

## ARTICLES





## Aspects of Technicity in Heidegger's Early Philosophy: Rereading Aristotle's *Techné* and *Hexis*

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### Abstract

The article aims to advance our understanding of what the early Heidegger had in mind when he spoke about technics. Taking *GA 18, Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie*, as a guiding text, Heidegger's "destructive" reading of the two notions most directly associated with Aristotle's presentation of technics—τέχνη and ἕξις—will be examined, especially with reference to the portrayal of technics in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It will be argued that Aristotle already exaggerated the distinction between virtue and skill and that, instead of insisting on their similarities (as will be argued to be desirable), Heidegger drove the two notions even further apart. This enabled him to form a warped picture of technical life, which he exploited as a counter image to develop an unrealistically non-technical notion of πρᾶξις, which Heidegger implicitly advocates.

### Keywords

technics, virtue, habitus, Heidegger, Aristotle

It has been recognized for some time now that the early Heidegger's work was led by a threefold formal structure: a reduction or return to the primal phenomena, by means of a "destructive" reading of texts of the philosophical tradition, thereby disobstructing and facilitating our access to the primal phenomena, and a construction of an appropriate articulation of these phenomena. In this study I shall retrace one of these ways of "Rückgang zum Boden," and this with an agenda set not by Heidegger but by myself, thereby taking seriously the suggestion (or challenge?) of Heidegger that "perhaps it is not possible, for someone that has learned to understand an author, to take what the latter indicates as the most important as basis for the interpretation" (*GA 19: 46*)<sup>1</sup> My aim, however, is less ambitious than finding a basis for interpreting

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<sup>1</sup> "Vielleicht ist es für den, der gelernt hat, einen Autor zu verstehen, nicht möglich, das, was dieser selbst als das Wichtigste bezeichnet, zur Grundlage der Interpretation zu nehmen." (Unless

Heidegger. What will be at stake in this study is the articulation or interpretation of a particular phenomenon and not, in the first place, the ontological implications thereof. The theme of my questioning concerns the perspective developed by Heidegger in the early 1920s on human technicity.

In what follows I shall attempt to walk the way of reduction with Heidegger to the phenomenon of technicity in order to explore what contribution he makes to an understanding thereof. Earlier studies of technics in Heidegger's philosophy (up to the early 1980s) were obliged to put the emphasis on the work after the *Kehre*<sup>2</sup> or to be restricted to *Sein und Zeit*,<sup>3</sup> since the researchers had limited access to Heidegger's lectures published in the *Gesamtausgabe*. When these became available they were exploited (since the late 1980s) by authors of the like of Volpi, Taminiaux, Bernasconi, and others, who were especially interested in the ontological reworking of Aristotelian notions, of which *ποίησις* and *πῶξις* took center stage.<sup>4</sup> The question of technics comes under discussion in these studies within the framework presented for it by Heidegger: that of the *Destruktion* of the metaphysics of presence. The publication of the Heidegger *Gesamtausgabe* is now so advanced that the texts

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otherwise stated, all translations from German and Greek are my own; text abbreviations are appended.)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. for example John Loscerbo, *Being and Technology. A Study in the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger*. *Phaenomenologica* 82 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981) and Günther Seubold, *Heideggers Analyse der neuzeitlichen Technik* (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> Cf., for example, Hubert Dreyfus, "De la *techné* à la technique: le statut ambigu de l'ustensilité dans *L'être et le temps*," in *Martin Heidegger*, ed. Michel Haar (Paris: l'Herne, 1983), 283–303.

<sup>4</sup> Franco Volpi has done a lot to make the findings of his *Heidegger e Aristotele* (Padua: Daphne, 1984) available for non-Italian readers in further studies, see "*Dasein* comme *praxis*: L'assimilation et la radicalisation heideggerienne de la philosophie pratique d'Aristote," in F. Volpi et al., *Heidegger et l'idée de la phenomenology*. *Phaenomenologica* 108 (Dordrecht: 1988), 1–42, and "Der Bezug zu Platon und Aristoteles in Heideggers Fundamentalverständnis der Technik," in *Kunst und Technik. Gedächtnisschrift zum 100. Geburtstag von Martin Heidegger*, ed. W. Biemel and F. W. von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1989), 67–91.

For Jacques Taminiaux, see "*Poiesis* et *Praxis* dans l'articulation de l'ontologie fondamentale," in F. Volpi et al., *Heidegger et l'idée de la phenomenology*, 107–26; "Heidegger et les Grecs à l'époque de l'ontologie fondamentale," *Erudes phénoménologiques* 1 (1985): 95–112.

For Robert Bernasconi, see "The Fate of the Distinction between *Praxis* and *Poesis*," *Heidegger Studies* 2 (1986): 111–39 and "Heidegger's Destruction of *Phronesis*," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 28, Supplement (1989): 127–48.

In all three of these cases I have selected only what seems to me most useful for the current purposes from a much more abundant literature.

available for studying technicity in the early Heidegger have become too voluminous to allow for an exhaustive discussion and analysis, in the scope of an article in any case. For the purposes of the current essay, the question will be thematically limited to repeating Heidegger's reading of (aspects of) two of Aristotle's notions, τέχνη and ἔξις, even though by doing so, the very notion of repetition (*Wiederholung*) will be critically examined. At the same time the most suitable text for this purpose seems to be the fairly recently published *GA 18* (lectures of the Marburg summer semester of 1924).

*GA 18* bears the title *Grundbegriffe der Aristotelischen Philosophie*, but one notices very quickly—as Gadamer testified of his experience as his student<sup>5</sup>—that one is not always sure of whose voice one is hearing, Heidegger's or Aristotle's. But what is decisive is that at crucial instances this volume could just as well have carried the title *Grundbegriffe der Heideggerschen Philosophie*. In setting out to explore the idea of technicity that Heidegger develops in reading Aristotle, I shall present elements of Aristotle's idea of τέχνη and ἔξις (without any claim to exhaustivity), first to declare my own reading thereof and thus to put my cards on the table for the reader to see, but then, by indicating Heidegger's divergence from it, to show what Heidegger was working on and, more importantly, what other interpretational possibilities there were available to him. Nowhere shall I use Aristotle to “correct” Heidegger; Aristotle plays a heuristic role in my essay (of course without being unconscious of the other influences on Heidegger).

In turning back with Heidegger to Aristotle, I shall *not* be concerned with the ontological project of these lectures but will ask: In this deconstructive reading of the tradition of Western philosophy, what happens to the phenomenon of human technicity? What perspective is presented on technicity? Two of the Aristotelian *Grundbegriffe* will pave the way to my answering this question: τέχνη and ἔξις. *GA 18* is exceptional, compared to the other lecture courses, in that there is a reading by Heidegger of both of these notions. Furthermore, the analyses of τέχνη and ἔξις are embedded in the same chapter of this lecture series,<sup>6</sup> and that is structured by Heidegger's reappropriation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. It will become clear that this setting has important

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophische Lebrjahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 216.

<sup>6</sup> Namely, “Die Auslegung des Daseins des Menschen hinsichtlich der Grundmöglichkeit des Miteinandersprechens am Leitfaden der Rhetorik,” which is chapter three of part one: “Vorverständigung über die Bodenständigkeit der Begrifflichkeit auf dem Wege einer Explikation des Daseins als In-der-Welt-sein in der Orientierung an aristotelischen Grundbegriffen.”

consequences for Heidegger's articulation of the relation between technicity and sociality. While close-reading Heidegger and his Aristotelian backdrop, I shall develop a criticism by means of which I would suggest to improve the notion of technicity present in these lectures.

### 1. Setting the Stage for Technicity: Being-in-the-World, Care and Understanding

According to Heidegger's ontologizing reappropriation of Aristotle's doctrine of the soul (*ψυχή*), human existence consists of characterizing life as being-in-the-world; as such it cares for its own being (cf. *GA* 18: 44).<sup>7</sup> A first sketch of what this means is given in §9, entitled "Human existence as *ψυχή*" (*Das Dasein des Menschen als ψυχή*). This existence as *ψυχή* has the fundamental possibility (*Grundmöglichkeit*) of being-in-the-polis, of *Miteinandersein*, of *κοινωνία* (*GA* 18: 46). This fact is brought to the fore by Aristotle by indicating that the human being is *λόγον ἔχειν* (*GA* 18: 46).<sup>8</sup> The human being is in the world in such a way that this being-in concerns him/her (*GA* 18: 51), and in this concern the world is opened (*erschlossen*) to the human being (*GA* 18: 52).<sup>9</sup> By concernfully being-in-the-world and engaging with (*umgehen mit*) things, these are interpreted *as* being such or such. The explicit articulation of this interpretation is the *λόγος τι κατὰ τινοῦ*: "in the speaking about something, I presentify it, I bring it to the there, it *as* this and that, in the character of *as* [*Im Sprechen über etwas vergegenwärtige ich es, bringe ich es ins Da, es als das und das, im Charakter des Als*]" (*GA* 18: 60). But saying to oneself that something is a this or a that could be done only since there is a more original expression of things, namely, the expression of their being such or such in discussion with others; "speaking is showing or pointing out self-expressing to..." (*Sprechen ist aufzei-*

<sup>7</sup> According to "Ontologie des Lebens und des Daseins" in *GA* 22, §§65–66, Aristotle aimed at developing an ontology of life with his doctrine of the soul. The latter is defined, following *De anima* 402a6f: [*Ψυχή*] ἔστι γὰρ οἷον ἀρχή τῶν ζῴων, "sie ist so etwas wie der Seinsgrund des Seienden, das lebt" (*GA* 22: 184).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *GA* 18: 50: "Sprechen ist nicht primär und zunächst ein Vorgang, zu dem nachher andere Menschen dazukommen, so daß es dann erst ein Sprechen mit anderen würde, sondern das Sprechen ist in ihm selbst als solches Sichaussprechen, Miteinandersprechen mit anderen Sprechenden und deshalb das seinsmäßige Fundament der *κοινωνία*."

<sup>9</sup> *GA* 18: 52: "Die Erschlossenheit des Seins der Welt hat bei Aristoteles ihre eigentliche Grundmöglichkeit im *λόγος*, in dem Sinn, daß im *λόγος* das Lebende-in-einer-Welt die Welt sich zuignet, da hat und in diesem Dahaben eigentlich ist und sich bewegt."

*gendes sichaussprechen zu ...*) (GA 18: 61). The care (πρᾶξις)<sup>10</sup> that has to engage in resolution or choice (προαίρεσις) in the moment or concrete situation (καιρός) (cf. GA 18: 58, 59 & 60) as it goes about in the world (the *Sichumtun in der Welt* [GA 18: 62]) is determined by the λόγος, such that care is right in the middle (*mittendrin*) of the λόγος in the κοινωνία.<sup>11</sup> The ζῶον πολιτικόν, who is the ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, exists ordinarily not in a way as to be in a position to say “I am,” but rather in a way as to say “I am one” (*ich bin man*), I am as ‘one’ is or as ‘they’ are; “this one is the actual ‘who’ of everydayness, of the average concrete being-with-one-another. One develops from such average everydayness the way and manner in which the human being sees the world at first and for the most part, how the world concerns a human being, how the human being addresses the world. ‘One’ is the actual ‘how’ of the being of the human being in the everydayness and *the actual bearer of this ‘one’ is language*” (GA 18: 64).<sup>12</sup> This is true also when the human being in question is practicing the θεωρεῖν (*Hinsehen*, inspection), in which the generality and universal validity of the εἶδος (*Aussehen*, appearance) is prevalent.<sup>13</sup>

One recognizes in these phrases the outline of some of the most salient elements of the later *Daseinsanalyse* in *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger is well along in his project of reconducting intentionality to the broader ontological phenomenon of care (as for instance in GA 20, §31). At the same time his reworking of the Husserlian intuition to understanding has clearly taken a Heideggerian shape.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For a useful overview of Heidegger’s ontologizing reappropriation of Aristotle’s πρᾶξις, see Roberto Rubio “La relevance de la *praxis* en la ontología del *Dasein*,” *Areté* 15, no. 2 (2003): 303–23 (especially the summary p. 312) and Volpi, “*Dasein* comme *praxis*: L’assimilation et la radicalization heideggerienne de la philosophie pratique d’Aristote.”

<sup>11</sup> GA 18: 61: “Das Besorgen ist μετὰ λόγου. Μετὰ besagt hier “mittendrin”: Der λόγος gehört zum Besorgen, das Besorgen ist an sich selbst ein Sprechen, ein Besprechen.”

<sup>12</sup> “Dieses *Man* ist das *eigentliche Wie der Alltäglichkeit, des durchschnittlichen konkreten Miteinanderseins*. Aus diesem *Man* heraus erwächst die Art und Weise, wie der Mensch die Welt zunächst und zumeist sieht, wie die Welt den Menschen angeht, wie er die Welt anspricht. Das *Man* ist das *eigentliche Wie des Seins des Menschen in der Alltäglichkeit und der eigentlicher Träger dieses Man ist die Sprache*.”

