DEFRAMING TECHNO-COLONIALITY: SIKH SPIRITUALITY IN THE AGE OF THE TECHNOCENE

by

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to engage with Martin Heidegger’s critique of modern technology in order to formulate a new conception of coloniality as techno-coloniality. Additionally, it argues that the Sikh spirituality can make a creative contribution towards building a decolonial future based on an alternative conception of technology. Heidegger envisioned *Gestell*, or Enframing, as the essence of technology which treats everything that exists as merely exploitable resources. This insight is very helpful in rethinking coloniality as techno-coloniality. The disciplines of postcolonial and decolonial studies have not given adequate attention to the question of technology. It has often gone unacknowledged that modern technology is not the only form of technology and that it is unlike other forms of technologies that originated within non-European cultures. What distinguishes modern technology from other technologies is that it is grounded in Western metaphysics. This research establishes that in order to build decolonial futures, it is imperative that the link between Western metaphysics and modern technology are exposed. The promise of decolonial futures can become a concrete historical reality through deframing. Deframing consists of deconstructing the logic of Enframing as well as drawing from alternative cosmologies to build a different conception of technics, for which, I have drawn on the Sikh tradition. I have argued that the Sikh conceptions of nature as *Kudrat* and labor as *kirat* can make substantial contributions towards building a decolonial future.
Lay Summary

This dissertation argues that modern technology plays a central role in the project of colonialism. Conventional scholarship has largely ignored this role. This is due to the fact that the nature of technology is rarely understood. I engage with the thought of German philosopher Martin Heidegger to illuminate the nature of technology and the role it plays in colonialism. Drawing from Heidegger’s work, I have rethought coloniality as *techno-coloniality*, placing technology at the heart of colonialism. However, Heidegger’s work is not without its shortcomings. Heidegger failed to think the colonial and racial difference. This research enacts a creative confrontation between Heidegger’s thinking about technology and Sikh spirituality while trying to envision a decolonial future in the times of climate change. It is argued that such future is only possible if we radically re-envision both nature and technology with the help of non-Western traditions.
Preface

This dissertation is original, independent work by the author, Prabhsharanbir Singh. Some parts of chapter 3 and 4 are published in Singh, Prabhsharanbir. “Auzeinandersetzung, Colonialism and Heidegger’s Oblivion of Other Beginnings.” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 51, no. 2 (2019): 174-186. I am the sole author of this article.
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It goes without saying that I am solely responsible for any shortcomings that this dissertation may contain.
For my parents:

Sr. Harbhajan Singh Sandhu

Srn. Surinderpal Kaur Sandhu
Chapter 1: Introduction

When I search for Man in the technique and the style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders.

- Frantz Fanon¹

Collapse and desolation find their adequate occurrence in the fact that metaphysical man, the animal rationale, gets fixed as the laboring animal.

- Martin Heidegger²

1.1 Introduction

In this dissertation, I will establish how a critique of technology is required to develop an adequate understanding of the contemporary human condition, which includes climate change, uniformity, and hegemony of capitalism. In the case of the colonized communities, it is even more important to take technology into account as coloniality was in fact techno-coloniality. Although Martin Heidegger’s critique of the idea of technology has been a powerful breakthrough in general and significantly helpful for my research, there is a major drawback; Heidegger was fixated on finding the solution in the West, which has provided my work with a

different trajectory. A Chinese scholar, Yuk Hui, has argued that modern technology is grounded in the Western perception of nature, therefore, it is important to explore what the non-Western traditions might have to add to our understanding of technology in the first place. I argue that the Sikh tradition offers an idea of and the human relationship with nature, which has the potential to provide an understanding of technology that will work as a major departure from Heidegger’s critique of technology. Also, decoloniality is not possible without a fundamental critique of technology.

With the technological globalization gaining unprecedented spread during the past few centuries, it has become quite urgent to locate its roots. I argue that a reflection on the nature of techno-coloniality and its foundation in Western metaphysics can illuminate the contemporary condition. The contemporary condition is marked by a conflict between singularity and universality. Thinking about this conflict may lead us to locate its roots in the technological globalization, which can be otherwise called a continuation of techno-coloniality.

Before I offer an outline of my research project, I will provide an introduction to the idea of technology. The mention of technology can create a misplaced expectation in the mind of any prospective reader of this dissertation. This expectation consists in anticipating analyses of concrete technologies such as the railways, postal service, military techniques etc., that the colonizer introduced in the colonies, in Punjab in the present context, and of how these alien technologies left an indelible mark on its society and people. This is due to a widespread and unfortunate misunderstanding about technology that is prevalent in our culture. Before moving forward, I must dispel this expectation. This misunderstanding is a result of a general perception
most people have about technology; technology is inseparable from technical artifacts such as airplanes, railways, computers, and so on. Such an approach seems to be very reasonable and fair on the surface. However, it creates confusion that obfuscates the difference between concrete technological artifacts that we can see all around us and the essence of modern technology.

Heidegger laid this confusion bare by saying that the essence of technology is by itself nothing technological. What he meant by this was that it does not reside in specific technical objects that we find ourselves surrounded with. Instead, the essence of technology is a metaphysical stance. It is the way everything is revealed to us. This stance does not originate from the general human condition. Instead, it sprung up from within a particular tradition, that is, the Western tradition. At the outset of occidental history\(^3\), Being revealed itself in such a way that it destined Western culture to a definite path. This destiny manifests itself in the form of planetary dominance of technology. This dominance is not merely a historical fact that can be materially attested, it is a metaphysical stance that affects all the visible and invisible aspects of our lives.

This destiny consists of the revealing of everything that exists as standing-reserve, as resources ready to be exploited. This, Heidegger argues, has changed everything. It has transformed our understanding and relationship with nature, how we comprehend and dwell within language, the flight of the gods or the absence of the sacred from communal life, and how we relate to death and temporality. This dissertation is concerned with these profound changes that usually escape

\(^3\) Occidental history is a phrase used by Heidegger to talk about Western history since the Ancient Greeks.
academic scrutiny. It seeks to understand what happens when the destiny of one culture, i.e. the Western one, in this case, overwhelms every other culture in an unprecedently totalizing way.

This study is not concerned, as might be expected, with the introduction of specific modern technologies such as the railways, the irrigation networks, electricity, postal services, military technologies etc. etc. Instead, it is concerned with more imperceptible changes in the (non)metaphysical attitudes of a community towards everything that exists. These changes can include but are not limited to, how a community relates to nature, understands history, makes sense of human existence, experiences the sacred, and so on. On the surface, it might seem difficult to connect these with technology per se. However, that is the major contribution that this research seeks to make. Technology is not just about technological objects, it is a much deeper and pervasive metaphysical stance that has altered our relationship with nature, language, tradition, and the sacred. Although the task seems daunting, I hope to accomplish it in a way that has relevance beyond the narrow debates in the field of philosophy of technology, which focuses solely on the idea of technology in the West and overlooks the impact it had on colonized communities and what those communities may have to offer. It brings me to a number of related questions, such as: Was the course of history that led to colonization inevitable? What role, if any, did the agency of the colonized play in the unfolding of technology among the colonized? How can we envision a decolonial future free from oppressive dominance grounded in technology?

It would be good to confess at the outset that a paradox haunts my endeavour. On the one hand, I am trying to extricate my own understanding and sensibility from the epistemic violence of
colonialism. On the other hand, however, I am attempting to stage a profound encounter with the deepest and darkest depths of Western philosophy. Dwelling with this paradox takes the form of Hegelian ‘tarrying with the negative.’ It is only by looking in the eye of the power that seeks to annihilate everything unique to my historical and communal existence that I can chart a way leading out of its metaphysical prison. Transgressing the boundaries of representational thinking is a basic requirement for such a venture.

In the Sikh tradition, this antinomian living, this ‘tarrying with the negative’ is indicated in the following way:

ਅੰ ਜਨ ਮਾਿਹ ਜ਼ਿਨ ਜੁਗਿਤ ਇਵ ਪਾਈਐ ॥ ੧ ॥

Stay within kohl but remain untouched, you attain Jog (yoga) with this technique.⁴

Kohl is a black powder, usually antimony “used in the East as make-up to darken eyelids etc.”⁵

The trope has been used in the Sikh sacred writings over and over again in the context that you have to dwell with something without being touched by it. It is called the “technique” of realization. My attempts to engage with the Western philosophical tradition and the world it has created through modern technology are enlightened by this insight. Although it is almost impossible, I have tried to engage with Western philosophy without internalizing the conceptual structures that it imposes. This posture seeks to transform the modalities of epistemic violence that inheres within this tradition. This approach is an alternative to the position to completely abandon the Western philosophical tradition because of its innate violence.

The approach outlined above of dwelling within something while remaining untouched by it is pertinent for two reasons. First is that metaphysics does not have an outside. It is part and parcel of the modern world. Modern technology, which is an external manifestation of Western metaphysics, has engulfed the entire globe and its reach now extends to outer space and even other planets. There is no running away from metaphysics. Secondly, the only way to deal with metaphysics is by transforming it from within, which requires to inhabit it and tarry with it. This dissertation has taken this task upon itself.

1.2 Technology and Coloniality

Technology is at the heart of this research project. A note on the usage of this term is necessary here. Three terms are used to denote three distinct but interlinked phenomena: technology, technē, and technics. I follow Yuk Hui while defining and distinguishing these terms from each other. He writes: “I make a distinction between the use of the words technics, technē, and technology: technics refers to the general category of all forms of making and practice; technē refers to the Greek conception of it, which Heidegger understood as poiesis or bringing forth; and technology refers to a radical turn which took place during European modernity, and developed in the direction of ever-increasing automation, leading consequently to what Heidegger calls the Gestell.”6 The first of these terms, technics is universal. Every human culture practices some form of making. The other two terms, technē and technology come from the

Western culture. Heidegger argues that technē in its original Greek sense is no longer practiced. It has devolved into technology which has become planetary with the onset of modernity and colonialism. I argue that the project of decolonization is dependent upon colonized cultures’ ability to revive and invent their own practices of making, i.e. their own particular technics.

The triad of modernity, coloniality, and technology defines the contemporary human condition. It is interesting that, despite their intermingling, they evoke different responses. While colonialism is almost universally repudiated, most people (at least in the non-academic circles) are ambiguous about modernity. A critique of modernity is usually accompanied or quickly followed by an overt acknowledgment of its benefits such as individual freedom, human rights, democracy, and improved living standards. However, some South American scholars, prominently Walter Mignolo, have recently pointed out that modernity and colonialism are mutually imbricated, and we cannot separate the two, a position I entirely agree with. I would like to add that the third part of this triad, technology, is even more complicated than modernity. It has not received the critical attention it deserves from postcolonial and decolonial scholars. Technology is usually understood as problematic only in terms of who controls it and what ends it is used for. In other words, the understanding of technology that is implicit in much of postcolonial and decolonial studies is limited by what is called instrumental understanding of technology. Instrumental understanding of technology is a view according to which technology is just a means to an end and nothing more. However, this view is deeply flawed. In this dissertation, I seek to establish that it is imperative to rethink modern technology from a

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decultural perspective to gain fresh insight into the nature of colonialism and its consequence: the contemporary world. Technology, modernity, and colonialism are inseparable from each other. All three phenomena are rooted in Western metaphysics. The primary aim of this project is to uncover these connections in the context of colonialism in Punjab.

Don Ihde claims that human existence is “technologically structured” today. Technological networks, over which we have no control, determine the “rhythms and spaces of daily life”.8 From fulfilling the bare necessities of life, such as shelter and food, to other needs, i.e., transportation and communications, everything is technologically mediated. More often than that, myriad forms of visible and invisible technologies also structure cultural representations and formations of ideological perspectives. What complicates this situation is the parochial origin of modern technology. Modern technology, exactly like modernity, originated in Europe and subsequently became global through colonialism. The question for colonized peoples today is how to live with something that is culturally alien to them, yet already structures their everyday life? Slavoj Žižek has raised this question concerning modernity:

Since, in Europe, modernization was spread over centuries, we had time to accommodate ourselves to it, to soften its shattering impact, through Kulturarbeit, through the formation of new social narratives and myths, while some other societies … have been exposed to this impact directly, without a protective screen or temporal delay, so their symbolic universe has been perturbed much more brutally: they have lost their (symbolic) ground with no time left to establish a new (symbolic) balance.9

I will argue that it is not so certain that the symbolic grounds of colonized peoples’ existence are completely lost, as Žižek implies. Anti-colonial resistance springs precisely from that ground. Žižek’s argument that such lack leads to fundamentalism is not convincing either because fundamentalism is rising in the West as well. However, I believe that colonization, and subsequently modernization, brutally disturbed the symbolic universe and meaning-making capacities of indigenous societies. I also hold that the same is true about modern technology. Europe, and western societies in general, had centuries to adjust to the disruptive effects of modern technology while it had overwhelmed the colonized societies rather abruptly. In Punjab during the decade following colonization in 1849 A. D., modernity and technology, as cultural and material logics of colonialism, suddenly eclipsed the symbolic landscape of colonized societies. It had the effect similar to what we may call an ontological earthquake that shook the very foundations of the collective being of the colonized. The task to confront the decolonial theory today is not merely to establish a new symbolic balance with modernity and technology, but to prepare a new ground, both symbolic and material, for the advent of a world manifesting equality, justice and hospitality in lived relations among the communities.

If modernity is the cultural logic of colonialism, technology is its material [and metaphysical] logic. The global spread of Western models of economics, trade, militarization, and communications networks are all founded on modern technology. However, material and cultural logics of colonialism are never clearly demarcated. They are mutually imbricated. Colonialism relies as much on cultural technologies as on material technologies. While colonialism stands for material dominance, orientalism symbolizes cultural dominance. Technology underlies both the material and the cultural processes. Nicholas B. Dirks has noted in this regard:
Colonial conquest was not just the result of the power of superior arms, military organization, political power, or economic wealth – as important as these things were. Colonialism was made possible, and then sustained and strengthened, as much by cultural technologies of rule as it was by the more obvious and brutal modes of conquest that first established power on foreign shores.\(^{10}\)

Dirks also notes that “[I]t has not been sufficiently recognized that colonialism was itself a cultural project of control.”\(^{11}\) Despite this realization, Dirks fails to notice how modern technology of control are rooted in a philosophical system. This dissertation is more focused on the philosophical foundations of modern technology than various concrete manifestations of this technology such as the industrial, logistical, or military ones. But more than that, I am interested in gaining an insight into what modern technology is.

It could be argued that modern western technology is a poisoned gift for the colonized. It is indispensable, yet it continues enabling oppression in novel ways. A cursory look at the structure of the contemporary world makes this clear. The predominance of capitalism, the ubiquity of cultural technologies of control, and almost universal acceptance of western models of governance now replace direct colonial rule around the world. It seems as if life on this planet today is engulfed in the dense smog of techno-rationality, disabling alternative modes of seeing and thinking; techno-colonial modernity has become the only air left to breathe. The displacement brought about by colonialism created a new social milieu in which calculative

\(^{10}\) Nicholas Dirks, foreword to *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, by Bernard S. Cohn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), ix.

\(^{11}\) Dirks, foreword to *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, ix.
rationality reigns. Such a condition makes it compulsory that any project to rethink colonialism must first think through the nature of technology. Coloniality is, in reality, *techno-coloniality*.  

### 1.3 Modern Technology and the Colonization of Punjab

The recurrence of colonization instantiates itself differently each time and in each place. This difference presents a formidable problem for the study of colonialism. When the British finally succeeded in annexing Punjab in 1849, they were already firmly established as a colonial power in South Asia. A logistical network, crucial for the maintenance of colonial power, was already in place. They also established colonial institutions, which functioned as vehicles for the cultural technologies of control. This enabled the colonizers to modernize Punjab at an unprecedented speed. This *blitzkrieg modernization* of Punjab resulted in a brutal tearing down of its symbolic universe. The academic scholarship on this period of Punjab’s history has ignored the role played by modern technologies in the process of modernization and their long-term effects.

The foreignness of modern technology requires one to develop its adequate understanding. Without such understanding, political resistance against the colonized was reduced to desperate attempts to survive the onslaught of change. I will argue that such understanding is still lacking partially because of its foreignness but mostly due to the displacement it has effectuated. In *Provincializing Europe*, Dipesh Chakrabarty claims that his critique of colonialism is both

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12 The notion of techno-coloniality will be discussed in detail in a later section of this chapter and in subsequent chapters. This notion implies that the colonial is always modern/colonial. As techno-modern/colonial, is a rather cumbersome term, “techno-coloniality” will be used in its stead, assuming the modern/colonial character of coloniality.
charged and delimited by what he calls ‘being-from-a-place.’ At the same time, he does not deny “that there must be many different locations, even within Bengal or India, from which one could provincialize Europe with different results.” I will argue here that Punjab is just such a different location. The ‘being-from-a-place’ that Chakrabarty talks about is not an intact being, it is a ‘displaced-being-from-a-place.’ Although Chakrabarty’s main focus is this displacement brought about by colonialism and capitalism, he, nevertheless, overlooks the question of technology.

The purpose of introducing modern technologies in the colonies was never just the efficient completion of material tasks such as transportation of people and goods from one place to another. Likewise, in Punjab, the colonizers “introduced Western education and brought about technological and economic changes to serve imperial interests, resulting in an unprecedented social change.” It resulted, among other things, in the “weakening of self-government in villages.” Ian J. Kerr has noted that the introduction of the railways in Punjab was “an integral part of the colonial project to master the Punjab and Punjabis.” The purpose of the railways was to manufacture a “colonial ‘dominant space’.” Although these scholars are aware of the momentous role played by modern technology in the shaping of colonial and postcolonial Punjab, they never seriously engage with the question of what modern technology is, which I intend to do in this dissertation.

15 Grewal, Master Tara Singh, 15.
17 Grewal, Master Tara Singh, 16-7.
So, what is this modern technology that we are talking about? Isn’t technology part of every culture in some way or the other? Aren’t modern technologies just more advanced forms of technologies used for millennia in different cultures throughout the world? What is the nature and essence of modern technology? I will explore these questions by engaging with the illuminating thought of German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). This choice itself raises some legitimate questions given that Heidegger was a Western philosopher who seldom engaged with non-western traditions. On top of that, he joined the National Socialist Party (Nazi Party) in 1933, made anti-Semitic remarks in his writings and neither apologized for his involvement with the Nazi Party nor condemned the holocaust. The next chapter seeks to answer these questions but first, a brief reflection on the missing link between technology and colonial modernity.

1.4 Decolonial Theory: The Missing Link Between Technology and Colonial Modernity

There seems to be no direct relationship between Heidegger’s thinking and the critique of colonialism. However, his philosophy, especially his critique of technology has profound significance for the study of colonialism. His philosophy of technology is indispensable for arriving at a new understanding of colonialism that is mindful about the role of technology. Modern technologies have acquired a kind of omnipotence and omnipresence. Thus, technology

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18 ‘Essence’ is used by Heidegger in such a way that it is already under erasure. He is not trying to posit an essence that can be taken for granted and readily reproduced. For more on Heidegger’s use of this term, see, Alfons Grieder, “What did Heidegger mean by ‘Essence’?” Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology 19, no. 1 (1988): 64-89.

19 His comments about Chinese and Japanese thought are too rudimentary to be counted as proper engagement. For a detailed discussion of these comments, see Lin Ma, Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event. (New York & London: Routledge, 2008).
effectively plays the role of God today. Technology has conquered both the external world of nature (in acquiring mastery over it) and the world of human interiority (by harnessing attention). In these conditions, the question of human emancipation is unthinkable without confronting technology head-on. Despite the significance of Heideggerian critique of technology for studying colonialism, postcolonial theorists have not shown much interest in Heidegger. However, some black scholars have fruitfully engaged with Heidegger’s thought.

Grant Farred, a South African black scholar teaching at Cornell University in the United States, has written a wonderful book, ‘Martin Heidegger Saved My Life.’ He recounts a racist encounter he had with a white woman. He lived in Cayuga Heights, a wealthy neighborhood near Cornell University. He was raking leaves in front of his home one day. A white woman, mistaking him for a menial laborer, came up to him and asked, “Would you like another job?” Only a racialized person can know what it feels like when one is hailed in this manner. He responded calmly, “Yes, if you can pay me more than Cornell University.”20 Later on, when he reflected on this incident, he wondered how he was able to respond during this altercation the way he did. He found an answer in Heidegger’s philosophy. He says that he owes a debt and gratitude to Heidegger and his book ‘Was heißt Denken?’ (What is Called Thinking?) even though he is also aware of racist, and especially anti-Black passages in Heidegger’s work. Farred is not alone. Other black scholars like Fred Moten and Sylvia Wynter have also engaged fruitfully with Heidegger’s thinking.21

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Although the works I mentioned above have made important contributions, a more sustained confrontation between Heidegger’s thinking and colonialism is still waiting to take place, as this conversation between Edward Said and William Spanos shows: “Dear Bill,” Edward Said once said to William Spanos, “you’re a good critic, but why do you weaken your originative criticism by Heideggerianizing it?” And Spanos responded, “Edward, I think you’re a good critic, too, but why do you limit possibilities by not attending to Heidegger’s destructive ontology?” Like Edward Said, most postcolonial and decolonial studies scholars have avoided serious engagement with Heidegger’s work. This dissertation is an attempt to fill this gap.

Sometimes, my postcolonial studies and decolonial studies colleagues, much like Edward Said’s conversation with William Spanos, object to my engagement with Heidegger. They argue that Heidegger was a Nazi and a deeply Eurocentric thinker. Why even bother engaging with him? My response to these objections is that as long as this tiny planet is dominated by the logic of Gestell, that is, modern technology, an engagement with the thought of Heidegger can be fruitful. Secondly, Heidegger’s Eurocentrism lives alongside a most profound critique of Western civilization. I will argue that it is not a good idea to reject Heidegger’s critique because of his Eurocentric bias. Thirdly, an engagement with Heidegger from a decolonial perspective is necessary because only by engaging with the pinnacle of Western philosophical tradition can we find a way out of its metaphysical prison. And lastly, we have a few prominent examples of the scholars who worked along similar lines. For example, Frantz Fanon’s engagement with Jacques

Lacan and Gayatri Spivak’s engagement with Derrida opened a new space for postcolonial studies. Strangely, an engagement with Heidegger has taken so long given that Heidegger is a “proto-poststructuralist,” as Spanos aptly puts it.\textsuperscript{23} It seems even stranger considering that postcolonial studies has a deep relationship with French poststructuralism. Although most of the scholars in the postcolonial and decolonial traditions do not realize the depth of this connection between postcolonial theory and poststructuralism on the one hand and poststructural theory’s debt to Heidegger on the other, I must acknowledge that there are some exceptions. Nelson Maldonado-Torres has written an article on the coloniality of Being in which he has engaged with Heidegger’s early thinking. He remarks about Heidegger’s relevance for the study of colonialism, “Returning to Heidegger can provide new clues about how to articulate a discourse on the colonial aspects of world making and lived experience.”\textsuperscript{24} He further argues that the damné is for the European Dasein a being who is ‘not there.’ Dasein, which means ‘being there’ is used by Heidegger to refer to the human being in his early works, especially \textit{Being and Time}. Torres says, “they [the damné or the wretched of the earth and the European Dasein] are not independent of each other but that, without awareness of coloniality, reflection on Dasein and Being involve the erasure of the damné and the coloniality of Being.” While I agree with Torres to some extent, I feel that he has completely ignored Heidegger’s later philosophy of technology. Before Maldonado-Torres, Fred Dallmayr has also highlighted the potential of Heideggerian thinking for understanding colonialism.\textsuperscript{25} Much like Torres, Dallmayr has also done little to start a dialogue between Heidegger’s critique of technology and the study of colonialism. Similarly,

\textsuperscript{23} Spanos \textit{The Legacy of Edward W. Said}, 13.
\textsuperscript{25} Fred Dallmayr, \textit{The Other Heidegger} (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1993).
Dipesh Chakrabarty in his important book *Provincializing Europe* engages with Heidegger’s early thinking in *Being and Time* but is completely silent about his later, I would argue, mature thought.\(^{26}\) Given that Chakrabarty is fully aware of the role modern technology played in the colonial project, his choice to not engage with Heidegger’s thinking about technology seems odd. An engagement with Heidegger’s more profound critique of technology and its connections with the planetary domination of Europe would have added rigor to Chakrabarty’s analysis.

Walter Mignolo, another decolonial thinker, has also missed a genuine encounter with Heidegger’s thought, especially his critique of technology. He, much like Torres, also argues, “Heidegger’s concept of ‘being’ is grounded in (or it presupposes) a territorial notion of location.”\(^{27}\) Walter Mignolo’s otherwise outstanding work *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* does not take into account Heidegger’s critique of modernity.\(^{28}\) Nor does it talk about his critique of technology. This lacuna in his thinking is significant because modernity is unthinkable without modern technology and productionist metaphysics.\(^{29}\)

However, Orlando Bentancor in his recent study *The Matter of Empire* takes into account “Heidegger’s insight into the mutual co-constitution between metaphysical totalizations and global technological expansion.”\(^{30}\) Bentancor acknowledges that Heidegger’s critique of


metaphysical instrumentalism and the colonial drive as an extension of the drive towards mastery over nature helps explain the ideological underpinnings of colonialism. But he argues, erroneously in my view, that the “Heideggerian critique of Western technological domination can be historically articulated with a Marxian critique of commodity fetishism by means of a critique of the inner impasses of Aquinas’s metaphysical instrumentalism in a colonial context.”31 I, pace Betancour, believe that capitalism is just a symptom of metaphysical instrumentalism that continues the West’s drive towards planetary domination through the circulation of capital. Orlando’s focus is colonial Peru, which is quite different from colonial Punjab. It must be kept in mind that as the experience of colonialism varied greatly for different peoples, the coloniality and the experience of decolonization cannot be the same thing for everyone. In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I will engage with Bentancor’s work and elaborate more on this issue.

Another exception is Chinese scholar Yuk Hui. In his recently published book *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, he has made a distinction between technology and technics. While technology refers to modern technologies developed in Europe, technics refers to general forms of making and practice. This distinction enabled him to pluralize technics by calling for the development of non-European forms of technics. He argues that non-Western societies cannot attain emancipation until they squarely confront the question of technology. I will engage with his thinking in the final chapter of this dissertation.32

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32 Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China*. 
Given such persistent omissions of important fissures within the Western philosophical tradition, a new orientation toward coloniality is required, which following Betancour and Hui, sees coloniality as a consequence of modern technology, and modern technology as a consequence of Western metaphysics. Thus, coloniality has its roots in Western metaphysics. Any confrontation with coloniality is, at the same time, a confrontation with Western metaphysics. Empires have always existed. But only modern Western culture has effectively attained global domination. Countries like China and Japan that were never directly colonized are today politically, culturally, and economically Westernized. This is precisely because the logic of modern technology, that is, the logic of Western metaphysics has, so far, gone unchallenged. I argue that no decolonial project can succeed unless it challenges Western metaphysics operative behind modern technology. It is imperative to understand the mutual entanglement of colonialism, technology, and metaphysics. In this endeavor, Heidegger is both a friend and an enemy.

1.5 Techno-Coloniality

To understand techno-coloniality, we must first develop an understanding of coloniality. Coloniality is not the same as colonialism. Colonialism is sometimes defined as the political subjugation of one nation by another, which is a very old phenomenon extending back to ancient times. It is argued that militarily powerful nations have colonized other, less powerful nations throughout history. However, it should be noted here that the ideas of both colonialism and nation had carried entirely different meanings during different historical epochs. Coloniality, on the other hand, is markedly a newer phenomenon. It is something that exists independent of
direct colonial rule. Nelson Maldonaro-Torres has described the difference between colonialism and coloniality thus:

Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations.  

These ‘long-standing patterns of power’ are not hanging in a vacuum. They have a very firm foundation as their ground. This ground is modern technology. Coloniality exists in a space opened by the technological interpretation of what is. As Heidegger says, the sway of modern technology in the current epoch of the history of Being reveals everything as objects to be manipulated. Everything, including humans, exist in a state of standing-reserve, waiting to be called to work for the planetary network of production and consumption.

Techno-coloniality reveals something that elided Heidegger’s understanding. We can also say that Heidegger, although he lived during the twentieth century, during the apex of colonialism, was oblivious towards one salient fact: that not all human beings are revealed equally as standing-reserve. The particularity of their concrete existence, that includes their race, religion, gender and geographical location, makes them available to technological manipulation.

33 Maldonado-Torres, On the Coloniality of Being, 97.
34 It is important to distinguish between coloniality, postcoloniality, and anti-coloniality. As is clear from the above discussion, coloniality does not end with the cessation of direct colonial rule. Thus, postcolonial is not a political reality. Rather, it designates a political consciousness that is mindful of the conceptual traps constructed by colonial discourses. Anti-coloniality, on the other hand, is a political stance that seeks to confront coloniality on multiple levels, such as cultural, philosophical, and of course, political.
differently. The sway of techno-coloniality reveals human beings differently and hierarchically: many are revealed as slaves and a few others as masters. Those who are revealed as masters are also called-upon by the technological mode of revealing as standing-reserve. However, their position contains a certain privilege vis-à-vis other humans who differ from them in certain respects.

Before moving forward, a note on Heidegger’s notion of revealing is required here. Revealing is not a theological concept in Heidegger, although I think that it does have quasi-theological undertones. Heidegger believed that every historical community has its origin in a particular revelation of Being, i.e. how everything that exists appears to them. They can make their lives intelligible only within the limits of this revelation. Contemporary world is a result of a revelation of Being that happened in Ancient Greece. Although Heidegger denies constructing a new theology or mythology, it is quite apparent that he is doing something bears a family resemblance to both. As Richard Polt notes, “Heidegger craves a theophany.”

Techno-coloniality reveals something about Being that Heidegger repressed in his thinking despite overtly acknowledging it. Heideggerian thinking is oblivious to the fact that the historical and cultural specificity of Being lends a certain cadence to its mode of revelation. The nature of this cadence is two-faced. To Western humankind, Being is revealed as the fate of the world, as the very ground of existence as such. Being determines the basic coordinates of reality and everything that exists follows its dictates. Being is the hidden wellspring of the fate of the entire

world, and because this wellspring is located in the West, everyone else has no recourse but to follow the West. This is the most Hegelian moment in Heidegger’s thinking.

The drama of the revelation of Being gets unfolded in the colonies very differently; being revealed itself differently to the colonized. They saw its other face. The alienness of this face did not disclose the basic coordinates of reality or the very ground of existence. Its advent heralded a bifurcation in the native experience of the world. It arrived as the sudden darkening of the world that, with lightning speed, scorched the meaning-making capacities of native cultures. The sway of technological rationality now rules over living human beings entrapped in its deadening grip.

Techno-coloniality has three aspects: (i) the epistemic hegemony over the interpretation of what is, (ii) cultural technologies of control, whose reach is now extended to the unconscious (if we are allowed to use this expression in the environment of Heideggerian thinking) to halt the emergence of alternative interpretations, and (iii) the capturing of the physical environment through technological networks of manipulation. These three aspects are interrelated and cannot exist without each other. I will outline these aspects here, however, a fuller picture of what techno-coloniality is and how it operates in the real world will emerge only in later chapters.

Walter Mignolo and others have shown that epistemic violence is an integral part of the colonial enterprise. However, they ignore that the scope of epistemic violence is not limited to presenting justifications for colonial rule or delegitimizing the alternative epistemologies of the colonized. The real terror of epistemic violence lies in its ability to transform the heterogeneous modalities of daily living into a singular one: that of technological rationality where everything exists as a
means to an end. Such an interpretation of everything that is, does not exist as an interpretation among many other interpretations. It operates as the invisible background of all interpretations (political, social, economic). Herein lies the *invincibility* of metaphysical thinking, the cornerstone of Western philosophy since the ancient Greeks. One cannot counter the metaphysical reign of technological rationality by juxtaposing another interpretation of reality in front of it. What is required is the creation of a new earth and people, to use Deleuzian terminology. Deleuze says, “The creation of concepts in itself calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist.”

Heidegger understood this difficulty but his morbid obsession with delimiting every emancipatory path to the Black Forest or Ancient Greece never let this understanding bloom into a real possibility. The task of decolonial theory today, which I intend to do in my dissertation, is to chart these paths outside the realm of metaphysical thinking and the cultural and historical reality created by Europe.

A caveat about metaphysics is necessary here. It is correct that living outside metaphysics is impossible. We can also say that there is not an outside of metaphysics. The logic of everyday language is embedded in metaphysics too deeply. It would also be inappropriate to think that metaphysics is exclusively Western. There is a long tradition of metaphysical philosophization in India. So, metaphysics is everywhere, and it is also somewhat inescapable. It does not simply mean that metaphysics is the ultimate horizon of human existence and attempts to escape it are futile. Rather, the point is that the exit from metaphysics does not simply exist at a certain juncture. It is a happening that occurs rarely. Its occurrence can be glimpsed in the radical

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transformation of language. Without making claims to the universality of such a transformation, it can be safely said that such radical transformation has its own unique path and way of revealing in every linguistic tradition. Without this radical transformation, the closure of metaphysics is indeed absolute. Prof. Puran Singh, in his introduction to Bhai Vir Singh’s *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Kosh*, makes this point emphatically, which I will analyze in this dissertation.

Scholars working on colonialism surmised long ago that the colonial enterprise derives its power from the cultural technologies of control that it unleashes on the colonized. Such technologies of control usually consist of but are not limited to, classifications of a local population through census, bureaucratic management of land and the people, establishment of modern educational institutions etc. The network of these technologies captures the daily existence of the colonized and puts it to the service of Empire. During the decade following the colonization of Punjab in 1849 AD,\(^{37}\) these technologies were unleashed on Punjab with unprecedented ferocity. I will analyze how this cultural *blitzkrieg* heralded long-term social and psychic transformations among the Sikhs.

Thirdly, colonialism changed the way people relate to the land. How is a people related to a land it inhabits? The complexity of this question demands that we leave its full exploration to later chapters. However, I want to say a few things here. Autochthony is a central theme for Heidegger. Charles Bambach locates the roots of Heidegger’s disastrous politics in his fixation

\(^{37}\) This date carries enormous importance in Sikh history.
on autochthony. Autochthonous comes from Greek language and means ‘sprung from the earth.’ It is used to designate a people who is an indigenous inhabitant of a land. It is often contrasted with allochthonous, which means a people that originated in a land distant from their present condition. Autochthony also means a particular way in which a people relates to its land and draws its inspiration and strength from the physical environment it inhabits.

Although not all colonized peoples were uprooted from their lands, their relation to the land they inhabited changed forever. How do we understand this change? The land was converted into a standing-reserve waiting to be exploited to supply vital resources to the Empire. The inhabitants themselves were also converted into standing-reserve waiting to be conscripted into the army, exported as indentured labor, or exploited as human resources in the service of Empire and its imperial wars. This conversion renders the land alien to its inhabitants although they continue to live on it.

1.6 Singularity, Universality and the Tyranny of Technological Globalization

The conversion of the (mysterious, heterogeneous) earth into (technologically interconnected, increasing homogenizing) globe—which is nothing more than a repository of exploitable natural and human resources—has triggered profound existential and philosophical responses. In a different register, the imposition of uniform Western cultural norms over diverse cultures has exacerbated political conflicts. Reflecting on these problems, Jean Baudrillard saw the violence

endemic in contemporary society as originating from an encounter between the global and the singular. The similarity between the global and the universal, Baudrillard says, is deceptive. “Universality is the universality of human rights, freedoms, culture and democracy. Globalization is the globalization of technology, the market, tourism and information.”

Baudrillard, as can be expected, is no champion of universality. His point is that “Any culture that universalizes loses its singularity and dies.” That, according to Baudrillard, is what has happened to Western culture. Every culture that gets assimilated into Western culture through colonization or neoliberal globalization also loses its singularity and dies. It has happened to many cultures throughout the world and the same process is in operation for many others. For Baudrillard, such a death, although tragic, is a fine death. It is a noble death. But the death of the Western culture is an “ignoble death,” as it has experienced “the loss of all singularity” and “the extermination of all … values.” In other words, the death of other cultures has certain heroism to it as it results from a fight with the other, an adversary. But in the case of Western culture itself, such death is more of a case of suicide, rather than any confrontation. The fight of different cultures against the planetary domination of the modern Western culture is a fight of singularities against an imposed universalization. The universalization of Western culture is not a universalization of a living cultural tradition but the spread a zombie-like dead culture. Much like Marx’s capital, Western culture hovers over this ravaged planet as a blood-thirsty zombie eager to suck the blood of singular cultures and turning them into its own mirror-images.

