is the starting state for this learning process. The reason for the name is that the cognitive structure is taken to develop by learning to integrate increasingly more possible perspectives on a situation, meaning that the initial state is centered on the ego and the organism's own perspective (e.g. Turner 1973: 332). In the case of the "forgetfulness" of fetishism, the reason we perceive a self-identical object rather than actions is that the latter tend to be far too complex and multifaceted for the organism to grasp intellectually. But even when our intellects can't grasp it fully, our hands still can. We can still successfully respond to the objects presence and thus orientate ourselves through reality, but only because we can always (argues Graeber) act according to a logic more complex than we are capable of actually explaining (Graeber 2001: 62-63). When we "respond", our actions will contribute to the production of the larger world even as we are ourselves incapable to fully grasping how it does so. It is within that discrepancy, when our own actions return to ourselves as if were they alien powers, that the phenomenon of "fetishism" occurs, insofar as it is construed in terms of Piagetian egocentrism within a world consisting in human creative activity. And finally, it is through that construal that the phenomenon can then be read as something much more dynamic than previously.

The nature of that "dynamism" becomes more clear by following a shift from cognition to formal logic. This jump becomes possible once cognition is thought as taking place through structures operating according to rules, and all three authors we have encountered in this section seize on that possibility, letting themselves be led to the results of Kurt Gödel (e.g. Graeber 2001: 61; Turner 1973: 360; Piaget 1970: 11). What these references all point to is the incompleteness theorems which Gödel set out in the 1930's, whereby he laid waste to any hopes for the project undertaken by earlier formalists (e.g. Frege) to find and define a solid basis of all logic and mathematics. The exact implications of the theorems are still a matter of debate, but the three authors which concern us here all seize on the most common interpretation thereof: Any formal system of sufficient complexity will contain at least one element of which the validity is not demonstrable within the system itself. Its truth *can* still be demonstrated, but only by the construal of another system of higher complexity. But the same condition will pertain also to this other system, meaning that logic is put in motion along a

hierarchy of rising complexity which *never* finds a solid final ground.[11] This is where we receive the notion of the mind as a hierarchy of levels from, and it is from the motion across these hierarchies we finally receive Graeber's construal of freedom.

How are these systems capable of rewriting themselves? Granted by how the point which is most crucially underdetermined in these systems is the point where it makes reference to itself as a whole, the possibility arises for identifying that self-reference with what we know as the *subject*. The subject would thus be that which remains perpetually underdetermined, and that which therefore would be able to put into effect shifts between levels of the logical hierarchy while itself always escaping complete determination by any such level (e.g. Graeber 2007: 391). The ability to put into effect such shifts in comprehension is probably the essence of Graeber's commitment to a belief that persons can always question the fundamentals of their own thought (section 3.5). It is the subject which would do so and, in so doing, it would put itself outside that system of operations, exactly like what needs to be done in event of *making* fetish. For what then happens is that the people making it suspend their determination by the rules operating on an initial logical level, whereby the possibility emerges for them to themselves define the rules which they then ought to operate according to.

It is because creating a new system requires operating according to a more complex logic than that which is then required to maintain it that we can then forget the whole creative aspect when operating in accordance with that system. It is the act of initial creation which is embodied in the object of a fetish, which people can then respond to without needing to recall that its commandments have been posited by themselves. When *making* fetish, then, what one makes are "revolutionary objects" (Graeber 2005: 427) with the power to bring into being that which they represent (Graeber 2001: 251). While what is represented are only the actions of the same people under the spell of the fetish, those actions are what human worlds are made of. Those actions are determined by values and hence it is values, as Graeber puts it, which brings universes into being (Graeber 2013; see above, p.25). And what the "fetish" means here is not something which misrepresents a quantity of value, as much as it is a necessary

[11]There are variations to this construal also within this mainstream interpretation of the theorem, but this rather standard version is what is found with Graeber (Graeber 2001: 62). Worth noting is also a completely different interpretation, which points out that what the proof actually demonstrates is that the system will be *either* incomplete *or* inconsistent. Completeness can be acknowledged as a possibility if one also accepts contradiction. In line with the western tradition of logic since Aristotle, Gödel and his successors avoided this option. But with recent developments in paraconsistent logics, e.g. Graham Priest (2002), we might perhaps still see this overturned. See in particular Livingston 2012.

misrepresentation of the source of any value. That source is ourselves, and what the discussion here shows is how the loss of power its construal entails is also one which might be lost to the same very people losing it. To the extent that these people can then remember their forgetfulness, they can also regain the possibility of ascending to their rightful place as masters of their own destiny.

This is the space of freedom which appears when the social world is taken as man's own activity, and that activity is taken to follow rules which can be rewritten by the same humans that follow them. But there is something crucial missing here. Even given the commitment to this model of cognition, the step from the existence of a perpetual lack of complete self-sufficient determination to the notion that an element within the structure is capable of willfully determining its future operations remains unexamined. The former possibility does not by any means necessarily lead to the latter. This gap, and what else might have been overlooked with it, is the topic which the upcoming discussion needs to deal with.

## 3.6. Leaving Graeber

We arrived from Hornborg's work carrying a question, along which we let Graeber's own gathering of influences be organized. Drawn together, a specific vantage point onto the world is offered where we would see from whence that something called "value" might arrive into it. Hence, the "why" of humans doing one thing rather than another would be answerable by recourse to a definite principle, rather than it being truly "arbitrary". Further, we find here a compelling suggestion for how it might be possible to transform those "values" which drive the processes which today lay waste to the earth. But at the very end, we encountered something overlooked. And slight as this thing may seem, it hints at something which remains unresolved. In this discussion, I begin by summarizing what we encountered above with due emphasis on the conditions for Graeber's account of value to make any sense. Then, I confront the yet unresolved point in order to show how it prompts questions of such magnitude that we cannot but keep pushing forward.

The answer we found above, to the question what values are and come from (section 3.1; p.17), is that values are an actor's own actions coming back to himself as part of some form of collective whole. But really crucial is the manner whereby this answer attains its significance in the context of human life. There, "values" are posited as that which somehow determines the activity of those humans, where the Marxian account of the structure of such lives also puts those humans at the very center of that life. Marx himself indicates the essential element

seized upon, both for the theory's answers and the significance of what those answers speak about, when he asserts that "To be radical is to grasp things by the root. But, for man, the root is man himself" (Marx 1994: 34). And indeed we encounter the same sentiment with Graeber when he asserts that "the only thing really lying behind the specific, material form of the object one desires to buy is the human energy that went into producing it" (Graeber 2001: 105). In relation to artifacts, it is only the *human aspect* of what they are that makes them meet our needs, and the relation to the artifact would thus really be a relation to the human which has bestowed that form upon it. And it is *that* aspect which values call into being: Human labor might not be the reason why there is fish in the sea, but it *is* that by which those fish might be present in the form of some sort of commodity, on the marketplace on Papua New Guinea, to meet the desires of haggling women. "Value" doesn't mean anything to fish – but it recognizes the actions of those beings which are themselves assumed to be capable of recognizing the meaning of such value, and it does so in such a way that activity is repeated and piles-of-fish will occur in the world time and time again.

The three anthropological traditions for thinking "value", which we found in section 3.2. are thus repositioned around the premise that they all speak of different aspects of man's relation to himself as an actor in a world of action. Now, this builds on the notion that both individual life and social forms are intentional projects, which would mean that they are processes whose meaning is bestowed upon them by their endpoints. Having found (with Scarry) that this endpoint is again ourselves, both values and the created artifacts which follow in their wake are revealed to trace a circle of return. To Hornborg's world, this might contribute a possible understanding of the projects for which the material world is appropriated to begin with: while a coat can be represented as its requirements of production such as Hornborg does, then the *why* of the coats existence to begin with would now be explainable by reference to human self-referential care, in a process of making the world "as-if" responsive to human needs. And as for the circularity of this reference, rather than establishing closure this is intimately related to the recursiveness which then lends this ontology to incompleteness in a Gödelian sense. Consequently, we come back to the phenomenon of *fetishism* as something which can be construed as an event where new endpoints (new ways for ourselves to be) can be consciously posited, and new worlds thereby brought into being. But what we then found in the very end was that this argument for the existence of freedom to self-determination relies on the construal of thinking (as the source of intentional directedness) in terms of logical structures whose operations demonstrably cannot be fully inscribed within themselves. And this in itself

does *not* warrant the conclusion that such operative rules cannot be inscribed anywhere else, and neither that they could be rewritten by an element *within* the structure.

In regards to the construal of Piaget from whence this model for how thinking operates is adopted, it has been pointed out that the exact opposite is actually true. As Sophie Haroutunian (1980, 1985) argues, since Piaget's model of learning is built wholly around a mechanism of feedback operating on behavior, then that behavior must already be performed in order for there to be something present for the mechanism to evaluate. And there are two significant implications of this: *First*, any new behavioral response initiated by the system must have been present within its structure as a latent possibility from the beginning; and, *second*, the same goes for the very principle which *evaluates* the feedback, which consequently becomes something which can never be learnt (Haroutunian 1980: 209). Such conclusions are lent further weight in this context by noting the implications drawn from Gödel's theorem itself by Hilary Putnam, if not in regards to Piaget then still to cognition more generally: That, to the extent that thinking really takes place through the kind of formal structures which the theorem would be applicable to, then if we ever were to actually encounter a full description of the rules we are operating according to, it would be logically impossible for us to ever believe that the description is true (Putnam 1985: 144)! This is of course contrary to Graeber's remark that probably everybody can examine the fundamentals of their thinking (section 3.5). And it is not even necessary to take Graeber's assertion more literally than other remarks of him lead us to believe it was really intended (e.g. Graeber 2001: 61-62). The significant point here is only to show the extent to which Graeber construes is argument on fetishism while looking only in direction of the lower level which can be superseded, *not* to what conditions would necessarily pertain to the higher level itself insofar as it appears within the structure to begin with. And among these conditions – as Haroutunian locates it structurally implicit in Piaget himself – we find how the very thinking which is independent in relation to one level will always be determined by rules already in effect on another (Haroutunian 1980: 208).

We can bring out the implications of this in relation to the value theory in the following manner: The being which is in possession of values (the architect, not the bee) is different from other beings in its relation to *time.* While the bee (presumably) acts in the manner of "reaction" towards immediately present entities, the architect relates to those same entities through a meaning given in light of a future goal towards which his actions are leading. This is what makes his activity contingent on this kind of "determination" in the first place, and

what the determination actually does is to establish the *future* horizon of *present* possibilities in such a manner that *past* actions are repeated. That the theory can be glossed like this is only affirmed by what is said to happen when a fetish is made, since that argument posits the freedom to create new worlds *as* the independence from values operating on one level, which clearly implies that non-independence means repetition of the past. But when the genuinely new is *intentionally* brought into being – when the past is not reproduced in the present – then what is the principle which determines the outcome of a choice in face of the genuinely new, and where do those new options come from to begin with? When we are free from the past, by what criteria do we decide what to do in the future? How do we will what to will?

While the following are contentions which Graeber would likely himself hope that his theory would avoid, it is nevertheless curious that the moment where wholly *new* possibilities are considered is exactly that situation Graeber claims to believe is impossible to fully theorize (Graeber 2005: 432). It is quite clear why the theory set out above would not be able to fully account for it: The choice among possibilities is itself an action, which as an action would presumably be determined by value. But since values are our own actions *coming back* to ourselves, then the unprecedented cannot be a value in Graeber's sense until after it has already been taken. And thus the explanatory basis of the choice is missing. As we found above, if we look closer at his notion of fetishism, what Graeber's argument really amounts to is a claim that we *can* withdraw from determination by an existent system, so to then project a new model for reality which we then make real. But it says nothing about how we actually choose which new possibility to project. These questions are not only unresolved in Graeber's work, but the ways along which his texts led to them bring some troubling commitments regarding possible resolutions.

My contention here is that the theory's very structure leads to that which Haroutunian points out in regards to Piaget, namely how the model's reliance on the principle of feedback means that both the very principles of *evaluating* feedback and the possibilities realized must in some way have been present in the system's architecture to begin with. What might these principles be in the case of Graeber? We can begin by gathering some circumstantial evidence from what is the case for those whose influence he relies on. In the case of Piaget, Haroutunian doesn't tell what the principle might actually be like, but we can find a direct answer from Piaget himself:

> [B]ehavior is constantly aiming to improve itself. The two objectives of behavior [are] the extension of the environment, having an environment larger than the present one […] and, second,

> the increase, the growth, of the organism's power over the environment. (in Bringuier 1980: 116-117)

These principles would not belong to any particular "level", but to living systems as such on all levels, including cognitive systems. *Meaning* becomes implied in the sorting activity whereby the organism learns to react to stimuli in such a manner that it will be able to attain its goals, so that "meaning" itself is here but a *function* in a creative activity guided by an expectation (idea). This expectation is crucial, since without such an expectation the feedback mechanism which prompts learning would have nothing to evaluate actual results in relation to. But in the end, as the quote shows, the principle of *positing the idea* is governed by the organism's will to enhancement and self-preservation, whereby knowledge itself becomes a phenomenon of prediction and control.

What, then, about *social* systems? That is, those systems which Graeber is most interested in advancing an account of how they can be intentionally transformed. What principles govern that intentionality? Moving from Piaget and instead to the Turner who made use of his work before both were appropriated by Graeber, we find him asserting, in an article where he describes the interaction of the Kayapo with contemporary projects of ecological protection, which outsiders try to introduce among them, how "[t]he Kayapo, in sum, are pragmatic eclectics, who are no more concerned with the ideological rhetoric of Western ecoliberals than were their 16th century ancestors with the mystery of the Holy Trinity" (Turner 1995: 121). And keeping Piaget's statement in mind, we then find a curious resonance with this at the point where Turner goes on to interpret the *principles* of this pragmatism, as being for the Kayapo an "[exploitation of] all opportunities for strengthening themselves economically, politically, and territorially through all available forms of trade, aid and political action" (ibid. 120).

If we move on to the most significant source of Graeber's work, we again find something similar at play: To Marx, values are for humans. It is only *as* humans that we *are* the potential for determining who to become. And this is itself a definition given in relation to something which the potential is *for*, namely ourselves as the creative and self-determining beings that we ourselves already are. That we really already are such beings is seen in Marx' famous take on capitalism as the historical configuration where "all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned" and "man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his *real conditions of life*, and his relations with his kind" (Marx 1994: 161-162, emphasis added). In bringing us

to the roots of what it means to be human, capitalism would in itself be "radical".[12] Beyond the holy and solid, all roots are grounded in the figure of Man. The ravages of capitalism show us what was always already true about ourselves, whereby it sets up the events where we can finally ascend the throne of rightful masters of our own destiny. As for the value theory, it is these "real conditions" that are at work wherever it is capable of explaining anything at all.

And what is "Man" always already? As John Milbank accurately points out, this something is found at the very heart of Marx' argument – for even the purely analytical demonstration of objectively antagonistic class interests presupposes an essential identity to actors apart from their roles in any given productive process (Milbank 2006: 195). This essence is reflected in the utopian vision of "unlimited possibility of human transformation of nature" (ibid. 177) which is really impossible to completely divorce from the analytical component. And, as argued by Milbank, this is would end up in a "tautology of power" (ibid. 196) which is really a projection of the self-referential manner in which capital operates according to no other standards than self-increase (ibid. 187). Something like this can be seen in Scarry's notion of artifacts as beings which are enfolded in a process of (never ending) self-amplification. But if what humans really are, are *producers* – then what about the importance of *not* producing? And if value is only, now as explicitly with Graeber, about *our own* actions, what about that world which does not spring from ourselves at all?

Also in the phenomenon of fetishism, where new futures are decided upon, only the humans who are to realize that future are invited (e.g. Graeber 2001: 255).[13] This is where new ways of existing are deliberated upon, but if it occurs only where the world is already Man's own then neither this world nor anything beyond it gives guidance for what decision to make. "Man" decisions don't respond to anything truly external, but would then rather develop according to a logic present already from the beginning. With Man as not only creator but also the purpose of his own creation (such as we found in Scarry), then the principle of decision

[12] *Radical* comes from the Latin *radix,* for roots.

[13] This division is also found where Scarry draws on a discussion of Plato's *Laws* as illustrative of her argument. That discussion consists in a proposal that murderers ought to be put to death outside the city's frontier, which also ought to apply to animals and even inanimate objects, but *not* to wild phenomena of nature such as lighting (Scarry 1985: 293). Scarry takes this to reflect awareness that what creation does is to imbue made artifacts with a degree of humanity, so that it would become possible to put moral expectations on it. It is would thus only once having been *made "*human*"* that such relations of moral expectation can occur.

(which makes the change that is history) could work towards nothing other than Man's own self-realization as what he already is. The whole model then appears to end up relying in its explanations on exactly such a principle of self-assertion that Hornborg demonstrates wreak such havoc across our world.

The intention here is not to dispute the conclusions of Piaget, Turner or Marx. And even if a similarity between the three is established, this is not sufficient for concluding that the same applies to Graeber. To know if it does, we need a better understanding of why the common commitment is present here to begin with, as well as the hereto unthought conditions and consequences which are the conditions for the value theory to be true. We can now see how this theory is anthropological not only in the sense of what scholarly field it belongs to, but also in that the explanatory power of values is premised on the notion that *Man* is both the efficient and the final cause for what beings are. And the question remains, as a call we shall follow into the next section, how "[f]or Marx, it is decided from the outset that man and only man (and nothing else) is what matters. From what is this decided? In what manner? With what right? By which authority?" (Heidegger 2004: 77. parentheses in original). These unanswered questions bring us face-to-face with the groundlessness of the figure which takes its relation to values, and whom values *are for*. The relation between the *ánthrōpos* and values is mutually constitutive, and with the collapse of its stability we are beckoned further, moving away from anthropology in direction to the one who gave voice to the questions.