<sup>13</sup> GA 18: 64: “Die Grundbestimmung des Seins des Menschen als ζῶον πολιτικόν ist festzuhalten, auch bei der späteren Explikation, wie es sich um das ‘Hinschen’, θεωρεῖν, auf die Welt handelt, um das, was in diesem Hinsehen das ist, das εἶδος, das ‘Aussehen’ der Welt, wie man sie gewöhnlich sieht.”

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the studies of Jean Greisch, *Ontologie et temporalité. Esquisse d’une interprétation intégrale de Sein und Zeit*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994): especially 23–30, and Theodore Kisiel, “From Intuition to Understanding: On Heidegger’s Transpositions of Husserl’s Phenomenology,” in *Heidegger’s Way of Thought: Critical and Interpretative Signposts* (London: Continuum, 2002), 174–86.

The going about in the world as whole of references, of meanings, that will be much more developed (for instance in *GA* 20, §23) and the exploration of the hermeneutics that *Dasein* itself is in having-to-do with things and which will be the condition for the expression of understanding (as worked out in *GA* 21, §12) are presented in a nutshell.

Two elements of this analysis should be highlighted in order to set the stage for the ensuing discussion.

1. Heidegger's leading intentionality back to care or the enlargement of intentionality to care made it possible to enlarge Husserl's intuition to understanding. This shift brings with it a change in the perspective on the human being needed for this project: understanding means first of all a possibility, rather than a cognitive activity. Heidegger explains that care is characterized as understanding uncovering (*Entdecktheit*) in every possibility to act; saying that I am, means, I can;<sup>15</sup> in fact, in a language perhaps more easily associated with Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger says: "in every [act of] care and in every being that is taken care of involves a priori the mode of being of 'I can', and to be precise it is this 'I can' as the condition of being of human existence always as understanding 'I can' (*GA* 20: 412).<sup>16</sup> Hence the importance of exploring the everyday engagement with the things in the world: it is only through this concerned interaction with the things of the world that the world as whole of significances arises, which in turn makes all understanding and interpretation possible.<sup>17</sup>
2. Since Heidegger is concerned about highlighting this pre-character (*Charakter des Vor*, as for instance in *Vorhabe* and *Vertrautheit* in *GA* 63, §§18–20 & 24) of our engagement with the world, since this engagement is always already an understanding and not a synthesis of sense data, the *Sitz-im-Leben* from where he explores the engagement is the life of the person who is already technically dexterous, who has already learned how and for what to use tools, who is already in interaction with other people, which makes

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *GA* 20: 412: "Verstehen besagt hier soviel wie 'können' und 'können' bedeutet: *bei sich selbst die Möglichkeit haben zu etwas.*"

<sup>16</sup> "In jedem Besorgen und in jedem Seienden, das durch die Sorge bestimmt ist, liegt a priori mit die Seinsart des 'Ich kann', und zwar ist es diese 'Ich kann' als Seinsverfassung des *Daseins* immer als verstehendes 'Ich kann'.

<sup>17</sup> And hence the possibility for reading Heidegger's early philosophy as a "pragmatism," as was done for instance by Carl Friedrich Gethmann; see, for example, his "Heideggers Konzeption des Handelns in *Sein und Zeit*," in *Heidegger und die praktische Philosophie*, ed. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert and Otto Pöggeler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 140–76.



possible that this socially situated artisan could understand the work-world, and that understanding and being familiar with (the *Vertrautheit*) could be, for all purposes, synonymous. In other words, the paradigmatic situation from which Heidegger constructs his notions of world and understanding (and thus the notions of “world” and “understanding” themselves) is only possible through 1) exercise and training in the constant, competent practice of a skill or art, that also generates the capacity for recognition of the same and of similar things and situations without which the acquisition of such skills is unthinkable; and 2) this is only conceivable in an existence with others from whom the artisan learns and with whom he/she interacts. Without these two conditions, there is no ordinary hermeneutical *as*. However, Heidegger does not examine the process by which one is familiarized with the work-world, by which one comes to understand.<sup>18</sup> Already very early on he considers the multiple engagements with what one is occupied with as being performed “each time in a certain acquaintance and familiarity.”<sup>19</sup> Since he does not pose this question of familiarization, it comes fairly easily to him to presuppose a certain character of the technical life, which would serve his ontological arguments. A large part of this idea of technical life he inherits from Aristotle.

In this essay I shall not question the elements of the Heideggerian hermeneutics summarized here. What I shall do is interrogate the origin of this hermeneutics by an exploration of the kind of notion of technicity in τέχνη and ἔξις that is presupposed by this hermeneutics.

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<sup>18</sup>) It is true, as Theodore Kisiel indicates in “From Intuition to Understanding,” that for Heidegger “[t]he primary given is the world and not things, the primary presence is meaning and not objects” (181) and that being or dwelling in this world of meaning is continuously energized by the “habit of our habitat” (182), so that “simply by living, or living thus simply, I acquire these peculiar possessions, the habits of my habitat that constitute my most immediate having, the having of having-been whose effects persist, the present perfect a priori [reference to *SZ* 85.—EW] as my prepossession” (182). But of the process of the “acquisition” of “habit,” which stands at the center of my concern, Heidegger speaks only obliquely, and it is only as such examined by Kisiel.

<sup>19</sup>) Cf. NB 15: “Hantieren an, Bereitstellen von, Herstellen von, Sicherstellen durch, in Gebrauchnehmen von, Verwenden für, in Besitznehmen von, in Verwahrung halten und in Verlust geraten lassen. Das je diesen Weisen entsprechende Womit des verrichtenden Umgangs steht dabei jeweils in einer bestimmten Bekanntheit und Vertrautheit.”

## 2. *Techné* (Skill)

I shall attempt to go back to what Heidegger in two “methodological” paragraphs calls “the ground experience in which I make the *character of the theme* accessible to myself” (*die Grunderfahrung, in der ich mir den Sachcharakter zugänglich mache*) and that “lies in life’s going about with its world” (*liegt im Umgang des Lebens mit seiner Welt*) (GA 18: 14, see also 270). This will be done not directly but, as Heidegger does, with Aristotle as guide. The two ground experiences that will become our theme carry the names of τέχνη and ἕξις (and will be explored in the next two sections respectively).

A first general circumscription of τέχνη is given by Heidegger as “the knowing-your-way-about something, in a particular manner of concern” (*das Sichauskennen in etwas, in einer bestimmten Weise des Besorgens*) and where concern is a being after something (*Hinterhersein*) (GA 18: 67); since this concern is circumspect (*umsichtig*) (GA 18: 68), τέχνη evidently shows itself clearly in what it was after, its τέλος, its good (ἀγαθόν). Since this circumscription is derived from Aristotle, let us now turn to him first in order to form an idea of his notion of τέχνη and to see where it comes from.

### 2.1 *Aristotle: Technai as Opposed to Aretai*

Aristotle gives us a useful set of ideas on technical life when he contrasts τέχνη and the τεχναί with ἀρεταί (virtues), in order to teach his students about the nature of virtues.

According to Aristotle human beings are born with natural dispositions (due to their φύσις) but are capable of acquiring additional dispositions (ἕξεις) through habituation (ἔθιζεν), i.e. the repeated practice of the appropriate action (cf. *EN* 1103a16–26). In fact, the quality of this disposition depends (at least to a large extent) on the quality of habituation to the right kind of actions since childhood (cf. *EN* 1103a14–16 & 1103b21–25). If this holds true for moral virtues (ἀρεταί), it certainly also holds true for practical skills (τεχναί), two terms that semantically overlap. This becomes apparent in the discussion of the acquisition of the moral virtues in Book 2 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle argues time and again by using technical skill as analogy for virtue. Therefore, when Aristotle describes in his *Ethics* how the human being works (the human ἔργον) and seeks to explain how well-being (εὐδαιμονία) is attained by functioning well (i.e. κατ’ ἀρετήν), he deemed it necessary to distinguish the two notions, ἀρετή and τέχνη.

In *EN* 1105a17–b15 Aristotle develops an argument to support his view that an action worthy of (ethical) approbation is such not by means of its inherent qualities but as a result of the qualities of the agent thereof. In a first movement he illustrates what he means by an analogy from the τεχνοί, grammar, and music (i.e., from the domain of production, ποιήσις). You would not call anyone musical for having played a good tune once; you consider the tune to be a manifestation of musical talent only if that tune sprang forth from musical knowledge. But after having drawn this analogy, Aristotle then takes a step back and in a second movement claims that in fact, skills and virtues are quite dissimilar (ἔτι οὐδ' ὅμοιον ἔστιν ἐπὶ τῶν τεχνῶν καὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν). He argues this, by changing his angle of approach from the author of the action to the “product” of action. To qualify the products of a skill (τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν γινόμενα) as good, one does not need to know anything about their producer, since they have in themselves what enables one to qualify them as such (ἔν ἔχει ἐν αὐτοῖς): when I see a stylish suit in the shop, I buy it if I judge it to be of good quality, without bothering to know anything about the kind of person that brought this product into existence. The converse would be true in the domain of πράξις, that is, in the case of what is brought about by virtue (τὰ κατὰ τὰς ἀρετὰς γινόμενα). These are not ἐν ἔχει ἐν αὐτοῖς, but could be characterized as of this or that virtue, only if the doer does them from a specific acquired state (καὶ ἐὰν ὁ πράττων πως ἔχων πράττη). The virtuous action, then, bears the three following characteristics: 1) the agent must act with knowledge (εἰδώς) (probably of the kind of action to be accomplished); 2) the agent must be exercising a considered choice (προαιρούμενος), and this consideration or deliberation should be such that it leads to choosing actions for themselves (δι' αὐτὰ); and 3) the action must proceed from a firm and stable disposition (ἔχων). The first of these is the least important, says Aristotle, but is the only characteristic of the agent of virtue shared with the agent of skill, for whom knowledge is much more important. Virtue stems only from the repeated practice or performance (πολλάκις πράττειν) of virtuous action.

Let us consider this threefold distinction. Aristotle already conceded that the first is shared by virtue and skill, although knowledge carries a different weight in each. As for the second distinction, it is true that Aristotle uses the word προαίρεσις for the kind of choice that has from the outset been stamped by its restriction to virtues, and thus to the domain of πράξις—as could be seen for instance in the definition of moral virtues in *EN* 1139a22–23: “the ethical or character virtue is a disposition for a choice and where choice is a deliberative desire” (ἡ ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετικὴ, ἡ δὲ προαίρεσις ὄρεξις

βουλευτική). But I can see no reason why this term could not just as well apply to the τεχναί.<sup>20</sup> If one considers the fact that προαίρεσις is defined as deliberative desire (ὄρεξις βουλευτική) and that βουλευσις—as we shall see later on—is deliberation not only about matters of πρᾶξις but also about matters of ποίησις,<sup>21</sup> this suggestion seems to carry some weight. In fact, in order to practice a τέχνη well (κατ' ἀρετήν, if I may), it will have to be πολλάκις πράττειν (provided that πράττειν is used here in its most general sense of “doing something”), since it is only the frequent and continuous exercise of a skill that allows for the mastering of it or acquiring mastering as ἔξις that would (but does not automatically) allow the craftsman to produce something of quality. With this last statement, the third quality of the agent of virtue has also been regained for the practitioner in the field of ποίησις. The major point of distinction between virtue and skill that remains is that virtuous actions are chosen for themselves. This distinction seems to me to hold, though I would maintain that often the virtue is practiced by means of the skill; and sometimes the very practice of a skill might correspond with the practice of a virtue. Aristotle seems to hold the same opinion when he affirms that ποίησις (production) is guided or governed by πρᾶξις (action).<sup>22</sup>

In the preceding paragraph, I have argued that the three characteristics of the virtuous agent, by which a virtuous action is recognized, apply to a greater extent to the skillful agent than Aristotle would allow for. I did so by judging the product by looking at its producer, as did Aristotle with the virtues. But he

<sup>20</sup> Michael Pakaluk concludes his discussion of προαίρεσις in *Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics. An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 129–36, by proposing the following definition: “*prohairesis* is a rational ability; it operates from an all things considered perspective; it varies in effectiveness (resolve, strength); and it is essentially practical, in that it is directed at actions immediately within my power. It expresses a kind of practical judgment as regards the goodness or badness of things, in the very seeking of them” (135). This definition guides my remarks above.

<sup>21</sup> For the double use of the word βουλευσις, cf. Richard Kraut, *Aristotle: Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 286.

We shall see later on that Heidegger used the word προαίρεσις for τέχνη in *GA* 19: 42.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *EN* 1139a35–b4. I cannot go into the exegetical difficulties associated with Aristotle's distinction between πρᾶξις and ποίησις. It will however be clear that my perspective on technicity tends to go in the direction of this passage of Aristotle's on πρᾶξις as governing ποίησις. I share Bernasconi's reading according to which “the for-the-sake-of, which governs *praxis* and belongs to it, is also the principle of *poiesis*” and this amounts to “understanding *techné* as piloted by *phronesis* through the *proairesis*. Thus *phronesis* also becomes concerned with technical issues and with intermediary steps” (“The Fate of the Distinction between *Praxis* and *Poesis*,” 137–38).

also distinguished skill from virtue by stating that the products of skill are ἐν ἔχει ἐν αὐτοῖς. This might be true, let us say, for a good watch: if it is good, but the craftsman was not, it does not disqualify the product from being good (though it might be difficult to think how it would come about without good skill, since it is extremely improbable that one would make a good watch by chance).<sup>23</sup> Even if one accepts that this could indeed be true for some artifacts, it certainly could not be used as a general rule. A healed patient is a good product of medicine, whether the doctor is skillful or not, Aristotle would claim. But could a patient who suffers little through a long sickbed to death not also be considered a good “artifact” of a doctor, even if in this case the dying patient could not be considered to be ἐν ἔχει ἐν αὐτῷ? The same kind of argument could probably be applied to other arts. In order to know how good a work of skillful production was, one would have to take into account the means available to the producer and the constraints under which the production had to be accomplished.

