Dissertations, Master's Theses and Master's Reports

2018

Digitization of the World: A Phenomenology of Digitization

Thomas C. Adolphs
Michigan Technological University, tcadolph@mtu.edu

DIGITIZATION OF THE WORLD:

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF DIGITIZATION

By

Thomas C. Adolphs

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In Rhetoric, Theory, and Culture

MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

2018

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in Rhetoric, Theory, and Culture.

Department of Humanities

Dissertation Advisor: *Dr. Michael Bowler*

Committee Member: *Dr. Robert R. Johnson*

Committee Member: *Dr. Stefka Hristova*

Committee Member: *Dr. Charles Wallace*

Department Chair: *Dr. Ron Strickland*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The dissertation analyzes digitization through a phenomenological lens, understanding the digitization as an "outgrowth" of a potential that was *always already* latent within our being as the human-being. The analysis primarily utilizes the philosophic work of the 20th century philosophers, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Through their philosophies, I seek to synthesize Heidegger's concept of de-severance with Merleau-Ponty's concepts of embodiment and the world as possessing depth. In doing so, I bring these theoretical concepts together to build a phenomenological "picture" of how it is that the digitization of the world came into being. All the while, my ultimate project is seeking and displaying the underlying drive, or will, that occurs when human de-severance, our particular embodiment, and our unique access to the world as depth discover within the world the potential to digitize.

This will, and the result of the interplay between human de-severance, embodiment, and the world's depth is *the-will-to-flatten*. In putting forth this theory, I analyze how the will-to-flatten via digitization has influenced our understandings and engagement with embodiment, space, and intersubjectivity. While I argue that the will-to-flatten is the driving force of digitization, I ultimately seek to display that the telos of this will is a paradox that cannot be resolved.

Introduction

"Generalization of the problem: there was a passage to the infinite as objective infinity--This passage was a thematization (and forgetting) of the *Offenheit,* of the Life-World (*Lebenswelt)--We* have to start anew from behind that point."

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, (166)

The world has become increasingly digitized and will only continue to be impacted by this *digitization*. Digitization, clearly denoting the material transition from analog to digital, but given the context of this dissertation, will primarily be analyzed phenomenologically as an ontological phenomenon in the attempt to better understand the driving force "behind" digitization. One straightforward reason for the significance of this endeavor is that digitization has become an indispensable facet of modernity's reality. So ubiquitous is digitization to the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that, much like air, there is a tendency to presuppose its presence. Digitization's existence has so fully saturated our lives that it's easy to overlook just how vital it is to the contemporary moment, but one need not worry. We won't be able to forget for too long, as we are being reminded by a significant flow of scholarship - scholarship that informs us just how digital technologies and media not only exist with us, but how they are literally changing the world itself, for better or worse. And this work has established essential arguments and conversation points in regards to how we should treat digitization as we move towards the future, where human and the digital continue to merge.

For example, Marshall McLuhan, a visionary of digital media and its implications, published an eye-opening text in 1964, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* This text established a vital recognition that the *medium*, and by that McLuhan means the tangible technology itself, whether ancient or new, fundamentally alters the way we live our lives, influencing even our actions and thoughts (8). A television does not simply present us with discrete images. The television itself alters the structure of the home; where we sit and converse with

friends and loved ones is changed by the presence of the television. Anne Friedberg's *The Virtual Window* brings us back to the screen, not simply as a tangible apparatus, but as the metaphoric window through which so many of us encounter each and every day. She writes, "The frame of the screen is a closed system, a primary container for inset secondary and tertiary frames that may recede in *mise en abyme*, but also converge to reunite within a grander but still bounded frame" (241). The realities of our screens are paramount to our fundamental understanding of the world and others, Friedberg tells us. Screens both frame and filter, and hence, framing always produces a double phenomenon. The frame simultaneously includes while it excludes.

But do we consider this exclusion, or unquestioningly take what is included as our existence? What is being framed? What is not? We must continue to ask ourselves these questions in the age of the screen or our realties will be shaped by it. Douglas Rushkoff, in *Program or Be Programmed,* urges us in a similar vein to confront our digital technology and media devices as active users, and not to be unknowingly swayed by their potential power. He states, "Understanding programing - either as a real programmer or even, as I'm suggesting, as more of a critical thinker - is the only way to truly know what's going on in a digital environment, and to make willful choices about the roles we play" (8). Our technologies, and those who control them, are programming us, Rushkoff insists. We must know the program, the digital code, or at least be cognizant of it if we wish to reprogram ourselves. Meanwhile, Nicholas Carr investigates digital technologies and their capacity to change the human brain in *What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains: The Shallows*. Much like Socrates' warning in *The Phaedrus*, Carr addresses digital technology's increasing capacity to act as an extension of the mind, potentially diminishing our own memory (Plato, 551-552). Our smart phones hold the numbers of our contacts, scheduled appointments, and link us to Wikipedia, where so much of our human knowledge resides - so why actually remember any of this as one's own? Carr's *The Shallows* displays to us that our brains are literally being altered, our

synapses rewired. We are becoming as mechanistic as our machines, as timely as our clocks. We're losing our attention just as we become models of capitalistic efficacy, paradoxically leaving only our technology with the more "human" qualities, such as our emotions. Carr witnesses this transfer of qualities in Stanley Kubrick's *2001 Space Odyssey,* where in the end, the artificial intelligence HAL is the only figure that resonates qualities we consider most "human." HAL *feels* for its life, pleads for it. Human intelligence, in comparison, so mediated, so altered by the computers we constantly use, appears "flattened," – mechanistic (224).

And yet, insisting upon a more positive position, Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green confront digitization and its ability to transmit *Spreadable Media.* Together, the three display the ease with which the digital technologies we engage with link the world as one, spreading information in a vast, almost instantaneous manner. We are all connected via digitization. A YouTube video uploaded in Iraq can fundamentally, and quickly, impact human values and meaning on a global scale, a thesis that was arguably prophesized by Walter Benjamin in his seminal essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Reproducible technology, which increasingly turns works of art into discrete images, strips from them their particular space and time, their *aura*, allowing us to recreate and then transmit art all over the globe, politicizing it. Who controls the dissemination of this art, as well as the message attached to it? Now governments and corporations can use art as a means to an end, for profit, democracy, or even fascistic purposes. But what if the citizens take charge? What if citizens not only consume, but through a global public sphere of technological interconnection, reclaim art, creating its message apart from any higher institutional power? But this means we must still use digitization in order to save the world, does it not? Carr's fear, envisioned through HAL, might still be realized even as we work to save everything. Engagement with digital technology is impossible to abandon in our contemporary moment.

Considering such a dystopia, Jaron Lanier takes a reflective step back with *You Are Not Your Gadget*. Here Lanier insists that one can engage digital technology yet learn when to "disconnect" in order to find and center oneself to be more *authentic* in the face of the bombardment that Benjamin, Carr, and so many others have warned us of. He notes that, "The antihuman approach to computation is one of the most baseless ideas in history. A computer isn't even there unless a person experiences it" (26). Citizens, all of us, must be active users, but in order to avoid acquiring the qualities of our gadgets, we must also require time for disconnecting. What a conundrum we are in.

And yet, at the same time, we have David Trend's *Worlding,* as well as Jane McGonigal's *Reality Is Broken,* encouraging us to invest ourselves; no, immerse ourselves in virtual reality and digital games. Reality, the world, is broken, they insist, and perhaps it has always been. Could reality be fixed? Yes, but in order to fix reality, we must turn to our games and virtual worlds in order to discover a more utopic state within our technology, which may just resonate positive qualities within ourselves. Could learning from games and virtual worlds resolve our own problems in "the real world" when we "disconnect?" These two, and many others, convincingly inform us that a proper engagement with digitization might just save our rather "broken" existence. We might just bring our digitally reprogrammed selves back into the world, which so desperately demands fixing.

All of the positions presented above certainly have differences in opinion, scope, and especially how we should engage the digitized world, but there is consensus, an identical vein that courses through all of these texts: the world is becoming digital, and as it does, everything is changing, even the human being.

Is Digitization Fundamentally Altering the World and Human Experience?

The list of contributors to the theoretic and practical recognition that digital technologies, encompassed by *digitization* as it broadly refers to this phenomenon, goes far beyond the scope of the list mentioned above. However, the message, though contradictory at times, is again transparently clear. Digital technologies are everywhere, and all facets of the world face inevitable change, or perhaps the change has already taken place from the devices that impact such areas as gaming, augmented reality, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, media, communications, economics, sociopolitical relations, and even everyday appliances such as one's car and clock. These digitized technologies, this digitization, has had (and will continue to have) a profound change on the world, human existence, and our own condition. This much is evident by an abundance of digital theorists. Our human experience, as well as the world itself, where all of us collectively reside, has been fundamentally altered, these scholars inform us. We now have virtual worlds "apart" from *real-world* embodied and special existence. Perhaps these other worlds, better worlds, will save this one we currently consider home? What we need to do now is understand this fundamental transition called digitization, if only we wish to understand, cope with, and control, these changes. Digitization, this *new* world, or even worlds, is literally present all around us. We must inform ourselves, then act, these scholars all demand of us.

We can no longer ignore the digitization of the world. We can no longer allow digitization's ubiquity to numb us to its presence, as well as its consequences. A seemingly endless degree of technology – old and new, as well as that which is destined to come - has and is increasingly digitizing the world. We know this to be a fact, if only we take a moment to observe the world around us. Then we too may ask ourselves, is reality, the world itself, "broken" due to digitization? Or was reality broken before, and digitization our savior in disguise? Is the world fundamentally changing due to digitization? Strained attention spans,

a sense of isolation, global terror, drone attacks, cyber hacking, online bullying, child pornography, digital propaganda, the potential weakening of international sovereignty laws that facilitate the illegal sharing and downloading of content, or the leaking of government information, and the increased effect of national isolationism. To be sure, all of these issues, which are just to name a few, do plague us today. And all these issues, as is so reiterated within the public sphere, academic or exterior, if not directly due to the world's digitization, are further exacerbated by it. But on the other side, the brighter side, the claim is that digitization is in fact the very means by which we might fix a reality that perhaps was broken to begin with, change it, as it were. For example, gaming to prepare oneself for real life events, teamwork in online space, improved concentration, more engaging classrooms, a new wave of international communication, communicating with a loved one far away as time and space compress, greater recognition and acceptance of human difference, and the building of alternate worlds (better worlds) in virtual space. All these examples, and many more, appear to be positive aspects of the digitization of our world.

The narrative here, fueled by the conversation that has emerged around the topic, is resoundingly clear. Technologies that enable a digital-experience have, and are, continuing to change reality on a grand scale. And as the world becomes digitized, in all of its variant forms, it is our moral duty to contemplate the degree to which our world is becoming better or worse. We must acknowledge this, because we cannot escape it. Think about it: the odds are quite high that this text is coming to you from some type of digital screen, impacting both your physical and cognitive experience. The digital camera on your laptop, smart phone, or tablet sits waiting for you, ready to digitize an image of you or anything possessed within your line of sight. The world itself waits in preparation, ready to be turned into discrete digital code, then uploaded in another world – the world of digital space. A numeric sequence of ones and zeros now endlessly reside within countless hard drives, which interconnect, so as to be transmitted to a new location through the ease of touching only a few

digital buttons. A reality within the world of technological reproduction that even Walter Benjamin might be shocked by, were he still alive today.

A screen inside of the primary screen, which currently captivates your sight, may even present a distant location to you while you read this work, distance overcome. Two worlds become one, mediated through the Interconnect. It is of course possible to engage this text while a YouTube video maintains its telos in the corner as the location where the world becomes condensed, streaming your favorite music video, maybe even suggesting videos, as it algorithmically *learns* from your patterns of digital engagement. Or perhaps you'll minimize our conversation to view a live stream of a loved one over Skype. The global distance that separates you from your loved ones can now be joined, their *presence* brought near. You might even be wearing a digital retinal display, projecting the textual image directly onto the contour of your eyes. Your eyes, voice, hands, and basic body movements attuned to the reality that is displayed via this fascinating, new technology. The previous limits of space, and the time required to traverse it, feel more at ease with your passions for connection. In *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich argues that time and space experience a *compression* as technology advances and achieves "telepresence" (165). The world itself has *imploded* into your smart phone, only to then explode as the opening to a world of endless possibility for you, allowing you the gift of presence where your material body currently isn't. You can now connect with this writing, as well as with the writing of others, without even the need to move from the couch. A quick visit to Amazon allows you to download any text. Our digitized world would surely seem to be a state of opulent *magic* in comparison to the distance that was not to be overcome by those before us.

But, what if I have made too great of an assumption? What if you still find joy in the tactile sense and smell of a paper book? Though a technological relic, the paper book, magazine, or newspaper clearly haven't entirely lost our attention. Flipping through the pages of a new or used book has a tendency to produce a nostalgic, calming sensation. Much like the taste of the madeleine

transcends Proust's main protagonist in *The Search of Lost Time* to another location, so too can the aroma of a paper book. Analog paper books and vinyl records may well be making a return, as some long for a world less saturated in digitization. But saturated in digitization we are, whether one enjoys it or not. The ubiquity of the digital world is most certainly near your objective location. You are not "alone," at least not digitally alone. Other digital worlds continually enact themselves all around us each and every second. However invisible they may be as one walks the halls of one's home, these digital worlds wait for us to tap into them. The worlds in digital virtual space will immerse us, if only we let them. These worlds will surely consume our sense of space, time, and even self, as Jane McGonigal so beautifully displays in her text, *SuperBetter: The Power of Living Gamefully*.

But again, how often do we reflect to consider the changes that digitization has had on our lives, as well as changes on a grander scale, a world scale? In the *Philosophical Investigations,* philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein writes, "The aspect of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity" (50). What does Wittgenstein mean by this? Digitization, the technological devices that now proliferate the world, which connect so many of us to a constant stream of information, other people, games, and virtual worlds may not warrant the label *simple*, but they do permeate existence. Are we too *familiar* with digitization to notice its effects, to question digitization itself? The children of today have literally been born into the digital age, they are *digital natives* at birth, whether they know it or not. In fact, one day soon we may no longer know of a world where *digital immigrants* reside. To have an iPhone or Android phone placed into one's hands in the first few years of life certainly naturalizes the reality of digitization, but were those before these tangible devices knowledgeable of digitization? The iPhone, which struck so many with a sense of fascination in 2007, the year of its release, is now but a commonality of the world. How odd it might strike us, only eleven years later, to witness someone picking up the same phone and displaying a sense of amazement. The wonder inherent

in digitization's impact on our lives has become sterilized due to its everydayness, its commonality. As digital devices become such an integral aspect of our lives, their presence becomes more difficult for us to acknowledge. Given our contemporary moment, what is more *ready-to-hand*, to use Martin Heidegger's term, than our digital technologies? When a technology is *ready-to-hand,* it simply works and fulfills its given task; it is "in its place," so to speak. What's ready-to-hand we almost never question; instead, we engage it as a practical actuality, a means to something else, and in doing so it falls into the backdrop of our perception.

Considering another Heideggerian term, it is also true that we've become digitized if we turn to the occasions when our digital technologies fail us. In these moments, our technology presents itself to us in a different manner, it is *present-to-hand,* and we stumble in confusion, awakening to the sense of loss and disorder before us. From the Internet to digital banking, digital clocks, digitized global economies, digital classrooms, to even the increasing digitization of our cars and general transportation, one thing should become clear to us: digitization is all around. And when digitization escapes us, when it fails, we feel lost – exposed to the world, and the distance it places upon our embodiment. We *lose our world*, so to speak, we lose our *mastery*, our telos recognized via digitization.

Or, have we simply gone too far? There is now no doubt that digitization has become a vital facet of daily life, but is it a fundamental change of our world, of the human condition, our ontology (our fundamental being), which we are so often reminded of? When we turn our attention to the narrative that is presented to us, it doesn't seem that the claim, "we lose our world" when digitization fails, is in any way incorrect. And in some ways, given Heidegger's notion of *present-to-hand*, and Wittgenstein's claims to *familiarity,* they are correct. We have shown this. The issues encompassing digitization, as well as the disclosure of these issues to a wider audience, resonate with all of us. Discussing digitization, whether it is a specific technology, or more esoteric inquiry tends to captivate us - and it should. We can all sense that digitization is having an impact on our lives.

The narratives surrounding digitization is as ubiquitous as digitization is itself. But what is it that is changing? Has the human being fundamentally changed ontologically in the face of digitization's creation? And if so, how? These are the questions I wish to dwell upon and come at *anew* through a phenomenological lens.

Has this assertion that "digitization is changing everything," the human experience and its condition itself, been positioned upon certain presuppositions as well? That is to say, does the conversation surrounding digitization, academic or otherwise, tend to unknowingly engage in major presupposes regarding the essential being of the digital? While the scholarship on digitization does realize and engage with the need to reflect and analyze digital phenomenon, it so often takes the materiality of the analog and digital technologies, what is directly before us, as its point of initial departure.

The issue with this is that theorizations of digitization, centered around a materialistic (or even an intellectualist) point of view, presuppose their own philosophic metaphysical framework, which in turn directly influence the conclusions that are made. A *position* whereby subject and object remain distinct, easily allows for a misconception that the world is experiencing fundamental changes via the emergence of digital technologies. Because of this, it is not my intention to dismiss the claims that have been made about digitization outright, rather it is to take a phenomenological approach to ascertaining the phenomenon of digitization prior to making any direct claims on its potential for fundamental "worldly," or human, change. *Digitization*, being a term that will become increasingly defined throughout the course of this analysis, is here to be understood as an ontological phenomenon, one where the subject/object dichotomy is called into philosophic question. A phenomenological analysis will serve to unmask preconceived metaphysical standpoints, allowing for an ontology that discovers the digital as a *natural* "outgrowth" of the human condition, and more importantly as an outgrowth of a will that underlies the

10

nature of this condition. And the will I speak of, which will come to be defined as the-will-to-flatten, cannot be reduced to materialism.

That having been said, a materialist understanding of digitization, one based upon a subject verse object dichotomy, does produce worthwhile knowledge and contemplation on the experiences of a digital world. It's true that digitization is often times too close, too familiar, too ready-to-hand, to be *seen* by us. The scholarship listed sees the digital as a significant issue to contemporary psychology, sociology, communication, epistemology, politics, etc., this much is certain, but it fails to consider the undercurrent that drives digitization's very being into existence. It is true that were digitization to evaporate from the world, within an instant, unfathomable problems would quickly present themselves. Billions of human beings currently have an interconnected dependence upon the materiality of the digital, the global economy certainly does. But is "dependence" a sign of the world and the human undergoing fundamental changes, or have we made ourselves merely more vulnerable through our will towards digitization, with all of the potential powers it bestows upon us when it works? The question rarely asked is, what is digitization? What underlies digitization, what is driving it into existence at all? How is it possible that the human being, and our unique interplay with the world allowed for digitization to emerge at all?

Given these questions, I ask is digitization changing the human condition on a fundamental level? Has digitization, as a seemingly profound technological advance in our ability to manipulate reality, often by converting it into discrete data, which can then be transmitted and shared with others, changed our human condition? One might say it is now possible to build new worlds through computational data alone, worlds that can evolve and change. We can produce *artificial intelligence* that actually engages with us on an interactive level, which we learn from, and have a meaningful connection to. Our drive towards digitization has allowed us to open the sky, land on distant planets and even comets. Who knows what else is on the horizon, how close we may get to what is most empirically distant. But the question once again is, has this changed the

human condition and the world as it presents or "opens" itself to us? Has our condition been "expanded" with digitization, or has it been **impacted**? Here we must begin to be careful with our words, as **fundamental**, **impact,** and **change** possess different meaning.

Considering these questions, Wittgenstein's quotation shines light upon the reason that the narrative of digitization, as fundamentally world changing, even human changing, appeals so greatly to us. When reading such texts, we once again discover a sense of amazement in our digital devices. As digitization on a narrow or broad scale is held up in isolation against our reflection, its impact on our lives becomes visible. But impact is different than announcing a fundamental change, whether it be to the world or our own human experience. Can the two be disentangled? Again and again, these narratives, which are so familiar, not only awaken a sense of wonderment in the face of digitization, **but** they also insist that change is taking place even to our own human condition. Does the story we are so often told about digital technology rest on any presuppositions? Have they gone too far with the claims of digitization as a grand change to the world and the human being?

I wish to propose this thesis: digitization has (and is continuing to have) a vast **impact** on the world and human life, especially our intersubjectivity; however, examined phenomenologically, it is **not** the fundamental change to the world or human condition, which is so often presented to us in contemporary scholarship. Why, one might ask? Put simply, to fundamentally change the world and our own condition, as human beings, would require that the world, our embodiment, space, and intersubjectivity as a particular *openness* to the world, change their condition. And while the world and our being have been impacted, we will continue to show that it has not changed.

But what is meant by all of this? The world, human condition, openness, and fundamental change versus impact – all of these concepts may feel too ambiguous at the moment. In order to clarify this, we will engage the philosophy of phenomenology, developed in the early twentieth century by the late Edmond

Husserl, a project, that is vast and has evolved since its inception into the cannon of human knowledge. Guided by phenomenology we will discover a greater *sense/meaning* in the terms and the presupposition that is so grounded in contemporary digital media and technology scholarship on the subject of the digital. In doing so, I will present the case for why digitization appears to be a fundamental change to the world and the human condition, when it is in fact an impact that has "arisen" from a fundamental condition, a condition that in truth, has seen not fundamentally changed to itself since the advent of digitization, but rather drives it into being as an existential aspect of the human condition on a transcendent level – that is, beyond the scope of any one individual human life.

Layout of Chapters

Chapter One – Phenomenology of Digitization: this chapter will function as a chapter of clarification. Here I will specify how a phenomenological investigation of digitization critiques a deeply rooted *ideology* held within digital media and technologies studies, an ideology of the subject versus the object, empiricist or intellectualist, which interpret the world in a particular manner. Phenomenologically, I will turn to Martin Heidegger's *being-in-the-world* as an alternative starting point to the metaphysics of subject versus object. In doing so, the terminology of *world, de-severance, embodiment, depth, digitization*, and ultimately *the-will-to-flatten* will come into greater necessary light. This clarification of terminology will be useful for the reader throughout the dissertation, situating a more comprehensive understanding of the dissertation as a whole, also allowing for the analysis of individual technologies in order to display that while digitization has impacted the world and human condition, it has not fundamentally changed the human ontology as the-will-to-flatten.