# 4. Martin Heidegger

> If the lad or lass is among us who knows where the secret heart of this Growth-Monster is hidden, let them please tell us where to shoot the arrow that will slow it down. – Gary Snyder
>
> Modern man has a "lived experience" of the world and thinks the world in those terms, i.e., in terms of himself as the being that, as ground, lies at the foundation of all explanation and ordering of beings as a whole […] "Anthropology," the Anglo-American form of which is "sociology," is supplanting essential thought. (Heidegger 1992: 165).

*

## 4.1. From Anthropology to Essential Thought

The theory of Graeber has now revealed for us what the "being" which leaves the trace of value could actually be – *ourselves,* as we *are* in the course of creating the ground on which values trace a circle back to their point of origin. Beings would then be "values" insofar as they are looked upon and taken into account by the *anathrōn ha opōpe* (see above, section

2.3). But the whole model makes sense only on basis of the notion that these beings are what they are due to the activity taking place at this common source. How is it possible for "Man" to be imagined as this common source, and what implications might follow from that possibility? "Why *Man",* as Heidegger complains in the 1973 lecture which we concluded the last section with, thus pointing straight to what we found at the heart of Graeber's value theory. But the lecture supplies no answer. Thus, we find a need to bring our inquiry to the wild and rugged terrain constituted by Heidegger's work as a whole.

Why turn to Heidegger specifically, or even to philosophy at all? While anthropology's concern with the human is in Graeber's case translated into a certain ontological primacy for the human being, this is by no means always the case even within that field. The last decades in particular have seen a proliferation of various "post-humanist" efforts, where especially the Actor-Network approach of Bruno Latour has made a significant impact.[14] But it is not at all certain that any of these can help us understand the possibilities of the trace which we are following here. Both Hornborg and Graeber have expressed reservations about the approach of Latour, especially in regards to its apparent lack of critical resources (e.g. Hornborg 2014b; Graeber 2013). As the ANT-industry continues to flourish, I suspect that this rift will only become all the more pronounced. Further, the very rationale of then looking outside of anthropology for alternative approaches belongs to the very heart of this thesis, which is human ecology rather than anthropology. To demonstrate the possibility of certain moves across established disciplinary boundaries is an achievement which here has a value on its own. And since the contentions interrogated in the last section turned out to be located on the level of Being itself, a logical next step is the field concerned with such general and fundamental questions – philosophy.

Once upon that field, there are three strong reasons for attending to Heidegger's work: *First*, the absolutely critical role it has played for all subsequent philosophy. Near all philosophy of a continental bend has been forced to take a stand on Heidegger's thinking, whether for or against it – something which is true also for Latour, who leans towards the latter (e.g. Latour 2004: 233). *Second*, much like Graeber's writings do to anthropological value theory, Heidegger's work engages the whole field of earlier philosophy, meaning that we find that whole field there enfolded. Of course again in a manner wholly contingent on the point which enfolds. *Third*, the manner in which Heidegger engages that field generates an answer to our

14 For a good discussion of some such approaches which are concerned specifically with value, see Gregory (2014).

questions which does not (necessarily) displace the path along which they arose. For the critical questions found at the end of the last section should be read in light of how Heidegger himself had, at least by 1964, arrived at the point where he could assert not only that metaphysics was completed with none other than Marx (Heidegger 1993a: 433), but also that even if that completion may be somehow contingent, still "[e]ach epoch of philosophy has its own necessity. We simply have to acknowledge the fact that a philosophy is the way it is. It is not for us to prefer one to the other" (ibid.). Instead of challenging Marx (and by extension Graeber), his critique is one which at the same time affirms that which it finds. And now bringing with us what Graeber let us learn from anthropology, we pursue the answers which we seek by following a trail leading towards an interpretative critique which (to rephrase a statement of Latour's) is so old-fashioned it never needed any steam to run.[15]

It should be noted already that the answer we can get from Heidegger is not any *direct* answer to those questions which I let him pose at the end of the last section ("From what is this decided? In what manner? With what right? By which authority?" (Heidegger 2004: 77; section 3.6 above)). None such answers are to be found in his work. Instead, his concern was with what makes the kind of primacy of any such figure *possible*, and what the reality of that possibility implies. To understand for ourselves the significance of either, we need to follow his answers to their genesis in the lands of Heidegger's own thinking. On one level, making sense of that territory is a huge task, which the "leaky" nature of especially Heidegger's later writings nevertheless forces us to confront. But no matter how weird the shapes appearing in these lands might strike Heidegger's readers, they nevertheless grew along paths of thinking which remained faithful to a remarkably simple line of questioning, which we shall here follow along one possible route. In letting our journey ahead be guided by our question rather than the chronology in which Heidegger wrote his texts, I will often have to jump between texts separated in time by several decades. Nevertheless, this makes for a path of thinking towards which Heidegger himself would likely have been well disposed, for as he puts it in *A Dialogue on Language Between a Japanese and an Inquirer* (written in 1953-54):

[15] A question which I will not discuss here is that of Heidegger's political involvement, and perhaps it is necessary to state why not: The discussions about what Heidegger's politics actually were, what its relation to his philosophical thinking was, and what that ought to mean for his readers is important. It's a debate which has been going on for a long time, and which might see a well-earned renewal with the publication of his *Schwarze Hefte*. But when that discussion occurs, it ought to be dealt with extensively and *directly*, and the anxious wringing of hands one often find inserted next to Heidegger's name, in texts which then anyway just proceed as they would otherwise, amounts to absolutely nothing. This thesis is not the place for the discussion that this topic deserves, nor for ritualistic and substance-less distancing. For a good introduction to this topic instead, see Wolin (1993).

> J: You are said to have changed your standpoint.
>
> I: I have left an earlier standpoint, not in order to exchange it for another one, but because even the former standpoint was merely a way-station along a way. The last element in thinking is the way. And ways of thinking hold within them that mysterious quality that we can walk them forward and backward, and that indeed only the way back will lead us forward. (Heidegger 1971: 12)

The sense of Heidegger's questions, which we were brought to through a resonance with potential problems that we discovered in Graeber's work, will be explored on Heidegger's own terms. Again, I present a wholly original interpretation of this body of text, guided by how it interlocks with the one's carrying us here. Now concluding the **first** section of this part of the thesis, the second section just ahead (4.2) introduces Heidegger's thinking by means of the key work *Being and Time*, which it engages to show both the crucial differences between Graeber's thinking and Heidegger's as well as how these differences doesn't entail a *direct* contradiction. The third section (4.3) completes the transition from Graeber to Heidegger by attending to the peculiar nature of the central question animating Heidegger's work: Being as such. The fourth section (4.4) brings this question to where we find the rationale behind Heidegger's question's in regards to Marx: his reading of Being as a *history* consisting of answers to what it really means to be. The fifth section (4.5) attends to Heidegger's criticism of contemporary ways of being. This critique is made sense of in reference to the history of Being dealt with in previous sections, and I can then discuss what Heidegger's take on the problematic implications which we found in Graeber's value theory would be. A sixth section (4.6) then discusses *another* way of being, which Heidegger holds might escape those implications. Finally, a discussion (4.7) turns around so to assess what is gathered along this part of our journey, and what we should bring with us as we move to the final discussion of the entire thesis.

## 4.2. Man and Dasein

> We have to clarify for ourselves what it signifies that man has a relation to the works that he produces. It is for this reason that a certain book called *Sein und Zeit* discusses dealings with equipment; and not in order to correct Marx, nor to organize a new national economy, nor out of a primitive understanding of the world (Heidegger 1995a: 117).

*

The purpose of this chapter is to begin creating an understanding of how Heidegger's thinking moves in relation to the one which presents us with the value theory of the previous part of

the thesis. I establish this on basis of *Being and Time* and works from the same period which are engaged with insofar as they help to make *Being and Time* intelligible. The reason I begin with this particular work is that, in deservedly being Heidegger's most well-known work, it remains a key for unlocking both the early and late periods of his thinking. And here, the task is to demonstrate how this thinking and that of Graeber do not contradict each other on an immediate level, but how Heidegger's thinking rather initiates a shift from anthropology to a wholly different level of thinking. The nature of this other thinking is obscure and made fully accessible only at the end of the next section, where I discuss the nature of the fundamental questions guiding it. Now, *Being and Time* is multifaceted and complex, and can lead one in a great variety of directions. This makes it possible for us to follow one such path without doing violence to the thinking presented by the text as a whole. Thus, I engage the work on basis of how our own line of questioning arrived to it, which was from how the riddle of "value" was resolved by Graeber through a certain ontological commitment. Heidegger helps us pursue this further, and does so best if our inquiry is kept from straying too far. In order to keep it from doing so, I proceed by taking the problems which Graeber could resolve – the meaning of life, the making of decisions, and the meaning of things – and put *Being and Time* to the task of resolving these issues on its own terms. How different would that resolution be?

These three problems do not appear anywhere in Being and Time in the same form as we find them in Graeber's work, and consequently it is not possible to neatly separate different answers for each problem which according to Graeber is posed by "value". But a good point of entry is given by following the problem closest to Heidegger's own concerns: The "meaning of things" – what things are understood to be, which is thought to belong to a relational structure of meaning. This is a problem which Graeber takes to be answered for within anthropology by a tradition shaped by structural linguistics, and to first gather a cue from Heidegger's take on narrowly "linguistic" forms of meaning, we find him holding that "[d]iscourse is […] prestructured in its own structure by the fundamental constitution of Dasein" (Heidegger 2010: 156). This, of course, only leads to the question of what "Dasein" might be. The concept is one of Heidegger's own making, which began to appear in his works in the period immediately preceding *Being and Time,* and the most succinct definition is given in a lecture course from 1925 which holds Dasein to be that which "is in its world but at the same time is by virtue of the world in which it is" (Heidegger 1985: 202). This might not be much of a definition on its own, but a crucial thing is to see how "world" is here not the globe which is viewed from a detached orbit, but something more akin to the *Umwelt* of Von

Uexküll, where it means (quite literally) that which surrounds.[16] As we shall see, this means that discourse would belong to a domain of meaning just as relational as that found in the Saussurean linguistics which Graeber associates this tradition for thinking value with. But simultaneously, it also avoids the central problem Graeber connects with it (and which he believes his own theory can help overcome), namely that of translating meaning into action.

How does Graeber hold meaning to be translated into action? An action is taken to proceed upon a decision, and decisions are understood as proceeding upon juxtapositions of more/less. It is then argued that what the more/less measures is not *objects*, and the "meaning" which identifies what a thing really *is* eventually becomes enfolded in a process where that meaning's desirability is construed together with that which the thing is to begin with. Before going on to discuss what it is that for Heidegger would establish the "meaning" which is desirable, it is helpful to note how the basic move he makes is similar: Just like in Graeber's theory, Heidegger relies on putting into effect a shift from a situation where things are at all "objects" to begin with. We see this especially clear two years before Being and Time, in a statement about the "nature" which, in contrast with "world", needs to be supplanted with meaning by a willful act of a subject:

> [Does] this interpretation of a natural thing laden with predicates of value fit the phenomenon we have identified, or does it just distort it? The question is whether what is called value is an original phenomenon at all; or is it perhaps not something which again developed under the presupposition of that ontology which we identified as a specific ontology of nature, under the assumption that the things are first of all things of nature and then have something like a value, where value is taken ontologically in a specific reference back to the thingness of nature. Perhaps it is unavoidable to regard values as values, when being is in fact from the outset approached as nature. (Heidegger 1985: 201-202).

Here we find him making use of the word "value", which in this context refers to that which determines the intended goals of our actions. In Graeber we find values used in the same sense, as well as a notion that the problems pertaining to how "meaning" is transformed into actions requires thinking such meaning as somehow already imbued with that which determines desirability. What Heidegger does here is to discard the primacy of the divide between object and meaning, for reasons having to do with his phenomenological

[16]Heidegger's most extensive discussion of von Uexküll is found in his 1929/30 lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, where also the *difference* between humans and animals manner of relating to the world is emphasized by suggesting that only the former really takes something *as* something (Heidegger 1995b: 263-264). This underlines the need not to *conflate* Heidegger's discussion with that of von Uexküll!

commitment to start thinking with how things really initially appear. For as things first appear, they appear as (meaningful) something-s: "Interpretation does not, so to speak, throw a "significance" over what is nakedly objectively present and does not stick a value on it, but what is encountered in the world is always already in a relevance which is disclosed in the understanding of world, a relevance which is made explicit by interpretation" (Heidegger 2010: 145). Consequently, the desirability of this thing might still require explanation, but such explanations ought *not* to be given in terms that presuppose that the desirability is applied something which initially appeared as a meaningless objects.

But given that our orientation belongs to the world as something initially meaningful, where does it then originally acquire its direction? The question of our orientation is what Graeber believes can really be explained if "values" can be interpreted back to an origin. In Heidegger's case, to find an answer we first need attend to how this "world" itself is structured. A large part of *Being and Time* is dedicated to a "world analysis" which asks for the different manners there are for beings to be in the world. These different manners interlock with each other in what is in the end a unified structure which exhausts the world (of Dasein) as a whole. This world is somehow structured around a project which is both intentional and ongoing. Thus, immediately present entities *are* in the form of an "in-order-to" (Heidegger 2010: 69), which is but a reference to a *work*, which in turn is but another reference to what is "beings with the kind of being of Dasein" (ibid. 70). And as Heidegger posits beings insofar as they are revealed in this reference: "[a] covered railroad platform takes bad weather into account, public lighting systems take darkness into account" (ibid. 70-71). These would thus go back to what is this beings concern for its own being (ibid. 83). This is not to be interpreted as meaning that intentions are ultimately determined by "self-interest". Rather, the discussion demonstrates a thinking much akin to Scarry's in relation to the winter coat (see above, section 3.3), where the meaning of the coat (and the reason it is brought into being to begin with) is given in a relation going back to its creator and her concern both for herself and those enfolded in her care – beings which in their being are like her (i.e. human beings, who can feel pain). Just like in the Marxian ontology of the previous section, this has little to do with self-*interest*, and all the more with self-*reference*.

Dasein's concern with its own being is, somehow, central to the whole "world" of already meaningful beings. And this concern has something to do with its initial direction towards that something which is ahead and to which actions lead. And here, in regards to that which is ahead, we find ourselves having been turned over to something close to Graeber's *first*

meaning of value. This first meaning is concerned with a problem which can be glossed as "the meaning of life", understood in Graeber as shared conceptions of what one *ought* to find desirable. In Heidegger, what Dasein's concern with its own being refers to (insofar as it is what the Work takes as its reference) is a concern of Dasein with its own possibility of itself *being* something. For example, this might be the possibility of *being* a father-in-law, which would then be the self-interpretation determining the actions to be taken (in accordance with what a father-in-law ought to do). Thus again we find an uncanny similarity with Graeber's value theory, where the desirability of a thing is a function of how it represents the *actions* which defines somebody as being somebody. Being a father-in-law is something an individual might or might not find desirable, but a shared conception of whether one *ought* to find it desirable is important in its own right. And this is something central to Heidegger's conception of "the They":

> As something factical, the understanding self-projection of Dasein is always already together with a discovered world. From this world it takes its possibilities, initially in accordance with the interpretedness of the they. This interpretation has from the outset restricted the possible options of choice to the scope of what is familiar, attainable, feasible, to what is correct and proper (Heidegger 2010: 188)

It is in a common world, in which Dasein is already *with* others with whom it is engaged in shared projects, that Dasein initially finds itself: "[t]his common world, which is there primarily and into which every maturing Dasein first grows, as the public world governs every interpretation of the world and of Dasein" (Heidegger 1985: 246). At this point we also find the possibility of making "the They" correspond with a central function that Graeber lets "shared conceptions of the desirable" perform: The function whereby those who share such conceptions are set off *as a group* from who do not. Implicitly, by being already *with* others in an already shared world, then also here it appears to be on basis of something appearing on *this* level that groups are delimitated against each other. How that "group" might acquire its direction – i.e. what for Graeber happens in the event of making fetish – I discuss below.

For now, this is where *Being and Time* would hold the orientation of "value 3" (the meaning of things) to acquire its shape, which it does in circumstances akin to "value 1" (the meaning of life). And this brings us back to the second meaning of value, which is most closely related to the making of decisions upon perceptions of value. This would in itself be an underdeveloped aspect of Heidegger's thinking, and we sooner find him going immediately from the third aspect of "value" (the meaning of things) to what is here dealt with last. As he puts it very explicitly in an essay from the late 1930's: "[K]nowing does not consist in mere

information and notions about something. He who truly knows what is, knows what he wills to do in the midst of what is" (Heidegger 2001: 65). Most likely, Heidegger's concern with activity of an already ongoing process of skillful coping is the reason for passing by the issue of the making of decisions on this level. Both activity and meaning are here taken to belong to the world as it always already is *initially*, so that the very problem of how meaning would be translated to activity *in* the world through a deliberate decision would not emerge to begin with. The concept Dasein carries a commitment to this other starting point, where the being referred to *and* its world belong to each other in such a manner that the problem of going from meaning to action does not need to appear. Much in contrast to the philosophical tradition's insistence to always regard action as an outcome of a deliberate decision, this is an account of action as something not necessarily stemming from such a deliberate decision in terms of juxtaposed possibilities at all. But when such situations of making decisions would anyway arise, then insofar as the outcome is determined by desire (or "*will"*) then the significant thing is how, just like in Graeber's ontology, this folds back into the same already directed structure we have been inquiring into above:

> In a willing, a being that is understood, that is, projected upon its possibility, is grasped as something to be taken care of or to be brought to its being through concern. *For this reason*, to any willing there always belongs something willed and this thing willed has already been determined in terms of a for-the-sake-of-which (Heidegger 2010: 187-188, emphasis in original)

To now make the three come together: With such a goal in view, then our woman in Papua New Guinea might be in a position to choose among the piles of fish on the market. And while her willing can inform a decision between present possibilities taking place in terms of better or worse, it does so when directed to a goal. This goal will in the last instance be determined by a sense of *being* someone. That "someone" and the sense whether that is something worthwhile to be is found as shared across a social world, setting a limit around an everyday "we" at the limit of those who simply presume that worthwhileness. And just here I have described a situation where all aspects of "value" belong, which could have been based on *either* of the two authors discussed. But while the contours of "orientation" are similar, what we have yet to receive from Heidegger is any kind of *explanation* for how one thing comes to appear more valuable than another, or for the actual direction of any given orientation. What about this actual direction of Dasein's intentional structure? What determines it to be in one way rather than another?