Thus, it seems possible to me to draw skill and virtue still closer than they seem to be, according to Aristotle. My point is not to collapse the distinction between (ethical) virtue and skill but to show that (at least in the passage examined) Aristotle’s valid effort to make an important distinction leads him to exaggerate the difference. This certainly is not an exhaustive discussion of the issue at hand. And it would be possible to indicate another voice in Aristotle, closer to mine.<sup>24</sup> Richard Kraut’s reading of βουλευσις (deliberation) would support such a reading. He makes a distinction between a superior and an inferior form of deliberation in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where the superior version leads to virtuous choices (in the domain of πράξις), but where recognition is given to the inferior one as the highest form of reflection in the domain of ποίησις. This is done with reference to the hierarchy of doctors (taken by Kraut from the *Politics*): the lowest is a δημιουργός who does not

<sup>23</sup>) I am thinking here of a single craftsman. It is unfortunately not difficult to imagine a skillfully produced artifact in which demands on the skill of a number of individuals might be very limited. One could think, for instance, of the work of laborers in car manufacturing plants who have been submitted to Fordist or Taylorist labor strategies. But I think that such a situation could be considered as one in which the skill of the workers has been suspended—or reduced in the phenomenological sense: put in brackets, incapacitated, without perhaps eliminating it as a potential. In any case, in such a motorcar construction plant, the real “technicians” would be the managers and engineers.

<sup>24</sup>) On deliberation in the τεχναί see for instance *EN* 1112b29–32—what Aristotle writes here about βουλευσις, I have drawn into προαίρεσις, justifying myself with the definition of προαίρεσις as ὄρεξις βουλευτική.

posses a τέχνη, since he simply follows the pattern provided by someone else, without being able to engage intelligently with his matter; the second is one who is educated and better capable than the former to follow the real artisan's recommendations; the third has studied (anatomy for instance) and alone has the intellectual virtue of τέχνη.<sup>25</sup> The knowledge and deliberation involved in skill are thus presented here as “significant intellectual accomplishments” that require knowledge of rules but also originality and suppleness in their application in changing circumstances, with a proper understanding of the set goal guiding the process (*ibid.*, 289).<sup>26</sup>

It seems clear then, that in the domain of production, this form of deliberation brings the nature of τέχνη much closer to that of virtues than could the mere repetition of simple tasks without any deliberation. It is this closeness that makes it possible to define both πράξις and ποιήσις (even when distinguishing them) as being dispositions following reason (ὥστε καὶ ἡ μετὰ λόγου ἕξις πρακτικὴ ἕτερόν ἐστι τῆς μετὰ λόγου ποιητικῆς ἕξεως [*EN* 1140a3–5]). I would not hesitate to say that just as is the case with virtue as ἕξις προαιρετική, skill is then also based on a ἕξις, which, since it is formed by πολλάκις πράττειν, sometimes from early childhood, could equally be said to be cultivated or taught through habituation (ἐθίζειν), provided that by doing so we do not forget about the inventiveness and adaptability that characterizes the acquired skill in its excellent form. Furthermore, that the ἕξις ποιητική is a disposition not only for action but for giving form to the emotions (as is the case with the ἕξις πρακτική) could be illustrated by the importance of mastering frustration and boredom, the practice of patience and perseverance in the technical life. I need not go into examples of this.<sup>27</sup>

The preceding analysis and argumentation with Aristotle render it at least provisionally plausible to say that moral virtue and skill, although the distinction has not been suspended, share: 1) its installation through exercise over a long time, 2) its sharpening through exercise thereof and by the social input of sanctions, etc., 3) the fact of having the form of which one could speak in general terms, but where the rules have to be constantly applied to the situa-

<sup>25</sup> Cf. R. Kraut, *Aristotle: Political Philosophy*, 287–88.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *EN* 1112b8–13: “Deliberation then is employed in matters which, though subject to rules that generally hold good, are uncertain in their issue; or where the issue is indeterminate, and where, when the matter is important, we take others into our deliberations, distrusting our own capacity to decide. And we deliberate not about ends, but about means.” The absence of deliberation about ends will be problematized later in this essay.

<sup>27</sup> The question of ἕξις will be pursued further in §3 of this article.

tion, by the relevant agent, in the way in which the wise person or the master artisan would have done.

If Aristotle exaggerated the difference between the ἀρεταί and the τεχναί (as I have argued), Heidegger not only follows his lead but drives the two even further apart.

## 2.2 Techné: From Aristotle to Heidegger

The first way in which Heidegger does so is by giving a very specific presentation of τέχνη. It is of course not in τέχνη itself that Heidegger is interested; he aims at showing how τέχνη is the ground for an εἶδος-oriented interpretation of being.<sup>28</sup> This would in turn serve to unmask the metaphysics of presence inscribed in Western metaphysics.

In §19 of *GA* 18, “The φυσικός and his kind of treatment of the ψυχή” (*Der φυσικός und seine Art der Behandlung der ψυχή*), the first book of the *Parts of Animals* is used to explore the central tenets of Greek ontology. Being, for the Greeks, meant being-present (*Gegenwärtigsein*) by being produced (*Hergestelltsein*) in the sense of being completed (*Fertigsein*).<sup>29</sup> If one desires to understand this ontology, one thus will have to explore how the production (*Herstellen*, ποιήσις) and the λόγος that governs it (namely, τέχνη) imply both completion or end (τέλος) and presence (implied in the notion of εἶδος). This Heidegger does in §19c(α) entitled “The ἔργα τέχνης and the λόγος of the τέχνη.” The same train of thought is found in *GA* 19, §7, and I shall use this later text (lectures from a half year later in the winter of 1924–1925) to present Heidegger’s ideas of the *GA* 18, §19, since the *GA* 19 text brings to the fore more clearly the elements essential to my argument in *GA* 18.

<sup>28</sup> See the subtitle of *GA* 19, §7c: “νόησις und ποιήσις. Die τέχνη als Boden der Auslegung des Seins durch das εἶδος.” On this text, see Volpi, “Der Bezug zu Platon und Aristoteles in Heideggers Fundamentalverständnis der Technik” (which also situates this theme within Heidegger’s whole philosophy of technics) and Taminiaux, “*Poiesis et Praxis* dans l’articulation de l’ontologie fondamentale” 112–17. A more recent treatment of the subject has been given by Bogdan Mincăse: “Das Modell der Herstellung. Über den Bezug *techné—eidos—logos* in M. Heideggers Interpretationen zu Aristoteles,” *Studia phaenomenologica* 4, no. 1–2 (2004): 127–50, see in particular his overview of the theme (based primarily on *GA* 24) in pp. 127–37.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *GA* 18: 219. See also *GA* 18: 214 where Heidegger clarifies the vocabulary: “Bedeutung von Sein als *Gegenwärtigsein*; Sein: *Da-sein in der Gegenwart*. . . das *Da* für die Griechen besagt: *In-das-Da-Gekommensein*, und zwar *durch die Herstellen*; Her: *Da*, *Her* is ein bestimmtes *Da*; *herstellen*: in das *Da* bringen, in die *Gegenwart*. Das ist der eigentliche Sein der ποιήσις. *Dasein* ist im eigentlichen Sinne *Hergestelltsein*, d.h. *Fertig-Dasein*, *Zu-Ende-Gekommensein*.”

This paragraph (*GA* 19, §7) opens by explaining that in τέχνη one has to do with an object that is still becoming (*Sein-Werdende*, ἐσόμενον). The principle or point of departure (ἀρχή) of this object (the ποιητον) has an aim (τέλος) outside itself and is brought about for some use by someone (πρός τι καὶ τινός [*EN* 1139b2–3]). This nonnatural way of becoming thus originates in a point of τέλος departure that is a form or plan, design, or image that is located in the soul (το εἶδος ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ [*Metaphysics* 1132b1]) and this εἶδος becomes the axis around which Heidegger works out his interpretation of τέχνη. In this way τέχνη is an ἀληθεύειν (*Aufdecken*): it lets one see what has to be brought about or produced (*GA* 19: 42). One starts to see what Heidegger's perspective on this τέχνη is, when he then pursues: "And what is uncovered here in the soul and what is *present* in it, is the εἶδος of the house, the appearance, the 'sight' of the house, how it should eventually stand there and what makes up its true presence" (*GA* 19: 42; my italics).<sup>30</sup> But the presence of this εἶδος ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ is anticipated (*vorweggenommen*) by what Heidegger himself calls προαίρεσις: what has to be produced is presentified (*vergegenwärtigt*) in the εἶδος. Thus Heidegger could describe the εἶδος as "ἀρχή of the κίνησις of the τέχνη as a whole" (*GA* 19: 44).<sup>31</sup> In this way we arrive at §7c with its aim of indicating τέχνη as the ground for an εἶδος-oriented metaphysics of being.

In this subparagraph Heidegger develops an image of τέχνη that has been warped with the help of *Metaphysics* VII, 7 to suit his ontological objective. Aristotle acts here as a good accomplice, since the image of τέχνη presented here is already much less sophisticated and convincing than what could be found in *Nicomachean Ethics* III, 3 (that I have read in §2.1 above). In the paragraph from the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle uses the doctor as example of the technician to assert that ἡ δὲ ὑγίεια ὁ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ λόγος—for the doctor, the health of the patient is the reason (in his/her ψυχῇ) for the practice of healing. Heidegger then in turn claims that this λόγος means λεγόμενον. This is contrasted with another citation of Aristotle where λόγος means λέγειν,<sup>32</sup> that

<sup>30</sup> "Und was hier in der Seele aufgedeckt wird und in ihr *präsent* ist, das ist das εἶδος des Hauses, das Aussehen, das "Gesicht" des Hauses, wie es einmal dastehen soll und welches seine eigentliche *Anwesenheit* ausmacht."

<sup>31</sup> This formula comes from the title of §7c. See also the same page: "In der τέχνη ist das εἶδος ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ die ἀρχή der κίνησις, welche zunächst die der νόησις und sodann die der ποίησις ist."

<sup>32</sup> The citation is from *De partibus animalium* 640a 31f: ἡ δὲ τέχνη λόγος τοῦ ἔργου ὁ ἄνευ ὕλης ἐστίν, which is commented on in more detail in *GA* 18: 222, where Heidegger translates: "Die τέχνη [nicht das Herstellen selbst, sondern eine Art der ἐπιστήμη als Sichauskennen hinsichtlich des Herzustellenden] ist ein λόγος dessen, was gemacht werden soll, des ἔργου, ein Ansprechen, das ohne die ὕλη ist, ohne den Stoff."



is, “discussing presentification” (*besprechendes Vergegenwärtigen* [GA 19: 45]). But the λόγος from the *Metaphysics* passage is λεγόμενον, which is nothing other than the εἶδος previously discussed, which in turn is, according to Heidegger, nothing other than the Platonic Idea. And thus Heidegger could conclude that “τέχνη is λόγος qua λέγειν of the λεγόμενον, i.e. of the εἶδος” (GA 19: 45) and that this εἶδος is first present in the νόησις and then in the ποίησις.<sup>33</sup> It is this ποίησις (*Herstellen*) that has been said at the beginning to aim at an end (τέλος). There is then complicity between the end and the image or plan, such that the plan is the anticipation of what is to be finished off.<sup>34</sup>

We have here the basic ingredients for a criticism of the representational notion of truth, for a criticism of the metaphysics of presence. But do we have a credible representation of technical life? Let us go over Heidegger’s chain of ideas again. Two links should be examined closer.

The first one is his decision to interpret λόγος (in the citation from Aristotle) to mean λεγόμενον or λέγειν of a λεγόμενον. The introduction of the substantified past participle (it is not explicitly used in the text to which Heidegger refers) does not seem to me to be imposed by the subject matter (though the text of Aristotle might allow such a reading). By insisting on reducing the λόγος of τέχνη to what has been reasoned (λεγόμενον), Heidegger effectively moves in the direction of aligning the technical procedure with the original plan. This is explicitly stated in GA 18: “From the How of the image [i.e., Heidegger’s translation of εἶδος.—EW] of the finished thing, from its being-anticipated, is laid out the type, the order and the direction of the procedure of production.”<sup>35</sup> By so doing, he tends to reduce the scope of technical actions

<sup>33</sup> Cf. GA 19: 45: “Das εἶδος, das aufgedeckt und verwahrt ist in der οἰκοδομική, ist ἀρχή der κίνησις, welche zunächst die der νόησις und sodann die der ποίησις ist.”