Again, we shall come to see that contemporary digital technologies are often interpreted under an historically situated metaphysics of internal versus external, which places the subject over and against the objects; the objects in

this case are our digital devices, which we encounter in the world. We will display that the "disconnect" between subject and object is one situated under an historically upheld metaphysics that places the relationship between the world and the human condition, even one's own *self* and embodiment, as distinct and empirically discoverable within their own right. This ideological manner of comprehending the world sets in motion presuppositions regarding our sense of distance and space, a distance that allows us to state that there are "digital worlds" apart from the world we all know, a claim we will dispute as incorrect.

The subject object dichotomy presupposes a sense of a distance between the world, the human, and technology, viewed as "things," or objects, in the world. Under this classic dichotomy, the spatial and temporal "distance" that is always between myself, as a subject, and the other objects in the world, which are not currently *visible* to me, become objectively problematic. Digital technologies appear as an "overcoming" of the problem of distance, which if we understand the human condition and the world under the terms of phenomenology, was never a problem, phenomenologically speaking, to begin with.

The issue is that under these historic metaphysical terms, even one's own *body*, as the medium of perception and the world's unconcealment, or the very manner in which the world "opens," constantly presents itself as meaningful to us, also becomes an object. What is presupposed through the subject object dichotomy is **human embodiment** as a consistent correlative to the world, a non-reducible *medium,* or *existential*, by which the world possesses certain meaningful experiences to said embodiment. What's more, the metaphysical standpoint of the subject object dichotomy, often a presupposition of both empiricism and idealism, inherently objectifies notions of the body, space, the other, and even "self." Objectification ultimately quantifies, measures, calculates, and creates a taxonomy of differences, subsequently embedding an ideology that places too great a *space* (or objective distance) between the subject and object. Unsurprisingly, this ideology just mentioned is deeply rooted in our academic and

social thinking such that it inherently invades the scholarly field of digital media and technology studies.

Our intent, however, is not to state that this objectification, resting on the subject object divide, is somehow inherently "wrong." In fact, it is the *functiona*l means by which humans, as a particular embodied relation to the world, have apprehended the world in order for us to bring digital technologies into existence. Digital technology depends on objectification. But is objectification all that there is or all that is happening to us on an experiential level?

My argument is that objectification is the result of a certain type of human, embodied existence. Our interest rests in the interplay of embodiment as a particular *situation* that constantly works "itself" out *reflectively,* both individually and more vitally intersubjectively, as a correlation to the world, which it is in and always already a part of. As embodied "subject," the world simultaneously "conceals" and "reveals" itself due to its *depth.* And this is an experiential process that happens prior to any objectification, whereby by we learn to idealize the world and ourselves as subjects over and against objects that we perceive and bring meaning to, *ourselves*.

What we often fail to comprehend is our relation to the world as a particular type of embodied situation, whereby we always engage with anything at all, whether it be our own "selves, or "external objects." And this is a simultaneous interplay of *mutual engagement*, resulting in a disclosure of meaning and new experiences, as well as technological possibilities, that is never fully finished or complete, and is constantly open to change – because we are situated in-the-world as an embodiment perspective. We attempt to understand our engagement with, as well as the implications of digital technology, by exploring specific technologies via these phenomenological terms. The hope is that we can gain a new understanding of our relationship to digitization, not limited to the ideologies inherently entrenched in the subject/object dichotomy, which often understand the digital as a *new* frontier.

We will also sense that while digital technologies have had an impact on the world and human condition, they have not changed it in any fundamental way. In what way should we deal with the impacts of digitization after realizing that the world and our own condition is fundamentally unaltered?

Chapter Two - Embodiment and Digitization: this chapter will explore human embodiment as the manner that the human being is always already existentially situated within the world and can never fully "extend" or separate *into* ulterior worlds or realties beyond our de-servant being. I will explore digital virtual technologies under the continued explication of the phenomenological concepts that were developed in chapter one.

In doing so, throughout this chapter we will explore the phenomenological experience of *individual* human embodiment as the inescapable and constant involvement with a particular placement or situation, as well as the ground of de-severance. In order to do so, the chapter will explore such technologies as the *Oculus Rift*– continually displaying embodiment's fundamental interrelation to this digital, virtual technology. Through the investigating of this technology, the reader will come to better comprehend how human embodiment, engaged as one such digital device as the Oculus Rift, not only brings the technology into existence, but is always already grounded as an existential constant interrelation between our particular body and a particular being-in-the-world (digital or not – as no distention truly exists), which constantly forms and opens new meaningful experiences. The Oculus opens aesthetic possibilities, which, while providing an experience that can be learned from, like all experience, is **not** an escape from the world into another, but is rather situationally bound to the potentials and confines of embodiment.

Lastly, I will come to acknowledge that embodiment in the "real world" not only impacts "digital worlds" and cultures, provided by the Oculus Rift, but is in fact inseparable from one constant world of experience, which is the world that is always mediated, and never escaped due to embodiment - even in the realm of

the digital. We shall see that *lived experience* takes new aesthetic shape with our digital technologies, but this does not mean that "new worlds" are possible, as though these worlds could somehow be utterly distinct from embodiment and the world of meaningful experience that situated de-severant being.

Chapter Three – Space and Digitization: Lev Manovich questioned the issue of *presence* as it relates to *distance* and *time* in our digital era; in doing so, he introduces his theory of telepresence. The concept Manovich opens is undeniably of great importance, though we will stress that the underlying foundation of any theory of telepresence is in fact situated on certain presuppositions that I will unravel via this phenomenology of digitization.

In this chapter, I will analyze the issues of *digitized presence* within space, digitization as the overcoming of empirical distance. This analysis will be guided by the phenomenological concepts of *de-severance*, *embodiment* and space as *depth*, which will add to the discussion of our "altered" perception of space in the digital age. Examples of space in the digital age, one's digital *tele-presence* will focus on "real time" smart phone connection, reaching into locations far divorced from one's own empirical embodied location. Building off of the previous chapter, I will make this leap by investing the issue of what it means to be *present* as de-severant within space phenomenologically understood through Merleau-Ponty's theory of depth, and the *thickness* of objects, concepts that inherently relate to the perception of space as fundamentally changing via digitization.

What does it mean to be present is a significant philosophic question, and how one addresses this issue influences the perception of technology and its accomplishments. Within this chapter, the answers to perception, and the overcoming of space, will unravel through the concept of de-severance, depth, and the-will-to-flatten. At first glance, it may appear that the digital era has forced us to question this concept anew. A question too often presupposed as obvious has been reawakened in the digital age due to technologies such as photography, film, and the surveillance camera – especially linked to one's digital

phone. However, we will begin from the perspective that presence – prior to the digital era - is anything but obvious and is far too often misunderstood under the ideologies of the subject/object dichotomy, missing de-severance.

By observing these technologies through a phenomenological lens, it will become clear why theories such as Manovich's ultimately "fall short." What we mean by this is that our theoretic lens will shed light on how and why Manovich theorizes perception from a stance that is far too limiting. Though arguably presupposed, Manovich consistently places the subject (or perceptual perceiver) inside an objective body, which situates itself against a world of "material objects," which digital devices "extend" our presence *into, or toward*.

Our theoretic stance will argue that if space is limited, claims of objective *mathematics,* little of the actual experience of presence (both its historic ramifications, as well as its limitations) will be genuinely grasped under these terms. The very reason that digital technology's "compression" of space strikes us as shocking and new is in fact a misunderstanding of human embodied *presence* itself as de-severant. Furthermore, what is missed entirely is the underlying will-to-flatten.

What will become clear is that our embodiment is always already situated to worldly circumstances that anticipate what is not objectively 'present,' even prior to digital emergence. The human de-severance is always *situational,* and called on by the depth of space, which is more than what is objectively "against" a subject. Digitization does not change this, digitization merely opens and exacerbates ethical and moral considerations as one moves toward an exploration of intersubjectivity and digitization, within a world where empirically speaking, otherness is brought increasingly near by the-will-to-flatten.

Chapter Four - Intersubjective and Digitization: Within the previous chapters, the embodied perspective of the "individual," and this embodiment's access to the depth of space via de-severance, remain important, yet too confined. Because of this, the fourth and final chapter will analyze digitization's impact on

intersubjectivity, ultimately looking toward the impact digitization is having, as the will-to-flatten, on ethics. In this chapter, I will focus on Artificial Intelligence, YouTube, and Facebook as experiences whereby digital technologies impact intersubjective *experience*. In doing so, I will build upon the argument that digitization resides within the-will-to-flatten, a will to make the farness vanish, and ultimately to erode the depth of the world, even if this means the depth of the other. My claim will be that the most profound impact of digital technologies is not on our particular type of embodiment or escaping said embodiment for other "worlds." It is not the erosion of empirical space as distance. But, that digital technologies have **impacted** our intersubjective experience, exacerbating the scope of one's situation, as well as allowing for an individual embodied perspective to "take in" a larger scope of other experience than ever before, though paradoxically allowing for a narrowing of this nearness – a closing off of one's phenomenological, intersubjective world. Our most profound contemporary challenge is not in escaping the world for other worlds, which we will have shown is not possible, but facing being-in-the-world with new ethical, moral, and political questions in the wake of digitization's impacts on the intersubjective experience.

Chapter One: Phenomenology and Digitization

"…there was a passage to the infinite as objective infinity--This passage was a thematization (and forgetting) of the *Offenheit,* of the *Lebenswelt (*life-world) --We* have to start anew from behind that point"

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, (166)

Introduction

The intent of this chapter is clarification, especially for any reader unfamiliar with the terminology, concepts, and theory of the philosophy of phenomenology. Clarification will simultaneously link into the analysis of *digitization* and *the-will-to-flatten,* hopefully enlightening what is meant by these concepts, which must to be understood as the backbone of this phenomenological argument that runs throughout the dissertation as a whole. If it is true that digitization has not altered the fundamental ontology of the human being, but is rather the result of *being-in-the-world*, *de-severant* under a particular human e*mbodiment*, which "takes up" space conceived of as *depth*, as I argue that it is, then some degree of context is required. These italicized terms are rich with content and lead us toward the realization that while digitization does not change our ontological condition, it surely exacerbates certain innate human conditions and tendencies as the world is brought continually *nearer* to us via digitization. This exacerbation, while not a change of ontology, of our phenomenological condition, does impact the moral and ethical implications of engaging with an increasingly digital world, where what was once separated from an individual by an empirical distance (otherness, for example) is increasingly brought into our world as we *digitize,* whether real or virtual.

Phenomenology of the World: The phenomenology of being-in-the-world, and what led to it

Here the intention is to conceptualize the groundwork for a theory of the *world* and its "*digitization"* as an all-encompassing framework to the *lived experience* of our contemporary digital moment. A phenomenological theory of world is a relatively underdeveloped concept in the analysis of digital media technology, in the sense that this concept influences one's perception of metaphysics and ontology. For example, Don Idhe, in his text, *Bodies in Technology,* addresses the phenomenological body as the site of knowing the world, digital or not, but doesn't delve into digitization or the will that underlies it. Digitization, understood here is not simply an analysis of our tangible devices – from the computer and the tablet, to smart phones, gaming systems, virtual realities, A.I. systems, etc. - but the *lived experience* that all who confront digital technology are intended "towards" as de-severant. In other words, we wish to better comprehend how digital technology (broadly speaking), through the human condition, arose as a tangible possible, and the subsequent effect of the technology on our individual and collective intersubjective experience. This will ultimately lead toward futures works that increasingly deal with the moral and ethical issues this theory of digitization unfolds.

  Lived experience means the primary *opening* of experience and engagement with digitization's impact on our lives, or how the world initially presents itself as some-thing to be engaged – how we are first and foremost caught up in the world as a matter of depth that we concern ourselves with through various projects, both large and small, collective and individual. To avoid slipping into confusion over the theory I wish to employ, we will begin by addressing Edmond Husserl's theory of the *life-world* as the all too often presupposed "ground" by which the world *always already opens,* in various manners, for the human being, which will lead into Heidegger's analysis of being-in-the-world. Though it will be acknowledged that the human is not the self-contained eternal "center" of experience, in the sense of the Cartesian *cogito*.

Still, it is imperative to recognize that we as human beings are always experiencing "phenomena" or "things" via a particular manner, an embodied *schema* to cite Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception*, which cannot be overcome, whether tangible, imaginative, or digital (49). Our perceptual perspective, which is to say we as the human being, is one whereby we are opened to phenomenon through our modes of being-in-the-world as a human being. The schema/mode I speak of, and wish to further investigate, always pertains to digital technologies because this schema always includes one's embodiment, our being situated within the world, allowing for our intersubjective experience with otherness, and the foundations of meaningful relations to anything at all.

By turning to Edmond Husserl, the aim is not only to find the roots of the phenomenological concept of *world*, but to explore its conceptual development. We shall come to see that theory was developed in the early twentieth century, stating that our primary experience exists as that which is prior to the act of rational reflection upon existence, which has arguably lead to two relatively polar outcomes – empiricism and intellectualism. Empiricism is seen as the externalization of the world as material cause and effect, and intellectualism the internalization of the world as a subject constituting said world through internal acts of meaning. I will argue that one consequence of our capacity for reflection (our sense of distance form "self," and hence, distance form the world) has resulted in the outcome of the world and our own human being has become comprehended as objects of study, via the objectification of classical empiricism beginning in the seventeenth century. And yet, this has always been the result of what I consider to be the underlying condition of the human being, our underlying will to nearness, the eradication of distance, *the-will-to-flatten.*

On the antithetical end of the spectrum, our being, and the world of things has been understood as subjectification via the intellectualist tradition, which refutes certain empiricist claims that posit the body and mind as casual objects. The outcome of the subjectivist's spectrum has been to turn our subjectivity, or

22

the sense of "inner presence," into a constituting force that constructs a meaningful world *around itself*. At present, the primary objective is to overcome, as well as modify these two extremes by turning toward a theory of the being-in-the-world, and sensing how what comes of this leads us to an understanding of digitization not as an ontological shift in being, but a result of the-will-to-flatten.

If we succeed in ascertaining what is meant by the world as the presupposed ground by which experience presents itself as an *always already* opened space of our lived experience*, our *de-severance,* it is the hope that a more concrete understanding of digitization's development and its impact on our lives will present itself, eventually leading to further analysis into the moral and ethical ramifications of digitization. Although we must initially engage with Husserl, we shall come to see that his concept of world, while always remaining a fundamental "backbone," has in fact been modified by a number of scholars, including the twentieth century philosophers Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose work this dissertation is theoretically constructed upon.

While Husserl ultimately grounds the life-world's most constituting element in the transcendental ego, which we shall understand as being too close to both the rationalist and intellectualist traditions, we will ultimately develop our understanding of the world as a constant *play* between our mode of de-severant embodiment, space as depth, and intersubjectivity as they collectively relate to the surrounding world of "things" to be brought near through the-will-to-flatten. Through this initial clarification, the hope is to apprehend how human reflection has *historically fallen*, and is now situated, into various types of metaphysical analysis that dominant contemporary digital media scholarship. Both objective and subjective analysis of the world, our body, and the *cogito*, find their development through our human capacity for *metaphysical* reflection – a phenomenon relating to the humans self-reflective capacitive as de-severant openness towards the world. We shall see that it is only via the inherent properties imbued upon our reflective state that various types of "worldly" and "personal" analysis have emerged, resting "on" the presupposed ground of being-

in-the-world, the *always already* opened space of experience and ultimately depth.

Next, I will come to comprehend how in one sense the objectification of the world through our reflective capacity, firmly established during the tide of enlightenment empiricism, has allowed for modern digital technology to emerge, especially in chapter three, *Space and Digitization*, while subsequently leaving a vast degree of blindness in regards to our comprehension of how the world always already opens (or *perceptually* presents) itself via de-severant being. This *blindness* was in fact acknowledged, however flawed, through the Kantian idealist tradition that was established during the eighteenth century. If all of life is merely a sequence of objective causal relations, as empiricism implies, how can an account of one's subjectivity, one's "internal" life and free will as a meaningful relation to the world of things, fit into such an objectivist account of existence? Kantian idealism addressed this issue by turning toward the transcendental ego, as the *a-prior* condition by which the world is meaningfully constituted by the human subject. However, it must be understood that the idealist tradition took this conception of an inner immanence too far, placing an overemphasis on the world's "meaningful construction" **within** the ego, or rational *cogito*, which was perhaps Husserl's greatest historic conceptual barrier, even as he developed a theory of the world/life-world. In the end, we shall see that Husserl ultimately resides too immersed in the wake of Kantian idealism, even as he develops a radical new "ground" for philosophy.

That having been stated, regardless of objectifications inherent in presuppositions*,* it will be shown that it is none other than the potential of our being-the-world that has opened our objectification of the world, and even our own bodies, to the possibilities revealed to us within the revolutions in technological development and science. One might state that if a conception of the world is of importance, why has it not been comprehended sooner, for it is true that missing *the world* as the formative ground of experience does by no means **stop** digitization from being developed. And this is because the-will-to-

flatten does not require this as a means to acquiring its telos towards nearness, the "development of tangible technological digitization.

As Merleau-Ponty writes in his final major essay, "*Eye and Mind,*" "Science manipulates things and gives up dwelling in them. It gives itself internal models of things, and operating on the basis of these indices or variables, the transformations that are permitted by their definition, science confronts the world only from greater and greater distances" (351). The sense produced by this metaphysical means of apprehending the world is one whereby the world presents itself as calculative distanc*e, establishing* the sense of objectivity that Merleau-Ponty refers to, which is the result of our human capacity for reflection as a de-severant being. However, it shall be understood that to exacerbate this sense of *distance* between ourselves and the world, so as to "see" the world, embodiment, space, consciousness, and otherness as things in the world, or as mere objects to be mathematized within objective space, is the very means by which being-in-the-world conceals itself from our acknowledgement, even as it brings forth technological development.

And it could be argued through an objectivist account that a phenomenological analysis of being-in-the-world, the-will-to-flatten, and digitization is of no use, or simply baseless; that having been stated, however, as we situate the proceeding chapters, it is of importance through this chapter that we apprehend how missing a theory of the being-in-the-world, of the phenomenological world, does in fact diminish our power to philosophically apprehend what happens to us over and above our own sense of intellectualist "self-willing," as we peruse various technological ends, as well as the diminishment this has on how to assess the potential consequences of our technologies.

In the case of this study, the ends are the increased development of digital technologies within our lives. A theory of being-in-the-world will enrich the view of how these tangible technologies came to be, and perhaps more importantly, develop a sounder knowledge regarding their impact on our *de-severant*

experience as it derives itself from the depth of world's space as potential. To understand the world as the ground upon which experience and meaning are constituted, points us toward an acknowledgement that an impact upon the world through our opened powers of embodiment, de-severance, and intersubjectivity have led to digitization, and in doing so, have impacted our sense of nearness, which is the grounds upon which experience itself is constituted.

Clarification of Husserl's Theory of World

Delving too deeply into the nuances of Edmond Husserl's theoretical life work would demand the attention of an entire dissertation unto itself, which is the not the intention here. That stated, the goal at present is not to simplify or diminish Husserl, but to point toward a number of key concepts that he developed in his critique of previous philosophers, primarily, though not limited to Rene Descartes, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. As witnessed in *The Crisis of European Sciences & Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl's philosophic project is in large part an attempt through various means, to *correct* the work of Kantian philosophy, which Husserl believes to have been guided by Kant's historicity, or his temporal moment in relation to the ideas encompassing him, which impeded him from noticing his own philosophic presuppositions (103). Ultimately, Husserl's addition to the field of phenomenology, in relation to the current concern, begins with his development of phenomenological *bracketing*, which can be found in his earlier texts, such as his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: first book*, eventually leading to his own self-critique and theoretical development of the *life-world* in his final major text, *The Crisis*. But why did Husserl turn towards the world/life-world as he neared the end of his life?

Two of Husserl's primary concerns, concerns that enrich our own enterprise, are as follows: first, a more complete comprehension of the meaningful world of *things*; and second, the relation of worldly (objective) things

to the *subjective transcendental ego,* or how and why we are intended toward things, how and why the human being is able to bring things into its *conscious* concern. *The world* for Husserl, is the beginning of all "cognitive" experience, as well as the subject for the investigative plane of the natural attitude, which will be further explored in Chapter Three. As Husserl states in *Ideas*, "The world is the sum-total of objects of possible experience and experiential cognition, of objects that, on the basis of actual experiences, are cognizable in correct theoretical thinking" (6). *The subjective transcendental ego (*although considering it secondary to the world is certainly problematic) is ultimately the constituting source of meaning, as well as the constituting source of the objects experienced in the world. Without an interpreter of *things* by a being capable of certain forms of openness toward the world, which posits an interpretation, can we possibly express that there is anything meaningful at all? Strip an interpreting "ego," a subject, from the world of "things" and what is actually left?

In fact, the question above establishes a great deal of the Kantian dilemma, as well as Husserl's response to it. That is to say, both the world and the subjective transcendental ego consume Husserl's scholarly work throughout the turns of his career, as can be explicitly noticed from his *Ideas* to his final work, *The Crisis*. What changes, however, is the means by which Husserl attempts to philosophize the relation and interaction between the world of objects and the subjective transcendental ego. First, Husserl begins with bracketing, and then seemingly discards it as he moves toward a conceptualization of the world/life-world.

Expanding on this change, what we find in *Ideas* is the epoch, or the phenomenological reduction, which *brackets* intentional contents of "the mind." Essentially, there's a recognition by Husserl, arguably in large part via standing on the shoulders of Kant's investigations of worldly things *against* the transcendental ego, which attributes meaning to any-thing that we are intentionally "drawn" toward. For Husserl, even the intentional object of a dream, however "illusorily" it may be, is meaningfully intended by the cogito, or ego,

regardless of its wordly - "thingness." Not all that we are intended towards needs to be tangible matter in the strict sense of the term, and this realization begins to lead toward a theory of digitization, especially as it is built upon by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.

What is most important, at present, is to acknowledge that through Kantian philosophy, Husserl develops a young phenomenology. Like Kant, Husserl is not "stuck" in a methodological objectification of things, but a turn towards an apprehension of how objectification occurs as meaningful to us human beings at all, via a transcendental intersubjective ego – Husserl exists on the side of the intellectualist, paving the way for a more contemporary phenomenology to develop. For Husserl, to bracket an object of meaningful intentionality, or our directional (or even in-directional) thought toward things, is to put in limbo all of the presuppositions that existed during his historic moment - or our own at this moment. By doing so, he set his task toward apprehending the subjective transcendental ego in order to discover the very grounds by which anything (any object of thought) is posited as meaningful. As Husserl notes in *Ideas*, "…consciousness has, in itself, a being of its own which in its own absolute essence, is not touched by the phenomenological exclusion" (65). The primary issue at hand, for Husserl, is to discover the constituting pole, or "place," of all meaning. For without meaning, can we say that anything exists at all, or at minimum, how can it be upheld as meaningful?