The reason for this absence is due to something central in Heidegger's whole project, which the rest of this section attempts to elucidate. And this is best achieved through attending to the point where *new* directions are acquired. And here, if we continue just a little bit further along the path of Heidegger's thinking, in texts from the period subsequent to Being and Time we first find even more similarities to what Graeber's discussion on value led to. Such as the following, from a 1942 lecture course:

> [F]rom out of the relation to the gods, out of the kind of festivals and the possibility of celebration, out of the relationship between master and slave, out of a relation of sacrifice and battle, out of a relationship to honor and glory, out of the relationship between these relationships and from out of the grounds of their unity, there prevails what is called the πόλις (Heidegger 1996: 82)[17]

This is the "world" thought both as wholly relational, and relational in such a way that in it one finds identities related to each other in terms of better and worse – such as their respective "values" would be. And not only is this structure relational, but also coherently so, out of some *ground of unity* which makes it coherent. In this lecture, the unity is taken to be achieved by how the structure is focused around "the pole, the swirl […] in which and around which everything turns" (Heidegger 1996: 81). In other words, we find here something very similar to Graeber's *fetish.* In 1936, Heidegger called this center of worlds the *Work of Art.* The essay where he does so is complex in its nature, but a central aspect of the focusing point is described by Dreyfus and Kelly as that of manifesting, for those who are part of a common world, the meaning of their actions as part of that whole (Dreyfus and Kelly 2011: 100). Just like in the case of the fetish, it is from this Work of Art that radically new world's spring. But this site – which is where for both authors the radically new erupts – is where all similarities between them finally start to break down. For where the fetish carries a message of (potential) human *freedom*, in Heidegger's thinking (here quoting his Letter on Humanism from 1946) we find a message to the exact contrary: "Man does not decide whether and how beings appear, whether and how God and the gods or history and nature come forward into the clearing of Being, come to presence and depart" (Heidegger 1993a: 234).

*How* does the new happen at this site? In the case of both of our interlocutors, that it can do so at all is a possibility granted precisely by imagining the world as a relational whole focused around a centering locus, so that a change at the center can shift the whole structure. Further, that point is somehow intimately connected to an act of interpretative self-reference going back to *ourselves* – it is something which tells us who we are. Nevertheless, each author

[17] πόλις is the *polis.* The city, city state, or community.

presents a different conception for how the new actually happens. And this has to do with *what* the reference leads back to. With Graeber, the reference leads back to a certain "what", namely ourselves as the creators of worlds. All that needs to be argued is then the possibility for us to recall how this is the case. In Heidegger's work, by contrast, Dasein is, is always defined towards possibilities for being which are already initially there. In a phrase from a later work, he strives to think even "'Imagination' as occurrence of the *clearing* itself" (Heidegger 1999: 219). Emphasis in original). That is, the possibilities for what we could possibly *imagine* ourselves to be are granted by the opening which lets us be imaginary beings to begin with.

The point in the latter case is not that Graeber's answer would be wrong, but rather points to the necessity of something similar to what Harourunian found in Piaget: That both a range of possibilities and the principles guiding their realization needs to be present from the beginning. In Graeber's case, the whole explanatory power of his theory depends on the ability to unite beings to a common ground in "Man", which then implies a certain principle for how a choice is made in face of options which are wholly new. Better/worse is in that case not random, but decided on basis of the self-realization of Man as a free creator (this we take primarily from Scarry). But what made new options present, what made them what they are, and what determined the principle of their selection? This cannot possibly be up to a willful decision of a being which from the beginning is defined by them. Hence, "Man does not decide". The reason that Heidegger cannot "explain" an orientation is because of how he insists on keeping his questioning on this level. Any "explanation" for a specific orientation would refer to a certain ground for it, where that ground must already have been given. What he goes on to do instead, especially in his later work, is to insist on questioning the transcendental *possibility* of such grounds which could explain actions and provide principles for their logic – a possibility he finds to be itself always groundless.

Again, this does not mean that Graeber's model is not *true*. His theory might very well explain why Dasein comes to take up the orientation which it does. But with "Dasein" would come the implication that its conditions of truth rest on something yet unexamined. What we need to do now is first of all to attend to whatever it is that *really* decides, in order to there discover with Heidegger the possibility of fundamentally different ways to be. To do so requires a shift of emphasis in the question about who we really are from "we" to "are", and all previous similarities between Graeber's value theory and that which can be taken from

Heidegger's ontology fall away at this point. Ultimately, this is what it means to read the self-referential structure of the world back to *Dasein* rather than to *Man.*

## 4.3. The Question of Being

> Man himself acts [handelt] through the hand [Hand]; for the hand is, together with the word, the essential distinction of man. Only a being which, like man, "has" the word, can and must "have" "the hand". […] The hand sprang forth only out of the word and together with the word. Man does not "have" hands, but the hand holds the essence of man, because the word as the essential realm of the hand is the ground of the essence of man (Heidegger 1992: 80)

*

This section completes the transition into Heidegger's manner of thinking by attending to what happens when the focus of our question is directed to the nature of "are" rather than "we". In other words, to the question of Being. I begin by again attending to the shift from Man to Dasein, here to make clear how this is not a shift from one definite being to another but rather a shift to a wholly different domain where to conduct our inquiry. For Heidegger, instead of a "ground" for explanations and principles of choice, what we find in this domain is instead a history of shifting grounds. It is by noting the structure he believed this history to have that we come upon the *kind* of figure that the Marxian Man implicitly was for Heidegger, and the general structures of these are then the topic for the next subsection. Here, we simply need to arrive to them.

To begin with, the essence of "Man" is in the case of Graeber given as somehow related to being the "political animal" of Aristotle, as was also the case for Marx. And Heidegger concurs but, in a lecture course from 1942-1943, goes on to complain that this is a definition still treated much too superficially – for it is too seldom asked what it really is that *lets* the political animal be political to begin with, even as the answer is given by Aristotle himself: This beings possession of *logos* (Heidegger 1996: 83). "Logos" must be understood to enfold both speaking and thinking broadly conceived. For instance, recall from Graeber how politics is ultimately supposed to be about the meaning of life (section 3.5). But then only that life which relates to itself in terms of a "meaning of…" would be political. This way, the *logos* is its origins and condition of possibility, which Heidegger does not deny, but insists should be questioned rather than taken as a starting point. Before we can talk about what makes one "meaning" more desirable than another, we need to understand how there can be meaning at all.

This shift leads to a transformation in how we must understand the nature of that speech and thinking which defines us as human. A common notion holds that humans are separated from nonhumans by the possession of a sense of self, where the "self" would be the center of meaning such as we found in Piaget's model of the mind. Complaining about exactly such notions in this lecture course, Heidegger insists that rather than the ability to say "I", what distinguishes humans is the ability to say "is" (Heidegger 1996: 90). The answer to the question what man *is* would (for Heidegger) thus refer it back to the space from whence the very question stems. But even if we for now accept the initial definition that "man" *is* the possibility of the question of "is", what does that mean for us here? In the case of the self-reference of Dasein in its concern for its own being, Heidegger's question brings him to a primacy of the "am" in the phrase "I am" which does not mean a shift from one side of a dichotomy to another. Instead, Man's essence (what he is) here becomes taken as something established on basis of something which is still unfamiliar. So what about this "is"? In ordinary cases, it grounds in the sense of what happens when it is said "I *am* X" – say, a producer. But what Heidegger ends up doing is to undo the possibility of any stability to such meanings, even in the form of "I am I". How so? The reasons for are found by directly taking on Heidegger's explicit (and perennial) discussion on the meaning of what it could really mean "to be".

To speak in terms of this "is" means identifying something as something. We find the true centrality of his otherwise dispersed discussion on this topic by noting how Heidegger, in a letter to the writer Ernst Jünger, claims that, in its usual employment, its use constitutes the fundamental operation of metaphysics – which happens whenever (through identification) something is made the ground of something else (Heidegger 1993b: 95). But what is metaphysics? As soon as we have a sense for what Heidegger uses *that* word to refer to, the structure which he takes to determine both Being and Man will be much clearer. We find the most succinct statement in regards to this in an inaugural address delivered on the topic at the University of Freiburg in 1929. At the heart of the lecture stands the assertion that "[a]s surely as we can never comprehend absolutely the whole of beings in themselves we certainly do find ourselves stationed in the midst of beings that are revealed somehow as a whole." (Heidegger 1993a: 99). Dasein is comported towards a "whole" of all meaningful relations, yet it does not in any simple way encompass that whole. Yet, somehow this "whole" is the concern of metaphysics. And what is peculiar about it, which is what Heidegger tries to clarify in the lecture, is the manner by which it can become a concern for any intellectual

enterprise at all to begin with – which stems from how "[t]he nothing itself nihilates" (ibid. 103).

The nature of this relation between Being as a whole and "nothing" must initially appear obscure, so much that in the letter to Jünger (which was written some 30 years after the lecture was delivered), Heidegger finds reason to complain about how much the lecture's central point had subsequently been misconstrued (Heidegger 1993b). His point was never that Being is, or springs from, a "Nothing"; nor that the question of its essence is itself meaningless. Rather, the primary topic is the very *question* of Being as a whole, and how this question would arise only when, in face of "nothingness", the marvel arises *that* there are beings – and not nothing. And now knowing that his concern was with the question of Being then, as Heidegger tells Jünger, it must also be remembered that the lecture was delivered not to philosophers, but to scholars from all across the different departments of the university. The central purpose of the presentation was then to illustrate for these other scholars in what manner philosophy is engaged in a qualitative different enterprise than that of these scholars' respective fields.

In this case, we come upon a "difference" which is not like that between, say, physics and history, for that difference delineates two fields against each other on basis of the different regions of beings they take as their matter of concern. In taking being as a *whole* as its topic, metaphysics is oriented not to another being among beings. And since metaphysics doesn't position itself in terms of orientation towards a range of beings, there is no "something" which bestows an identity to it (such as "the past" can do for history). Instead, it is oriented exactly to that which for the ontic sciences must be *no-thing* (Heidegger 1993b: 78). And by doing so, metaphysics nevertheless deals with that which the scientists meet at each and every moment even as they themselves hardly notice it, namely "*that* [these beings] are beings – and not nothing" (Heidegger 1993a: 103). The mode of knowing characterizing the sciences are always about some-thing, and thus about a being identified by its "what"; metaphysics, on the other hand, is concerned with a *thatness* which is irreducible to any whatness even as everything which is something will also simply *be* – meaning that it will confront the scientists at every step of their way.

"Grounding", in the sense of making something the ground of something else, would always make recourse to the "what" of a *something*. Values can *be* actions only insofar as actions are a "something". So how can a project of grounding then still be the essential operation of this metaphysics, such as Heidegger writes to Jünger? At first it would seem to be its very

opposite. The answer relates to changes having taken place in Heidegger's own thinking over the 30 years which passed between the lecture and the letter. During that period Heidegger moved from attempting to make a fundamental ontology of his own, to rather conduct a deconstruction of the "history of Being". A fundamental condition of possibility for the latter project is to accept the premise that this history can be read as a series of chapters where the "whole" has been made an integrated structure of inner coherence and intelligibility exactly *by* stabilizing the meaning of "that" into a "what". That is, metaphysics grounds the *whole* in a something. The structure which all metaphysics thus share is one Heidegger calls by the name onto-theology:

> When metaphysics thinks of beings with respect to the ground that is common to all beings as such, then it is logic as onto-logic. When metaphysics thinks of beings as such as a whole, that is, with respect to the highest being which accounts for everything, then it is logic as theo-logic." (Heidegger 1969: 70)

We find the origin of projects that attempt to achieve this among the Pre-Socratic Greeks and their very explicit attempts of establishing which element is the basic one (e.g. water, air) fundamental to all.[18] For this common element the term adopted came to be *arche* – which originally meant both origin and *ruler.* In this context, it rules *as* an origin which stabilizes significance and possibility into one coherent system, where everything is intelligible in relations going back ultimately to some final "ground" or another. Now, the word used by Heidegger to refer to any specific onto-theological constellation is "epoch", which stems from the Greek word for holding something back. And this tells of something significant for how it becomes possible for Heidegger to read metaphysics as a *history* as opposed to himself engaging in such an onto-theological project. To construct a history means telling of a transformation, and according to Heidegger one can read metaphysics itself as a history of shifting grounds. One can here imagine the world as flux, in the Heraclitean sense, in order to see how much like a dam holds back the flow of a river, we find in Heidegger's reading of the history of Being a flow of sense which is always held back by some highest figure - whether this is God, Subject or Man. That figure is the dam of any identifiable epoch, which is projected ahead of it so to determine a range of possibilities which the water in its rising will eventually reach. But equally always, despite what appears the case from within the epoch, such dams can only hold back the flow for so long before it bursts to let meaning surge forth

[18] Throughout his life, Heidegger shifted what he took to be the exact starting point of metaphysics back and forth from Plato to the Pre-Socratics.

into a radically different possibilities – possibilities of sense and meaning which are all but unpredictable from within the worlds come before it.

Metaphysics is the project of securing dams, and for Heidegger both their closure and the necessity of their eventual overflow are the basic elements in his telling of the history of Being. The closure means that there is a hidden necessity of each epoch which can be read towards its determinate figure, which is established at its outset so to close off the flow of possibility before it. Bringing this back to the question of Man from the beginning of this section, this is what saying "is" as the very condition for there being an "I" leads the essence of that "I" to. What Marx work does, given the perspective set out here, is to define a dam which holds back that transformation, and only by relying on it is Graeber given the ability to explain "desirability" according to a principle common to all that which is held back. But where an epoch might stabilize the meaning of an "I", the "is" which remains its condition is something which, while still capable of fixations of identity, remains unstable in itself and in its cracking undoes the stability of any relational "whole". Thus there is a plurality of "stabilities" for the "I", but none which exist apart from its openness to a history of continuous transformation.

This is another answer to why Heidegger holds that "Man does not decide…", for here there is no "subject" to withdraw so to posit new realities through a fetish. Any narrative which makes the whole of being intelligible as a history of Man is put at play in a larger history transcending that grounding figure. At the same time, all this is also *why* Heidegger's thinking doesn't amount to holding any stories relying on "Man" to be necessarily incorrect. For such a truth *can* be, only that we also need to accept the contingency of its conditions. In Graeber we find a relational whole which is explained from a common ground – in Heidegger this ground is pulled away. Now, as we proceed, the essential thing to take from this section is the understanding of how Heidegger's questions in regards to Marx (at the end of 3.6) refer to answers which would exist within this history of Being. Even then, his writings offer no *concrete* answers to his own questions. But what might we be able to say about such epochal figures in *general*, insofar as they belong to metaphysical structures? This is the topic explored in the next section, which takes on the structure of metaphysics directly.

## 4.4. The Origins of Metaphysics

> This happening of the transformation of unconcealment, by way of distortion, to undistortedness and from this to correctness, must be seen together with the transformation of *phusis* into *idea*, of *logos* as gathering into *logos* as assertion. On the basis of all this, the final interpretation of Being

> that is secured in the word *ousia* works itself out and works itself to the fore. *Ousia* means Being in the sense of constant presence, presence at hand. Consequently, what really is is what always is, *aei on.* What is continuously coming to presence is what we must go back to, in advance, in all comprehending and producing of anything: the model, the *idea.* What is continuously coming to presence is what we must go back to in all *logos,* asserting, as what always already lies at hand, the *hupokeimenon, subjectum.* What always already lies at hand before us is, from the point of view of *phusis,* of emergence, what is *proteron,* the earlier, the *a priori.* (Heidegger 2000: 206)

*

The question "why Man" demands a cause or origin. But no such answers are readily accessible in Heidegger's own thinking. The reason for that is because the path of thinking he pursues transcend the possibility of any "why's", as shall be made clear during the course of this section. But a demonstration of how that is the case is not the central point here. Instead, since the answers would for Heidegger refer "Man" to a history of Being, we need to know what kind of "history" this is to begin with. What are its common characteristics? In this section I turn first to the point where Heidegger locates the origins of this history, so to learn there what structures hold for all later metaphysical permutations. This is probably the most complex issue confronted in this thesis, and it deals with something so abstract that it can be hard to see what it can tell us about anything else. Therefore, I go on to discuss some cases where we might recognize metaphysical structures of thinking. These examples still do not *directly* answer any question about Man, but help us advance to answers by showing the operations of a logic present also in what is our own primary question. Then towards the end of this section I turn to what little can be inferred about the origins of metaphysics as such – to that origin which answers the "why" for the very structure which then gives the possibility for figures like "Man" to be that which every other "why" goes back to, such as Heidegger believed to be the case for Marx.