40 Baudrillard, The Spirit of Terrorism, 88.
Seen from another perspective, this confrontation between the West and its others cannot be limited to direct dispossession only; a dispossession that we are too familiar with. Paradoxically, the destruction of the singularity of other cultures also happens through a (sinister) “giving.” Through globalization, other cultures are given Western technology, political institutions, capitalism, social mores, education and much more. But this “giving” is humiliating, Baudrillard points out. The rest of the world’s hatred of the West, Baudrillard argues, can be understood only in the context of this humiliation. “It is not the hatred of those from whom we have taken everything and given nothing back; it is the hatred of those to whom we have given everything without their being able to give it back. It is not, then, the hatred bred of deprivation and exploitation, but of humiliation.”41 Although Baudrillard is playing down the idea of colonial dispossession that so many of world’s cultures have gone through at the hands of the West, he is nevertheless making a profound point. The West, while dying an “ignoble death” by universalizing itself, has also robbed other cultures by giving or rather imposing on them a culturally desolate form of social organization, thereby killing their singularity.

The problem with this cultural interaction is that it is unidirectional. Everything flows from the West to the rest, while nothing goes back. (Even when the West gets something from the East, for example, spirituality, it is appropriated in such a way that it is completely transformed. Eastern spirituality, when transported to the West, is reduced to the status of a commodity.) I am not denying the fact that Western civilization has borrowed many things from other cultures. It is too obvious. It happens in a situation where it is not acknowledged as such. This is so because the West has arrogated to itself, and only itself, the very idea of the human. The rest are unable to

41 Ibid, 100.
give back because they are not considered fully human. The march of history goes only in one direction: towards the Europeanization of the entire planet. This situation is deeply humiliating for everyone but the West. The rest has two options in this situation: to “ape the Whites, who regard them as apes”42 which is itself humiliating or to fight back. One way to resist humiliation is by inflicting a greater humiliation upon the oppressor. That is how Baudrillard understands 9/11 attacks. In this violent symbolic exchange, Baudrillard argues, 9/11 attackers were able to humiliate the West by sacrificing their own lives. It was a humiliation to which the West was unable to respond symbolically.

But these are not the only two options. The singularities of other cultures can sometimes be violent, but not necessarily so in every situation. The violence of terrorism “avenges all the singular cultures that have paid with their disappearance for the establishment of this single global power.”43 Singularities can also express their resistance in subtle ways. There are singularities of “language, art, the body or culture”44 that resist in imperceptible yet powerful ways. The global conflict we are embroiled in since colonization is not a ‘clash of civilizations.’ It is an anthropological confrontation “between an undifferentiated universal culture and everything which, in any field whatever, retains something of an irreducible singularity.”45 The future of the world depends on how this confrontation plays out in the end.

43 Baudrillard, The Spirit of Terrorism, 97.
44 Ibid., 96.
Heidegger also envisioned this confrontation from a somewhat similar perspective although his framing of the issue takes place in a completely different theoretical register. This is, unsurprisingly, one of the least talked about issues in the Heidegger scholarship. He talked about the planetary domination of Western technology and its catastrophic consequences although colonization and non-Western peoples were rarely on his mind. One such rare occasion was when during the 7th centennial celebrations of his hometown Meßkirch in 1966, he delivered a poignant talk about homeland, its rapid disappearance in the modern world and some possible avenues of its return. He located the roots of homelessness endemic in contemporary societies in the planetary domination of modern technology. He said something about the non-Western peoples that deserves to be quoted at some length:

The often-mentioned underdeveloped peoples are being given the gift of performance in, success with, and use of modern technology; the question is whether through technology that which is most their own, most their inheritance, is not being taken and transformed into alienation. Perhaps ‘foreign-aid’ is basically nothing more than the race of the (apparently) highly developed peoples and states toward the goal of dominating as quickly and decisively as possible world business, thereby gaining a means to power in the struggle of the great powers for the domination of the earth. The form of this domination will be determined through the absolute, technical state.46

Heidegger’s reading, in contrast to Baudriallard, brings technology to the center. It is the “gift” of modern technology that is uprooting people from their historical homelands. Heidegger’s discourse of autochthony and rootedness is at play here. Many scholars usually relate this discourse to his disastrous politics. However, a community’s intimate relationship to the land, language, and way of life is not always contaminated by fascist politics. It can also take the form

of art. When this relationship is celebrated through art, it becomes a site of resistance against the forces of uprooting. In the colonial context, sometimes the fight for the survival of the singularity of colonized cultures takes such a route.

My research is not motivated, as Leela Gandhi once remarked regarding her own critical reflections on the postcolonial theory, by “a desire for postcolonial revenge,” that is, by a desire to “marginalize the West—to render it an excluded and uneasy eavesdropper.” I seek to engage with the West as profoundly as I can. On the other hand, unlike Gandhi—who is too optimistic—I do not believe in the possibility of a “democratic colloquium between the antagonistic inheritors of the colonial aftermath.” Gandhi is not sufficiently critical about this “democratic” ideal that she adopts too enthusiastically. I, on the other hand, see colonialism as a still-ongoing struggle. However, the task of my research is to achieve a metamorphosis of this unfinished confrontation, which is violent to its core, so that it does not simply end in devastation for everyone involved. This metamorphosis of the unfinished encounter between Western metaphysics and the colonized ways of life bears the hope of a decolonial global future. This hope is betrayed by an act of forgetting. Gandhi notes that postcolonial condition is usually accompanied by a “will to forget.” She calls it “postcolonial amnesia.” It is “symptomatic of the urge for historical self-invention or the need to make a new start—to erase painful memories of colonial subordination.” The task of this research is to undo this forgetting and start a process of creation.

48 Gandhi, Postcolonial Theory, 4.
Albert Memmi once wrote about this process of creation, “And the day oppression ceases, the new man is supposed to emerge before our eyes immediately. Now, I do not like to say so, but I must, since decolonization has demonstrated it: this is not the way it happens. The colonized lives for a long time before we see that really new man.”

Gandhi claims that his pessimism has “its source in the residual traces and memories of subordination.”

The hope that a really new human being will arise out of these “traces and memories of subordination” makes it possible to continue the fight for a decolonial future. However, this hope can transform into concrete historical reality only if the colonized are ready to creatively confront the logic of modern technology.

What Robert Young once said about the absence of an alternative to the Hegelian dialectic is also true about the modern technology:

The real difficulty has always been to find an alternative to the Hegelian dialectic – difficult because strictly speaking it is impossible, insofar as the operation of the dialectic already includes its negation. You cannot get out of Hegel by simply contradicting him, any more than you can get out of those other Hegelian systems, Marxism and psychoanalysis, by simply opposing them: for in both your opposition is likewise always recuperable, as the workings of ideology or psychic resistance.

Along these lines, is it possible to argue that technology also entails exactly such a dialectic? If one accepts modern technology, one simultaneously accepts the systems of domination that this technological organization of society entails. On the other hand, if one shuns it, one is constantly

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49 Cited in Gandhi, Postcolonial Theory, 6.
50 Gandhi, Postcolonial Theory, 7.
in flight from it. In both cases, technology fundamentally structures one’s existence. This techno-dialectics demands an alternative praxis; a praxis grounded in a vision of life that is devoid of ‘ontological imperialism’ of Western philosophy, to use a phrase by Emmanuel Levinas.

It is now almost a commonplace, at least within certain academic circles, to present a critique of Western metaphysics and to state that contemporary forms of oppression are grounded in this metaphysics. Despite its overuse, this critique is right on the spot. However, this critique has a glaring blind spot. It is called technology. Prominent postcolonial theorists like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Partha Chatterjee rarely discuss the question of technology in their writings. This omission is so glaring that even basic textbooks like Robert J.C. Young’s *White Mythologies* and Leela Gandhi’s *Postcolonial Theory* barely mention the issue of technology. This becomes more surprising given the central role that modern technology has in facilitating Western imperialism. Although decolonial scholars like Enrique Dussel and Walter Mignolo are more mindful about the role technology plays in the colonial endeavor, it never becomes a central question for them as well. This dissertation is aimed at filling this gap.

1.7 Chapter Summaries

The second chapter of this dissertation introduces Heidegger’s life and works. After a brief introduction to his life, the focus is turned toward major themes in his work. His controversial association with the Nazi party is discussed in some detail. Heidegger’s disastrous involvement with National Socialism is not understood in isolation. It is put in the context of racism embedded within Western philosophy. Many canonical names in the Western philosophical
tradition, such as Plato, Hegel, Kant, Nietzsche, Husserl, and Levinas have all expressed racist ideas in their writings. Heidegger’s politics is placed within that context. Heidegger’s failure to engage meaningfully with the non-Western traditions is also reflected upon. Heidegger’s philosophy of technology is discussed in detail with a special emphasis on how his thinking of technology develops from machination to Enframing as the essence of technology. A section is also devoted to explain why modern and traditional technologies are different from each other in their nature as well as their consequences. The chapter concludes with emphasizing the uniqueness and exclusively Western nature of modern technology.

The third chapter is more philosophical. It deals with Heidegger’s cosmology. Heidegger understands confrontation as a basic feature of reality. He says that the world comes to be through creative confrontation. He develops this thought by extending the Heraclitean thinking of polemos. Polemos is the word for originary war through which everything comes to be. Thus, Heidegger’s ontology, or rather his cosmology, is tainted by violence. I discuss in detail if colonialism can be understood as such a confrontation. The answer is very complicated. Colonialism both is and is not such a creative confrontation. Colonialism is not an originary struggle in Heideggerian sense but it is a profound struggle against the sway of Western metaphysics, in which modern technology is rooted. A part of this section is devoted to uncovering the deep connections between Western metaphysics and modern technology. The next section shows how metaphysics and technology combined in the form of techno-coloniality to wreak havoc on many parts of the world.
The fourth chapter deals with an originary lack in Heidegger’s thinking. This is done to explain Heidegger’s inability to meaningfully engage with non-Western traditions. I have shown that Heidegger struggled to make a breakthrough in this direction. Although he was able to get a glimpse of what a non-violent encounter with the other might look like, he was never able to enact it. An original and close reading of Heidegger’s recently published *Black Notebooks* is performed to reveal his inner struggle. Last two sections of this chapter are devoted to discussing what he missed by not engaging with the other traditions. An original reading of a Sufi poet Baba Farid is presented to highlight the potential of Sikh tradition in contributing to addressing the spiritual crisis of the contemporary world. Heidegger’s thinking is also critically engaged via Nietzsche and Derrida in these sections.

The fifth chapter discusses how techno-coloniality destroyed Sikh form of life. I use this phrase ‘form of life’ very loosely to denote the unique culture, spirituality, and way of life on the one hand and deeper understandings, which are implicit in that way of life, of temporality, language and way of thinking. The chapter starts with a brief introduction to Sikh religion and its history till 1849, the year Punjab was colonized, and Sikh sovereign power was destroyed. It is followed by a reflection on the event of colonization. In this section, I discuss how colonialism cannot be understood as merely another event in the chronological sequence of other historical events. I argue that it must be seen as introducing a new idea of history, that of world-history. Hegel’s thought is engaged to discuss this issue. It is then followed by a section dealing with the specific event of colonization of Punjab and how this event altered not only social space but subjective space as well. A special focus is given to the invisible violence of techno-coloniality. This violence consists in transforming the understanding of some of the basic features of human
existence such as temporality, language and thinking. A section is devoted to the destruction of education in colonial Punjab. These transformations led to what I call the destruction of Sikh existence that led to the Enframing of Sikh politics.

The last chapter follows the lead of Fanon’s impassioned plea at the end of *The Wretched of the Earth*. In the last few pages of his most famous work, Fanon urged the colonized to not imitate Europe in rebuilding their societies and version of the human being. I argue that his plea, unfortunately, went unheard. Many scholars, who otherwise adore Fanon, rarely discuss this plea. I have tried to enact a creative response to techno-coloniality while drawing my inspiration from the Sikh tradition. The heart of this chapter goes toward creating the idea of deframing as a necessary response to techno-coloniality. Deframing is a complex process that simultaneously operates under several registers. I have engaged four of these (there can be several others): existence, politics, climate, and language. Deframing is oriented towards envisioning decolonial futures (which are necessarily plural) not only by creating a different relationship with technology but also by attempting to create a new technics that has its roots outside the West. The latter project of creating a different technics is only hinted upon, as an attempt to enact it here would be overambitious. The social space created by deframing would be enthused with revolutionary love which I will discuss with reference to the Sikh tradition, the work of a French-Algerian Muslim woman Houria Bouteldja, and the native American Hopi community. The chapter ends with a reflection on modernity’s incorrigible tendency to desecrate sacred aspects of other cultures. I have argued that the pain caused by this desecration cannot be understood merely as pathology, but as an emancipatory opening towards decolonial futures.
These chapters are followed by the conclusion that provides a retrospective outline of the thesis. It provides a summary of the research discussed in the main body of the dissertation and what conclusions can be drawn from that research. It also briefly discusses the future avenues this research may open. It raises crucial questions about the place of sacred traditions in a society oversaturated with different technologies. Local spiritual traditions worked as the glue holding people together for centuries, creating a sense of community and shared destiny. With technological restructuring of society, religion has indeed lost its former role but it has survived, contrary to the opinion of many scholars and academics too eager to predict its imminent demise. The persisting power of religion has raised many questions. As attention becomes the primary commodity in a hyper semio-capitalized society, what happens to the ineffable promise of decolonial futures where different cultures and spiritual traditions coexist in a festive mood without the will to exploit each other? The search for such futures might stay elusive, but commercial exploitation of psychic energy has indeed acquired a new urgency which must be addressed to avoid complete domination of humanity by technology.
Chapter 2: Heidegger’s Philosophy of Technology

“Martin Heidegger is the hidden master of modern thought.”
– Timothy Clark

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, after a brief overview of Heidegger’s life and work, I will be discussing some of the more problematic aspects of his thinking such as his involvement with the Nazi party. Despite Heidegger’s Nazi connection, I argue, he is no exception in this regard. Racism has been an inseparable part of Western philosophy from the very beginning. Racism is different from race. While we can understand race in terms of biology, racism can be understood as ideology. Heidegger’s disastrous politics cannot be understood without placing it in the context of the larger picture of the racism inherent in the Western philosophy. This chapter provides a detailed introduction to Heidegger’s critique of technology. I also argue that although Heidegger’s diagnosis of the crisis of modern civilization is very profound and useful, his suggestions for getting out of this crisis are problematic. This chapter concludes with making a distinction between modern and traditional forms of technology. This distinction is very important for my research, as the critique of technology I am dealing with is not that of technology as such but only of the modern technology.

2.2 Heidegger: An Introduction

Heidegger is often regarded as one of the most significant philosophers of the 20th century. When his most famous work *Being and Time* was published for the first time in the spring of 1927, it was described as an “electric shock” and a “lightning strike.”\(^{53}\) *Being and Time* quickly established him as a towering figure in the history of Western philosophy. His philosophical project is so radical that he not only created a new conceptual framework, far removed from the ones used by eminent modern philosophers such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche, but he also created new terminology to articulate it, usually depending on the flexibility of the German language to create new words and to give existing words completely novel meanings. His writing is often said to be obscurantist and mystical. That is partly so because he tried to articulate the most basic features of human existence while abandoning the philosophical vocabulary used by the previous philosophers.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger raised anew the question of the meaning of Being.\(^{54}\) Heidegger says that the question of Being is forgotten and repressed since antiquity. The forgetfulness of the question of Being is dual in nature. We have forgotten to discuss this question as an issue in itself and we have also forgotten that we have forgotten the question of Being. We are oblivious


\(^{54}\) Being is a translation of German word *Sein* used by Heidegger. Sein is usually translated either as the capitalized “Being” or as the lower case “case.” Macquarrie and Robinson have translated it as capitalized to distinguish from beings [Seinende], things we encounter in the world. But Joan Stambaugh has opted for lower being for *Sein* and beings for *Seinende*. Although translating Sein as capitalized Being has its problem, I have followed Macquarrie and Robinson in this regard.
to the fact that we have not remembered this question as the most important question for our
time. The stated aim of *Being and Time* was to build a *fundamental ontology* by raising this
question again so that some clarity can be gained as to what Being is. It should be noted here that
Heidegger is not trying to give a determinate answer to the question of what Being is. He is
trying to question the very nature of *is* in this question. The real question he is trying to answer is
this: What does it mean for something to be? Being is not a supreme entity like God that exists
above and beyond everything else. Being itself does not exist in the manner as other objects like
the table, city and mountains. So, this question is not the same as asking what something is as an
ordinary question. The question of the meaning of being is a quintessential metaphysical
question that leads the way to gain an insight into the essence of metaphysics and also language.

The difference between Being and beings is what he calls the *ontological difference*. Heidegger
believes that philosophers throughout the Western philosophical tradition mistakenly treated
Being as either a most universal concept, as something indefinable, or as a self-evident
concept.\(^{55}\) Being is also not to be confused with the Supreme Being, God. Being is a particular
way of revealing whatever there is. This determines the way the world is disclosed to human
beings. The human being is not a being among other beings. It is a being for whom the question
of Being is an issue. Heidegger’s name for it is *Dasein*. Dasein literally means existence and in
colloquial German, it simply means ‘being there.’ *Da* in German means ‘there’ and *Sein* means
‘Being’. Dasein is ‘being there’ as human existence always exists in a world. It always has a

place. “Dasein is an entity which, in its very being, comports itself understandingly towards that being.”

Dasein is not a property of human beings. We are Dasein. It is how we exist in the world that makes us Dasein. Heidegger used this term deliberately because he wanted to stress the importance of the place of the lived reality of human existence. The ‘there’ is not an abstract nomination of any place. For him, the place of human dwelling is always historically and culturally specific, a place where one can make sense of one’s existence in its historical context and make a meaningful relationship with others. Heidegger’s notion of Dasein can also be related to his ideas about home and belonging, to autochthony, from his later thinking. Language has a special place in Heidegger’s thinking as he considered Language to be “the house of the truth of being.” Heidegger’s connection with Nazism has a lot to do with his privileging of the Homeland, that is Germany, and German and Ancient Greek languages.

Heidegger presents a scathing critique of French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) for positing a self-certain and self-transparent idea of the human being as something that stands against the world. For Descartes, *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) is the epistemological foundation of the possibility of philosophy as such. According to Descartes, there are three types of fundamental substances in the world, *res extensa*, material objects; *res cogitans*, thinking substance or consciousness; and God. This results in a fundamental duality of

the material world and consciousness. Heidegger, contrarily, believes that we do not exist as thinking beings separate from the world around us, but our existence is fundamentally a being-in-the-world. Without the world, it is impossible to imagine a human being. Being-in-the-world stands as a “unitary phenomenon” which “must be seen as a whole.”\textsuperscript{59} We are not selves or subjects, according to Heidegger; we are beings-in-the-world, always already involved in our surroundings.

During the 1930s, Heidegger moved away from the existential analytic he reflected upon in \textit{Being and Time}. He turned his attention towards issues like art, poetry, and technology. In the late 30s, the thinking of ‘Being’ was replaced by a thinking of \textit{Ereignis}, event or happening. It was only towards the end of the 1940s, after the Second World War came to an end, that he explicitly articulated his views about technology (more on that in the next section). For the rest of his career, he remained focused on issues such as nihilism, the decline of occidental thinking, and search for a new beginning to revitalize the truth of Being. Heidegger’s oeuvre proved to be highly influential and many important philosophers of the latter part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Bernard Stiegler reflected on the paths opened by his thinking.

\subsection*{2.2.1 Heidegger and Nazism}

Locke, Kant, and Hegel all made major and new contributions to racism that go far beyond any contribution Heidegger made to anti-Semitism.

\textsuperscript{59} Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 78.
The severest indictment of Heidegger and his philosophy comes as the accusations of his involvement in National Socialism and his anti-Semitic remarks. In 1933, shortly after Hitler came to power; Heidegger joined the National Socialist movement. He was appointed Rector of Freiburg University. After nine months, he resigned from his post and stopped participating directly in political activities, although he never renounced his membership from the Nazi party. Both his membership in the Nazi party and his anti-Semitic views were long known to Heidegger scholars.

But it all came to the general public’s attention after Victor Farias published his book *Heidegger et le Nazisme* in France in 1987. The publication of Farias’ book ignited what is now knows as *L’affaire Heidegger* or *French Heidegger Wars*. Most scholars agree that Heidegger did indeed made the mistake of joining the Nazi party and also harbored anti-Semitic views. A large number of them also believe that it is not possible to completely divorce his philosophy from his politics. However, despite these damning revelations, there is an agreement that Heidegger’s philosophy provides valuable insights into the contemporary human condition, rejecting it *tout court* for personal political decisions is rather rash. Although the personal and the political cannot be separated neatly into different categories and there can be no justification for Heidegger’s anti-

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Semitic remarks, his philosophy nevertheless contains something that deserves a thorough discussion.⁶²

One of the most controversial comments was made in 1949 Bremen lecture, where he said, “Agriculture is now a mechanized food industry, in essence the same as the production of corpses in the gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockading and starving of countries, the same as the production of hydrogen bombs.”⁶³ This comment is almost universally condemned and is often presented as proof of his moral insensitivity. But some scholars have defended him by saying that Heidegger is only revealing the disturbing commonality that underlies all of these diverse processes. This commonality is the technologization of all spheres of life by imposing a logic of efficiency and exploitation on everything that exists. It cannot be doubted that technology, as Enframing, has dominated all spheres of life, from the production of food to the production of corpses.⁶⁴

Another earthquake hit Heidegger Studies in 2014: the publication of the Black Notebooks. From 1931 to 1970s (he died in 1976) Heidegger kept a series of notebooks bounded in black oilcloth to jot down his thoughts. There were 34 notebooks in total. Heidegger destroyed the first one. The rest are in the process of getting published. The first three volumes, containing notebooks II through XV, came out in 2014, two further volumes are since published and the rest will be published in the future. Anti-Semitic passages in the Black Notebooks comprise no more than

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⁶² The same can be said about Carl Schmitt who was a Nazi supporter as well.
two and a half pages out of a total of 1200 pages. But those passages are quite damning and show the extent of Heidegger’s anti-Semitism.

It should be noted here that Heidegger’s anti-Semitism is not based on the principle of race. Rather, it is a form of metaphysical anti-Semitism. For example, a notebook from the period 1939-41 notes: “The question of the role of world-Judaism is not a racial question, but a metaphysical one, a question that concerns the kind of human existence which in an utterly unrestrained way can undertake as a world-historical ‘task’ the uprooting of all beings from being.”65 Not only that Heidegger’s anti-Semitism is not based on the idea of race, he accuses the Jews of espousing the principle of race: “With their emphatically calculative giftedness, the Jews have for the longest time been “living” in accord with the principle of race, which is why they are also offering the most vehement resistance to its unrestricted application. The instituting of racial breeding stems not from “life” itself, but from the over powering of life by machination.”66

Heidegger’s involvement with Nazism and his anti-Semitic remarks have ignited intense, often polemical discussion. A group of scholars are always eager to repudiate him for his political views and some even go as far as rejecting his entire thinking. What is often ignored in this discussion is that Heidegger’s political views are not an anomaly in the Western philosophical tradition. Following post-structural thinking, it has become clear that the imperialism and xenophobia embedded within the Western imaginary has its roots in philosophy grounded in logocentrism that has always remained tainted by exclusionary and racist ideas. Perhaps the

66 Heidegger, Ponderings XII-XV, 44.
vociferousness with which Heidegger is so often condemned betrays an attempt to conceal the rotten core of philosophy. The exclusion that lies at this core is so strong that it is still conditioning Western philosophy, even after the historically unprecedented atrocities like colonialism and the Holocaust. Keeping this in mind, a brief survey of the racist foundations of Western philosophy is necessary.

2.2.2 Philosophy and the Sickness of European Civilization

From a non-western point of view, what is strange in this L’affaire Heidegger is that he is not alone in this. He was part of two and a half millennia-long tradition of thinking which has been racist and exclusionary through and through. Robert Bernasconi has pointed this out explicitly, “The Eurocentrism, antisemitism, and racism of many of the canonical names of Western philosophy, including figures of the stature of Locke, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche, are now well documented.” He also rejects the standard responses such as “a child of his/her own time” as illegitimate and I am in agreement with him. Bernasconi says that the involvement of many luminaries of the western philosophical tradition in ghastly evils such as “the enslavement and oppression of people of African descent in the Americas was extreme even by the standards of the time.” He points in the right direction when he says that the real question is not that of Heidegger’s collusion with the Nazis or his anti-Semitic views, the real question is how do we come to terms with the racism embedded within western philosophy. Bernasconi also reveals

68 Bernasconi, Another Eisenmenger, 171.
69 Ibid.
that “Heidegger’s refusal to look outside … the Western philosophical tradition or look more closely within the western philosophical tradition is what deprives him of resources, deprives him of a language” to articulate what he struggled to articulate after abandoning the project of *Being and Time.*\(^7^0\)

I want to share a somewhat concealed aspect of three philosophers from the 20\(^{th}\) century, two of who lived through and long after the holocaust. All three were Jewish and had significant relations with Heidegger. They also publicly critiqued Heidegger’s political decisions. These thinkers are Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), and Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995). Husserl was Heidegger’s teacher and mentor but after Hitler’s rise to power, he was forced to leave Germany. Hannah Arendt was Heidegger’s student and long-time lover. Emmanuel Levinas was also Heidegger’s student and was enamored with his thinking for a long time before turning against him. What is most disturbing about them is that they were deeply racist.

Hannah Arendt met Heidegger in the 1920s when she was a young student and Heidegger’s fame as a mesmerizing lecturer and deep thinker was beginning to spread throughout Germany. They quickly fell in love although Heidegger was married at the time. In the 1930s, when Heidegger moved closer to National Socialism, their relationship fell apart and Arendt moved away. But after the Second World War, Arendt reconciled with him once again and played a pivotal role in introducing his thinking to North America. It is shocking yet unsurprising that Arendt, a Jewish

woman who witnessed the horrors of the Holocaust, shamelessly espoused anti-Black racism in the United States.\textsuperscript{71}

Edmund Husserl, who lived through and endured the pernicious Nazi rule in Germany, blindly reinforced the exclusionary logic in his writings that the Nazis used to persecute Jews and others. In an address delivered in Vienna on May 7 and 10, 1935, Husserl talked about the spiritual crisis of Europe and sought to develop a “philosophical historical idea (or the teleological sense) of European man.”\textsuperscript{72} Husserl’s point of departure in this lecture is that “The European nations are sick” and that contemporary Europe is “in critical condition.”\textsuperscript{73} Europe, for Husserl, was not merely a geographical entity, but a spiritual one that extends far beyond its geographical boundaries such as the United States etc. However, “the Eskimos or Indians of the country fairs, or the Gypsies, who are constantly wandering about Europe” are not part of Europe’s spiritual heritage, according to Husserl.\textsuperscript{74} Husserl went as far as to proclaim that Europeans have achieved an evolved form of humanity, which others lack although they are also human in the broad sense.


\textsuperscript{73} Edmund Husserl, \textit{Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy}, 150.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, 155.
The uniqueness of Europe, for Husserl, lies in the constant motivation of all other human groups to “Europeanize themselves, whereas we, if we understand ourselves properly, will never, for example, Indianize ourselves”.\textsuperscript{75} This is so because there is an entelechy inherent in “European humanity” that makes it natural that Europe assumes global leadership. Philosophy has a special role in fulfilling the inner entelechy of European humanity. “Philosophy has constantly to exercise through European man its role of leadership for the whole of mankind.”\textsuperscript{76} This suffices to demonstrate that Eurocentrism and racism tainted Husserl’s philosophical vision. Little did he know that the very vision he is articulating in Vienna was going to haunt him and millions of other Jews shortly after.

Perhaps the strangest case is that of Emmanuel Levinas who lived through the holocaust and lived to see the twentieth century almost to its end. He was one of the inspirations behind the rise of postmodern, post-structural philosophy and its emphasis on the Other. Levinas, once Heidegger’s student in the 1930s, took it upon himself to present a powerful critique of Heidegger’s philosophical project. He did so by introducing the ethical primacy of the Other in philosophy over the thought of Being. However, the Levinasian Other of Heideggerian Being does not include everyone. Levinas’ exteriority is a limited exteriority, it does not embrace infinity, despite his claims to the contrary. Levinas’ thinking was itself haunted by the terror of another other, that of the ‘Afro-Asiatic masses.’

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, 157
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, 178
In his short essay, *Jewish Thought Today*, Levinas shared his concern. He saw “The arrival on the historical scene of those underdeveloped Afro-Asiatic masses who are strangers to the Sacred History that forms the heart of the Judaic-Christian world” as one of the three ‘great events’ that “constitute for Jewish thought today the facts of the new situation,” the other two being the revival of anti-Semitism and the creation of the state of Israel. He is upset and feels threatened by the rise of ‘Afro-Asiatic masses’ and calls for unity of Jews and Christians against them.77 With reference to Franz Rosenzweig, he talks about “a religious truth that is certainly not pluralist but dualist.”78 The context of this Jewish-Christian solidarity is the rising threat from Asia:

I am not thinking exclusively of our kinship in the face of Nazism. But behold, upon the world’s stage, innumerable masses advancing out of Asia. In the eyes of these crowds who do not take holy history as their frame of reference, are we Jews and Christians anything but sects quarrelling over the meaning of a few obscure texts?79

In an interview with Florian Rötzer, Levinas explained why Europe is central for him and what he thought about the rest of humanity: “Europe, that’s the Bible and the Greeks. It has come closer to the Bible and to its true fate. Everything else in the world must be included in this. I don’t have any nostalgia for the exotic. For me Europe is central.”80 And this was after the holocaust. It seems that Levinas is not interested in understanding the roots of the violence that Europe has unleashed on the world. His concern was practical and surprisingly petty for the thinker of his stature.

78 Emmanuel Levinas, *Jewish Thought Today*, 163.
These philosophers believed that Europe has a spiritual unity and that it has a historical mission to lead humanity. They also believed that, for several reasons, this mission is in crisis and philosophy needs to play a role in alleviating this crisis.

Interestingly, some anti-colonial thinkers like Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon also talk about the sickness and crisis of Europe, albeit for entirely different reasons. Aimé Césaire calls Europe “a sick civilization, a civilization which is morally diseased, which irresistibly, progressing from one consequence to another, one denial to another, calls for its Hitler, I mean its punishment.”

Fanon also warns us about the nihilism that Europe has unleashed, “Europe now lives at such a mad, reckless pace that she has shaken off all guidance and all reason, and she is running headlong into the abyss; we would do well to avoid it with all possible speed.” Fanon also cautions us against the temptations of European technique and style. In the European technique and style, he sees “only a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders.” He then calls the colonized to pull their muscles together to create “the whole man (l’homme total), whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth.” I will explore this theme in greater detail in the later chapters.

82 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 312.
83 Ibid, 312.
84 Ibid, 312-3.
2.2.3 Heidegger’s Blind Spots: The Oblivion of Other Beginnings

Heidegger’s excessive focus on Western philosophy and thinking as the only mode of engagement with the world makes him blind to the truth of other traditions. Although it is true that only Western culture has attained planetary domination through its calculative and instrumental way of thinking, this does not mean, however, that other cultures and traditions are rendered defunct by this domination. Heidegger never explicitly acknowledged that the truth of other cultures might be alive in their perpetual struggle against technological domination. Not only that, but the possibility of these traditions eventually presenting an alternative to the logic of Enframing cannot be foreclosed.

Jarava Lal Mehta, an Indian scholar who wrote one of the very first introductions to the work of Martin Heidegger back in the 1960s, also grappled with the question of the future of other traditions in the age of technological domination. Mehta presents a sympathetic view of Heidegger’s philosophy. While I agree with him that Heidegger’s philosophy is not without relevance for postcolonial thinking, I do not believe, like him, that Heidegger acknowledged the relevance of other beginnings as a response to the technological domination of the earth. In an epoch, Mehta argues, where

[T]he “Europeanization of the Earth and of humanity” is no longer a mere threat but has become a harsh reality … the thinking Indian faces a challenge to which he was never exposed before: the compulsion of belonging, irretrievably and inescapably, to this 'one
world' of the Ge-Stell, to a world 'one' only in the desolation of being enveloped within the Nihilistic metaphysical heritage of the West.  

The present situation and challenges are “utterly new in history … because there is neither escaping it nor a possibility of directly attacking it and because no strategy of defense can be enduringly effective against it.” Mehta argues that we in the East will have to “go along with this Europeanization and to go through it.” What is needed, according to him, is not a simple step back into our own traditions, because that is simply impossible, but “a profounder rethinking of our Indian tradition in terms of its own original beginnings.” Mehta’s appraisal is based on his understanding that Heidegger also acknowledged the existence of few other great beginnings. The passage he cites from is in Heidegger’s book on Hölderlin, *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*. It goes like this:

Accordingly, the present world condition can receive an essential change or, for that matter, preparation for it, only from its beginning, which fatefully determines our age. It is the great beginning. There is, of course, no return to it. The great beginning becomes present, as that which awaits us, only in its coming to the humble. But the humble can no longer abide in its occidental isolation. It is opening itself up to those few other great beginnings which, with their own character, belong in the sameness of the beginning of the in-finite relation in which the earth is contained.

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86 Mehta, Martin Heidegger, 466.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
A careful reading of this passage makes it abundantly clear that the “essential change” he wanted to bring to the West can come only from its own beginning. The acknowledgement of the “few other great beginnings” is too little and its presence in Heidegger’s entire work is next to nothing. Heidegger’s viewpoint predominantly privileges the West and he believed that the alternative to contemporary nihilism could only arise from within the West.

2.3 Heidegger on Technology

Heidegger’s mature philosophy of technology differs significantly from his earlier notion of machination [Machenschaft], first developed in the late 1930s, primarily in Contributions to Philosophy. Machination, broadly speaking, denotes the sway of calculation and objectivity. This sway prevails due to abandonment of beings by Being. “Beings are abandoned to the world, and this means they are abandoned into machination.”\(^{90}\) Although machination ordinarily means “a ‘bad’ kind of human endeavor and the scheming that goes into it,” it also means something else when seen in the context of the question of Being. From that perspective, “[I]t does not name a kind of human conduct but a mode of the essential occurrence of being.”\(^{91}\) Even though machination distorts the essence of being, Heidegger thinks that simply denigrating it is not appropriate.

\(^{90}\) Andrew Mitchell, The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 27.

Instead, it is essential that we understand what kind of essential occurrence of being happens through machination. “[T]he name machination [Machenschaft] should immediately refer to making [Machen] (ποίησις, τέχνη), which we assuredly know as a human activity.” Heidegger, Contributions, 100. However, making as a human activity is grounded in a specific interpretation of beings that brings their makeability to the front. But this is not making itself by itself, an interpretation of being that is visible in the Greek concept of φύσις [phusis]. The interpretation of being that pervades in machination is causality. This interpretation was strengthened when Judeo-Christian thought brought the idea of the world as ens creatum [created being] and the God as causa sui. “That is an essential deviation from φύσις and is at the same time the transition to the emergence of machination as the essence of beingness in modern thought. The mechanistic and the biologistic modes of thinking are always only consequences of the concealed machinational interpretation of beings.”

Heidegger’s mature thinking about technology started in 1949 when he gave a lecture course in Bremen titled Insight Into That Which Is. At that time, Heidegger was under a teaching ban imposed by the De-Nazification Committee after Germany’s defeat in the Second World War. It was also his first speaking engagement after the War. Graham Harman, naming the lecture course as “one of the strangest jewels in all of Western philosophy,” has described it as the second greatest work of Heidegger after Being and Time. In this lecture course, he first

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92 Heidegger, Contributions, 100.
developed the thought of the “fourfold” and “Enframing.” A part of this lecture course was later revised and published as *The Question Concerning Technology* in 1954 in which he substantially developed the thought of Enframing. Heidegger’s stated aim in this essay is to first arrive at an understanding of the essence of technology and then to point towards a way leading to establishing a free relationship with that essence.

Heidegger starts the essay by making a provocative claim: “[T]he essence of technology is by no means anything technological.” He claims that just as the essence of a tree cannot be found in the trees around us, similarly, the essence of technology cannot be there in the technological artifacts. Heidegger cautions against regarding technology as something neutral as it can make us “utterly blind to the essence of technology.” He also warns against unthinkingly accepting instrumental and anthropological definitions of technology. Instrumental definition of technology understands technology as a means to an end while the anthropological definition sees it as a human activity. Both these definitions are correct, Heidegger says, but not true. The merely correct does not “uncover the thing in question in its essence” while through the true, this uncovering happens to pass. The problem with instrumental and anthropological definitions of technology is that they do not show us the essence of technology.