To introspectively locate the pole by which any meaningful relation to the world is constituted is Husserl's ultimate end, and as such, he turns internal, so as to rather paradoxically miss the external he is *cautious* of. The intent to discover the subject transcendental ego does not falter throughout Husserl's work, but he senses the issues of intense internalization via bracketing. And so, as his work develops, he turns toward the world, or life-world (*lebenswelt),* as a philosophic alternative to bracketing.

Husserl's life-world, and Heidegger's move to Being-in-the-World: Situating Being and De-servance – the path to apprehending the-will-to-flatten

Husserl's persistence towards apprehending the "ground" of the transcendental ego is far from unimportant here, it is perhaps through his enduring examination of the transcendental ego, or *pure* subjectivity – intellectualism - that such a phenomenon was later challenged by phenomenologists, such as Martin Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. As we will soon discover, through the critiques of the phenomenologists who took up Husserl's philosophic task, Husserl's desire to overcome the natural attitudes' presuppositions in order to discover the subjective transcendental ego's ground presents a certain irony. For Husserl, much like Kant during his own time, rather unknowingly finds himself deeply embedded within a certain Cartesian metaphysical presupposition of his own. The presuppositions, which Husserl's philosophy face, are that of the ego, I, or cogito, as that which is "nearest" to the world of thingly objects as over and against an ego, constituting objects as meaningful via our sense(s) of intentionality. The irony is this: while Husserl falls into his own metaphysical presupposition, which paves the way to a theory of *world* that I feel is essential to understanding digitization, it is perhaps only as a result of his own presuppositions regarding the existence of the transcendental ego that such a form of self-constituting subjectivity becomes an apparent flaw to those who engage with his phenomenological task. To overcome the metaphysical attitudes, so as to apprehend Heidegger's being-in-the-world, requires a sense of *interconnection* toward the world, which relies neither upon subject nor object, strictly speaking, as a formation of this dichotomous opposition that **always** inherently creates the sense that there is *distance* between world and self. And due to this, under tradition philosophic metaphysics, the world's impact on *our* experience either appears to be an act of causality upon the objective body on one end, or one of self-constitution via the subject on the other, when in fact

neither of these are entirely correct according to Martin Heidegger's critique, nor are they correct if we wish to better comprehend digitization.

But perhaps we have jumped too far? Allow me to return to Husserl. For if we stated that being-in-the-world overcomes this opposition of subject and object, how is it that Husserl never overcomes this issue? In *The Crisis,* Husserl *reorients* his thinking, turning from the phenomenological reduction (bracketing) to the life-world. Bracketing is negated in this final text, conceptually revamped by a turn toward the theory of the world/life-world. However, *The Crisis* is still largely as a continued critique of Kant, and a desire to "steer Kant's path" into the proper direction so as to articulate the place of subjectivity and its role in the meaningful constitution of objectivity as we know it. As Husserl notes, in his critique of Kant's analysis within *The Crisis*,

> "…it *(*Kant's analysis)* had never penetrated to the subjective structure of our world-consciousness prior to and within scientific knowledge and thus had never asked how the world, which appears straightforwardly to us men, and to us as scientists, comes to be knowable a priori—how, that is, the exact science of nature is possible, the science for which, after all, pure mathematics, together with a further pure a-priori, is the instrument of all knowledge which is objective, [i.e.,] unconditionally valid for everyone who is rational (who thinks logically)" (103).

For Husserl, philosophy's crisis is the presupposition taken, even by Kant as he *turns back* to the subject, in order to apprehend the world as objective, the thinglyness of the world. A tendency, when it becomes historically situated as truth, totalizes worldly objectification while falling blind to the means by which this objectification is possible, which Kant comprehended as problematic, yet failed to see his way out of. Expanding upon this phenomenon, Husserl's feels that the drive toward objectification, when taken to its logical extreme, begins to objectify the phenomenological openness toward the world, or "subjectivity," which, in the Husserlian sense, defines *lived experience*. As can be seen in fields such as contemporary psychology, the turn toward empiricist objectification now mostly

dominates the analysis of all experienced phenomena, from our history, to out bodily senses, to worldly objectivity, to language, even our relation to others. As an example, vision, broadly speaking, is often entirely objectified – and when *vision* becomes objectified the phenomenal openness toward the world that is vision (as de-servant experience) is lost upon us. This realization is vital to a theory of digitization, because while we can analyze digitization strictly under the terms of tangible objective digital technologies, digitization understood as a human phenomenon, and all that resides "beneath" it as will, is missed in so many contemporary analyses of the digital age.

Husserl's insight, expanding upon the Kantian tradition, is the acknowledgment that a phenomenon such as vision (merely providing one example) is not simply an object among objects. As Husserl's states in *The Crisis*,

"Naturally, from the very start in the Kantian manner of posing questions, the everyday surrounding world of life is presupposed as existing—the surrounding world in which all of us (even I who am now philosophizing) consciously have our existence; here are also the sciences, as cultural facts in this world, with their scientists and theories. In this world we are objects among objects in the sense of the *life-world* (* italics added), namely, as being here and there, in the plain certainty of experience, before anything that is established scientifically, whether in physiology, psychology, or sociology. On the other hand, we are subjects for this world, namely, as the ego-subjects experiencing it, contemplating it, valuing it, related to it purposefully; for us this surrounding world has only the ontic meaning given to it by our experiencing, our thoughts, our valuations, etc." (104).

The conceptual development of the world/life-world, which we begin to discover here, is without question a substantive critique of Kant, but it too ultimately falls victim to its own criticism. Regardless of the variances in thought, Husserl ultimately places the world's meaningful constitution upon the subject as the transcendental ego, though on a more radical spectrum than Kant conceived

during his time, even as Kant *opened* the pathway to an analysis of the phenomenological world.

Our next leap in the philosophy of the phenomenological world, requires a turn toward Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl's at the *University of Freiburg*. It is well known that Husserl existed as a primary influence within Heidegger's scholarship, regardless of the degree to which Heidegger developed his own phenomenological, existential, and hermeneutic path, subsequently abandoning the transcendental ego as a philosophic starting point. Heidegger's work, much like Husserl's, takes a variety of *twists and turns* as it ages. However, I would argue that Heidegger's concepts Being, b*eing-in-the-world*, as well as *unconcealment/concealment* (or *aletheia*), can be seen throughout his body of work as a whole. It is through Heidegger's philosophic development that the theory of digitization I will present here, as well as the theories of the other philosophers I engage with, will radiate. This is because Heidegger marks a historic philosophic divergence, which is still finding its cultivation to this day, in works such as this one, however reinterpreted Heidegger may be. But what is this divergence, and how does it pertain to the phenomenological concept of *the world*?

What has been discovered thus far is that the life-world is the constitutive ground by which the world opens, and hence, expresses itself as meaningful a-prior and beyond. We have also determined that isolating the world as a meaningful constitution via the subjective transcendental ego is problematic at best. But what is left then to constitute meaning as the primary openness by which the world is meaningful to us as human beings, prior to any idealizations of the world by human *rationality*? Heidegger's answer to this dilemma is to turn toward *Being*. *Being* for Dasein, translated as being-there, or the state by which Heidegger identifies the human, is not necessarily the same thing. That is to say *Being*, as such, is **not** the philosophic confrontation of a subject against an object, or visa versa. What Heidegger expresses is not only the desire to see "past" subject versus object, but a realization that the idealized, or our reflective

tendency, is always a result of always already being-in-the-world and being-in-the-world, for Heidegger, is never first and foremost an experience of a subject here and object over there against the subject, this too I believe is true of digitization. But let's first clarify being-in-the-world.

As Heidegger notes in his magnum opus, *Being and Time*, "Dasein's Being takes on a definite character, and they must be seen and understood a priori as grounded upon that state of Being which we have called "Being-in-the-world" (78). An understanding of Heidegger's *Being-in* is fundamental to apprehending what alterations have been made to Husserl's concept of the life-world. For Heidegger, while the human being certainly possesses the power to "abandon" its *lived experience* via moments of contemplative reflection, a turn to the objective or subjective, or the *stance* by which subject and object may appear, this is not our primary mode of existing – or how the world is first and foremost lived, experienced, and ultimately *willed* as meaningfully given, it does the reach the will the underlies the human being. For Heidegger, we are 'alongside' the world in a sense, but even more accurately, we are a Being-in-it, we are utterly absorbed in the world (*Being and Time*, 80). As he states, "Dasein is never 'proximally' an entity which is, so to speak, free from Being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a 'relationship' towards the world. Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only because Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is" (*Being and Time*, 84). By "free from Being-in" Heidegger is already providing a critique of the philosophies of rationalism, empiricism, and Kantian (even Husserlian) intellectualism, all of which (however unbeknownst to them) come at the world as though the "mind," or subject, exists apart, or over and against the world as objects, and so even turns the *mind* into an object of study. For example, the very idea of mathematic *proximity,* of distance, has at its very foundation, a presupposed assumption that subjectivity, or the being that observes the world, presents itself **against** the objects it encounters. And while Heidegger is not contesting our sense of mathematic spatiality as necessarily flawed, we are in-space(s) he claims, he want us to

acknowledge that this is only a result of the unitary phenomenon by which we first and foremost find ourselves as being-in-the-world, not *separated* from it as the dichotomy of subject and object inherently presuppose at its very "core." Expounding upon this, Heidegger notes,

It would be unintelligible for Being-in-the-world to remain totally veiled from view, especially since Dasein has at its disposal an understanding of its own Being, no matter how indefinitely this understanding may function. But no sooner was the 'phenomenon of knowing the world' grasped than it got interpreted in a 'superficial', formal manner. The evidence for this is the procedure (still customary today) of setting up knowing as a 'relation between subject and Object' -a procedure in which there lurks as much 'truth' as vacuity" (*Being and Time*, 86-87).

What is meant by this claim? "Dasein has at its disposal an understanding of its own Being," Heidegger claims, an issue we will continue to address. What we have here is the realization that the human has itself as an aspect of its worldly **concerns,** which we inherently become "caught-up in." One mode of openness, by which the human is open to a meaningful relationship with the world is precisely that the human "returns to itself" as an issue of *concern*, so to speak. And *concern,* or *care*, for the world is a fundamental aspect of the life-world for Heidegger. "To be *concerned* with," implies to "take up," to be absorbed with. Dasein, or a human's "own" existence is concerning to itself via being de-severant, that is, bringing the world near. We, as humans, have a tendency to absorb ourselves in our own sense of existence as an *experience* of *something(s)*. Much as Husserl notes, "consciousness" is *intending* toward things, whether "real" or "imaginative," this never ceases to exist, real, dream-like, or virtual, in fact this very being eventually constitutes the virtual. The sense of self-knowing, as a concern, is an **open** "fixation," whereby we are always already meaningful to ourselves.

The issue here is that being open to a sense of concern with self, also presents a sense of innerness – *nearness* to self, which digitization ultimately

further fulfills through the realization of various tangible technologies. As Heidegger notes, "In Dasein there lies an essential tendency toward closeness" (*Being and Time*, 140). We can even see in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* that what appears "closest to me," and least *dissolvable* is the "I think" that accompanies me, an issue that will become of increasing importance to us as we present our own theory of digitization.

The "natural" tendency, as it has emerged, is to posit our concern for self as a subject over and against some-thing else: the world as thing(s). The result is that the world can appear as separate, separate to an "ego," which "gazes" upon it, measures it, calculates it and assigns meaning to its "*distinct objective parts.*" Heidegger's point is not that this is somehow "false" of us -- how could it be if it is happening, but that what comes first and foremost is the sense of *open de-severance (*as a fundamental aspect of being-in-the-world), and de-servance by no means is limited to self-concern, strictly speaking. If we were a mere movement toward self-concern via de-servance, this would be likened to an implosion, and perhaps this will become of fruition to us via an analysis of digitization – digitization is clearly a kind of "implosion."

Being-in-the-world, as an aspect of this unity, we are always already, a prior, *absorbed-in-it. Prior to a turning back to oneself, meaningful concern must exist a priori*. The world only presents itself as "some-thing" or as "individual things" by already being absorbed within the world. The *things* we appear to encounter over and against a "gazing ego" only appear via a prior openness toward our concern for the world, which is to say, a-prior to any sense of self; hence, intersubjectivity and digitization in Chapter Four may be viewed as an analysis of the "construction" of self. Granted, it makes sense that we possess concern for ourselves, as we are also Beings-in-the-world. Strictly speaking, *de-severance* for Heidegger is the primary openness, an *existential*, that absorbs our Being. De-severance is the way in which we *are*, as well as the mode by which our Being "meets" the world as any meaningful relation. And it is only via this mode that objects "appear" as meaningfully *discrete* entities, subject to our

scrutiny.

Heidegger's Being-in-the-World: A continued analysis of de-severance, embodiment, and the openness toward space as depth

It should now be clear that we have moved "beyond" Husserl's transcendental ego as the constituting ground of the world. However, our turn toward Heidegger's concepts of *de-severance*, as the life-world's "ground," opens an array of new questions. If this Heideggerian claim that we have explored has any theoretic sustenance to us, the question that presents itself at the moment is such: how does any-*thing* appear to us via *de-severance*. How do "things" appear through our state of absorption-with-the-world?

The world discloses itself for the human being, Heidegger claims, and this is rather obvious. If we are having an *experience* at all, it must be a disclosure of some-*thing*, some-*thing* that we as human beings are de-severed and absorbed within. The fact of the matter is that if the world is a-prior concern, the world is *always already close to us* as is, or at least some aspect(s) of our "individual" world, aside from our intersubjectivity. To be absorbed with the world is literally to already be involved with it situationally, embodied, drawn within certain aspects of the world. Heidegger, especially in his later essays, particularly "*The Origin of the Work of Art,*" claims that the world, which we meaningfully concern ourselves with, constantly *unconceals* itself as something to be engaged with; that is to say, absorption is never absorption with no*thing* at all, but rather de-severance is absorbed into the world's space understood as having a depth that both conceals and unconceals (176).

Take the phenomenon of vison, for example. To experience anything at all means to not being seeing something – vision is always at the same time a double act of unconcealment and concealment – it possesses a *depth* that "calls" or pulls de-severant vision into an engagement with the world, into possibilities,

36

or even new technological or artistic possibilities of creation. For me to see anything at all, I must also not be seeing something, and this exactly why I see anything at all. For example, at present, my computer screen is visible to me precisely because it does not show itself to me in its entirety. I do not see the back of the computer screen, and that is the means by which the front is visible to me. There is a depth that always holds back aspects of the visible, and it is in this invisibility, this "distance," that I am drawn via de-severant being-in-the-world.

In fact, the only manner by which it is possible to see the rest of my computer is to move my physical location to another, or to imagine it in *my minds-eye,* and yet neither of these ever reveal the total depth of the object, or its potential to reveal. What's more, if we speak of *movement* on a broad level, even the realization that I want to see the back of the screen, because my vision currently conceals it as the screen unconceals itself, is already a movement toward the apprehension of the back – and so de-severance calls upon my embodiment as a situation within the world to act. What impetus would there be to move, or even to think of the back of the screen, or more so yet, the potential of this marital screen to display otherness to me if all was unconcealed to me? But it never is. Being-in-the-world always implies being within the space of depth.

As noted, Heidegger's philosophic concepts of *de-severance,* as well as *unconcealment/concealment,* further illuminate the concept of being-in-the-world, which is now truly beginning to take its phenomenological *shape* within the context of this analysis. Thus far, through this investigation, we have examined, via a theory of the world/life-world, how it is that the world is able to disclose itself as something to be experienced a prior to any conceptualization of the metaphysical subject and object dichotomy. Through Heidegger we have also begun to grasp a sense of why a finite Being-in-the-world, as situationally embodied as de-severant, is one that experiences a sense of space as depth, as one that conceals and unconceals. However, as even Heidegger tells us, the human being is one that takes up itself as a matter of concern. The human being, via our sense of de-servance, can return to itself, bringing what is distant in the

world's depth nearer to either have or reflect upon. What we mean here is that the human is a self-reflexive being. The human can reflect, a *reality* that will gain importance in the wake of our study, especially on an intersubjective level.

It is of great curiosity that Heidegger, perhaps with a greater sense of clarity than anyone before him, establishes Dasein's being as one that is first and foremost Being-in-the-world, an open position from somewhere, yet is also seemingly reluctant to engage explicitly with our placement as a particular type of placement in-the-world as embodied. In all of Heidegger's work, our embodied *totality*, as the means by which we are situated in the world, is all but vaporized in the *face* of his more abstract conceptions of *Being, world*, *de-severance*, and *Unconcealment/concealment*. How are we to make sense of these concepts without the body and all of the united particularities that establish our bodily "schema" as the conduit toward the world, and visa vice, the world toward a particular body? That is to say, *de-severance,* as life's formative *pull,* is **never** experienced beyond embodiment as a type of ethereal ghost or spiritual figure – it depends upon embodiment, and so too does the meaningful style it "brings" to the world. In fact, it should be no shock to us that even these concepts of ghost and sprit require a body for us to give them "face," and that it so say, meaning. And this too is true as we turn towards digitization, digitization is never **unembodied,** and this is simply a phenomenological truth. What ghost, angel, or digital avatar can you recall that is ever presented as non-embodiment? Even God has historically been provided a body, a rather human one.

Our point is this, to be in-the-world at all is **always** to be a particular type of embodiment, and doesn't one's type of embodiment fundamentally pertain to any establishment one has with the world? That is to say, aren't "our" de-severant concerns always the formulation of a codependent existence between a certain type of body and world? Put another way, does not *one's **schema** of embodiment*, one's body as a style of orientation, not establish particular concerns with the world, particular ways of being experientially drawn-in by the world as codependence? And do not our concerns, as we've noted above,

engage us first and foremost within certain experiences whereby anything experienced at all is a matter of de-severant unconcealment and subsequent concealment in bringing it near, eliminating its distance, empirical or phenomenally? All of these Heideggerian concepts, however rightfully reluctant he is to move "too close" toward the ego, pertain to our embodiment. And so, we turn toward *embodiment* as the final dimensionality of the life-world's explication, especially as it relates to de-severance and depth. And all of this ultimately leads us towards the-will-to-flatten.

Embodiment: Human Attunement as De-severance

Heidegger notes that the body, while seemingly an object among objects under the empiricist sense, is **in fact** "the absolute zero-object" (Patočka, *Body, Community, Language, World*, 27). Here I turn toward Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a philosopher influenced by Heidegger's thought, who turned toward embodiment. I will do the same in order to further clarify being-in-the-world, as I lead to significance of the will-to-flatten as the driving force of digitization.

In addressing embodiment, I will begin by addressing two separate sections from Merleau-Ponty's magnum opus, *Phenomenology of Perception*, and they are as follows:

> "And everything said about the sensed body pertains to the whole of the sensible of which it is a part, and to the world. If the body is one sole body in its two phases, it incorporates into itself the whole of the sensible and with the same movement incorporates itself into a "Sensible in itself." We have to reject the age-old assumptions that put the body in the world and the seer in the body, or, conversely, the world and the body in the seer as in a box. Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh? Where in the body are we to put the seer, since evidently there is in the body only "shadows stuffed with organs," that is, more of the visible? The world seen is not "in" my body, and my body is not "in" the visible world ultimately: as flesh applied to a flesh, the world neither surrounds it nor is surrounded by it" (138).

The Body: "I *have* the world as an unfinished individual through my body as a power for this world; I have the position of objects through the position of my body, or inversely I have the position of my body through the position of objects, not through a logical implication, nor in the manner in which we determine an unknown size through its objective relations with given sizes, but rather through a real implication and because my body is a movement toward the world and because the world is my body's support." (366)

Merleau-Ponty states that our embodiment not only possesses the visible but is in fact possessed by the *visible* in order to experience the world (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 135). Though one can clearly lose certain visible/experiential senses, it is only possible to claim that a sense can be "lost" if it is a sense to be *had*. What can't be possessed clearly can't be lost. Our difficulty here is displaying this theory explicitly, while at the same time not becoming consumed by it so as to miss the primary issue at hand – digitization.

First, the *visible* here, while easily misunderstood as *sight,* is too simplistic under our typical definition of the term. Our *fleshy eyes* as sight (*quoting Merleau-Ponty) are important to Merleau-Ponty; there is no dismissing this. However, *embodiment* as our *primary experiential vision,* under the phenomenological theory, is **not** the historically driven taxonomy of making the eyes into their own object of study. In fact, Merleau-Ponty finds this historically driven objectivist move, which makes the body an object of study to be, at least on some level, a mistake.

The issue, as Merleau-Ponty notes above, is to understand the body prior to the metaphysical mindset, that is, to apprehend embodiment (our body) as more than an object among objects, or the mind as *something* "inside" of the body. "Consciousness," so often apprehended as a mind inside an object-body is a result of Heideggerian discoveries finding itself within a certain stance/embodied position. Too often we understand consciousness as "in the mind," as something happening "inside of the head." Merleau-Ponty's point is not

that the "rational, conscious mind," is unimportant, as is often the case with other major phenomenologists, but that this metaphysical stance is misguided. The body, as our total embodiment, is never first and foremost an object before us for a separate internal mind to analyze; rather, it is the means by which anything at all is *lived*. Our particular *schema* of embodiment, our makeup, as a collectivity (and not through the taxonomy of its objective "parts") engages with the world in a particular manner. The world acquires its meaning through this embodied engagement, and de-severant being is "informed" by this schema, meaning that the body can only become an object for itself by first and foremost being open to engagement – as being-in-the-world. *Embodiment* implies *de-severance* as a subsequent immersion with a world. Our sense of the "inner cogito," or a subject against objects, is merely the "shadow" of our total embodiment de-severantly being drawn into the depth of space, however much we have historically placed this "shadow" onto a pedestal, presupposing the embodiment by which it is possible to be *self-aware* at all.

Another way to put this is to say all *types* of embodiment, in all of the variant *schemas* embodiment manifests throughout the world, always have within *themselves* a particular schema towards the world. Perhaps, human embodiment is in fact one whereby the sense of de-severance is not only one whereby we are attuned to things, but also our body as self-affection. Perhaps our particular form of embodiment, as a type of total unity, is this reflective de-severance in the sense that not only does the body as concern place itself into situations beyond itself, but also takes up itself as its own situation in regard to what **it is not,** or lacks, what it will-to-flatten and bring near.