So, to begin with, I bring our inquiry to the platonic dialogue on *the Sophist*. The dialogue's relevance for our current purposes is given by how all metaphysics (so Heidegger claims) is Platonism (Heidegger 1993a: 433). Metaphysics is, of course, the project at the heart of the "history of Being"; all its epochs are "metaphysical", in the sense given in the preceding section. And so central to Heidegger is this specific dialogue on the sophist that, after first having dedicated a full semester to a close reading of it (1924-1925), he even went on to use an excerpt from it as the epigraph to *Being and Time* itself. Here I begin by approaching the dialogue directly (rather than through Heidegger) so to draw out what I believe to be the most essential elements in it that we need attend to in order for our present inquiry to proceed. But

in the end, we need to go to Heidegger's own discussion of it. For what he finds really critical in it is that which its participants do *not* question, namely the significance of *presence*. It is by attending to the importance of that which is thereby overlooked that the metaphysical history of Being can reveal itself.

The dialogue itself is best approached by first carefully noting the problem it tries to resolve: the existence of sophists. But why is it that the sophists become enough of a conceptual problem that their existence serves the topic of an entire debate? For the participants in the discussion, the answer is quite clear: Their philosophical predecessor, Parmenides, had put the significant authority of his name beyond the notion that *being and thinking are the same.* Exactly what Parmenides meant is still a topic of debate, but in the case of the characters of the discussion it is interpreted as meaning that *speaking falsehood* is a logical impossibility. Since that which defines the sophist is that this is exactly what he does, and sophists evidently exist, then that very existence would seem to embody a logical contradiction. Now, the initial conclusions drawn from Parmenides' assertion might appear too absurd to be given much credence today, but the basic problem is actually much the same as what we encountered in Heidegger's address on the topic "What is Metpahysics" above (section 4.3): Speaking is always speaking of *something*, and every something is necessarily a being. But speaking falsehood means to say that which *is not*, meaning that when somebody (like the sophist, who is defined exactly by so doing) speaks falsehood then he would say that which is not. But since he nevertheless speaks, and all speech is about something, then this nonbeing must nevertheless somehow be "a being" even as that is exactly what it by definition cannot be. Hence, contradiction ensues. Through the mouth of one participant in the discussion:

> This appearing, and this seeming but not being, and this saying things but not true things – all these issues are full of confusion, just as they always have been. It's extremely hard, Theaetetus, to say what form of speech we should use to say that there really is such a thing as false saying or believing, and moreover to utter this without being caught in a verbal conflict. (Plato *Sophist* 236e)[19]

The Sophist himself is thus, at least as far as we need be concerned here, a mere figure which points towards the more fundamental problems of truth and falsehood as possibilities for thinking to relate to beings. As for the discussion in the dialogue, it is unusual insofar as it is not led by Socrates but rather a character known only as the Visitor (or, alternatively, the

[19]Plato 1997d. *Sophist*. transl. by Nicholas P. White, in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited, with introduction and notes, by John M. Cooper, Indianapolis: Hackett. 245-293.

Stranger), who attempts to tackle these problems by means of raising anew the question of what it really means to be (*Sophist* 244a). That is, to think what it must mean "to be" if that meaning nevertheless somehow includes what apparently contradicts it. This Visitor begins by alluding to "something like a battle of gods and giants" (*Sophist* 246a) in order to refer to the standpoints which partisans of past times had taken on what it really means "to be", and since these standpoints are recognizable even today, they let us better locate the Visitor's own position in a surprisingly familiar context: On the one side we have those materialists who insists that nothing "is" except what is physical like that which the hand can touch; on the other side those idealists who insists that what the materialists call physical is naught but processes of becoming and that what "is" must rather be intangible ideas somehow distinct from such processes. And here the Visitor himself enters the fray so to supersede these predecessors by bringing their positions into a harmonious synthesis. To understand the Visitors argument we can follow it along the challenge he poses to the materialist position, which would be closest to what we have encountered earlier in this thesis: Provided that the misguided radicalism of positions archaic already to the Visitor is not to be repeated – positions that deny the difference between the bodies of a living animal and a dead one – then the recognition of such a difference between that which is the same as far as the touch of the hand is concerned already recognizes the presence or absence of an intangible soul. No matter how small or insignificant this thing is taken to be, the very act of recognizing that it *is* anything at all would then entail that the term "being" cannot be taken as simply identical to material things.

We can already see how the conundrum here has to do with the meaning of what it is to "be" as such, insofar as it is something accessible to *logos* and therefore at all *has* a "meaning". It's about what we really say when we say that something *is*. The position the Visitor himself ultimately arrives at is one where he proposes a "definition that *those which are* amount to nothing other than *capacity*" (*Sophist*: 247e. emphasis in original). More precisely in this case, "capacity" comes to be connected to a set of "great kinds" which would be both identifiable and always available for realization. The kinds are five in number: change, rest, being, sameness, and (most importantly) difference (254b-c). These "kinds" can be thought as potentials which can realize actualities by blending with each other, and what makes "difference" the most important is not only that it is what lets the great kinds be different from each other to begin with, but also that it is that which supplies the Visitor's resolution to the conundrum falsehood: Every statement is directed towards something which is other than

(*different* from) itself. Within this domain of *aboutness* provided by the structure of the *logos* one then again finds available the great kind of difference. If difference is mixed together with what is, then it would create that which is *different* from that which is, i.e. what is not – and in the form of this otherness, nonbeing is made available as a something which it is possible to maintain an intentional relation of thinking towards. And hence would appear the possibility of speaking of it.

So, what does Heidegger make of this resolution? It is one which remains central to Heidegger's thinking, believing as he did that here can be found something about the meaning of "Being", which remained ever thereafter. To understand Heidegger, especially when it comes to the history of Being, we need to understand what he took this something to be. To begin with, he considers the resolution a great advance on earlier thinking. According to Heidegger, Parmenides mistake was to "identify the ontological meaning of Being with the ontical totality of beings" (Heidegger 2003: 395). That is, the meaning of "being" would simply be identical and exhausted by all which is. "Negation", such as is involved in falsehood defined as speaking *non*-being, would then posit "nothing" on basis of *what* is negated. What the Visitor's argument leads to is a more fundamental apprehension of "negation" as *relational* and already involved in the constitution of being as such: in being founded on difference, then negation is the negation *of* already acquired content - "[i]n every case, the other is possible only as other-than" (ibid. 377). This is important first of all because thinking nonbeing as "difference from" makes it relational to an initial matter, which is connected to something whose significance is forgotten by much contemporary philosophy, namely that each *logos* is always a *legein ti,* that is, it speaks *about something* (ibid. 414). In regards to this something, the very relationality which now pertains to this kind of negation makes it no longer simply identify beings which are and beings which are not, but one wherein negation is itself a productive force (ibid. 388). It is involved with what makes a "something" accessible for the *logos* to begin with, and in fact even the empty negation of Parmenides really exhibits that which it is different from (ibid. 395). For instance, this is a realization which Heidegger makes extensive use of in his own address on metaphysics (section 4.3 above) where Being is presented as first revealed only on basis of *difference from* a "nothing".

This emphasis on difference "from" is what makes it possible to think the whole of being as a relational structure of mutual differences, such as is presupposed already before we assume that such relations would add up to totalities organized around a center by (for instance) the

work of art (section 4.2 above). Nevertheless this *logos* and how it operates is something Heidegger locates at the basis of the "onto-theologies" he berates. As he puts it when in 1957 he returns to the statement of Parmenides:

> "Ontology […] and theology are "Logies" inasmuch as they provide the ground of beings as such and account for them within the whole. They account for Being as the ground of beings. They account to the *λόγος*, and are in an essential sense in accord with the *λόγος*-, that is they are the logic of the *λόγος*" (Heidegger 1969: 59).[20]

But what is it about the *logos* that renders such structures? This is something which has to do with its mode of operation. Recall from the letter to Jünger how making something the ground of something else is the essential metaphysical operation (section 4.3 above). This is what happens whenever it is said that X really *is* Y; for example that value really *is* action. This would thus be present at the very foundations of Graeber's theory. But when it is asserted that these are the same, what about the actual *sameness* implied? Going back in particular to the sameness asserted by Parmenides in the relation of thinking with being, Heidegger asserts that even behind the apparent tautology "A=A" there hides a principle of Being itself: That to every being there belongs identity, and does so in a manner where "not only […] every A is itself the same; but rather that every A is itself the same with itself" (ibid. 25). The meaning of this statement is obscure even by Heidegger's standards, but speaks of something which we need at least a rudimentary understanding of in order to proceed.

We find the meaning by returning to Heidegger's lecture on the dialogue led by the Visitor. According to Heidegger, as fundamental as the achievement of the Visitor was, that achievement overlooks something at its own foundation. As Heidegger points out, since the dialogue is already from the beginning underway to find whatever being best satisfies the meaning of Being – to find the being which is most like Being – the actual meaning of that which sets the criteria for deciding this is itself already taken for granted (Heidegger 2003: 323). And what might that be? When the Visitor proposes his definition that Being should be understood as capacity, in the sense of the ability for beings to affect one another, then their being *is* most fundamentally the possibility of their coexistence. But what grants the possibility of coexistence? Something which the Visitor simply takes for granted, which is that Being means *presence* (ibid.). To be "capacity", which the Visitor concluded is what it means to be at all, means to be capable of relating and exercising effects. But beings are acknowledged as capable of exercising effects only insofar as they are *present* with each

[20] *Λόγος* is *Logos*.

other. Beings are, at all, only insofar as they are present. Absence is not, and things absent do not exercise effects and thus "are not". The "grounding" of *logos*, of saying "is", would refer a being to a *something*, which as a "something is assumed to be present. Even the past and future is subsumed to this: Something only "was" insofar as it once *was present*, and only "will be" insofar as it will arrive *as* something present.

What the Visitor attempts to do is to find the "something" which most endures as present. When found, the being thus established as the meaning of Being and of everything which can be thought or said, is the "something" which all "groundings" ultimately lead back to. "X *is* Y" makes X intelligible by "grounding" it in Y. "Y" would in turn be Z, which *all* beings are ultimately intelligible by reference to. And the self-presence of this highest Being is what Heidegger holds the notion of "sameness" of "A with itself" to imply, since what is "the same" would ultimately be this being always identical with itself: Beings would really *be* that which most endures about them, more primordial than the *difference* of relationality, and this something is common to everything which is. And the desire to establish this "something" is perhaps the real animating impulse of all metaphysics.

This "presence" is supposed to be common to everything which today is, insofar as our epoch is determined by metaphysics. Are there any places we can ourselves recognize all this, which might perhaps be a little less abstract? Some ways to do so come from attending to the importance of how the distinction of permanence and change became "spatialized" in a certain manner. As Heidegger puts it in his *Introduction to Metaphysics:*

> Only with the sophists and Plato was seeming explained as, and thus reduced to, mere seeming. At the same time, Being as *idea* was elevated to a supersensory realm. The chasm, *khorismos*, was torn open between the merely apparent beings here below and the real Being somewhere up there (Heidegger 2000: 111. Emphasis in original).

This refers to the classic divide of above from below, as encountered for instance with the *anathrōn ha opōpe* (section 2.3). What we can see now is how this spatial divide is in fact made on a *temporal* basis, and how with it, models become privileged over their copies (di Pippo 2000: 30). That which is always self-identically present above; fleeting differences below. When speaking the *truth* means to say that which is, then the enterprises of knowledge become oriented wholly to such models. A good example is the orientation which many sciences of life take up towards the DNA (model) as over the actual organism (copy) which develops according to a design taken as contained in the former. This design (it is assumed) determines from the beginning how the surrounding world will be integrated so to unfold a

life whose story is determined already ahead of itself, and the target of scientific inquiry would be the design (of that story) as it is *in itself.*[21] In a different way (which through Haroutunian was revealed to nevertheless be structurally similar in this respect) this is found in Piaget. There, the organism's development is organized in accordance with a determinate potential already present as this potential from the beginning. Also Marx' "Man" (as Heidegger reads Marx) is such a "model" as above, which *as such* would therefore imply the chasm which makes models possible, as well as everything else which comes with it (discussed further in section 4.5). This is particularly apparent in Scarry's appropriation. Only because Man is put at the center of civilization, and only because he is there accorded a primordial identity as "creator", is it at all possible to make all creation intelligible in reference to this model – whether a chair or a coat. And only then does the kind of relation exist where a *deviation* from the model (such as capitalism is) can be read as deviating. Only with the *khorismos* does the possibility emerge for that something (the model) in relation to which realizations can be realizations and divergences divergences.

What we can see now is how the very relation of model/copy is a *kind* of relation which is only possible with the "chasm" which establishes a difference between the two, and then makes the copy intelligible through a "grounding" reference back to the model, which is located in the "above" to which the human eye is assumed to be primordially oriented. The next section reads out the implications of this whole structure. But before moving on, is there nothing more we can say regarding the actual *origin* of the event of metaphysics? Did the primacy of presence arrive with the Visitor simply out of nowhere? The problem with insisting on an answer here is that according to the very logic which reveals these structures to begin with, the answer must be *yes*. This is because the question asks for a ground, which as such would need to be something present. And thus it would insist on accounting for presence out of something which, in what it is, always already presupposes it. But if we turn to a different order of "origins", there are still some things to be said. As Iain Thomson points out, when we are searching for origins through Heidegger we are not conducting a search for causes, but rather a *phenomenological* search for the emergence of the constellation which lends Being to thought in certain terms (Thomson 2000: 315). To search for such an origin, we can put our focus on the phenomenon where Heidegger lets production and presence find their unity: *techne.* This is the root word for "technology", but originally (when interpreted phenomenologically) designates the comportment of wonder in face of the blossoming

[21] See GRAIN 2003 for a critical confrontation with this paradigm..

*phusis.*[22] Thomson then makes an immediate connection of *techne* to presence by suggesting that such blossoming takes place on such a slow pace that a glance will not take in the generative process which blossoms (verb), but rather sees apparently self-identical blossoms (noun) which simply are what they are at that moment (ibid. 317). Thus, in a manner recognizable from earlier in this section, what a flower really *is* becomes identified with an unchanging model, which is that by which language and thinking refers to the flower through.

Still, I believe that it is worthwhile to think the origin of metaphysics (now also as "technology") along a slightly longer path than Thomson does here. For such blossoming of plants is not quite that invisible for somebody living within a land rather than passing through it – and we are here dealing with a person whose thinking grew along the paths of his Black Forest dwelling, who I find it doubtful would ascribe such blindness to his beloved Greeks. Instead, maybe we find a clue given by how the *eidos* (the model), which means unchangeable *what* (Gadamer 1993: 89), according to Heidegger also means a face-to-face meeting (Heidegger 1968: 41). The shift implied with the latter is towards noting first not that which one is face-to-face with, but rather the event which has brought seer and seen into the mutual constellation of such a facing. And could the "face-to-face" structure of this constellation perhaps in itself tell us something? A recent study tells us the following:

> In our studies of everyday walking […] [w]e found that walking abreast was generally experienced as a particularly companionable form of activity. Even while conversing, as they often did, companions would rarely make immediate eye-to-eye contact […]. Direct face-to-face interaction, by contrast, was found to be far less sociable. A key difference is that in walking along together, companions share virtually the same visual field, whereas in face-to-face interaction, each can see what is behind the other's back, opening up possibilities for deceit and subterfuge. As they turn to face one another, stopped in their tracks, each blocking the other's path, they appear to be locked in a contest in which views are no longer shared but batted back and forth (Ingold 2013: 106)

"The metaphysics of the modern age" writes Heidegger, "begins with and has its essence in the fact that it seeks the unconditionally indubitable, the certain and assured" (Heidegger 1977: 82). What could prompt this, and with it the whole project of ordering beings into coherence, other than an initial suspicion of their "deceit and subterfuge"? Holding metaphysical "thinking" to take place in such face-to-face meetings would give us a way for understanding it as always already determined by a certain confrontation, where its path

[22] *Phusis*, containing a range of meanings related to emergence and birth, is usually taken as the Greek word for Nature (which comes from from the Latin *Natura*). Heidegger nevertheless believed that something essential was lost in the translation of the former to the latter (Heidegger 2000: 14).

forward always needs to subsume (through "grounding") that which it meets and moves across. And as far as the possibility for speaking of an "origin" of metaphysics as a whole, this might be as far as we can go on Heidegger's own terms. The revealing withdraws, and does not reveal itself as the revealing.

This section has now discussed the origin of metaphysics, discovering there a thinking taking place in terms of relational structures where the flow of relational significance is nonetheless closed off. That closure then takes a spatial shape, but should be thought on an ultimately temporal basis. That way, *difference* is contained and simultaneously given a common universal logic, which makes beings intelligible for the *theōría* turned towards the unifying point.[23] The last paragraphs of the section gives a "why" for those structures in general (and by extension Heidegger's 1973 questions) which might not be entirely satisfying as a "cause". But that's not what matters about it, and in the end the more significant thing is how it helps us apprehend that which needs to be transcended if metaphysics is to be overcome. This is something I return to towards the end of the following section. First, the crucial task is to take what we learnt in this section about the conditions that Heidegger identifies for a theory such as Graeber's to be true (the chasm; presence) in order to attend to the implications which Heidegger reads from the basic architecture of such structures.

## 4.5. Unfolding Metaphysics

> [W]hereas for the Greeks to "take something as something" was still experienced within the essential realm of disclosedness and unconcealedness, thought in the Roman way it lies outside this essential domain […] This determines for the future, as a consequence of a new transformation of the essence of truth, the technological character of modern, i.e., machine, technology. And that has its origin in the originating realm out of which the imperial emerges. The imperial springs forth from the essence of truth as correctness in the sense of the directive self-adjusting guarantee of the security of domination. The "taking as true" of ratio, of reor, becomes a far-reaching and anticipatory security. Ratio becomes counting, calculating, calculus. Ratio is a self-adjustment to what is correct. (Heidegger 1992: 50).