<sup>34</sup> This idea of εἶδος (design) that Heidegger derives from Aristotle is very close to that of Marx, when in *Das Kapital* (book 1, chapter V) he explains what human labor is in contradistinction to the activity of animals: “Wir unterstellen die Arbeit in einer Form, worin sie dem Menschen ausschließlich angehört. Eine Spinne verrichtet Tätigkeiten, die denen des Webers ähneln, und eine Biene beschämt durch den Bau ihrer Wachsellen manchen menschlichen Baumeister. Was aber von vornherein den schlechtesten Baumeister vor der besten Biene auszeichnet, ist, *daß er die Zelle in seinem Kopfgebaut hat, bevor er sie in Wachs baut*” (my italics) (*Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*. K. Marx, F. Engels, *Werke*, Band 23 [Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1974], 193).

<sup>35</sup> GA 18: 221: “Aus dem Wie des Aussehens des fertigen Seienden in seinem Vorweggenommensein ist vorgezeichnet Gangart, Gangfolge und Gangrichtung der Herstellung.” This portrayal of the technical procedure seems to me incompatible with that presented in GA 19, §8, pp. 53–54 in which Heidegger comments on EN 1140b23–25, and especially Aristotle’s distinction between virtue and skill in a statement of which the translation is hard to give: “and in skill someone that willingly errs is preferable [to someone that errs unwillingly], whereas in

to that of the least impressive of the technicians, the δημιουργός, whose work is characterized by the attempt to follow closely the advice or design of a master, since he restricts the working of the βουλευσις that allows for innovation and adaptation in the master craftsman.<sup>36</sup> The importance of the reciprocal adaptation of design and execution, of which the master craftsman should be capable, should not be underestimated. But Heidegger, on the other hand, instead of recognizing this feedback loop in τέχνη between εἶδος and ποίησις, seems to let τέχνη slip from an ἀληθεύειν concentrating on things that change, namely, the ποιητὰ, to being anchored as an ἀληθεύειν of what, in his mind, does not (at least for the duration of the project), namely, the εἶδος. This accent on programming has the advantage for his ontological argument that the temporality of things is seized or fixed. The perfectum character of programmatic production is of course reinforced by the acquaintedness that an artisan would have with a particular task. Hence the being-anticipated (*Vorweggenommensein*) that is the having (*Haben*) as habit and habitat of the craftsman (to which reference has been made above),<sup>37</sup> again without reference to the process by which this acquaintedness (skill) has been acquired through exercise and teaching from others. And if one were to ask where this perfectum, this *Haben*, comes from, what the origin of this λεγόμενον of the technical life is, the only hint is the technical deliberation to which Heidegger refers and that, as we shall see later, aims at excluding all deliberation. But, even if

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prudence it is the worst, and the same holds also for the other virtues” (καὶ ἐν μὲν τέχνῃ ὁ ἐκὼν ἄμαρτάνων αἰρετώτερος, περὶ δὲ φρόνησιν ἦττον, ὥσπερ καὶ περὶ τὰς ἀρετάς). In Heidegger’s reading of this phrase, the capacity to miss the mark intentionally (*Fehlgehenkönnen*) that manifests itself in the repeated attempt to try is exactly constitutive of technical skill, since it is only by trying that the certainty of the art is acquired and the stiffened technique, the firm process, is shattered (*zerbricht*). Insofar as Heidegger overstates his point, by claiming that “The τέχνη will proceed surer when it risks the attempt by error” (*Die τέχνη wird um so sicherer gehen, wenn sie einen Fehlversuch riskiert* [GA 19: 54]), he misses Aristotle’s point: the latter only means that whereas prudence reveals no excellence in deliberate error, the technical show-off, for instance, could still demonstrate considerable technical skill even by not doing the appropriate action. However, Heidegger’s claim about the heuristic and training merits of trying in technical life should be considered valid. In fact, one would have to ask why this trying—which could be nothing else than a practical deliberation—did not appear so clearly to him elsewhere where he portrayed skill, for instance in his reflection on exercise (see discussion later), and where he saw nothing of technical training by means of trying but only by means of the interiorization of prescriptions and the elimination of deliberation.

<sup>36</sup> In the passage of our discussion the question of deliberation (βουλευσις) is not touched on. In it, Heidegger translates τέχνη with deliberation (*Überlegung*).

<sup>37</sup> See my remarks above on Kisiel “From Intuition to Understanding,” 181–82.

one were to concede that there is an εἶδος as λεγόμενον behind every technical action, the introduction of a λόγος as λέγειν of a λεγόμενον would necessarily tend to favor an idea of technical life that corresponds more to its most modest figure, the δημιουργός, from whom the least effort and skill of adaptation between design and execution is expected; at the same time the hermeneutic nature of the mature skill of the master craftsman who is best capable of giving reason (λόγος) for what he/she is doing, as well as the process by which this skill is acquired, are obscured. My point would be still stronger if one accepts my argument above that Aristotle is mistaken not to allow for debate as to the ends of the τεχναί, as one should, on the basis of the ends-means feed-back loop.

The second link in Heidegger's chain of ideas to be questioned is equating λόγος as λεγόμενον with εἶδος. This move is needed in the economy of Heidegger's text, to indicate the correspondence between τέχνη, presence, and representation. What this does for the picture he paints of technical life, however, is to reduce the giving of reason in this domain to having an image, pattern, or design of the final product. Perhaps this tends to be true for an assistant who mechanically executes simple repetitive tasks. But it holds true neither for the apprentice nor even for the master craftsman, and this, even when no negotiation of the aim or εἶδος is required during the process of production. Very often in production there is a tension between the image or design of what is to be brought about and what is achievable within the limits set by contingent constraints. Aristotle hints at this in Book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (EN 1098a30–32) where he illustrates the varying degree of precision attainable in different disciplines by comparing the carpenter and the geometer: both seek to attain a precise geometrical figure (ἡ ορθή, but this is nothing different from the ideal τέλος or εἶδος), but whereas exactness is quintessential to the geometer, the carpenter is content with approximating this figure to the degree demanded by his work (πρὸς τὸ ἔργον). What a precise geometrical figure (a straight line or a right angle) is, is the same for both. The carpenter, in his/her design of a piece of furniture, would have an ideal in mind in which only right angles and straight lines figure, even though he/she knows very well that contingent factors (underdeveloped skill, the nature of the material, time constraints, and the like) would make it impossible in reality to bring that geometrical figure about in the production of the piece of furniture; in the final product there would be only approximations of the geometrical figures. It does not mean that the carpenter has from the outset a crooked, imperfect, or approximated εἶδος in mind; knowing that the product will not correspond perfectly to the

design does not mean the same as having an imperfect design in mind. The crooked line, the imperfect joint, in the final product is part of no εἶδος. But it does not come as a complete surprise either. In other words the λεγόμενον that justifies the way of working aspires to an εἶδος and most often cannot foresee in what way exactly this εἶδος will not be attained. The reason given for “the type, the order and the direction of the procedure of production,” i.e., the λεγόμενον, is not the same as the εἶδος. To say that the εἶδος and the λεγόμενον are the same thing is to claim that the craftsman aimed at an imperfect product from the outset (but in such a way that the precise imperfection was known to him/her beforehand), which would in practice exclude the aspiration to an improved execution.<sup>38</sup> The εἶδος and λεγόμενον tend to overlap the more mechanical, repetitive, and simple a task becomes. But in master craftsmanship and in complex arts, the εἶδος informs the λεγόμενον without determining the process of production completely. Whereas contingent constraints make the attainment of the εἶδος impossible, through exercise, improvement of instruments, the luxury of sufficient time and energy, one could acquire the skill to approximate it more and more closely. This is what ambitious craftsmen strive for. But the question of the quality of workmanship—a constant concern for good craftsmen—does not enter into consideration for Heidegger.

By following the same distinction of the λεγόμενον and the εἶδος, one would be able to give a more complete account of the phenomenon of style in workmanship. Whereas one would, by following Heidegger, have to reduce technical style to being an aspect of what is programmed in the technical εἶδος, the distinction that I propose would make it possible to take into consideration the constant ἔξις of the artisan and inventivity in the spur of the moment by the artisan that, in combination, account for aspects of an individual's or a school's style beyond the εἶδος.

It seems then that even though I do not deny that very often τέχνη has an εἶδος as its ἀρχή that anticipates the τέλος, it does not mean that in technical life there is always an εἶδος as a clearly defined idea or an accomplished, finished-off plan or program, or that it is necessarily present in the mind and

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<sup>38</sup> What is said here with the example of the carpenter should be complemented by *EN* 1104a7–10 (which will be discussed below), where Aristotle indicates that there is no τέχνη that could determine what the τεχνίτης should do in every particular circumstance. Having a general knowledge of the field of work (τέχνη) informs the craftsman in a particular situation but it is not a question of simply applying the rules—it is a question of hermeneutically engaging with the situation in order to find the appropriate technical μεσότης.

of which the execution would approach a “reading” of this script,<sup>39</sup> without any question about the attainability of a reasonable design.

Whether this deformed presentation of τέχνη is to be attributed more to Aristotle or more to Heidegger is of no importance to me here. But once this caricatural picture of technical life has been accepted, it is much easier to follow Heidegger in exaggerating the distinction between τέχνη and ἀρετή. I shall still have to turn my attention to virtue and in particular to that aspect that is the most immediately affected by what one thinks of the relation between ἀρεταί and τεχναί and thus the nature of τέχνη, namely, ἕξις, in order to argue why the life of πρῶξις for its part is much more technical than Heidegger concedes.

### 3. *Hexis* (Disposition)

Heidegger repeatedly states that his objective for discussing Aristotle’s *Grundbegriff* of ἕξις (disposition) is that it allows us to gain a better understanding of πάθος. Though there is no reason to deny that Heidegger does indeed use his analysis of ἕξις in this way, it will become apparent from the following discussion that this analysis opens up to the Heideggerian “ethics,” which it makes possible to a large extent. “Ἔξις is the place where the road of *Jemeinigkeit* or *Jeweiligkeit* splits into its authentic and its inauthentic modes. The road to inauthenticity will carry the Greek name ποίησις, and the way of authenticity, that of πρῶξις.<sup>40</sup> Thus the ἕξις will lead us to a number of themes that will remain important in *Sein und Zeit*, especially *Entschlossenheit* and *Eigentlichkeit*, that will be so decisive for the way in which Heidegger conceived of the relation between *Dasein* and its equals. My own concern with this theme, however, lies neither in the emotions nor in the authentic existence but in the perspective proposed in it on technicity. I shall read Heidegger’s rendering of ἕξις in the ethical virtues to finally gain access to an understanding of ἕξις that is not only a ἕξις πρακτική, but also a ἕξις ποιητική.<sup>41</sup> Once again, my objective is not to suspend the distinction but to show how this distinction has been exaggerated by Heidegger and from there to question his presentation of the ἕξις προαρετική, the *Entschlossenheit*.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Heidegger’s use of the word *Vorschrift* (instruction) that could be read etimologically as I indicate.

<sup>40</sup> I herein agree with Taminioux; see his “*Poiesis et Praxis* dans l’articulation de l’ontologie fondamentale.”

<sup>41</sup> See my appropriation of the ἕξις πρακτική and ἕξις ποιητική in *EN* 1140a3–5 above.

As in the previous section, I shall start here by providing an orientation to the theme as I read it in Aristotle, before moving on to §17 of *GA* 18 that covers the ἕξις.

### 3.1 *Aristotle on Hexis*

In the preceding section, I examined the distinction between virtue and skill. Aristotle was obliged to explain himself on this topic, since the two terms are so closely related. This closeness is illustrated by the number of analogies that he used to explain the process of virtue acquisition. Let us go back to an important point in Aristotle's explanation of this process. He anticipates the critical question about what it means that in order to become virtuous, one must perform virtuous actions (*EN* 1105a16–18). The solution to this question, which is a center piece of the Aristotelian functional argument, consists in distinguishing two ways of acting virtuously and in indicating what they represent for one another. Two people do the same virtuous action, but for the one this means doing the *kind* of action that a virtuous person would, whereas for the other it means doing it *as* a virtuous person would.<sup>42</sup> The backbone of Aristotle's theory of virtue acquisition consists in arguing that it is by acting as the first person does that we learn to act like the second (though acting like the second is never guaranteed). We find here a situation similar to that present in the acquisition of skill: one could do the right thing by simply following the instruction or pattern (this is what the δημιουργός or the apprentice does); or one could practice an art as the master craftsman does, namely, from a well-established disposition (but without any guarantees) to do the right thing.

If this is how virtue is acquired, virtue is to be defined as follows: "Virtue, then, is a state involving rational choice, consisting in a mean relative to us and determined by reason—the reason, that is, by reference to which the practically wise person would determine it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess, the other of deficiency." (ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετική, ἐν μεσότητι οὖσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὠρισμένη λογῶ καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν. μεσότης δὲ δύο κακιῶν, τῆς μὲν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δε κατε ἔλλειψιν [*EN* 1106b36–1107a2]).<sup>43</sup> This is what the virtuous person "disposes of"; but the virtue apprentice, though he/she would be able to steer towards the mean

<sup>42</sup> Cf. M. Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics*, 104.