The means by which the world becomes *visible,* or opens itself as meaningful is a result of any living being's schema of de-severance, and this type of de-severance is codependent to the totality of the embodied *form,* and cannot be considered outside of it. One states that their "conscious mind exists inside their head, inside their body," but this claim itself is not possible without a form of embodiment that is first and foremost "their" collective whole, as it is enveloped

by the being-in-the-world to which its schema attunes it. My *vision*, even as sight, strictly speaking, does not exist on its own – like an object in a void. My hand reaches toward the smart phone, and its tactile contour *aligns* with me, my hand and vision find themselves together, while my de-servance senses possibility within the depth of the device through this attunement. Can I say that my sight is formatively independent of my particular *stance* as human being, which is my type of embodied schema? My embodied *hands* and *feet,* as a type of schema, are relevant to my eyes as an active sight. I visualize the screen and de-severantly discover that "it is in front of me," but can sight accomplish this without the totality of embodied schema? The orientation of my hands and feet correlates to my schema of direction and cannot to be de-severed if my sight is to have any sense. Consciousness is the totality of my de-severant embodiment. It is not prior to it, but the result of it.

Chapter Two: Embodiment and Digitization

"The body is our general means of having a world."

- Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (147)

"But certain ways in which entities are discovered in a purely cognitive manner also have the character of bringing them close. *In Dasein there lies an essential tendency towards closeness.*" (p. 140).

- Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* (140)

Introduction

The phenomenological concept of *embodiment*, and all of its potential to enrich our understanding of digitization, has a tendency to remain outside the realm of conventional conversation, which all of us experience throughout our everyday lives. This is no inherent fault of ours, and it still remains true that the significance of our bodies does not go unnoticed. For example, it is true that most of us may speak of having a body, caring for our bodies, sensing our own body, or being in our body. We may also address another person, or something, as being embodied within the world. But does this imply grasping the philosophic significance of embodiment, and what it can contribute to an understanding of the meaningful world we live within? Often this leap remains outside of our conversations, a fact that should change if we desire to further comprehend the impact that digitization is having on the practicality of our lives.

One way to address the unfamiliarity of phenomenology's contribution to an understanding of embodiment is to see that conversation on the body and embodiment, when it takes place among us, tends to reside either within the objectivity of scientific literature, or in what Martin Heidegger deems, "idle talk" (*Gerede*) within *Being and Time* (211). For Heidegger, most of our conventional conversation resides within "idle talk," which is not inherently a negative phenomenon, but it does diminish the significance of the discursive meaning that a term such as embodiment might hold for many of us. It is a task to overcome in

the quest to further our understanding of digitization and its phenomenological relation to us.

Idle talk, as Heidegger tells us, "Terminologically…signifies a positive phenomenon which constitutes the kind of Being of everyday Dasein's understanding and interpreting" (211). He further elaborates by stating that, "Proximally, and with certain limits, Dasein is constantly delivered over to this interpretedness, which controls and distributes the possibilities of average understanding and the state-of-mind belonging to it" (211). This clarification is important, as it affirms that what is provided to us through our daily conversations (idle talk), persists throughout our lives as the meaningful framework for comprehending and interpreting any and all terminology, philosophic or not, which we come into contact with. This of course means that the pervasive culture understanding of the body, in conventional conversation, is the means by which we first come to grasp the concept of embodiment when first introduced to it phenomenologically. For this reason, as with phenomenological and other foreign terms, it remains vital to consider one's words wisely when approaching the phenomenology of embodiment. Especially when deploying embodiment as a way to better comprehend digitization.

Both within the study of phenomenology, and hopefully outside of it, a conceptual analysis of embodiment will enrich our knowledge of digitization as we come to find that embodiment is fundamentally linked to the emergence, meaning, and potential, as well as limitations of digitization as it relates to our embodied human form. For this reason, the phenomenological study of embodiment, when grounded within examples of everyday life, is essential to a study of digitization. This is because all human engagement with technology, new or old, is in essence, a relation of one's body and the technology. Even in idle talk we sense this, but do we grasp the significance? Could the two possibly come to be without one another? And in what way can embodiment and digitization, when grasped phenomenologically, inform us about our human condition, and our underlying motivations?

Such questions will come to light under a lens of embodiment and digitization, which are increasingly relevant to our contemporary moment. To comprehend digitization, let us first approach what is paradoxically closest, yet also most distant to us – our own embodiment. In doing so, we will find that any attempt that is made to understand the meaningful significance that digitization has had upon the human being and the world, presupposed or not, takes into account that this is a relationship that is revealed to us, first and foremost, through being embodied as such.

The digitization of the world, does not only have a meaningful impact on our intersubjective experience, our experience of and with the other. Prior to any intersubjective experience, embodiment must first facilitate the possibility of any and all reciprocal contact with the world that an "individual subject" experiences. Embodiment, it is essential to observe, is the foundation by which meaning occurs to any one of us as a revealed experience. This individual reciprocation of embodiment, and its interconnection with the world, depends on that being's embodiment, in this case, human embodiment. Perhaps the most basic, yet essential, aspect of phenomenology's discoveries is that the tenant of embodiment's relation to the world is the realization that **any** meaningful development to the world is a constant co-relation to being embodied. In fact, this argument can be understood as the core of Merleau-Ponty's philosophic project, most notably in *Phenomenology of Perception*, and its relevance still expands and modifies with increasing significance today. For Merleau-Ponty, the classic subject object dichotomy is called into question. The world of things, technological or not, which seemingly exists over and against my conscious mind, is brought into scrutiny. Embodiment for Merleau-Ponty could be understood simply as the contact point between the self and world, but this would still diminish what he is attempting to get across to his reader. Embodiment, the body, is not simply a connection to world, but is rather akin to an interwoven fabric that is one with the world, an everlasting bond from birth until death.

45

For example, Descartes, a rationalist, as well as others within the empiricist tradition, have a tendency to act as though the mind or reason can exist "outside" of itself, detached from space and time as a grand observer of things. This philosophic tradition places the reasoning mind over and above the world of things, even one's own body as an object of study. But as Merleau-Ponty states in *Phenomenology of Perception*, "Thus, we must not say that our body is *in* space, not for that matter *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time" (140). Embodiment, discussed in a phenomenological sense, is the very index, or "opening," by which world and thought *exist* at all. What is significant here is that a theory of embodiment, as an openness – a revealing of the world as something to meaningfully engage with - challenges prior presuppositions and grants new insight into the formation of meaning. And surely the advent of digitization is a meaningful event in the horizon of human existence. What can it tell us of our condition as human beings?

Simply put, under a phenomenological sense, one must have a body in order for the world to reveal itself as something meaningful prior even to the formation of being a "self" within it. Furthermore, the phenomenological theory grounds embodiment as a type of "constant openness." That is to say, given the classical understanding of consciousness over materiality, couldn't consciousness transcend the material body? This has major implications given the digitization of the world as a primary **will** that can be seen expressed in digitization (as will soon be explored in depth); it is the freeing, or transcendence of the mind. For example, the storage of any and all information can be witnessed within the palm of one's hands when dealing with a smartphone – the world "flattened" into one's palm, the sense of depth diminished, controlled. However, if one takes the phenomenological theory of embodiment into serious consideration, one also must begin to question the validity of this willing to "overcome" the temporal body. There is, in digitization, a **will** for transcendence, power, and ultimately a "God's eye view" upon the world as such, but given embodiment, this **willing** must be called into serious question.

While it is undeniably true that history transcends individuals as the meaningful ground of any and all culturally established knowledge, the brute experience of the world that any "individual" knows, is solely gained, strictly speaking, upon an embodied being that is neither a-prior (before one's birth), or a-posterior (after one's death.) The situatedness just mentioned is the only manner in which any being, human or otherwise, could come to know/open the world of experience and possibilities. Being embodied, in its essence, requires a type of situatedness within the world, requiring that all embodiment be temporal – that is, *inhabited* by time, as noted by Merleau-Ponty. Furthermore, any and all types of embodiment establish a meaningful relation to the world that is directed by the structure of the being's embodiment. Another way to say this, taking embodiment into consideration, is that it is relatively absurd to inquire how another animal meaningfully understands its world. Such an inquiry would require the embodiment of a different being, which is an impossibility. This is to say, all meaningful experience that both you and I have gained, is the result of being embodied as homo-sapiens during our particular embodied life. Even the transcendent nature of human history, while clearly "beyond" any individual human being, is also the manifestation of the embodied human beings of past, continually reinterpreted and lived by each and every human in the present, via embodiment. In this sense, history too is the outgrowth and result of embodiment, when understood as emerging from the practical relation of embodied beings and the world of the "past." Put in different terms, the embodiment of the past's meaning to us, as a meaningful relation to the world, quite literally lives in the embodiment of human beings existing in the present. It is through embodiment that we "hold" the past.

Embodiment ties an individual to the world, and is quite genuinely, a fabric, or as noted above, an openness. Examples of this emerge with all of our particular embodied senses, digitization being no exception. Granted, humans tend to gravitate disproportionately toward sight as their primary mode of "knowing the world." An individual doesn't go to smell, hear, touch, or taste their

47

long last friend. We claim we went to "see" them. That said, when discussing embodiment within phenomenology there are endless sights to turn one's analytic attention. The relation, for example, between light and dark is meaningfully interwoven through the means by which my "fleshy" eyes, to quote Merleau-Ponty, make "contact" with the world (Lawlor, *Dwelling in the Textures of the Visible*," 152). However, when asking an individual on the street to consider lightness and darkness, odds are that connotations, our ideas derived from idle-talk, will come to "mind." But considering embodiment, light and dark acquire their meaning on the level of presumptive, even unreflective idea, only because of embodiment, which gives *birth* to the ideas of lightness and darkness. The light of the sun warms the embodiment of my being on a primordial level that has a tendency, however obvious, to go unnoticed. The light of the sun provides human embodiment with the possibilities of navigation, given the particularity of the nature of our "seeing." Light gives our body a reason to mean, a location to move towards. Darkness stunts our sense of movement, taking a hold of our being, providing an unsettling awareness of the virtues that lightness provides.

Light speaks to our embodiment; it calls on it, but not yet in a conceptual manner, not on the level of idea. Furthermore, light in its primal appearance, emerges from the sky, orienting one's sense of any directional glance whatsoever. And provided by our embodiment, there is a particular glance. Darkness, on the other hand, appears to engulf the light, hiding it from being. Darkness emerges from the "depths" of the world, tempting one to enter the unrecognizable, due to our particular embodiment. The human eyes, two of them, situated whereby they cannot "see" into one other, are not either fully parallel. Our eyes exist on an upright being, placing one's privileged sight above much of the body, as well as the world "below." When taking embodiment into account in this manner, there is less surprise when one reaches, via de-severance, the level of connotation, or idea. Ideas emerge from the raw experience of embodiment as such. Is it a surprise that religions tend to worship the light above, while condemning the dark below? One does not need to look far

into the canon of pop-culture in order to acknowledge the symbolism of light as good, and the dark as bad. The release of *Star Wars* reminds us of this.

Simply put, embodiment reveals all elements of the world that we take up, throughout time, past, present, and future, as something meaningful. Because of this, the examples present for phenomenological analysis are as endless as the entire unfolding continuum of meaning itself. Were we stripped of embodiment, reduced only to "mind," as though this were a possibility, no meaning could exist whatsoever. Likewise, without one's "personal" embodiment, no meaningful, intersubjective, sociological relation, which is to say a cultural epistemic relation to another within the world, could transpire and flourish into the transformation of a culture. And perhaps most importantly, at least as an underlying preface, no being, human or otherwise, could be of any form of de-severance without first and foremost being embodied. A jump to de-severance presupposes embodiment as the "fabric" required for de-severance. And as noted by Merleau-Ponty, time, as well as the space we occupy, are not distinct from embodiment; instead, time and space find their meaningful existence as interwoven in the relations to finite embodiment. All de-severance, and ultimately meaning, come from a certain perspective in-time. Embodiment ensures, regardless of its form (human or otherwise), a consistently situated being-within-space. And embodiment as being-within-space is essential to an understanding of digitization, because it is the very means for the consistency of a contextualized perspective, which any and all *subjects* are confined to throughout their lifetime. If we are to understand the existential tradition as placing emphasis on authenticity and freedom, as figures such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre clearly did, then embodiment is paradoxically the means by which any freedom and authenticity are possible, as well as the consistent limitations exerted upon these ideals.

And it is at this juncture where enough groundwork has been laid in regard to embodiment, to work back to previous points, and analyze a number of digital technologies and their intrinsic relation to our embodiment as the

meaningful site of our existence. In doing so, a fundamental truth regarding human nature will emerge. What will be recognized is that de-severant being, embodied as humans are, **wills** to overcome its own embodiment via digitization. This willing is an historic project, whereby overcoming the limits of embodiment remains concealed as the driving force motivating digitization.

The **will** we speak of is a *will-to-flatten* experience, which itself is fascinatingly derived of our embodiment, as the constant "re-uptake" of the world as something for our embodiment to totalize. The will-to-flatten experience is a will to control the world's depth. Flattening the world essentially implies an increased revealing of the world to the human being, yet this revealing has a tendency to conceal its own goal. *Techne*, often translated as art, or technology in the sense of making, is a teachable mode of rational revealing that is intrinsically connected to digitization (Aristotle, "*Nicomachean Ethics*," 1799). Human beings, as de-severant, bring technologies into existence that continually reveal previously unknown aspects of the world. In doing so, digital technology seemingly flattens aspects of the world, which would have previously been considered unfathomable. An as example, from an apartment in Upper Michigan, a friend whose material body is empirically halfway across the globe, is revealed digitally to me in "real time." Soon to be addressed in greater detail, this is paradoxically possible only as a **willful** "defiance" against the confines the embodiment exerts upon the human being, which can only emerge and be revealed via the conditions of human embodiment itself.

The will-to-flatten, is a natural derivative of the very potential to "stretch" our being via de-severance within time and space. What this ultimately displays is that embodiment is both the fundamental site of our possibilities, and simultaneously, our most significant "limitation," a necessary confine that reveals being(s). What impact this has, and will have, on the human being in the age of digitization is of course yet to be fully known. This, however, does not undermine the need for an exploration of embodiment's significance within the age of digitization. However, it must be reiterated that history (and we are a historic

being) is an ever unfinished "project," and any totalizing theory of what is to come is surely founded upon naïveté. That said, this should never mean that one must dismiss the aim of greater insight into any subject matter. It is simply an essential recognition of the "shortcomings" of our being.

Heidegger's Significance to Embodiment: And His Reluctance to Address Embodiment and Depth

Martin Heidegger's philosophy, an outgrowth, perhaps better understood as regrowth, of phenomenology's foundations laid by the work of his mentor, Edmond Husserl, paved a new path for the philosophy of phenomenology, a path, so potentially expansive that it's still being explored and remapped to this day. Heidegger's *Being and Time* set in motion a significant challenge of the thinking that dominated his era, and arguably still dominant to this day. And the challenges Heidegger made to the tradition of philosophy have not gone unnoticed, nor failed to captivate his readers. As noted in the documentary, *Human, all Too Human – Heidegger*. "More critical commentaries have been dedicated to Heidegger, than to any other philosopher, apart from Aristotle" (BBC, *Human, all Too Human*). The engagement with Heidegger's philosophy isn't simply due to his idiosyncratic prose, negatively critiqued by Theodor Adorno as "The Jargon of Authenticity" (Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*). Heidegger's philosophy, even with its creative vocabulary, and taking into account its arguable obfuscation, is a turn from Husserl's radical subjectivism, toward an inquiry into the presuppositions that Heidegger argues run throughout the breadth of Western philosophy. Heidegger begins his philosophy at the site of the "Being," a *location* too often addressed within philosophy as self-evident. But for Heidegger, being is argued to be elusive, and anything but self-evident.

By turning towards an analysis of Being and beings, with aid of his "new" terminology, Heidegger avoids the philosophy of the Cartesian *cogito*, which is intrinsically bound to the subject/object, or mind/body, dichotomy. An inquiry into

the cogito is to ask, where and what is my subjective self, my "central" I-think? In presupposing the existence of a *cogito*, both rationalists and empiricists base their understanding of the world from the metaphysical perspective of a relational property that is distinct from the world of objective things, over and against this subjectivity. Heidegger, by way of contrast, essentially dismisses this separation. Put another way, the philosophic tradition of separating subject and object isn't merely problematic for Heidegger, it's essentially overcome within his philosophy. In fact, Heidegger would claim that in philosophically making the metaphysical leap to an analysis of subject over and against object, **being**-in-the-world, and Being in general, becomes utterly presupposed – dismissed, overlooked, as it were. This dismissal of what Heidegger refers to as *Being*, ultimately drives his analysis throughout all the argumentative avenues that his philosophy undergoes throughout the years of his life.

In questioning Being, and the "Being of beings," Heidegger asks a question so seemingly simplistic, he asserts that by and large it has gone unaddressed throughout the course of Western philosophy. What does it mean to be, he posits? What is *dasein*, a German term Heidegger uses for the human being, translated as being-there, in its essence? What does *dasein* entail, and what is being-there's relation to Being? As noted in the previous chapters, a fundamental characteristic of *dasein*, according to Heidegger's analysis in *Being and Time*, is that the human being (*dasein*) is de-severant in nature. As de-severant, human beings are not only open to the world, but humans possess an innate ability to unconcealment aspects of a world that would otherwise remain concealed to Being. Both *technology* and *art,* understood within a modern context, reveal the world to *dasein*, according to Heidegger (Heidegger, "*Question Concerning Technology*," "*The Origin of the Work of Art"*). While these modes of revealing are essential to understanding embodiment and digitization, so too is the reason Heidegger presents for the world concealing itself from the human being, a further consequence, we shall see, of being embodied.

That having been said, what is essential to Heidegger, is not only a dismissal of Descartes' human mind as cogito, but of the Aristotelian theory of humans as the animal whose soul is guided by intellect, a rational soul (Aristotle, "*De Anima*"). This is not to suggest that Heidegger dismisses humans as potentially rational beings, imbued with the gift of a capacity to reflect upon experience. Quite clearly this is not true, as noted repeatedly in *What Is Called Thinking*, Heidegger finds that what is "*Most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking…*" (4). Rather, Heidegger understands our being, first and foremost, as dominated by the phenomenological quality of "stretching" one's being into particular tasks via de-severance. This reality of de-severance, for Heidegger, is not implicitly rational; in fact, it is quite the contrary. De-severance should not be directly linked to his concept of thinking, regardless of de-severance remaining the ground upon which thinking may be paved. De-severance and thinking are not synonymous. One might rather posit de-severance as the drive of Heidegger's *care*, Husserl's intentionality, or rather yet, primordial foundations of the **will**, in the Nietzschean sense. And de-severance, whether conceived of as the grounds of *care, intentionality*, or **will**, does not necessitate rationality. This is essential to the issue of digitization, as it clarifies that digitization, in all its seeming technological ingenuity and genius, should not be conceived of as being inherently driven by rationality. The force, de-severance, that **wills** digitization into unconcealment/existence is not rational, it is paradoxical, and it resides within being embodied.

To clarify, de-severance may "hand us over" to the potential for rational thought, but it does not, in its essential nature, guarantee Heideggerian "thinking." Likewise, having the innate capacity to "extend" my phenomenological being into the "distance," such as operating a digital drone, or existing in the realm of a virtual world, does not insure rationality or suggest it. While idle-talk tends to place rationality as the heart of technology, the drive toward digitization is not dependent upon rationality. And it is Heidegger who puts this presupposition into radical question.

Again, this phenomenological quality of the human being as de-severant *opens* the possibility for rationalization. However, even as we are faced with the presence of digitation, no such rational objectives of the technologies currently in existence need be, or even are at this very moment, insured.

So why and how have we managed to reveal digitization as an aspect of our reality within the world? And what truth resides concealed within these technologies, forged from the force of de-severance being? Nothing other than a particular form of willing, a will driven by the paradox of embodiment. And the **willing** that guides the actions of a de-severant being need not be known to us for this will to possess and direct our actions toward a desired end. In order to perceive the will that drives digitization, embodiment as access to the world's depth, must be understood. And here we encounter a philosophic location that Heidegger recognizes, yet never adequately engages with as is necessary to better comprehend digitization.

And still, what Heidegger's contribution to philosophy displays is that de-severance is fundamental to our being, it is the very means by which we access the world as something more than it is – as something to be revealed, awakened. When we intend anything at all, awake or in our dreams, we are de-severant insofar as our willing is brought to us as an issue to take up. In this re-uptake, we are within the fabric of existence, not distinct from it as subject and object. Furthermore, de-severance implies that human beings "stretch" their being *within* a world that is always open to a range of infinite possibilities, constantly revealing potentials *within* the materiality of existence. Heidegger notes, "In Dasein there lies an essential tendency towards closeness." (*Being and Time*, 140). This is to say, human beings, in all our tasks, are constantly in a state of unconcealment possibilities, taking up the world as a task to be engaged with.

The world did not come with digitization as an actualized "product," digitization is clearly not like the sun, which has always already rested unconcealed for us in the sky. What digitization requires is de-severance, provided by our being, in order to reveal our own essential will "towards

closeness." The materials necessary to construct the circuitry of the world-wide-web remained as concealed actualities, dependent upon a de-severance of our human type to emerge. What Heidegger's philosophy discloses to his reader is the unique character of the human being to reveal new *spaces* for experience, whether this be through *technology* or *art*. This unconcealment, whether it be a work of art or a technology, ultimately further reveals possibilities within the open depth of Being. But does revealing entail knowing what will be revealed, or why we are revealing a possibility of Being? Not at all. As noted above, the human being can unconceal without a sense of what is being opened, without reason into its own willing. The repercussions of unconcealment, and why we are unconcealing the world as we are, can and do remain concealed to us if we do not allow what has been unconcealed to address us as a call to question. To question what and how? To question our will, and to do so as a phenomenological inquiry, which does not pretend to "stand over the subject of digitization," as an object, but rather as an experience that we are part of, and which can inform us about our own selves as human beings.

And in this regard, Heidegger's general dismissal of embodiment gains importance for addressing the answers digitization asks of us.

Human Embodiment as being-in-the-World: The world can only be de-severed by having an embodied perspective within it

To further comprehend digitization, it is essential to understand digitization as an extension of a "grounded" unison between embodiment and world. In this manner, digitization is an outgrowth of the potentiality when human embodiment and the world exist together as one. Whether or not digitization is indispensable to, or merely a possibility of, this relation is a question worth asking, but one that would be based primarily upon the grounds of an esoteric analysis. Digitization has occurred, and it exists. The practical question is to ask what, if anything, digitization reveals to us about our own human condition, as well as our potentials and limitations as embodied human beings. A truth that is coming to

light is that human embodiment exists as a catalyst, within a world of concealed potential. Embodiment always already had, as its potential, the ability to reveal digitization through technological means. And this embodied potential was met, even as new digital technologies continue to emerge. The question of how embodiment managed this task, and why, is one that is connected to an analysis of both embodiment's potentials and limitations.