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96 Enframing is a translation of German word *das Gestell* used by Heidegger. Andrew Mitchell, who translated Bremen lectures into English, has translated is as “positionality” while William Lovitt, who translated his seminal essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, used “Enframing” instead. I believe Lovitt’s translation more aptly captures the connotations of suggested by *das Gestell*. Hence, I have followed Lovitt in using Enframing for *das Gestell*. Wherever I have used Mitchell’s translation, I have added Enframing in brackets along with positionality.


99 Ibid, 6.
Where else, then, does the essence of technology lie? In order to answer this question, Heidegger goes back to Ancient Greece. Greeks had a name for the uncovering, revealing and coming-to-presence of things: *alētheia*. *Alētheia* is usually translated as truth but etymologically speaking it is closer to connotations of unconcealment and revealing. When Romans translated it into *veritas*, they had truth as correctness in mind rather and revealing. It was with the Romans’ translation of Greek *alētheia* as unconcealment into *veritas* as truth/correctness that the decline of occidental thinking started. Another Greek word *poiēsis* is also a form of revealing, in the manner of bringing-forth. It is a “bringing-forth not in itself, but in another (*en allōi*), in the craftsman or artist.”

All forms of arts and crafts are instances of *poiēsis* as they bring something forth in the form of a finished object or work of art.

Heidegger claims that technology, in its essence, is also a kind of revealing. Technology is derived from the Greek word *technē*. *Technē* means “activities and skills of the craftsman” on the one hand and “arts of the mind and the fine arts” on the other. “*Technē* is a mode of *alētheuein*. It reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us. *Technē* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiēsis*; it is something poietic.” But over time, we have become oblivious to the fact that technology, in its essence, is a form of revealing. We are stuck in the instrumental and anthropological definitions of technology. For Heidegger, the crucial first step towards understanding and appropriately dealing with technology is to understand it as a form of revealing.

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100 Ibid, 11.
Not only ancient but also modern technology is a form of revealing, according to Heidegger. But it is not revealing in the sense of bringing-forth. “The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [Herausfordern], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such.”102 Modern technology is a revealing that challenges-forth nature in such a way that its balance is disturbed (more on this in the next section). The environmental crisis that we are experiencing today, and we have every reason to believe that it will become worse in the coming decades, is a result of challenging revealing of modern technology. Michael Zimmerman has used Heidegger’s philosophy of technology to develop the notion of deep ecology.103

The unconcealment that is peculiar to modern technology treats everything as mute objects to be calculated, manipulated and ordered. “Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed, to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve [Bestand].”104 Although it appears that the man is challenging-forth nature in this way and treating it as standing-reserve, but this is not the case. In so far as this challenging-forth is a form of revealing, man himself is challenged-forth and ordered “even more originally than nature within the standing-reserve.”105 However, in spite of being challenged more originally than nature, man is never “transformed into mere standing-reserve.”106 Because he drives technology

102 Ibid, 14.
105 Ibid, 18.
106 Ibid.
forward and “takes part in ordering as a way of revealing.” The revealing itself, however, is not a result of human activity.

If modern technology as a challenging revealing is not just a result of human activity, what is it then? It is Enframing. “Enframing is the gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon which sets upon man and puts him in position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve.”107 Enframing is a way of revealing that reveals everything as standing-reserve. Although its roots lie in ancient Greek thinking, it got fully manifested as a challenging-forth only during modernity. Thus challenged-forth, the man also stands within the realm of Enframing. Enframing, as a way of revealing, is also a destining. Heidegger posits a new vision of history here: History as destiny. History, according to him, can neither be reduced to written documents nor to merely a human activity. He understands history as an originary destiny. This destiny unfolded itself through history and imposed a particular way of revealing of being upon everything that exists. Despite appearances, technology does not have the same place in Heidegger’s thought as the spirit does in Hegel’s. However, any detailed examination of their similarities and differences is outside the scope of this project.

The idea that Enframing is a form of destining can be very helpful in understanding colonialism. “Enframing is an ordaining of destining, as is every way of revealing.”108 Ordaining has a range of meanings including conferring holy orders, ordering officially, and decided in advance (by fate or God). This word is a translation of the German word Schickung, which is used by

Heidegger. One meaning of *Schickung* is also an act of God. Heidegger is not thinking theologically here in terms of conceiving God as the supreme Being and *causa sui*. What Heidegger is trying to stress here is that the planetary sway of technology we are witnessing today is a result of destiny inherent to Western culture. Its planetarity suggests that the destiny of the West is also the destiny of the Rest.\(^{109}\) The danger posed by technology is not a danger that emanates from technological objects such as the Atomic Bomb, automation etc. This danger is such that it affects us in our innermost being. “The rule of Enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth.”\(^{110}\) As George Pattison has remarked on Heidegger’s understanding of technology, “[T]he contemporary planetary hegemony of technology is not the result of a haphazard sequence of brilliant individual inventions and discoveries but the outcome of an original destining of Being.”\(^{111}\)

Heidegger sees emancipation from the Enframing reign of technology in preparing the way for another form of revealing of being. One alternative realm of such revealing is art. “In Greece, at the outset of the destining of the West, the arts soared to the supreme height of the revealing granted them. They brought the presence … of the gods, brought the dialogue of divine and human destinings, to radiance.”\(^{112}\) It was not a coincidence that art in Ancient Greece was called *technē*. It was a revealing in the sense of bringing-forth, *poiēsis*. Hence Hölderlin’s saying:

\(^{109}\) In theorizing Enframing as destining, Heidegger’s Eurocentrism is revealed in very clear way. It will be problematized in later chapters.
\(^{112}\) Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 34.
But where danger is, grows
The saving power also.

We, as humans, cannot guarantee this change. However, our questioning can prepare the way for its coming. The more we understand the essence of technology, the nearer we come to the mysterious saving grace of art. “The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become. For questioning is the piety of thought.” Questioning concerning technology is not empty philosophizing for Heidegger. It is a way of intervening, however indirectly, in the history and destiny of the West, which for him is moving towards a darkening of the whole earth, the flight of gods and the sway of calculability.

2.3.1 Uniqueness of Modern Technology

A question still remains to be answered: how is modern technology different from pre-modern and non-western technologies that people used, invented, and improved for thousands of years?

What is peculiar about modern technology that makes it so dangerous that its reign leads to “the darkening of the world, the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the reduction of human beings to a mass, the hatred and mistrust of everything creative and free?” Heidegger gives many clues to answer these questions in his writings.

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113 Ibid, 35.
One passage from his commentary on German poet Hölderlin’s hymn ‘The Ister’ is worth quoting at some length where he specifically discussed the difference between modern and pre-modern technology:

The machine of modern technology is essentially distinct from every kind of "tool" not only insofar as it has its own sequence of effects and its own way of producing energy and is thereby a different means in the hand of human beings. What is distinctive about modern technology is that it is no longer a mere "means" at all, and no longer merely stands in the "service" of something else, but that it itself is unfolding a kind of domination of its own. Technology itself demands of itself and for itself, and indeed intrinsically develops, its own kind of discipline and its own kind of awareness of conquest. Thus, for example, the fabrication of factories for the purpose of fabricating fabricated products, namely machines that themselves in turn fabricate machines, in short, the construction of a machine tool factory, constitutes a singular triumph that occurs in stages. The fascinating side of this process can, especially in conjunction with the discipline pertaining to technology, cover over to a large extent the "misery" into which human beings are thrust by technologization. Perhaps there is no longer any such "misery" for those human beings who are completely technological. Conceived metaphysically, modern machine technology is a specific kind of "truth," in terms of which the essence of the actuality of everything actual is determined. The machine that belongs to such technology is different from a "tool," for technology itself is self-subsistent.¹¹⁵

When Heidegger says, “modern machine technology is a specific kind of ‘truth,’” he does not mean it in the sense of a deeper truth such as the truth of Being. What he means is mere correctness that reveals everything that exists in a specific way. It reduces truth to just correspondence. As we have seen in the previous section, the “truth” of modern technology lies

in its challenging-revealing. In his essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger contrasts the mining of earth for minerals with agriculture. While the mining of earth for coal and ore challenges it, this is not so in the case of traditional forms of agriculture. In traditional agriculture, the land is taken care of instead of challenged. “The work of the peasant does not challenge the soil of the field. In the sowing of the grain it places the seed in the keeping of the forces of growth and watches over its increase.” 116 But Heidegger also laments the fact that as agriculture has become part of the mechanized food industry, it too has become a setting-upon that challenges forth. Similarly, Heidegger talks about the radio and the airplane and argues that these are not just improved versions of the rural postman and the mail coach, “Rather, the airplane and the radio are intrinsically, that is, in terms of their machine essence and in terms of the extensive scope of their essence, determining the new leeway for playing out possibilities that can be planned and accomplished through human willpower and for its putting things into effect.” 117

A crucial point for Heidegger is to establish that modern machine technology is not a means to an end. One obvious objection against this idea is that modern machine technology is never an end in itself. It is always a means to achieve something else. Heidegger counters this by saying that the relationship of means and ends is not that of either/or, it is not one or the other. If something is not an end in itself, it does not mean that it must be a means. He asks, “For who says that something that is not a means necessarily has to be an end, and conversely, that whatever is not an end can only be held to have the character of a means?” 118 He says that this

117 Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister,”* 44.  
118 Ibid, 45.
very question about whether the modern technology is a means or an end is an erroneous question as it fails to grasp the “essence” of the modern technology. The reason for this failure is our tendency to unquestioningly accept the underlying reality of this question, “the spatio-temporal order and the unity of space and time.”

In other words, the question of modern technology in its essence is a question of metaphysics. The important thing to note here is that “metaphysics first begins to achieve its supreme and utter triumph in our century as modern machine technology.” As a question of metaphysics, it is also a ‘spiritual’ question, the question of the ‘spirit’ of Europe and that of our age. It is wrong, Heidegger says, to believe that we live in a materialistic age because machines are made of the material. “Modern machine technology is ‘spirit’.” In a surprisingly Hegelian move, Heidegger here claims that precisely because of the spiritual nature of modern technology, it is not possible to return to a world that existed before technology became supreme. “It is just as childish to wish for a return to previous states of the world as it is to think that human beings could overcome metaphysics by denying it. All that remains is to unconditionally actualize this spirit so that we simultaneously come to know the essence of its truth.” Thus Heidegger also dispels the misunderstanding that he is against the use of technology. He is not. He is just asking to understand its essence so that its completion is realized, and we enter a new epoch of Being. There is something of a destiny in the nature of technology. What originated in Europe as its own destiny has become the destiny of everyone through the reign of modern machine technology.

119 Ibid.
120 Ibid, 53.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
Heidegger argues that only by encountering the essence of technology and its historical beginning in Ancient Greece can we prepare for another beginning.\(^{123}\)

Not many postcolonial thinkers have engaged with Heidegger’s notion of Enframing. Timothy Mitchell, in his book *Colonising Egypt* (1991), has employed the term Enframing as an analytical tool. He acknowledges that he has borrowed this term from Martin Heidegger. However, it is surprising that he does not engage with Heidegger’s notion of Enframing at all. His idea of Enframing is substantially different from Heidegger’s understanding. He defines Enframing as “a method of dividing up and containing, as in the construction of barracks or the rebuilding of villages, which operates by conjuring up a neutral surface or volume called ‘space.’”\(^{124}\) This method, Mitchell argues, “offered the possibility of a remarkable standardisation, between houses, between families and between villages.”\(^{125}\) Apart from being a method, Enframing also “works by determining a fixed distinction between outside and inside.”\(^{126}\) Mitchell also mentions a third aspect of Enframing which consists in the “way it provides a place from which the individual can observe.”\(^{127}\) This aspect of Enframing is similar to Foucault’s idea of panopticon. He also argues that this new method of Enframing, along with containing and disciplining, is “not only made possible the modern process of schooling; they created the very need for it.”\(^{128}\)

\(^{123}\) The idea of another beginning is one of the most mystical and obscure in Heidegger’s entire *oeuvre*. I will elaborate it in the next chapter.


\(^{125}\) Michell, *Colonising Egypt*, 45.

\(^{126}\) Ibid, 55.

\(^{127}\) Ibid, 59.

\(^{128}\) Ibid, 92.
Although Mitchell’s notion of Enframing is important in understanding colonial Egypt, his lack of engagement with Heidegger, from whom he borrowed this notion is baffling. His notion of Enframing is closer to Foucault’s ideas about disciplinary apparatus rather than Heidegger’s idea of Enframing. His affinity with Foucault rather than Heidegger is clear from the following quote, “More generally, the technique of order I called Enframing, in military manoeuvres, in timetables, in the layout of classrooms and hospitals, in the rebuilding of villages as well as cities, in each case tended to produce the effect of a structure, which seemed to stand apart as something conceptual and prior.”\(^{129}\) Enframing, for Mitchell, is more like a technique of control consciously employed by the coloniser rather than spontaneously arising out of Western metaphysical tradition.

As we have seen in our discussion of Heidegger’s notion of Enframing, it is not something that the colonisers invented. It has its roots in Ancient Greek philosophy. It is an inevitable outcome of the metaphysical stance operative at the beginning of Western civilization. For Heidegger, Enframing as a metaphysical stance is operative behind the current world order. It is not limited to the colonies alone. Enframing in this sense is responsible for the planetary sway of modern technology. Although Mitchell acknowledges the conceptual aspect of Enframing, which is not same as the metaphysical aspect, he is completely oblivious about the fact that for Heidegger, Enframing is rooted in a particular revealing of being which happened in Ancient Greece. Enframing, in a way, is the destiny that Western culture acquired at its outset. Although it got fully revealed only two millennia later.

\(^{129}\) Ibid, 149.
2.4 Conclusion

In light of the preceding discussion, we can say that Heidegger’s life and work are very complex and cannot be dissociated from their contexts. Heidegger was a complex figure. His involvement with the Nazis cannot be ignored as an unfortunate mistake. Nor can we reject his philosophy in its entirety because of it. Heidegger is not alone in this. Many canonical names in the Western tradition such as Hegel, Kant, Hume, and Husserl were also blatantly racist. Their racism has a common root in regarding thinking as the supreme activity. Their thinking is marred by a tendency to apotheosizing the act of thinking. In other words, the activity of thinking lacks humility. It arrogates to itself the supreme rank in regard to all other human activities.

Heidegger’s philosophy was stuck in a stubborn ethnocentrism from which he tried to break free in his later life but could not succeed in completely moving away from it. This was due to his conception of confrontation between different nations and peoples. Because he saw the encounter of different peoples exclusively in terms of violence, it colored his thinking with a certain type of ethnocentrism. The next chapter discusses this aspect of his work in detail.
Chapter 3: Auseinandersetzung between Colonialism and Western Metaphysics

For our thinking remains everywhere metaphysical, and this is not only because remnants of the Christian world view remain operative everywhere, if only in terms of a reversal and secularization, but rather because metaphysics first begins to achieve its supreme and utter triumph in our century as modern machine technology.

- Martin Heidegger\(^{130}\)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to interrogate the possibility of studying colonialism with and against Heidegger’s thinking with constant reference to the concept of *Auseinandersetzung*. Auseinandersetzung is Heidegger’s name for a creative confrontation with the other. This confrontation is not an ordinary conflict or war, but an originary confrontation. I argue that this idea has its roots in Heidegger’s cosmology, his view about how the world originates in the first place. This is done by dwelling on the contested terrain of the supposed roots of Western culture. It is followed by a reflection on whether colonialism can be understood as a form of Auseinandersetzung or not. It is shown that the answer to this question is quite ambiguous. The links between Heidegger’s critique of technology and metaphysics are also explored. In the end, colonialism is understood as a result of the play of Western metaphysics and modern technology.

3.1.1 Confronting the Other

In the eleventh *Black notebook*, Heidegger makes an intriguing remark about *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, an autobiographical account of the Arab revolt during the First World War by the British spy Thomas Edward Lawrence, popularly known as ‘Lawrence of Arabia.’ The book, also turned into a 1962 movie *Lawrence of Arabia*, is required reading for army trainees in many Western countries. Heidegger calls it “The first, bravest book of great reticence.” Reticence here is no ordinary virtue. Heidegger tells us in the *Contributions*, “Nearness to the last god is reticence, which must be set into work and word in the style of restraint.”

Heidegger cautions us, this book should not be read merely as adventurous stories of a spy, a history of Arabs, or as the lived experiences of its author. Instead, Heidegger tells us,

> What occurs in the book is the overcoming of the machination of being in a deliberately disinterested suffering of the compulsions and enchantments of that machination—all this on the basis of surmising the closure of other possibilities of being, for which every essential futural human being must become a poetizing-thinking questioner who has refused all expedients and from grave distrust already destroys all substitute forms of humanity, ones concocted out of things bygone.

Heidegger locating “the overcoming of the machination of beyng” in the actions of a British spy is indeed strange. The “greatness” of Lawrence lies in enacting a creative confrontation with the Arab world and in subduing that “substitute form of humanity” to his own supreme will.

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131 Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 12.
133 In his later works, Heidegger often used the archaic spellings of the German word *Sein* as *Seyn*, which is translated into English as *Beyng*.
134 I discussed this passage at a conference in Manchester, UK, ‘On the History of Being – After the Black Notebooks.’ Robert Bernasconi also gave a detailed reading of the Lawrence passage. However, my
Lawrence’s “greatness” lies in his ability to authentically confront both the Arabs and the Turks on the one hand, and the British imperial power on the other. It is well known that Lawrence acted somewhat independently during the Arab revolt and refused to accept an honorary medal from the King of England after coming back home. For Heidegger, it might have meant that Lawrence was being an authentic warrior representing the real spirit of the West and not just an agent of calculative rationality like his superiors. For Heidegger, such authentic struggle between nations is of paramount importance.

We must not forget … that the Greeks did not become what they are and will be forever by excluding themselves in their ‘space.’ Only through the harshest, but creative, confrontation with the element which was most alien and hostile to them, that is, with the Asian element, did they rise to the brief course of their historical uniqueness and greatness.\textsuperscript{135}

It is not the only occasion when Heidegger referred to this originary struggle between the Greeks and the Asiatic. In his Schelling lectures given at the University of Freiburg in the summer semester of 1936, Heidegger writes, “For the great beginning of Western philosophy, too, did not come out of nothing. Rather, it became great because it had to overcome its greatest opposite, the mythical in general and the Asiatic in particular, that is, it had to bring it to the jointure of a truth of Being, and was able to do this.”\textsuperscript{136} Heidegger’s discourse on confrontation here refers to an interpretation of this passage differs from Bernasconi’s as he interprets “substitute forms of humanity” as those created by modernity. \textit{Pace} Bernasconi, I argue that Heidegger is referring to the non-Western people involved in that conflict, primarily Arabs and Turks.\textsuperscript{135} Cited in Domenico Losurdo, \textit{Heidegger and the Ideology of War: Community, Death, and the West}, trans Marella and Jon Morris (New York: Humanity Books, 2001) 104.\textsuperscript{136} Martin Heidegger, \textit{Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom}, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985) 146.
originary struggle, which has an ontological status for him. His name for this creative confrontation is *Auseinandersetzung*.

### 3.2 Heidegger’s Cosmology

Heidegger’s philosophical cosmology in the form of originary confrontation requires a deeper look. But this cosmology becomes comprehensible only in relation to the roots of Western culture. The origins of Western culture lie in a myth that the West has told itself. This myth reveals a lot about Heidegger’s thinking.

#### 3.2.1 The Roots of Western Culture

According to Homer, Europa was the daughter of Phoenix, who was king of Phoenicia, a country in the Middle East. Because of her great beauty, the Greek god Zeus approached Europa in the form of a “white” bull and carried her away to Crete, where she became the mother of king Minos.\(^{137}\)

This story, according to Fred Dallmayr, “tells us about the ambivalence of origins, and especially about the ambivalent origin of what later came to be known as Europe.” Europa, that is what makes Europe what it is, is not European but oriental. She “was forcefully abducted by a conquering hero and only later domesticated or ‘naturalized’ in her new surroundings.”\(^{138}\) This origin myth of Europe succinctly summarizes her entire history. This is what Europe has done:

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\(^{138}\) Dallmayr, *Dialogue Among Civilizations*, 49.
robbing others of what is beautiful in them and making that its own. A casual visit to any museum located in a Western country can make one quickly realize this. This is also the story of colonialism: looting other people’s treasures and making these her own possessions.

Heidegger stresses again and again that the Western civilization, which he calls Western humankind most of the times, has its roots in the Ancient Greek world. For him, the West and Europe are unthinkable without the Ancient Greek way of life. Western Philosophy, for Heidegger is a tautology, as he believes that philosophy is Greek in its essence and there is no other philosophy. Heidegger’s position is not unique by any means. It is the mainstream view within philosophy and classical studies. For a very long time, this view was accepted as a common understanding. However, this question of the origins of Western-European identity is fraught with many problems.

Recently, scholars from classical studies have started questioning this received wisdom about the birth of Western identity. They have started to question the very premises of this perspective. These premises are, “That there was one Greek World and on [sic] Greek Identity was regarded as being as much a fact as a unique Greek Way in world history. It was supposed to have generated itself essentially from within itself; in a special relationship with the so-called Western World.”139 The first step in this questioning is to problematize the division of ‘Greek’ and ‘Non-Greek.’ Robert Rollinger argues that this opposition “clearly betrays a Hellenocentric point of

view." He argues that this legend of self-generated Greek World is “simply unthinkable without the external impulses of an extensively integrated Mediterranean world.” Rather than focusing on the “collision of two distinct worlds,” Rollinger talks about their “manifold interactions.”

In 1987, Cornell University professor Martin Bernal published *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. Two subsequent volumes were published in 1991 and 2006. The books started an immense controversy. Bernal’s thesis was simple: the currently dominant view of Greek history as essentially European is a myth that was fabricated only in the first half of the 19th century. He calls it the ‘Aryan model.’ Contrary to this recently devised model of Ancient Greek history, he proposed an ‘Ancient Model,’ which was “the conventional view among Greeks in the Classical and Hellenistic ages.” According to this model, “Greek culture has arisen as a result of colonization, around 1500 BC, by Egyptians and Phoenicians who had civilized the native inhabitants.” This radical view was supplemented by a more accepted one that, “Greeks had continued to borrow heavily from Near Eastern cultures.”

Classical Studies scholars ferociously attacked Bernal’s books. This was expected, given that Classical Studies is a discipline that is seen as highly conservative and also almost exclusively

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140 Rollinger, The Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond, 197.
141 Ibid, 197-8.
white. They argued that Bernal is not part of their discipline (he was a professor of modern Chinese political history and developed an interest in the roots of classical civilization later in his career), therefore he does not possess sufficient training to make such claims. Whatever the merits or weaknesses of his thesis, Bernal made the question of the roots of western civilization a burning issue. Several scholars started to think and write about it.

Edith Hall presented one of the more balanced critiques of Bernal’s thesis. She criticized Bernal by arguing that instead of focusing on either the “Aryan Model” or the “Ancient Model” we should turn our focus to “ethnicity as a social, subjective construct which signifies abstractions having little to do with ethnicity” itself.\textsuperscript{144} Her focus on ethnicity as a social construction requires attention. She argues that Greek identity was constructed in its relation to its others, the Orientals. In her other major work, \textit{Inventing the Barbarian}, Hall showed that the construction of Greek and ultimately Western identity was based on the Greeks’ views about others, the barbarians.\textsuperscript{145} It is this focus on defining oneself in contrast with the other that has led to the construction of a rigid, exclusionary identity in the west ultimately giving rise to the imperialistic politics.

Hall argues that the way they did so was through looking in other cultures for their own self-image. They looked in the other for the most important aspects of their own culture such as democracy, moderation, self-restraint etc. Unsurprisingly, they did not find it in the cultures they


\textsuperscript{145} Edith Hall, \textit{Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy}. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
hated, such as the Persians. In Ancient Greek tragedies, most prominently in Aeschylus’ *Persians*, the Persians are represented as tyrannical and effeminate. This is still the same. The ancient Persians are still portrayed in movies such as *300* (2006) directed by Zack Snyder and *300: Rise of an Empire* (2014) by Noam Murro in the same way: tyrannical, effeminate and without any moral code. Hall argues that these representations by Ancient Greek authors such as Aeschylus tell us less about the Persians and more about Ancient Greeks themselves. Orientalism is just a continuity of this discourse. Hall says, “The dangerous myth of the Orient as decadent, effeminate, luxurious and materialistic, which remains to this day a corner-stone of western ideology, was actually born at the time of the Persian wars.”

In her more recent work, Hall has stressed the debt Ancient Greeks owe to their neighbors for the cultural, technological, and philosophical advancements. For example, they learned or may have learned how to construct an alphabet from the Pheonicians, minting of coins from the Lydians, composition of hymns from Luwians, and finally, “when the Greeks invented rational philosophy and science, after 600 BC, their horizons were opened up by the expansion of the Persian Empire.” She also argues that recent investigations have shown what the historians of antiquity have so far understood as the “Greek miracle” was actually a result of a long and continuous process of intercultural exchange. “The Greeks were innovators, but they could never have made the progress they did without adopting many of their skills, ideas, and practices from their non-Greek neighbors.”

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Heidegger, although a staunch Eurocentric, also presented one of the most profound critiques of Western civilization. He believed that the spread of Western metaphysics is responsible for the catastrophes humankind is facing today. One among them is the desolation of the earth, a possibility that has become far more pronounced since Heidegger’s death in 1976. Most postmodern and postcolonial critiques of Western hegemony are also indebted, however tangentially, to Heidegger’s critique of Western metaphysics. But paradoxically, Heidegger’s critique is also based on an understanding that upholds Western hegemony in a different way. It is argued here that his disastrous politics is also rooted in this paradox. To understand the paradoxical nature of Heidegger’s critique of Western metaphysics, we need to take a deeper look at what he meant by *Auseinandersetzung*.

### 3.2.2 What is *Auseinandersetzung*?

Two texts from the 1930s can help us understand this notion of *Auseinandersetzung*: *Introduction to Metaphysics* and *Being and Truth*. *Auseinandersetzung* is akin to Heraclitean *polemos*. Following Heraclitus, Heidegger thinks about this struggle as something that “[F]irst and foremost allows what essentially unfolds to step apart in opposition, first allows position and status and rank to establish themselves in coming to presence… In confrontation, world comes to be.” But this confrontation does not divide or destroy unity. “It builds unity; it is the gathering (logos). *Polemos* and *logos* are the same.”

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Auseinandersetzung, and reality itself, is the juncture for Heidegger where authentic history originates.

Polemos is so fundamental that the cosmos itself would not exist without it. Aristotle reports that Heraclitus scolded Homer for depicting Achilles expressing regret over his conflict with Agamemnon. Aristotle writes, “Heraclitus, who believes that the nature of things was constructed according to conflict [eris], finds fault with Homer [for this verse], on the grounds that he [Achilles] is praying for the destruction of the cosmos.” From Aristotle’s account, it seems that turning away from conflict and war is the original sin for Heraclitus as it amounts to turning away from the organizing principle that sustains the reality of cosmos itself. If the conflict ceases, cosmos would vanish as well. Given the exceptionally violent history of the West, locating such thinking at the roots of Western philosophical thinking is not very surprising.

According to Heraclitus, socio-political hierarchy also emerges out of this originary struggle. It is polemos that has made some gods and others mortals, some slaves and others free. Ancient Greeks loved polarity. Binary logic was deeply embossed on their way of thinking. This led to a peculiar understanding of the world in which everything is pitted against something else, Greeks vs. barbarians. Edith Hall writes, “The Greeks’ love of polarity was so strong that instead of a collective term they often simply referred to the two opposing parts of a single phenomenon: Instead of ‘the whole human race,’ for example, they almost always preferred to say ‘both the

Greeks and the barbarians.’”  

This fundamental inability to see ‘the whole human race’ as essentially having the same worth is one of the underlying stimuli of the drive for colonization.

Heidegger translates polemos as Auseinandersetzung. In English, it is translated usually as confrontation. Charles Bambach notes that in colloquial German, it can have multiple meanings such as debate, discussion, dispute, quarrel, contests, settling of accounts, altercation etc. It has a broad range of meaning, which can “extend from a sober analysis or examination of a topic to a violent struggle or clash.” Its translation as confrontation is grounded in these meanings. But a more interesting and possibly rewarding exercise to understand Auseinandersetzung is through its etymology. Etymologically speaking, it “means something like a ‘placing’ or ‘setting’ (setzen) things ‘apart-from one another’ or separating them out from one another (auseinander).” Bambach claims that simply translating Auseinandersetzung as confrontation misses the mark. The “reciprocal determination in the play of back and forth, to and fro” is decisive in this term.  

However, setting apart from each other also has an element of violence and Auseinandersetzung has this violence at its core. Confrontation, as an ontological principle structures the world. But what is this violence directed against? This originary struggle is against the overwhelming sway. The work of the creators, the poets, thinkers, and statesmen that sustains this struggle is directed “against the overwhelming sway, they throw the counterweight of their work and capture in this

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work the world that is thereby opened up. With these works, the sway, physis, first comes to a stand in what comes to presence.”\textsuperscript{154} The overwhelming sway is the key term here that makes a distinction between what is great and what is not, between what is a world and what is just chaos. A little earlier in the same text, Heidegger says, “physis means the emergent self-upraising, the self-unfolding that abides in itself … This sway is overwhelming coming-to-presence that has not yet been surmounted in thinking … insofar as the sway struggles itself forth as a world. Through world, beings first come into being.”\textsuperscript{155}

The word Heidegger uses for the sway is Walten or das Walten. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, the translators of Introduction to Metaphysics, note that Walten is related to Gewalt, which means violence. The other meanings of walten include “to prevail, to reign, to govern, to dominate.”\textsuperscript{156} They also urge the reader to lend special attention to the way in which “Heidegger seeks to interpret physis as this ‘sway’.”\textsuperscript{157} Throughout the text, Heidegger uses the adjective violent to describe this sway. It is described as the “originarily emergent self-upraising of the violent forces of what holds sway…”\textsuperscript{158} Heidegger also notes that the “violent, the overwhelming is the essential character of the sway itself.”\textsuperscript{159}

Given the centrality of physis for Heidegger’s project, it locates violence at the very heart of his thinking. For Heidegger, physis, self-emergence or revealing of beings is a violent process. In the

\textsuperscript{154} Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, 65. 
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid, 64. 
\textsuperscript{157} Fried & Polt, introduction to Introduction to Metaphysics, xiii. 
\textsuperscript{158} Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, 66. 
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid, 159-60.
last session of his last seminar, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Jacques Derrida, talked at some length about the place of *Walten* in Heidegger. “It is as if to be beings and *Walten* were the same thing,” he says.\(^{160}\) This *Walten* denotes a “pre-potency in the sense of the prevailing that wins out in a combat.”\(^{161}\) He further adds that, as he himself does not have time to do this, however, “let me point out at least that you can see it extend as much to the logos, precisely, as to physis.”\(^{162}\) Derrida also notes while translating the *Walten* family of words, Gilbert Kahn’s\(^{163}\) vocabulary and semantics denote both the sense of domination and that of power.\(^{164}\)

But there is another layer of violence about which Derrida is silent in this seminar. This overwhelming, violent sway is then surmounted in thinking to form a world. Thus, the world-forming process is based on a double gesture of violence: the violence of the overwhelming sway, and then the violent surmounting of this sway in thinking. It is here that Heidegger shows his ethno-centrism most clearly. If “the essence of Being is struggle,” as he says in the 1933-34 seminars *Being and Truth*, then it must need an enemy. The enemy is someone “who poses an essential threat to the Dasein of the people.”\(^{165}\) If it seems that the enemy is missing, then “it is a fundamental requirement to find the enemy, to expose the enemy to the light, or even first to make the enemy, so that this standing against the enemy may happen and so that Dasein may not

\(^{161}\) Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 287.
\(^{162}\) Ibid.
\(^{164}\) Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 280.
lose its edge.” The greatness of what is great can only be sustained through a constant struggle, a perpetual surmounting of the other.

This originary struggle not only lets the world to be in the first place, it also determines the interrelations that structure that world internally. It lets the status, position, and rank establish between those who struggle with each other. The Greek “greatness” is established over and against the Asian “inferiority.” A key passage from Being and Truth makes it clear, “This means that the powers of destruction and ruination have their home in beings themselves; in struggle and through struggle they are only subdued and bound … for these powers fundamentally break forth as the unbridled, the unrestrained, the ecstatic and wild, the raving, the Asiatic.”

These powers of destruction and ruination are not to be confused with the “Christian standards of evil and sin,” Heidegger cautions. He made these comments while interpreting Heraclitus’ Fragment 53 about the polemos being king and father of all. Heidegger declares this Fragment to be a “primal declaration” that has a “self-ruling gravity” of its own. While interpreting the second part of the fragment where Heraclitus asserts that it is polemos itself that makes some human beings kings and some others servants, Heidegger leaves a damning clue about how he envisions cultural difference, “one is a servant not because there simply are servants, in addition

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166 Heidegger, Being and Truth, 73.
167 Ibid, 74.
168 “War is both the father of all things and the king of all things, and on the one hand it shows forth the gods, on the other, human beings; on the one hand it makes slaves, and on the other hand, the free,” Heidegger, Being and Truth, 72n2, translators’ note.
169 Heidegger, Being and Truth, 76.
to other types, but because this Being contains in itself a defeat, a denial, a deficiency, a cowardice—indeed, perhaps a will to be lowly and base.”  

This self-contained “defeat, denial and deficiency” is also connected with philosophizing, the task of thinking. “Confrontation is genuine criticism,” Heidegger tells us in his Nietzsche lectures.  

Thinking, much like confrontation and *polemos*, also establishes the difference between what is great and what is lowly. The task of genuine critique is also to establish status, position, and rank. In *What is a Thing*, Heidegger notes that the purpose of critique is to establish a contrast against others. “Because critique is a separation and lifting out of the special, the uncommon and, at the same time, decisive, therefore, and only in consequence, is it also a rejection of the commonplace and unsuitable.”  

Etymologically, *Auseinandersetzung* also means, “to set apart from each other.”

Perhaps, a case can be made here about a connection between Heidegger’s insistence on the importance of the status, position, and rank and contrast against others on the one hand, and his disastrous politics on the other. Heidegger’s ruminations about the different status of different peoples are rooted in his philosophical cosmology. Here, he has a striking resemblance with the connection between the Hindu caste system and its cosmology. The different castes are said to be of different social rank and status because they originate from the different body parts of

170 Being and Truth 75.
172 Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, trans. W. B. Barton, Jr. & Vera Deutsch (South Bend: Gateway Editions, Ltd., 1967), 120.
Brahma: Brahmins from the mouth, kshatrias from the arms and the chest, Vaishyas from the thighs and finally the Sudras from the feet. However, this analogy cannot be explored further here except to say that Sikh cosmology fundamentally and consistently rejects this division into castes.

Auseinandersetzung can be between two thinkers, or between two peoples. Heidegger described his Nietzsche lectures as a confrontation with him. In the case of two thinkers, Heidegger envisioned confrontation as “genuine criticism.” It is the “supreme” and “only way” going towards the “true estimation of a thinker.”174 It is the confrontation that enables us to reflect on the “effective force” of a thinker’s thinking and it also lets us “become free for the supreme exertion of thinking.”175 Confrontation with the thought of a great thinker makes it possible for one to enter the realm of authentic thinking. Heidegger’s work can be understood as a confrontation with various canonical thinkers of the West such as the Presocratics, Hegel, and most importantly Nietzsche. Post-War French philosophy can also be thought of as a confrontation with Heidegger. Looking at the current Heidegger war going on after the publication of the Black Notebooks, it seems this confrontation is far from over.

For the current research project, the second type of confrontation is far more significant: the decisive historical confrontation between peoples. For Heidegger, Heraclitus is not just the name of a philosopher who lived a long time ago. Neither is it a “formula for the thinking of some universal world humanity in itself.” It is, rather, “the name of a primordial power of Western-

175 Ibid, 4-5.
Germanic Dasein, … in its first confrontation with the Asiatic.”¹⁷⁶ This single line is key to understanding the matter of Heidegger’s thinking, his political choices, and the significance of his thinking for colonialism. Philosophy, for Heidegger, is not some form of intellectual exercise divorced from the outside world. Contrarily, it is an essential unfolding of history that destines beings to the particular historical paths they then tread for centuries. It determines the contours of every epoch and also the outcome of essential struggles taking place within different ages.

In his *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, Heidegger talks about the “great beginning” of Western philosophy. It did not, he claims, come out of nothing. “Rather, it became great because it had to overcome its greatest opposite, the mythical in general and the Asiatic in particular.”¹⁷⁷ The West is not great in itself, it became great in its ability to subdue the Asiatic. This submission is first metaphysical, i.e. happens in the realm of thinking, and only then it unfolds itself in the form of history. Western philosophy, Heidegger says, was able to bring the Asiatic to “the jointure of a truth of Being.”¹⁷⁸ It is clear that for Heidegger, an originary struggle, in the form of polemos or Auseinandersetzung, is essential for establishing the greatness of the great. Without the struggle, there is no greatness. The West is great because it was able to conquer the other, the Asiatic in particular.