<sup>43</sup> Translation of Roger Crisp, in the Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). A more literal translation is given by Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985): "Virtue, then, is a state that decides, consisting in a mean, the mean relative to us, which is defined by reference to reason, i.e. to the

between two vices, lacks the state, the disposition, the ἔξις, to do so, like the φρονίμος would. It is evident that the notion of ἔξις is central to this definition and thus to the solution offered by Aristotle to the criticism anticipated. Ἐξις is what distinguishes the virtuous person, from someone who is not yet but strives to become one. Taken on its own, however, it is not a term that would suffice to make the distinction between the virtuous person and the vicious one, since one could have a ἔξις that disposes towards vice. Hence the importance of the complete definition.

The ἔξις is characterized 1) as having a hold on something (this is the element of firmness, steadiness or stability), 2) as being possessed, rather than used (it is a potential that could remain hidden), and 3) as a persistent orientation or disposition that could be more passive (in the sense of being mere reaction) or more active (striving to realize an objective).<sup>44</sup> These are all qualities that are also associated with acquired skill; in fact, we have already referred to *EN* 1104a where Aristotle clearly distinguishes ποίησις and πρᾶξις, but in the same passage he insists that there is no skill that is not a state or disposition to make or produce, and this with the involvement of reason (οὐδεμία οὔτε τέχνη ἐστὶν ἥτις οὐ μετὰ λόγου ποιητικὴ ἔξις ἐστὶν [*EN* 1104a9–10]). It seems then that an acquired ἔξις or even a ἔξις μετὰ λόγου does not distinguish virtue from skill.

The determination of the virtuous ἔξις as directed at the mean between extremes also provides us with material for further comparison. This mean, as is well known, is no universal principle; it has two aspects of relativity: it is πρὸς ἡμᾶς, relative to us 1) in the sense of who we are and 2) relative to the range of particular qualities of possible actions within a given situation in which we find ourselves. The relativity to us consists in determining the mean by the agent's degree of expertise or experience, with reference to human nature and to the age, gender, and position with regard to the freedom of the agent.<sup>45</sup> If it could be shown that the guiding idea of the mean is indeed applicable to skill too and not only to virtue, then these determinations of the mean πρὸς ἡμᾶς would certainly apply to the craftsman too. I wish to suggest not that the ἔξις of ποίησις could be reduced to its seeking of the mean (in any case, virtue is not exclusively concerned with the mean either, as is indicated by Aristotle in cases of murder, adultery, theft, etc.), nor that the ἔξις ποιητικὴ

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reason by reference to which the intelligent person would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency.”

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics*, 107.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics*, 113.

should be conceived of as means-seeking to the same extent as in the case of ἀρετή, but that a similar structure is not foreign to the ἔξις of τέχνη. In order then to argue this point, let us examine the second aspect of relativity of the mean, namely, that it is relative to the particularities of possible action in the situation of practice.<sup>46</sup> The mean is defined as not a mathematical mean but as the right proportion to be established on a range of “distinguishable increments” of all the adverbial possibilities of an emotional or practical response to a situation. These adverbial possibilities are the range of possibilities concerning the agent, object, instrument, manner, time, place, duration, reason and purpose. Thus, for every possible action in a particular situation there is a range of possible determinations of each of these adverbial aspects of the sought action and the combination of these will make up the response to a given situation. Virtue is having the disposition to choose the appropriate ratio, the mean, of each of the adverbial possibilities that determine action.

If one accepts this complex version of the doctrine of the mean borrowed from Michael Pakaluk, then one would be obliged to acknowledge that in technical action too, one is always confronted with the choice of the distinguishable increments of the agent, object, instrument, manner, etc. of a particular technical action.<sup>47</sup> And if this is conceded, then the doctrine of the mean applies to skill and thus the determinations of who the artisan is, is also determined πρὸς ἡμᾶς, as I set out to show.<sup>48</sup>

I do not believe that my analyses amount to eliminating the distinction between ἔξις ποιητική and the ἔξις πρακτική. But it does seem to suggest that the two notions sufficiently overlap to consider them as two derivatives of one human ἔξις. The acquisition of such a ἔξις would take place from the earliest childhood by good or bad, implicit or explicit education and social sanction. The virtuous person or the virtuoso has acquired a disposition to deliberative choices relative to himself/herself and relative to the particulars of the action to be undertaken. Furthermore, it could not be excluded that a ἔξις for virtue could be partially learned by practicing a related skill: temperance or self-mastery acquired in the carpenter’s workshop, on the sports field, or in the piano room might translate very easily in a practice of temperance or self-mastery; the badly acquired virtue (or the vice) of irascibility would impair the

<sup>46</sup> Here I follow M. Pakaluk, *Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 110–11.

<sup>47</sup> Though one would have to qualify the last element, the purpose, since the οὐ ἕνεκα is inscribed in the essence of practice as it could not be inscribed in production.

<sup>48</sup> This conclusion has been anticipated by my interpretation above of the precision of technical work as being determined πρὸς τὸ ἔργον (see my discussion in sec. 2.2 above of Aristotle’s comparison of precision for the geometer and for the carpenter).



apprentice craftsman to surmount the initial difficulties in acquiring a particular skill.

In the reading of Heidegger that follows, we shall see that his reading of Aristotle takes him in the opposite direction from what I propose, in line with his exaggerated distinction between skill and virtue: ἔξις is, according to him, ἔξις, not of ποίησις, but of πράξις.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.2 Hexis: *From Aristotle to Heidegger*

Heidegger executes this fine separation by a strategy of forming his own notion of ἔξις (not a ἔξις ποιητική but ἔξις πρακτική) with the exclusion of a number of qualities of Aristotle's ἔξις, in particular, those that would be shared by a ἔξις ποιητική. This is done in service of laying out two modes of existence that would at the same time be two ways of existing relative to the others. Let us have a look at how Heidegger “deconstructs” Aristotle's notion of ἔξις.

Heidegger's discussion of ἔξις in *GA* 18, §17, is to be read within the setting of the third chapter of part one. Its theme is clearly formulated in the title “The interpretation of human existence with respect to the fundamental possibility of speaking-with-one-another following the main theme of the Rhetoric” (*Die Auslegung des Daseins des Menschen hinsichtlich der Grundmöglichkeit des Miteinandersprechens am Leitfaden der Rhetorik*) and is made possible by Heidegger's conviction that “the Rhetoric is nothing but the interpretation of concrete [human] existence, the hermeneutics of [human] existence itself” (*Die Rhetorik ist nichts anderes als die Auslegung des konkreten Daseins, die Hermeneutik des Daseins selbst* [*GA* 18: 110]). Still in *Sein und Zeit* the *Rhetoric* is presented in this way, namely, as “the first systematic hermeneutics of the everydayness of being-with-one-another” (*die erste systematische Hermeneutik der Alltäglichkeit des Miteinanderseins* [*SZ* 138]). However, the *Rhetoric* moves to the background in §17 in favor of passages from the *Metaphysics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but it remains the décor against which this paragraph is to be read—the perspective on the authentic existence with which this paragraph concludes will indicate what the conditions are for individual action, independent of the influence of others, and will thus anticipate the singularizing aspect of authenticity in *Sein und Zeit*.

The discussion of ἔξις (§17) is embedded in that of πάθη (in §§16 and 18). The former notion is introduced with the aim of using that which is more transparent (i.e., the ἔξις) in order to elucidate that which is less transparent

<sup>49</sup> For the purposes of the present essay I shall leave out the ἔξις ἐπιστημική.

(i.e. the πάθη).<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, if the πάσχειν of the πάθη is the opposite of the activity of ποιεῖν and thus they represent the two extremes in the research of κίνησις (i.e., *Sein im Sinne des Bewegtseins*, being in the sense of being-moved [GA 18: 172]), then by implication, as we shall see, ἔχειν and ἔξις take a middle position between πάσχειν and ποιεῖν.<sup>51</sup> But in the part of GA 18 under discussion, the πάθη is presented as something that co-determines the meaning of a λόγος of the speaker; the λόγος has its ground (*Boden*) in πάθη (GA 18: 177), the fundamental reason for this being that the emotions are the *how* of being-in-the-world (*Die πάθη charakterisieren ganz allgemein eine Befindlichkeit des Menschen, ein Wie des Seins-in-der-Welt* [GA 18: 178]). But emotions change (as under the influence of rhetoric) and thus a being-in-the-world could be entirely redirected by such a change in emotion. But the possibility of holding or grasping (*fassen*)<sup>52</sup> emotions also exists and that is exactly where the ἔξις (disposition) comes into play.

Heidegger starts his exposition of the double Aristotelian *Grundbegriff*, ἔξις/ἔχειν, in GA 18, §17, by synthesizing a definition of ἔχειν from its four different uses presented by Aristotle in Book 4 of the *Metaphysics*. According to this definition, ἔχειν, when said of a being, characterizes it as “*being out after a determined possibility* of being or its negation, but which is in the sense of the negation the same: the *withholding from being appropriately as something could be*” (GA 18: 174).<sup>53</sup> Subsequently, ἔξις “means in this ontological context

<sup>50</sup> According to Heidegger’s declaration of his “general hermeneutical theme” (*allgemeinen hermeneutischen Leitfadens* [GA 18: 177]). Cf. also the title of §18a: “The ἔξις as main theme for the understanding of the structure of being of πάθος” (*Die ἔξις als Leitfaden für die Fassung der Seinsstruktur des πάθος* [GA 18: 191]).

<sup>51</sup> Heidegger’s reading of Aristotle’s κίνησις in the *Physics*, that covers the whole of the second part of GA 18, balances the first part in which *Dasein* as λόγον ἔχον is analyzed, in order to form a unified ontological argument of this series of lectures. Whereas I concentrate on the first part of GA 18, a commentary on the second part has been worked out by Charlotta Weigelt in “*Logos as Kinesis: Heidegger’s Interpretation of the Physics in Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie*,” *Epoché* 9, no.1, (Fall 2004): 101–16. For a global reading of the early Heidegger’s reappropriation of Aristotle’s κίνησις, see Jussi Backmann, “Divine and Mortal Motivation: On the Movement of Life in Aristotle and Heidegger,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 38 (2006): 241–61.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. GA 18: 180: “In der ἔξις wird sich das Dasein schärfer zeigen in seiner *Jeweiligkeit*. Sein des Menschen, menschliches Leben als Dasein ist *jeweilig, im Augenblick*: ἔξις ist ein Gefaßtsein des Daseins, orientiert auf den Augenblick.”

<sup>53</sup> “*Ausein auf eine bestimmte Seinsmöglichkeit* oder seiner Negation, was aber im Sinne der Negation dasselbe ist: des *Abhaltens davon, eigentlich zu sein, wie etwas sein möchte*.” This “being out after” (*aussein auf*) is the exact expression by which Heidegger characterized the facial movement of life since the Natorp Bericht: “Der Grundsinn der faktischen Lebensbewegtheit ist

the appropriate being-present of the having as such” (*bedeutet innerhalb dieses Seinszusammenhanges das eigentliche Gegenwärtigsein des Habens als solchen* [GA 18: 175]). This being-present (*Gegenwärtigsein*) of the ἔξις is to be understood as the in-between (μεταξύ) between the active bringing about of something and that something’s having been brought about;<sup>54</sup> it is, according to Heidegger, no new determination of being (*keine neue Seinsbestimmung* [GA 18: 175]); it is the mere being there (*Da*), namely, being there at the τέλος of the particular thing. Ἐξις is furthermore characterized by the fact of disposing elements in a certain order (διάθεσις). Thus far Heidegger has presented the ἔξις as a general ontological *Grundbegriff* applicable to the whole spectrum of beings from things to human beings, according to the aim laid down by him.<sup>55</sup> But he then applies it to human beings, and in the move changes his mind to state that ἔξις, *Haben*, is indeed a determination of being (*Seinsbestimmung*).<sup>56</sup>

In accordance with the aim of the discussion of ἔξις, namely, the elucidation of the πάθη, Heidegger can now proceed by stating that “[t]he πάθη can be had, in having resides a relation with being” (*Die πάθη können gehabt werden, im Haben liegt eine Beziehung auf das Sein* [GA 18: 177]). The link between ἔξις and πάθος imposes itself in a reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 2: according to Aristotle, the soul (or at least the part of the soul that is capable of reacting to reason) can bring about either πάθη or δυνάμεις or ἔξις.<sup>57</sup> Here πάθη should be seen as actual emotion and δυνάμεις as the potential to have an emotion; ἔξις would then be the intermediary, the μεταξύ with relation to emotion.<sup>58</sup> The relation to being (*Beziehung auf das Sein*) follows from Heidegger’s ontological understanding of the emotions as the *how* of being-in-the-world (cf. GA 18: 178). It thus follows that the ἔξις is a relation to being by the fact that it “expresses” a being-composed (*Gefäßtsein*)<sup>59</sup> with regards to the *how* of the being-in-the-world.

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das *Sorgen* (curare). In dem gerichteten, sorgenden ‘Aussein auf etwas’ ist das Worauf der Sorge des lebens da, die jeweilige *Welt*” (NB 14).