*

In a Marxian value theory of the kind that Graeber proposes, what values are is something determined by their manner of participating in the figure of Man, who is both the one oriented towards them and the one which has made them what they are. This is what makes them at all intelligible for the value theory. That which makes this fundamental constellation possible is

[23] "Theory" comes from words concerned with viewing something, such as *théa* (a view) itself.

that the site of the appearance of values – the external world – is interpreted as a process of production whereby Man is externalized only to then return back to himself, such as we found with Scarry. But as Dasein instead of Man, we rather encounter an openness to "Being", which (when interpreted in terms of Heidegger's later thinking) renders this "Man's" essence (even as "producer") at stake in the play which constitutes the groundless History of Being. But what does Heidegger take to characterize the whole sequence which makes up this history, where "Man" is one chapter? This is the question guiding this section of the thesis. I pursue it by turning to Heidegger's confrontation with our times and the interpretation of it which the position outlined in the previous section allowed him to make. This takes place in his (in)famous critique of *technology*. What is "technology" for Heidegger? After I answer this, I turn to how we can see its presence in the very narrative of "progress". This is important because "progress" has to do with change and the new; it's a certain way for these to be ordered, and this *way* is itself metaphysical. Perhaps it is even *the* metaphysical way, and we would find there the source of the commonalities to Piaget, Turner, Marx and (by extension) Graeber.

To begin with, there's the topic of Heidegger's confrontation with technology. This is a critique which is as well-known as it is misunderstood by detractors and acolytes both. While it is hard to overlook elements of romantic yearning for idyllic rural life, to follow certain thinkers in dismissing it on such basis (e.g. Latour 1993: 65) simply sidesteps an engagement with the substantial content of Heidegger's critique. But there are mistakes which are easy to make also for those sympathetic with Heidegger, which are therefore all the more critical to avoid repeating. Crucially, Heidegger lends little ammunition for those whose stand on technology is determined by fears of the risks entailed in the possibility for machinery to malfunction, such as happened at Fukushima. Quite on the contrary, the greatest danger which technology poses is one which (as Heidegger makes clear in an address delivered at his native town Meßkirch in 1955) stems out of the very possibility of its *success,* wherein what it would endanger is not the physical bodies of men but rather the "autochthony of the works of man" (Heidegger 1966: 53). How it would do so is further elaborated in the key essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, where he begins by insisting that the common identification of "technology" with technological artifacts might very well be correct. But it nevertheless misses what is essential, which is that which makes it possible for the technological things to *be technological* to begin with. The crucial aspect for letting technology be is for Heidegger the *revealing* which reveals things in such a way that they

appear as susceptible for certain forms of manipulation (e.g. Heidegger 1977: 12). For only once this has happened can production (with technological instruments) come underway.

What identifies the "technology" which the critique is directed towards is a threat directed at "the works of man". And this threat stems out of something which reveals the world to be in a certain manner, where "world" here also entails the standards towards which man can direct himself. As Heidegger describes its effects:

> The forester who, in the woods, measures the felled timber and to all appearances walks the same forest path in the same way as did his grandfather is today commanded by profit-making in the lumber industry, whether he knows it or not. He is made subordinate to the orderability of cellulose, which for its part is challenged forth by the need for paper, which is then delivered to newspapers and illustrated magazines. (Heidegger 1977: 18)

The quote refers to a subordination to "orderability", and what the word "technology" speaks of in Heidegger's critique is that which lets us "know" in a certain way, thus found in our modes of perceiving the world as much as in our modes of then engaging with it. Those modes of knowing belong also to the production of knowledge undertaken by the sciences, whose ultimate (if implicit) goal is that which Heidegger in an essay from this period recognizes as the construction of an image of the world as a "self-contained system of motion of units of mass related spatiotemporally" (Heidegger 1977: 119). What Heidegger holds to be the essence of technology can best be traced from this manner by which the sciences let us know the world. Beyond its quest for "objective" truth lies something more fundamental, which prompts thinking to accost Being in such a manner. This is in the first instance the mistrust which, as we know from the last section, belongs to metaphysics and which in its structure harbors the origin of both "objects" and the "subject" confronted with them. And if knowing is most fundamentally a project of *control* as a response to mistrust, then that control also finds a justification in the process of production itself: If a being can be known to behave in a certain manner, then one would not only always know the best use to put it to but also avoid any risk of things going their own ways rather than along the technological highway to the model.

With technology is thus implied a connection to mastery and control, which becomes all the more apparent if we attend to what the thinking which endeavors to establish truth in a "technological" manner is actually engaged in doing. What characterizes that being whose impulse of suspicion is expressed in the modern sciences? To show that, I turn first to Heidegger's key essay on Nietzsche (*The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"*). The essay is

not directly about technology, but Heigegger's belief that Nietzsche completed metaphysics makes his reading of him one which ought to tell us what Heidegger holds to be common to all which belongs to that completion, including the sciences. This would then of course include also Marx, whom we found above that Heidegger held to have already completed metaphysics. Heidegger's engagement with Marx is much less extensive than the one with Nietzsche, but if *both* completed metaphysics then on the level he confronts them, Heidegger ought to have seen great similarities between the two. Proceeding with this intuition, what does Heidegger find in Nietzsche? He finds what he calls a metaphysics *of value* (Heidegger 1977: 72). This is related to Nietzsche's famous announcement of the death of God which should, however, be read with the realization which today is so often forgotten – that throughout the western tradition, God had become simply another name for Being. This is Being in the sense of what endures, as was found in the heavens of Plato and Aristotle. Nietzsche proclaims the Overman – defined as the one which posits *new values.* And this very definition then completes metaphysics by overturning the whole ancient domain of Being by means of a creature which self-consciously faces up to the need of himself posit whatever is kept in view above (ibid. 70).[24] This is similar to what Graeber believes humans can do, as seen in his conception of fetishism. But what does any of this have to do with technology and science as a mode of knowing? It belongs to them by articulating the animating impulse of *mastery* belonging to it, and the crucial thing here is how Heidegger believed this Overman to be nowhere near as free as Nietzsche imagined.

In not being submitted to anything above, the Overman is supposedly "free" to master his own being, which reveals a connection taken for granted between *freedom* and *mastery*. This connection remains as omnipresent and as hidden today, so that whether "freedom" is employed in a modern or postmodern mode, its meaning is still understood in terms of mastery (Thiele 1994). Even in seemingly innocuous phrases, such as in calls for "self-mastery", the meaning of freedom has been construed from the notion that only by controlling something – subjecting it to oneself – does one escape the risk of being submitted. Take for instance the event of fetishism, where the subject escapes submission to a system by being elevated to a higher level, and where it masters what is below so that the person can then submit to something he has himself created. And to return to Nietzsche's Overman, as Heidegger reads this figure: This being is understood in terms of Will, but in not being directed at anything other than itself, the will ends up turning back on itself, in order to will

[24] Recall here the *anathrōn ha opōpe* from the discussion on Hornborg.

itself as the particular willing which it is (Heidegger 1977: 77). The particular content of any value might vary, but their positing will always remain bound to one enduring principle operating according to two criteria of evaluation, namely the will's own *preservation* and *enhancement* (ibid. 72). Nietzsche's definition of the Overman would then make him little other than the being which is (self-)aware of this principle of Mastery that all life really has in common. And, if we return to Piaget, we find that these are the exact same principles of "extension" and "control" which he believes to govern the behavior of life as such (see section 3.6)! Even the very construal of what it means "to know" is in Piaget exactly that which Heidegger reads into the sciences. That is, it is nothing but the increased capacity for the organism to predict, control and thereby manipulate its environment for its own purposes – purposes ultimately governed by the same impulse of mastery which wills but further mastery.[25]

What I try to establish above is how, at the hearts of both technology and of metaphysics, there is found a principle of mastery which only finds its most poignant expression in Nietzsche's Overman. Technological instruments free us from constraints which keep us from achieving what we want, but at its essence there is something which has already determined the principles of what we actually *can* want. Piaget is only where these principles are most explicit. To Heidegger, what is expressed there is something which is true for the current epoch of metaphysics as a whole. Also the forester is bound to this, without realizing it himself. But *why* is that principle so prevalent? The interrogation into technology points the way to a partial explanation (which is as good as explanations come on this level of Heidegger's thinking). For already at the outset of metaphysics we find a characteristic which remains crucial still, namely how Being as such was understood in terms of *production.*

[25]One of the most persistent critics of Piaget among his contemporaries was the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, where the structure of this critique can be illuminating for what we also find in Heidegger. Overcoming "egocentrism" is the process by which the child learns to distinguish himself from the external world, and here the classic example (which Graeber also makes recourse to) is the child developing the belief in the enduring existence of a ball, also as it disappears from the child's view. But according to Merleau-Ponty, this whole argument rests on the adult having projected his own manner of thinking onto the child, as the measure which the child's thinking is to measure up to. Rather, we should not assume (with Piaget) that the child holds any propositional beliefs about the permanence or impermanence of the ball whatsoever! (Merleau-Ponty 2010: 142). That assumption leads Piaget to hold that thinking takes place on the level of *re*-presentations of the external world (ibid. 153), where meaning would belong to categories which the (presumed) raw matter of perception is molded in accordance with. And in some resonance with Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, Merleau-Ponty insists that it is therefore that Piaget is led to emphasize objective language which carries information for logical processing rather than the calling of *poetic* language (ibid. 457).

According to Heidegger, this is so ingrained that all subsequent philosophy relies on it (Heidegger 1995a: 117). And "production" has a certain structure:

> In producing something, the thing to be produced must necessarily be previewed even though it is not yet finished or perhaps not even begun. It is simply represented *(vor-gestellt)*, in the genuine sense of the word, but not yet brought about and produced as something at hand. This representing and previewing of the ἔργον in its εἶδος is the real beginning of producing and not, for example, mere making in the narrow sense of working with one's hands. This [is itself] the forming of a model […] Εἶδος is what it is only insofar as along with it and through it something which is to be produced is addressed as what is to be present later […] The εἶδος assumes leadership in the whole process of production (Heidegger 1995: 121).[26]

As Di Pippo reads Heidegger's take on production: "[I]n production, the artist projects an image of the thing, i.e. its intended look, before the thing worked upon comes to embody this image. The product, insofar as it eventually fulfills this intention, becomes a likeness or imitation of this projected model" (Di Pippo 2000: 12). While it is Aristotle which is discussed by Heidegger in the preceding quote, we can recognize this exact structure in Marx' analogy of the architect and the bee. With such a projected model in view, definite expectations are furnished onto beings to be conductive for its realization. What happened with the *khorismos* of Platonism was that such models were identified with what it really means "to be", and there is even a highest idea of the Good which can be kept in view by the eye here below. That "model" would then be the basis of all intelligibility, which confronts and attempts to *master* everything truly autonomous – that which yet cannot be made sense of in any relation to this *arche.*

As long as thing must be given a fixed significance by being grounded in this stable model, the ongoing divergent movements of beings are resisted (by the produced) who is only oriented to bringing their differentiations towards realization in likeness with their pre-defined model. This is the case at the beginnings of metaphysics, and also at its conclusion. Recall Scarry's insistence that Marx held creation to have a common structure on all levels of scale – including that of civilization as a whole (Scarry 1985: 246; see above, 3.3.). This would imply that even civilization is oriented to some εἶδος. The process of that creation is the ongoing change which we know as "history" and, of course, the model which would here structure and make this process intelligible is the model "Man". This model's permanence guarantees the possibility of intelligibility across all different beings, which as "copies" of an ideal intention

[26] ἔργον can be translated to work, deed or task. εἶδος to form, kind, appearance.

move towards realization (such as, on the smaller scale, the full recursive return of creations to the creator). All things are made coherently intelligible also in relation to each other. But for this to happen, then Man must be *already present* and this history defined as "Man's" history to begin with. In essence, since it requires that the figure of Man is the *epokhḗ* for human worlds, then the value theory adopted by Graeber relies on something only possible due to the *khorismos* which puts this figure on the far side of the world's unfolding. And when it is put in that place and our understanding of the world takes place through the intelligibility it bestows, then Heidegger would hold the impulse of mastery to already be there.

Again, in keeping with his approach to the various epochs of Being, Heidegger's reading of both "technology" and Nietzsche's program towards their ultimate conditions and consequences was not meant to contradict either, but rather to reveal the call which that thinking responds to. In particular, by following Heidegger's questioning, we can see how the event of freedom (of escaping fetishation) which brings us to a site where we are confronted with new possibilities also does so only in a manner where we would already be guided by a hidden compulsion to respond to these possibilities in a particular manner. Or, in other words: The event of "fetishism" is when we arrive at a site where we are free to posit new values. With Heidegger, we would see how the choices we can make when we arrive there are already bound (by the figure of Man, which is the basis for the argument that "making fetish" can happen at all) by a principle of self-assertive mastery. But given all this, where else might we with Heidegger recognize the implications of this general architecture? Some ways to do so become apparent in seizing on how he lets the common implications of narratives of *progress* be thought.

"Progress" is a concept which speaks not only of events, one after another – rather, it is a manner of understanding this sequence in light of its overall *direction,* whereby it also becomes possible to judge particular events taking place in it. Progress speaks of motion, and a motion towards *something*. The condition for this is the presence of a goal – the *eidos* in the process of creation – which can be kept in view so to bestow a meaning onto the present, thereby to serve the basis of evaluative *claims.* This is where we would find the principle of mastery at work, and its conditions and consequences become more clear if we attend to the notion of progress not as something only *about* history, but as to how it itself originates within it. The word itself is old but, as the geographer Kenneth Olwig shows, as late as the reign of Queen Elizabeth I it still referred to the literal "progress" whereby the regent

circulated the commonwealth to receive acknowledgment in her role as ruler, thereby generating the community within which these diverse lands are unified into one (Olwig 2002: 24). Now, Olwig tells of something about which Heidegger in all likelihood had no direct knowledge. But we find a resonance between this story and Heidegger's, and it is definitely possible to read the events which Olwig describes in light of Heidegger's thinking. Then, many parallels appear: The change in the concepts meaning were parallel to the emergence of the Modernity we identify with Carteisan dualism and modern natural science. And this not only in a chronological sense, but also structurally. With the emergence of modern science we find the *things* of nature for the first time really becoming the "nature" of immutable laws which can be known by a scientist detached from their situation, whose knowing is simultaneously removed from their reach. And this at the same time as the sovereign no longer attended the *things* (gatherings to deliberate and pass judgment on matters of common concern) of the lands, and the commonwealth was increasingly reduced to the subjects of the monarch who now remained seated at the capital, over and beyond them (ibid. 25).[27]

This change in the meaning of the concept came together with the rise to new ideals of governance, as expressed in a new concept of the time: "Utopia" - a name which carries meanings related to *no place* and *no time* (Olwig 2002: 45). But if the word was new, the phenomenon itself has a longer pedigree than this, as found already in the writing of the one whom Heidegger so frequently posits as the first thinker of metaphysics. For Plato himself suggests about the State, that perhaps "In heaven […] there is laid up a pattern of it […] which he who desires may behold, and beholding, may set his own house in order" (Plato *Republic Book IX*).[28] What then happened in the 16th century was that such notions of a timeless and ready-made pattern acquired a newfound meaning and importance. And the significant thing here is what already Plato alludes that the pattern *lets* us do – to set our house in order: Like a model, it constitutes an ideal image which present circumstances can be *measured against*, and only in such a constellation can the story of history's unfolding take the form of a narrative of progress, since only then can it be seen as moving towards a preconceived end against which present actions can be judged as to how they contribute.

The elevated Being, which is stable and held in view, orders beings and nonbeings, actualities and possibilities, so that realizations of the latter into the former are made to tell a coherent

[27] Recall also how *arche*, in addition to origin, means ruler.
[28] Plato, *The Republic Book IV*. Benjamin Jowett translation. http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.10.ix.html (Accessed December 21, 2014)

story, and lets deviations from that story appear exactly *as* deviations. The *eidos* of history found in the Marxian notion of progress is identical to that which gives to Piaget and Nietzsche their principles of evaluation – the realization of the maker himself *as* maker, attaining complete *self-mastery* as what he always already is. But the more basic point we might now (after learning Heidegger's manner of thinking) be able to see is how this narrative of progress is governed by a logic of *presence*, where the meaning of differentiation is constantly juxtaposed against an ideal form which exists *ahead* of the creative act and which serves as its meaning-bestowing measure. When everything becomes a value (by being apprehended only in light bestowed by a present highest value) then everything is juxtaposable, and all difference has thus already been made into differences in terms of something which is the Same. This sameness is a ground which fixates beings as available for man in relation to a goal, which in Marxian thinking on the logic of history is the form of Man *as* the creator of worlds.

Again, already from the very architecture of these structures there are implications to be read. As Olwig's discussion goes on to demonstrate, when the movements of change are dictated by the beat of progress, then the "place" of creation becomes a marching ground where the past is always continuously nihilated so to make space for the New (Olwig 2002: 24). This is on ample display not least in Marx:

> [I]n general, the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favor of free trade. (Marx 1848)

The specific endorsement must be understood in context, and what is significant here is merely how it is framed by a general understanding of what "progress" must mean. A good example how the same logic might translate into a progressive politics of *ecology* is found in the works of contemporary Marxist philosopher Slavoj Žižek. Mocking notions of the finitudes of human knowledge as precursor of "conservative" attitudes of respect for the earth, Žižek insists that natural history is primarily a history of destruction, wherefore we must take it upon ourselves to "intervene into the Earth ecology even more forcefully" (Žižek 2007). On one level, this argument is a perfectly legitimate critique of "nature" as a domain of balance now being disturbed by external human interference. But in this case, what happens to "nature" is in effect its subsumption to the modern logic of progress. Natural history becomes a process of *destruction* of what it leaves behind; a threat to the possibility of our lives. Faced

with such danger of everything external, the human task is to stage an assault on nature's chaos so to order it in conformity with our needs, and to strive towards the ideal where we have finally realized ourselves as the one "outside" that past which we are born from. And there we would finally realize ourselves as the *masters* with the power to create new forms of life, as Žižek says, "from scratch" (ibid.).