A thinker as great as Jean-Luc Nancy failed to recognize the importance this originary confrontation with the other holds for Heidegger’s thinking. In his (justifiably) angry response to

the publication of Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks*, Nancy has tried to show that Heidegger’s anti-Semitism and his involvement with the National Socialist regime, stems from Western self-hatred. He believes that Heidegger’s thinking is contaminated by an “old rancor.” This rancor stems from “the old hatred of self … of the West against itself.”¹⁷⁹ He also claims that Heidegger sees the West in isolation from the rest. “It is remarkable that this Greek singularity appears in isolation, without being in any way related to a historical environment.”¹⁸⁰ It is surprising that Nancy missed such an important point in Heidegger.

*Pace* Nancy, Heidegger does not see the “Greek singularity” in isolation. He sees it in its historical context, but his view of history is undoubtedly Eurocentric. Rather, he sees history originating in Europe. For Heidegger, Ancient Greeks established their greatness by confronting and defeating the “Asian element.” It was no ordinary victory. This victory determined the status and rank of each party; it determined who is authentically free and who is destined to be a slave.

This is not philosophy in the ordinary sense. It is more like cosmology.¹⁸¹ We can say a peculiarly Heideggerian philosophical cosmology. It is about how the world originates as such. Yuk Hui, in *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, has coined a new term cosmotechnics, pluralizing this cosmological aspect, highlighting the connection every notion of technics has with a corresponding cosmology of the culture from which it originates. I will discuss Yuk Hui’s notion of cosmotechnics in greater detail in Chapter 6.

¹⁸¹ Here Heidegger resembles traditional cosmologies such as the Hindu cosmology where the origin of different castes is said to be from Brahma’s mouth, arms, legs, and feet.
3.2.3 Colonialism as Auseinandersetzung with Modern Technology

Can we understand the global spread of European powers through colonialism as an authentic confrontation, that is, Auseinandersetzung? It goes without saying that colonialism is a very violent confrontation. Through colonialism, the West came to hold sway over the entire planet. But is the colonial encounter an Auseinandersetzung? If we attend to Heidegger’s characterization of Auseinandersetzung, the answer seems to be ambiguous. Colonialism is not Auseinandersetzung because this originary strife takes place only when the powers in conflict are still abiding in their greatness. This does not seem to be the case. But on the other hand, it can be seen as Auseinandersetzung because sometimes, Heidegger sees the powers of destruction and ruination as essentially Asiatic against which an originary struggle must be waged.182

Heidegger does not celebrate the West’s domination of the entire planet through colonization. Colonization, for Heidegger, is rather a symptom of the West’s decline. “In the planetary imperialism of technologically organized man, the subjectivism of man attains its acme, from which point it will descend to the level of organized uniformity and there firmly establish itself. This uniformity becomes the surest instrument of the total, i.e., technological, rule over the

182 (In some of his interviews and articles, Levinas comes surprisingly close to this view. “I often say, though it's a dangerous thing to say publicly, that humanity consists of the Bible and the Greeks. All the rest can be translated: all the rest - all the exotic - is dance,” Raoul Mortley, French Philosophers in Conversation (London & New York: Routledge, 1991),18; “The arrival on the historical scene of those underdeveloped Afro-Asiatic masses who are strangers to the Sacred History that forms the heart of the Judaic-Christian world,” Levinas, Jewish Thought Today, 160; “But under the greedy eyes of these countless hordes who wish to hope and live, we, the Jews and Christians are pushed to the margins of history, and soon no one will bother any more to differentiate between a Catholic and a Protestant or a Jew and a Christian, sects that devour one another because they cannot agree on the interpretation of a few obscure books,” Ibid, 165.)
Modern technology, that enables Western supremacy, is an unwelcome development for Heidegger. Modern technology is a product of the fall of the West from its originary greatness exemplified by the ancient Greeks. It is a spiritual decline. He says, “The spiritual decline of the earth has progressed so far that peoples are in danger of losing their last spiritual strength, the strength that makes it possible even to see the decline.” This spiritual decline has resulted in “the darkening of the world, the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the reduction of human beings to a mass, the hatred and mistrust of everything creative and free.” This is how Heidegger sees the contemporary global order, which is a direct consequence of Western colonization of the world.

In his lecture course on Parmenides, Heidegger rejects imperialism as a Roman invention. “The imperial actio of the constant surmounting of others includes the sense that the others, should they rise to the same or even to a neighboring level of command, will be brought down.” Sometimes, the others are overthrown in direct attack, but some other times, they are “brought down by being "tri‌pped up" from behind in a furtive way.” Such fall is brought about through

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183 Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology, 152.
184 Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, 40.
185 Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, 40-41.
187 Ibid, 41.
subterfuge and trickery. “Thereby the fallen are not destroyed but are in a certain way raised up again—within the limits fixed by the dominating ones.”\textsuperscript{188} This can easily pass off as a definition of colonialism whereby the defeated are left to subsist in the limits fixed by the victors. This is just one instance of Heidegger’s attempts to locate the West’s downfall in the transition from the Greeks to the Romans. It can be worthwhile to recall here his lament about the translation of \textit{phusis} into nature by the Romans and how this translation constitutes a decisive event in the history of Being.

So colonialism is not an Auseinandersetzung in the Heideggerian sense. It is, instead, a testament to the rise of unstoppable nihilism to which the West, as Heidegger would put it, is destined from its very origins. However, exceptional individuals like T. E. Lawrence seem to be still capable of engaging in Auseinandersetzung with “substitute forms of humanity … concocted out of things bygone.”\textsuperscript{189} The eulogization of Lawrence is a symptom of Heidegger’s longing for the lost “greatness” of the West.

Heidegger didn’t see the occident and the orient merely in geographical terms. This becomes clear from his reflections on the “Homeland.” In the Letter on Humanism, he says about the homeland, “The word is thought here in an essential sense, not patriotically or nationalistically, but in terms of the history of Being.” Following Hölderlin, he did not see the essence of the homeland “in an egoism of his nation.” It is seen “rather in the context of a belongingness to the destiny of the West. But even the West is not thought regionally as the Occident in contrast to

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{189} Heidegger, \textit{Ponderings II-VI}, 330.
the Orient, nor merely as Europe, but rather world-historically out of nearness to the source.”

The Western people are privileged not because of their allegedly superior genetics, but because of the special way in which they are destined by Being.

It is tempting to label this stance being-historical ethnocentrism, following Peter Trawny’s charge of being-historical anti-Semitism. However, if I do that, I condemn myself to a vicious circle: a contest to define the other. It does not matter how “truthful” any alleged definition is, once one starts this process, it becomes extremely hard to get out of it. The only way out of this circle is to envision a different version of the meeting of cultures, their Auseinandersetzung.

The colonized must come to terms with colonialism and its legacy. We have not done that, yet. That is why postcolonial nation-states are nothing more than poor imitations of their former masters. This is not entirely due to the fact that Western nation-states still have tremendous power and they keep many postcolonial nation-states deliberately in a dependent position, although that is the case. This is more due to our inability, which is still persisting, to confront the logic of Gestell, to envision a different relationship with technology as Heidegger suggested. I argue that many non-Western traditions have the resources within their cultures to enact such an Auseinandersetzung. What would it look like? I will explore that in the next and subsequent chapters.

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There is very little, almost nothing that Heidegger said about colonialism. But it is implied in his thinking. He sees the planetary domination of modern (European) man as an effect of machination. It is not an authentic victory of the Europeans over the others. It is decadent Europe serving as a tool for the spread of modern technology. The sway of modern technology is destructive for everyone, including the Europeans. It leads to “the desolation of the earth.” It is not authentic history for him. The entire globe is transformed into an object that is present-at-hand. It is ready to be exploited.

As is evident from the Heidegger quote cited above about the gift of modern technology to the so-called underdeveloped peoples of the world, Heidegger saw this process as part of the greater drive toward domination of the earth. Thus, this struggle takes place in a different register than the struggle of the Ancient Greeks against the Asian element. But I want to read Heidegger against Heidegger here. I think Heidegger missed something essential about colonialism. He failed to see the situation from the perspective of the colonized.

For the colonized, colonialism is essentially Auseinandersetzung with modern technology. This confrontation, which started with the global reign of European colonial powers, is far from over. Modern technology spread globally as the borders of colonial empires shrank. Today, it is even more entrenched than it was during colonialism. The ways in which the latest technologies are shaping culture, politics and ways of thinking and experiencing are unprecedented. Every non-Western culture is faced with a choice: to assimilate in the late modern culture founded on ideals of individual freedom, mass consumption, and democracy, or to enact a confrontation with it so
as to establish a free relationship with it. The future of decolonization depends on this confrontation.

What is the future? Is it just a point we have not yet reached on the linear, unidirectional passage of time? Heidegger talks about a rather unconventional understanding of the future. He says that the future is not something that lies ahead, that is over there towards which we are moving. He understands “future as that which is coming towards us.” Heidegger says, is not something that follows today but that which projects into it. The future comes towards us. “What comes towards us, meets and determines us constantly.” Technologies that are not yet invented, are determining our fate today.

In this sense, decolonization, which has not yet been achieved, denotes a future that determines our present. It conditions our lives and the course they can take. In Heidegger’s words, it is \textit{das Ungeschehene} — the un-happened. Arun Iyer has argued that Indian social reformer Rammohan Roy’s work is such an example of the un-happened that nevertheless happened in a very different way. These events “happened as concrete historical possibilities that have a bearing upon our present and contain in them the power to shape a genuine future.” Although I have some disagreements with Iyer’s thesis, it can be safely said that decolonization is a process that is un-happened in the sense discussed above, and that continues to determine our future.

\begin{flushright}
192 Heidegger, Homeland, 233. \\
193 Ibid, 234. \\
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Why is this un-happened? It is so because the confrontation with modern technology is still unfolding today. The confrontation with modern technology is actually a confrontation with Western metaphysics because modern technology is rooted in Western metaphysics. Twentieth-century continental philosophy is just such a confrontation, but not from the decolonial perspective. Walter Mignolo and other decolonial scholars have established the link between ideologies underlying modernity and colonialism. But Mignolo’s work does not take into consideration the role technology plays in the colonial enterprise and the significance of metaphysics in driving it. A decolonial critique of metaphysics is necessary in order to build a proper critique of techno-coloniality.

3.3 Heidegger’s *Destruktion* of Metaphysics

Metaphysics is a term that is very elusive in nature. Philosophers throughout the ages have reflected upon the meanings of metaphysics, but it has remained obscure at best. Metaphysics, in general, is an attempt to fit everything that exists into a schema intelligible for humans as rational, philosophizing beings. It is an overarching, all-inclusive interpretation of the world that tries to resolve some fundamental questions about its existence such as why is there something rather than nothing, what is the most fundamental substance, and what is the original cause of this world etc. Metaphysics is also defined as “the investigation of timeless entities” that was named by Aristotle as *protè philosophia* or first philosophy.\(^\text{195}\) Metaphysics is an inquiry into the nature of existence

itself. Western philosophical tradition, from its very origins in ancient Greece, is characterized by its metaphysical nature.

Aristotle is one of the most important ancient explicators of metaphysics. In a compilation of his several short books, ‘On Things after the Physics’ (tôn meta ta physika), usually known as ‘Aristotle’s Metaphysics’,\(^{196}\) Aristotle talks about a “science which takes up the theory of being as being and of what “to be” means, taken by itself. It is identical with none of the sciences whose subjects are defined as special aspects of being.”\(^ {197}\) By special aspects of being, he means various fields of natural sciences such as physics, chemistry and biology. For Aristotle, understanding being as being, as it differs from everything that exists, that is being as entities, is a completely different epistemological exercise. Every other science has a specific being as its subject matter. For example, physics deals with the physical world, biology with living organisms, and mathematics with numbers and shapes. But metaphysics does not take a specific being as its object of investigation. Instead, it inquires into the nature of being in general. Its guiding question is: What does it mean to be? Thus, its subject matter is infinite. Everything that exists, from a speck of dust to the entire universe, falls under the purview of metaphysics. Heidegger borrows heavily from Aristotle’s terminology and also complicates his ideas on the nature of metaphysics.

Heidegger’s understanding of and attitude towards metaphysics is very different from traditional philosophers. For him, “metaphysics is not simply the esoteric concern of philosophers isolated in

\(^{196}\) Aristotle’s Metaphysics was first compiled by Andronicus of Rhodes, who was the scholarch of Peripatetic school, in first century BCE. The name metaphysics was also given by him and was not used by Aristotle.

their ivory towers.” Metaphysics, for Heidegger, is not just an epistemological endeavor accomplished by a philosophizing subject. It is not merely a human activity. The scope of metaphysics goes far beyond that. “Metaphysics grounds an age” in giving “that age the basis upon which it is essentially formed. This basis holds complete dominion over all the phenomena that distinguish the age.” In grounding an age in which we live, metaphysics also determines and conditions our capacities for knowing the truth of that age. Iain Thomson terms this conditioning of our capacity for knowing by metaphysics as the “historical constellations of intelligibility.” Metaphysics constructs historical constellations of intelligibility “through a specific interpretation of what is and through a specific comprehension of truth.” To adequately understand the essential condition of a given age, metaphysics must be comprehended first in which that age is grounded. One task of my research is to understand the consequences of the new “historical constellation of intelligibility” that colonialism introduced in Punjab.

Heidegger claims that throughout the history of Western civilization, the Western humankind has passed through different epochs of intelligibility. These different epochs comprise a ‘history of being’ (Seinsgeschichte). History of being for Heidegger is not ordinary history. To convey the singularity of this history of being, Heidegger makes a distinction between two German words

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200 Ibid.
201 Ibid.
202 It needs to be noted here that reflection or thinking for Heidegger is not merely an intellectual activity divorced from the world of everyday living. Reflection is a courageous activity that intervenes in the historical process, not in the sense of direct political activism, but in a quasi-spiritual way, in unleashing the power inherent in understanding. “Reflection on the essence of the modern age puts thinking and decision into the sphere of effective working that belongs to the genuinely essential forces of this age.” (Ibid, 137)
203 The self-provincialization by Heidegger is noticeable here. He firmly situates his discourse within the realm of Western civilization. Wherever he talks about metaphysics, he makes sure to clearly state that he is talking about the history of the West and not humanity in general. He also uses the term ‘western humankind’.

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used for history: *historie* and *geschichte*. *Historie* is used for the chronological happening of events while *geschichte* is reserved for a deeper and underlying process of transformations in the meaning of being. *Geschichte* is deep history. Deep history happens rarely.\(^{203}\) The development of modern industrial technologies in the West and colonization of the rest of the world are such deep historical events.

The modern age is an epoch in which the intelligibility is conditioned by the dominance of technology or technological understanding. With the advent of modernity, something fundamental in our understanding of the world has changed. Modernity has changed our understanding of *what is*. The modern age also has inner diversity. There are five essential phenomena of the modern age according to Heidegger: science, machine technology, transformation of art into aesthetics, understanding human activity as culture, and the loss of the gods. Of all these five phenomena, the phenomenon of modern technology is most important, as its essence is “identical with the essence of modern metaphysics.”\(^{204}\) It is the technological understanding of being that has sway over everything in the modern age. Through colonization, such an understanding is no longer limited to the West. It has become planetary. One thing that distinguishes the metaphysics underlying the modern age from other metaphysical ages is its global reach.

Heidegger argues that in order to gain insight into the *truth* of being, we must first destroy the metaphysical meanings attributed to being throughout the ages. The concept of destruktion is very important in Heidegger’s oeuvre. In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* Heidegger described

\(^{203}\) Clark, *Martin Heidegger*, 31.  
"destruktion" as the “critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must be employed, are deconstructed down to the sources from which they were drawn.”205 Heidegger understood the process of *destruktion* as both necessary and affirmative. It does not have negative undertones for him. It is the only way to arrive at the “concealed truth” of things. “Only by means of this destruction can ontology fully assure itself in a phenomenological way of the genuine character of its concepts.”206 Things remain concealed, and the process of unconcealing involves the destruction of that which conceals, “We understand this task as one in which by taking the question of Being as our clue, we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being – the ways which have guided us ever since.”207

In spite of its very significant place in his oeuvre, Heidegger does not adequately describe *destruktion* in his earlier or later writings.208 This term is unique in Heideggerian terminology in having an Islamic instead of a Greek origin, which is usually the case with many terms used by him such as *Technē, Aletheia, Physis* etc. Dermot Moran claims that even if Heidegger was unaware of its Islamic background, “it is not wrong to hear Heidegger’s term as echoing, resonating, recovering, these medieval meanings.”209 The term itself comes from an Eleventh-century Muslim philosopher and theologian Al-Ghazali (1059-1111). His book *Tahafut al-falasifa*,

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206 Ibid.
which attacked the philosophers’ arrogance and their claim that philosophical method can attain a
certain and definite truth, was translated into Latin as *Destructio philosophorum*\(^{210}\).

Another peculiar aspect of this usage is that Heidegger is using a Latin term to employ his critique
of the productionist metaphysics. He departs from his usual practice of excavating Greek roots of
words to uncover the hidden, originary and usually affirmative meanings. But in this case, despite
the central place of *destruktion* in his work, he chose a Latin word with Islamic roots.

> It is noteworthy…that with *Destruktion* he chose a word with Latin roots—unconsciously
gathering the already established philosophical authority of the word but nevertheless using
the tool of the Latin mind to disestablish…the manner in which the edifice of Greek
ontology had been erected by rationalist philosophers from Descartes through Kant to
Hegel and Nietzsche.\(^{211}\)

Moran also notes that the concept of *destruktion* is replaced by the more poetic and softer idea of
homecoming (*Heimkunft*) in Heidegger’s later writings.\(^{212}\) Although at the same time, this idea of
destruktion remained trapped in the Nietzschean metaphysics of will to power. “*Destruktion*
becomes, despite Heidegger’s avowed intention, or perhaps paradoxically because of it, a form of
the will to power.”\(^{213}\)

\(^{210}\) Given that many modern scholars have translated Al-Ghazali’s book as The Incoherence of the
Philosophers, the term destruktion is based on a misreading or mistranslation of a medieval Islamic term.


\(^{212}\) Ibid.

\(^{213}\) Ibid, 189.
Understanding *destruaktion* is essential for understanding Heidegger’s critique of technology. It is this very concept that also makes Heidegger’s endeavor to present a solution to contemporary nihilism problematic. In the words of Dermot Moran:

Heidegger is using the term *Bestand* to indicate the stock of philosophy, using a term that will later designate the comportment toward technological exploitation. Philosophy then is something which is available as fodder to the *Gestell* of technology. Destruction, far from releasing philosophy into its essential possibility, is actually participating in a will to power, forcing philosophy to give its essence over to technological appropriation. This is what Heidegger calls challenging (*Herausfordern*): destruction challenges philosophy. Far from being a corrective to Western metaphysics, destruction turns out to be a modernist manipulation of the stock (*Bestand*) of philosophical concepts and stances. Philosophy now belongs to the pure technological essence of metaphysics. The moment of radical questioning has been subsumed (*aufgehoben*) in the will to power. Here Heidegger’s language has betrayed him, yet the process of destruction is one that Heidegger evokes with confidence in many of his writings, seemingly unaware of its hidden disruptive force.²¹⁴

Dermot Moran has failed to understand here that Heidegger is using destruktion in a being-historical sense. Destruktion as a challenging forth of philosophy is an essential step in the unfolding of Being. Heidegger is using a word with Latin roots because this word connotes a negative process which nevertheless plays an important role in the uncovering of the essence of Being. Destruktion as a process is not akin to *aletheia* as the founding of truth. Destruktion does

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not establish anything. It just prepares the ground for the other beginning. Destruktion also has a
tonality similar to the idea of downgoing that Heidegger used in his later writings.\textsuperscript{215}

### 3.4 Planetary Technology as Externalization of Western Metaphysics

Technicity is the highest and most encompassing triumph of Occidental metaphysics.

-Martin Heidegger\textsuperscript{216}

As we have already seen, technology, according to Heidegger, is neither a means to an end nor merely a human activity. It is a particular revealing of Being. It reveals everything that exists as a standing reserve, ready to be exploited. It is Enframing of the entire existence. In this sense, the emergence of technology is a consequence of a deeper process: the emergence of Western metaphysics. But metaphysics itself is an elusive concept. To understand what Heidegger meant by metaphysics we need to take a deeper look at his work.

Metaphysics is an all-pervading pre-theoretical understanding of what things are.

“‘Metaphysical’ are those deepest, inherited decisions about what things are within which Western people immediately live.”\textsuperscript{217} Thus, metaphysics is the epoch-grounding source of occidental civilization that has subsequently become planetary. “Completion of modernity is

\begin{itemize}
\item It is outside the scope of this project to adequately explore these connections between \textit{destruktion} and \textit{downgoing}.
\item Clark, \textit{Martin Heidegger}, 11.
\end{itemize}
simultaneously completion of the metaphysical history of the Occident.”\textsuperscript{218} Occidental metaphysics is a tautology. Metaphysics is fundamentally Western. Other traditions might have their own cosmologies, but these cannot be called metaphysics, according to Heidegger.

Technology and metaphysics are mutually inseparable. Metaphysics, for Heidegger, is always Western metaphysics, for there is none other. Technology is not just the existence of some machines and gadgets out there in the world. It is a revealing. This technological revealing leads to “a way of understanding beings as a whole.”\textsuperscript{219} Heidegger firmly believed that this revealing and its attendant way of understanding are symptoms of metaphysics. Furthermore, this revealing does not just reflect the limitations of modernity, “but of the ‘first beginning’ of Western thought.”\textsuperscript{220} He thus places the rise of modern technology at the very roots of Western civilization.

Paradoxically, this stance simultaneously shows Heidegger’s Eurocentrism and his critique of it. For him, only Europe was destined to develop technology and thus rule the world. But this development has not only put the future of Europe and that of the West at stake but that of planet Earth and our species as well. Heidegger is in the grips of this strange contradiction: he wants to elevate the West above the rest; still, he is unable to move beyond the realization that the West has done something irreparable to our relationship with Being. The transformation in this relationship is responsible for turning everything into standing-reserve, mere resources for the unconditional will to will, the desolation of the earth, and the flight of the gods from the earth.

\textsuperscript{218} Heidegger, \textit{Mindfulness}, 19.
\textsuperscript{220} Polt, \textit{Heidegger: An Introduction}, 171.
which means an uncanny absence of the sacred in human life. Self-adoration and self-condemnation go hand in hand in Heidegger's work.

Jean Grondin has identified a transformation in Heidegger’s thinking about metaphysics. According to him, in his early project of *Being and Time*, the crisis is “understood as an inauthentic form of *Dasein*’s temporality.”[^221] The forgetting of Being leads Dasein to have an improper relationship with its own temporality. Thus, the problem is that of not confronting finitude and death. Dasein can only lead an authentic life by confronting death and finitude. This explains Heidegger’s focus on *Being-towards-death* in *Being and Time*. Thus, the project of *Being and Time* locates the reasons for the sedimentation of metaphysics in the forgetting of Being.

However, this changes in his later work, especially in the 1930s. Heidegger’s later work understands metaphysics not as Dasein’s inauthentic relationship with temporality, but as a historical destiny of the West. Being was revealed in a way that it eventually led to the epoch of metaphysics. So, metaphysics is not a result of some Western thinkers’ wrong moves. It is always already there in the destiny of the West. This destiny was also destined to be planetary. The crisis is not that metaphysics has become dominant; the crisis is that we have forgotten the originary power of Being to affect everything.

The contemporary sway of technology is the innermost destiny of Western metaphysics. “Technicity itself becomes the destiny of metaphysics and its completion.”\(^{222}\) The power that technology generates, the mastery over natural forces and the ability to perform previously impossible tasks, is no power. It merely signifies the “metaphysical enslavement to technicity.”\(^{223}\)

People often assert that we are living in a machine age. But usually, the understanding of what a machine is and what constitutes the machine age in its essence remains clouded. The dominance of the machines is not understandable without first understanding and grasping the inner truth of technology, that is, “a basic form of the unfolding of truth in the sense of securing the objectness of beings.”\(^{224}\) This unfolding of truth that reveals everything that exists as objects of manipulation is itself “grounded by Occidental metaphysics and determined by its history.”\(^{225}\)

What does this mean for understanding colonialism? Everything. Western domination of the globe continues as long as modern technology rules everywhere. Even if the West ceases to exist in its current form, it would continue to live in the operations and procedures of technology that have unleashed long-term devastation of the earth. Non-western nation-states have adopted modern technology unquestioningly. China is implementing the technological control of society to an unprecedented degree. By means of surveillance cameras and the social credit system, the

\(^{222}\) Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, 151.
\(^{223}\) Ibid, 152.
\(^{224}\) Ibid.
\(^{225}\) Ibid.
Chinese government has converted a Muslim Uighur town into a prison.\textsuperscript{226} Heidegger seems to be the only thinker who presciently understood such a possibility as an inevitable consequence of modern technology grounded in Western metaphysics.

As is noted previously, technology is the material logic of colonialism. Without the will to technologize all spheres of life, the colonial logic couldn’t have gathered the steam it required to operate. This logic is the logic of availability of things. White Europeans acted as the drivers of this logical engine of technology while the rest were reduced to mere objects left to be manipulated. From this perspective, there is nothing to celebrate in the rise of powerful non-Western nation-states such as Japan, China, and India for they are merely imitating the West to grab the driver’s seat of this monstrous engine.

When Heidegger claims that through the sway of the machine and its attendant logic of technology, nature is secured as raw material, history is converted into mere propaganda, and “man himself … becomes trained for arranging all beings into calculable makability … through breeding and schooling,”\textsuperscript{227} he forgets the colonial difference. For the colonized humanity, this conversion “through breeding and schooling” has entirely different overtones than the Western humankind Heidegger is primarily concerned with. This colonial difference is also a racial difference. It is also a linguistic difference. Although Heidegger clearly disavows the racial privilege, he grants exceptional privilege to ancient Greek and German languages. This linguistic privilege is, for all practical purposes, the ethnic privilege of a subset of European humanity.


\textsuperscript{227} Heidegger, \textit{Mindfulness}, 152.
3.5 The Play of Metaphysics, Technology, and Destruction in the Colonies

Metaphysics that underlies modern technology and energizes the drive towards colonization, revealed itself fully in the colonies. Although Europe too had to go through the destructive effects of modern technology, it was not the same type of destruction that was experienced in the colonies. The difference between these two types of destructions unleashed by modern technology, the one in Europe and the other in the colonies, eludes Heidegger’s thinking. Heidegger is completely oblivious to this difference. He is also oblivious about the different responses triggered by this destruction.

Orlando Bentancor, in *The Matter of Empire: Metaphysics and Mining in Colonial Peru*, has argued that Western metaphysics was used to justify colonization of the Americas. Bentancor shows how early Spanish thinkers used Aristotelian metaphysics to legitimize colonial rule. For example, a Spanish Roman Catholic philosopher Francisco de Vitoria (1486-1543) interpreted colonial relations in Aristotelian terms. He understood that Europeans and Indians are related to each other in the same way as *form* and *matter* are related to one another. From this perspective, natives were merely the clay, which Europeans can shape into anything.

Bentancor also used Heidegger’s critique of modern technology to expose the hidden connection between colonialism and Western metaphysics. He argues, “[T]he condition for understanding the link between metaphysical instrumentalism and modern technological reduction to standing

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228 Bentancor, *The Matter of Empire*. 
reserve is in examining the inconsistencies that arise from metaphysical instrumentalism in its imperial dimension and colonial context.”229 I agree with Bentancor that the colonial context is indispensable for understanding the invisible connection between metaphysics and technology; however, I believe that he did not sufficiently develop the central role technology plays in the colonial project.

Bentancor also fails to take into account John McCumber’s earlier work on the connection between metaphysics and oppression in the light of Heidegger’s critique of Western philosophy. McCumber makes a provocative claim that contemporary modes of oppression are rooted in a “very ancient parameter so deeply embedded in our life and thought as to remain invisible to us.”230 He calls this parameter *ousia*. Ousia is an ancient Greek philosophical term that is commonly translated into English as essence or substance. But McCumber advances a peculiar understanding of ousia as consisting of three traits: boundary, disposition, and initiative. Boundary denotes that “it is securely and determinately bounded”; disposition points to “one unitary component within its boundaries—what Aristotle calls the “form”—generates and/or orders everything else within these boundaries”; and the initiative hints that “only this governing unit affects the world outside these boundaries.”231 Its deployment is metaphysics itself whose “oppressive character should be obvious.”232

232 Ibid.
McCumber shows that ousia is a basic trait of Western civilization. “Its bounded and disposed units, I suspect, are to us Westerners what hexagonal cells are to honeybees: they are what we so easily build.”233 He argues that social engines, which can be defined as a “discourse, institution, or mechanism which gets people to live and act in accordance with an ontological structure,” of oppression such as colonialism, slavery, and the Roman Empire are all powered by ousia:

The Empiricists and the Rationalists, in spite of their differences, thus work within the same basic ontological framework. Its centerpiece is the modern "subject," an intellectual being which exhibits … the structures of domination proper to an Aristotelian ousia. Unlike their Aristotelian ancestors, modern subjects exist in a non-ousiodic nature, in a universe of mere "objects" or bodies. And this means that modernity, insofar as it can be defined through these thinkers, is a sort of halfway state in which ousia has been evicted from nature but continues to shape the human world…I suggest that the effects of this incomplete eviction can be seen in such projects as colonialism, American slavery, and modern marriage.”234

Such is the range of Western metaphysics that it continues to structure the human world in invisible ways. The structuring capacities of Western metaphysics become enormous when it is coupled with modern technology. In the next chapter, we will see how Western metaphysics and its consequence modern technology restructured social life in colonial Punjab.

233 Ibid, 15.
234 Ibid, 108.
3.6 Conclusion

Modern technology is grounded in metaphysics. Imperialism, fascism and colonialism are also grounded in the same metaphysics. The destruction of metaphysics is an inseparable part of any decolonial endeavor. Ghazali’s Tahafut-al-Falsifah is an early example of such destruction. Heidegger’s destruction of the history of metaphysics as presence is also such an achievement. Heidegger failed to break the ground for another beginning of Western tradition because he lacked something fundamental that is required for such monumental achievement. The next chapter discusses Heidegger’s essential lack that obstructed his chances of looking beyond the horizon of his own tradition.
Chapter 4: Heidegger’s Lack: Why Heidegger Failed to Look Outside the West

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the roots of Heidegger’s refusal to look outside the West in search of possible companions in his fight against spiritual devastation resulting from the uncontested reign of technological rationality. I argue that these roots lie in Heidegger’s philosophical cosmology. However, Heidegger struggled all his life to break away from the ruthless pressure of this cosmology. Although he did not exactly succeed, he was nevertheless able to get a glimpse of the future of humanities. This struggle consisted in envisioning a different type of meeting with the other, a different Auseinandersetzung, that is not necessarily violent. I argue that violence is located at the very heart of Heidegger’s project despite his claims to the contrary. Although he tried very hard to move beyond the violent heart of Western metaphysics and was also able to travel some distance away from it, yet his ethno-centrism was too deep-rooted for him to completely envision this different type of creative confrontation with the others. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s failure presents a valuable lesson for anyone trying to break this logjam. This explains my unease with a recent strand of decolonial thinking that refuses to engage with Western thinkers. To me, this move comes too close to mimicking the master. If we have a different ethos than the West, then it must reflect in our intellectual endeavors.

I also want to locate a transition in Heidegger’s works starting in 1930s to his later phase of late 1960s and early 1970s. I argue that the recently published Black Notebooks can help us
understand this transition. So, what I am offering is a particular reading of the Black Notebooks with a constant reference to the other texts from the 30s and some late texts. I agree with Jeff Malpas’ argument that the Black Notebooks are intelligible only within their context. I am engaging with Heidegger with reference to his idea of confrontation. As Heidegger’s career progressed, this idea of confrontation did not stay the same. I have identified at least three distinct forms of this idea of confrontation. The first is most clearly stated in two texts from the 1930s, *Introduction to Metaphysics* and *Being and Truth*. The second version of confrontation takes place in the *Black Notebooks* and the third remained futural for Heidegger although we can get its glimpses in some later texts. I must say that this division is only provisional and these different variations of this idea of confrontation traverse multiple texts.

Does the discussion in the preceding chapter mean that Heidegger’s philosophy should be rejected because it was contaminated by violence? I don’t think so. There are at least two other types of confrontation that are implicit in Heidegger’s work. These alternative versions of confrontation are only implicit in his philosophy. He never articulated these clearly. The second type of confrontation can be seen happening in the *Black Notebooks*.

### 4.2 Black Notebooks: Heidegger’s Auseinandersetzung with Himself

I want to suggest that these *Notebooks* are Heidegger’s confrontation with his own thinking, and with thinking itself. Heidegger asks, “What should happen?” and answers, “Taking action—

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creatively acting and only ‘speaking’ of it to oneself.” This speaking only to oneself takes the form of internal Auseinandersetzung Heidegger is trying to enact both in the Black Notebooks and his other non-public writings which Daniela Vallega-Neu has called his poietic writings. And perhaps that is why there are passages like these, “Why do I have two g’s in my name? Why else, except that I recognize what constantly matters: Benevolence [Güte] (not pity) and patience [Geduld] (i.e., supreme will).” At the end of the sixth notebook, he notes an “Uncanny play of historiographical dates in the foreground of abyssal German history” which includes some prominent dates related to recent German spiritual history. He puts his own birthday at the end signaling the importance of his own coming into this world from a being-historical perspective. In the fourteenth notebook, he muses about when his own name would go into oblivion and gives it the year 2327, roughly three centuries from now. It is not just megalomania, a thinking gone berserk. It is evidence of Heidegger’s struggle against himself. Why is he struggling with himself? Has he realized that he will have to go beyond thinking itself? Commenting on the anti-Semitic statements in the Black Notebooks, Robert Bernasconi has rightly noted that this is not just Heidegger’s problem; it is Western philosophy’s problem.

238 Ibid, 380.
240 Bernasconi notes, “The Eurocentrism, antisemitism, and racism of many of the canonical names of Western philosophy, including figures of the stature of Locke, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche, are now well documented, as is the fact that many of the standard responses, such as the “child of his/her time” defense or the denial that the statements at issue are central, are frequently applied without legitimacy. We know that the complicity of many of the major figures from that tradition with the evil of, for example, the enslavement and oppression of people of African descent in the Americas was extreme even by the standards of the time. So the question that has to be posed is not only that of how we relate to Heidegger but also that of how we relate to the Western philosophical tradition more generally.” Bernasconi, *Another Eisenmenger*, 171.
Racism runs through Western philosophy and could not be dismissed by clichéd responses such as a child of his/her own time. But I want to go a step further and claim that it is not just Western philosophy’s problem but the problem of thinking as such. Heidegger’s conception of thinking as something that bestows status, position, and rank, makes it impossible to dissociate this thinking in the 30s from his disastrous politics.

Why did Heidegger let the anti-Semitic remarks stand in the *Black Notebooks* and also allowed their publication? The decision about publication was made quite late in his life, in the 1970s. Keeping in mind the backlash he had already received, he could have easily chosen not to publish or omit these remarks. He did not do that and there is a particular reason for that. Black Notebooks are Heidegger’s own down-going through his confrontation with himself. As Lin Ma has argued, down-going is not merely descent, it is also ascent.241

Despite this confrontation with himself, Heidegger was unable to envision a more welcoming relationship with the other because he is unwilling to acknowledge that maybe the saving power does not grow where the danger is. Maybe thinking is not poetizing. Maybe poetizing has an entirely different provenance than thinking. Maybe thinking needs to enact its own confrontation with poetizing and realize its own status as different from poetizing? Maybe poetizing happens only when thinking is let go, is loosened a bit? Maybe what is needed is a different confrontation, which is not a confrontation but a friendly encounter, with those “substitute forms of humanity” rather than just destroying them?

These questions are valid but to be fair to Heidegger, it must be noted that he struggled to get beyond the restricted horizon of his thinking although he was never able to successfully do that. *Black Notebooks* contain some intimations of that struggle and what is about to come in Heidegger’s later works. For example, in the second Notebook, he raised the question of the validity of questioning. He asks himself, “Why the entire hardness and coldness of the concept,” and answers, “to impart to beings their full empowerment” and to “lead humanity to a more originary poetry” so that it can “experience the bliss of high spirits.”\(^{242}\) How does one experience this bliss if not in one’s body? This Auseinandersetzung with himself led him to a crucial insight regarding the plight of contemporary world.