<sup>54</sup> *Metaphysica* 4.1022b ff.: ὅταν γὰρ τὸ μὲν ποιῆ τὸ δὲ ποιῆται, ἔστι ποίησις μεταξύ (“when the one makes and the other is made, in between them is the fact of making”).

<sup>55</sup> GA 18: 172: “Wir müssen sehen, worin die Mannigfaltigkeit der Bedeutungen des ἔχειν übereinkommt, inwiefern das ἔχειν Sein ausdrückt.”

<sup>56</sup> GA 18: 176; cf. also 179, where ἔξις is called a “Grundbestimmung des Daseins des Menschen.”

<sup>57</sup> EN 1105b19–21: ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γινόμενα τρία ἐστί, πάθη δυνάμεις ἔξις, τούτων ἂν τι εἴη ἢ ἀρετή.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Pakaluk, *Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics*, 105–6.

<sup>59</sup> Heidegger will exploit a number of elements from the semantic field of the root “fass-”: *Fassung* (composure); *fassen* (grasp, hold or grasp [figuratively]), i.e., understand); *gefäßt* (calm,

However, in what follows in *GA* 18, §17, one quickly comes under the impression that Heidegger is interested in much more than an understanding of the emotions. He sets out to explore the ἔξις in the human being as genus of virtue (*GA* 18, §17c, introduction)<sup>60</sup> and announces four fundamental aspects (*Grundmomente*) of the ontology of *Dasein* that will come to the fore by an exploration of this connection between ἔξις and ἀρετή:<sup>61</sup> 1) that doing (πρᾶξις) is concern (*Besorgen*) and, in particular, care of *Dasein* for itself; 2) the *Jeweiligkeit* of *Dasein* in the *Augenblick*; 3) while on average and mostly *Dasein* lingers in the extremes of the too much or too little, it has this *Gefasstsein* that is a possibility that *Dasein* has seized from its always there position (*aus seiner jeweiligen Lage*); 4) the occasion for and the way of forming a ἔξις is to be situated in the *Dasein* itself. Thus, the ontological importance of ἔξις is indicated early in §17c with reference to human existence (*Dasein des Menschen*) that is equated with πρᾶξις and, in particular, with reference to the καιρός of that πρᾶξις (cf. *GA* 18: 180). It should be noted that the stage is thus set to explore the ἔξις as a fundamental aspect of the ontology of *Dasein* by considering only the ἔξις πρακτική and without any consideration for the ἔξις ποιητική. Thus ἔξις could be considered exclusively in the perspective of *Dasein's* concern for *itself* (while in interaction with the world and others). Furthermore, ἔξις is explored in the genesis of ἀρετή in a context that is stamped (albeit by anticipation of §19) by the exaggerated distinction of ἀρετή from τέχνη; the ἀρετή of which the ἔξις is part of the genesis is an ἀρετή strictly devoid of everything technical. Chances for this reading of ἔξις to concede an affinity to anything resembling technical life have been practically eliminated in advance.

In order, then, to follow Heidegger's development on the contribution of virtues and disposition to the understanding of *Dasein*, one has to remember that virtues are dispositions and the latter considered only as "being-composed with respect to the variety of states" (*Gefasstsein zu den verschiedenen Befindlichkeiten* [*GA* 18: 181]); virtues, or rather virtue (since Heidegger uses here only the singular), is a qualification of *Dasein*, not in the sense of a quality

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composed); *gefaßt auf etwas* (prepared for). The word *Gefasstsein* should resound with these possibilities.

<sup>60</sup> *GA* 18: 179: "Wir betrachten die ἔξις, sofern sie bezogen ist auf die ζωὴ ἀνθρώπου, auf die πρᾶξις μετὰ λόγου—ἔξις als das γένος der ἀρετή." Jacques Taminiaux, using especially *GA* 19, has worked out an interpretation of "The Interpretation of Aristotle's Notion of *Areté* in Heidegger's First Courses," in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, ed. F. Raffoul and D. Pettigrew (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2002), 13–27.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *GA* 18: 180.

(*Eigenschaft*), but as the adverbiality of the *Sein* of *Dasein*, that is, of the temporality or extension in time (*Zeitlichkeit, die Erstreckung in die Zeit* [GA 18: 181]). Thus, since *Dasein* exists temporally, its adverbiality (namely, ἀρετή) comes about only temporally, that is, according to Heidegger citing Aristotle, δι' ἔθους, *durch die Gewohnheit*, through habit. But Heidegger gives quite a peculiar turn to this habituation. Ἔξις is to be obtained by going through (*durchmachen*) different situations, which are explicitly characterized as dangerous situations (*gefährliche Situationen*).<sup>62</sup> What enables one to get a new hold on the emotional access to the world thus resembles less of a gradual process of training and more of a frequent confrontation with danger. As surprising as this twist to Aristotle may be, it is decisive for the interpretation of ἔξις: it constitutes a moment of reduction<sup>63</sup> by which one is torn out of one's mode of everyday existence and obliged to answer to the proposition of a possibility of a (new) mode of existence. And it is only by confrontation with danger, and in resisting drawing back from the danger, that the specific adverbiality of a *Dasein* could be changed, i.e., the ἔξις could be changed by *Dasein* itself.<sup>64</sup> Conceded, Heidegger characterizes this process of the acquisition of ἔξις also as *Umgang*—"it is in interaction with other people that we become staid and prudent"<sup>65</sup>—but this more tame rendering of the situation in which ἔξις is acquired is immediately thereafter destabilized by implying that this very interaction with people is the dangerous situation in the face of which one could form a ἔξις. Furthermore, in this regard, Heidegger insists on his interpretation that virtue is learned not by mere reflection but by daring into existence (*Sichauswagen in das Dasein* [GA 18: 181]).

<sup>62</sup> On the one page (GA 18: 181), Heidegger uses twice the adjective "gefährlich" and once the noun "Gefahr." It should be noted that the notion of danger is to be found here and there throughout this lecture course.

<sup>63</sup> I use the notion of "reduction" here in the Heideggerian sense as analyzed most clearly by Rudolf Bernet in "La réduction phénoménologique et la double vie du sujet," in *La vie du sujet. Recherches sur l'interprétation de Husserl dans la phénoménologie* (Paris: PUF (Epiméthée), 1994), 5–36.

However, it becomes apparent that the exact nature of the reduction by danger has not been clarified: does it come over me or do I bring it about? One finds a well-known example of the latter in §283 of Nietzsche's *Fröhliche Wissenschaft*.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. GA 18: 181: "Erst dadurch, daß das Leben sich nicht vor seinen eigenen Möglichkeiten und Gefahren zurückzieht, ist die Gelegenheit geboten, dieses Wie des Daseins *selbst* auszubilden" (my italics).

<sup>65</sup> GA 18: 181: "Dadurch, daß wir miteinander im Umgang mit Menschen sind, werden wir gesetzt und besonnen."

If there is then still any doubt as to Heidegger's non-declared wish to write out the habituation from virtue acquisition, one could follow the movement by which he pursues the realization of this wish.

1. In his interpretation of ἔξις by the formula “we get them [the virtues] by using them” (χρησάμενοι ἔσχομεν [EN 1103a30–31]), he insists that we appropriate a ἔξις by making use of the possibilities of the acts (*Handeln*) or concerns (*Besorgen*) of emotions (*Befinden*) and adds that we *do not* have it to then make use of it. This corresponds with Aristotle's view insofar as the ἔξις is not a natural capacity or disposition and thus a disposition acquired (in practice).<sup>66</sup> But Heidegger's negation is ambiguous: it reinforces what had just been stated, but it could also be read as contradicting Aristotle—we *do*, according to the latter, use our virtues (or for that matter our ἔξεις) after having acquired them, in fact, that is the very reason why attention should be given to acquiring the right ἔξεις. If Heidegger is read in this way, he would seem to say that ἔξις is hardly *acquired* or *had*; it is to be reconquered anew every time.<sup>67</sup>
2. This statement of the non-habitual acquiredness of the ἔξις is then reinforced by declaring that there is for the taking of the chance (*Gelegenheit-Nehmen*) and daring (*Sichauswagen*) by which the ἔξις is formed no τέχνη or παραγγελία (command, instruction).<sup>68</sup> This means that the way in which this formation will take place cannot be programmed beforehand, neither by skillful know-how (which, as we have already seen, is, according to Heidegger's view of τέχνη, programmed by the εἶδος or image of what is to be brought about) nor by “something like a general military command, an a priori ethics” (*so etwas wie einen allgemeinen Armeebefehl*,

<sup>66</sup> See introduction to previous subsection.

<sup>67</sup> Aristotle incidentally states explicitly in the same passage (EN 1103a 32) that one is to understand this acquisition of virtue by analogy to that of technical skill: one acquires virtues by doing virtuous things in order to acquire the ἔξις of practicing virtues, just as one acquires a skill by practicing the skill in order to acquire the stable practical know-how.

<sup>68</sup> The text from which Heidegger cites here (EN 1104a7–10) serves to explain the nature of precision to be expected from reflection on conduct. Aristotle states that “the λόγος that one can have concerning each single thing [form of action] can not be exact” (ὁ περὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα λόγος οὐκ ἔχει τὰκριβές) and that one can therefore follow no general τέχνη or παραγγελία in the particular case, but should consider the occasion in itself (τὰ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν σκοπεῖν). He clarifies this idea by the example of two τεχναί: “it is just like in the case of medicine and navigation” (ὡσπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ἰατρικῆς ἔχει καὶ τῆς κυβερνητικῆς). This analogy is completely lost in Heidegger's reading, and it is exactly this ὡσπερ that is my concern.

*eine apriorische Ethik* [GA 18: 182]). If then disposition is not acquired like a skill that is learned from others or by order from another, it follows that: “everybody has to have his/her glance directed, time and again, for himself/herself, to that which is on the occasion and concerns him/her” (*Jeder muß je für sich selbst den Blick gerichtet haben auf das, was im Augenblick ist und ihn angeht* [GA 18: 182]). With this latter conclusion, Heidegger couples his refusal of a programmable acquisition of ἔξις (and thus the serious playing down of acquisition of ἔξις by habituation) with a rejection of the influence of the others in this process, i.e., the role of explicit or implicit education of ἔξις.<sup>69</sup> What is at stake in the formation of the ἔξις is the individual human being within his/her singular circumstances of danger (that is, the *Augenblick* or *καίρως*) that concerns himself/herself and on which each person should thus provide his/her own unique response. In this way an important step is given in the direction of the depolitization of the ethical virtues: ἔξις is what concerns me and my singular possibilities, in my circumstances, and is directed to myself as *τέλος* of the virtue. This self-directedness to which a ἔξις could enable *πρᾶξις*, distinguishes it from *τέχνη*, since the latter’s only concern is to produce a product that functions correctly (cf. GA 18: 182). Nothing is said about any similarities between skill and virtue.

3. In line with the first two aspects of the crossing out of habituation from the acquisition of ἔξις, Heidegger will make the distinction between exercise (*Übung*) and repetition (*Wiederholung*), which I shall analyze later on.

Having laid out the basic structure of the genesis of the ἔξις, Heidegger now proceeds by characterizing the agent of the ἔξις by using Aristotle’s comparison of virtue (to which ἔξις leads) with skill (the same comparison that I have discussed above in §2.1): the virtuous action is such due to the ἔξις, the *πὼς ἔχων* (EN 1105a32) of the agent that is characterized by 1) acting in knowledge (*εἰδώς*), which Heidegger immediately associates with circumspection

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<sup>69</sup> By this, I do not want to suggest that one should allow the other to be, as it were, virtuous in my place, neither do I negate the real possibility of entering into opposition to current values and ways of doing. But I ask whether the other is only part of the danger and not sometimes either my teacher in virtue or my companion in the exercise of it. Would the concession that the formation of ἔξις depends on a social setting necessarily mean the impossibility of finding the mean, the dissolution into *das Man*? Is it completely unimaginable that a real ἔξις, as Heidegger seeks it, could be socially formed? In any case, stating that virtue is formed only in opposition to the others rather than by social influence is very far from Aristotle’s opinion.

(φρόνησις),<sup>70</sup> i.e., acting with *Umsichtigkeit* directed at the occasion (καιρός, *Augenblick*), 2) acting as προαιρούμενος, “from a real resolution to... (*aus einem wirklichen Entschlossensein zu...*), translates Heidegger and adds, “he has to act from himself” (*er muß von sich selbst her handeln*), and 3) acting as βεβήως καὶ ἀμετακινήτως ἔχων, which is to say, “firm, not being brought out of composure” (*fest und nicht aus der Fassung zu bringen*), or again, acting as “having-arrived-at-another-composure” (*in-eine-andere-Fassung-Gekommensein*), which is uncharacteristic of the everyday existence (*GA* 18: 183). The adverbs βεβήως (steadfastly or firmly) and ἀμετακινήτως (immovable) are however not explained—which surprises us, given the care that Heidegger has taken to let traces of permanence in the ἔξις fade away. This puzzle could be solved if one accepts that Heidegger’s translation of the phrase in question points not in the direction of an acquired, stable disposition but rather in the direction of an unwavering resistance to the usual, everyday being thrown about by the changes of emotions, the πάθη, the *Mitgenommenwerden* or *Ausder-Fassung-Geraten* (*GA* 18: 242), a resistance that is a steadfast “having-by-yourself” of a determined possibility to be such and such” (*Bei-sich-haben einer bestimmten Möglichkeit so und so zu sein*—according to the ontological definition of ἔξις in *GA* 18: 144). In other words, the βεβήως is steadfastness with reference to the changes of how one finds oneself (*Befindlichkeit*), rather than the sedimentation of a disposition, as Aristotle is usually thought to mean.