These are narratives which have now been read back to the structure they rely on, where my argument is that, in approaching them with Heidegger, this common structure can be understood as responsible for critical similarities. Now, while Heidegger did indeed insist that we need to "accept" what metaphysics bring, this is not to say that he in any way *endorsed* what he described. So then, what could Heidegger then possibly imagine as an alternative way of being? This is the question which leads the next section on, going through a contrast between value and *worth*, which then helps to make intelligible how Heidegger could ascribe such intense importance to *poetry*.

## 4.6. Gelassenheit

> Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being (Heidegger 1993a: 245).

*

In the preceding section I have connected technology with mastery and control, and both these to metaphysics and presence. There, we have learned what Heidegger holds are the implications of the conditions for Graeber's value theory. But then, what other *ways* might there be? In this section I turn to the hints offered by Heidegger about ways of being beyond all metaphysical epochs. "Poetry" holds the clue for how we can embark upon them. Why poetry? Because it preserves absence against the onslaught of presence. And exactly what this means is to be made clear in this section.

To introduce these issues, we might as well start with that which Heidegger actually proposes as the wholly *other* than production – something realized in the comportment he calls *Gelassenheit* (e.g. Heidegger 1966: 54). This term, usually translated as "releasement" or "detachment", is taken directly from the works of the 13$^{th}$ century German mystic Meister Eckhart. In regards directly to Eckhart's use, Reiner Schürmann interprets the meaning of the concept as being, in the first instance, "the attitude of a human who no longer regards objects and events according to their usefulness, but who accepts them in their autonomy" (Eckhart 2001: 15-16). But what does that mean? In Heidegger's case, this can be made more clear by

attending to a discussion he conducts in a book that has the very title ask *What is Called Thinking* (1968). The particular discussion I want to draw attention to is about the possibilities for "thinking" to relate to a specific thing, namely a tree: "[W]hile science records the brain currents", Heidegger asks, "what becomes of the tree in bloom?" (Heidegger 1968: 42). The "science" here, also speaks of any metaphysical thinking. In setting upon the meeting by reducing the tree to a measurable system, the actual meeting with the tree becomes explained on basis of something which (it is so easy to forget) actually presupposes that there is an initial meeting at all. This forgotten dimension is what Heidegger elects to pursue, asserting that what "matters first and foremost, and finally, is not to drop the tree in bloom, but for once let it stand where it stands. Why do we say 'finally'? Because to this day, thought has never let the tree stand where it stands" (ibid. 44).

*Gelassenheit* names a comportment where thinking would let the tree stand where it stands, and this is achieved through some kind of "releasement". But how? Interestingly enough, all this comes together around a problem where Heidegger himself makes recourse to the concept of value. We already found how he considered the completion of metaphysics in Nietzsche to result in a "metaphysics of value" (see above, section 4.5). What we then find Heidegger doing is to make a peculiar contrast between these values and the apparent synonym of "worth". As Heidegger puts it in the *Letter on Humanism:* "To think against 'values' is not to maintain that everything interpreted as 'a value' – 'culture,' 'art,' 'science,' 'human dignity,' 'world,' and 'God' - is valueless. Rather, it is important finally to realize that precisely through the characterization of something as 'a value' what is so valued is robbed of its worth" (Heidegger 1993a: 251).[29] This distinction – values against worth – interjects a difference between what is otherwise often treated as synonymous, which for Heidegger also parallels the difference between what *is* as belonging to the current epoch, and what might still be. But what might it mean? At one point, in his essay on Nietzsche, Heidegger states clearly what he believes it means to be "a value":

> The essence of value lies in its being a point-of-view. Value means that upon which the eye is fixed. Value means that which is in view for a seeing that aims at something or that, as we say,

[29] Such "thinking against values" is something Heidegger had initiated already in the earliest lecture course which has been published, delivered in 1919. In this lecture course Heidegger stages a confrontation with the generation of German philosophers immediately preceding his own, and in particular focus is his own former thesis adviser Heinrich Rickert. Rickert is here subjected to the exact accusation which Heidegger later levels towards Nietzsche – that he has constructed a "philosophy of value" (Heidegger 2008: 146).

> reckons upon something and therewith must reckon with something else. Value stands in intimate relation to a so-much, to quantity and number (Heidegger 1977: 71).

First we have the quote referring to "quantity", which is an element present also in Graeber's theory as that which is assumed to be required for a choice to be made in face of several options. But more to the point, "values", as Heidegger uses the concept here, are kept in view. In the line of the seeing which keeps them in view, beings are *for* that something. This would let the tree be measured against other beings in terms of how useful it is for realizing the given purpose, which the eye is fixed on. And this then creates expectations on it, holding it from appearing as it is in itself, in pursuit of paths of its own. What is kept in view is again of course determined by the highest "model", which the preceding section (4.5) dealt with at greater length. Use *is* a reference to a value. Meeting a tree with one's eyes turned to a value beyond it, the tree would appear in its usefulness, and what the completion of metaphysics thus implies is a state where everything appears only as such usefulness.

By contrast, a "worth" does not order itself in line with the expectations posited by any "why", and does not order itself in accordance with any *arche.* The "worth" of a thing answers to no "why", and here we can return to the words of the original thinker of *Gelassenheit:*

> If a man asked life for a thousand years, 'Why do you live?' if it could answer it would only say, 'I live because I live.' That is because life lives from its own ground, and gushes forth from its own. Therefore it lives without Why, because it lives for itself. And so, if you were to ask a genuine man who acted from his own ground, 'Why do you act?' if he were to answer properly he would simply say, 'I act because I act.' (Eckhart 2009: 110).

In not confronting the tree in bloom with a "why", it is left standing. But if this is the meaning of *Gelassenheit,* then how are we to be led to it? Through something called "poetry", and its relation to *things*. We can begin to make sense of this sentiment by taking note of an anecdote regarding how two friends, both going by the name Friedrich, reacted to the Alps: Where one saw glory and divine life, the other saw a wasteland which bored him (Harries 1999: 161). The second Friedrich of this story is Friedrich Hegel, whose thinking shaped not only Marx, but all subsequent philosophy of history and genesis. The first Friedrich is Friedrich Hölderlin, a poet who died alone and forgotten. His work has nevertheless later had an impact in many places. A decisive case is that of Heidegger's thinking, where Hölderlin's poetry is elevated almost to prophesy of the future age to come, beyond metaphysics. So, what then about these different ways of seeing the Alps? According to Harries the crucial element of the contrast is how it juxtaposes a philosopher and a poet, whereby Heidegger's celebration of

Hölderlin can be read as a challenge to philosophy as a whole (ibid. 148). And considering how Heidegger locates the heart of metaphysics in a certain mode of language, this is far less unexpected than it might otherwise have been. But what does poetry have to do with the kind of "divine life" which Harries maintains that Hölderlin saw? To return to the perspectives on the Alps, a "wasteland" is good for nothing, and in being useless in such a manner it has no value. Presumably, the mountains would become such when their appearance is already initially confronted with the demand to facilitate a function in the teleological unfolding history. A seeing which apprehends divine life, by contrast, doesn't demand of the mountains that they should useful in any way at all.

"The useless has its own greatness and determining power since it does not let anything be made out of it. In this manner, useless is the sense of things" (Heidegger 1998: 131). But what "sense" and what "things"? Here it is crucial to recall how a "thing" is not an object. As Heidegger maintained, "[o]nly when man becomes the subject do non-human beings become objects." (Heidegger 1992: 165). An "object" is for Heidegger a thing of "nature", bound in cause-effect relations and with no worth unless given to it by the subject. In essence, an "object" is valuable only insofar as it is useful for the realization of some *other* value. The "sense" of *things*, by contrast, is here taken to imply a certain absence: They are use-less, without use. The Alps are a thing, and so is the tree in bloom. "Poetic" language reveals them and brings them into language, and can also do so while not revealing them *as* usefulness (such as, for instance, "productive potential"). Now, the word "*thing"* is established on basis of an etymology going back to it as a *gathering.* That is, "thing" in the sense of that which Olwig showed how the sovereign removed itself from in the 16th century. As we found above, for Heidegger that detachment is not only about the political establishment of sovereigns and subjects but also, fully parallel, of subjects and objects. And in contrast to objects, as Heidegger saw it, an actual thing *is* the *thinging* which gathers earth and sky, divinities and mortals (Heidegger 2001: 171-172). And with these divinities we can really begin reconnecting this discussion to the difference between the poet and the philosopher, and their respective ways of relating to the mountain. One saw holy life and the other not. There is no need to think this sentiment theologically, and what is significant (for now) about these "gods" is what Heidegger lets them do - which is to beckon (see ibid. 176). [30] It is enough to

[30] It should be noted, however, that when Heidegger in the *Contributions to Philosophy* discusses his Last God, this is one he hold so be "The totally other over against gods who have been, especially over against the Christian God" (Heidegger 1999: 283). This Christian God would, for Heidegger, be the God of metaphysics –

think them *as* such beckoning, which calls us to be gathered to the *thing.* It is in thinking the ability of that call to do so that (I believe) sets the sense in which we ought to understand Heidegger's famous assertion in the *Der Spiegel* interview of 1966, that "only a god can still save us" (Heidegger 2010[1981]: 57).

So, how would "a god" do so? First, this emphasizes that this event would not wholly be contingent on a willful act by ourselves. In a sense, the very "saving" is rather dependent on our ability to at all approach being as *not* being for ourselves. And already here poetry becomes crucial, since the essence of poetry is taken to entail such a way of being. And how it does so is something we can see by finally establishing the relation of poetry with the "gods". Gods are holy, and as Anna Strhan points out, "Holy" more literally means "set apart" (Strhan 2011: 931). What poetry can do is to *speak the holy,* whereby the poet then "names what is Other" (ibid.). In bringing the holy into language, the poet would thus speak what is Other, and speak the other *as* other. Here, the crucial point is that the "why" would not only be absent, but that it is this *absence* which originally lets the holy thing be. All this then turns out to go back to the question of *presence,* which is at the heart of metaphysics. To see the significance of this, we need to recall what was discussed in section 4.4: First, how the otherness of a word and thing is the space where these two can meet, and where "nonbeing" can occur; second, the principle of sameness which Heidegger finds in Parmenides, where every "A" is the *same* as itself. In the latter case, the *logos* would always subsume the space of otherness to something present, which always remains the same as it is in itself. But "otherness" in itself *is* not this or that something, for in itself it is only "other" – its full meaning is absent from language. What poetry does is to operate *without* the need to ground an identity. When it says that X *is* Y, this is not to fixate the former. Rather, it makes them both for the very first time stand forth as beings, which needs to happen before one is made the ground of the other.

Instead of measuring brain currents, the space of poesy is where the tree in bloom stands forth for the very first time. And only by being harbored in its *absence* is it left standing. What does that mean? Simply that what it "is" is not dissected into something present and wholly intelligible and measurable. What it really *is* escapes the same *logos* which reveal it. But then it also can't be predicted and controlled, which is what makes this so foreign to all metaphysical thinking. At the *thing,* the gods are present *as* their absence. When they are

---

the highest Being and highest value. For the best discussion of the heritage of Heidegger's thinking in distinctly religious traditions, see Crowe (2007).

*merely* absent, then things become objects which can (in principle) be made wholly present as what they are and could possibly become. In the case of the Alps, even these great mountains would then be turned into objects composed of interacting and computable relations. As a *thing,* however, the mountains are reserved a certain *autonomy* from knowledge, which thinking as "poetry" can nevertheless relate to in its autonomy. Now not expecting to master it for the thinking organisms own purposes, as the mountains appear in the mode of "holiness", their autonomy makes them something which cannot be counted with or made to answer any concrete "Why". This is what we found in the *Gelassenheit* of Eckhart, where the contrast is to that which Heidegger calls "value". In always accosting every absence with the question *why,* there metaphysics and technology always expect a *something* from the absence. Something is "valuable" always only for a *reason.* What it means to say that the completion of metaphysics has turned everything into a "value" is that this completion has abolished all absences and that all Being is made "something-s" which can be expected to be appropriated for Man's purposes. And, to put the above as briefly as can be, *poetry* can still avoid this exactly in not needing any "why" or purpose for itself. It is in thus being (as Heidegger liked to paraphrase Rilke) "a breath *for nothing"* (Heidegger 2001: 137, emphasis added), that the very *uselessness* of poesy makes it capable of speaking the sense of *things*.

Now, how would that "save" us? First it would seem that the above lacks any great promise for letting us do anything at all. In abandoning the grounds and principles which every "why" leads to, this thinking cannot tell us *why* we should do this thing or the other. Neither is it really capable of "explaining" anything, since it brings us to a fleeting space of otherness without such grounds. But none of this should be interpreted as advocating a mere passivity in the communion of things. Rather, it displays the possibility of a way of being wholly different from than that of self-assertive pursuit. This is a way of being which would let us be in touch with our world and to respond to whatever it demands from us. To the extent that it's valid to interpret Heidegger's poetic thinking in terms of Ingold's contrast between face-to-face movements and those passing side-by-side, we would find here the possibility of what the latter calls *correspondence* – not in the conventional sense of correspondence theories of truth, but where "[t]o correspond with the world, in short, is not to describe it, or to represent it, but to *answer* to it" (Ingold 2013: 108). Such "answering" made on our part *requires* the ability to listen to calls from something other, and if the correspondence is to be maintained then our answer to the *autonomy* of that which calls cannot be to try to abolish its independence.

What might the above mean more concretely for ways of continuously engaging with the world? This can only really be said in one case from another, which is a flexibility which exactly this de-universalization of call and response permits. But a good general clue can be taken from John Milbank's discussion of the ugliness of a flyover, which embodies those ways of engagement which are dominant today. Citing Heidegger's insights, Milbank makes a contrast where "the true ornamental bridge primordially discloses to us the banks of the river […] the flyover […] declares that it wishes the river was not there, and therefore declares also that it regards itself as an unfortunate necessity. All mere *techne* tends to view itself only as overcoming restrictions, and therefore detests its own exigency and is thoroughly reactive" (Milbank 2003: 202). If *techne* is thought, as in this thesis, as a mode of knowing characterized by the confrontations of face-to-face meetings, then it is wholly proper to it that when it comes up to a river then the river appears only as an obstacle which must (through the expenditure of willful effort) be overcome. In the nihilism of such overcoming, the annihilation even of the self becomes the true (if unachievable) value.

In a seemingly paradoxical fashion, Heidegger's thinking "for nothing" would overcome the nihilism that demands for "something" tends to lead to. Instead it affirms the autonomy of things, and even of life itself. And where the very meaning of what it means to "think" today has been shaped by metaphysics, there Heidegger insists on going back to a word with the same origin – *thanking*: "In joy, thinking becomes a gracious thanking" (Heidegger 1968: 49). "Thanking" responds to a gift, and the gift which here calls for a response is Being itself. This does not mean that there is a giver. Instead, what is implied is a mode of being with characteristics different from metaphysical: Thanking is aware of itself as a response, and thereby preserves the autonomy of mutuality. And this autonomy is not only for the thing, but like in the case of a gift leaves free a space for return in voluntary fashion. This entails a degree of trust in the giving, as opposed to the suspicion characterizing metaphysics which would demand strict rules and protocols for how to proceed. But without such suspicion, we might ourselves be free from the hidden impulse of mastery. And that would open for an existence which, despite being without "value", would not be without a worth of its own. For

> Joyful things, too, and beautiful things and gracious things give us food for thought […] if only we do not reject the gift by regarding everything that is joyful, beautiful and gracious as the kind of things that should be left to feeling and experience and kept out of the winds of thought (Heidegger 1968: 31).

This is an optimistic sentiment, which I let lead to the conclusion of the present section due to its contrast with the existential gloom which is all too often associated with Heidegger. During the course of the section, I have outlined his notion of a way of life which is different from that which could be explained by a value theory. Or any other theory whatsoever, since it remains unbound by any unifying principle. But instead of explanations, we would have a sense for a possibility of life which, in contrast to where the metaphysical sovereign establishes future possibilities, lets the "god's" holy absence preserve the autonomy of *things*. There, through our participation, another future can be wrought in terms which are not up to "ourselves" to decide, but which exactly therefore might be all the more worthwhile.

To really conclude this section, we can attend to how this other way of being can be read in what is also the concluding statement of all Heidegger's thinking. This is found in his hometown Meßkirch – as the single star which decorates his grave. The symbol of metaphysics was from Plato onwards always the sun, in the light of which every being is led back to the One *arche* of God, Truth, Subject or Man. Heidegger's star by contrast, as his friend Otto Pöggeler interprets it (Pöggeler 1987: 62), is a light which preserves the same darkness which brings it into view. Its shining is granted our eyes only by the great absence which surrounds it. In how its very being preserves that absence, Heidegger's thinking avoids the Imperialism of metaphysics and should be understood, as Reiner Schürmann argues, as literally *an-archic* (Schürmann 1978: 367). By preserving the darkness, the star preserves also the manifold other lights of the sky above and does not abolish them with its own glare. No self-identical figure is here posited as containing the whole system of relational differences – whether Man or God – and this thinking does then not proceed in direction of the *arche* or origin. This is a thinking which progresses along forest paths leading nowhere – the *Holzwege* of Heidegger – and refuses to confine itself within the wall which surrounds the territory of any sovereign.

## 4.7 Leaving Heidegger

> The *Geschick* of being, a child that plays, shifting the pawns: the royalty of a child – that means, the ἀρχή, that which governs by instituting grounds, the being of beings. The *Geschick* of being: a child that plays.
>
> In addition, there are also great children. By the gentleness of its play, the greatest royal child is that mystery of the play in which humans are engaged throughout their life, that play in which their essence is at stake.
>
> Why does it play, the great child of the world-play Heraclitus brought into view in the αἰών? It plays, because it plays.