This third type of confrontation does not precisely exist in Heidegger’s works. He was never able to enact it, but he got some glimpses of it. During his journey to Greece in the early 1960s, Heidegger hinted at a different type of Auseinandersetzung. The “confrontation [Auseinandersetzung] with the Asiatic element was for the Greek Dasein a fruitful necessity. This confrontation is for us today—in an entirely different way and to a greater extent—the decision about the destiny of Europe and what is called the Western world.”\(^{243}\) Bret Davis has suggested that Heidegger moved gradually away from his onto-historical ethnocentrism in the 1930s to the necessity of East-West dialogue.\(^{244}\) However, Lin Ma and Jaap van Brakel have rightly suggested that Heidegger failed to “provide us with a positive ontological account of


East-West dialogue” because he could not “overcome[s] the bias that true philosophy is the sole property of the West.”\textsuperscript{245} I want to develop this line of thinking further by arguing that Heidegger failed to provide “a positive ontological account of East-West dialogue” also because of his inability to fully realize the third type of confrontation. What does it look like?

4.3 The Want of Holy Names

Towards the end of his life, in 1974, Heidegger wrote a short, poetic and enigmatic text: ‘The Want of Holy Names’. He opens this text with a quote from Hölderlin:

\begin{quote}
And a poet gladly joins with others
so that they may help him understand.\textsuperscript{246}
\end{quote}

We must gladly join with the others in order to understand. Through an alternative reading of this text, or in other words, in gladly joining Heidegger and Hölderlin so that they can help me understand, I want to enact a different Auseinandersetzung between Heidegger’s longing to escape Western metaphysics and the still unEnframed remnants of Sikh spirituality. It is this third type of Auseinandersetzung that Heidegger could not himself practice but he got a faint insight into what it might look like.

\textsuperscript{245} Lin Ma & Jaap van Brakel, “OUT OF THE ‘GES-TELL?’ THE ROLE OF THE EAST IN HEIDEGGER’S \textit{DAS ANDERE DENKEN},” Philosophy East and West 64, no. 3 (July 2014): 548.
Heidegger locates the crisis of the West in the lack of holy names. “Holy names are wanting,” said Hölderlin. Heidegger follows the poet and declares, “Insight into the singularity of this “want,” which could lead to an understanding of the distress, would be accorded by the generous grant of the experience of its origin. The origin presumably conceals itself in the self-denial of the holy and prohibits a suitable naming of the appropriate and self-illuminating name befitting to it.”

Heidegger’s quest reaches its apogee here. It is here that we need to start dealing with him, if we want to deal with him at all. On the one hand, Heidegger’s yearning gains its purest form in this text, and on the other hand, the limits of his thinking are also most clearly revealed. He uses a term, which he seldom used elsewhere: das Gestellnis. Although the translator of this text, Bernhard Radloff treats it as a synonym of das Gestell, Lin Ma and Jaap van Brakel have recently said that “there exists a subtle differentiation (yet still in connection) in shades of meaning between these two words,” Ge-stell and Gestellnis. The Ge-stell and Gestellnis denote two sides of the same coin. Where danger is, there grows saving power also. While Ge-stell denotes more the danger side, Gestellnis denotes more of the side of the saving power. It is more a matter of emphasizing a particular aspect of the same term.

Our fate in the technological age depends on our ability to experience Gestellnis. Heidegger argues, “Were the technological age capable of experiencing the power of the Exposition (das Gestellnis) which determines it in such a form that it became apparent how – namely, in a

distorted way – this “want” rules it, then the being-open (das Dasein) of man would be allotted participation in the open Region (die Gegend) of the saving.”

Realizing the need for this want might be the key that can help us get out of Ge-stell. However, before the need for this want is realized, the others must be joined so that they can help us in gaining an insight into the nature of this want.

How do we join the others to understand? On the occasion of Heidegger’s eightieth birthday, the University of Hawaii organized a conference on the theme of Heidegger and Eastern Thought. Heidegger wrote a letter to the conference organizers. In this letter, he talked about an ‘unfortunate circumstance’ which hinders the dialogue between Western and Eastern thinkers.

Heidegger wrote a letter to the conference organizers. In this letter, he talked about an ‘unfortunate circumstance’ which hinders the dialogue between Western and Eastern thinkers. He described this circumstance as follows, “The greatest difficulty in this enterprise always lies, as far as I can see, in the fact that with few exceptions there is no command of the Eastern languages either in Europe or in the United States. A translation of Eastern thought into English, on the other hand, remains – as does every translation – an expedient.”

Most orientalist scholars from the West, who do have mastery of Eastern languages, are not philosophers but linguists who unwittingly impose Western frameworks of thinking over Eastern texts. What Heidegger is calling for here is the engagement with primordial power of founding words in other languages. Unfortunately, this realization came too late for him to join the others.

However, Heidegger failed to develop this insight and realize that this distress caused by the lack of holy names must take root in the body before it can move towards its fulfillment. The event whereby this distress takes roots in the body is like Ereignis, whereby Being enters history. What is Being if it does not enter history through an event of appropriation? An empty concept. Heidegger realized that. But he did not realize that this distress must also enter the body of a particular Dasein in order to be real. He failed because he didn’t heed the poet’s advice of gladly joining with others to understand. Who might be those others?

Twelfth century Punjabi Sufi poet Baba Farid (1179-1266), whose verses are a part of the Sikh scripture Sri Guru Granth Sahib, used a word, or rather a holy name that names this want for holy names. It is called Birha (बिरह). It is obviously untranslatable but a couplet from his poetry can help us get a sense of it.

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\begin{align*}
\text{बिरह बिरह अपनी बिरह तु मुझउठ}। \quad \text{ बिरह बिरह उनि बिरह तु हैथम में उठ तरा भागुठ}।
\end{align*}
\]

Everyone cries separation, separation. The separation is the King of all. O Farid, that body is like a graveyard in which the acute awareness of this separation does not awaken.\(^{251}\)

Two things are important here. The first is that Birha is called Sultan in this couplet. Sultan is the word for a king. Just as polemos rules everything for Heraclitus, birha rules everything for Baba.

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\(^{251}\) Sri Guru Granth Sahib, 1379. Translation mine.
Farid. Heidegger understands this rule of birha as the want of holy names. The second is that birha is not just separation. It is the acute, bodily awareness of distress caused by the lack of holy names. It is physical pain caused by a longing. The longing here is the longing for the divine. It names that powerful longing that makes the body ache. Without this physical longing, the body is like a graveyard. This bodily dimension is missing in Heidegger.

4.4 The Missing Bodily Dimension

In a brilliant critique of Heidegger, Nietzsche (born posthumously after all) hints at this bodily dimension. In the section 419 of ‘Will to Power’, Nietzsche engages in a critique of German philosophy that uncannily looks like a critique of Heidegger’s entire work. Nietzsche declares that “German philosophy as a whole … is the most fundamental form of … homesickness there has ever been: the longing for the best that ever existed.” He goes on, “One is no longer at home anywhere; at last one longs back for that place in which alone one can be at home, because it is the only place in which one would want to be at home: the Greek world!”

But unfortunately, all the bridges that lead to this ancient Greek world are broken, except the “rainbow bridges of concepts.” German philosophy is a “will to go on with the discovery of antiquity, the digging up of ancient philosophy, above all of the pre-Socratics-the most deeply buried of all Greek temples!” Who can fail to hear the intimations of Heidegger in this

254 Ibid.
premonition? But Nietzsche does not stop there. He declares that a few centuries from now, the real dignity of German philosophy would be located in the “gradual reclamation of the soil of antiquity.” But why this return to antiquity: to repair a broken bond, “the bond with the Greeks, the hitherto highest type of man.” We, the Germans, Nietzsche says, are growing more Greek by the day, coming closer to “all those fundamental forms of world interpretation devised by the Greek spirit through Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, Democritus, and Anaxagoras.” However, to be fair, this becoming Greek of the Germans is happening only in “concepts and evaluations, as Hellenizing Ghosts.” Nietzsche was acutely aware about the missing bodily dimension from German philosophy’s reclamation of the ancient Greek soul. However, he had hope. “…but one day, let us hope, also in our bodies! Herein lies (and has always lain) my hope for the German character!”

What is the meaning of this becoming like the Greeks in our bodies? We can only surmise about this. But it surely has something to do with the spiritual decline of the world that both Nietzsche and Heidegger struggled against. As if confirming what Nietzsche said about the return to the Greeks, Heidegger says in the notebooks, “Nietzsche alone saw “today’s situation,” and he could do so because he foresaw something else.”

Heidegger describes his Nietzsche lectures as Auseinandersetzung with the core matter of Nietzsche’s thinking. This encounter with Nietzsche is also an encounter with the last thought of

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255 Ibid.
257 Ibid, 226.
258 Heidegger, Ponderings II-VI, 37.
Western metaphysics, its end. That is why Nietzsche is omnipresent in the notebooks, as David Farrell Krell has observed.²⁵⁹ (However, Krell is not right about limiting it to Heidegger’s inability to mimic Nietzsche stylistically. It is deeper than that.) As a thinker struggling to find a way out of metaphysics and toward another beginning, it is also a confrontation with himself, as someone who is struggling to herald a new era for the West.

There is ambivalence in the Black Notebooks regarding the bodily dimension. At one place, where he is talking about the indigenous ones, he says, “The one who can be indigenous is the one who derives from native soil, is nourished by it, stands on it—this is the original—that is what often vibrates in me through body and disposition—as if I went over the fields guiding a plow, or over lonely field-paths amid ripening grain, through winds and fog, sunshine and snow, paths which kept mother’s blood, and that of her ancestors, circulating and pulsing. . .”²⁶⁰ But this bodily dimension never becomes a primary concern for Heidegger. He lapses back into the ‘hardness and coldness’ of the concept too often and tries to find solace there.

It is due to Nietzsche’s emphasis on the bodily dimension that Derrida performs deconstruction of Heidegger through Nietzsche both in ‘Différance’ and ‘Ends of Man’. In ‘Différance’ Derrida comments on a passage from ‘The Anaximander Fragment’ where Heidegger says, “… in order to name the essential nature of Being, language would have to find a single word, the unique word.”²⁶¹ Commenting on this longing for a unique word, what he calls Heideggerian hope,

²⁶⁰ Heidegger, Ponderings II-VI, 29.
Derrida, says, “There will be no unique name, even if it were the name of Being. And we must think this without nostalgia, that is, outside of the myth of a purely maternal or paternal language, a lost native country of thought. On the contrary, we must affirm this, in the sense in which Nietzsche puts affirmation into play, in a certain laughter and a certain step of the dance.”

Similarly in The Ends of Man, Derrida deconstructs Heidegger’s national philosophical humanism through Nietzsche. Commenting on Nietzsche’s difference between the superior man “who is abandoned in distress in a last movement of pity” and the superman who “awakens and leaves” and whose laughter is “directed toward a return” which neither takes the form of “the metaphysical repetition of humanism” nor that of “a memorial or a guarding of the meaning of Being.” He, the superman, says Derrida, “will dance outside the house, … No doubt that Nietzsche called for an active forgetting of Being: it would not have metaphysical form imputed to it by Heidegger.”

Dancing and laughing Nietzsche deconstructs thinking Heidegger, via Derrida.

This dancing and laughing body, the ecstatic body is what is missing in Heidegger, if not body as a philosophical concept. This bodily dimension should not be understood in biological or subjective terms. It is not some new age miraculous practice that can “renew” or “awaken” our bodies epigenetically. It is rather the moment of the transcendent element, for the lack of a better expression, entering our bodies. It is when the divine makes its presence felt in the human. It is such an event of appropriation that stirs the sensible transcendental, to use a phrase from Luce Irigaray, in the human body. Heidegger might have realized it if he was willing to gladly join

others in a friendly Auseinandersetzung to understand how to let the distress caused by the lack of holy names take root in one’s body. If he had done that, he might have called it the other Ereignis, a door opening towards the other beginning.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to take a look inside Heidegger’s tortured soul. His predicament is multifaceted. On the one hand, he is determined to present the most profound critique of Western tradition and its philosophical (metaphysical) roots. On the other hand, he insists that the other beginning must also come from within this tradition. Although he formulated the notion of Gelassenheit (letting go) in his later works, he never let thinking go. His stubborn attachment to thinking as the supreme mode of engagement and his insistence on the self-sameness of thinking and poetizing proved to be a prison of his own making. His efforts to break free failed precisely because of his stubborn attachment to thinking, his privileging of Ancient Greek and German languages as ontologically superior, and his refusal to look outside the Western tradition.

The next chapter looks at techno-coloniality in operation in colonial Punjab. This techno-colonial operation resulted in the destruction (partial, perhaps mutilation is a better word) of Sikh existence, or form of life. It looks at how techno-coloniality transformed the basic coordinates of existence for the colonized.
Chapter 5: Techno-Coloniality and the Destruction of Sikh Form of Life

There never can be easy guarantee for the tranquility of India, until we shall have effected the entire subjection of the Sikh people and destroyed its power as an independent nation.

- Lord Dalhousie\textsuperscript{265}

Twice it has been your Lordship's privilege to conclude our wars against the Sikhs by their entire and utter defeat; and on this occasion by a humiliation so complete, that in almost the literal sense of the classical phrase they have been compelled, subdued, and disarmed to pass beneath the yoke.

- Lord Dalhousie\textsuperscript{266}

5.1 Introduction

Although the destruction of indigenous cultures and traditions is a universal and inseparable part of the colonial enterprise, each instance of its enunciation is unique. Attending to the nuances of these differences is imperative for gaining an insightful understanding of the phenomenon of colonialism. Colonialism did not just bring simple destruction. It did not just annihilate whatever was there before its advent although such destruction was one of the inevitable consequences of colonialism. Colonialism reshaped the worlds and cultures it conquered. Its destruction was

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\textsuperscript{265} Lord Dalhousie, the then governor general of India, noted this in his dispatch to the Court of Directors, quoted in Ganda Singh (ed.), \textit{Private Correspondence Relating to The Anglo-Sikh Wars}, (Amritsar & Patiala: Sikh History Society, 1955), 163.
\end{flushright}
productive as well. While destroying the old life-worlds, cultural practices, social institutions, and forms of life, it simultaneously installed new institutions, invented new social categories, and crafted new forms of life. Its productive side proved to be more dangerous for the colonized cultures as it inserted their existence into a politico-economic global network where their role was reduced to being cogs in the mega machines of the empire. The complex technological apparatus whose control still lies with the West sustains this network. This network functions as a profit-generating machine for those who control it and as a cruel mechanism of control for those who are subjected to its perpetual functioning. For these reasons, understanding the destruction wrought by colonialism goes hand in hand with understanding its productive force and underlying technological apparatuses that enable it. One of the most consequential and least talked about aspects of colonialism is the Enframing of the colonized being.

Colonization not only reshaped the world of the colonized, it also installed an epistemological framework through which the colonized were supposed to understand the profound changes in their lifeworld. Bernard Cohn argues that the modern state differs from its medieval counterpart in its distinctive way of making its power visible. While pre-modern states, both in Europe and elsewhere relied on “theatrical displays…royal entries, coronations, funerals and other rituals,” to display their power to the public; modern states do so “through the gradual extension of ‘officializing’ procedures” such as “by defining and classifying space, making separations between public and private spheres; by recording transactions such as the sale of property; by counting and classifying their populations, replacing religious institutions as the registrar of
births, marriages, and deaths; and by standardizing languages and scripts.” This was a completely new way the colonial power devised to make its functioning as efficient as possible. It is evident that knowledge played a crucial role in the functioning of colonial power.

One way to exercise power over the colonized was to learn their languages. The function of this knowledge of local languages, according to Cohn, was to “enable the British to classify, categorize and bound the vast social world that was India so that it could be controlled.” These aims gave shape to what he calls “investigative modalities” of colonialism. Such modalities include i) the historiographical modality, ii) the observational/travel modality, iii) the survey modality, iv) the enumerative modality, v) the museological modality, and vi) the surveillance modality. These modalities are still functional in the postcolonial world, albeit in a different form. What Cohn fails to recognize is that these modalities are sustained by two things: material technologies such as logistical and communications networks and a technological way of understanding, a deeper attitude towards the world in general. This chapter seeks to take into account both of these factors while narrating the story of colonial Punjab.

Sikhs were one of the last to be colonized in South Asia. By the time the British came face to face with the Khalsa army of Punjab in the 1840s, they had conquered almost all of what now constitutes as the nation-state of India. By that time, the British Empire had become an unparalleled global force whose military power, technological supremacy, and logistical agility were virtually unmatched. They encountered a formidable enemy in the form of Sikhs. The

268 Cohn, Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge, 4-5.
losses incurred on the British army during the Anglo-Sikh wars of the 1840s were so great that the British army officers were “highly impressed by their martial qualities. Unlike many of their conquered subjects, who struck the British as superstitious and effeminate, the Sikhs were considered manly and brave.”

The British perceived Sikhs as a mighty foe and a constant threat. Lord Dalhousie, the then governor-general of India and in charge of the campaign to annex Punjab to the British Empire portrays Sikhs as an evil people and their country as infernal. “I can see no escape from the necessity of annexing this infernal country”, he declared. His policy was to annihilate the Sikhs as a politically sovereign nation. He did so by adopting brutal suppression and modernizing the province at an unprecedented pace. His policy resulted in the annexation of Punjab to the British Empire, dissolution of Sikh religious institutions, and the (incomplete) destruction of Sikh way of being.

It becomes clear from the epigraphs to this chapter that Dalhousie made it a personal mission to eradicate the existence of Sikhs as a political nation. My argument here is not that he succeeded in annihilating Sikhs once and for all. Sikhs as a religious and political community have indeed survived. The point instead, is that colonialism mutilated their collective sense of being in such a way that its political ramifications are still playing out. It is not pure and simple destruction that is my theme of analysis here, but the capture of their existence in a global techno-colonial network. Imprisoned in this network, Sikhs are forced to exist in the state of a perpetual oscillation between subjection and resistance. Such existence invariably becomes precarious and is subjected to the diktats of dominant political power. Since colonization, Sikh history has gone

269 Cohn, Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge, 109.
270 Baird, Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie, 33.
through a lot of political turbulence. Political violence remains a permanent part of Sikhs’
everyday existence. This chapter delineates the ways in which colonialism destroyed/mutilated
Sikh existence and the consequences of this destruction.

While telling the story of the colonization of Punjab and its effects on Sikh identity, I have
relied, apart from the vast body of historical work in the field, on the colonial archives,
administrative reports, and above all letters of colonial administrators and military generals. Lord
Dalhousie’s private letters are very revealing in telling the inside story of this historical chapter.
These private letters were “written to Sir George Couper, Bart., his oldest and dearest friend.”²⁷¹
The thoughts expressed in these letters are so intimate that Dalhousie, in a letter dated September
18th, 1849, a few months after the annexation of Punjab, wrote to his friend:

> I have already told you I keep you as a safety-valve, through which I have a right to blow
off feelings which I can express to no one in India but my wife, and do express to no one in
Europe but your two selves… I defy you to produce any letter of mine irritably expressed,
except to one of you two, with whom, as I said before, I have surely a right to claim the
privilege of expressing the elsewhere suppressed annoyance which every man in my
position must occasionally suffer.²⁷²

It is a startling confession on Dalhousie’s part. He was a very strict and disciplined bureaucrat.
The candidness, with which he expressed his emotions, including a heavy dose of contempt for
the Sikhs, makes these letters a peephole into the subconscious recesses of his mind. He carried
out his project of destroying Sikhs and their “power as an independent nation” with a particularly

²⁷¹ Ibid, v.
²⁷² Ibid, 95.
vicious zeal.\textsuperscript{273} Sikhs bore the full brunt of Dalhousie’s barbaric mission, which was energized by the power of technology that his side commanded. Before moving forward, it is important to give a brief description of Sikhism and its pre-colonial history.

5.2 Sikhi(sm): A Brief Introduction

Sikhism is usually described as the youngest of all world religions. This description takes two things for granted. First, it presupposes the smooth transition of Sikhi into an “ism” (more on this below). Secondly, it uncritically makes use of the term religion, treating it as a conceptual basket in which all the traditions that are considered “world religions” such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism etc. are thrown together. This simple description betrays the invisibility and power of the way of thinking working behind it. In order to meaningfully discuss the issues at hand, it is necessary to first deconstruct this particular way of thinking that captures, and thus transforms everything it tries to define.

5.2.1 Is Sikhi(sm) a Religion?

Is Sikhi(sm)\textsuperscript{274} a religion? If so, what kind of religion is it? Can defining it as an “ism,” do justice to its essence and spirit? What is an “ism” anyway? Sikhism, when translated into

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid, 33.
\textsuperscript{274} In the field of Sikh studies, there is some contention about using Sikhi vs. Sikhism. Sikhi is indigenous precolonial term while Sikhism became prevalent after colonization. Sikhi as a noun in Punjabi is feminine (Every noun has a gender in Punjabi language) while Sikhism or Sikh Dharam, when used in a Punjabi sentence, are masculine. I will use Sikh throughout my thesis as an indigenizing gesture. Balbinder Singh Bhogal, "Sikh Dharam and Postcolonialism: Hegel, Religion and Zizek," \textit{Australian Religion Studies Review} 25, no. 2 (2012): 185-213.
\end{flushleft}
Punjabi, would be called *Sikhwaad*. Why does it sound ridiculous and is never used as such in Punjabi? These questions are very complicated. One can answer these questions in two ways. First, one can answer these questions through an engagement with the critique of the category of religion offered by continental philosophers and postcolonial theorists. Secondly, one can provide answers by analyzing the Sikh colonial history and understanding how colonizers worked to subdue emancipatory aspects of *Sikhi* by imposing a modernist interpretation of Sikh texts and practices. In what follows, I will combine these two methods.

According to the now widely accepted critique of the category of religion, religion is either an inadequate category or a colonial/colonizing concept. The translation/conversion of *Sikhi* into Sikhism is a result of a very violent (both literally and symbolically) process of colonizing the Sikh tradition. This chapter will add to this ongoing discussion by arguing that the imposition of the European concept of religion on *Sikhi* and modernist interpretations of its texts and practices is a result (although partially) of the technological mode of thinking that originated in the West and subsequently disseminated in other parts of the world via colonialism. Balbinder Singh Bhogal writes in this regard, “The transformation of precolonial *sikhi* into the modern/colonial Sikhism, a project instigated by British colonialists to define the Sikhs as one party among India’s many, was in turn consolidated by the Singh Sabha (1970-1920) which


\footnote{276 Many scholars such as Balbinder Singh Bhogal, Anne Murphy and Arvind-pal Singh Mandair have drawn attention to this issue. See, Bhogal, *Sikh Dharam and Postcolonialism*; Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West*; and Murphy, *Defining the Religious and the Political*.}
sought the political legitimacy ‘a civilized religion’ brought.” Bhogal further argues that such remodeling of *sikhi* is a reflection of Protestant Christianity. Sikhi is thus made to share all the characteristic traits of Protestant Christianity such as “a monotheistic creed, codified tenets of belief, a canon of scripture, a prophetic history, an emphasis on individual morality, critique of idol worship and empty ritual” etc.

Religion comes from a Latin word *religare* that means uniting together. Indic traditions have a wide array of words to describe what is today assembled together under the rubric of religion. Religion is usually translated as Dharma. Dharma means a set of moral rules among other things. In Sikh lore, the most often used word that comes closest to the usage denoted by religion is *Panth*. Earlier Sikhs were called *Nanakpanthis*. Panth comes from Sanskrit *puth*, which means path. Thus, Nanakpanthis are those who travel on the way opened by Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), the founder of Sikhi. Later on, when the tenth and last Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) founded the order of the *Khalsa* in 1699, the community of Khalsa Sikhs acquired the name of *Khalsa Panth* as well.

What is in a name? Why does the nomenclature matter so much? Isn’t it natural for every language to accept new terminology as it comes in contact with other languages? If we do not reduce language to just its representational character, then we will have to accept that names are more than just labels for things. A name is rooted in a particular tradition and culture. Names have history. The violence inherent in the process of translation manifests itself in the process of

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unilaterally changing names. When Sikhi becomes Sikhism, it marks the entry of what is called Sikhism into a new conceptual universe. In this new sphere, it is fitted according to a pre-existing hierarchy. The ability to name something or to change something’s name also denotes power. It can be a function of power to put names on things. Colonial categorization of society along European lines is just such an imposition of new nomenclature to denote indigenous traditions and practices. In the context of South Asia, this power has expressed itself through the naming and institutionalization of people into different castes and creeds.

The act of translating Sikhi into Sikhism is an act of epistemic violence. Despite the fact that there are numerous studies on the concept of epistemic violence, yet the origins of this phenomenon remain murky. It is rightfully located in the project of European imperialism. But what exactly drives this violence often remains unanswered. I argue that epistemic violence has an intimate connection with the technological mode of thinking. Just as the will to dominate nature functions primarily through technology, the will to subdue non-western sources of knowledge also has its power hidden under the technological apparatuses of domination.

5.2.2 Sikhi: A Short History till 1849 AD

Sikhism originated in the 15th century Punjab. Punjab is a province that lies in the North-Western part of South Asia. It is currently divided between India and Pakistan. Important Sikh religious places are also divided into two countries. Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of the founder of Sikhi, Guru Nanak (1469-1539), is in Pakistani Punjab while Sri Darbar Sahib (popularly known in the West as the Golden Temple) is in Indian Punjab. Punjab, at the time of Guru Nanak’s birth, was
a part of the Lodhi dynasty (1451-1526). But in his lifetime, it was conquered by Babur and became a part of the Mughal Empire (1526-1857). It remained so throughout the early Sikh period. Punjab’s geographical location made it the entry point of India. Invaders from Alexander of Macedonia to Muhammad Gauri to Babur, all entered India through Punjab. This converted Punjab into a perpetual battlefield. Punjab at the time was unable to resist as it was a feudal society deeply embedded in the traditional Hindu caste system.

Ten Sikh Gurus²⁷⁹ practiced and preached Sikh mostly in what is now northern India and Pakistan. Though the first Guru, Guru Nanak traveled far and wide: as far away as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan in the West, Sri Lanka in the South, Kashmir, Ladakh and Tibet in the North and Bangladesh in the East. During his travels (which are called Udasis in early Sikh literature and oral tradition), he engaged in dialogue with Sufi and Muslim saints, Yogis, Siddhas, Bhakats and other spiritual figures prominent at the time. Sikh Gurus wrote spiritual poetry or Gurbani, as it is called in Sikh lore, in Punjabi and a mix of other languages prevalent in the region at the time such as Sant Bhasha.

Khushwant Singh, a prominent Sikh historian and author, states in his influential A History of the Sikhs,

Sikhism was born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam after they had known each other for a period of nearly nine hundred years. But once it had taken birth, it began to develop a personality of its own and in due course grew into a faith which had some

²⁷⁹ The ten Sikh Gurus are: Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), Guru Angad Dev (1539-52), Guru Amar Das (1552-74), Guru Ram Das (1574-81), Guru Arjan (1581-1606), Guru Hargobind (1606-44), Guru Har Rai (1644-61), Guru Har Kishen (1661-64), Guru Tegh Bahadur (1664-1675), and Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708). These dates are the dates of their respective periods of Guruship, not of their natural life.
semblance to Hinduism, some to Islam, and yet had features which bore no resemblance to either.  

This quote is full of paradoxes. It is a history of Sikhs by a Sikh author, yet it uses a name given by the colonizer. It also presents Sikhi both as a mix of Hinduism and Islam yet acknowledges its unique autonomous nature. This quote shows how fraught it is to write about Sikhs.

The succession of Gurus in the human form ended in 1708 AD when the tenth Sikh Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the Guruship on Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the scripture of Sikhs. The 18th century was a period of extreme turmoil in Sikh history. It was mostly a fight for survival as Sikhs battled a number of powers originating from Afghanistan, Iran as well as Delhi. But almost miraculously, they not only survived but also established their own rule in Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839).

Ranjit Singh established a powerful rule whose borders were spread as far as Kabul in the West, China in the East, and Kashmir in the North. He was a formidable military force in all of South Asia. His administrative astuteness and military abilities made him a powerful and highly popular ruler of the times. His rule is described as a religiously accommodating (most of the important posts in his Darbar were held by Hindus and Muslims) benevolent dictatorship.

Shortly after Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s death, the British started to gain control over affairs of the Lahore Darbar. It took them a decade (1839-1849) to annex Punjab to the British Empire. This

decade was marked by the betrayal of Ranjit Singh’s Dogra ministers, infighting among his heirs, and two bloody Anglo-Sikh wars. On March 29th 1849, the British finally annexed Punjab and Sikhs were subjected to a long period of political slavery. In order to fully comprehend the effects of colonization on the Sikh psyche, we need to understand the concept of colonization first.

5.3 The Event of Colonization

What kind of event is the event of colonization? For the colonizers, every conquest of a new territory is just another chapter in their triumphant march in history. History, for them, is just a succession of events unfolding the inevitability of their superiority and their right to dominate. History, from this perspective, becomes an embodiment of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic. It is a struggle unto death of two opposing parties, which always ends in victory for the one and defeat for the other. On an abstract level, this struggle is a struggle for self-consciousness. Colonization is thus, Europe’s march towards self-consciousness through a violent encounter with her others.

Colonialism, like Christianity, has a long history of its apologetics. However, it also seeks to provide “logical explanations” for its existence, unlike prior imperial adventures,. Strangely, these explanations are not after the fact justifications. These explanations/justifications go parallel to colonialism and often work as a jumping board for the imperial endeavors. One such case in point is the philosophy of early nineteenth-century German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.
Hegel’s philosophical project is over-ambitious to the point of becoming megalomaniacal. He describes the march of Spirit (Geist) through world-history as a march of self-consciousness towards freedom. Different cultures and civilizations are stages in the Spirit’s march towards freedom. He saw Africa as a land without history. History originates in Asia but culminates in Europe alone. He sees Europe at the forefront of Spirit’s march towards freedom. Colonization, from this perspective, is the movement of the rest of the world’s self-consciousness towards freedom in the leadership of Europe.

Hegel built a hierarchy of cultures that the colonial enterprise actualized in the real world. He said, “Thought is, indeed, essential to humanity. It is this that distinguishes us from the brutes.”\(^{281}\) Thus, he insinuated that there are humans in the form of brutes who are without the capacity to think. He further speculated, “Reason is the Sovereign of the World” and that history of the world is a rational process. His description of this rational process of history can be succinctly presented from his following assertions:

> The Orientals have not attained the knowledge that Spirit — Man as such — is free; and because they do not know this, they are not free. They only know that one is free…The consciousness of Freedom first arose among the Greeks, and therefore they were free; but they, and the Romans likewise, knew only that some are free — not man as such…The German nations, under the influence of Christianity, were the first to attain the consciousness that man, as man, is free: that it is the freedom of Spirit which constitutes its essence.”\(^{282}\)

\(^{282}\) Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 18.
It is quite clear from the above quote that Hegel’s worldview was informed by a deep-rooted racial prejudice in which he regarded the White Europeans as the most advanced people who have a right to rule and lead others. Commenting on Hegel, Wilhelm Halbfass says that for Hegel, “European horizon transcends all Asian horizons. Asian thought is comprehensible and interpretable within European thought, but not vice versa.” Therefore, colonialism is a worldview firmly embedded in European philosophy.

However, there are two problems with Hegel’s view of history: the problem of Christianity and the problem of colonialism. The first problem, i.e., the problem of Christianity can be stated like this: if the Spirit’s march towards freedom is dictated by internal contradictions and the search to resolve these contradictions, the introduction of Christianity (which is an Eastern import) in Europe cannot be interpreted through Hegelian schema. Christianity did not arise from the European communities’ efforts to resolve their internal contradictions. Christianity came from the outside. Hegel ignores this and tries to fit Christianity into his schema of history as an incident in the European Spirit’s march towards freedom.

Secondly, which is more pertinent to the current project, the Hegelian schema loses its explanatory force when it is applied to the colonial situation. Non-western societies were inducted into modernity not by their efforts to resolve contradictions inherent in their own traditions—although there were many such contradictions the efforts to resolve them had a different trajectory than that of Europe—but by the irreducible contradictions between colonial

modes of social organization and native forms of life. It was the violent imposition of European socio-political models and methods of world-interpretation (i.e. philosophy) that rendered native forms of life (that is what a people consider as authoritative while interpreting the world and social relations) redundant. It was not the putatively superior power of European reason to explain things in changed circumstances but an effect of power.

Whence did the European nations draw their power? The short answer is modern technology. It is not that the West was cleverer than others in inventing technological apparatus. Some of the epoch changing inventions were made outside the West such as the compass, gunpowder, and paper. It is rather a question of the direction of the will. The Western culture directed all its energies toward treating and exploiting everything as mere resources whether it is nature or humanity itself. It is this orientation that the other cultures lack. It is also the same thinking that helped the West gain global domination. That is why only an understanding of history that is mindful about the role played by modern technology (whose roots lie in Western metaphysics) can help us understand the real nature of colonialism.

Heidegger’s understanding of history is markedly different from Hegel’s, but there is one similarity between the two. Both regard Europe at the forefront of history, although for entirely different reasons. For Heidegger, there is little to celebrate in Europe’s triumphant march through history because the planetary domination of the European way of life is a manifestation of its unbounded nihilism. “Europe is the unconditional and calculative order for actualizing the downgoing of the West. The name for the fact that this ‘downgoing’ is not simply allowed but is
urged on and made secure as the unconditional devastation.”

Europe is thus a “downgoing of the West” which, representing the consummation of Western metaphysics is bringing unprecedented devastation to the earth. But still, Heidegger believed that the response to European nihilism, the cure for the disease it has spread all over the planet, must come out of the Western tradition itself.

On the other hand, the colonized experience the same phenomenon very differently. Colonization, for them, happens both as a socio-political and subjective catastrophe. Their world turns upside down. Things fall apart. The most significant casualty is the process of meaning-making. Epistemic violence of colonialism renders the native symbolic universe obsolete. It is as if the natives’ physical and symbolic spaces of habitation are suddenly flooded with volcanic lava, rendering them inhabitable.

To use Heideggerian terminology, colonialism can be described as a deep historical event. These kinds of events happen rarely. Heidegger believed that in the history of the west, only five deep historical events have happened. From this perspective, according to him, the Second World War changed nothing, as it was not a deep historical event. Heidegger is mute about colonialism. But it is quite easy to see why colonialism is a deep historical event.


\footnote{Downgoing is a technical term in Heidegger’s philosophy that needs a more nuanced approach which exceeds the scope of current project.}
Colonialism is a productive and transformative process. Its productive and transformative power lies in its ability to mold native cultures in its own image. It does so most powerfully through a technologization of the living environment. Colonization altered Punjab’s geography in many ways. It also introduced people to modern forms of agriculture that treat the land as standing-reserve, a resource ready to be exploited.

5.4 The Colonization of Punjab: An Imperial Experiment

Nowhere in the Indian empire had a programme of development and modernization ever been attempted on the scale that was tried in the Punjab after 1849. In 1851 the Board of Administration – the body that had been established to supervise the government of the new province – described this programme of reform as ‘an imperial experiment, imperially conducted.’

-Andrew Major

The Punjab, John Lawrence’s charge, was Lord Dalhousie’s pet province. It was his own child, his own creation.

-Bosworth Smith

Colonial administrations were prolific producers of social categories.

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The essence of the modern state consists of its unprecedented power to control the population. This control is exercised, first and foremost, by the effacement of pre-existing forms of life. The second aspect of this mechanism of control is to create new social categories and to transform the existing ones. Thirdly, the apparatus of the modern state brings about new modes of experiencing life. This also includes how the conditions of social existence are transformed through a rearrangement of experience.

Academic work on colonial Punjab (historiographic or otherwise) has mostly focused on the religious revival movements originating in the 1870s. This excessive focus on a particular period of Punjab’s colonial history (the 1870s onwards) and a particular aspect of it, namely the revival of various religious traditions such as Singh Sabha, Arya Samaj and Muslim League has occluded many other important aspects. One such aspect is the role played by colonial technologies in shaping Punjab’s social milieu and way of being of its people. My primary concern here is the transformation of Sikh existence during the early colonial period in Punjab. This section aims to illustrate this particular lacuna in the field of Punjab and Sikh studies to show that the introduction of modern western technologies during colonization had far-reaching effects for its people, especially Sikhs.