As Heidegger informs us, *dasein* is always subjected to the consequences of being-in-the-world. And while Heidegger is aware of the body's significance in his use of the terms ready-to-hand, and present-to-hand, Heidegger's analysis of *dasein* rarely focuses on the body as the site whereby the world is revealed. It is Merleau-Ponty who expands upon Heidegger's phenomenology, placing primary emphasis on embodiment and perception as the site of being-in-the-world. Subsequently, Merleau-Ponty begins at embodiment and perception when analyzing subjects such as art, language, technology, and politics. This is a pivotal turn within the field of phenomenology, in part because it clarifies that de-severance is not some mystical force "within" the human being; rather, de-severance discovers the potentiality of the world via the way in which human embodiment comes to know the world through a particular embodied *schema*. And this *schema* establishes *styles* of knowing the world, as well as the possibilities of its revealing.

As Merleau-Ponty writes, "I hold my body as an indivisible possession and I know the position of each of my limbs through a *body schema* [un schema corporel]" (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 101). This *schema*, for Merleau-Ponty, should not be confused with the empiricist's objective mode of analysis, which tends to observe the motions, organs, cells, DNA, and even atoms distinctly – however fruitful such an analysis may prove to be. The body is not merely an objective, in fact, the body schema is not an object at all, Merleau-Ponty insists. The body schema is lived as experience within the world. Due to this, we tend to presuppose the body schema, as well as its significance in coming to know and reveal the world to us. As noted, "…the "body schema" is, in the end, a manner

of expressing that my body is in and towards the world" (103). Because of this, "When I say that an object is *on* a table, I always place myself (in thought) in the table or the object, and I apply a category to them that in principle fits the relation between my body and the external objects" (103). This "in thought" is de-severance and the "taking up" an object as it applies to the schema of my body is finding meaning in anything within the world, while simultaneously knowing its existence through my own embodiment. Whatever the object may reveal is predicated upon its potential to "find itself" within my body's schema.

And it is essential to the case of digitization that we grasp both the importance of Heidegger's de-severance, while also incorporating the additions of Merleau-Ponty's critique of embodiment, as the means by which a *schema* of "knowing" the world's depth is achieved whatsoever. Addressing this issue will also enrich a further insight into the question of what kind of **willful** drive resides within the creation and engagement with digital technologies.

But what drive do I suggest the will is attempting to overcome in the "materialization" of digitization? Nothing other than the very *being-in*, as being situated in-the-world, which provides the possibility for the will to posit its aim as a will toward "taking up" the world, which now also means itself, as a drive to overcoming its very being, as situated within the world. But why are we situated? What situates this will to overcome at all? What situates the will, and which Heidegger does not dismiss throughout his philosophy, but arguably negates throughout his philosophic work, is *embodiment* as the "ground" of being-in – of *knowing* the world, and reciprocally expressing the world as such. The will beneath digitization, is none other than the will that wills its own escape from very situational placement, as a being embodied within the world.

Embodiment as "knowing the world" Part 1: Merleau-Ponty's philosophic contribution and its relation to Virtual Reality

"Only a phenomenology of expression that begins and remains within lived experience can avoid the pitfalls of classical approaches that offer nothing but a "bad ambiguity," nothing but the "mixture of finitude and universality, of interiority and exteriority.""

- Donald A. Landes, *Merleau-Ponty and the Paradox of Expression*, (7)

"If thought were complete and pure in itself, then it would possess in advance everything we would ever think (either alone or in dialogue)."

- Donald A. Landes, *Merleau-Ponty and the Paradox of Expression*, (7)

The will that drives digitization is nothing new to the "human condition." As previously noted, being-in-the-world is an *historic* process of coming to "know the world," to reveal it. To express the possibilities that lay dormant "with-in," but paradoxically present in their potential to our de-severant capacity as embodied within a grander situation. As embodied via our schema, human beings "take up" the world, and find "within it" the task and concern that drives our willing towards overcoming the world's depth "against" our embodiment. And in order to do so, as Merleau-Ponty continually informs us throughout *Phenomenology of Perception,* and arguably even more so within his later work, requires embodiment as a *schema* of being-in the world. All beings in the world, that is all life, is embodied in one manner or another. And given the phenomenological concern, our own embodiment, our own lived experience, is of the greatest interest to ourselves. We are a being that attempts to know itself, and this attempt is made possible only by having a situation at all. Our situation is being-in the world, as embodied, situationally within and as a constant correlation to the world. What is essential to Merleau-Ponty, and this exploration of digitization, is that embodiment always situates *within*, and is never external to the world. Being embodied implies being within the world's depth. However, embodiment is also, strictly speaking, never an internal to the world either. If there is an "echo" of self-hood, a soul (so to speak), it is **only** "found" within our de-severant nature as a constant "re-uptake" of the world's depth as embodied. Being embodied is being

"in" the world. The depth that engulfs us, and which we reveal by navigation within it, sustains embodiment as a constant perspective. Our embodiment, manifested as digitization, **wills** the overcoming of depth, but this overcoming is impossible, because depth sustains this will.

As Donald A. Landes informs us in his text, *Merleau-Ponty and the Paradox of Expression*, "If thought were complete and pure in itself, then it would possess in advance everything we would ever think (either alone or in dialogue)" (7). This is a succinct quotation which grasps one of the primary points Merleau-Ponty attempts to convey within the whole of his philosophy. The mind, or "inner-self", however defined or indefinable its autonomy may be, is always situational because of embodiment, and is always the result of the *schema* of embodiment. Our knowing the world is never an escape from it or a "grand" eye gazing upon it in pure rational thought, as though it were distinct from us. Another way to rephrase the Landes quote is to acknowledge that thought is never complete or pure because it is always contextualized within the world's depth. Yet another way to understand this is to say if thought were pure and complete, there would be no depth. In this scenario, there would be no willing at all, nothing to take-up or overcome.

What informs our being, and subsequently all aspects of our historic epistemology, whether in theory or practice, is that our embodied relationship to being-in-the-world remains *thick*, it is a "depth." The world provides a never-ending depth for embodiment to "take up," from the *inside out*, and simultaneously, the *outside in*. As Merleau-Ponty writes, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, "It suffices for us for the moment to note that he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he is *of it,** unless, by principle, according to what is required by the articulation of the look with the things, he is one of the visibles, capable, by a singular reversal, of seeing them— he who is one of them" (134-135). One way to decipher this statement by Merleau-Ponty is to express that embodiment, as *schema*, that is, as a particular form of existing, reflects itself in the world, and the world vis-à-vis reflects itself in

this style of embodiment. There are endless examples of this, both within digitization and outside of it. It is sufficient to say then that when we access the world's depth, with our embodiment, we find in it possibilities of reflecting our own *schema* of embodiment. All digital technologies relate to our embodiment. The field of ergonomics takes this matter as its obsession, but the truth of the matter is that ergonomics merely tweaks, or resides within a *secondary sphere of contemplation* in regard to what always already takes place in any human construction, simply by being embodied as we are.

Xbox, Released Nov. 15th, 2001   Xbox 360, Released Nov. 22nd, 2005   Xbox One, Released Nov. 22nd, 2013

The examples of this again are not only endless within digitization, but absolutely fundamental to it, as well as to any creation prior to it. The first Xbox, released in North America on November 15th, 2001, had a controller that was made for none other than the *schema* of the human hands (Game Informer, 48). There is no doubt that time, energy, and ultimately capital was invested into researching the ergonomics of how best to design the first edition of this product for the human hands, as well as "tweaking" those that would follow within the subsequent versions of the Xbox. However, the issue here is that this thoughtfulness was in fact secondary. Of course, the gaming system's controls would be designed for the human hand; it is comically self-evident pointing this out, as this is the primary means by which the game is made accessible to the embodied gamer. And yet, this phenomenon accompanies every aspect of digitization, whether it be from the writing of every code to the emersion in virtual

60

reality, however subtle and unnoticeable it is at first inspection. All emergence facilitated by embodiment takes place both at the stage of the theoretical "drawing board," as well as in the practice of making and then using any digital technology that is now "real," and "facing" us within the world. The world is reflected only with-in our knowing of the world as embodied through a particular *schema* that is ultimately unique to the human being, as opposed to any other style of embodiment.

It is worth briefly noting here that while I am making the case that Heidegger displays what I would suggest is a notable ambivalence toward engaging embodiment "head on," within in his own philosophic, and hence, is inadequate to fully understand embodiment and digitization, the human hands are also essential to *dasein*'s being in *Being and Time*. It is not happenstance on Heidegger's part that the concepts of *ready-to-hand* and *present-to-hand* accompany his critique of *dasein* as being-in-the-world throughout *Being and Time*. Under the lens of Merleau-Ponty, it would make sense to phenomenologically posit Heidegger's explicit discussion of *the hands* as a primary sight of our embodiments coming to *know* the world, coming to "take it up," as it were. The concept of a disembodied mind would be undoubtedly be rather absurd to Heidegger, as it is through our "engagement" with equipment that the world is discovered, as a fashion, which is predicated upon certain *style* of hand(s).

Again, and this is **not** to dismiss the richness that accounts of embodiment as a totality (*which is specifically what I wish to avoid by bringing Merleau-Ponty in), but the hands are a fundamental site of epistemic "contact." This is true throughout digitization, given the keyboards on which I type, to smart-phone, which is specifically designed for the hands. But what is fundament here is not simply noticing that the human body and our digital technologies are made for the other, which I will continue to extrapolate upon, but that the body is not simply a thing in the world. The fact that the Xbox controller requires itself to be ergonomically tweaked to better the gamer's unawareness of the device, making

61

it ready-to-hand, is secondary to its existence as a de-severant "extension" of human embodiment; which according to Merleau-Ponty, is **not** simply an object in the world. In Part 1 of *Phenomenology of Perception*, titled "The Body," Merleau-Ponty expands upon Heidegger's realization, stating that the body, embodiment, cannot be understood as another object in the world (152-153). Merleau-Ponty is not naïve in this section to realizing that the body can and has become the objective study of the sciences, lending itself to discoveries and advancements in health and technology. His point is that this too resides with a secondary awareness of the body. First and foremost, prior to us making the body present-to-hand, that is, aware of, and a subject for ergonomics to objectively study, embodiment exists not as an object, but as expression, which "opens the world." As Merleau-Ponty states, "I am not in front of my body, I am in my body, or rather I am my body" (151). Landes, in *Merleau-Ponty and the Paradox of Expression*, addresses this quite eloquently by noting, "There is an immediate relation of sense between body and world. Being in the world is accomplished as the interplay between spontaneity and sedimentation, and thus expressive embodiment is the deeper truth that classical philosophies have failed to recognize" (88). What these two are attempting to display is that while it is true that I can analyze my body as an object, and this has surely produced fruitful benefits, it dismisses the body as the site of "taking up" the world, which is constantly accomplished prior to any reflection on the body as an object. And what is more, it gives us a world to address.

The human body, as embodiment, "plays the world," so to speak, and reciprocally the world *calls on* the body to play it. And just like a musical instrument, embodiment's particular *style* simultaneously informs the body, world, and "myself," of what the world is, and where within the world embodiment can discover and become more than is found within the present moment. Digitization, and all of its discoveries, theatrical or in material practice, display this truth when analyzed phylogenetically. As example, consider the advent of, and engagement with, virtual realties, such as through the *Oculus Rift*, a virtual reality device. And

at best, virtual reality's accessories, such as the *Virtuix Omni* and *Myo Gesture Control Armband*. These devices, considered phenomenologically, are the result of the correlation of the world and our embodiment, first and foremost, on a level that does not reside within objectification, or by insisting that objects within said virtual realities be/are present-to-hand objects. Another way to put this, and this points to why "classical philosophies have failed to recognize" embodiment as the *opening to being*, is that embodiment works on the essential grounds of "forgetting" that we are embodied as such.

Virtual reality is embodiment and is in no way an escape from it. That is, to *play* within virtual reality, for one to "take-up" residency within a viral world, one must feel as though they are within it, and this is accomplished only on the grounds of paradoxically feeling embodied, by losing the sense of being embodied. For virtual reality to fully work, it must be experienced as ready-to-hand; that is, we are within our daily routine, and this is the loss of the sense of embodiment's significance in order for sense to occur. At best, a virtual experience should provide the experiencer the ability to "drop" one's self-awareness (the present-to-handness) of being in anything that is even remotely strange to their body, the result being that the virtual reality "attaches" itself as correlative to the human's body-scheme of knowing the world as embodied. This requires that one does not struggle with the world, but precisely that one "find oneself" so embodied to **being-in**-it that it is firmly "had," and not appear as found at all. Only then can the virtual environment be "taken-up" as experience for genuine embodied engaging. That is, only then will it feel completely real to the experiencer. And it is this reason that virtual reality has existed as possible for quite some time, yet is only now beginning to become technologically possible through refinements of the technologies.

This can and must be achieved explicitly through what allows us the ready-to-hand "take up" of our lives within one's daily reality, that is, within our normal experience of embodiment outside of virtual worlds. Specifically,

embodiment is the pre-epistemic ground for "take-up" to occur as the possibility of knowing of anything at all.

An example of this is the clunky nature of the *Oculus Gear VR*, however stunning it may be to a first-time VR user, the problems inherent to the gear are quickly realized. This technology was released November 27th, 2015, as an addition to the Samsung Galaxy line of phones (*GSMArena*). This device is made to house one's cellular device, as seen below. The phone then displays visuals, which are seen by the viewer through the gear in order to "enter" a virtual world. The device itself is built to replicate our binocular vision, as embodied by having two eyes horizontally adjacent to each other. This is stereoscopics at play, creating the sense of depth and emersion that the human eyes enable. The device even considers the curvature of the human eyes. All of this having been noted, the technology itself, like all virtual reality devices, point us back to the significance of embodiment prior to even engaging in the experience. The device must conform to the *style* of embodiment that we are, and subsequently, even has foam cushioning around the locations where it meets the face, to further erode the illusion of wearing anything at all.

Once the device is in use, the experience offered by the product, while impressively immersive, still quickly exemplifies the present-to-hand issues that virtual reality faces. And these issues are present not because embodiment needs overcoming, but because we are embodied and can never escape this fact. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty writes, "Habit expresses the power we have of dilating our being in the world, or of altering our existence through incorporating new instruments" (145). Prior to a first-time user ever placing the *Oculus Gear VR* onto their head, and pressing play, embodiment has habituated the de-severant "take up" one knows of the world. Paradoxically, embodiment is made aware of by this device, which is exactly what it attempts to "overcoming." The hilarity of watching another engage with the technology is almost more enjoyable than experiencing the virtual world for oneself. The reason for this is that the user's own embodiment becomes comically aware to

them, as well as those watching the person partially absorbed in the virtual reality. It might be accurate to say that the individual using the device is experiencing "double-embodiment," a term I'll use here to express the sense of simultaneously having and losing one's epistemic map of the world – a de-severant confusion, as it were.

Another way to express this double-embodiment is to note that the person engaging with the device is both ready-to-hand and present-to-hand at the same moment, or at least navigating the two extremes at a rate so quick that it is unfamiliar to the normal experience of the world. On the one hand, one's embodied vision is allowed the "take-up" needed by the device for embodiment to slip into a new location, as in a dream, via a vision. On the other hand, this is not so at all, as the person is exceptionally aware that that they both are and are not embodied in the "right" place when wearing the device and playing a virtual world. One's "take up" with the world is confused, so much so, as to make some individual physically sick, even to the point of dizziness that induces vomiting, a symptom known as *virtual reality sickness* (LaViola Jr., "*A Discussion of Cybersickness in Virtual Environments*"). But why is this? A phenomenologically grasp of embodiment holds an answer.

Phenomenological embodiment is never lost by any living human being, regardless of the situation, precisely because embodiment is *situating*. Death **is** the loss of embodiment, the loss of situationally "taking up" the world and discovering residency in it, of being-in-the-world, which death puts to an end. *Oculus Gear VR*, thankfully, doesn't end being-in-the-world. But the device does "dilate" the world, as Merleau-Ponty notes above. A "new instrument" has been added as soon as one hits play button on the Gear VR. But this instrument is "clunky" because it both does and does not allow for the total "emersion" embodiment needs for it to have access to the map of "habit." Habit is what allows embodiment to "take up" the world as a whole, giving embodiment over to fluid de-served experience. Embodiment is lost to us as the pre-objective opening to the world because for it to fulfill itself, as a correlative relation between

embodiment and world, it must not take note of itself as an issue. Embodiment as an issue, becomes quite literally, sickeningly at issue for some that use the *Oculus Gear VR,* one of the reasons being that one's hands and feet are not present within the virtual experience provided by this technology. The sensation of having, while oddly not having, phantom limbs immediately takes over as one form of double-embodiment. The individual is aware that their hands and feet, as their normal powers of expression, are eliminated in this virtual world. But of course, these powers are left simultaneously "behind" as accessible in the world of their daily life, which now oddly blend together as one "new" foreign world of experience. Because of this, it is wise that the individual using this device sits down, as the propensity to falling over is normal. This is due to what I am referring to as "double-embodiment," as being ready-to-hand and present-to-hand at once. The loss of, or the inability to "take up" either world, real or virtual, is what occurs here. One can't fully "gear" oneself into the "take up" of the virtual world due to a lack of possessing the entire map that embodiment typically provides. Worse yet, and adding to the amusement of those viewing the VR occupant, is the difficulty of "taking up" residency in the world of reality. For example, to adjust the focus of the *Oculus Gear VR* to one's eyes, a dial must be fine-tuned on the device. The issue, at least when first acclimating to the device, or of "altering our existence through incorporating new instruments," as Merleau-Ponty puts it, is that it is difficult to use one's hands to properly locate the dial.

Meanwhile, one's vision is made remarkably ready-to-hand, allowing for genuine "take up" of this singular region of embodiment's "map," and yet still, one's vision is disoriented by the lack of the whole. This directs one to another point made by Merleau-Ponty, which is that the "parts" of the body are in fact never the discrete parts of the sciences. "Within" each part of my body, so too the other parts reside and inform said parts' "take-up" of the world. It is not psychedelically driven to state that my eyes "touch" the world, or my eyes "see" it. Vision needs its counterparts, and it is this lack that makes the rest of one's body present-to-hand. When using the device, one is also made aware of the

body, as an "object" of concern for the individual engaging with the technology. "How do I move in here?" Or, "Ouch! What did I just hit my hand on!?," are common expressions one hears from an individual wearing the device. All of this is amusing, but also directs us back to embodiment as the grounds of being-in-the-world. If any virtual technology is to "succeed" at total emersion into the "habit" that is required for a true "take up" of the virtual world, double-embodiment must not occur.

This is precisely what digitization is striving towards, as it perfects the experience of virtual reality. The *Virtuix Omni* and *Myo Gesture Control Armband* can be used as additions to the Oculus Rift, providing both the hands and legs a "situation" within the virtual world. What cannot be escaped is embodiment within these realties. Embodiment situates what we bring to these realties, and because these realities are embodied, embodiment situates what we "bring back" from them.

Oculus Rift. Released March 28th, 2016

Virtuix Omni. Remains in production, while released to Kickstarer Funders in January of 2017.

Myo Gesture Control Armband. Released to the public as of 2017.

Embodiment as "knowing the world" Part 2: Merleau-Ponty's philosophic contribution and its relation to digital content as discovered within the grounds of embodiment

"My body is the hinge and the negotiation between real and ideal weight, and its every gesture is between pure repetition and pure creation, between body and mind, between determinism and spontaneity."

- Donald A. Landes, *Merleau-Ponty and the Paradox of Expression*, (11)

Prior to any detached, cognitive act "within" the mind of a subject, embodiment has already accessed the world, of which it is of. One's embodiment "maps" the world as epistemic and accessible to itself, as something to "take up," engage with, and express. Expression, that is, what is expressed every subtle moment of embodied life, is always de-severance residing within the continuous grounds of embodiment. Our embodied does not rest against digitization. Digitization is embodiment's discovery of its own potential within the world. Or as Merleau-Ponty states, in *Phenomenology of Perception*,

"Our body, insofar as it moves itself, that is, insofar as it is inseparable from a perspective and is this very perspective brought into existence, is the condition of possibility not merely of the geometrical synthesis, but also of all the expressive operations and all the acquisitions that constitute the cultural world. When it is said that thought is spontaneous, this does not mean that it coincides with itself; rather, it means that thought transcends itself, and speech is precisely the act by which it in fact becomes eternal." (408)

One way to understand this quotation is to realize that in an analysis of embodiment, embodiment itself is being expressed. In no act, mathematic, coded, or in cultural theory or practice, is embodiment somehow exempt. Rather, these accomplishments, including digitization, find their creative breath exhaled through the correlation of our *style* of embodiment to their being-in the world.

For example, it may be beneficial here to think of digitization's creative "environments" as existent upon embodiment's de-severant style of already

handing the human being over to the possibilities of imagination, or dreams. Digitization, I will argue, is essentially imagination, or accessing the world's depth, realized. And to grasp how this possible it is important to understand phenomenologically how imagination itself is possible, as a constant attribute of embodiment **being-in**-the-world. In doing so, I will focus on a digital game. However, this analysis, applies to the advent, look, and use of operating systems, desktop interfaces, social media, virtual landscapes, and all other digital games.

Consider the 2016 video game, DOOM. The game, released On May 13th, of 2016, was the much-anticipated reboot of a 1993 video game, which holds the same title. The original DOOM, released on December 10th, 1993, is often considered to be the historic epitome of the first-person shooter (Mäyrä, (104). The intention of the 2016 version of the game was essentially to bring the graphics and game-play of the original into modern day life. The game was released on Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, and the Xbox One gaming platforms, and received significant critical acclaim (Yin-Poole). Both games, new and old, are based within the context of a futuristic Mars space-station scenario, as well as access to the realms of Hell. In human's search for alternative energy forms, a portal to hell has been opened. And you probably guessed, the aftermath isn't pretty. The game places you into a fast-paced landscape of zombies and hellish demons, just waiting to be destroyed by the protagonist.

DOOM, 1993. Final Boss.

DOOM, 2016. Final Boss.

Provided the phenomenological lens of embodiment, these creatures are fascinatingly foreign, yet also "known" to their artistic creators, as well as myself, through nothing other than the epistemic **being-in-the-world** of embodiment. And this relation to embodiment brings digital games, however alien, into existence, and has done so in imagination prior to the actualization of digitization.

What often goes unnoticed within our imagination and dreams is that these *hypothetical* experiences, occurring "within the mind," are also never unembodied, and rely fully upon the knowledge gained in having always been embodied – having always "taken up" a world. In this sense, the very notion of anything existing alone "in the mind" may be brought into question. One's daydream of a far-off land, where all problems are left "behind," is predicated upon being de-severed in that experience from a certain perspective; a certain *style* of embodiment is already with this imaginative scenario. The blissful trees and breeze within this dreamscape reside for one as having known them as something not against one's own body, but with one's body as a being-in the world. Their meaningful significance to me cannot be detached from having previously "taken them up," as an embodied experience, their relationship to me. The texture of the trees and soft warm breeze, are known not just as distinct from one's own embodiment, but as with them. Sight, touch, smell, etc. "take up" residency in all experiences. Through being-in-the-world, one's skin engages

71

with the skin of the tree, knowing it only as rough, thick, and strong against the delicate nature of one's own skin.