> The "because" withers away in the play. The play is without "why." It plays since it plays. It simply remains a play: the most elevated and the most profound. (Heidegger 1991: 113).[31]

We arrived to Heidegger's work carrying a concern with possible implications of the foundations for the theoretical account of "values" which Graeber provides: If the value theory is true, does it still allow us the space to respond to that which is not "ourselves" and, if not, is there any possibility for us to answer "what next" according to a logic other than (collective) self-assertion? I have now cleared a path through the writings of Heidegger in order to tell what he would answer about the case of Graeber, and why he would answer as he does. The first two sections after the introduction (4.2 and 4.3) are dedicated to first knotting Graeber and Heidegger firmly together, before gradually following where the tug of Heidegger's thinking bring his readers. There I show how Heidegger in his later thinking (always informed by his early) reads the world through a history of Being revealed most fully through subsequent attempts of "metaphysics" to stabilize Being as a whole in intelligible constellations. The following section (4.4) then turns to the origins of the whole metaphysical project in order to discern the basic architecture of its structure, finding there a primacy of presence. "Presence" here entails that this being is thought as being identical with *itself,* and all beings are made intelligible always in relation to something which remains stable. For Heidegger, the condition for Graeber's value theory to be true rests on a primacy of the figure of Man, which is an instance of the elevation of a being to the Being of beings, and at least according to Heidegger this is what "Man" was for Marx. Section 4.5 then leads towards the *implications* of the completion of metaphysics with which Heidegger identifies both Marx and Nietzsche. These implications are strikingly similar to what is found explicitly in Piaget, and are at least hinted at in the works of both Turner and Marx. And, since these implications are here revealed not as accidental but as belonging to the common foundations of their thinking in metaphysics, Heidegger's answer to the question whether the same would be the case for the humans whose actions are explainable by Graeber's value theory is a resounding "Yes". Section 4.6. then tells us what it would take for things to be otherwise.

To make this more clear, note how Graeber's value theory, as seen in particular with Scarry, depends on a primacy of Man. With Heidegger, this would be read as "Man" having been made the *arche* of beings, which are all made intelligible in reference back to this primordial truth. For instance, a move (which is in no way exclusive) is the manner which it allows Graeber to make sense of human difference by reference to something which is common to

[31] ἀρχή is *arche;* αἰών is aeon, epoch.

all, and which remains what it is in all cases. As for Heidegger, this would require both the great chasm between Beings and beings as well as the confrontation of that difference with a need to stabilize it. If we adhere to Heidegger's thinking, we would need to conclude that Graeber's value theory cannot escape a logic of endless self-assertive expansion. In ordinary cases, the "value theory" explains why values are what they are, and through these values explains how the question "what next" is answered. But the principle of creating *new* values is rendered interior and unresponsive to any genuine otherness, since such otherness has already been abolished and subsumed to the present *arche*.

This does not mean that Heidegger would hold Graeber's theory to be wrong. Instead, he would argue that its truth belongs to exactly those conditions which are today leveling the entire earth, and that it truthfully describes a being which is unable to transcend this situation, as long as it really remains something which the theory can explain. Again, the argument whether we *should* adhere to Heidegger's thinking must be sought elsewhere than in this thesis. Nonetheless, the discussion above shows the *possibility* of a knot which would not discard Graeber's conclusions but rather preserve them and carry them beyond their own limits. So, what would Heidegger then offer beyond them? The crucial element missing is the ability to recognize the "worth" of that which is neither by nor for any "us". Rather than the self-mastery which Graeber cherishes, this "us" must itself be put at stake in a play not up to ourselves. The clash between these perspectives becomes especially apparent in reference to the "gods". But even here this contrast needs not be absolute. Recall again that the event where the genuinely new happens is one which Graeber maintains escapes the grasp of his own theory (see section 3.6). Maybe, if one could only allow for the ability of "Man" to arrive at that moment of re-defining himself *without* holding the moment's creative power to really be "his own", then the authentic meeting of a *thing* could nevertheless take place. If we can only accept that the "next" of that moment (to invoke Hägerstrand) ought to be answered in a manner not decided by "ourselves", and that the actions then taken (which is what "value" is taken to be) are never really "our own", then a space of our "ownness" can still be preserved even as Heidegger teaches us the importance of really *listening* to what is truly not by or for ourselves.

If so, then how well does any of this connect back to the distant starting point of this thesis – the use of "value" in Hornborg's discussion of unequal exchange? How strained has the connection now become? Recall how the concern there was with the impact of ideas like value on natural processes. And while both Heidegger and Hornborg share a concern with

criticizing the apparent neutrality of "technology", their critiques are very different. Where Hornborg relies on describing an inequitable transfer of real "productive potential" beyond appearances, Heidegger confronts technological thinking as that which makes beings appear as productive potential to begin with. At the same time, it is obvious that Hornborg in no way *embraces* the processes he strives to describe non-normatively. And if we turn to some of his writings where he discusses not value or unequal exchange directly, but rather something which resists that whole system, then we suddenly find a great resonance where Hornborg maintains that "[t]urning a mountain into gravel is facilitated by *first* breaking it down conceptually" (Hornborg 2005: 204. Emphasis added).

The statement belongs to a discussion of Mi'kmaq resistance to the undoing of a particular mountain, where Hornborg contrast one language speaking of "valued ecosystem components" (ibid. 203) and another which invokes the *sanctity* of the mountain. It is the second which belongs to the Mi'kmaq activists, and only this one is truly capable of resisting the actual razing of the mountain which so easily follows its conceptual undoing. As I read this situation with Heidegger, this stands forth as a contrast between one language which requires a *use* for the mountain, which could be measured against other possible uses. In essence, the mountain then becomes a "value" in Heidegger's sense. And, still reading with Heidegger, the contrast is towards a language which can preserve the mountain exactly by relating to it as something which should not be expected to be measurably "useful" – an invocation of sanctity which is at least "experientially real" (ibid. 198). This whole contrast is akin to the one made above between Hegel and Hölderlin (see section 4.6). Even if it would be presuming too much to claim that the activists experienced their mountain just like Hölderlin experienced his, at least the regime which both experiences stand *against* would be the same in both cases. And all this shows a space for a mutually rewarding interchange of Heidegger's and Hornborg's thinking. For instance, where Heidegger might tell us much about the internal structures of ways of being and thinking, Hornborg informs us how these interlock and take shape within such global structures of inequality and power to which Heidegger paid scant attention.

As a final point here, what might the task of human ecology itself become if it names the space where these three strands of thinking meet? While it would still be an enterprise of knowledge, the motion the last part of this thesis enacted - from metaphysics to poetry – can also be seen as moving from a concern with knowledge of what *is*, to the opening towards what *can be*. Could this poetical thinking, which we have here only scratched the surface of,

still be considered Human Ecology? Perhaps it could. And it has recently been pointed out that, in being the *logos* of the *oikos,* where the latter means house or place of dwelling, the word *ecology* may itself be read as "the story of home" (Siewers 2011: 108). This is a wholly retroactive interpretation,[32] which would nevertheless have the advantage of emphasizing how our speaking and thinking *about* the world takes place *in* the world as part of its transformation of itself. And as "poetic", this is a story which would simultaneously answer and bring forth possibilities of truth, instead of fixating it into the "correct" stasis of a given constellation.

Thinking the world as continuous transformation then, in the spirit of how Heidegger continues the quote which introduces this concluding section, this would align this sort of Human Ecology with what is perhaps the most crucial task for our species today. For as Heidegger continues, "*[t]he question remains whether and how we, hearing the movements of this play, play along and accommodate ourselves to the play*" (Heidegger 1991: 113. Emphasis added). Our dwelling in the world takes place through the stories which we enact. The possibility of changing such stories is what Graeber seized upon, but how do we really play *well*? If it should aspire to help us do so, Human Ecology needs to remain steadfast in its role of responding to that which is *more* than human. And doing so would entail refraining from imagining the site where its own story is told as belonging to a culture set over against an objective nature. It would find the space for conducting its telling at the *thing*, rather than against it. The latter would be the speaking which *confronts* beings and forces them into the light of Truth where their dance can be controlled; the former the poetic speaking of Heidegger, which an-archically moves under the starry sky beyond the Sun of Plato's State. And where Heidegger's night sky provides no ready-made pattern for mortals to behold, journeying "without why" lets our path be gathered as participants at the *things* where the world itself unfolds. By learning to *listen* we find ourselves also answering within rhythms of purpose rather than purposive rhythms, moving ever onwards together, without any score set down ahead.

# 5. Leaving this Thesis

> Meno: How will you look for it, Socrates, when you do not know at all what it is? How will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If you should meet with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you did not know?

[32] "Ecology" is a neology coined in 1866 by Ernst Haeckel

> Socrates: I know what you want to say, Meno. Do you realize what a debater's argument you are bringing up, that a man cannot search either for what he knows or for what he does not know? He cannot search for what he knows – since he knows it, there is no need to search – nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for.
>
> Meno: Does that argument not seem sound to you, Socrates?
>
> Socrates: Not to me. (Plato, *Meno* 80d-81a)[33]

Here the story of our pursuit of what "values" might mean at the place we came upon it is at an end, and it is time to take our bearings at the place where it has brought us. We arrived here by finding a trace called value, which was something we did not know what it was. In knowing that we did not know, we embarked on a *method* which traversed three distinct stories related to what "value" might have been at the place where the initial trace was left, so to gather these stories together into the open of this *thesis.* Having gone the long route of reading towards the elements in each domain of thought still left unaccounted for in the writings of each of its caretakers, we became cognizant of how these elements are conditions of possibility for what might take place within the worlds in which they describe something. From Hornborg, values led us to the world of Man's purposes. There, we found Graeber collecting those purposes back to Man himself. But then, when the being of values seemed confined in a self-recursive structure, the question of the Being of that very structure which stabilizes Man and purposes led to Heidegger's deconstruction of *its* conditions.

What have we gained from this? First of all, three original interpretations of each authors writings. And this then lets us tell something about what would happen if our interlocutors were gathered to a *thing* and made to lay verdict on a question, such as (say) the value of a tree. Now, we cannot speak for the actual *persons*, but taken simply as voices for the interpretations of their texts set out above, each would add something like this:[34]

> *Hornborg*: Would hold the "value" to be cultural and therefore arbitrary. On the far side of culture stands nature, and as a *natural* thing then what matters about the tree is that which can be measured and quantified objectively. Different measures may be used for quantification, but these all fall back into being some refraction of a "productive potential" – which can be demonstrated to be systematically distorted by the description of "price". But *as* such productive potential, the tree

[33] Plato 1997. *Meno*. transl. by G.M.A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works, edited, with introduction and notes, by John M.* Cooper Indianapolis: Hackett, 870-897.

[34] As for the *persons* behind these names, it would be perfectly reasonable for them to answer differently than below. As we saw in especially with Hornborg, what is implicitly advocated is a situation where that which is described by the specific model discussed in this thesis would no longer exists. This would not contradict the argument here, which simply reads the implications from *particular* logics employed by the authors for particular purposes.

would matter only from the perspective of the furnace which burns it in the productive transformation of the world.

*Graeber*: Would shift the question to the other side of the furnace, insisting that the values according to which the potential is transformed into actuality is not arbitrary at all. Value is the face of a substance which is human labor, and values thus inheres in relations between human beings as the meaning *of* their productive activity. As for the tree itself, it would then only really receive a value at the point where it begins a transformation to meet a human need – such as being turned into a chair for a person to sit on.

*Heidegger:* Would complain how both his interlocutors already accept that the tree has value only as something given to it, and that this giving is accorded only to the extent that it is useful for production. To the extent that "value" speaks only of usefulness, then it is itself the problem since it would only accrue to the tree when it is cut down to serve raw material for production. Thus, this "value" will never be able to let the tree stand where it stands. Prompted to explain what he means by "production", Heidegger presents a story so inclusive that it would mean any such structure where "uses" are coordinated in relation to a highest reason. And then arguing that such structures are always unable to finally stabilize themselves, Heidegger insists on the possibility of a path beyond *any* such values, going along completely alternative thinking which abandons the emphasis on the activity of production in favor of the importance of *not* "producing" might have.

At each stage, another implication for the *polis* is added: Hornborg would let us speak of *equity* and absolute, nonnegotiable limits to human possibilities in the world; Graeber would let us speak more directly of the *freedom* entailed in our capacity to consciously create new worlds and pursue other values; Heidegger would, finally, emphasize the freedom *not* to "pursue" at all, and so open for a *politics of uselessness:* For as long as we keep thinking in terms dictated by production, then we will still be compelled to approach beings (including ourselves) in terms of what they can *do.* What then happens when we, as is inevitable, come up to beings which simply do nothing for us? Where dominant forms of thinking would compel us to transform its way of being into something useful, Heidegger's thinking leads us towards realizing ourselves as humans in our ability *not* to do, which would free us to a limit which we are today constantly compelled to override.

To make this very clear, with the risk of repeating myself. When taken together and turned back towards the transcendent reality which this thesis has so far avoided confronting, then Graeber and Hornborg might together clear a space for a thorough critique of the world as it is. There, they might come together in the following manner: With Hornborg's work, we find a relation between what he calls extractive economies and productive ones. Value has the function of mediating this relation, and to serve the condition of possibility for the material flows which mutually constitute both its ends. "Extraction" would be the activity of rendering

beings available *as* that which they are already described as, insofar as they have already been described by the sign of money. What his model then demonstrates is how the sign is structured so to let the productive economy maintain the viability of its claim on the materials. But then still, the affective component which would explain *why* the flow is actually enacted by *either* side remains a riddle. But having noted that when a tree is described by the sign of money, it is actually re-presented only by what is a measure for human desire, then the question of value leads to Graeber's attempts to understand the latter. The money-sign has an effect exclusively on humans, and can thus only function by mediating a human desire towards what another human may do. What the sign mediates are calls and responses for human activity to take on certain forms, and it is towards such forms that desires are directed as far as part of the economy. And those desires can be intentionally rewritten. Where in Hornborg's case we find value in context of a question of equity, it is here transformed to a question of *freedom* and our ability to give the world we inhabit a different form than it currently has. A more equitable one, for instance.

But the "why" we would find with Graeber relates back to the desires of the one in possession of the values – "Man" – whereby the nature of that figure and its needs is already given, and his orientation to the world then implicitly accepted as taking place through self-affirmation against an intrinsically resistant environment. Heidegger's thinking does not consist in any next step "up" in continuance with the one from Hornborg to Graeber, but rather steps *below* so to undermine the previous constellation by pointing to how the very problems that both Graeber and Hornborg want to overcome belongs within the domain which also provides the conditions of possibility of their respective models: In both the argument towards freedom and that towards equity, beings have already been determined as a certain sort of *potential.* This potential initiates a reference towards production, which the thing will be a mere resource for. And to the extent that production answers to a human need, once the need has been divorced from anything other than a certain self-recursive "human desire", then these humans would remain committed to a usefulness for the self-amplification of man – a self-amplification whose twofold requirements of securing and stabilizing define the Overman, where Heidegger sees the history of the metaphysical tradition to have completed itself. But it *is* possible to be in wholly other ways.

Without claiming that any of this is finally exhaustive of either of the authors gathered here, or even less of the question of values, this is still the story which this thesis has made the three authors tell about this question together. The possibilities occurring along *this* path have been

thoroughly examined, and the possibility of such a path demonstrated. And through following it, it has been shown here how this path can bring three stories together in formulating a position on some of the most burning questions facing our world today. So then, to return again to Hägerstrand's formulation – what do we do *next?* Each part of the thesis above ended with this question, and rather than breaking that pattern here, I use the last paragraphs of this thesis to suggest where all of the above might find its greatest relevance.

I believe that attending to certain limits of Heidegger's thinking is significant here – namely his ethnocentrism. When he writes his "history of Being" by tracing it back to a structure first set out by Plato, it is obvious that there is no simple way in which this "history" can be the determinative history of Strathern's women on Papua New Guinea. This is a limit which Heidegger himself recognizes, particularly in discussions with his many Asian friends and colleagues (e.g. Heidegger 1971).[35] What Heidegger does is entirely to read and deconstruct a certain history from the *inside*. But seen *as* something with a limit, the question arises: where are its borders located? And I propose an answer here which is directly related to the general question of value (rather than the specific one I've discussed in this thesis), which would also suggest where the results of the story above might be the most helpful for further exploration of what is really at stake within the domain constituted by these limits.

The proposition I suggest here emerges if we think back to the Plato (where the origins of metaphysics are supposed to be located) and follow Deleuze's (1983) example in how to read the very structures of the platonic dialogues towards a certain underlying motivation: These dialogues tell of a series of successive claimants to the title of being something, where these claims are then measured each one in their turn against an original myth. This myth is told at the beginning of the dialogue and serves as a measure for assessing whether the claim is made on behalf of something which resembles the Idea under discussion in substance or only in appearance. With the whole method thus about distinguishing good copies from bad ones, the underlying motive appears structurally analogous to what one might expect in regards to the products of a new method for inscribing signs which was coming to prominence at the time: *coinage*.

If we turn directly to this phenomenon, we find that coinage was invented not only at the same time as philosophy, but in the very city (Miletus) which was at the time becoming the

[35] Some of this is also at display in the following interview, which also touches on many of the topics discussed in this thesis: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8HR4RXxZw8

world's first monetized society.[36] And, as classicist Richard Seaford argues, no other change in Greek society is chronologically correlated to "the advent of the idea of the universe as an *intelligible order* subject to the *uniformity* of *impersonal* power. More specifically […] the counter-intuitive idea of a single substance underlying the plurality of things manifest to the senses" (Seaford 2004: 175. Emphasis in original). This would be the *archic* structures of what Heidegger calls onto-theology. And while the connection to coinage is complex, Seaford's argument about philosophy is that only with its invention did the people of that place and time come face to face with an entity which distinguishes the pure sign of value from the actual metal on which it is stamped, which then "[implies] a homogeneous ideal substance distinct from the metal in which the sign is expressed" (ibid. 137).