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Punjab occupies a marginal place in the historiography of colonial South Asia. Whether this is due to the late colonization of Punjab or a paucity of historians from the region is beside the point. Punjab was the last major province to be annexed by the British in 1849. Some historians of Punjab have celebrated 1849 as the year when Punjab entered into the modern age. Some others, like Sita Ram Kohli, just dismissed the significance of studying the Sikh history of this period as having nothing “but melancholy interest for the students of Sikh history.” Such historians ignore the fact that 1849 was, first and foremost, a year of destruction for Punjabi society in general and Sikhs in particular.

Lord Dalhousie, who was Governor-General of India at the time and who personally supervised the annexation of Punjab in 1849, gives glimpses into his own attitude towards Sikhs quite unreservedly. Here are a few quotes from Dalhousie’s letters, “There never can be easy guarantee for the tranquility of India until we shall have effected the entire subjection of the Sikh people and destroyed its power as an independent nation.” One of Lord Dalhousie’s biographers notes that he “insisted on the absolute dismemberment of the Sikh confederacy.” This kind of attitude was unprecedented in colonial India. Nowhere else did the British seek the destruction of an entire people based on their religion. Immediately after the annexation, an agenda of colonial reforms was implemented with unparalleled ferocity. An anonymous

291 Sita Ram Kohli, foreword to Umdat-Ur-Tawarikh by Sohan Lal Suri, Daftar iv, pts i-iii, trans. V.S. Suri (Chandigarh 1973), xxi.
292 Singh, Private Correspondence Relating to the Anglo-Sikh Wars, 163.
contributor to the *Calcutta Review* noted in 1853, “reforms which had taken at least twenty-five years to be implemented elsewhere in British India had taken only four years in Punjab.”\(^{294}\)

Robert Needham Cust, a colonial administrator in Punjab, described the nature of colonial rule with a striking metaphor: “The iron hand in the velvet glove.”\(^{295}\) This metaphor is not just to denote the severity of colonial rule, but it also points towards its mechanistic nature. It shows the real power working behind the colonial rule, the power of the machine. Cust notes that the “irregularity in our proceedings” would have “shocked the red-tape Regulation Officer” because “legal forms not attended to; important precedents disregarded; standing orders defied” were how they operated on a daily basis. He says we did not care because “we were entering on a new environment of Non-Regulation Administration, and, strange to say, the Panjab has set an example to the older Provinces.”\(^{296}\) Such was the nature of colonial rule in India. It was unprecedented. The full power of controlling mechanism was unleashed.

Commenting on the nature of colonial rule in Punjab, prominent historian J.S. Grewal has noted, “the colonial rulers introduced a large measure of bureaucracy and the rule of law, which established a new kind of relationship between the individual and the state”.\(^{297}\) My task is to investigate the nature of this new kind of relationship and how this relationship could not have materialized without colonial technology. It was this new relationship mediated through modern technologies that played a decisive role in the shaping of colonized native forms of life. One of

\(^{294}\) Major, *Return to Empire*, 126.
these effects was to render the pre-colonial self-organization of society redundant. Grewal notes that “The effect of the British administration had been a weakening of self-government in villages.”

But the weakness in Grewal’s account of the history of colonial Punjab lies in that he fails to take into account two things that most powerfully determined this destruction: technology and western metaphysics.

Grewal further notes that, “The ‘paternal’ rule of the early decades was eventually replaced by the ‘machine rule’ of laws, codes and procedures.” However, he does not explain the nature of this machine rule. One aspect of this new “machine rule” was a network of communicative and logistics technologies, as he notes, “For political and economic purposes as well as for administration, new forms of communication and transportation were developed, symbolized by the post office, the telegraph office, the metalled road, the railway and the press.” These communicative and logistics technologies profoundly transformed methods of governance and social control. This change, in turn, resulted in new conditions of social existence.

The ferocity with which Punjab was colonized and later modernized by the British is of central importance in understanding its history of past one and a half centuries. It is also important for understanding how the specific form of life of its inhabitants was destroyed and reconstructed according to the colonizers’ needs. M. A. Rahim notes in his study Lord Dalhousie’s Administration of the Conquered and Annexed States:

We must not forget that the pacification of the Punjab after 1849 could not in the least be

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298 Grewal, The Sikhs of the Punjab, 16.
299 Ibid, 128.
300 Ibid.
explained by its becoming a British province, but by the simple fact that the soldiers of Ranjit Singh’s old army had been well beaten, and that they knew it; the doubt that was left in their minds after the campaign of 1846, was effectually dispelled; they fully knew that they could not contend against the British Government; they were made to lay down their arms; they had lost all their guns; their saints and prophets were all discredited; their union was dissolved, and most of the sardars lost almost all their jagirs. Besides, the quick and simultaneous measures taken by Dalhousie in order to cow them down permanently, was a sufficient cause for them to reconcile themselves to their new rulers against whom they began to bear no grudge in view of the lesson they had been taught.\footnote{M. A. Rahim, \textit{Lord Dalhousie’s Administration of the Conquered and Annexed States} (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1963), 68.}

What is crucial in Rahim’s remark is his claim that “their saints and prophets were all discredited.” On the surface, this statement is not correct. Sikhī as a religious belief is very well alive today and a lot of people do believe in their faith. The continuance of this belief is also an act of resistance. The political movements that the Sikhs have initiated since colonization also draw their power and strength from these beliefs. But Rahim’s comment signifies something deeper as well. It points towards a gigantic dislocation that every brutally colonized community goes through. A metaphysical shift took place. This shift transformed the community’s relationship with itself and the outside world. It is in this shift that the real significance of the colonial event lays.

Colonization, from this perspective, is not an event of chronological history. Colonization is a deep historical event. The colonization brought a decisive turn in world history. It is the point whereby the very idea of world-history originates. Before colonization, there were indeed varieties of world interpretations. But these interpretations, especially those coming from non-
Western parts of the world, did not interpret the world as an image. The interpretation of the world as an image, and world history as a unifying process consummated with colonialism. It was a result of what Heidegger called ‘The Age of the World Picture.’ Three things are crucial for this turning: the interpretation of the world as an image, the reign of calculability, and the reduction of everything to mere resources. Modern science presents a particular picture of the world.

5.5 The Invisible Violence of Techno-Coloniality

Techno-coloniality, that is, the dominance of every aspect of life by technologies that exert their control in increasingly imperceptible ways, is a violent process. The inaugural gesture of this violence is the metamorphosis of basic conditions of existence of a historical community. It attained an unprecedented change in the basic coordinates of human existence such as temporality, language, and thinking. These profound and impalpable changes are often ignored by the otherwise nuanced analyses of colonialism. This is especially true with regard to the scholarship on colonial Punjab.

5.5.1 Temporality

Temporality is one of the basic coordinates of human existence. We can make sense of the world only through an experience of time. In other words, a certain understanding of temporality must be implied for human experience to take place. Although it seems that time is a universal,

302 Heidegger, Question Concerning Technology, 115-154.
ahistorical coordinate of reality; the reality is much more complicated. Time as such does not exist. The notion of temporality is always culturally mediated. Every understanding of time is a result of a historical process rooted in a particular cosmology. Colonization, along with other things, also imposed a putatively universal understanding of time that was irreducibly European in its nature.

Giordano Nanni argues that the imposition of European standards of time was an inseparable part of the colonial project. Nanni argues that capitalism and modernity were successfully implanted in the colonies only because of the foundation prepared by the imposition of standardized time. Nanni’s work has opened a new way for a deeper exploration of the temporal effects of colonialism.

In a similar vein, Pheng Cheah has argued that “the hierarchical ordering and control of the world as we know it is based on technologies of temporal calculation.” It would be highly unlikely for the colonial enterprise to succeed without the technologies of temporal calculation. Mechanization of time in the form of mechanical clocks and watches, and subsequently its standardization as the Greenwich Mean Time is one of the most glaring, yet rarely acknowledged, signs of Western domination. Pheng Cheah further argues in this regard:

The subordination of all regions of the globe to Greenwich Mean Time as the point zero for the synchronization of clocks is a synecdoche for European colonial domination of the rest of the world because it enables a mapping that places Europe at the world's center. This

tethering to the uniform march of European standard time is a form of imprisonment that smothers lived local temporalities.\footnote{Cheah, \textit{What is a World}, 1.}

Two things are important to note here. First is that the “European standard time is a form of imprisonment” and the second is that this imprisonment “smothers lived local temporalities.” Time, from this perspective, is one of the most potent tools of oppression. The imposition of European standard time changes everyday life in a myriad of ways most of which are invisible. It is not only that standardized time is used for bio-political control of the colonized, but that the native’s own perception of time is transformed.

Following Spivak, Cheah also notes that temporalization is indispensable for the operation of imperialist discursive cartography which is “a form of epistemic violence that shapes how colonized subjects see themselves.”\footnote{Ibid, 8.} This process is also related to the “worlding of the world.” Spivak notes that she has vulgarized Heidegger’s notion of “worlding of the world.”\footnote{“My notion of the ‘worlding of a world’ upon what must be assumed to be uninscribed earth is a vulgarization of Martin Heidegger’s idea,” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,” \textit{Critical Inquiry} 12, no. 1 (Autumn, 1985), 260n1.} However, Spivak does not develop this notion substantially.

This temporalization by modern colonial regimes has ancient roots, although both Nanni and Cheah ignore it. Paul Kosmin has brought attention to how “Empires make claims to time and space.”\footnote{Paul J. Kosmin, “A Revolution in Time.” Accessed May 9, 2019. \url{https://aeon.co/essays/when-time-became-regular-and-universal-it-changed-history}.} In his illuminating study of the Seleucid Empire (a Hellenistic state that existed
between 312 BC and 63 BC), Kosmin notes how a new understanding of time was introduced in history:

The Seleucid empire, as expressed through the temporal regime it invented and promoted, constituted a *Weltanschauung*, a total worldview—a mode of thinking about power, duty, origins, historical development, and the future that was both relatively coherent and fundamentally different from all that had come before. The Seleucids’ linearization and absolutization of time was not only rationalizing and “empty,” characterized by measure and number. Their temporal regime, perhaps even despite itself, was also “full,” generating an interpretation of experience, a horizon of contemporary memory, a political responsibility, a pessimism about the direction of history, and, ultimately, the necessity of redemption.\(^\text{309}\)

This temporal regime, according to Kosmin, faced tremendous resistance. This resistance, I argue, continues to the present day. During the colonization of Punjab, the standardization of time by the colonial regime did not go without resistance. This resistance had its roots in the Sikh understanding of time that differs from the homogenous understanding of time imposed by the colonial authorities.

A cursory look at the primary Sikh religious texts is enough to see that the conceptions of time, temporality, and the atemporal are highly significant. *Mool Mantar*, which opens the Sikh scripture *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, contains an enigmatic phrase: *Akaal Moorat*. *Akaal* can be translated as atemporal while *moorat* can be translated as the corporeal. This simple phrase problematizes the Western philosophical binaries of time/timeless and transcendence/immanence. With the imposition of standard time, any talk of the atemporal

became either transcendental gibberish or operated within a strict conceptual demarcation of the temporal and the atemporal. While in its original context, it was devoid of these binaries of temporal and timelessness.

This has immense implications for the interpretation of Gurbani\textsuperscript{310} later in the Singh Sabha period (starting in the early 1870s). While the modernist Sikh scholars failed to resolve this tension, those working with a non-modernist outlook were able to reject this false opposition. Literary works of Bhai Vir Singh and Prof. Puran Singh are examples of this resistance. Perhaps this is why David Petrie, a British intelligence officer working in Punjab, noted in one of his reports that Bhai Vir Singh “may safely be regarded as a zealous neo-Sikh and thoroughly anti-British.”\textsuperscript{311} This was in spite of the fact that Bhai Vir Singh never explicitly said anything for or against the British rule in Punjab. His game was different. For him, direct political activism was too domesticated. He worked to revitalize the pre-colonial lived temporality and the power of language (more on this in the next chapter).

In his commentary on Bhai Santokh Singh’s epic Sri Gur Partap Sooraj Granth Bhai Vir Singh notes that time, in the Sikh tradition is not “eternal” or “absolute.”\textsuperscript{312} He maintains that the human perception of time is not uniform. Everyone perceives time in a different manner. “What seems like years to someone in their interiority in one condition can seem like second to

\textsuperscript{310} Sacred writings of the Sikh gurus.
someone else in a different condition.”\textsuperscript{313} This idea of temporality is incompatible with modern linear time. Benedict Anderson also presented a critique of what he calls “homogenous empty time” in which modern nation-states linger.

5.5.2 Language

“[E]very language is a world view, namely that of the people who speak it.”\textsuperscript{314}

–Martin Heidegger

What happens when a language is transformed by an alien worldview? Heidegger bemoaned “the transformation of language into mere information.”\textsuperscript{315} But this transformation is not a result of some political changes or changes in the external world due to the progress of science and technology. Rather, “The structure and performance of large-scale calculative planning rests on the technological-calculative principles of this transformation of language as saying into language as a mere report of signal transmissions.”\textsuperscript{316} This is in conformity with Heidegger’s view that metaphysical transformations underlie and precede transformations of the world. The transformation of European languages into mere information took place due to a philosophical process that originated within Europe centuries ago.

\textsuperscript{313} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{315} Heidegger, \textit{Traditional Language}, 139.
\textsuperscript{316} Ibid, 140.
However, the situation with colonized cultures is very different. The traditional languages of colonized peoples started to transform as a result of colonialism. There are several reasons for this. First, the transformation of language was a potent weapon of control in the hands of colonial administrators. Secondly, this conversion of language into information deprived the colonized of the invigorating power of their languages. As we will see, the resistance against continued forms of colonialism is inseparably linked with this power of language.

Arvind-pal S. Mandair has theorized the language event in his book *Religion and the Specter of the West*. He notes that colonial accounts of Punjab were mediated through a naïve “form of the representational theory of language.” Mandair omits the role modern technology played in the installation of this naïve theory of language. Although he has engaged with Heidegger’s notions of onto-theology and critique of metaphysics, he failed to take into account the implications of his critique of technology. Secondly, he fails to realize that the anti-colonial resistance is powered by the invigorating power of traditional language. He ignores the political potential of language. His analyses of the literary works of Bhai Vir Singh betray this bias.

The language event had paradoxical effects in colonial Punjab. On the one hand, it sedimented the colonial discourses and ushered in a new discursive space where traditional narratives were reframed to serve the colonial agenda. However, on the other hand, it also unleashed new creative possibilities. While the pro-British section of the Singh Sabha is an example of the former, the works of Bhai Vir Singh, Prof. Puran Singh and the Ghadar and Babbar Akali poetry are instances of the latter. The historiography of Punjab and the academic accounts of colonial

Punjab have repeated *ad nauseam* how Sikh literature of the colonial period is just a discursive effect of the event of colonization. They have rarely looked at the creative enunciations of resistance. What the dominant academic narratives ignore is the process of a transformation in language. When indigenous authors such as Bhai Vir Singh and Prof. Puran Singh adopted Western literary genres (novels, free poetry etc.) they adopted these genres to their own needs.

5.5.3 **Education**

The last aspect of techno-colonial violence lies in the plantation of a new mode of thinking, i.e. technological mode of thinking through the transformation of educational institutions in colonial Punjab. It is well known that colonial education was geared toward producing obedient servants for the regime. Only a handful of civil administrators (around 1000) educated at elite English universities such as Oxford and Cambridge managed a vast territory such as colonial India. They needed natives trained in Western education to help fill lower-level bureaucratic posts. Colonial education was aimed at supplying human resources to ensure the smooth functioning of the colonial machine.

It is easy to see that this model of education fits the logic of Enframing that Heidegger postulated. Colonial education was the most efficient way to treat the colonized as (human) resources ready to be exploited. While Heidegger looked towards the ancient Greek notion of *paidiea*, the colonized have no need not do so. They had their own pre-colonial version of education that was systematically destroyed by the colonizers. This destruction took on a particularly catastrophic form in colonial Punjab.
One aspect of the “reforms” introduced by the colonial regime was to effectively destroy the indigenous education in Punjab. The state of education in pre-colonial Punjab was really good as compared to the rest of India. It has been noted:

The EIC (East India Company), after a survey, discovered that education in Lahore, and the Punjab, was far superior to the education the British had introduced all over ‘conquered India.’ In Lahore alone there were 18 formal schools for girls besides specialist schools for technical training, languages, mathematics and logic, let alone specialised schools for the three major religions, they being Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. There were craft schools specialising in miniature painting, sketching, drafting, architecture and calligraphy.\(^\text{318}\)

The colonial surveyor concluded that the Punjab was far ahead of the rest of India, including its European system of education. Every village has some form of education. “Every village in the Punjab, through the Tehsilar, had an ample supply of the Punjabi ‘qaida,’ which was compulsory for females. Thus, almost every Punjabi woman was literate in the sense that she could read and write the ‘lundee’ form of Gurmukhi.”\(^\text{319}\)

G. W. Leitner, a colonial administrator who has a penchant for education, wrote a detailed report about the state of indigenous education in Punjab before colonization. He notes how the British destroyed the indigenous education in Punjab. In the very beginning of his report, he notes:


\(^{\text{319}}\) Ibid.
I am about to relate – I hope without extenuation or malice – the history of the contact of a form of European with one of Asiatic civilisation; how, in spite of the best intentions, the most public-spirited officers, and a generous Government that had the benefit of the traditions of other provinces, the true education of the Panjab was crippled, checked, and is nearly destroyed; how opportunities for its healthy revival and development were either neglected or perverted; and how, far beyond the blame attaching to individuals, our system stands convicted of worse than official failure.\textsuperscript{320}

Leitner also observes that the education system under Maharaja Ranjit Singh was far superior to that of the company rule and later the British Raj. The Sikh ruler, he says, spent more on education than the British did even after three decades of their rule in Punjab. Leitner’s account was written in the 1880s. While Leitner blames it only on mismanagement and denies that it was intentional. But we look closely at the circumstances, we can see that it was far more intentional than Leitner is willing to believe. Allender also notes in this regard, “After more than 30 years of British colonial rule in Punjab, education was much worse in 1882. The 1882 Hunter Commission concluded that Punjab yielded worst results from education in all of India.”\textsuperscript{321}

The British model of education was not only a means of exercising control over the population. It was also a means of molding their way of thinking. Invisible and powerful structures were introduced in the form of western education. “From the very beginning, the British administrators of the Punjab gave importance to education in English literature, western sciences and social studies.”\textsuperscript{322} The British saw Punjab as a restive province. They were very keen on

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\textsuperscript{320} G. W. Leitner, \textit{History of Indigenous Education in the Panjab since Annexation and in 1882}, (Patiala: Languages Department Punjab, 1971), i.
\textsuperscript{322} Grewal, \textit{The Sikhs of the Punjab}, 129.
\end{flushright}

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pacifying its population as soon as possible. So, they introduced western education system to change peoples’ patterns of thinking. They not only introduced the western education, but they purposely destroyed the vibrant and diverse indigenous education system of Punjab. Grewal notes that, “The cause of indigenous education in the Punjab was finally lost. Urdu was introduced as the medium of education in government schools up to the matriculation level, though Punjabi was the dominant language of the province.”

Christian missionaries played a key role in the establishment of Western education in Punjab. “Christian missionaries proved to be the greatest allies of the government in spreading English education.” They were given generous grants while the indigenous institutions were stripped of the grants they used to get under the Sikh rule. The missionaries “made the press an effective medium of communication in Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi for evangelization. In the process they denounced indigenous religious beliefs and practices, social evils and morals of the Punjabis rather openly and aggressively, partly because of their own theological assumptions and partly because they regarded the colonial rule as providential.”

Colonial authorities’ attitude towards Punjab was informed by a “new imperial ethos.” J.S. Grewal, a leading Punjabi historian, argues, “They introduced Western education and brought about technological and economic changes to serve imperial interests, resulting in an unprecedented social change that marked the emergence of new middle classes in the province.” It is clear that new technologies introduced in colonial Punjab by the British

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324 Ibid, 130.
325 Ibid, 130.
326 Grewal, Master Tara Singh, 15.
authorities were not just a vehicle of material transformation. Ramifications of such change are much deeper than material changes. They triggered profound social changes, which eventually made a long-lasting impact on people’s characters as well. Coping with such broad changes was naturally traumatizing. People responded to these changes in numerous ways. To take respite from the onslaught of rapid social change, they tried to take refuge in tradition. “Their responses to the colonial situation led to a widespread cultural resurgence among all the major religious communities of the Punjab. This resurgence became the basis of political articulation, particularly by the middle-class leaders.” But little did they know, that their access to tradition is as much altered as the society they inhabited. The introduction of new conceptual and social categories by the colonizers started to shape their understanding of tradition.

The role of education as a disciplinary practice is well known. Following Foucault, we know that educational institutions function as state’s bio-political apparatus to control and discipline its subjects. It is also well known that colonizers have used education in their efforts to produce a class of indigenous elites to work as their accomplices. This technique of disciplinary education has been extremely useful for those in positions of power to exert their control. But what is distinctive about Punjab and the Sikhs is that colonialists did not use education as a productive technology but used the destruction of indigenous education and then lack of effective educational institutions as a tool of subjectivization. The subjectivization of Sikhs through modern educational institutions led to the destruction of Sikh existence toward which we turn now.

327 Ibid.
5.6 The Destruction of Sikh Existence

There is a black hole in the history of Punjab: the period ranging from 1849 to 1872. Most historians of Punjab have not paid sufficient attention to this period. This period immediately succeeds the annexation of the Punjab province and the Sikh kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780 – 1839) by the British East India Company. The annexation of Punjab by the British East India Company was unique in many ways.\textsuperscript{328} This period is known usually as the modernization period in the history of Punjab. Punjab transformed from a traditional society to a society firmly embedded in the global empire and international markets. This section deals with the implication of this gap in Punjab’s historiography and academic research concerning its politics, culture and religion. This period is often valorized as the period of embracing new values: the western values stemming from the enlightenment.

But for Sikhs, this period signifies the onset of a very destructive process that is still continuing. Sikh population rapidly declined following the colonization. The reasons for this decline remain understudied. One thing that becomes clear from the archival materials is that the British were, at least during the first few years following the annexation, scared of Sikhs and were intent on destroying them as a political community. The first census of Punjab was taken in 1855.

Although the census failed to present a complete numbering of Sikhs, the figures it presents are startling.\textsuperscript{329}

The writer of the census report notes that it is very remarkable that “there should be less than 200,000 Sikhs to a total population of three and a half million in a Division, which contains the religious capital of Sikhism, Umritsur, and the original and peculiar Territory of the Sikhs, the Manjha.” According to the writer, this “disproportion so clearly shown by these figures bear out … the decay not only of the Sikh religion and polity, but also of its numerical strength and the absorption of Sikhism into Hindooism.” He wonders that the Sikh nation that was so strong just a few years ago is dying out so rapidly and absorbing into Hinduism. “The old Sikhs are dying out; the new Sikhs initiated are but few; the children of Sikhs are, and remain, Hindoos.” Finally, he connects this decline with the political status of Sikhs, “Now that Sikhism is politically defunct, they return to Hindooism, and thus the numerical paucity of Sikhs at the present day may be explained.”\textsuperscript{330} The census report echoes what Dalhousie wrote a few years ago:

Their great Gooroo Govind sought to abolish caste, and in a great degree succeeded. They are, however, gradually relapsing into Hindooism; and even where they continue Sikhs they are yearly Hindoo-ified more and more; so much so, that Mr, now Sir Geo., Clerk [Governor of Bombay, 1847-48] used to say that in 50 years the sect of the Sikhs would have disappeared. There does not seem to be warrant for this view, though it is much more likely now than six months ago.\textsuperscript{331}

\textsuperscript{330} Report on the Census, 24.
\textsuperscript{331} Baird, Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie, 69.
It is well known that the “enumerative technologies of control” played a key role in the exercise of colonial power. The census, through the enumerative modality, not only “objectified social, cultural, and linguistic differences among the peoples of India” as Cohn has stated, it also enabled the colonial authorities to manage these differences. Armed with enumerative technologies of the census, they were able to precisely observe whether the changes in population are according to their wishes or not.

In their efforts to annihilate any possibility of Sikh resistance against the Empire, the British wrested the control of Sikh religious institutions. They imposed their ‘machine rules’ on the functioning of central Sikh religious institutions such as Sri Akal Takht Sahib and Sri Harmandir Sahib. These institutions were thus submitted to the logic of governmentality. The colonial governmentality created a chasm in the process of subject formation of Sikhs, which we will deal in the next chapter. This chapter is focused on how the colonial authorities imposed Eurocentric rules and regulations in their attempt to domesticate the Sikh subjectivity.

Before moving forward, it is necessary to dwell briefly on the nature of these central Sikh institutions. The fourth Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Dass founded Sri Harmandir Sahib during the late sixteenth century (1581-89). Sri Akal Takht Sahib was founded by the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind Sahib in 1606. Guru Hargobind gave the idea of Miri-Piri. According to the prevalent interpretations, Miri is temporal, political power and Piri is spiritual power. He wore two swords, one signifying Miri and the other Piri. While Sri Harmandir Sahib signifies the spiritual power

332 Cohn, Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge, 8.
for Sikhs, Sri Akal Takht Sahib signifies temporal and political power. However, this division of Miri-Piri is problematic because colonial authorities first introduced this division and it has since created enormous problems for Sikhs.

Ian Kerr notes that the “British involvement in the functioning of the Golden Temple dated from the period of indirect rule when the British Resident at Lahore and his assistants were in fact, if not in law, the real power in the Punjab.” An official document states, “During these ten years (1849-59) the Government virtually maintained a direct management of the temple through a judicial officer of its own.” They handed the charge of these institutions to people who were loyal to them. For example, Sirdar Jodh Singh was one such person who was appointed a judicial officer at the Amritsar court after the first Anglo-Sikh war. “He supported the British in 1848-49 and when they annexed the Punjab in 1849 they appointed him Extra Assistant Commissioner and stationed him at Amritsar. He remained at Amritsar until his retirement from government service in 1862.”

In a bid to control these institutions, the British also provided some financial support. Kerr notes that it benefitted the Raj in two ways. First, it provided “the British with a way to influence and pressure the influential functionaries of the Temple.” Secondly, they gained “the gratitude of the Sikh community (which at least could be translated into passive acceptance of British rule) because of the generous treatment of Sikhism’s premier shrine.”

335 Ibid.
336 Ibid, 310.
In 1859, a document named *Dastur-ul-Amal* (the way of practice) was formulated. The adoption of *Dastur-ul-Amal* converted the direct control of colonial authorities “into simple magisterial and political control.”³³⁷ “1859 saw the beginning of a process in which the British substituted a more informal and covert connection with the Golden Temple for the formal and direct involvement in the management that existed between 1849 and 1859.”³³⁸ This policy of direct involvement in the management of Sri Darbar Sahib was unique in India as the British did not interfere in the functioning of religious places elsewhere.³³⁹

Recalling the colonial administrator Robert Needham Cust’s apt phrase describing British policy towards the Sikhs as “The iron hand in the velvet glove”, it is notable how this attitude underlines the inner logic of colonialism as particularly brutal and machinic. But this power was so successful due to the deceptive nature of the velvet glove. The coercive force of their military always backed up the machine rule that they introduced. By the time they reached Punjab, both the efficiency and ruthlessness of their “iron hand” was greatly increased.

Hands, and not the brain, are what make humans, human. André Leroi-Gourhan, a French archaeologist, paleontologist, paleoanthropologist and philosopher, reached this conclusion after years of research on pre-historic human fossils. His idea was unique among paleoanthropologists. He carefully studied the prehistoric human remains and declared that hands played a crucial role in the development of intelligence in humans. The area of the brain that

³³⁷ Ibid, 314.
³³⁸ Ibid, 315.
³³⁹ Ibid, 316-17.
controls hands and face is far bigger than that which controls other parts of our bodies. When pre-homo sapiens species started using tools, it greatly enhanced their intelligence as that area was used more and more.

He draws a bizarre, but true, conclusion from this: technics precedes the birth of the human. In fact, it is technology that enables pre-human species to evolve into humans. This seemingly counterintuitive conclusion proved to be revolutionary for post-war philosophy of technology. Derrida commented extensively on the role of hands in the emergence of the human in his *Of Grammatology*. He used it to subvert the binary of human-nonhuman and shows that technology is not a human artifact. Instead, humans are a consequence of technology.

More recently, Bernard Stiegler has developed Leroi-Gourhan’s thinking to highlight the originary nature of technics. Although much of Heidegger’s work precedes that of Leroi-Gourhan, their stance about the originary nature of technology has a family resemblance.

If anything is common between many 20th century continental philosophers of technology, it is their belief that the dominance of technology in our modern age is leading to a new kind of barbarism. I argue that the ‘iron hand’ of colonialism wrapped in the ‘velvet glove’ of the promise of development was the first sign of this new barbarism. In permanently submitting the functioning of society to this ‘iron hand in the velvet glove,’ colonial authorities in Punjab, and by extension, European powers in general, heralded a new era of barbarism. It is now quite clear that this new barbarism created unheard of brutalities on this earth.
5.7 Enframing Sikh Politics

The destruction of the Sikh form of life initiated a process of Westernization that resulted in what I call the Enframing of Sikh politics. This process initiated an internal struggle between two sections of Sikhs. One section wanted to modernize every Sikh institution while the other preferred to stay loyal to traditional modes of organization. The colonial authorities patronized the former while suppressing the latter. But the differences between these two sections cannot be explained away by addressing the political exigencies of the age. This division was sustained by an interminable struggle between two modes of thinking and being.

The bureaucratic reorganization of Punjabi society ushered in a crucial shift in understanding. This shift in understanding consists in two things. The first is the emergence of subjectivity as the primary locus of engagement with the “outside” world. The second lies in dealing with everything that is “out there” through a logic of efficiency. This division between subjectivity on the one hand and the outside world on the other is the foundation upon which Enframing of Sikh politics rests. The way towards Deframing of Sikh politics goes through a deconstruction of this division.

A crucial caveat to note here is that this division was never complete and not every Sikh internalized it. As a result of this division, a dialectical struggle ensued between those who internalized it and those who resisted it. It is this division that has determined the crises of contemporary Sikh politics. Understanding the nuances of this struggle might help us understand how a technological way of thinking underpins it.
Sikh efforts to gain control of their religious institutions resulted in the establishment of two modernist Sikh organizations: SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbhandhak Committee) and SAD (Shiromani Akali Dal) in the 1920s. The aim of SGPC was to take care of historical Sikh Gurdwaras while SAD was supposed to represent Sikhs politically. Both of these institutions have become thoroughly anti-Sikh and often work against Sikh interests. For example, SGPC has demolished many heritage buildings associated with the early Sikh history and SAD, during its rule from 2012 to 2017 killed and jailed many Sikh activists. It is not an accident that these Sikh institutions have turned against Sikhs. The betrayal was weaved in the structure of these institutions from the very beginning.

The problem lies in the uncritical embracing of Western political notions such as nationalism, secularism and democracy. In other words, the problem is the Enframing of Sikh politics. This Enframing remains invisible because it is always hidden under the seemingly unquestionable technological paraphernalia.

The modern nation-state is unthinkable without modern industrial technologies. Benedict Anderson, in his path-breaking work *Imagined Communities*, convincingly shows how the emergence of the modern nation-state can be seen as a consequence of the printing press.\(^{340}\) Print-capitalism and vernacularization of administrative languages led to the kind of nationalism that is prevalent even today. Without print-capitalism, the kind of nationalism that is ubiquitous

throughout the world would be unimaginable. But it is not just print-capitalism that underlies modern nation-state; it is the technological modernity itself that serves as its foundation.

Anderson missed this despite his otherwise brilliant analyses. He failed to ask a crucial question: Why did the printing press and print-capitalism emerge precisely at the historical moments that they did? Because the onset of modernity initiated a process whereby Western metaphysics, which is rooted in Greek antiquity, started to externalize its essence into mechanical artifacts. Printing press and print-capitalism are symptoms of this process of the consummation of Western metaphysics. It is almost impossible to see the hidden nature of modern political formations without exploring these links between technology, Western metaphysics, bureaucratic organization of society, and the political institutions of modernity.

5.8 Conclusion

The true nature of colonialism is revealed only when we understand it in conjunction with modern technology. Coloniality is essentially techno-coloniality. The colonization of Punjab provides a singular example of the ferocious unleashing of techno-coloniality. The colonial experience is irreducibly marked by the invisible violence of techno-coloniality. The extraordinary ability of this violence to structure the lives of those who are at its receiving end often goes unexplored. However, only by navigating these dark pathways can we take a leap toward decolonial futures.
These futures are by their very nature diverse. This diversity bears witness to the singularity of each experience of colonialism. This diversity can only materialize by responding to the Enframing reign of modern technology in creative ways. It does not suffice to merely own and appropriate modern technology. What is needed is its thorough decolonization. To initiate this process of decolonization, deframing can prove to be an effective strategy.
Chapter 6: Envisioning Decolonial Futures: Sikh Responses to Techno-Coloniality

We today can do everything, so long as we do not imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe.

- Frantz Fanon 341

A radical trembling must come from the outside.

– Jacques Derrida 342

6.1 Introduction

How does one respond to something like colonialism, given that the world we inhabit today is its product? Techno-coloniality and the consequent globalization have transformed the world into an image. This image is developed from the photographic negative of Western metaphysics, with technologization of the world as its external manifestation. Despite this seeming difficulty, this chapter argues that, if we look closely at the history of colonial Punjab, there is no dearth of responses to techno-coloniality. In addition to these responses, several new avenues also exist which can be treaded to create new paths. This chapter tries to envision some of these paths.

The very nature of these paths transgresses Western ways of knowing. These paths, unlike Western metaphysics, are not exclusively focused on cognition and thinking. Their essence is

341 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 312.
revealed in the form of a transformation. Whereas cognition privileges the egocentric subject, transformation is a dynamic social process that takes place through the intersections of multiple forces. Transformation is a key trope in the Sikh scripture *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. This transformation is different from the metanoetic process found in Christian theology. *Metanoia* is too bound up with the notion of subjectivity. It is a subjective spiritual conversion resulting from a process of repentance. The subject remains at the center. The Sikh idea of transformation is different in one crucial aspect. It is a collective process, which takes place with the help of *Sangat* and it also involves structural changes in society. This process has an unmistakable ethico-political dimension.

This chapter explores some possible ways of responding to techno-coloniality, one of which is deframing. Deframing is a possible avenue of resistance against techno-coloniality’s unrelenting drive towards Enframing. Deframing, simply understood, is a collective response to the domination of technology. It calls for a new relationship with modern technology. Secondly, this new relationship with technology can take place only through a transformed language, a language free from linguistic narcissism. Such a language would also be free from the representational conception. When language comes out of the trap of representation, the duality of subject and object is also destroyed. Fortunately, such conception of language does not have a singular origin in Ancient Greece, as Heidegger erroneously believed. It has multiple origins,

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343 *Sangat* is key Sikh term which can be translated as ‘awakened community.’
344 Antonio Cerella and Louiza Odysseos first used the term “de-framing” in their introduction to an edited volume ‘Heidegger and the Global Age.’ However, they did not elaborate this term. It is only used once in the title and nowhere else. I have tried to develop ‘deframing’ as a response that is indispensable for resisting techno-coloniality. See, Antonio Cerella & Louiza Odysseos, “Introduction: *De-framing the Global*,” in *Heidegger and the Global Age*, ed. Antonio Cerella & Louiza Odysseos. (London & New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 1-21.
scattered throughout the world. Lastly, decolonial future also calls for a multilogue between these different cosmologies. Such a festive multilogue would take place by developing an ethos of meeting with the other that is different from Heideggerian Auseinandersetzung.

6.2 Overcoming Techno-Coloniality

In German, there are two different words for overcoming, überwindung and verwindung. In his essay, The Turning, Heidegger highlights the distinction between these two terms by noting that while überwindung is an overcoming in the normal sense, Verwunden is a restorative surmounting which is similar to the process when one “gets over grief or pain.”345 Prolific Heidegger translator Joan Stambaugh explains the difference between these two terms in this way, “When something is overcome in the sense of being überwunden, it is defeated and left behind. This is not the sense Heidegger intends here. When something is overcome in the sense of being verwunden, it is, so to speak, incorporated. For example, when one ‘overcomes’ a state of pain, one does not get rid of the pain. One has ceased to be preoccupied with it and has learned to live with it. Thus, to overcome metaphysics would mean to incorporate metaphysics, perhaps with the hope, but not with the certainty, of elevating it to a new reality.”346 Dominique Janicaud called this term untranslatable.347 Andrew Mitchell has suggested that Verwindung can be best described as a “struggling through” and that it is “not an affair of painless detachment

346 Heidegger, The End of Philosophy, 84n1.
from metaphysics.” 348 Thus, overcoming metaphysics for Heidegger is not like a decisive victory over it in which metaphysics is defeated once and for all and the world becomes free from it. The overcoming of metaphysics comes with an acknowledgement that the history of metaphysics and the world-historical changes it has engendered are irreversible, but nevertheless possibly digestible. We will have to live with it. But we can expect the birth of something new, something outside the realm of technological rationality, out of this overcoming.