Thus Heidegger fully exploits Aristotle’s threefold distinction between the agent of virtue and the agent of skill; in fact, he even drives the two further apart. This could be seen in his gloss on the first point: not without conceding later, on the same page, that this point is shared by skill and virtue, Heidegger reformulates this point by equating εἰδώς with φρόνησις and by explaining that this specific kind of εἰδώς is such that the agent of virtue “has to act with the right ‘circumspection,’ that is oriented towards the καιρός in view of the field [of the matter of the καιρός]” (*muß in der rechten “Umsichtigkeit” handeln, die hinsichtlich des Sachgebietes orientiert ist auf den καιρός*) (*GA* 18: 183)—this is vocabulary that Heidegger reserves for πρῶξις (as has been indicated above and will be seen in the discussion later on). Ironically this formulation would suit Aristotle perfectly well where he spoke about the need to consider the particularity of the occasion as is done in the τεχνάι (and as I have indicated in footnote 68). Instead of recognizing and exploring this similarity,

<sup>70</sup> For a useful bibliography of Heidegger’s reappropriation of Aristotle’s φρόνησις, cf. J. Backmann, “Divine and Mortal Motivation,” 259–60 n. 42.



Heidegger opts to formulate (with the support of *EN* 1105b1–2) a second gloss on the first point, such that it clarifies how the agent of skill could be considered to act εἰδώς or εἰδέναι: “In τέχνη only the correct subject-knowledge is relevant. What kind of fellow I am, plays no role in cobblery” (*Bei der τέχνη kommt nur die rechte Sachkenntnis in Frage. Was ich selbst für ein Kerl bin, spielt für die Schusterei keine Rolle* [*GA* 18: 183]).<sup>71</sup> In other words, Heidegger thus separates acting “with knowledge”—which Aristotle thought was shared by the agent of virtue and the agent of skill, albeit in different degrees—so that, for the one, acting “with knowledge” means circumspectly seizing the occasion appropriately, but for the other, it is simply applying subject-knowledge as an internalized prescription (*Vorschrift*). Thus Heidegger advances in the construction of his notion of ἔξις that is at the basis of ἀρετή, a ἔξις that has nothing in common with the life of technical skill.

But what most retains Heidegger’s attention in this threefold characterization of the agent of virtue is the last two points (what Heidegger calls “das Προαιρούμενος-βεβαίως-Sein” [*GA* 18: 184]). Following these, Heidegger characterizes the agent of ethical virtue as someone who acts from himself/herself (*von sich selbst her*). Instead of taking flight into the majority of people’s *Geschwätz*—that discussion about ethical conflicts by which the οἱ πολλοὶ believe they could generate moral conduct—the true agents of ethical virtue succeed in “having the authentic existence by themselves” (*die eigentliche Existenz bei sich selbst haben*, as Heidegger renders οὔτοι τὴν ψυχὴν οὕτω φιλοσοφοῦντες [*GA* 18: 184]).<sup>72</sup> Heidegger can now proceed to explain what ἀρετή as ἔξις is, what the “eigentliche Existenz” is in contradistinction both to the average everydayness and to the technical life. And he can do so while having the full benefit of the crossing out of social habituation from his notion of ἔξις and the exaggerated distinction between virtue and skill taken over from

<sup>71</sup> Heidegger chooses here a skill that suits his argument: making and repairing shoes needs a certain knowledge that is to be put into practice and the client of the cobbler cares only about having good shoes. It is however very difficult to imagine that a cobbler would succeed in attracting his clientele if he does not have the ἔξις of a good cobbler which would also be characterized as βεβαίως καὶ ἀμετακινήτως ἔχων, i.e., “fest und nicht aus der Fassung zu bringen” (*GA* 18: 183). In concrete terms that means that he has to have mastered a level of perfectionism, the perseverance to continue skillfully under pressure or under boredom, the wisdom to know when to refuse a task that the circumstances would not allow to be accomplished, etc.

<sup>72</sup> And a few pages later, the opposite pole from the common *Geschwätz* is characterized when Heidegger presents virtue directed at the mean “die sich selbst ausgrenzt ‘durch das Sprechen’ mit der Welt, in der Weise des Vorüberlegens des Augenblicks, durch das Wie des Durchsprechens der Umstände” (*GA* 18:188).

Aristotle and amplified. In the subsequent analysis of virtue, which clarifies still further the second and third aspect of the characterization of the agent of virtue, it will become apparent that these acquisitions play a major role in his reappropriation of Aristotle's ἀρετή. This authentic existence, the life of the agent of virtue, is laid out in the exposition of ἀρετή as aiming at the mean (μεσότης).

In order to understand the mean as part of authentic existence, one should be reminded of the relation between virtue as ἔξις and the changing of emotion: “our being-in-the-world is always characterized by this state of being elevated and dejected, and precisely so that we find ourselves in the extremes as taken along by a depression or an elevated state” (GA 18: 185)<sup>73</sup> or even more explicitly “on average and ordinarily we are taken along, moving in extremes” (*Durchschnittlich und alltäglich sind wir mitgenommen, bewegen wir uns in Ausschlägen* [GA 18: 242]). Now this swing or these extremes (*Ausschlägen*) are what Aristotle called excess (ὑπερβολή) and defect (ἔλλειψις) (cf. EN 1107a2–3), i.e., the swing towards the extremes that represent the vices. How Heidegger goes about introducing the idea of being taken along (*mitgenommen*) is not clear, since for Aristotle, though sometimes people could be taken along, often those people who live in vice are trained in their own way—they have a ἔξις, but a badly formed one that does not allow them to achieve the appropriate, prudent μεσότης for them in a particular situation—which means they have a ἔξις that tends rather towards a vice or extreme than a virtue, but it is a ἔξις nonetheless and not simply being taken along. Be that as it may, it is with reference to this condition that there is a *Gefäßtsein* of the emotions, a disposition or a steadfastness within the *Mitgenommenheit*. As such it is a particular modification of the πάθη, of *how* one is in the world. Virtue, ἀρετή, is a form of disposition that seeks the mean that would be beneficial to the particular agent, within a particular context. “*Our being as characterized by its always-there does not lend itself to having one-off and absolute norms imposed on it.* It boils down to shaping the being of the human being in such a way that it is set in the *aptitude of holding the middle*. However that means nothing different from *seizing the moment*” (GA 18: 186).<sup>74</sup> Viewed ontologically, the

<sup>73</sup> “Unser In-der-Welt-sein ist immer charakterisiert durch diese Befindlichkeit des Gehoben- und Gedrücktsseins, und zwar so, daß wir uns in den Ausschlägen befinden, von einer Mißstimmung oder gehobenen Stimmung mitgenommen.”

<sup>74</sup> “Für unser Sein, charakterisiert durch die Jeweiligkeit, läßt sich keine einmalige und absolute Norm geben. Es kommt darauf an, das Sein des Menschen so auszubilden, daß es in die *Eignung* versetzt wird, die *Mitte zu halten*. Das besagt aber nichts anderes als *den Augenblick zu ergreifen*.”

virtue refers to an aptitude (*Eignung*) to keep to this beneficial, non-mathematical mean.<sup>75</sup> The virtue as ἔξις is then an orientation to the world such that one is directed at seizing the moment (*Augenblick*, *καιρός*). The having (*ἔχειν*) of the ἔξις is not the having (*Haben*) of the everyday world, since the latter is reserved for the *Vor-Struktur* of familiarity with the world, and this familiarity would be due to the internalization of ‘einmalige und absolute Normen.’<sup>76</sup> But there is no familiarity on which the Heideggerian ἔξις could be based. What then is this aptitude to find the mean in the moment?

The last subsection of §17 takes as a theme the seizing of the moment. If the mean is not a mathematical middle, but the right talking-through of the situation (*Durchsprechen der Umstände*), it should be concluded, says Heidegger, that it would be incorrect to consider virtue as a skill (*Fertigkeit*; and it will become clear from the ensuing discussion that this is *τέχνη*). In order to appreciate what is at stake in this distinction between virtue and skill, Heidegger once again traces the genesis of the ἔξις: ἔξεις are brought about δι’ ἔθους. He summarizes that “‘habituation’ is the way by which we come to ἔξις, to ἀρετή” (*Die ‘Gewöhnung’ ist der Weg, auf dem wir zur ἔξις kommen, zur ἀρετή* [GA 18: 188]). “Gewöhnung” has to be written between inverted commas, lest the meaning of this word is misunderstood—*Gewöhnung*, ἔθιζειν, Heidegger clarifies, is “bringing-yourself-to-a-determined-possibility by often-making-through” (*das Sich-in-eine-bestimmte-Möglichkeit-Bringen durch das Öfter-Durchmachen* [GA 18: 188]). The possibility in question here is, however, twofold; Heidegger will distinguish two possibilities of existence that are acquired δι’ ἔθους, but in which this expression does not mean the same for each. These are ποίησις (“the acquisition of the possibility of a production, technics”—*die Aneignung der Möglichkeit einer Verfertigung, Technik*) and πρῶξις (“not taken in the broader meaning of ‘action’ as such, but as modification of the being of the human being”—*nicht genommen in der weiteren Bedeutung ‘Handlung’ als solche, sondern als Bestimmung des Seins des Menschen*

<sup>75</sup> Translated usually as aptitude, *Eignung* could here also be taken to evoke the semantic field of *eignen* in the sense of possessing something, *Aneignung*, appropriation, or *eigne/eigen*, one’s own; introduced against the backdrop of the *Jeweiligkeit*, one could perhaps think of “daß es in die *Eignung* versetzt wird” as, “that it is moved to its ownness or *Eigentlichkeit*.” The verb *versetzen* is also used in German in the sense of moving someone to feel in this or that way, and thus by using this verb Heidegger might be considered to be maintaining the link between ἔξις and emotions.

<sup>76</sup> It will become clear from the ensuing discussion of the distinction between *Übung* and *Wiederholung* that this claim is not only allowed for by the current text, but also supported by my preceding exposition of *τέχνη* in §19 of *GA* 18.

[GA 18: 188–89]). Heidegger seems to say that this definition of “*Gewöhnung*” applies equally to both possibilities, and thus the difference between the two possibilities hinges on very little, in fact, perhaps only on the manner in which both is a “sich in . . . bringen,” an *Aneignung*, an appropriation or acquisition.<sup>77</sup>

If this is true, then the difference between the two modes of existence does not depend that much on *what* is appropriated, but on the *way* in which it is gone through (the *Öfter-Durchmachen*), since it is the adverbiality of this going-through that constitutes the appropriation. These two ways of appropriation are called exercise (*Übung*) and repetition (*Wiederholung*), respectively. Exercise as mode of often-going-through typical of the acquisition of technical skill is characterized by its initial orientation to an instruction or prescription (*Vorschrift*) that is gradually left behind, in the sense of being interiorized. The very aim of exercise is, according to Heidegger, to cancel deliberation (*die Überlegung zum Ausfall zu bringen*) as to the realization of the desired result. Since it is the result that is decisive in τέχνη, the delivery of the result demands the smoothest procedure of the process of production, which is implied to be without deliberation, mechanically following rules or principles. It is even suggested that the realization of the sought after result requires the “bringing-into-play or activation of a fixed skill” (*Ins-Spiel-Bringen einer festsitzenden Fertigkeit* [GA 18: 189]); on the next page Heidegger qualifies skill as a “fixed routine” (*festsitzende Routine*). A benevolent translation would render *festsitzend* as “stable,” but it should rather be translated with “stuck,” or at least “fixed.” Everything points in the direction of an automatic, unreflected, predetermined execution of the working process (*Betrieb*). This, again, can only be realized by means of exercise, and exercise is the manner in which ποίησις as mode of existence is appropriated. This is the mode of existence that we have seen in the introduction to be the manner in which people exist in their average everydayness, that is, the familiarity, the *Haben*, that condition from which the hermeneutic being-in-the-world is originally derived. On the other hand, repetition (*Wiederholung*) as mode of often-going-through typical of πράξις, is distinguished by the decision (προαίρεσις, *Entschluß*, or *Sichentschließen*) from which it rises. If skill is then characterized by the exclusion of deliberation and decision, then right or virtuous action can never be a skill. Repetition by which the deliberative-decision-taking existence is appropriated is not routinely practiced but entails “acting in every moment newly

<sup>77</sup> Cf. GA 18: 189: “Ποίησις und πράξις zwei Möglichkeiten, die vielleicht nur zwei verschiedene Weisen der Aneignung bezeichnen.”

from out of the relevant decision” (*in jedem Augenblick neu aus dem entsprechenden Entschluß heraus Handeln* [GA 18: 189]). In contradistinction to the routine fixedness brought about by exercise that destroys (*zerstört*) the moment or breaks down (*versagt*) in the face of the moment,<sup>78</sup> repetition forms a ἔξις that opens in every moment onto a new decision; it is a “holding-oneself-free, δύναμις in the μεσότης” (*Sichfreihalten, δύναμις in der μεσότης* [GA 18: 190]). However, it is not possible to hold one’s entire life in this exclusive position; one loses this possibility, and it is difficult to regain it.