To return to our example of the woman on Papua New Guinea, which arrives into this thesis from Graeber but originally from his confrontation with Marilyn Strathern: It is a very interesting coincidence that many of the things which Strathern argues were absent among her interlocutors (so to through their absence undermine the assumptions of modern social science) are also the things which Seaford argues were absent in Greece before the invention of coinage. For instance, the notion of a unified subject (Seaford 2012). Without speculating any cause-effect relations, might the story of metaphysics be the unfolding story of coinage, so that *this* is what Heidegger reads from its inside and towards its ultimate conclusions? Attending to these "conclusions" makes that contention even more intriguing. For instance, in an address delivered at Glasgow in 2009, Seaford himself turns to the ancient story of king Erysichthon as being a story about the effects of money, told by people that had not yet become so accustomed to this phenomenon that its effects were simply taken for granted. The essence of the story is as follows: Once, desiring a new banqueting hall, Erysichton ordered a grove of trees cut down to supply the materials. But as the workers did so, they came upon a sacred tree protected by Demeter, and so refused to proceed. Grabbing the axe himself, Erysichthon cuts the tree down, managing to kill a nymph in the process. But then, as a result of this sacrilege, Erysichthon was cursed by an insatiable hunger which food only served to fuel. Driven to eat endlessly, the king sold all his possessions and in the end even his own daughter, until he was finally compelled to devour himself (Seaford 2009).[37]

[36] Graeber (2012: 212) points out that coinage actually emerged simultaneously also in northern China and by the Ganges. And in each case we find similar transformations in social life taking place, though the nature of these commonalities remains a mystery.

[37] Note also with Tim Ingold that the word *tekhne* (from whence comes "technology") originates in the Sanskrit terms *tasha* and *taksan* – meaning axe and carpenter (Ingold 2011: 211).

When this king decided "what to do next", he was in the exact position that Hägerstrand brought us before at the outset of this thesis. And when his axe cut down the tree he was left with wood, which called *hyle* also served the Greek word for *matter*. Insofar as both rely on a notion of "potential", the models of Hornborg and Graeber both apply only after this has already happened. But also note that it was only once the tree was no longer standing that the insatiable hunger, which is recognizable in the structure Heidegger finds in that thinking which does not let it stand, befell Erysichthon.

Pursuing this connection further, we also find an uncanny resemblance of that which Heidegger reads into technology with what already Aristotle warned against in the following terms:

> The most hated sort, and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from the natural object of it. For money was intended to be used in exchange, but not to increase at interest. And this term interest, which means the birth of money from money, is applied to the breeding of money because the offspring resembles the parent. Wherefore of an modes of getting wealth this is the most unnatural. (Aristotle *Politics,* Book I, Part X)[38]

While Heidegger maintains that the *useless* is the sense of thing, the word for "usury" itself stems from *ūsus* – to use. "Value" only exist in relation to a being comporting itself to an undetermined future. What a *debt* does is to subsume that openness to a demand inscribed in the present, deciding *for* the one so burdened what to do next – to make a return in an amplified quantity of what was given at outset. The human engagement with Nature's weave would thus be compelled to demand from it something which accords to the definite specifications of the debt. And just like Erysichthon's hunger, one finds in interest-driven economical systems like our own that the total quantity of money is always striving to catch up with the total amount of debt, which remains insatiable. Even the *manner* of trying to catch up tends to follow Erysichthon's precedent – translating the useless into the useful by integrating into the monetized economy what was held in common (then charging people for access to it). And if Heidegger is right that the very operations of quantification that characterize modern sciences stem out of a need to "make secure", then cannot this need itself spring from a demand to engage only with that which is predictable enough to guarantee the return of an investment? Might usury itself have played a role in the very constitution of "nature" as a domain of manipulable and predictable cause-effect relations set off against the domain of specifically human concerns? This possibility would need to be investigated

[38] Aristotle, *Politics.* Benjamin Jowett translation. *http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.1.one.html*

ecologically, politically, economically, anthropologically, theologically and ontologically – in essence, through the study of overflowing relations which *Human Ecology* should always aspire to remain.

This is where the story of this thesis ends. Not with a definite answer to "what next", but with a transformation of the *question* of value in such a way that it seems to focus our very historical situation around one central problematic. Heidegger's thinking doesn't provide us with any strict instructions for how to proceed, but with the "*thanking*" of his late thinking we can perhaps discern a path which would let what is most primordial also come towards us from our future: For in in contrast to a financial debt, the *gift* is an obligation which ties together and expects a return, but not in the manner of a contract which specifies the return in advance. This creates a space of freedom in being *with* rather than locked in confrontation against, wherein a site of freedom might grow in the space *inbetween*. And this space might not need to be invented by turning away from money, as much as in transforming the nature of what money actually *is*. For, as Heidegger so much loved to quote Hölderlin:

> *Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst*
>
> *Das Rettende auch*[39]

[39] Hölderlin, *Patmos.* http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/friedrich-h-262/132 (Accessed December 22, 2014); "But where danger is, grows / The saving power also" (in Heidegger 1977: 34).

# 6. Literature


Aristotle, *Politics.* transl. by Benjamin Jowett, *http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.1.one.html* (Accessed December 22, 2014)

Aristotle (1933) 1989. Metaphysics. In *Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vols.17, 18,* transl. by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd.

Bringuier, Jean-Claude. 1980. *Conversations with Jean Piaget*. Chicago: Chicago U. P.

Crowe, Benjamin. 2007. On the track of the fugitive Gods: Heidegger, Luther, Hölderlin. *Journal of Religion*, 87(2): 183-205.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1983. Plato and the Simulacrum, trans. by Rosalind Krauss *October* 27(Winter): 45-56.

Di Pippo, Alexander Ferrari. 2000. The Concept of Poiesis in Heidegger's An Introduction to Metaphysics. In *Thinking Fundamentals, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vol.* 9, ed. D. Shikiar. Vienna: Istitute for Human Sciences.

Dreyfus, Hubert L. & Sean Kelly. 2011. *All Things Shining: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age*. New York: Free Press.

Eckhart. 2001. *Wandering joy: Meister Eckhart's Mystical Philosophy*. Translation and commentary by Reiner Schürmann. Hudson, N.Y.: Lindisfarne.

——— 2009. *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*. Translated and edited by Maurice O'C. Walshe. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.

Elson, Diane. 1979. The Value Theory of Labour. In *Value*: *The representation of Labour in Capitalism*, ed. Diane Elson, 115-180. London: CSE Books.

Escobar, Arturo. 1998. Whose Knowledge, Whose Nature? Biodiversity, Conservation, and the Political Ecology of Social Movements. *Journal of Political Ecology* 5(1): 53-82.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1993. *Heidegger's ways*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Graeber, David. 2001. *Toward an anthropological theory of value: the false coin of our own dreams*. New York: Palgrave.

——— 2005. Fetishism as social creativity: or, Fetishes are gods in the process of construction. *Anthropological Theory* 5(4): 407-438.

——— 2006. Turning Modes of Production Inside Out: Or, Why Capitalism is a Transformation of Slavery. *Critique of Anthropology* 26(1): 61-85.

——— 2007. *Lost people: magic and the legacy of slavery in Madagascar*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

——— 2012. *Debt: the first 5,000 years*. New York: Melville House.

——— 2013. It is value that brings universes into being. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3(2): 219– 243.

GRAIN. 2003. Unravelling the DNA myth, *Seedling*, July 2003, GRAIN. Accessed February 25 2015. http://www.grain.org/article/entries/375-unravelling-the-dna-myth

Gregory, Chris. 2014. On religiosity and commercial life: Toward a critique of cultural economy and posthumanist value theory. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4(3): 45-68.

Haroutunian, Sophie. 1980. A Biological Conception of Knowledge: One Problematic Consequence. *Educational Theory* 30: 203–209.

——— 1985. Can Jean Piaget explain the possibility of knowledge?. *Synthese* 65(1): 65-86.

Harries, Karsten. 1999. The Epochal Threshold and the Classical Ideal: Hölderlin contra Hegel. In *The Emergence of German Idealism*, ed. M. Baur and D. Dahlstrom, 147–175. Washington, D. C.: CUA Press.

Heidegger, Martin. 1966. *Discourse on Thinking*. transl. by John M. Anderson & E. Hans Freund. New York: Harper & Row.

——— 1968. *What is Called Thinking?* transl. by Fred D. Wieck & J. Glenn Gray. New York: Harper and Row.

——— 1969. *Identity and Difference.* transl. by Joan Stambaugh. New York: Harper & Row.

——— 1971. *On the Way to Language*. transl. by Peter D. Hertz. New York: Harper and Row.

——— 1977. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. transl. by William Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row.

——— 1985. *History of the Concept* of *Time*: *Prolegomena*. transl. by T. Kiesiel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

——— 1991. *The Principle of Reason*. transl. by Reginald Lilly. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.

——— 1992. *Parmenides*. Translated by André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.

——— 1993a. *Basic writings: from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. (Rev. and expanded ed.), Edited by David F. Krell. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

——— 1993b. Om Varafrågan. In *Jünger/Heidegger: Linjen.* Lund: Propexus.

——— 1995a. *Aristotle's Metaphysics [theta] 1-3: on the essence and actuality of force*. transl. by Walter Brogan and Peter Warnek. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.

——— 1995b. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. transl. by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

——— 1996. *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*. transl. by William McNeill and Julia Davis. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

——— 1998. Traditional Language and Technological Language. transl. by Wanda Torres Gregory. *Journal of Philosophical Research* 23: 129-145.

——— 1999. *Contributions to Philosophy: (From Enowning)*. transl. by Parves Emad and Kenneth Maly. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.

——— 2000. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. transl. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

——— 2001. *Poetry, language, thought*. New York. transl. by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Perennical Classics.

——— 2003. *Plato's Sophist*. transl. by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer. Bloomington, Indiana.: Indiana Univ. Press.

——— 2004. *Four seminars*. transl. by Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul. Bloomington, Indiana:Indiana University Press.

——— 2008. *Towards the definition of philosophy.* transl. by Ted Sadler. London: Continuum.

——— 2010. *Being and time*. transl. by Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University of New York Press.

——— 2010[1981]. Only a God Can Still Save Us: The *Spiegel* Interview (1966). In *Heidegger: the man and the thinker*, ed. T. Sheehan. New Brunswick: Transaction.

Heinrich, Michael. 2012. *An introduction to the three volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Hornborg, Alf. 1998. Towards an ecological theory of unequal exchange: articulating world system theory and ecological economics. *Ecological Economics* 25(1): 127-136.

——— 2001. *The power of the machine: global inequalities of economy, technology, and environment*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

——— 2003. The unequal exchange of time and space: Toward a nonnormative ecological Theory of exploitation. *Journal of Ecological Anthropology* 7(1): 4-10.

——— 2005. Undermining Modernity: Protecting Landscapes and Meanings among the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. In *Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups*, ed. S. Paulson and L.L. Gezon, 196-216. New Brunnswick: Rutgers University Press.

——— 2009. In Defense of the Nature/Culture Distinction: Why Anthropology can Neither Dispense With, nor be Reduced to, Semiotics. *Cognitive Semiotics* 4: 92-115.

——— 2010. *Myten om maskinen: essäer om makt, modernitet och miljö*. Göteborg: Daidalos.

——— 2011. *Global Ecology and Unequal Exchange: Fetishism in a Zero-Sum World*. London: Routledge.

——— 2014a. Why Solar Panels Don't Grow on Trees: Technological Utopianism and the Uneasy Relationship Between Marxism and Ecological Economics. In *Green utopianism: perspectives, politics and micro-practices*, ed. K. Bradley & J. Hedrén, 76-97. New York: Routledge.

——— 2014b. Technology as Fetish: Marx, Latour, and the Cultural Foundations of Capitalism. *Theory, Culture & Society*. 31(4): 119-140.

Hägerstrand, Torsten. 1976. Geography and the Study of Interaction between Nature and Society. *Geoforum* 7: 329–334.

Hölderlin, *Patmos.* http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/friedrich-h-262/132 (Accessed December 22, 2014).

Ingold, Tim. 2011. *Being alive: essays on movement, knowledge and description*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

——— 2013. *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. London: Routledge.

Jorgenson, Andrew K. & James Rice. 2007. Uneven ecological exchange and consumption-based environmental impacts: a cross-national investigation. In *Rethinking environmental history: world-system history and global environmental change*, ed. A. Hornborg, J.R. McNeill, J. Martinez-Alier, 273-288. Lanham, Md.: Altamira.

Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We have never been modern*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

——— 2004. Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern. *Critical Inquiry* 30(2): 225-248.

Livingston, Paul M. 2012. *The politics of logic: Badiou, Wittgenstein, and the consequences of formalism*. London: Routledge.

Marx. Karl. 1848. Speech to the Democratic Association of Brussels at its public meeting of January 9, 1848. In Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 6, 450. Accessed December 21, 2014 https://marxists.anu.edu.au/archive/marx/works/1848/01/09ft.htm.

——— 1976. *Capital: A critique of political economy*. *Vol 1*. London: Penguin in association with New left review.

——— 1994. *Selected Writings*. Edited by Lawrence S. Simon. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Masschelein, Jan. 2010. E-ducating the gaze: the idea of a poor pedagogy. *Ethics and Education* 5(1): 43–53.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2010. *Child psychology and pedagogy: the Sorbonne lectures 1949-1952*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press.

Milbank, John. 2003. *Being reconciled: ontology and pardon*. London: Routledge.

——— 2006. *Theology and social theory: beyond secular reason*. (2. ed.) Oxford: Blackwell.

Moran, Emilio .F. 1990. Ecosystem Ecology in Biology and Anthropology: A critical assessment. In *The ecosystem approach in anthropology: from concept to practice*, ed. Emilio .F. Moran, 3-40. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Olwig, Kenneth. 2002. Landscape, Place, and the State of Progress. In *Progress: geographical essays*, ed. R.D. Sack, 22-60. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

——— 2005. Representation and Alienation in the Political Land-*scape*. *Cultural Geographies* 12(1): 19-40.

Piaget, Jean. 1970. *Genetic Epistemology*. Translated by Eleanor Duckworth. New York: Columbia U.P.

Plato. 1997a. *Cratylus.* transl. by C. D. C. Reeve. In *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper, Indianapolis: Hackett, 101-156.

——— 1997b. *Gorgias*. transl. by D. J. Zeyl. In *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper, Indianapolis: Hackett, 791-869.

——— 1997c. *Sophist*. transl. by N. P. White, in *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett, 245-293.

——— 1997d Meno. transl. by G.M.A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works, edited, with introduction and notes, by John M.* Cooper Indianapolis: Hackett, 870-897.

——— *The Republic*. transl. by B. Jowett. http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.10.ix.html (Accessed December 21, 2014)

——— *Republic ,Book IV.* transl. by B. Jowett. http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.5.iv.html (Accessed December 21, 2014).

Pöggeler, Otto. 1987. West-East Dialogue: Heidegger and Lao-tzu. In *Heidegger and Asian thought*, ed. G. Parkes, 47-78. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Priest, Graham. 2002. *Beyond the Limits of Thought.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Putnam, Hilary. 1985. Reflexive Reflections. *Erkenntnis* 22(1/3): 143-153.

Robbins, Joel. 2013. Monism, pluralism, and the structure of value relations: A Dumontian contribution to the contemporary study of value. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3(1): 99– 115.

Scarry, Elaine. 1985. *The body in pain: the making and unmaking of the world*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Schürmann, Reiner 1978. Questioning the Foundations of Practical Philosophy, *Human Studies: A Journal for Philosophy and the Social Sciences* 1(1): 357–368.

Seaford, Richard. 2004. *Money and the early Greek mind: Homer, philosophy, tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— 2009. World without limits - The Greek discovery that man could never be too rich. *TLS - The Times Literary Supplement; June 19, 5542, 14-15*.

——— 2012. Monetisation and the Genesis of the Western Subject. *Historical Materialism* 20(1): 78-102.

Siewers, Alfred K. 2011. Ecopoetics and the Origins of English Literature. In *Environmental criticism for the twenty-first century*, ed. S. LeMenager, T. Shewry & K. Hiltner, 105-120. New York: Routledge.

Strhan, A. 2011. Religious language as poetry: Heidegger's challenge. *The Heythrop Journal*, *52*(6): 926-938.

Thiele, Leslie P. 1994. Heidegger on Freedom: Political not Metaphysical. *American Political Science Review* 8(2): 278-291.

Thomson, Iain. 2000. Ontotheology? Understanding. Heidegger's Destruktion of. Metaphysics. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8(3):297-327.

Turner, Terence. 1973. Piaget's Structuralism. *American Anthropologist* 75: 351–373.

——— 1995. Neoliberal Ecopolitics and Indigenous Peoples: The Kayapo, The Rainforest Harvest, and The Body Shop. *Yale F&ES Bulletin* 98: 113-127.

——— 2003. The Beautiful and the Common: Inequalities of Value and Revolving Hierarchy among the Kayapó. *Tipití* 1(1): 11-26.

——— 2008. Marxian value theory: an anthropological perspective. *Anthropological Theory* 8(1): 43–56

Weisz, Helga 2007. Combining Social Metabolism and input-output analyses to account for ecologically unequal trade. In *Rethinking environmental history: world-system history and global environmental change*, ed. A. Hornborg, J.R. McNeill, J. Martinez-Alier, 289-306. Lanham, Md.: Altamira.

Wolin, Richard. (ed.) 1993. *The Heidegger controversy: a critical reader*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2007. *Censorship Today: Violence, or Ecology as a New Opium for the Masses – part 1*. Accessed December 21, 2014. http://www.lacan.com/zizecology1.htm