The origin of metaphysics lies in the West and its subsequent dominance over the entire earth is destined. “Metaphysics is in all its forms and historical stages a unique, but perhaps necessary, the fate of the West and the presupposition of its planetary dominance.” 349 Although Heidegger’s thought is reticent about colonialism, it is quite clear that colonialism worked as a vehicle for the planetary dominance of Western metaphysics. Heidegger’s overcoming of metaphysics takes place through the poetry of Hölderlin and the originary sayings of the pre-Socratic philosophers. It is easy to doubt that the same can be true about the colonized peoples. Heidegger is silent about that although he has hinted at some places that there can be multiple, alternative beginnings for other cultures. The project of overcoming of metaphysics in the colonies looks a whole lot different from Heidegger’s path.

When we talk about overcoming colonialism, which sense are we talking about: überwindung or verwindung? A prior question should be something like this: In which sense did European powers overcome native cultures when they colonized them: überwindung or verwindung? These

349 Heidegger, The End of Philosophy, 90.
questions are highly complicated. Colonization of a culture always entails an incomplete overcoming in the sense of überwindung. The local culture is both defeated and left behind in the march of history. But this overcoming and defeat remains incomplete because the native cultures continue resisting colonialism and its aftereffects. They continue to remind the colonizers that their victory is incomplete and that it will always remain so.

These cultures are not simply defeated and left behind, i.e., overcome in the sense of überwindung although there was no pain or sense of loss involved on the part of the colonizers. They are also incorporated in the metahistorical process of the ‘Europeanization of the earth.’ Almost every formerly colonized country is on the path to becoming like Europe, i.e., the mirror of the former colonizers. This is what Fanon warned them against at the end of The Wretched of the Earth. He said, “[I]f we wish to reply to the expectations of the people of Europe, it is no good sending them back a reflection, even an ideal reflection, of their society and their thought with which from time to time they feel immeasurably sickened.”

Fanon wanted to see the colonized to “turn over a new leaf” to “work out new concepts,” and “to set afoot a new man.” But instead of listening to him, most postcolonial nation-states decided to imitate Europe. They are now incorporated in the global politico-industrial complex headed by the Western nations in such a way that their emancipation has become very distant. The cause of this situation lies in the very nature of their overcoming by the European nations. They were both defeated and incorporated into the European project. Perhaps this situation can be best described by a portmanteau word überwindung. Overcoming of colonialism in the sense of überwindung

350 Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, 316.
351 Ibid.
demonstrates that political decolonization and submergence into the global economic-technological network, which is controlled by the West, are not opposite phenomena. These are intimately connected.

The overcoming of colonialism, on the other hand, is much more complicated, for several reasons. First of all, this overcoming, if such a thing is possible at all, has not yet begun. Overcoming of metaphysics, for Heidegger, is also its completion. It is unthinkable to understand overcoming of colonialism in this sense. The overcoming of colonialism must begin from a place that lies outside the epistemic framework provided by colonialism itself. It must have its beginning in something that is radically other to modern/techno-colonial thinking. *Pace* Heidegger, the place of that beginning must lie outside the *topos* from where Western Philosophy originated, i.e., Ancient Greece, the birthplace of Europe. For Heidegger, “The statement that philosophy is in its nature Greek says nothing more than that the West and Europe, and only these, are, in the innermost course of their history, originally ‘philosophical’.” It signifies Heidegger’s inability to look outside the pale of European civilization. However, he failed to acknowledge that emancipation is not inevitably bound up with philosophy. Other cultures might express their uniqueness in non-philosophical ways. In many non-Western societies, spiritual and artistic singularities still survive outside the realm of philosophy.

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352 Heidegger argues that Western Philosophy is a tautology. For him, Philosophy is always Western and there is no other, Indian or Chinese.
Overcoming of colonialism cannot be an overcoming in the sense of überwindung. Simply leaving the effects of colonialism behind is no longer possible. The makeup of the contemporary world is perhaps irreversibly westernized. Our political institutions, economic structures, cultural artifacts, models of education, and above all, the representational way of thinking are all poisoned gifts of colonialism. The planetary dominance of modern technology is such that for a long time to come, it would stay dominant and make any political, especially violent resistance, unable to defeat it.

It is also hard to envision overcoming of colonialism in the sense of verwindung in spite of the fact that it has already happened to a certain extent. Colonial institutions are incorporated into postcolonial nation-states and these societies have established (however temporarily) an uneasy peace with them. But the futility of such a project becomes apparent when we realize that colonialism (in the form of coloniality) never ended. What we call the postcolonial condition is just a continuation of colonialism in a different form. One can reconcile with a pain only when it stops hurting, when the pain has already gone away. In the case of colonialism, this has not happened. Therefore, the possibility of overcoming it in the sense of verwindung is also not realizable.

How then are we supposed to respond to colonialism? How can we overcome it? Is it even possible? This question, I believe, cannot be answered, not because there is no answer to it. It is unanswerable because it is not translatable into the currently dominant way of thinking which is unmistakably Western. However, we must address these impossible questions. The thinking of a
new beginning after colonialism must arise out of a place that can grant humanity a vision devoid of the monstrous nature of modern/techno-colonial rationality.

6.3 Decolonizing Technology

The misconception that technics can be considered as some kind of universal remains a huge obstacle to understanding the global technological condition in general, and in particular the challenge it poses to non-European cultures.

-Yuk Hui354

Any project of decolonizing technology must be wary from the start about the romantic calls to go back to nature. There is no going back to the time before techno-coloniality dominated our planet. However, there can be different futures. Envisioning these futures is one of the tasks of this project of decolonizing technology. Fanon was quite aware of this challenge when he located a negation of man in the technique and style of Europe. That is why he asked for not imitating Europe, “Let us decide not to imitate Europe; let us combine our muscles and our brains in a new direction. Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth.”355 Unfortunately, later scholars did not work in this direction with the required urgency.

354 Hui, The Question Concerning Technology in China, 12.
355 Frantz, The Wretched of the Earth, 312.
Yuk Hui’s recent work is an exception. He raises very important questions: “So what is the question concerning technology for non-European cultures prior to modernization? Is it the same question as that of the West prior to modernization, the question of Greek *technē*?” These questions lead him to pluralize technics. He argues that different cultures need their own forms of technics. He is primarily concerned with China. This need for different forms of technics is intimately connected with the need to decolonize the world. Every culture, Western included, needs to do this. My need to rethink the question of technology from the Sikh perspective is different from that of Yuk Hui. China is a technological superpower. Sikhs are a marginalized community going through cycles of genocidal violence. But still, Sikhs need to rethink the question of technology in order to not only survive and thrive in the coming epoch, but also contribute in the construction of a decolonial future.

Hui’s larger point is that technics, understood as an ontological category, “must be interrogated in relation to a larger configuration, a ‘cosmology’ proper to the culture from which it emerged.” As we have seen in the previous chapters, modern technology is itself a product of a particular cosmology, i.e. the Western one. The task of decolonizing technology is not just a critical task, as the prefix *de* might suggest. It is a more positive and constructive task. It is the task of constructing new technics on the basis of cosmologies of different cultures. Technics, unlike modern technology, is not a universal concept. It is open-ended, and that is where its strength lies.

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357 Ibid, 10.
To construct a different technics, Hui coins a new term: *cosmotechnics*. He defines it as “the unification between the cosmic order and the moral order through technical activities.” This concept, he argues, can help us chart different forms of technics and also “contributes to opening up the plurality of relations between technics, mythology, and cosmology—and thereby to the embracing of different relations between the human and technics inherited from different mythologies and cosmologies.” The possibility of decolonial futures does not thus lie in going back to the pre-colonial mythologies and cosmologies, but in embracing these cosmologies to construct a new technics.

My argument here is that before constructing a new technics based on different cosmologies of different cultures, deframing of existence must happen. Hui ignores this task. As long as existence is enframed in the techno-colonial milieu, attempts to construct alternative futures would slide back into the metaphysical marshes of modernity. Deframing of colonized existence can function as ground preparations for the task of constructing alternative technics. The next section discusses what it might look like.

### 6.3.1 Fanon on Radio

Having a radio seriously meant *going to war*.

- Frantz Fanon

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Fanon's essay *This is the Voice of Algeria* is his attempt to understand the ambivalent nature of colonial technology, specifically that of radio. Fanon's analysis successfully captures the fluidity of power operative in the Algerian's complicated relationship with radio and "illustrates the shifting positions of resistance and domination and their effects on the psyche, particularly the sense of agency of the oppressed."\(^{361}\) This leads Fanon to believe that the gradual adoption of the radio by common Algerians was a result of their realization that it can be as much a method of fighting colonial domination as it is of colonial oppression. His analysis raises some very pertinent questions that can help us understand the role of colonial technologies in our era.

For the French settlers, the radio was a helpful and friendly presence. It reminded them daily to not "go native" and to not "forget the rightfulness of his culture."\(^{362}\) Radio was not only a convenient method of communication for the French settlers. It was what assured the non-interruption of their identities. Settlers living in remote areas, used to say, "without wine and the radio, we should already have become Arabized."\(^{363}\) However, the situation for the colonized was utterly different. Fanon tells us that before 1954, Algerians were very skeptical towards the radio. This was so for two understandable reasons. First, the radio was an instrument of colonial domination. It was the voice of the colonial authority. It conveyed the victories of the French over its enemies. The voice transmitted over the radio sets produced anxiety in the natives as it constantly reminded them of the might of the French state. Secondly, Algerians rejected the radio because of its potential bad cultural influence, particularly on the younger generation. People

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\(^{362}\) Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 71-72.

\(^{363}\) Ibid, 71-72.
saw radio as an instrument of spreading the culture of the colonizer, which threatened their specific way of life.

However, Fanon notes that after 1954, the situation changed "almost magically." The radio suddenly "lost its identity as an enemy object." It was "no longer a part of the occupier's arsenal of cultural oppression." The reason behind this dramatic reversal was Algerian resistance fighters' decision to adopt radio as their chosen method of propagating their message to the masses. This change had a dramatic effect on people's mental health as well. The voices coming out of the radio receiver, once inimical and anxiety-producing, became protective and friendly. "Insults and accusations disappeared and gave way to words of encouragement. The foreign technique, which had been 'digested' in connection with the national struggle, had become a fighting instrument for the people and a protective organ against anxiety."

The adoption of radio was a giant step towards a collective consciousness of Algerians as a nation engaged in the struggle for their existence. It connected them like never before. It produced "fundamental change in the people." This resulted in "a radical transformation of the means of perception, of the very world of perception … The Voice of Algeria, created out of nothing, brought the nation to life and endowed every citizen with a new status, telling him so explicitly." Fanon was highly enthusiastic about radio and saw its potential even beyond the struggle for liberation. Even after the liberation is attained, he hoped that the radio, under new

364 Ibid, 84.
365 Ibid, 89.
366 Ibid, 96.
367 Ibid, 96.
political conditions, "will have an exceptional importance in the country's building phase." He ended his essay with an optimistic note about the role of radio, "The identification of the voice of the Revolution with the fundamental truth of the nation has opened limitless horizons."

However, he was not naïve about the role of radio and its effects on Algerian society. Interestingly, Fanon also notes that the effect was not limited to the adoption of radio as a communicative technology. It also altered Algerians' relationship with the French language. Whereas previously, the "Arabic language was the most effective means that the nation's being had of unveiling itself." Under the new conditions produced by the radio, The French language lost its stigma. The use of French by a native was no longer "tantamount to treason or to an impoverishing identification with the occupier." After the combatants starting using French to convey their revolutionary message, the French language became "an instrument of liberation."

Fanon was aware of the dangers of this move. He knew that it could be used as a tool of integration and the building of a "French Algeria." Commenting briefly on this possibility, he makes a cryptic remark tinged with a stroke of genius, "the French language, the language of the occupier, was given the role of Logos with ontological implications within Algerian society."
What is this role of *Logos*? What are the "ontological implications" of this move? These questions need attention.

Colonization, and especially the implication of colonial technologies in a colonized society, has ontological implications. Although, from a superficial perspective, every new technology only seems to be a means to an end, which can be used either for good or bad as we have seen in the case of radio. However, there are ontological implications of every new technology that is introduced in native society. It also brings to mind Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum: Medium is the message. Technology is never just a tool or a means to an end. Every new technology introduces a new scale in society and thus transforms the inner structure of that society. This transformation is why the promise of decolonization has remained unfulfilled until now. The westernization of the globe is the result of the ontological implication of technology.

This becomes even clearer when we contrast Fanon's views about radio with Heidegger's. In his memorial address, Heidegger explicitly states that technological devices are indispensable, and it would not be wise to condemn these devices simply as "as the work of the devil."374 However, Heidegger claims that these technological devices can enslave us. But that is not inevitable. We have the power to change that.

We can use technical devices, and yet with proper use also keep ourselves so free of them, that we may let go of them any time. We can use technical devices as they ought to be used, and also let them alone as something which does not affect our inner and real core. We can

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affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature.375

Although Heidegger's point is philosophically valid and I agree with him, he nevertheless fails, unlike Fanon, to come up with a concrete example of such emancipatory use of technology from his own historical situation. This is so because his subject position is complicit with the enslaving reign of modern technology. It is not due to his Nazi association. Every European subject is marked by this complicity, regardless of his or her political and ideological position. If they are not engaged in an active struggle for emancipation, they cannot devise emancipatory ways of using that technology. The situation of the colonized is entirely different. They can do so because their survival depends on their resistance.

Still, in the longer run, the colonized were also trapped in the Enframing reign of technology. Fanon was apprehensive about this. His exhortations at the end of The Wretched of the Earth, calling the colonized to not imitate Europe and pursue the path leading towards ontological independence, bear witness to this apprehension. This task still calls us today. The success of this depends upon the ability to move beyond the use of colonial technologies as a means of liberation. It can work well in a particular historical situation. But eventually, it only strengthens the Enframing reign of technology. Some of the ways leading towards this goal are discussed in the subsequent sections.

375 Heidegger, Discourse on Thinking, 54.
Walter Mignolo, in his 2011 book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, enacts a powerful critique of what he calls ‘The Western Code.’ This Code is founded on “the belief in one sustainable system of knowledge, cast first in theological terms and later on in secular philosophy and sciences.”  

This Code “is pernicious to the well-being of the human species and to the life of the planet.” It benefits only a small portion of humanity and is detrimental to the overall health of living beings on this planet. Another essential feature of this Code is “the belief that in terms of epistemology there is only one game in town.” This Code is founded upon and sustained by the supremacy of the Western way of knowing, that is, Western philosophical tradition. The critique of Western epistemology is very important for Mignolo’s argument. The racism and patriarchy inherent within the Western models of social organization are sustained by a particular structure of knowledge that is “either grounded on the word of God or the word of Reason and Truth.” Such knowledge-construction is fundamentally exclusionary. Mignolo’s self-professed goal is to break this Code. He seeks to do so through a displacement of Cartesian formula ‘I think therefore I am’ by ‘I am where I think and do.’ He wants to bring the “place” back into his epistemology that is geared towards the task of decolonization.

For Mignolo, modernity forms the core of the colonial matrix of power. He defines modernity thus: “‘modernity’ is a complex narrative whose point of origination was Europe; a narrative that

376 Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, xii.
377 Ibid.
378 Ibid.
379 Ibid, xvi.
builds Western civilization by celebrating its achievements while hiding at the same time its darker side, ‘coloniality.’ Coloniality, in other words, is constitutive of modernity—there is no modernity without coloniality.” This mutual imbrication of modernity and coloniality is a seminal achievement of Mignolo’s thinking. It exposes the lie that the sins of Western imperialism are just side effects of the historically inevitable process of modernization. Such a view regards these sins merely as accidents of history, which can be addressed by switching to more humane and open versions of the same form of social organization that created coloniality in the first place. Contrarily, Mignolo has shown that the very core of modernity is rotten and beyond redemption. Instead of trying to salvage modernity, we need to nurture the flowering of decolonial options, which are inherently plural.

In contradistinction to modern globalization, Mignolo posits a global option; that of “decolonial cosmopolitanism.” In contradistinction to Kant’s cosmopolitanism that is “conceived centrifugally (e.g., a cosmopolitan world designed and lead by and from Europe),” Mignolo posits a decolonial cosmopolitanism that

… should be thought of as cosmopolitan localism, an oxymoron for sure, but an oxymoron that breaks away, delinks, from the imperial bend of Kantian cosmopolitan legacies. Cosmopolitan localism names the connector for global and pluriversal projects, where all existing nation-states and future organizations that will replace, displace, or redo current forms of nation-states, as well as the emerging political society will participate (by whatever form of organization) to a truly cosmopolitan world.381
Mignolo seems to be too enthusiastic about this “decolonial cosmopolitanism.”\textsuperscript{382} Pace Mignolo, I believe that as long as conditions of social existence are determined by the Enframing reign of modern/western technology, such “decolonial cosmopolitanism” would remain an empty label at most. This brings us to the question of technology, which is always a complicated one. Mignolo is not naïve about modern/Western technologies. He sees through the lie of technology as a mere means to an end. However, his analysis fails to reach the depth that is required to effectively exorcise its spectral presence in the house of decolonial thinking.

\textbf{6.4.1 Ontology vs. Epistemology}

In \textit{The Darker Side of Western Modernity}, Mignolo conceives the relations between epistemology and ontology as that of mediation. Knowledge acts as a double-edged sword in the colonial matrix of power. On the one hand, it acts as “the mediation to the ontology of the world as well as a way of being in the world (subjectivity).”\textsuperscript{383} On the other hand, “it became a commodity to be exported to those whose knowledge was deviant or non-modern according to Christian theology and, later on, secular philosophy and sciences.”\textsuperscript{384} Mignolo did not explore this complex issue of the relations between epistemology and ontology further in that work.

However, he has devoted keen attention to this issue recently. In a book co-authored with Catherine Walsh, Mignolo confronts this issue head-on. Now, the relations between epistemology and ontology acquire a significance never seen before in his work. “What matters

\textsuperscript{382} Ibid, 4.
\textsuperscript{383} Ibid, 113.
\textsuperscript{384} Ibid.
is not economics, or politics, or history, but knowledge.”385 It even ranks higher than ontology. He declares the primacy of epistemology over ontology directly now: “Ontology is made of epistemology. That is, ontology is an epistemological concept; it is not inscribed in the entities the grammatical nouns name.”386 This is a radical step. The putative universality of Western ways of knowing rests primarily on its claim to ontological reflection. Western knowledge has always claimed to represent things as they truly are. Even Kantian reversal works within this framework. The inability to truly know things in themselves is a statement about the very state of things as they are. They are always mediated through our structures of knowing. What appears as an epistemological concern is ontological in reality. But Kant did not provincialize his own way of knowing and firmly believed in its universality.

Mignolo thinks that the task of decolonization is intimately tied to the dethroning of Western knowledge. Mignolo names this fundamental attitude of trying to know the truth of everything that exists ‘Western world-sense.’ However, this ‘Western world-sense’ is not the only sense that there is as it claims to be. There are other, non-Western world-senses as well that are not founded on the will to know. “…beyond Western world-sense that privileges entities and beings (ontology; Martin Heidegger’s Being), there are world-senses that privilege relations.”387 Such a world-sense that privileges relations over entities and beings is not open to ontological inquiry “because relations are not entities (they are relations among entities).”388 I agree with Mignolo that many traditions privilege relations over entities. Sikh tradition is one of these. These

387 Mignolo, On Decoloniality, 135.
388 Ibid.
relations can be with other human beings, nature, or the divine. I would like to reflect a little more on the theme of nature as it relates more with the inquiry at hand.

### 6.4.2 Translation of Pachamama into Nature

Following Quijano, Mignolo defines ‘the colonial matrix of power’ as founded on four interconnected domains of “control of the economy, of authority, of gender and sexuality, and of knowledge and subjectivity.” But he asks an intriguing question: “Shall we consider nature as a fifth sphere?” His answer is in the affirmative. However, his idea of nature does not come from the Western tradition but from the indigenous communities. It is called *Pachamama*. This concept did not grow out of the green movement, theology of liberation, or the Marxist anti-capitalism. It is a result of the “thinking of indigenous communities, leaders, and indigenous intellectuals.” Colonialism implanted the Western idea of nature and marginalized the idea of Pachamama.

The thinking of Pachamama is devoid of the polarity between “nature” and “culture.” It is best “understood the human relationship with life, with that energy that engenders and maintains life, today translated as mother earth.” It is also “conceived as something outside the human subject.” Ayamaras and Quechus “saw themselves in it, not separated from it.”

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390 Ibid, 10.
391 Ibid.
392 Ibid, 11.
393 Ibid.
394 Ibid.
colonialism transformed this and imposed the Western idea of nature. One task of decolonial thinking today is to break free from the idea of nature and embrace the idea of Pachamama. Mignolo is careful to not essentialize Pachamama. It is not the concept of nature. It is a specific relation between humans and their surroundings (without presupposing a sharp distinction between the two) that emerged within a particular culture. Other cultures can have their own “conceptions of nature” which might be closer to Pachamama in spirit than the Western concept of nature.

6.4.3 The Idea of Kudrat (nature) in Sikhi

This brings us to the Sikh (non)concept of nature. The word that is used for nature in Gurbani is दुर्गोद्वृत्त (kudrat). Although Sikhi originated in South Asia and is generally considered as part of the Indic family of religions, that is Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism etc. (wrongly in my opinion), it is notable that this word comes from Arabic. The Sanskrit term पृक्ष्ण (Prakirti), which also means nature, is rarely used in the writings of the Sikh Gurus.395 Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, in his Mahan Kosh, gives the meaning of Kudrat as डूबू, डबू (power, force).396 Bhai Vir Singh, in his Sri Guru Granth Sahib Kosh, gives a much more detailed meaning. In fact, he lists three meanings of this term: power, creation, and that which comes to light. Despite its Arabic origin, the concept of Kudrat in the Sikh tradition cannot be reduced to the meanings that are found in Arabic. The way this word is used in Asa di Vaar and other banis transcends its Arabic meaning.

395 For more on this, see Harpal Singh Pannu, Guru Nanak da Kudrat Siddhant, edit. Dr. Wazir Singh (Patiala: Publication Bureau, 1987).
Dr. Wazir Singh, a prominent Sikh philosopher, claims, “‘सिख-विवेक के ‘कुद्रत’ रहे हैं विवेक-विमानी मंदिर दी रहीं, रामरितवर्य भागों रूप मंदिर अंत तिलेकले विस्तर-विमान ले आपा ले है।”\(^{397}\) “In Sikh thinking, ‘nature’ is not only a high-level gesture, it is also a concept with philosophical significance and the foundation of a unique cosmology.”\(^{398}\) He also claims that Guru Nanak constructed his own unique concept of nature.\(^{399}\) The idea of nature in the Sikh scripture is intimately tied with Sikh mystic experience. Sikh spiritual experience is not transcendental. It is a part of our experience of nature. Harpal Singh Pannu writes, “‘वनस्पति-विद्वान कुद्रत रहे हैं टॉटिया वैधिक वेबसी रहीं’।” “Mystical-experience is not a separate and transcendent miracle detached from nature.”\(^{400}\) Sikh spiritual experience is always mediated through one’s experience of nature. Unlike Christianity, the creator and creation are not distinct from each other. They are one and the same. “कुद्रत अंत्र वैधिक ही रही है।” “Creator and Kudrat are also same.”\(^{401}\)

One of the most detailed descriptions of nature occurs in Guru Nanak’s \textit{Asa di Vaar}. Asa di Vaar is a poetic composition that is sung early morning in almost every Gurudwara. It goes like this:

\begin{align*}
\text{भाग १} & \\
\text{कुश्चनि ऐसी कुश्चनि मुडीथे कुश्चनि उठि सभ माधु}\\
\end{align*}


\(^{398}\) Translation mine.

\(^{399}\) “‘guru nwnk bwxi ny Awpoxw invykhw kudrq dw sMklp isrijAw hY, ijs ivcoN gurbwxI dy kudrq-isDWq dl sQwpnw huMdl hY|’ vii


A conventional translation would be like this:

Kudrat enables us to see, kudrat makes us hear, kudrat provides the sense of fear and comfort.

Kudrat prevails in the underworld and the skies, qudrat gives form to everything that exists.

Kudrat effected the Vedas, the Puranas, and the Katebs (semitic scriptures), within kudrat exists all thought.

Within kudrat is eating, drinking and dressing, under kudrat is all love.\textsuperscript{402}

There are three key claims in this stanza that might sound strange to us who have become habitual to the Western concept of nature as a reservoir of exploitable resources. These three claims are that Kudrat is ਸਰਬਾਲੀ, ਸਰਬਾਲਿਤਾਂ, and ਸਰਬਾਲਿਤਾ। Punjabi word ਸਰਬਾਲਵ can be variously translated as totality, entirety, wholeness, or fullness. I think ‘whole’ comes closest to the connotations of this word. However, it does not capture the essence of this word. It is used as an adjective for the following three words; ਆਵਾਲਵ, ਸੀਲਵਾਲਵ, and ਸੀਲਵਾਲਵ। We can translate these words as form, reflection, and love. However, we should keep in mind that these translations, like every translation, are only provisional. We can translate the phrases in the following way:

Kudrat is form in its totality.

Kudrat is reflection in its totality.
Kudrat is love in its totality.

Kudrat, in this sense, is not limited to a sum total of entities that exist in the universe. Although entities and forms do exist and it is acknowledged as such, but these are not exclusive domains through which nature can be engaged. There are other ways to envision nature. In this respect, the last phrase is the most interesting and intriguing. The line that the phrase appears in can be translated as follows: Kudrat is eating, drinking and wearing; it is love in its totality. Kudrat is love itself. Kudrat here enters the human realm. It is the totality, reflection, love in their totality at the same time. What follows from this line of envisioning nature is that the artificial boundary between nature and culture can no longer be sustained.

Western thinking, from the earliest times to Heidegger, has insisted on the self-sameness of thinking and being. Parmenides, Hegel, and Heidegger, all three canonical thinkers of the West restate this formula in slightly different ways. When Parmenides visits an unnamed goddess in a chariot driven by the daughters of the Sun, she tells him, “… thinking and being are the same.”

We can safely say that this is the most fundamental and enduring theme in all of Western philosophy.

6.4.4 Multiple Natures and Multiple Technics

Yuk Hui, a Chinese scholar, raises a very important question with respect to the interrelation of nature, cosmology, and technics. He asks, “If one admits that there are multiple natures, is it possible to think of multiple technics, which are different from each other not simply functionally and aesthetically, but also ontologically and cosmologically?”  

His idea of multiple natures is based on Philippe Descola’s deconstruction of the binary between nature and culture. Descola argues that “the antithesis between culture and nature … triumphed in the West in the seventeenth century.” He called it “naturalism.” He “suggests that the nature/culture division developed in the Occident is not universal.” This division is one of the driving forces of modernity. It understands the cosmos as a reservoir of exploitable resources and energy. Non-western cultures adopted this division only after colonization and globalization.

Based on this idea of the inherent multiplicity of the concept of nature, Hui develops his distinctive philosophy that he calls cosmotechnics. For Hui, cosmotechnics “means the unification between the cosmic order and the moral order through technical activities (although the term cosmic order is itself tautological since the Greek word kosmos means order).” Postulating alternative cosmotechnics is the ultimate decolonizing act. He does not claim that he has accomplished this task. He gives a call for such an accomplishment:

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404 Hui, The Question Concerning Technology in China, xiii.
405 Ibid, 21.
406 Ibid.
407 Ibid, 23.
One will certainly have to understand science and technology in order to be able to transform them; but after more than a century of ‘modernisation’, now is the moment to seek a new form of practice, not only in China but also in other cultures. This is where imagination should take off and concentrate its efforts. The aim of this book has been to put forward such a new translation based on difference. It is only with this difference, and with the capability and the imagination to assert this difference in material terms, that we can stake a claim to another world history.\footnote{Ibid, 312.}

The task of understanding “science and technology in order to be able to transform them” is what is attempted here. Such an understanding is necessarily based on an understanding of a particular conception of nature and the cosmology that underlies this conception. This understanding will work as a point of departure for building an alternative world history.

Hui postulates that such an understanding can be developed through the process of transduction. This term comes from the work of French philosopher of technology Gilbert Simondon. In his short but insightful essay, ‘The Limits of Human Progress: A Critical Study,’ Simondon proposed an alternative understanding of human progress in terms of internally consistent systems. These systems involve people as agents and subjects of development. He identifies three such systems: language, religion, and technology. The consistency of each system relies on the internal resonance between people living under that system and the objective concretization it achieves in the world. The technical system fails to produce an internal resonance and is incapable of leading to a new system.\footnote{Gilbert Simondon, “The Limits of Human Progress: A Critical Study,” \textit{Cultural Politics} 6, no. 2 (July 2010): 229-236.} That is where the process of transduction comes in. The
current impasse can be resolved through transduction. Transduction, as opposed to a translation based on equivalence, “but a translation based on difference.”\textsuperscript{411} “Transduction,” Hui states, “implies the progressive structural transformation of a system triggered by incoming information—part of the individuation of civilisation, in which progress is characterised by ‘internal resonances.’”\textsuperscript{412}

However, Hui ignores that every translation is always already a transduction. For example, look at the colonial processes of translation. These were not simply translations based on equivalence but involved structural transformations of massive scale. The only difference between colonial transduction and the one posed by Simondon is that former almost always led to internal dissonance rather than resonance. But it was nevertheless “progressive structural transformation of a system triggered by incoming information.”\textsuperscript{413} The Western conception of nature and the Western technology were imposed on colonized societies through this process of structural transformation.

The point is to reverse its course from West to East. The decolonization of the current global (dis)order depends on this inversion of the process of transduction. The question for our times is: How can Eastern ideas structurally transform the contemporary planetary system that is fundamentally Western by reversing the transductive processes that enabled Western modernity to transform every other culture in the first place? A simple celebration of transduction as opposed to translation as equivalence, as Hui does, is not enough.

\textsuperscript{411} Hui, \textit{The Question Concerning Technology in China}, 310.
\textsuperscript{412} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{413} Simondon, \textit{The Limits of Human Progress}, 236.
One way to perform such reverse transduction is by *grafting* non-Western notions of nature onto the stem of man-technology system. Of course, a simple adoption of these notions is not possible. Neither can such notions work as ready-made cures for the problems of our world. The point is to do something that is natural and technical, old and new, and artificial and organic at the same time. Hence the metaphor of grafting. This horticultural technique of grafting requires human intervention but works through natural processes. The animating force that makes grafting succeed is life itself. That is why the poetic description of nature as love in its totality is so apt here.

Nature as love in its totality can gradually and perhaps imperceptibly supplant the current conception of nature as a reservoir of exploitable resources. Sikh poet Harinder Singh Mehboob evocatively described such process in his poetry:

हंड़ भल्लाण ठूँ चव घैचरी, टिंटु रेंह अंबुज ची माणी।

A single lush green grapevine can cover entire barren mountains.\(^{414}\)

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6.4.5 Sikh Cosmopoetics

The Sikh conception of nature is rooted in a distinctive Sikh cosmology. This cosmology is not so much logical. It is more poetic. That is why we should call it Sikh cosmopoetics. This cosmopoetics is described thus by Guru Nanak:

माशे दे पद्मः ब्रह्मा भलैः दे नल घोंट।
नल दे नृक्रवङ्ग मातिल्ला धार्त धार्त तातेज तातेज।

Air is born from truth, and water is born from air.
Three worlds (heaven, earth, and the underworld) come into being from water and light is absorbed into everything.\(^{415}\)

My idea of Sikh cosmopoetics both converges with and diverges from the idea of cosmopoetics proposed by the organizers of an event held at Durham University from 8\(^{th}\) – 10\(^{th}\) September 2010. They envisioned cosmopoetics as:

Neither utopian nor dystopian, Cosmopoetics directs itself towards thinking a poetic atopia, a poetic interval within which the multiple currents of communication, mediation and influence mix; poetics as a particular border-crossing, trans-linguistic, socio-economic phenomenon. It is simultaneously sensitive to cultural and natural concepts of world or cosmos, and individual and aesthetic concepts of poesis, or the production of poetry, and seeks to re-centre contemporary poetry in its mediating capacity, as bridge between the singular and the universal, the local and the global, the creative and the critical.\(^{416}\)

\(^{416}\) “Cosmopoetics: Mediating a New World Poetics,” Accessed June 26, 2019, https://www.dur.ac.uk/english.studies/events/?eventno=7940
Sikh cosmopoetics is not utopian in the sense of political utopias such as Marxism but it does have an emancipatory aspect. It is intimately tied to the betterment of not only human life but everything that exists (ਸਰਕਾਂ). It is grounded in the aesthetics and praxis of a life lived in accordance with the ideal of the wellbeing of all (ਸਰਕਾਂ ਸਰਕਾਂ). It is not grounded epistemologically. It is grounded relationally.

मੈਂ ਹੀ ਕੁਝ ਪੱਛੁੱਚੀ ਗੁਲਾਬ ਸਪਨਦੇ ਸੇਵਾ ਆਪਣੀ ਵਾਲਾ।।

All the work is done through union and separation and everyone gets what is ordained for them.417

The relational grounding of Sikh cosmopoetics imparts it a distinctive hue devoid of the will to mastery. As Mignolo has convincingly shown, epistemological grounding of the Western tradition has led to the path of global domination. The modern/Western conception of nature as an exploitable reservoir of resources is also grounded in the will to know the secrets of nature. However, when nature appears differently in a tradition, that is, relationally, it changes everything. Most importantly, it gives rise to a new conception of technology as a bridge between humanity and nature. Sikh cosmotechnics, when seen from this perspective, is fundamentally poetic.

6.5 Deframing: An Opening Towards Decolonial Futures

Emancipation in the contemporary world is inextricably bound up with a response to technology. Scholarly and popular discourses about technology usually inhabit one side of the pole of technophobia and technophilia. Such responses often forget that the point is not to embrace or reject technology, but to build a different relationship with it. Heidegger insisted that the resources required for building this relationship must come from within the Western tradition. His insistence had its roots in his ethno-centrism from which he was never able to free himself.

Before we can dwell upon what we mean by deframing, it would be helpful to first note what it is not. Deframing is not anything like deceleration. Deceleration is a movement in response to the overwhelming domination of technology in our daily lives. The efforts to decelerate often include, but are not limited to, practices such as yoga and mindfulness. These responses are almost always individual responses. The problem with these responses is that they function within the capitalist logic, and thus also within the logic of Enframing. The calls for deceleration are often accompanied by promises of increased productivity, job performance, work-life balance, and “happiness.” These goals are not only entrenched within a capitalist way of life, but they also strengthen it. Such efforts are completely ignorant about the larger structural issues related to the capitalist way of life.

Deframing, on the other hand, is not an individual response. It does not even include the calls to build artificial communities around social causes such as the environmental crisis, and other social justice issues. It is not a programmable response for every programmable response
necessarily remains stuck within the logic of Enframing. Programmability is the essence of
calculative way of thinking. Deframing cannot wait for the worldwide revolution to happen so
that things are officially changed for such a response would be programmable response as well.

Deframing is, by necessity, rooted in an alternative cosmology that reveals the world and human
life in a different way than the logic of technology. However, this cosmology can never be
singular. As it is mentioned in SGGS:

यादर्थि रमा भलेव घेरेहू बृह ब्रह्मेये।।

“Traverse multiple directions for the divine love.”

Deframing, as a decolonial praxis, can take many forms. Colonized peoples in different parts of
the world can use their own traditions as resources to build their own versions of Deframing.
Deframing is the gradual building up of a different relationship with the natural environment,
with other people, with work, and with themselves drawing from pre-colonial traditions. Every
newer form of technology is not necessarily alien to this praxis. Some of these technologies can
be used in a limited sense provided that the logic of Enframing does not operate within them.

Deframing consists in building caring enclaves within the desolation of techno-modern
coloniality. These enclaves are saturated in a particular culture’s aesthetic sensibilities. Without
this aesthetic sensibility, which is different in every culture, deframing would be reduced to a
form of mere activism. Deframing is not activism. Deframing is a vision of life devoid of the

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notion of modern subjectivity. Technological Enframing is unthinkable without the modern Cartesian notion of subjectivity. To move from this notion of subjectivity, nothing less than deframing of human existence is required.

6.5.1 Deframing Existence

Western philosophy has been obsessed with “defining” human existence. These attempts at “definition” reached their peak in the idea of subjectivity. But these efforts have their roots in the Western philosophical conception of the man\textsuperscript{419} as \textit{animal rationale}. Heidegger argues that this definition of man as animal rationale is based on defining man racially and rationally.\textsuperscript{420} These two logics are intertwined: the logic of racialization and the logic of rationalization.