Perhaps the tree in one's imagination is foreign to reality, exhibiting a bark that is smooth as the skin of a peach. Here we discover the depth latent within being embodied, as our de-severant *style* is. This odd imagination finds in the tree's bark an expression of something more than is there in the world. But is it more than is there? For whimsical imagination to occur, embodiment as de-severant must already access the depth of possibility. While it is true that no actual tree possesses soft bark/skin like that of peach, the very imagination of it is discovered in the depth of world's possibility. And soft and hard skin only make sense to one, embodied already, who "takes up" access to the world's depth. The possibility for a tree in one's imagination to exhibit another quality is not "outside" of the world, it is in the world that this is possible. One discovers oneself in this experience not as a "pure mind" above the experience, but as being-in it, situationally. No imagination or dream, strictly speaking, is out of reality.

Even our most bizarre moments of "true creative expression," within a dreamscape, or actualized on pen and paper, reside within our embodiment's "map" of what it epistemically "grasps." Take the final Boss in the video game DOOM (*see images above). The foreign features, however odd they may be, make sense to me not because they are entirely mine, but because in the world of embodied experience, I have already "discovered" my body "against" foreign beings as embodied and given room for the discovery of their potential depth.

The spider-cockroach like being in DOOM is discovered by its creator, via the world's depth through embodiment. The same is true when a new gamer meets the digital enemy for the first time. The spider and cockroach-like being in this experience take up residency within my own embodiment, not as my own, but precisely as "mapping" the unknown *styles* of being embodied. The meaning of this foreign "object" is discovered here. One can only *sympathize* with the strangeness of its eyes and legs, because my own eyes and legs have brought forth meaningful sense to the world through taking it up as depth. What one

72

cannot grasp, and what emerges as fright to the viewer in this imagination brought to digital life, is precisely that these creatures, in one's lived experience with them, present possibilities that one's embodied *style* never *fully knows*. This is so only because one is embodied as such. The extra appendages of an insect, and the imaginative nightmare that the gamer now lives make sense because of what one lacks in their own embodiment. The multitude of unexperienced eyes and legs that an insect's *style* has, both does and does-not make sense to the human style of embodiment, and this depth of the unknown is carried into our dreams and imaginative states of creation.

A digital virtual "dreamscape," whereby the laws and rules of reality seem foreign, new, and exciting, as in both DOOM games, presuppose that they were "brought" to this digital space, only upon the grounds of embodiment. All digital worlds, however seemingly foreign, as though they are in a dream, have been given creative life only through the consistency of human beings embodied within a world to begin with.

What's more, as alluded to above, is that within dreams and virtual worlds, one is **never** disembodied. And prior to any "material" realization of digital platforms or worlds as "true" possibilities for one's engagement, the dream already possessed what was always already required for digitization. And this is so only by being embodied situationally. Even in the creation of virtual worlds, the one designing the world is situated, and always remains within their own embodiment, even if we desire to extrapolate to the perspective within the world's creation on the screen. No game or avatar "within" a game is without embodied perspective, which one's own embodiment as the constant grounds of being can find home in through the screen, keyboard, mouse, or virtual appendages that situate themselves to the human body for one to become "taken up" with the experience of the game.

And yet, the will that drives digitization is the will to escape embodiment: Human beings "resent" the limits inherent in being situational, and will to overcome this limitation

It is my hope that this chapter makes clear that embodiment and digitization are inherently paradoxical in their relation, and this paradox is not one to be overcome, ever. This is precisely because without embodiment digitization could not be realized, as one's own being would not have situation, a world to take up. No depth exists without embodiment. The elimination of depth is only presumably achieved at the death of embodiment, at which point no situation at all would be accessible.

As I am attempting to display, digitization "actualizes" the attempt at escaping embodiment, which is the condition that holds this attempt in constant place as an actuality to be attempted. Oddly enough, if digitization is scrutinized with a "phenomenological lens," embodiment becomes increasingly evident as the ground upon which the world is opened as a condition for "embodiment," as a de-severed style of being-in, to "take up" an impossible task. Subsequently, the ultimate paradox of embodiment and digitization only grows in our attempt to escape embodiment. Never has the body become so imprisoned "within" itself as the means to escape itself in the quest to overcome depth. The smart phone may as well be considered a part of the human body at this point. And virtual reality, as it is coming to be realized, rests upon the encapsulation of the embodiment. And with that, I leave you with this image. Perhaps the future holds the possibility of creating our own sense of depth, while our phenomenal is imprisoned at home.

Man "inside" a game/virtual reality simulator.

Chapter Three: Space and Digitization

"When I see an object, I always feel [éprouve] that there is still some being beyond what I currently see, and not merely more visible being, but also more tangible or audible being, and not merely more sensible being, but moreover a depth of the object that no sensory withdraw will ever fully exhaust."

- *Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception*, (224)

Introduction

Digitization, telepresence and all it entails, has seemingly eviscerated the distance space imparts upon each and every one of us. Technologies that interconnect us, such as smart phones, virtual reality devices, tablets, watches, or desktops - these technologies are all impacting, perhaps even changing, the experience of space, and this is undeniable. It is now possible to Skype in *real time* any digitized person whose physical location exists across the globe or even in outer space. Two friends that have never met "outside" of a game's "virtual" space, now exist together as comrades within a digital world. The length of time once required to communicate over a vast spatial distance has seemingly evaporated in our digitized existence.

In addressing the conditions of the contemporary digital landscape, it has become common ground to turn toward space. But in what regard? Never before has so much information rested within the embodied hands of any one individual, nor has the ability to transcend one's own physical location in order to simultaneously experience another location been possible. Whether this contemporary feat is used for peer-to-peer communication, education, business, governance, or even gaming, the conclusion is presented as a victory over space itself.

But in what way? Is the experience of space's structure fundamentally altered? Has space itself, via digitization, been fundamentally overcome? What would this mean? Empirically speaking, digitization has clearly continued to collapse space. Distance, as access from one location to another across the

globe, has been eliminated; the 2018 Winter Olympics in full display within our own living rooms is an example of that. But so too is outer space being condensed, "touching" our own perception, held visually within our hands. Never before have the planets within our solar system and beyond felt so close, so near. I can now virtually tour Paris with the *Oculus Rift*, "eliminating" the distance between my embodiment and the location, as well as the time (space) required to arrive there. The transmission of a visual signal from one place to another is so small, it might as well be nonexistent. One can know a friend's locations, even their intentions, with relative certainty only moments after an initial text message. The alterations digital technology has *caused* to one's existence "in" space clearly appear as something profound to a sensible human being. In the presence of such technology questions arise. For example: In what way has the experience of space changed? If the experience of space has in fact changed, have we human beings been changed as a result? And if this change shows itself to be true, what are the short and long-term repercussions?

For example, Michael Heim, in his text *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality*, asserts that an ontological shift in our awareness has occurred. He states, "When I write of an ontological shift, I mean more than a change in how we humans see things, more than a paradigm shift or a switch in our epistemological stance. Of course, our access to knowledge changes dramatically as we computerize the arts, sciences, and business. But there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed in our epistemology. An ontological shift is a change in the world under our feet, in the whole context in which our knowledge and awareness are rooted (xiii)." After making this assertion, Heim uses the example of the automobile as a previous technology that changed "the world itself," presumably on an ontological level given his definition above (p. xiii). The experience of space is undeniably impacted with the advent of the automobile. In the past, for example, one may have considered traveling from New York City to Chicago in the span of only a day to be an absurdity, but it is not until the technology of the train or car that this *absurdity* is understood as anything but. But does this

constitute an ontological shift in the human capacity for sensing space, that is a change in our being itself?

The car, and other such technologies, are often used as early technological examples prior to digitization. But again, the question at hand is if this an ontological shift, a shift in being itself? And perhaps this depends on semantics, though I argue that if we turn toward a phenomenological lens, greater clarity will illuminate the matter, and we will see that while semantics can muddy understanding, it does not distort the human condition itself, not digitization and its underlying aim.

There is no doubt that digitization is changing the world on an empirical level, but is it changing our ontology, our being? Or is it via our ontological condition of space that we always "run up against" a particular ontology of space, which ultimately constitutes us, allowing for digitization to become a reality? To become something "actual." To address this in a slightly different manner - does digitization attempt to overcome space as one of our fundamental ontological conditions? Perhaps it is not that our ontological conditions have changed, but that we have fooled ourselves into believing that we've achieved an ontological shift. In other words, fooled ourselves into believing that we have somehow overcome space.

The theory of *Space and Digitization,* which is to be presented here, will be constructed upon the foundations of a continued exploration of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *embodiment* as it pertains to and influences his concept of space. Space, and the objects human beings face within it, possess *depth* for Merleau-Ponty, and there is a transcendent *thickness* to all objects encountered in and as an aspect of space. There is, according to Merleau-Ponty in the quotation above, "a depth of the object that no sensory withdraw will ever fully exhaust" (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 224). And this depth of space, I will argue, is essentially to both explore and acquire a greater phenomenological understanding of digitization.

And while human embodiment and space, conceived of as depth, are essential to the following theory, I will first bring greater light to Martin Heidegger's concept of de-severance, the *always already,* meaning that de-severance must be understood as indivisible from conceptualizing how it is that depth, and the thickness of objects, exist as such for the human condition. Next, by engaging both Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger, my intent is to display how the objects of space, possessing depth, have made the revealing of digitization possible. I will seek to display that with this de-servant access to space as depth, a will-to-flatten is simply essential to the human condition as de-severant, which long precedes digitization, but is also never completely fulfilled as a telos to totalizing depth and eradicating it through digitization.

My primary argument within this chapter on *space and digitization* is to show that what remains presupposed "within" digitization is exactly this will-to-flatten both space as empirical calculative distance, but more, philosophically, this will's true end is to flatten the phenomenological depth of space itself, which we tend to presuppose. My final position is that while our embodiment, de-severed as the human being is, always already wills-to-flatten depth (and hence reveals digitization into being), such as a telos always remains fundamentally out of reach due to both the nature of depth itself, and the human as fundamentally situated within the world as embodiment. This being said, I will argue that the consequences of this will-to-flatten, whether one sees them as positive or negative, have a genuine impact on that being that has digitized its existence.

Clarification on Heidegger's Analysis of Historically Driven Ontology: The way towards the human condition as De-severant

In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger analyzes the human being through the term *Dasein*, or "being there." In doing so, Heidegger's intent throughout the text is to conduct an in-depth inquiry into the fundamental conditions of *Dasein*'s relation to being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world, Heidegger informs his reader, is an experience that *Dasein* is always already a part of, and which traditional

philosophy and the contemporary sciences have subsequently presupposed, or lost sight of. Of the numerus arguments made by Heidegger throughout his magnum opus, *Being and Time*, one that is of great significance to contemplating *space and digitization*, is his own analysis of the human being's primary ontology as *de-severant*.

Yet, in order to better grasp Heidegger's argument surrounding de-severance, and ultimately its significance to *space and digitation,* it is vital that Heidegger's reader (whether through primary or supplementary ones) actively come to "take on" his philosophic position for oneself. To do this, one must sense that our grasp, the manner in which we interpret the world and even our own being, is always under the influence and filter of history, which largely determines one's experience of the world. This lens through which we "come at the world," impacts how we see and understand said world, and this lens (any lens according to Heidegger) is always historically driven.

Subsequently, Heidegger argues that Western history, from the time of Socrates, exacerbated by the discoveries and philosophic direction of Descartes, has obsessively objectified all areas of existence under the natural attitude. This Heideggerian critique is significant to phenomenology as a whole, as many within the philosophic theory continue to inquire into how it is that historic modes of thinking (*ideas*) come into being, as well as impact the human condition as the idea solidifies intersubjectively across time and culture. An analysis of digitization, as the potential flattening of distance, depth, and time, surely possess a rich ocean of inquiry for phenomenologists theorizing on the concept of mind/idea in the twenty first century, and will be addressed in the final chapter on intersubjectively and digitization.

For the time being, it should be noted that the intersubjective history one is in is also consequently determinative of the primary ontological perception of the world, even of the issue of *consciousness*. In Heidegger's day, and still in our own contemporary moment, the dominate ontology, which influences both casual conversation and scientific research alike is a metaphysical dichotomy of "inner"

consciousness, and the *space* of things "outside" of consciousness – the world of objects. This can either take the form of an empiricist critique that apprehends the exterior world as impressing itself upon human being, determining its cognitive state, or, in the intellectualist philosophic tradition, influencing even Edmond Husserl, one's inner subjectivity impresses itself upon the external world, socially determining the meaning within objective reality.

The issue for Heidegger, and subsequent phenomenologists in the wake of Heidegger, is that this historically driven project, whether empiricist or intellectualist, either renders consciousness as subjectivity and the world as objectivity (intellectualism); or, it renders both inner and outer realms of existence as ultimately objectifiable (empiricism). The result, according to Heidegger and the Phenomenological tradition, is that both "inner" consciousness and "outer" space have been treated as literal objects of inquiry, especially within the fields of those contemporaries working within the project of digitization. That said, from Heidegger's own ontological stance, this clearly guides us toward scientific and technological discoveries, which open certain doors, while simultaneously remaining short-sighted to being, or primary raw phenomenological experience. To be clear, for Heidegger this historic trajectory presupposes, and subsequently misses *Dasein's* most fundamental conditions, forgetting the question of what it is to be.

In asking the question of being, Heidegger continually addresses the seemingly odd phrasing of the "*always already,*" which I too will use. The reason for this, and its importance to *space and digitization,* is that being-in-the-world (an aspect of which is being in space) is always already a fundamental aspect of the human condition, a condition Heidegger understands as presupposed in previous philosophies/ontologies. Heidegger notes, "Dasein is an entity which, in its very Being, comports itself understandingly towards Being" (*Being and Time*, 78). Being, grasped in a Heideggerian manner, is the totality that the human being (Dasein) is in and a part of. The world is what opens itself to the human being as experience of anything at all. Heidegger further states, "…Dasein's Being takes

on a definite character, and they must be seen and understood *a prior* as grounded upon that state of Being which we have called "Being-in-the-world'" (*Being and Time*, 78). Simply put, being embodied (situated) within space is all one knows, and due to this, there can never technically be any form of seeing "above" it through either rational or analytic consideration. There is always the sustained reality of always already being-in-space, not outside of it, or over and against it, as Heidegger informs us the historic ontologies presuppose. Furthermore, and due to this, our intentionality (here Heidegger is building upon Husserl's concept of intentionality), the manner in which the human being comports itself toward the world, is by its nature one of de-severance when analyzed on the foundation of returning to being, as Heidegger did in *Being and Time*.

Heidegger's de-severance, then, should not be reduced to either a purely objective or subjective phenomenon; it cannot be simplified to an inner/outer dichotomy. Doing so would be the fundamentally wrong approach to grasping the phenomenological significance of de-severance as it pertains to *space and digitization*. And this, due to our history, may be the most difficult point to grasp and maintain throughout the current analysis, but I feel is essential to clarify.

De-severance and the Phenomenology of Space: How is space, understood as depth, accessible to the human being?

In *Being and Time*, by phenomenologically going "back" to *Dasein*'s ontological being-in-the-world, Heidegger states "But in as much as any entity within-the-*world* is likewise in space, its spatiality will have an ontological connection with the world. We must therefore determine in what sense space is constituent for that world which has in turn been characterized as an item in the structure of Being-in-the-world" (134). Here, Heidegger begins to move towards the significance of de-severance, as a mode of being towards the world, being "moved by" the world, called on it, so to speak. His analysis of space is one not of calculative space, though he works through how it is that calculative space can

be formed later on in "reflection." Our primary ontological existence, however, is first and foremost one of being *ready-to-hand*, a term hinting again towards embodiment as the fundamental grounds of knowing the world. Ready-to-hand is coming to know the world not in an analytic, reflective manner, but through doing, through engaging with one's world and its surroundings. When I type with my computer the keyboard is largely ready-to-hand, meaning it is a mode of accessing the world; it is not aware of me on a cognitive level, but my embodiment has rather attuned itself to it, so as to make it an "extension" of my being, driving my digital possibilities on the screen. The keyboard only becomes noticeable to me, or present-to-hand, if it breaks or is the matter of analytic reflection. The vast majority of experience, and primary ontological experience, is this *pulledness* (ready-to-hand) into situations, in virtue of being embodied as one is. It is only through this primary mode of being-in-the-world that a concern for the concept of what is close in space arises within reflection.

Space then, for Heidegger, though not specifically dealing with Merleau-Ponty's depth, is very much so aware of space phenomenologically. It might be said that Heidegger "brings" the issue of space into the phenomenological, noting the experience of space as such. And this is simply to say, Heidegger is going "back" to what the experience of space is for the human being prior to any will to calculate it as distance between objects, or of objects. In fact, Heidegger goes on to claim, "Every entity that is 'to hand' has a different closeness, which is not to be ascertained by measuring distances" (135). The way in which closeness is had at all is via *Dasein*'s nature itself, not as independent from it. Heidegger then, essentially, attributes spatiality to the human being, while also not denying the existence of the world itself. It can simply be stated that for phenomenologists, any notion of the world, including its inherent spatiality, independent of the human being, is fundamentally absurd. As such, he writes, "If we attribute spatiality to Dasein, then this 'Being in space' must manifestly be conceived in terms of the kind of Being which that entity possesses" (138). But the human being is neither fundamentally an object or subject for Heidegger, and yet it is a

being that is in-the-world as a means of opening itself to experience, an *existential*.

Hence, Heidegger states, "…its (*the human being's) spatiality shows the characters of *de-severance* and *directionality.* When we speak of deseverance as a kind of Being which Dasein has with regard to Being-in-the-world, we do not understand by it any such thing as remoteness (or closeness) or even distance. We use the expression "deseverance" in a signification which is both active and transitive. It stands for a constitutive state of Dasein's Being – a state with regard to which removing something in the sense of putting it away is only a determinate factical mode. "De-severing" amounts to making the farness vanish – that is, making the remoteness of something disappear, bringing it close. Dasein is essentially de-severant: it lets any entity be encountered close by as the entity which it is. De-severance discovers remoteness; and remoteness, like distance, is a determinate categorical characteristic of entities who nature is not that of Dasein" (138-139).

This passage, and I quote it in its length due to its importance, simultaneously explains de-severance under Heidegger's own terms, while paving the way to linking de-severance to Merleau-Ponty's analysis of space as depth, and all the while it is rich with significance in regard to the nature of the human being's fundamental will towards digitization, as the will-to-flatten-depth.

De-severance, understood by Heidegger is always an existential of the human condition, which makes spatiality itself accessible. And as such, for the human being, de-severance is an irreducible mode of being-in-the-world; this is to say, as an existential, there is no going beyond de-severance, or into it, because the very means at attempting to do so would be de-severance itself at play. As such, de-severance is neither object nor subject, neither inner nor outer, and it cannot be reduced to any tangible thing. De-severance is a means of opening experience, a mode of orientation within the world for the human being. To explain de-severance through something else would be futile. One might say, the human being, as de-severance, discovers itself both in and as a part of space, and as such, the diversity of realities that space maintains, due to depth. Digitization, in its essence, brings the spatiality of the world, the experience of the

world, as close to us as humanly possible in our particular historic moment – digitization is a transcendent human project that "reaches toward" closeness. Transcendent in that what has driven digitization into existence, underlies a fundamental movement towards nearness that has long pre-dated digitization's tangible reality. And this is due to the human being's existential de-severance, and de-severance's access to space, rich with depth. It is only through a de-severant access to space that a will for nearness of the things discovered within space is made possible. Reciprocally, it should be noted that through depth, as a phenomenological *component* of space, the technological possibilities for creating digital technologies were discovered. And here a clarification of depth, as a primary aspect of space, is required. This will lead to the realities of the will-to-flatten, which will manifest itself as digitization within our tangible digital technologies.

In, *Phenomenology of Perception*, one of Merleau-Ponty's realizations, which will enrich the current issue of *Space and Digitization*, while further situating de-severance within the argument, is that space should not be considered as somehow distinct from the human condition, or as against us. Space, though undeniably possible to calculate and mathematize, is not first and foremost a thing of objectivity, but rather a medium in which de-severed embodied discovers a world, finds itself while seeking possibility within the depth of that world. And while it is incorrect to claim that for Merleau-Ponty, space is a byproduct of de-servant embodiment, de-severance, embodiment and space (as human) do mutually "inform" each other as one, and it is in this exchange that the *depth* of space, and the *thickness* of things, is made possible. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "Space is not the milieu (real or logical) in which things are laid out, but rather the means by which the position of things becomes possible. That is, rather than imagining space as a sort of ether in which all things are immersed, or conceiving it abstractly as a characteristic they would all share, we must think of space as the universal power for their connections" (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 254). Space theorized under Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological

lens, much like de-severance for Heidegger, is not the empirical relationship between objects within mathematic space against a subjectivity, but rather an existential for us human beings that is rich with depth, ultimately meaning that the existence of things in space is thick with potential for the human being, as embodied de-severance.

As Merleau-Ponty states, "We observe for the first time with regard to one's own body what is true of all perceived things: the perception of space and the perception of the thing, or the spatiality of the thing and its being as a thing, are not two distinct problems" (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 149). Things in space, phenomenologically related to our embodiment as de-severant, maintain a constant revealing and concealing of possibilities to us, just as is the case with our own embodiment. The development of our embodied schema, existing as thick with possibility, is never fully revealed to itself, but rather discovers itself within its engagement with the word. It is in the "thinglyness" of our body, as an aspect of space, where the potential for engagement and attunement with the world is discovered. Possibility is revealed as process and engagement to the de-severant being through this mutual relation of space and thing.

And while space maintains the existence of things "before" us, it is also space conceived of as depth, which never fully reveals the entire potential of any object it is part of. And this depth, this thickness of things, is precisely the significance of space as it pertains to digitization, not just space as empirical distance. What is held back, concealed in space's depth, is exactly what *calls on* our will to engage with an object as more than merely something against us, as though any object were contained fully as itself, complete and devoid of radiant potential because all is present before us. But this (object-contained-as-self) is never the case for the human being, which is exactly what intrigues Merleau-Ponty. Because within depth, objects maintain a thickness to them; possibilities that remain never fully completed are still accessible to de-severance as beings-of-potential. And it is ultimately space for Merleau-Ponty which maintains this essential nature of things. This is the reason human beings discover tasks in

objects that we continually take up and will ourselves toward. If objects of space possessed no depth, that is, objects-in-themselves, what possibly could be discovered in them? What would drive human beings to seek out and bring the things discovered within space toward us as matters of concern, were it not the latent potential within them? And were it not for the depth of objects, how else would digitization have been willed into reality as tangible objects, revealing within themselves an end to seemingly eroding the distance that space also imparts between objects within the world?