Had Heidegger not beforehand carefully eliminated the aspect of habituation from the genesis of ἀρετή, this sharp distinction between the two possibilities of existence would not have come that easily. Furthermore, the company of the others in whose presence not only the habituation takes place, but the practice of the virtuous life as well, is passed over in silence. Now the full meaning has unfolded of the anticipated sketch that Heidegger had given earlier in §17 of the ἔξις: “The being-composed is not something chosen as you like and undetermined. In the ἔξις is situated the primary orientation to the *καίρος*: ‘I am here, come what may!’ It is this being-here, being-at-your-post in a situation opposite your affair, which is characterized by the ἔξις. The ἔξις, that is, as a possibility of being, that is *in itself related to another possibility*, related to the possibility of my being, *that within my being something happens to me, that changes my composure*” (GA 18: 176).<sup>79</sup> The ἔξις is the possibility of being on guard without anybody (except myself?) giving any παραγγελία (*so etwas wie einen allgemeinen Armeebefehl, eine apriorische Ethik* [GA 18: 182]), without any set of norms to adhere to, but under seizure of the danger constituted by the others. *Dasein* stands at its post and has to act from himself/herself (*von sich selbst her*), standing firm, but circumspectly so, since this firmness has to be reinvented as often as possible in order to assure that he/she has “die eigentliche Existenz bei sich selbst” (GA 18: 184). *Dasein* stands at its post alone and any concession 1) that *Dasein* has learned from another how to be at its post—even if that other is his/her own earlier self (i.e., any idea of

<sup>78</sup> It should be noted that Heidegger is here in contradiction with Aristotle who precisely illustrated the τὰ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν σκοπεῖν with reference to the τεχναί of medicine and navigation.

<sup>79</sup> “Das Gefäßtsein ist nicht ein beliebiges und unbestimmtes, in der ἔξις liegt die primäre Orientierung auf den *καίρος*: ‘Ich bin da, es mag kommen, was will!’ Dieses Da-sein, Auf-dem-Posten-Sein in einer Lage, seiner Sache gegenüber, das charakterisiert die ἔξις. Die ἔξις also als eine Seinsmöglichkeit, die *in sich selbst auf eine andere Möglichkeit bezogen* ist, auf die Möglichkeit meines Seins, *daß innerhalb meines Seins etwas über mich kommt, das mich aus der Fassung bringt.*”

experience), 2) that *Dasein* is accompanied and aided in being at the post by others, or 3) that the conditions for being at his/her post has been put in place, that is, has been made possible, by others—any of these three concessions would amount for Heidegger to abandoning the post to infiltration, to surrendering, or to taking flight in the face of danger.

#### 4. Conclusion

This reading of Heidegger's *Destruktion* of Aristotle's notions of τέχνη and ἔξις leads me to two related conclusions: first, that Heidegger exaggerated the difference between technical existence and the life of virtue, i.e., that it is more correct to see these two aspects of human action as much more similar and, second, that the life of the ethical disposition has much more of technicity to it, due to their common participation in a general human ἔξις, than Heidegger would allow for. But these points will have to be formulated more clearly and argued more fully.

Our discussion of τέχνη in section 2 allows us to conclude with the claim that τέχνη is much closer to ἀρετή than Heidegger would allow for. He willingly inherits an exaggerated distinction from Aristotle that he drives even further. Instead, it seems much more plausible to conceive of these two aspects of existence as much closer, and this because both are manifestations of one ἔξις μετὰ λόγου. The closeness between the agent, circumstances, and action of ποίησις and πρῶξις has been argued above, without collapsing the distinction completely. The role of the ἔξις μετὰ λόγου is to provide a stability of know-how that allows for the agent to act as a master craftsman or as a master of virtuosity. This is informed by a general knowledge of the relevant terrain, without this knowledge guaranteeing success. In fact, it does not even prescribe the minutest detail of the situation in which to act. In the καιρός (be it of τέχνη or of ἀρετή) the competent person chooses the best ratio (the μεσότης) of a series of distinguishable increments that describe the adverbiality of the action. This is done by taking into consideration the agent himself/herself, the situation of the action, and what has to be brought about.

But this is an ideal for both the apprentice craftsman and the inexperienced agent of politics. Hence the need to follow someone else's example and advice, to exercise in doing the right kind of action; and of course, for the master as for the apprentice, this could only be done if the surrounding conditions allow for it.

Heidegger's inability to see this closeness of the life of virtue and the technical life has important consequences for his perspective on the latter. Heidegger's τεχνίτης is at best an early beginner. This apprentice is not on course to learn difficult or complex tasks. It is a technician who thinks only about means and is not capable of adjusting means and ends mutually to one another. It is one that quickly grinds to a standstill if he/she runs out of instructions from the master as to how exactly something should be done in a certain context. There is for this craftsman no tension between what would ideally be achieved and his/her capacity to bring it about; it is an ambitionless craftsman (or perhaps sometimes one that is naively ambitious). It is one who works by merely mechanically executing what he/she has been instructed to do. Style is, strangely enough, completely planned by this technician (or by his/her instructor). The only dexterity that he/she has acquired is to have internalized the prescription of how to do a task and to execute it automatically. Perhaps this image of technical life does not invalidate Heidegger's criticism of the metaphysics of presence—this is however not my question. What is sure is that once technical life has been misconstrued in this way, it becomes conceivable to start thinking of characterizing in a general way the agent of everyday concern and occupation as 'one' or 'they' (*das Man*)—an easily replaceable worker, with no particular style, nor exceptional expertise; it becomes possible to consider this existence as being of such a nature that one lets oneself be drawn along in the concern for the world (*Sichmitnehmenlassen von ihr* [NB 19]), to the extent that one is all the time subjected to the tendency of *Verfallen an...* (the *Verfallensgeneigtheit* of NB 19), which gradually hardens more and more in Heidegger's reflection to a simple *Verfallen*, and hence the distinctive quasi-ethical undertones in the hermeneutics of facticity of salvaging *Dasein* from its *Wegsein*.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. for example Jean Grondin, "L'herméneutique dans *Sein und Zeit*," in *Le tournant herméneutique de la phénoménologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), 38–56, especially 52–56. Michel Haar has already shown that Heidegger's description of everydayness that underlies the whole of *Sein und Zeit* is "based on a presupposition that is non-phenomenological, since it does not depend on a description of the phenomena of the world, but on a preconceived idea of *Dasein*" as the authentic self (*Soi propre*). See Michel Haar, "L'énigme de la quotidienneté," in *La fracture de l'Histoire. Douze essais sur Heidegger* (Grenoble: Jérôme Million, 1994), 61–72 (citation, 66–67). The current essay is a contribution to an understanding of what is understood by Heidegger to be in contradistinction from this authentic self—at least that part of the everyday life that is the technical life—and how Heidegger went about to construct this preconceived idea of *Dasein*.

What seems sure to me is that while Heidegger was presenting his students with a destructive reading of the tradition, in order to open up what has been obstructed by it even if that obstruction itself guides us to a phenomenon (in this case the question of being), he did so not only by transmitting to them the tradition's obscuring picture of technical life, but at the same time obscuring it further.

The discussion of ἔξις and in particular the opposition of *Übung* and *Wiederholung* with which section 3 of the current article ended, left no doubt as to Heidegger's wish to separate virtue and skill. But do they not have anything in common? Is virtue as mode of existence only a departure from or a leaving-behind of skill as its opposite mode of existence? I shall consider myself to have been enabled to conclude that there is something common to virtue and skill, if it could be argued plausibly that what Heidegger discusses in his destructive reading of Aristotle's ἔξις is, contrary to what the German philosopher says, dependent on 1) the sedimentation of some or other know-how, 2) a process of acquisition of that know-how, and 3) conditions in which to practice this know-how—all three of these presuppose a dependency on 4) the involvement of others. Whereas the preceding analyses probably do not allow arguing this case completely, they do allow arguing that there is at the very least a strong *prima facie* case for elements of technicity in the ἔξις πρακτική.

Of course, in claiming this I presuppose, not the kind of technicity that is sketched by Aristotle in his exaggerated distinction between τέχνη and ἀρετή, but rather the kind of technicity that I have presented in my criticism of Aristotle and that is rooted in the common ἔξις with its two appearances, ἔξις πρακτική and ἔξις ποιητική, both of which are ἔξεις μετὰ λόγου. Now as we have seen, Heidegger drove virtue and skill still further apart. It should have become clear that what Heidegger presents as technical life is nothing but a reductive caricature thereof. He needed this caricature in order to develop his notion of ἔξις in opposition to it: thus the unmasking of the caricature should amount to raising a first doubt concerning his new version of ἔξις, since Heidegger fails to provide sufficient justification for the extreme separation of virtue and ἔξις; had his presentation of technical life been more plausible, this distinction would have been made much more difficult. But perhaps, as Michel Haar has argued, Heidegger is not guided here by description, but by

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I do not think that my analyses allow me to reject outright Heidegger's notion of *Verfallen* and of *Man*, but it seems to oppose the ease with which he applies these terms categorically to everyday existence.



a presupposed idea of what authentic *Dasein* is. It is this preconceived idea that guides Heidegger to separate the commonality of virtue and skill in terms like *εἰδώς*, *μεσότης*, *βεβούτως*, *ἔθιζειν*, and *καιρός* and motivates his undeclared disregard of important analogies from technical life that Aristotle repeatedly used precisely to illustrate how virtue works.

This exaggeration of Aristotle's distinction could best be seen in the care that Heidegger takes to write out social habituation from virtue as mode of existence. It is in this very act, that the desocialization and depolitization of the authentic existence take place. This depolitization has been commented on often, and I shall not go into the detail here. It suffices to repeat that in Heidegger's *ἔξις*, *Dasein* acts alone and *von sich selbst her*, in the face of the danger of the other (but without the danger of the other ever being sufficiently presented). One finds no argumentation for the possibility of acting in a way independent of social habituation but that would nonetheless have meaning, even if it is only for *Dasein* itself. Without some form of prejudice or *Vorhabe*, pertaining not only to the kind of actions with which one is familiar and from which the virtuous action is an exception, but prejudice of the new action itself, the latter will not be virtuous (*κατ' ἀρετήν*) but meaningless; acting not like the others is no meaning in itself. Aristotle's notion of *ἔξις*, with its specific element of habituation, would be able to account for an understandable newness, without claiming that having acquired such a *ἔξις* would guarantee the attainment of virtuous action. Certainly then there is no "einmalige Norm" for seizing the *καιρός*, but Heidegger's overstatement passes in silence the middle option between an action that is absolutely determined by rule and one in which there is no rule at all, namely, hermeneutic engagement—and it is exactly in Aristotle's technical examples of what it means to seize the *καιρός* (the carpenter, doctor, navigator) that we see what this engagement means. Aristotle shows to us an *εἰδώς* that characterizes the agent of virtue and that is perhaps, as Heidegger indicates, of the nature of *φρόνησις*, but this *φρόνησις* is socio-culturally formed: as *ἔξις* it archives implicitly the conditions of its acquisition. Lastly, one searches in vain for any recognition by Heidegger that the conditions for exercising his *Wiederholung* could have been created by others. That this negligence could have been avoided by a less partial reading of Aristotle has been illustrated by Martha Nussbaum's reading of Aristotle in which full recognition is given to the importance of this reference in the practice of virtue to the others.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup>) She draws of course from various other sources as well to develop her capabilities approach to a (partial) theory of justice, but see especially her "Aristotelian Social Democracy," in *Liberalism*

On the basis of these remarks, a case could be made to claim that what Heidegger presents in his discussion of the exercise of ἔξις is much more dependent on socially acquired capability that is exercised in favorable conditions created at least partially by others than Heidegger is willing to admit. If this is true, then one would have to conclude that there is a particular kind of technicity in the ἔξις πρακτική that, though probably not the same thing as the ἔξις ποιητική, is not too dissimilar from it either; in fact, the two seem to be variations of one human ἔξις. The authentic existence is much more of a τέχνη, provided that the τέχνη is understood in a sense much closer to that of virtue, as I have done above. Πρᾶξις as mode of existence is more social and less creative than Heidegger taught his students in 1924.<sup>82</sup>

### Abbreviations

#### *Works by Martin Heidegger*

- GA* *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann). *GA* texts are cited by volume number, followed by page number or section.
- GA* 18 *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* (Summer Semester 1924), ed. M. Michalski, 2002.
- GA* 19 *Platon: Sophistes* (Winter Semester 1924/25), ed. I. Schüssler, 1992.
- GA* 20 *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (Summer Semester 1925), ed. P. Jaeger, 1979.
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