In \textit{Overcoming Metaphysics}, Heidegger talks about the collapse of the world and the desolation of the earth. He connects both phenomena to metaphysics: “Collapse and desolation find their adequate occurrence in the fact that metaphysical man, the \textit{animal rationale}, gets fixed as the laboring animal.”\textsuperscript{421} What Heidegger fails to realize here is that the colonized got fixed as the laboring animals without entering the realm of metaphysical man, the \textit{animal rationale}. To say that the colonized is not \textit{animal rationale} lends itself to easy dismissal as it seems that such a view regards the colonized as mere animals without the humanness granting addition of rationality. This is not the case. Metaphysical man or \textit{animal rationale} does not refer here to the possession or lack of the faculty of reasoning. Of course, everyone has the faculty of reasoning.

\textsuperscript{419} Man is used deliberately here to highlight the patriarchal bias of thinking.
\textsuperscript{420} Heidegger, \textit{Ponderings II-VI}, 270.
\textsuperscript{421} Heidegger, \textit{The End of Philosophy}, 86.
Instead, it points towards the absence of a particular lineage through which Western man has defined himself. Heidegger gives a detailed account of this lineage in his *Letter on Humanism*:

The first humanism, Roman humanism, and every kind that has emerged from that time to the present, has presupposed the most universal "essence" of man to be obvious. Man is considered to be an *animal rationale*. This definition is not simply the Latin translation of the Greek *zoon logon echon* but rather a metaphysical interpretation of it. This essential definition of man is not false. But it is conditioned by metaphysics.\footnote{Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, 226.}

The animality of man as *animal rationale* is now “emerging in the consummation of the predatory nature of the roving beast.”\footnote{Heidegger, *Ponderings VII-IX*, 329.} This animal is not the innocent animal pushed to the brink of extinction by man, but a predatory animal, who is “covetous of victory and power.”\footnote{Ibid.} Colonizing European man is the most brutal form this predatory animal has ever taken. It is the uncontrolled frenzy of this rational animal that has led to the devastation of the earth as the abode of humanity. It has now attained the form of an “ideal” for a very large section of humanity, but not for everyone. “That the human being as this predatory animal becomes the more or less explicitly affirmed and divulged ‘ideal’ of humanity is only the fulfillment of the essential requirement that one day the human being, identified as an animal, would lay claim to his essence— which is animality—as an ideal.”\footnote{Ibid.}

The colonized, although they possess the faculty of reasoning, their being is not defined by their capacity of reasoning. They did not envision themselves to be rational animals. Deframing of

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\footnote{422 Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, 226.}
\footnote{423 Heidegger, *Ponderings VII-IX*, 329.}
\footnote{424 Ibid.}
\footnote{425 Ibid.}
colonized existence consists in moving away from defining humans as rational animals. Every tradition has at its roots a definition, although this “definition” is not always articulated in philosophical terms, of being human that is operative throughout its history and shapes its institutions, conduct, and relations with the world. Deframing draws upon this non-metaphysical understanding of what it means to be human and how humans should dwell within the world and relate with others. For every tradition, a confrontation with colonialism or its legacy goes through a revitalization of this conception.

This can have profound consequences for the future of humanity. For these peoples are the ones who are victims of this collapse and desolation but are not complicit in it. Their continued resistance against western imperialism has its hidden source in their non-metaphysical origins. If they imitate the West and build themselves in its image, then they are doing nothing but following the logic of Enframing as contemporary nation-states of Japan, China, and India have done. They are trying to catch up with the West. Little do they know that their efforts to mimic the master are nothing but a frenzied race towards spiritual suicide.

Deframing, on the other hand, is a nurturing process. Instead of ravening, it exudes fostering. In an epoch when physical destruction of the planet is equally matched by the emotional and spiritual devastation, such a nurturing principle that can ground collective life is urgently needed. The task of deframing human existence, if taken seriously, can constitute the coming age as completely different from that of the last few centuries.
6.5.2 Deframing (Sikh) Politics

As is noted above, Deframing is not a universal procedure that can be applied everywhere regardless of cultural, spiritual, and linguistic differences. It is a process that is universal in spirit, but its enactment is unique in every situation. As I am most familiar with Sikh history and politics, I will limit my comments to deframing of the Sikh politics alone. The questions that such an effort needs to ask are these: What is Sikh politics? In what does its uniqueness consist? What are the Sikh models of social and political organization? Is decolonizing Sikh politics even possible?

Puran Singh captured the essence of Sikh politics when he wrote, “Every Sikh is to wear His Sword. Not his own. Kirpan is a gift from the Guru. It is not an instrument of offence or defence; it is mind made intense by the love of the Guru. The Sikh is to have a sword-like mind. It is the visible sign of an intensely sensitive soul.”  

What does this mean?

In an age of technological globalization, something profound has happened in the past two decades. The global economy is shifting its focus away from oil as a primary commodity. Throughout the 20th century, oil was immensely important. Several wars were fought over oil. Although fossil fuels are still important for the global economy, something else has started to take its place. It is attention; human attention. The rise of gigantic digital technology corporations such as Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon is enough to prove that whoever is able to capture human attention can amass fortunes in a relatively short period of time. As this

426 Puran Singh, The Spirit Born People (Patiala: Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, 1990), 111.
process is relatively recent, not enough scholarly attention is paid to this field of study. However, there are exceptions.

Tim Wu, in his recent study on the effects of converting human attention into a commodity, has noted that the rabid commercialization of attention we are witnessing today deserves more attention it is getting for “it is not our nation or culture but the very nature of our lives that is at stake.” The widespread crisis of attention that has inflicted the West, and which is rapidly spreading around the globe, is converting all of us into “homo distractus.” How did this assault on our consciousness become so powerful that it is changing our very nature? Wu notes that “the full potential of the business model by which attention is converted into revenue” can be realized only when we understand that “the power of mass attention was discovered not by any commercial entity but by British war propagandists.”

Wu’s claims divert our attention to the fact that these determined efforts to capture our attention are not fundamentally economic in nature, but political. The future wars, as has already become evident through the Cambridge Analytica scandal, would be fought on the frontlines of human attention. What are the resources that non-governmental and non-corporate actors, that is, ordinary people, can deploy in this war that is primarily against them and them alone? Before moving forward to answer this question, let us take a look at a more philosophical perspective on the issue of attention.

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Bernard Stiegler, a prominent French philosopher of technology, first made considerable efforts to theorize the theft of attention and its political import. His ideas about psychic individuation and its failure are very important in understanding the crisis of attention.

In an interview given to Patrick Crogan, Stiegler argues that in order to grasp the contemporary situation, we will have to move from Foucault’s concept of bio-power to psycho-power. He argues that “with the development in the United States of marketing and advertising and the like, industry has consisted essentially in the harnessing of attention, the channeling of libido, and the progressive destruction of …the circuits of trans-individuation.” What Stiegler means here by ‘circuits of trans-individuation’ demands more elaboration. In his own words:

These circuits enabled affects to be constituted and to circulate, solidarities to form between individuals and for social roles and places to be created: fathers in relation to children, the division of labor and all those things, the whole range of hierarchies that formed. These are the hierarchies and different instances that constituted one’s place in society – what in Greek would have been called that ethos of individuals. This has been turned completely upside down by these cultural industries. And I think this has become destructive of libidinal energy.

The power of Stiegler’s analysis lies in his ability to connect the commercial destruction of attention to the circuits of individuation that enable us to form solidarities with each other. However, Stiegler’s analysis lacks a concrete praxis rooted in a cultural tradition that can provide

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431 Crogan, *Knowledge, Care, and Trans-Individuation – An Interview with Bernard Stiegler*, 160.
432 Ibid.
an alternative to the consumerist way of life imposed by the attention merchants. Stiegler’s problem is also similar to Heidegger’s: he refuses to look outside the Western tradition to find resources for this struggle. Deframing local struggles might be the first step in this direction.

Such Deframing would consist in first articulating the political demands (which would neither be political nor demands in the conventional sense) of specific peoples without using Western terminology. Understood from this perspective, the struggle is not for attaining adequate representation within the system, nor does it lay in overturning the system through a direct revolution (Marxist or otherwise), but in restructuring (in a non-structural way) individual and social circuits of affect. These transformed circuits of affect are then embedded in an other-oriented praxis of caring. This other is not Levinasian other which is limited to the Judeo-Christian-Greek traditions. It is an all-embracing otherness that not only includes all humans but also non-human and non-sentient entities like the earth and the natural environment.

Two Sikh non-concepts can function as examples of Deframed politics: Sarbat da Bhala and Seva. Sarbat means everything, the whole of creation, and Bhala is used when we mean that something good has happened. This phrase is part of Sikh daily prayer and expresses a wish to help everyone and everything. Seva is another non-concept around which Sikh praxis is weaved. Seva literally means self-less, non-commercial help extended to the other. These twin concepts primarily function through the institution of Gurdwara, which is a caring enclave where people belonging to all castes and creeds can come together. But it is not like a secular institution, which exists in a cultural void created by modernity. Sikh Gurdwara is a place coming together of
different singularities harmoniously rings together in the ambience created by *Kirtan*, the Sikh sacred music.

Deframing of Sikh politics can only take place in a space that is thus transformed into a caring enclave. Transformation of the self can never take place in isolation, for there is no I without a we, as Stiegler has argued.\footnote{Bernard Stiegler, *Decadence of Industrial Democracies*, trans. Daniel Ross and Suzanne Arnold (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).} The isolated I in the Cartesian sense is nothing but a metaphysical chimera. In the real world, people exist only as parts of networks that are larger than them, but in which they contribute something unique and original. It is the glowing sword of mind made intense through revolutionary love that can destroy the logic of isolated subjectivity.

6.5.3 Deframing Global Futures in the Era of Anthropocene

Anthropocene is one of the most urgent issues of our time. The threat of climate has become very real. The situation is so alarming that the experts, speaking at a meeting organized by the *United Nations*, have warned that we have only 11 years left to take action against Climate Change. If the current trends continue, the situation would become irreversible after 2030.\footnote{“Only 11 Years Left to Prevent Irreversible Damage from Climate Change, Speakers Warn during General Assembly High-Level Meeting,” United Nations Meetings Coverage, 28 March, 2019, accessed 10 January, 2020, \url{https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12131.doc.htm}} A vast majority of environmental scientists agree with some version of that damning assessment. However, the debates around this burning issue remain within the scope of technological fixes.
David Wallace-Wells, in his recently released *New York Times* bestseller book *The Uninhabitable Earth*, says that the climate change is “worse, much worse, than you think.” He goes on to present a horrifying picture of the state of the climate and how little is being done about it. Just one reference is enough to imagine the scope of destruction that is at our doors: “200 million climate refugees by 2050.” The world is going to witness destruction at a scale that it has never seen before, at least not in the last few thousand years.

However, although Wallace-Wells presents a pretty accurate picture of the coming climate apocalypse, his optimism seems to be utterly blind. He is ideologically inclined to believe that the solution to climate change lies in using the very technology that has caused it. “Should anything save us, it will be technology.” He claims that we all have the tools to stop this disaster. His solutions include: “[A] carbon tax and the political apparatus to aggressively phase out dirty energy; a new approach to agricultural practices and a shift away from beef and dairy in the global diet; and public investment in green energy and carbon capture.” This is inane. The solution does not lie in using technology wisely. His solutions are also anthropocentric. He believes that the response to climate change is a “bet on human activity.” The solution lies somewhere else. I want to argue that a Deframing perspective is necessary for addressing this urgent issue.

437 Ibid, chap. 3.
438 Ibid, chap. 4.
439 Ibid.
Anthropocene is defined as “a time when humans acted as a major geophysical force determining the climate and the history of life on earth.” Although it is undeniable that human activity has resulted in global warming (only right-wing politicians, conspiracy theorists, and capitalists deny it), an interesting philosophical debate has happened about how pertinent this term is. The problem with this term is that it seems to blame all humans equally for something which is a result of the actions largely of only a particular group of them, namely whites. A much larger portion of humanity in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere that barely subsists cannot be accused of causing climate change as they do not have enough power and resources to effectively exploit the earth and its natural environment.

Maurizio Lazzarato, an Italian neo-Marxist scholar, and Éric Alliez have claimed that it is not anthropocene but capitalocene as only capitalism is responsible for this disaster:

Capital is not a mode of production without being at the same time a mode of destruction. The infinite accumulation that constantly moves its limits to recreate them again is at the same time unlimited, widespread destruction. The gains in productivity and gains of destructiveness progress in parallel. They manifest themselves in the generalized war that scientists prefer to call “Anthropocene” rather than “Capitalocene,” even if, in all evidence, the destruction of the environments in and through which we live does not begin with “humans” and their growing needs, but with Capital.

While their argument seems convincing, they have ignored a crucial factor, i.e. technology. Capitalism is only a symptom of the logic of modern technology. At the bottom, it is actually


modern technology’s drive toward Enframing, treating everything as exploitable resource that is responsible for climate change. Unless the very nature of technology and our relationship with it are changed, no technological fix can fix this tribulation. That is why I prefer to call it technocene\textsuperscript{442} rather than anthropocene or capitalocene. Our epoch needs to be redefined as an age where technology has become a geological force, thereby initiating a string of events that would eventually lead to destruction of life on earth.

Michael E. Zimmerman has examined the possible relevance of Heidegger’s critique of technology for the environmental movement called ‘deep ecology.’ Deep ecologists are not content with standard explanations of the environmental crisis and want to probe deeper. According to Zimmerman, “Deep ecologists agree that the real explanation for the environmental crisis is the radically anthropocentric character of Western culture. Such anthropocentrism stems from at least two sources, including Christianity and Greek philosophy.”\textsuperscript{443} The Western scientific revolution, as we know it, is made possible by the “integration of Christian theology and Greek metaphysics.”\textsuperscript{444} They try to look past the instrumental definitions of technology according to which technology is just a tool that can be used for both bad and good ends.

Deep ecologists come closer to Heidegger’s views of the essence of technology as a kind of revealing. They argue, “[T]he real roots of our ecological crisis lie in the anthropocentric

\textsuperscript{442} Although this term is used by other scholars before such as Peter Sloterdijk and Bernard Stiegler, my use of it is different from theirs. For further discussion, see Agostino Cera, “The Technocene or Technology as (Neo)environment,” Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology 21, no. 2-3 (2017): 243-281.


\textsuperscript{444} Zimmerman, \textit{Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity}, 242.
humanism which portrays all non-human entities as raw materials that are useful in enhancing human projects.” What is the reason that despite these parallels, Heideggerian philosophy has failed to contribute significantly to the growing environmental movement? I think the problem lies with Heidegger’s eschatology. He failed to develop a deframing perspective required for responding to challenges like climate change. One of the reasons he failed in this project is, as is noted in a previous chapter, his neglect of the body as a site of resistance.

David Michael Levin has argued that it is Heidegger’s neglect of body that made him blind to a possible emancipatory path. Zimmerman, concurring with Levin, stresses that Levin’s argument is very persuasive in claiming that “only by exploring how modern technology has transformed and perverted bodily experience can we move in the direction of the ‘new beginning’ for which Heidegger longed.” In a series of brilliant books, Levin argued that Heidegger’s oblivion of the “wisdom of the body” made him blind to certain insights that could have led his work to more fruitful conclusions.

My argument here is that this oblivion of the body on Heidegger’s part is no accident. It has its roots in his refusal to look outside the Western tradition, his stubborn ethno-centrism that stayed with him till the very end in one form or another. If we now do what Heidegger never did, what do we find?

Ibid.
Ibid, 245.
At a recent conference on ‘Political Theology’ I had a conversation with a professor who informed me that he recently realized that we (people in the West) don’t even know how to breathe. This simple remark betrays a profound truth: the excessive and unhealthy focus on reason, mind, and ideas has led to a substantial oblivion of the body and corporeality. This is not the case everywhere.

The Sikh tradition values physical activities such as listening (sarvan), singing (kirtan), labor (seva), reading (paath karna), and seeing (darsan) over thinking (sochna). The place of thinking is actively delimited. In Japuji Sahib, the inaugural work in SGGS, Guru Nanak Dev says about thinking:

“Even if you think a hundred thousand times (means if you think a lot), you cannot think it through.”

It challenges the centrality of thinking in human life, a centrality that not only Heidegger but almost every Western thinker eulogizes. This stress on corporeality does not just function as an intellectual corrective, but it is embedded within a shared set of practices that Sikhs are emotionally attached to. These activities would not translate into a way of life without this emotional attachment.

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449 Guru Nanak, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, 1.
The limits of climate activism in the West are set by the nature of the call to save the climate. Our responsibility to save the planet is almost always invoked as a moral injunction, but never as a fidelity to a particular cultural praxis embedded in a specific way of life. What makes such praxis distinctive from purely moral imperatives is that it contains within itself the promise of a certain type of enjoyment that is neither merely physical thrill-seeking as is the case with the modern entertainment industry, not is it a purely transcendental mystical experience completely divorced from corporeality.

Such praxis cannot be global although it can be universal in spirit. Becoming global, as modern Western culture has become, would be suicide for it. The West has committed such suicide. Jean Baudrillard makes this evident:

> The universal was an Idea. But when it became realized in the global, it disappeared as an Idea, it committed suicide, and it vanished as an end in itself. Since humanity is now its own immanence, after taking over the place left by a dead God, the human has become the only mode of reference and it is sovereign. But this humanity no longer has any finality. Free from its former enemies, humanity now has to create enemies from within, which in fact produces a wide variety of inhuman metastases.\footnote{Jean Baudrillard, “The Violence of the Global,” trans. François Debrix, \textit{Ctheory}, May 20, 2003, \url{http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=385}.}

The West has not only itself committed suicide, but it has become an enemy of every particular. It hovers over the planet like a flying zombie and targets every residual particular clinging to its last breath. Drone warfare is an external manifestation of this phenomenon. Despite the immense
technological capabilities of detection and destruction, cultural singularities have survived so far. And the future of humanity also depends on their survival.

Becoming global of a particular culture happens through an abstractification. When a particular culture passes through the machine of thinking, it comes out on the other side as a disembodied ghost of itself, devoid of all life-affirming characteristics. This disembodiment is a result of abstractification. What counters this is not another philosophical system opposed to it in its structure, but an excess of life that refuses to be abstracted and disembodied. That is why, from the standpoint of a modern white subject, still clinging to a particular way of life remains an enigma.

Baudrillard asks, “Who can defeat this global system?” And he answers, “Certainly not the anti-globalization movement whose sole objective is to slow down global deregulation.” This movement is powerless not because it lacks political impact, but because it has no symbolic impact. What can defeat this system, in Baudrillard’s view (and I agree with him on this), is not some positive or negative alternative, but a singularity, or rather singularities. Singularities have this power because they “represent a different symbolic order.” In highly evocative language, Baudrillard describes these singularities:

They do not abide by value judgments or political realities. They can be the best or the worst. They cannot be "regularized" by means of a collective historical action. They defeat any uniquely dominant thought. Yet they do not present themselves as a unique counter-thought. Simply, they create their own game and impose their own rules. Not all singularities are violent. Some linguistic, artistic, corporeal, or cultural singularities are quite subtle. But others, like terrorism, can be violent. The singularity of terrorism avenges
the singularities of those cultures that paid the price of the imposition of a unique global power with their own extinction.451

The West has forsaken its own singularity if it ever had one. In a Faustian bargain, the West sacrificed its singularity and exchanged it for global domination. The desire for global domination originated from a pure will to will, which is unwilling to let go its destructive willing. This supreme will defines the modern epoch. Will this “will” exhaust itself in the end? Maybe, but not before destroying the planet we inhabit.

(If we listen to someone like Elon Musk, who is determined to colonize Mars, we can easily conclude that this “will” might live on even after the death of this planet. Elon Musk shows, better than anyone else, the truly “universal” (in the sense of going beyond earth) reach of this will. His justification for the need to colonize Mars is scary, “It’s important to get a self-sustaining base on Mars because it’s far enough away from earth that [in the event of a war] it’s more likely to survive than a moon base.”452 What this means is that the destruction unleashed by modern technology is no longer limited to this planet alone, it has already become terrestrial. Indian space agency ISRO’s (Indian Space Research Organization) recent destruction of a satellite in space is just an indication.453)

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The resistance of these singularities is not only aimed at their own survival over and against the threat posed by the West. It is also a fight to save the West from itself. This strange solidarity with the West is where the hope lies. For as long as these singularities fight out of hate for their enemy, they get reduced to its mirror image. This happens only when they fight out of revolutionary love, a love engulfed in the call of Sarbat da Bhala.

6.5.4 Sabda (Language) as the Way: Deframing Language

दीवा धमान्दे हेले बहुधे।
Cosmic expanse happened through the word.
-Guru Nanak Dev⁴⁵⁴

[O]ne must speak several languages and produce several texts at once.
- Jacques Derrida⁴⁵⁵

The Sikh scripture considers Sabda (language) as the way that leads to human emancipation. Without Sabda, there is no salvation. In one’s confrontation with oneself, Sabda provides the anchor that is required for such an endeavor. But what is Sabda?

Sabda is not a theory of language. It is not a metalanguage. Nor is it the essence of language that pervades through every language. All of these descriptions would be metaphysical. Sabda is a

⁴⁵⁴ Guru Nanak, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, 3.
⁴⁵⁵ Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, 135.
non-metaphysical style of language that is universal and particular at the same time. Sabda does not come from one language. It arises from the intermingling of several languages. It calls into question the metaphysical purity of every putatively originary language. It is the free throbbing of language devoid of its metaphysical framework.

Is it possible to capture the essence of Sabda in a language that is from the West, in a metaphysical language? It is a tricky question. Is metaphysics alien to Sabda? If that were the case, then Sabda would be something provincial. If not, then how do we explain their relationship?

Sabda is not an essence (not even in the Heideggerian sense). It is rather a transformative process that refuses to be captured in any given framework. Prof. Puran Singh, a Sikh scholar who responded to the crisis of modernity through his creative writings, writes about the transformative power of words. There is no Sikh “philosophy” of language as philosophy dissects only dead things. As Hegel said in his Philosophy of the Right, “The Owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the falling of dusk.”456 He meant that philosophy could analyze something only after the fact. When something has already passed. Thus, philosophy cannot provide any help in envisioning a future. The initiation of a transformative process is much more likely to lead to an emancipatory future than philosophizing.

Sikh understanding of language involves a deliberate move away from philosophizing as the sole and supreme mode of engaging with the world. When Guru Nanak Dev said, “Cosmic expanse happened through the word,” it is not meant as an ontological explanation of the creation of the world. It points towards the originary power of the word. This conception of the cosmos sidesteps the centrality of confrontation, as is the case with Heraclitus and Heidegger, for the emergence of the world. This move eliminates the move to posit the pre-existence of duality for the confrontation to take place.

A Sikh scholar, Dr. Gurbhagat Singh (1938-2014) has called attention to the uniqueness of Sikh Sabda. He distinguished it from Vedantic, Buddhistic, and Western notions of language. According to him, the real contribution of Sikh sacred writings is “in producing a signifier that is neither stably connected with the signifieds related to the Vedāntic kind of ātmicity accepting Brahma as the source or the ultimate of the Order, nor connected with the Buddhistic kind of anātmicity that leads to an invisibly and non-phenomenally accepted self (not-self or anātta).”

The signifier of the Sabda creates a different order that is not isolated in its interiority but is connected with an “external order with socio-political undertones.” Language is not merely a vehicle for human expression. The manifestation of these signifiers in lyric and music makes them “loose and fluid.” Their very fluidity makes them unstable. “This instability helps the signifier in retaining the human element and at the same time elaborate the minimal order that the life needs to sustain itself.”

\[459\] Ibid.
One of the problems in dealing with this conception of language is that it evades metaphysical linguistic representation. It can be more easily enacted than philosophically explained. One of the “proofs” of this enactment is the life of Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak travelled extensively through South Asia and Middle East. Bhai Mardana, an accomplished Rabaab player, accompanied him. Wherever he went, it was his custom to announce his arrival by singing a hymn. His dialogues with Siddhas, Jogis, Peers, and Sufis are in poetic form. Some of these dialogues are preserved in the form of Guru Nanak’s *Baani* such as *Siddh Gosti*. *Siddh Gosti* is a poetic rendering of his dialogue with the *Siddhas*. This mode of engagement is different from the one envisioned by Heidegger as *Auseinandersetzung*. Heidegger’s method is trapped in thinking. He failed to imagine, as we have in chapter four, that sometimes bodily wisdom can find the way where thinking encounters an impasse.

### 6.6 Revolutionary Love as Decolonial Praxis

The *I*, as a *psychic individual*, can only be thought insofar as it belongs to a *we*, which is a *collective individual*: the *I* constitutes itself in adopting a collective history, which it inherits, and in which is recognized a plurality of *Is*.  

> -Bernard Stiegler

Our wise men say: “May God protect us from the word I.” The immigrant faithfully did what he could to preserve the ultimate meaning of this saying in a France that exalts the

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460 *Rabaab* is a musical instrument used in South Asia.

461 Religious and spiritual personalities of the time.

liberal, consumer, pleasure-seeking “I.” An “I” that motivates the market and crushes every indecisive “we,” starting with the postcolonial “we,” which is opportunistically stigmatized as tribal.\textsuperscript{463}

-Houria Bouteldja

Love starts by escaping the prison of the I. When a culture has invented countless myths, ideologies, and technologies to exalt the I, to raise it to the level of God, then it becomes necessary for any emancipatory politics to forge a “we.” This “we” does not have to be a “we” of a closed group identity. This “we” is not a community of those whose moral codes concur with each other, but a “we” embedded in a love for the other.

Houria Bouteldja, a French Muslim woman, looks for the realization of this “we” in Islam. “In Islam, divine transcendence calls for humility and the permanent awareness of the ephemeral.”\textsuperscript{464} Her call is a call for a liberation utopia. She calls for solidarity of all liberation utopias. “But there is still much work to be done and all other liberation utopias will be welcome, wherever they may come from, be they spiritual or political, religious, agnostic, or cultural, so long as they respect Nature and the human being, who is fundamentally only one element among all others.”\textsuperscript{465}

\textsuperscript{463} Houria Bouteldja, \textit{Whites, Jews, and Us: Toward a Politics of Revolutionary Love}, trans. Rachel Valinsky. (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2016), 131.
\textsuperscript{464} Bouteldja, \textit{Whites, Jews, and Us}, 132.
\textsuperscript{465} Ibid, 134.
She cites a letter written to American President Richard Nixon by the Hopi tribe of indigenous people on 4th August 1970. This message, which the Hopi elders say is a message for all people, identifies the problem with utmost clarity:

The white man, through his insensitivity to the way of Nature, has desecrated the face of Mother-Earth. The white man's advanced technological capacity has occurred as a result of his lack of regard for the spiritual path and for the way of all living things. The white man's desire for material possessions and power has blinded him to the pain he has caused Mother Earth by his quest for what he calls natural resources. All over the country, the waters have been tainted, the soil broken and defiled, and the air polluted. Living creatures die from poisons left because of industry. And the path of the Great Spirit has become difficult to see by almost all men, even by many Indians, who have chosen instead to follow the path of the white man.466

We are all today like those “many Indians, who have chosen instead to follow the path of the white man.” We have forgotten the message of love our traditions taught us. Rekindling this love is not an intellectual act. This love is not an abstract idea or just a cozy feeling. This love shines forth through particular sites. These sites can be deeds of solidarity, acts of resistance, words of poetry, artistic creativity (that is not a part of the culture industry), and the creation of secure enclaves for “vulnerable” people.

Every culture has some sort of anchor that provides strength when its people are threatened by an immense danger. These anchors come in different forms for different cultures. For a Muslim, it can be Holy Quran, for the indigenous peoples, it can be the stories of their elders, and for Sikhs, it is Sri Guru Granth Sahib. It is due to the primordial power of these anchors that Western sociologists who predicted the demise of religion by the end of the twentieth century were proven wrong. These anchors effectively function as wellsprings of resistance.

The dangers faced by vulnerable people can be so immense at times that they can fall into despair. How can an individual be expected to retain her courage when faced by something like genocide, climate change, and torture? The prevalence of depression today is a sign that many people have lost their anchors. But why did they lose their anchors? Not every culture has turned against their traditions like the West did in modernizing itself. What happened then?

Two things have happened. One is what the Hopi elders described in their letter to Richard Nixon, that many Indians (and other non-white, non-Indians as well) are becoming more and more like the whites. But the second thing, which is very crucial, is that these anchors are targeted by the logic of desecration. What is this logic of desecration? This logic is the ultimate political weapon. It operates by way of humiliation, trivialization, and obsolescence.

Humiliation: The logic of desecration operates by identifying the most sacred and revered aspect of the life of a people and then attacking it in the most debasing way. The desecration of Holy
Quran by white supremacists and American soldiers, the publication of the cartoons of Prophet Muhammad, and the recent string of desecrations of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in Punjab and elsewhere are some of the examples. After colonization, the British started this process in Punjab by desecrating Sri Harmandir Sahib. The Indian Army did it in 1984 by attacking Sri Harmandir Sahib and Sri Akal Takht, two places most revered by Sikhs.

Trivialization: After humiliation, both the damage and the pain are trivialized. The left plays a prominent role in this process. After the desecration of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in Punjab, some leftist activists argued that it should not be made an issue as it is just a book, and everyone should have a right to disrespect a book. The left in non-Western countries, and especially in Punjab, often functioned as a zealous driver of this logic of desecration.

Obsolescence: The third aspect of the logic of desecration is obsolescence. It functions primarily by academic and intellectual means. It consists of arguments that the anchors of the community are just relics of bygone eras which no longer have any practical relevance for current issues. This move originates in uncritically espousing the ideals of modernity.

Instilling self-hate in the targeted community neutralizes the resistance against this logic. This logic of desecration is aimed at making the anchors that reinforce communities in times of crisis absent. When these anchors stop pulsating everyday praxis of a community, then their vital cultural practices are reduced to moral duty, an unwanted burden. Inability to understand this logic of desecration has prompted many people to, unfortunately, succumb to the idea that the logic of modernity has no alternative.
In the wake of the publication of cartoons of Prophet Muhammad, Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood reflected upon the nature of injury caused by desecration. Mahmood poignantly argued that this injury couldn’t be addressed through legal means alone for the logic of law does not even recognize how grievous this injury is.

Sublime, affective attachment with something goes against the logic of Enframing. Such attachment affirms that aspect of life, which refuses to submit itself to the logic of standing-reserve. It resists being reduced to a resource ready to be exploited. These anchors provide life-affirming vitality that is needed to sustain the struggle against technological domination. The desecration of these beginnings is an attempt to neutralize this resistance by way of a most devilish subterfuge.

The possibility of being desecrated is not “vulnerability” in the ordinary sense. It is instead the real strength. In keeping their most sacred aspect vulnerable, these other beginnings evade the closure of metaphysics. Metaphysics arises from the fear of death and destruction: hence the excessive morbid emphasis on the meta, the beyond of this world. Something that is vulnerable to desecration opens itself unreservedly. The wound is not a problem to be avoided. It is the place where light enters you.

The technological Enframing of existence, the informatization of language, the desecration of the sacred: these are not causes for lamentation. Attunement with the pain caused by these leads the way towards birha, without which body is like a graveyard. It is this bodily experience of birha,
a painful longing for the divine that leads to another future. Birha is the wound of the soul captured by Enframing. Only by keeping this wound open can an emancipatory opening towards the future happen.

6.8 Conclusion

This penultimate chapter outlines a possible response to techno-coloniality. Such response becomes conceivable by grounding everyday life in the transforming power of the desecrated beginnings. This transforming power functions primarily through language. It is by altering our relationship with and our conception of language that we can connect with this beginning.

Realizing the power of language in this way is essential for every decolonizing project. Decolonizing techno-colonial situation functions by way of revitalizing the primordial power of words. Decolonization understood in this way, is not an event within history, but an event that ruptures the monotonous and dull frame of history that is imposed upon it by technologization of the world. Only by revitalizing the lived temporalities, originary power of words, and revolutionary love can we envision decolonial futures.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

The promise of decolonial futures conditions our present as much as our colonial past does. Colonialism is not something that we have left behind. It continues to structure and condition the world we inhabit. Techno-coloniality regulates our inner lives, the environment we live and breathe in, and institutions that provide foundations of our social existence. The extent to which techno-coloniality is able to arrest our attention and exploit our natural resources was unthinkable during the height of colonialism although it existed as a metaphysical principle long before that. Commodification of not only our attention, but almost every aspect of our inner lives such as sexuality, interpersonal relations, affects etc. has lent a new urgency to the task of decolonization. Along parallel lines, imminent climate change catastrophe exhorts us to find ways to deframe techno-colonial organization of contemporary global order without any delay. The future of this planet and our own species may depend on our efforts to envision decolonial futures.

Our inner lives and the cultures we live by do not exist as rational systems but as ecologies. English word ‘system’ comes from Ancient Greek. It is composed of syn, which means together and histanai, cause to stand. System is something that makes things stand together. There is a sense of enforcement and order operative here. On the other hand, ecology, which also comes from Ancient Greek, is composed of oikos, dwelling place or house, and logia, study of. Houses or places of dwelling are not forcefully put together but are held together by the affectionate bonds of a family. However, ecology also contains a problematic strand in the form of logy, which makes it stand under the shadow of epistemology. In spite of that, ecology does convey a
sense of relationality that can play a decisive role in finding alternatives to our techno-colonial condition. During the last decades of his life, Heidegger made homeland and homecoming his primary motifs. During the seventh centenary celebrations of his hometown Messkirch, he raised this immensely important question of the homeland, “A question not only for this city, not only for our country, not only for Europe, but for mankind on this earth is whether under the domination of modern technology along with the changes in the world worked by it there can be, in any sense at all, a homeland.”467 This homelessness does not merely consist in the physical dislocation of a people from their lands, or the transformation of their lands by gigantic technology. This homelessness is ontological. The planetary triumph of metaphysics makes every nation homeless no matter how well they have preserved their landscape and traditions. When everyday life comes under the shadow of technological rationality, the connection with the homeland inevitably changes. How can a people feel at home in a world where modern technology reigns and everything, including human beings, is reduced to standing-reserve, resources ready to be exploited?

This question haunts all the colonized peoples. Their homeland, their specific relation to their inhabited land is changed forever by techno-coloniality. Political decolonization did nothing to address this loss of homeland. Homesickness has become their destiny. Homesickness is a major motif in the poetry of Prof. Puran Singh, one of the major Punjabi poets of the 20th century. He lived during colonization of Punjab. His poems are replete with the calls for the return of old Punjab which was rapidly disappearing.

467 Heidegger, Homeland, 235-6.
For Heidegger, the task of addressing this homelessness is twofold. First, a new relationship with technology must be established in which the essence of technology is envisioned differently than its current condition. Secondly, the West needs to go through a profound spiritual awakening by reenacting the first beginning of Greek philosophy as the other beginning. For Heidegger, both these tasks are beyond the pale of human doing. It seems that he believes, although he never explicitly said so, that these changes can occur only through the grace of Being. All humans can do is to prepare themselves to be receptive of these transformations. For the colonized, this striving towards a different future takes a divergent route. For them, the promise of a different future is much more meaningful than it was for Heidegger.

Without this promise, we would be condemned forever to live in a world determined by technocoloniality. Realizing this promise is an immense task. Militant anti-colonial intellectual Frantz Fanon envisioned this future at the end of his book *The Wretched of the Earth*. Unfortunately, this part of his book is most neglected. The success of our efforts to create a world free from the clutches of modern technology, whose devastation has started to look more and more apocalyptic now, is premised on our ability to envision a different relationship with technology. To use Yuk Hui’s term, we need alternative technics different from the narrow and self-destructive conception of Western technology.

While the urgency of climate change is accelerating at a threatening pace, the mainstream discourses still remain trapped within a poverty of thinking slavishly tied to the panegyrics of science and technology. The wannabe climate saviors are miles away from acknowledging the futility of finding resolution to this gigantic problem from within the same domain where it had
its genesis. Although technological fixes do have a limited relevance in addressing this problem, it cannot be solved through these fixes alone. Something else is needed as well.

The planetary dominance of techno-coloniality requires the colonized to put forward a non-metaphysical, relational conception of the world capable of establishing an alternative social order. It would not happen in the form of an overarching, universally replicable program. It would take different forms for different regions of the world drawing from their respective traditions. The plurality of technics can thrive only in an environment of diverse cosmologies. Sikh spirituality provides such a cosmology which can empower deframing practices and bestow the grounds of a new beginning.
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