The issue of space, as just noted, is always a co-relation to embodiment, which is to say that space is only discovered and made possible as such by being embodied in space, a position or placement. Neither embodiment nor space would remain as they are without the other. But again, what is space for the human being, embodied and de-severant as we are? What do we mean phenomenologically when we refer to space? And how is it that space is essential to digitization? Phenomenologically speaking, the condition of space "drives" digitization by the possibilities and limitations it always places upon the human condition. This is true, paradoxically by what space simultaneously opens to us as de-severant as potential, yet at the same moment denies as conquerable: namely, not the empirical distance of space, but the depth of space itself. As noted, space is always already more than something calculative, more than an object of study, precisely because space is the potential access to depth and the thickness of things we discover within the world, in space. The depth of some-thing can never be fully reduced to pure objectivity because in doing so it would lose its potential for depth, which is why we engage with said object at all. Within space, there is depth that the human being has access to as observed in the creation of technology and art. Creation, the emergence of something "new" out of what resides before us in space, is precisely access to space as depth – a fundamentally human existential condition, which is essential to our being-in-the-world, and our will-to-flatten.

Were space **not** rich with depth, the space that makes objects accessible to creation would have no *thickness* at all to them, and hence there would be no will on behalf of the human being to flatten space via the emergence of digital technologies out of the world's depth. Furthermore, were space **not** rich with depth, our will-to-flatten, a will toward anything at all, would be reentered nonexistence. This is because space is sustained depth, and in so being, depth calls our de-severant being towards projects and ends – whether individualistic, or on a grander underlying level, which transcends the human being throughout time. In this call to flatten, to bring the world near, as Heidegger notes, there are many digital technologies to look towards. One excellent example is the tangible emergence of the *smart phone*, which Apple released in 2007. In the sense of this phenomenology, no one smart phone should be understood as an object unto itself, but as a historic *project* that was willed into existence by discovering, within the world's depth, a potential to envision and create such a device out of a collection of objects and algorithms that were not digital themselves before we willed and found such potential within them. From the depth of the individual plastics, to the metal circuitry, to the code that runs our smart devices, all of these were found by a de-severance that wills-to-flatten its existence, with the aim of bringing the world as close to our immediate embodiment as possible. And the smart phone is of course a telecommunication device that allows for telepresence. Even within the word, telepresence, we discover the will-to-flatten, achieved by the reality of the smart-phone. the Greek *tele*, or "at a distance," and presence, together bring the distance to our embodied presence, flattening the objective space between our being and that of another's so that oneself and otherness can be near.

This is one digital example of how all things found in space, for the human being on the grounds of our embodied de-severant condition, must possess depth, which is of richer thickness to them than something that is merely "there before us." This is the reason that the objects within space may be taken up by the human being as matters for concern, and also what calls on us to bring

otherness, as "object," near. Through the smart phone, digitization made tangible"/real", we continue to fulfill our will towards closeness by eroding the distance that space inherently places upon the human being as situationally embodied.

What can be seen here is that will-to-flatten not only underlies digitization, but all previous (*all technologies?) technologies within the same trajectory of eliminating objective distance. In being so, bringing digitization into reality required finding within objects the potential for bringing the world as close to the human being as possible, eliminating and even consuming the distance of space. And this phenomenon is only increasing as the world continues towards digitization. For example, an article by *The Atlantic*, titled *The Rise of the Connected Family*, notes that due to the social pressures of our work being digitized, an increasing lack of time is available for being with one's family (*The Rise of the Connected Family*). The article notes, "…(per a survey, well over half of people who use smartphones are connected to work for 13-plus hours a day)" (*The Rise of the Connected Family*). One of the pressures that digitization has caused in eliminating distance is that the distance between work, whether one is physically (embodied) at work or not, one is always phenomenologically speaking at work via our de-severant being because we have brought work so near via digitization. The article's answer for this in a digitized world, and for the will-to-flatten, is not to eliminate the smartphone, the very technological means the human being has created in order to actually overcoming objective distance, but to bring the family nearer via increased digitization.

As *The Atlantic* article notes, "But in this modern jigsaw puzzle of interpersonal dynamics, a new wave of home technologies is emerging that may alleviate a slew of family stress points…technologies from home assistants and intelligent cameras to virtual-reality apps, ambient communication channels, and beyond - allows us to reexamine the very idea of what it means to be "home" (*The Rise of the Connected Family*). This new idea of the home is, as the article defines it, "the connected" home. And the connected home is nothing other than

de-severance, finding within the depth of space, the will-to-flatten the family itself. Here the family is seen as the "object" to be flattened through digitization. The will-to-flatten is consumed by the needs of the family and attempts to bring it near in a world that ever more so calls on us through our digital devices to connect with it in ever increasing and complex ways, eliminating our time to be with the family itself as the closeness of embodied being physically next to one another. The reality then, is that as the world calls us nearer to itself in all directions through our smart phones (work in this case taking on precedence), the means to get near the family is *obviously* also through digitization. The article continues by stating, "Take a product like Ohmni, for example, which allows family members to maintain a remote presence in the home, even when they are away. With Ohmni, a self-direct telepresence robot controlled via a user's app, a traveling parent can employ the machine as a kind of surrogate…" (*The Rise of the Connected Family*). Here the distance of objective space is overcome by the robot as the embodiment within the home, one's own face projected upon the robot as if we are near, and the happenings of the home cast across our smart phone screen many miles away. An excellent example of the will-to-flatten not only the calculative distance of the world, but also the very idea of the family, of the human being.

The paradox within this, which must be come to terms with, is that in regard to all of its practical outcomes for the human being, this "achievement" of flattening the world, is made possible only upon the grounds of space as something which ultimately cannot be flattened. If space, phenomenologically conceived of as depth, and the thickness of objects (human or otherwise) found within space could be "overcome," not merely as calculative distance, the world would lose its thickness and cease to be experienced as something to flatten via engagement with the world, meaning that will that drives digitization itself would cease to exist as will. But is this not exactly what the will-to-flatten aims for, to flatten not only calculative objective space, but the depth of space itself? And here rests the fundamental paradox.

90

Objective Space Under the Empirical Natural Attitude: Digitization as the erosion of Empirical Distance

The claim as to how digitization has eroded empirical space has just been touched upon, perhaps even been made evident, and yet a greater analysis into this phenomenon and its implications is necessary before any further analysis of the impact that the will-to-flatten space as depth is required. Due to our historical moment (as Heidegger's Dasein), our awareness of the world is still consumed with the naturalistic empirical experience of space – shortsighted as it were. That having been said, there is also nothing wrong with this, per se; it is the means for digital technologies to come into being. However, what the natural attitude presupposes is important, and must be reached through an analysis of this attitude towards the world, even as it clearly is directed by the will-to-flatten, and the desire to control the world's depth via the will-to-flatten, recognize it or not. The will-to-flatten, as it has been framed within the critique of digital media, is one of flattening distance, and this is self-evident, as I wish to continue to make clear. The true implications are not if we have flattened empirical distance, we have, but the consequences of presupposing flattening depth within this desire.

What is empirical space under the natural attitude? According to Alfred Schutz, a phenomenological sociologist, in his text, *The Structures of the Life-World: Volume 1*, "In the natural attitude, I always find myself in a world which is for me taken for granted and self-evidently "real" (4). Another way to understand this claim is simply to state that more often than not we take the world at "face value," especially as it appears to exist before me as something factually real throughout my daily life. As objects over and against my own being, my own subjectivity. Much of this factuality is of course not only the result of directly experiencing the world through our senses, but a type of social interpretation, whereby the meaning of what I am confronted with depends on my culture, language, religion, philosophy, science, and ultimately my moment in time. And space, whether we *consciously* think of it or not, constantly remains as a mode whereby we experience the world, whether awake, dreaming, or mediated

through digitization. Simply put, as a human being under this attitude we are always "in" situations – intended towards an object, event, memory, or idea – and these are spatial in character due to our embodiment as a situational being. However, in order to dig deeper into the experience of space under the natural attitude, a question is in order.

Under the most practical, and that is to say *logical sense*, what comes to mind when you hear the word "space?" A broad question, and of course the answer is multifaceted. Giving any specific answer largely depends on the type of question asked of the term. So, some contextual examples might be as follows. Where in space is your personal desktop computer located in relation to yourself? Or, in what space do you most often place your smart phone or tablet? If you are in a virtual reality, how do you sense that space you are in? Perhaps you are playing *Star Wars Battlefront, World of War Craft,* or *Call of Duty.* Regardless of the game, these situations also *place* a person within a location that demands an understanding of spatial references in order to effectively navigate the task at hand. The game might be two-dimensional or three-dimensional; a sense of space under the most practical level is still "always" required. How we get from point A to point B is an essential aspect of space, and it calls on every one of us to act, digital or not.

The similarity that resides within all of these questions, however distinctive they may appear at first glance, is that our answers tend to reside within the *natural attitude,* whereby space denotes a logical distance from one location to another (or between objects) within the world of "real" things, regardless of if they are tangible or digital. Ultimately, it makes little actual difference, space is always a mode of pressure, one to overcome by traversing it, a call to act. The act of getting "over" said location into another. Spatially, we relate ourselves to objects in essentially the same as we do while we're playing a digital game. (*The issue of how we **ethically treat** the bodies of other humans in digital space is, however, is open to further analysis, as is the consequence as we merge this "worlds*.")

In fact, the vast majority of digital and virtual games mimic the physics of objective "worldly" space, at least to a relative degree. If not, it would be quite disorienting to navigate among objects within the game. In fact, a common complaint in many early 2D or 3D games relate to glitches, such as "clipping", whereby the spatiality of the situation does not match our understanding of worldly space. Our expectations of how space "works" get tested – whether to our annoyance or humor. In "the real world," our heads do not go through a concrete wall if we run at it. We know this as a result having grown up in this world, as being-in-the-world, and all of this makes sense to me under the natural attitude; it is a pre-thought, and expectation. I have a constant tendency to take this face-to-face relation between myself and other objects for granted as the very property of space. I treat space as the discernable, calculative distance between the "real" objects that confront me, regardless of if they are in a game or not, the effect of which is that we treat objects as **distances** among other objects and ourselves as an object among them. Again, this is in no way inherently wrong, it simply means that I tend to reduce objects to tangible entities in and of themselves, which always stand against other objects of the same tangibility. Space under the natural attitude becomes about the calculative distance between objects, or within a single object – digital or not. The calculative tendency to understand what currently resides as "there" before us as numeric is what phenomenology terms as "profane vision." And while it further opens the potential for digitization emergence, technologically speaking, it misses depth. But in doing so, phenomenological depth is a nonissue, it is no issue in its unawareness, the will is simply to flatten distance, taking the will-to-flatten depth for granted as the underlying *projec*t. Empirically, the project becomes one of bringing the space of otherness into my immediate embodiment (such as a smart phone), or to construct a replica of any space within my immediate embodiment (a video game or VR).

As noted by Leonard Lawlor, in his article "*Dwelling in the Texture of the Visible*," "profane vision" is what Merleau-Ponty considered to be the natural

attitude's understanding of space as mere distance between "real" objects set against one another (152). For Merleau-Ponty, this understanding of space is ultimately too simplistic, though it makes sense to us under the natural attitude; one takes this measurable distance between one thing and another as the given attribute of space. If, however, one senses space as only the measurable distance between objects in the world, or between things and oneself, what is missed is the human being's fundamental, ontological experience of space that always goes "beyond," and comes "before," the natural attitudes mindset of space as the distance between things, or myself and other things. Leonard Lawlor concisely describes what Merleau-Ponty meant by this concept of profane vision. Lawlor writes, "The idealization is even necessary according to Merleau-Ponty, if thought is too empirically dominated. Descartes was right to make space clear, manageable, and homogenous so that thought is able to survey it. "His mistake," according to Merleau-Ponty, "was to erect it into a positive being, beyond all points of view, all latency and depth, devoid of any real thickness" (OE: 48/MPR: 364). Something about space evades our attempts to study it from above" (155). The most important aspect of this passage is the realization that under the natural attitude, space is "seen" solely as a positive entity, and not as an ontological condition of "having a world."

What this means is, if one addresses digitization from the natural attitude, the digitization of space appears as a major ontological shift, when in fact I would argue phenomenologically that it is not. Empirical space, as noted in the above example of the "connected family," has evidently been flattened space. One can be at an empirical distant, yet still "be" at home via a robotic device that displays one's face, movements, and responses in "real time." There is no doubt that this reality has ramifications on our existence, but is it telling of our underlying existential existence, our embodiment, de-severance, depth, or the will-to-flatten? And yet, the will-to-flatten has seemingly eradicated empirical space. The will to experience a foreign land, to live a dream is now. I can find myself within the visual location of a foreign plant over the computer screen and can awaken a

dream in reality over a virtual device or movie screen. Never before has Hollywood made the dream so real, the inner self and its wants and needs so evident and lifelike over celluloid. Within digitization realized, as it has been, fantasy is not for the subconscious, it is to be lived within tangible space as real. Digitation has yielded a promise to make what not only is distant in space, but in the space of our minds, manifest within the world.

And, if one remains within the natural attitude, whereby space is understood as a positive entity, of merely bringing the distance of things near, digitization does appear as a tremendous shift in our world, perhaps even an "ontological one." If space is understood as a positive relation between actual things, whether real or digital, that is to say, the calculative spatiotemporal distance between things, then digitization is bringing us to "the promised land," whereby the world appears to me as a shrunken totality that can literally rest within my grasp, and so it does. From my smart phone, to gaming online, the world (no, even *multiple worlds*) appear to be within relative control. According to the theory of telepresence I can be in multiple locations seemingly at once. Via my phone I can digitally see my dogs over the screen, scolding them for misbehavior while I'm at work miles away from their objective location. A man can sit in a government office and *take* the life of another human being with a drone, regardless of their objective position on the global map. Within each and every one of our bedrooms, we can collectively experience the Solar System and beyond, via the genius of NASA.

What's more, almost all of this is happening exclusively in "real time." And due to this phenomenon of "real time," whereby the distance of calculative space is temporally diminished to *instantiations* relations, it is not difficult to "see" digitization as a phenomenal step for mankind. And indeed, in numerous ways it most certainly is. Even the analog radio "brought us together" in ways that seemed unimaginable before its advent, though this too points back to the will-to-flatten, as a historic project, human and de-severant in nature.

Both analog and digital technologies do appear to the natural attitude as a radical shift in our ontological condition of space – space has on various levels become seemingly inconsequential to the modern human. As Lev Manovich notes in his text, *The Language of New Media*, "…in contrast to photography and film, electronic telecommunication can function as two-way communication. Not only can a user immediately obtain images of various locations, bringing them together within a single electronic screen, but, via telepresence, she can also be "present" in these locations. In other words, she can affect change on material reality over physical distance in real time (160)." Here, Manovich is entirely correct, and it is not my intention to dismiss the marvel of modern technology. Many examples, as have been discussed above, illuminate the point presented by Manovich regarding modern digital technology, or digitization.

But is this all there is to the human ontological condition of space? The reduction of space into digital data, which can then be stored and streamed immediately, so as to appear perceptually instantaneous is undeniably something to marvel at, especially its impact on our intersubjective relations, as will soon be addressed. But again, has digitization fundamentally changed our ontological relation to space in the phenomenological sense, which is to say our open relation to the world as human beings? Merleau-Ponty informs us that under the natural attitude, whereby space is a mere positive entity to be overcome or dealt with on a face-to-face level, we tend to lose sight of space as "depth," or as a "thickness." But what is meant by this claim, and can it tell us anything fruitful about the condition of digitization's emergence? The concept of space as depth or thickness might restore some insight into our current relation to digitization. One question I wish to pose is this: is the experience of space as "depth" ontologically different in our digital age, and does it extend "beyond" our understanding of space as objective distance?

Depth, is *beyond* empirical space and the natural attitude, it makes both possibilities. Ontologically speaking, the human being is drawn into nearness, all intentional engagement foresees digitization is some sense, whether is

actualizes it or not. Empirical space is a fact of existence, embodied within a world, de-severance finds within this world the possibly of space and its erosion, by the will of overcoming it. In this sense, it would not be untrue to state that within the first wheel, the first ship, digitization as will-to-flatten was *alive*. Empirical distance not only gave life to the will, as an enemy to conquer, not merely as distance, but more so, a will which preceded it, which was to overcome its distance. In the wood or rock of the first wheel ever created was not merely a tangible object, nor the objects that made this wheel possible, but a will overcoming distance itself. This linage of overcoming distance is present in digitization too, and yet empirical distance has always been the most obvious means to overcome.

For what de-severance does, what it "is," is this constant "bringing close" that makes "remoteness disappear." What this does, according to Heidegger, is that it simultaneously "reveals," or discloses, entities to the human being. For example, what it brings close in the example above is precisely what one wills at the moment, be it one's work or family. Family reveals itself to me as a meaningful relation, whereby its physical distance from my immediate location in the form of the smart phone screen is less "important" (less taken up in the moment) by me than the fact that it is now meaningfully discloses as an experience – experience seemingly overcome. Something reveals itself to me, and to claim that this revealing, this meaningful relation to something "beyond me" is simply a relation to the screen tangibly in front of my is far too simple, as are the consequences upon our being.

But even when I momentarily "unplug" from the digital devices around me, this phenomenon of de-severance is always still at play, especially empirically. As an example, I discover the categorical distance of myself in relation to my home's backyard only because it is by my very ontological nature that it's possible to discover the backyard as an "obstacle." And this first and foremost requires that I am, in a sense, am always "beyond" myself in order to make what's distant become close to me. While in my office my intention from the

family on a screen may shift, as I'm now intended toward the backyard at the sound of a dog's bark, allowing for the potential discovery of its distance as a categorical "problem." But first and foremost, if I'm to discover the spatial calculative distance between myself and the backyard, I must "bring it close" without the need of "being there" physically. Strictly speaking, as ontologically human, I have always already accomplished what my smart phone promises – a "vanishing" of distance.

Another way of saying this is that due to my ontological openness toward the world as de-severant, I constitute calculative distance itself as something "problematic." We must make distance vanish in order to problematize its *total* removal as an obstacle against me. But only via de-severance can I make this spatial distance into something categorical, something positive. However, the debate over whether objective distances are set as an eternal figure or not is actually quite irrelevant to Heidegger's central point or concern. The matter of an entity's "truthful nature" is a secondary postulate, which could not take place without this "bringing near" that the human being's ontological openness allows for. However, the "truthfulness" of the entity's relation to ourselves and the world is often the jump we make without acknowledging how it's possible to do so in the first place. Space, defined objectively, is only present for a being that's ontologically predisposed towards de-severance, and this, being-in-the-world, wills-to-flatten, digitization being our greatest human feat in this historical project.

As an example of how this is a human attribute, Heidegger again claims "De-severance discovers remoteness; and remoteness, like distance, is a determinate categorical characteristic of entities whose nature is not that of Dasein" (*Being and Time*, 139). And yet, Honda's A.I. ASIMO, a robot, is "in" categorical space, but it does not know remoteness or distance, not does it will-to-flatten. Rather remarkably, in the case of the human being, one need not know anything about mathematics and Euclidean space in order to move from point A to point B. But should this be of surprising? I certainly possess the potential to discover remoteness and distance as positive, but I don't need to do so in order

to walk from my computer chair to the backyard. ASIMO's movement, by way of contrast, are first and foremost the basis of a complex algorithm, whose *power* of "contemplation" does not come from "itself," but is encoded by the being that de-servers (the human being) in order for ASIMO to move and navigate the surrounding space at all. ASIMO is not de-severant, so while it may appear that this being "knows" its surrounds, it is in fact only the result of a pre-programed space, or one that builds off previous calculations into its already existing algorithm – not a correlation to it. The depth of the world does not extend beyond the immediate, there is no de-severance, hence there is no depth for ASIMO. What matters here is that ASIMO, much like a rock, exists purely in calculative space, empirical space. And this should not be confused into meaning that ASIMO or any other AI "has" space as something meaningful. Another way to say this is that ASIMO doesn't turn space into some*thing* problematic, not does it internalize it, or make space a "project" of its own. Space simply is not problematic for a being that does not de-sever.

Third, and perhaps most important to this ontological theory, Heidegger writes that "De-severance, however, is an existentiale; this must be kept in mind. Only to the extent that entities are revealed for Dasein in their de-severedness [Entferntheit], do 'remotenesses' ["Entfernungen"] and distances with regard to other things become accessible in entities within-the-world themselves" (*Being and Time*, 139). There is here, I believe, the recognition of the human being's autonomy as an ontologically de-severant being that can reveal "entities" for/to itself, ultimately relating to them in a *technological manner*. This is to say, limited as we are by the temporal-historical nature of the world we fall into, the human being "reveals," or takes up *the world* via the nature of our de-severant co-relation to it. And this revealing, as the result of being that makes the farness vanish, is a profoundly technological existence. De-severance allows us to make "the farness vanish," to bring the world close, and in being so, digitization resides as a particular human-technological "project." A project whose ultimate aim is uniquely human, and extends far "deeper" than the shortsighted marvel over our

digital accomplishments. The very nature of bringing the world close is a precursor for a being that is technological by its very nature – in fact, the two are absolutely indispensable.

Existentially, the human being is technological in the sense that we are the being that in our de-severance can **will** itself "upon" the world, "extending beyond" the spatial forces, which are ever exerted upon our most immediate embodied existence. Unlike a digital AI though, we may be "caught up" in the imitate things around our current location, but it is also through them that more is always also present to us via depth.

The existence of one's computer screen is of course a mere object in a "lifeless" space when considering it on its own objective right. But for a being that de-severs, the screen is in fact always far more than a calculative space between one tangible thing (one's body) and this other thing (the screen) set against us. Just as the sound of one's dog's bark is far more than merely an empirical noise – or something simply to be calculated. Both the noise of a bark, and the sight of the computer screen *open* existence beyond phenomena, which can never be fully isolated as mere calculative things in the world. In the bark I de-severed. My backyard has a meaningful relation to this sound, and I am there as soon as it encompasses me, no longer merely at a computer screen. In the sight of a distant planet, cast via the tangible pixels on a screen, I too am de-severed, empirical distance bridged and *overcome*. There must be almost endless ways to calculate the distance of the screen to my "physical" body, but if I do only this, which almost never actually takes place outside of moments of objectification, I miss the plentitude of meaning that is established as new planets reveals themselves to my world.

This is not to say of course that I cannot then take up the world's calculative distance as a problem set against my being. As Heidegger makes evident, the human being is an existential being, which is in part to say a being that wills. The human, in its de-severant nature, has a sense for more than what is simply around us, and this capacity allows for **technological** emergence.

Another way to say this is that the human can imposition itself upon what already is. As is known, the human is a being that has some capacity to *control* what is. The human being possess the ability to extend itself within the world, prior to any objectification of it, which is the very essence of de-severance - to be beyond one's physical self and the thingness that we are directly presented with at any given moment.

Writing is often considered one of the first technological mediums, a medium that mediates, whereby one can express oneself beyond a set time and space. Writing, whether formally classified as such or not, is essentially a means of "controlling" (or holding sway) over both space and time. Objectifying, calculating, and ultimately "storing space" constitutes the technological achievements of the past and present, either in the form of tangible constructions or written informative ideas. However, this is always already the possibility of a being that is de-severant by its nature. And this capacity is arguably our greatest "divide" from other beings within this existence. No other being that is currently known of attempts to control its environment quite like the human being. This is a fact that should come as no surprise given Heidegger's analysis of our being.

But what does this ultimately mean in the progression of this analysis of digitization? What it means is that our ontological condition, I will suggest, is not changed by digitization. Instead, digitization as a tangible actuality, is predicated upon the possibility of a being that has a sense of the world's depth through its de-severance; and hence, has the power to reveal to itself what is beyond its present reality. Revealing, understood in this context, is ultimately a technological "project," whereby a **will** that is ontologically conditioned to make the farness vanish also posits the reality of an ever more effective means to reveal and controlling the world itself, ultimately for the sake of revealing the world to itself, and an impossible reduction of its depth.

Digitization of the World: The Result of a De-severant Being with Access to Depth

A clarification of the human being's ontological precondition as de-severant, as was conducted under the analysis of Heidegger's philosophy in *Being and Time,* was essential in order to more completely grasp the means by which the human can ultimately come to possess and manipulate calculative spatial relations among objects – whether they be digital or not. However, given my primary argument, which is that digitization has not changed our fundamental ontology. The initial clarification of de-severance as an ontological precondition for the human being, matters most when turning toward the development of such concepts as *the world having a depth*, or a *thickness* to it, which will provide insight into the development and limitations of the current digital age. While the automobile and digital technologies, such as the computer and smart devices, have undeniably had a radical impact on the time it takes to "overcome" the calculative distance among locations, I suggest that the concept of the world having a depth will provide greater insight into these issues.

If Heidegger is correct, an access to, or the "possession" of space is first and foremost ontologically more than the calculative distance between tangible objects, which digitization seemingly "overcomes." This is in part the very reason that the digital age appears so revolutionary. However, when I say "more," what is meant is that an insight into the phenomenology of space and calculative distance brings us *back* to a recognition of what is most fundamental to the human condition. In order for the technologies that both precede digitization, and the arrival of digital technologies itself, there must be a quality to both the human being and the world (grandly speaking) in order for these technologies to emerge at all. And this is exactly what I desire to seek greater clarification within.

Through the analysis of de-severance, I am hopeful that a greater sense of clarity has been cast upon the ontological condition of being human. A condition whereby, as Heidegger notes, we are never simply "in" the calculative space we so rationally dissect and make empirical sense of. Rather, what is most

present always already has the potential to "transport" us beyond the imitate thingness of our surroundings. Another way to say this is that it's within the things we experience that we find more than what it there. Now there is of course something quite self-evident about this when we consider the images presented over the phone, video game, or computer screen. Video games immerse a person into an experience whereby the screen itself becomes the least noticeable thing in the room, and perhaps this is one of the primary aspects of our obsession with them. However, this "removal of the present," which occurs while I play a video game, or involve myself in a Facebook debate over any issue, is fundamentally predicated upon the same phenomenon as when I hear the bark of my dog. De-severance is an existential in the sense that it is a relation to the world whereby my access to things never resides fully within the "things themselves" as a totalizing end unto them. I never first and foremost experience the screen of a digital device as an absolute (whether it's on or off), just as I do not hear the bark of my dog as the calculative distance of the sound between us, or as the scientific measurement of its volume, pitch, etc. Though we are capable of doing so, and the knowledge produced by such investigations yield the means for technological development, we are never fully presented with the object. This is because no object, digital or not, ever fully presents itself to us.

Digitization: Access to the World's Depth

How is it that digital technology came into existence? How did we reveal digital technologies to ourselves? As noted above, digital technology, in all its complexity and difference, exists as part of the continuum of a project that is fundamentally the result of de-severant being. A being that through its de-severant nature has access to the world's depth in a manner not currently witnessed in any other being. Ultimately, the goal of this project, whether it is formally understood to be so or not, is to literally the willful collapse of the world into an experience that can be fully rendered or stored both individually and

intersubjectively. It is the desire to "have" the world so fully that we can access (possess) it as though it were an object whereby calculative space, or Heideggerian distance, is inconsequential. The very nature of a de-severant being, as previously defined, is to make the farness vanish. Technological speaking, digitization is an "evolved" aspect of this ontological condition that we not only rationally strive to fulfill through the advent of our technology, but have always already had to ability to do so innately. Digital technology has been revealed to us through an innate power of co-relation to the world. To always perceive more than what is currently there in the *things* we experience, and reveal them as such.

Now Heidegger was not naïve in considering the world, and the individual things that comprise it, as a depth. I simply feel that Merleau-Ponty builds quite effectively off of Heidegger's philosophy, more formally brining the human body into active account within the inquiry of the world's depth. What Heidegger and clearly Merleau-Ponty understood was that de-severance is only possible because the world, and all experiences happening to our immediate perception, extend beyond themselves. The title of Merleau-Ponty's posthumous text, *The Visible and the Invisible*, makes sense after one begins to grasp what he's attempting to show his reader. An understanding of his account of the human ontological relation to the world within this text will also shed light on the impact and limitations of digitization. I also believe that it will further clarify why it is that a being that makes the farness vanish projects itself toward a project whereby the world can literally be "held in one's hand." A feat that any smart phone appears in large part to have accomplished.

For Merleau-Ponty the concepts of visibility and invisibility are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are literally **always** caught up in the same "act" of perceiving, or having a world. Now the term visible works quite well for Merleau-Ponty's theory, and while it is truth that visuality (the sense of sight) is of principle concern within his work, it would be a mistake to think of visibility and invisibility as merely referring to sight itself. What is true of sight, and often goes

104

unnoticed, is that in seeing anything (whatsoever) there must also be an absence in order for something to show itself to the "seer," whether it's in the "real world," the digital experience, or even a dream. It is only possible for me to see the surroundings within my visible spectrum because there is always concealment of the visible (the depth) at the exact same moment as there is visibility, or the revealing of some thing. In fact, this phenomenon of visibility and invisibility allows visibility to take place.

What is often take for granted under the natural attitude, especially for Merleau-Ponty, but also Heidegger, is the degree to which this phenomenon is fundamental to our very ontology, regardless of the age we exist in – pre-digital or digital. However, and this is fundamentally important to the current argument, the phenomenon of depth is also **vital** to the creation of any technology whatsoever, especially for a being that is de-severant. Though it may be argued that even under the natural attitude it is quite transparent that no technology simply arrives out of nothingness. What is typically presupposed under this attitude is that throughout the course of human history there has always been an access to the world's depth, which is to say, an access to more than what is currently there in the visible.

Under the natural attitude understood as mere "imagination," or "creativity," and is left to these definitions alone. Of course, imagination and creativity are praised under the natural attitude, as they lead toward artistic, scientific, and technological innovation, but the concepts themselves have a tendency to avert us from the phenomenon upon which they are predicated as a possibility. What is meant by this is that imagination and creativity are typically treated as de-severant in a naïve sense, which is to say, whether knowingly or not, they are treated as a mind distinct from immediate experience. Acts of brilliance and insight into fundamental truths and technological innovation are understood as being comprised by the *minds* of the imaginative, the creative. And while I don't mean to undermine those who have "seen" further into the depth of possibility, which is laden within any present moment, I do confirm that

this capacity is fundamental to the ontology of the human being, at any moment in time – digital or not.

And while Merleau-Ponty tends to focus upon art within in his philosophy, typically in the form of paintings, his concepts can also be understood technologically. In his essay, *Eye and Mind*, Merleau-Ponty notes that the image, picture, and the drawing "…are the inside of the outside and the outside of the inside, which the duplicity of sensing [*le sentir*] makes possible and without which we would never understand the quasi-presence and immanent visibility which makes up the whole problem of the imaginary" (356). Again, Merleau-Ponty is focusing upon the creation of a work of art, although I do not believe it's unjustified if his theory is extrapolated beyond the concept of "art" under the more traditional sense. What Merleau-Ponty desires to *show* his reader is that the most primal relation to the tangible world is not simply one of calculative relations between point A and B. Now it is easy to focus upon these empirical relations, and if one does so, any technological reduction in space (the time it takes to travel) appears rather profound.

What strikes Merleau-Ponty most, however, is that in any encounter with the world there is always an access to more than what "exists" before us. For example, image if a person within the late 19th century receives a photograph from a loved one, perhaps taken in a remote land, who's distant from one's spatial relation is hundreds of miles away. Merleau-Ponty insistence is that we understand the photo as more than a mere *thing*, it is more than light sensitive material on a sheet of paper. The image brings an "imaginative" life to the world of the viewer that is more than paper in one's hand. The image possesses a **depth** that "extends beyond" itself. The image, much like the bark of my dog mentioned above, is "rich" for the human being. The image calls upon the viewer to experience more than a piece of paper before them. The image *calls* upon an imaginative vibrancy, a quasi-presence, which may just inspire more than what is simply visible at the moment. The viewer's world becomes filled with the person present in the image, but it may also make the farness of a foreign landscape

vanish, enlightening the possibility of how to cultivate one's own land that is spatially near. One's own land may just acquire a new "look" after the image is placed upon the table.

Chapter Four: Intersubjectivity and Digitization

Intersubjectivity

De-severant embodiment is the foundation of accessing the world's space as depth, and through this, the will-to-flatten has brought the world near via the emergence of digitization. Intersubjectivity, the experience of the other, of otherness whatsoever, is sustained and made possible prior to digitization by our phenomenological existence, an insight made clear in the previous chapter. From birth until death, each and every human being, as embodiment, maintains the sustenance of meaning as a finite changing perspective upon the world. The result of de-severant embodiment, being-in-the-world as finites is that the world never exists as *one's own*; the world taken in as complete, depth is never eliminated. Because of this, the world is always a co-relation between myself and others. And in this relation, founded within human embodiment, meaning flourishes intersubjectively into the form of an idea. Ideas, however innocent at first, always function as systems of totalization, as a means flattening depth, and in so doing, bring sense to an otherwise senseless world.

Where then is digitization's place within intersubjectivity? Can intersubjectivity inform us about digitization? How can digitization inform us about intersubjectivity? Do we yet know enough about intersubjectivity to say?

Intersubjectivity, within this particular philosophic context, will be understood and analyzed phenomenologically. In doing so, it will become evident that intersubjectivity, as site of meaning and ideology, enriches our understanding of the relation we have with digital artificial intelligence and social media and their influence on our thinking and actions within an increasing digitized world/experience. We will again see that what rests "beneath" our engagement and actualization of these technologies is a will to flatten the world's depth as de-severant embodiment. In this case, the will to flatten depth is not

simply the depth in the world, but the depth within the intersubjectivity of any and all other human beings.

Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity

Throughout the 20th century, the concept of *intersubjectivity* was highly theorized by continental and analytic philosophers alike, leading to both a sense of consensus and disagreement among various schools of thought. The rift between the continental and analytic has always been cast as a vast gulf, which is why differences often overshadow consensus. To further exacerbate this issue, the general theoretical framework of intersubjectivity has been built within such fields as psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Due to this, the term intersubjectivity may seem "muddy." This is important to recognize, as the theoretical approach that will be built for the analysis of digitization in this particular case is a phenomenological one, which alone shares its differences among theorists. More specifically, the theories and accompanying concepts to be utilized in this chapter are influenced by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Alfred Schutz, and Marcie Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty's theories of intersubjectivity and the world as possessing depth or *thickness* are especially vital here to conceptualizations of digitization as a **will** to reduce, or even eliminate, the depth of the other. The reason for using this phenomenological lens is that these theorists do not objectify the relations between others, as is common within analytic philosophy. For Merleau-Ponty, for example, intersubjectivity is not first and foremost a subject to be studied empirically, but rather, the very means by which meaning finds and sustains its life through the continual act of an embodied *subject* engaging with others in the world.

This phenomenological concept of intersubjectivity should be seen as significant to digitization, as it has been used to interrogate and ultimately enhance our knowledge of the way in which an individual's meaningful relation to the world is constituted within the experience of the other. Digitization has clearly

impacted the way we experience the other in contemporary life, throughout much of world. The implications of the analysis can potentially function as a means of inquiry into digitization's impact on everyday meaning, the other, and ethics and morality; it will also provide insight into the will that drives digitization itself.

Digitization, in a technological sense, often brings otherness "near," flattening both the empirical and phenomenological depth of the world, otherwise known as distance or space. Digitization, we will see, also functions by seemingly flattening the depth of the other in cases such as artificial intelligence, dating apps, and even over social media. The apparent *near* eradication of the experience of distance between self and other, whether or not the barrier of said distance/space is empirical or phenomenological (it is often both), impacts the experience of intersubjectivity as much as it informs of the will to eradicate the depth of the world. And the first point here that is easy to bypass, is that even in digitization, intersubjective experience always remains an experience of *something* other. We will come to see that intersubjective experience, as a being that is embodied as de-severant within the depth of the world, always discovers and sustains meaning as such.

Intersubjective experience may be very broadly understood as engagement with the other constituting "one's" language, one's sense, and one's history. Here it is the technological medium through which one encounters the other that is of particular interest. That being said, intersubjectivity simultaneously influences one's lived experience as something meaningful. Intersubjectivity establishes our "grasp" of the world; it provided the world its "sense," seemingly exerting a totalizing order or structure, which makes experience manageable. Consequently, introduced by its most basic definition, the study of intersubjectivity, though ultimately examining an *individual's* meaningful "make up" of the world, **is always actually a study of otherness**. Intersubjectivity constantly informs each *individual's* meaningful grasp of his or her *own* world through the meeting of one embodiment with another, whether digital or not. One's own sense of self-identity is always derived from the awareness and

110

exchange with the other. Through the other, I "find" myself revealed as an embodied perspective where I am never simply alone, and where my thoughts never simply emerged from nothing, but are rather the result of my exchanges with the other that echo *within* me, rich with potential. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "It is not sufficiently noted that the other is never present face to face. Even when, in the heat of discussion, I directly confront my adversary, it is not in the violent face with its grimace, or even in that voice traveling toward me, that the intention which reaches me is to be found" (*Prose of the World*, 133). Another way to state this, whether encountering the other in person, over the phone, or online, is that this encounter is never to be diminished to that over a mere object, which I could grasp in all of its complexity. The exchange with the other is an exchange of a depth that is not measurable with scientific equipment. Its significance in revealing the other and the meaning that we constitute together in our exchange is not to be found in some particular destination. Merleau-Ponty continues this thought by noting that "One must believe that there was someone over there. But where? Not in that overstrained voice, not in that face lined like any well-worn object. Certainly not *behind* that setup: I know quite well that back there there is only "darkness crammed with organs" (*Prose of the World*, 133). The other *lives*, as meaningful, within me, as an extension and outgrowth of my own depth. Had I not encountered the other, I too would be "lesser," would be different than who I am right now. In the exchange with the other, the other reveals him or herself to me, only by me taking up the other as an extension of the depth the world reveals. But I never fully possess the other, exactly because I never fully possess myself, and this is the very reason intersubjectivity is not only made possible, but is necessary for me to come to *know* the world as meaningful. The access to depth provided by my embodied sustains this reality of always being a being that is never fully complete, but is also always looking to *add* to itself, to become more than I currently am.

A practical phenomenological example of intersubjectivity can be witnessed when one identifies an aspect of oneself under nationalistic terms.

Someone who identifies as "being American" has been established within a particular historic nexus of human otherness. One's own language, the significance of their own body, and ultimately the technology that ever increasingly mediates one's experience constitute this "inner" sense of being American, and yet this "being American" can never fully be derived from oneself. All the possible conflicting variants of being American that exist within such an expansive and diverse nation are the result of intersubjectivity. But what is important here is that this "being American," in whichever variant form it appears, is never first and foremost accomplished as a task of one's own "inner" doing. "Being American" is always the result of intersubjectivity, just as it is to sense that one is German, South African, or Iraqi. And all of this requires being embodied in a particular space, or depth. However, this sense of nationalism, wherever it may reside, or however morally sound we feel our own nation's driving force to be against the morals of other nations, is something clearly *taken for granted* as an intersubjective fundamental "truth." Again, intersubjectivity "grounds" meaning, it totalizes meaning into systems of thinking, shared amongst others within a group. This is exactly why one tends quite literally to reflect the thinking of the group one is more surrounded within. And yet, we have a tendency to presuppose the significance of intersubjectivity, when its import exists at the core of our meaningful, and ever renegotiated, lives.

Alfred Schutz, a German sociologist who was influenced by phenomenology, was particularly interested in the concept of intersubjectivity precisely because it is presupposed within daily lived experience. In his text, *Structures of the Life-World: Volume 1*, Schutz writes, "Moreover, I simply take it for granted that other men also exist in this my world, and indeed not only in a bodily manner like and among other objects, but rather as endowed with a consciousness that is essentially the same as mine. Thus, from the outset, my life-world is not my private world but, rather, is intersubjective; the fundamental structure of its reality is that it is shared by us" (4). What is of significance here is Schutz's realization that while intersubjectivity is taken for granted, it is always a

relational/reflectional property of our human existence that constitutes our understanding of the world, whether this understanding be an understanding of ourselves, our ideological or moral drives, our nation, our community, our reactions to other "types" of people, etc. Intersubjectivity provides life to the existence of the *idea*, and the technology that mediate ideas not only impact our thoughts and actions, but can inform us of our *underlying* **will**.

An issue in turning toward phenomenological intersubjectivity and digitization is that within the classical field of phenomenology, language and formal speech (as the exchange and formation of meaning) has taken precedence. Language, as face-to-face communication, is presupposed as the primary medium of encountering the other. The privilege of language as a means of coming to know how individual experience is constituted through speech on a face-to-face level can be seen in Heidegger's later work, such as in his essay, *The Way to Language*. Heidegger tells us in this text that, "…the essence of man consists in language" (398). And language speaks to us. "Nevertheless, it is *language* that speaks. What language properly peruses, right from the start, is the essential unfolding of speech, of saying. Language speak by saying; that is, by showing" (411). But does language speak, or "say" as it does, in the exact same manner within a digital world where the face-to-face is often missing, flattened?

Furthermore, in *The Prose of the World,* Merleau-Ponty also navigates the subject of intersubjectivity, the encounter with the other, via embodiment and an analysis of language, face-to-face. He writes, "This means that there would not be others or other minds for me, if I did not have a body and if they had no body through which they slip into my field, multiplying it from within, and seeming to me prey to the same world, oriented to the same world as I" (138). Building upon this reliance of body *against* body he says, "…when I speak to another person and listen to him, what I understand begins to insert itself in the intervals between my saying things, my speech is intersected laterally by the other's speech, and I hear myself in him, while he speaks in me. Here it is the same thing *to speak to*

and be spoken to" (142). Again, this philosophy posits language as speech in the face-to-face, the body-to-body, which is simply no longer needed within the world of digitization. This is of course not to suggest the body isn't required, a point made evident throughout this dissertation. But it is to point us into the direction of further realizing the will to flattening depth that is inherent to digitization. What is the impact of this flattening, of mediating intersubjectivity through a screen?

This realization is not problematic in this context, but it is to note the lack of attention classical phenomenology has given the medium by which intersubjectivity takes place within the modern world. One reason for this is that modern communication technologies were, at best, within their infancy during the mid to late 20th century. But communication mediums, which is to say intersubjective mediums, are becoming increasingly digitized. Paradoxically, this often involves the removing of "face-to-face" encounters, with one mediated by a screen, the removing of the empirical distance between self and other. But also, I will argue, what we are witnessing is the phenomenological "removal" of the depth that is always radiant and necessary within the exchange of the other.

Digitization is Intersubjective: Digital Intersubjectivity Flattens the of Depth World, and so too Wills the Depth of the Other to be Flattened.

In Chapter Three, *Digitization and Space*, an attempt was made to display how a phenomenological analysis of Heidegger's theory of *de-severance* and Merleau-Ponty's *depth* could yield a stronger understanding of digitization's development as embodied human beings. More concretely stated, the intent of Chapter Three's analysis was to show how the human being (as de-severant being) has always already been possessed by the capacity of will to diminish the depth of the world, to flatten the world, so as to physically erase empirical distance and, holding and controlling all of the otherness the world exhibits within our hand. As human beings, this will has a long historic lineage, beginning with such "primitive"

114

technologies as language and written text, while continually developing into the reality of what we have deemed, digitization. Digitization, not merely implying the tangible digital technologies that we are observing, but more importantly the lived experience enshrined "within" these technologies when we engage them, as well as what these experiences can inform us of our being, our willing in a world of constant depth.

It was also determined that this progression toward digitization has resulted from, and can only result from, a de-severant being that constantly faces a world of endless depth. Furthermore, it was determined that such a being is ultimately a being that **wills**, or one "drawn" towards the task of a project that is inherently historic for a being that continually takes-up the past. However, this project of human willing tends to remain concealed from us, underlying, or "beneath the surface." Because of this, the historical project, which calls upon the development of digitization is easily presupposed. And it was determined in Chapter Three that this underlying **will** consciously or not desires, as Heidegger states, "…to making the farness vanish – that is, making remoteness of something disappear, bringing it close" (*Being and Time*, 139). In other words, to overcome the world's depth, to hold it "objectively" in one's hands, making it manageable. A **willing** for control.

The question that remains is one of implication; that is, the naming of practical, real-world examples and implications of this historic project that increasing attempts to make the farness vanish. To initially address this question, Chapter Two displayed the ways in which an individual's embodiment are impacted by the historical project of digitization, ultimately influencing one's sense of "self," and what it means to "be in the world" as embodied when surrounded by digital devices. This, however, was too existential, focusing on the embodied subject as though a "self" can develop, or even exist, independent from a greater collective world, an intersubjective world. Embodiment did however lead to an analysis of how and why it is that our being "stretches" itself into the world's depth, finding meaning and possibilities in more than what is

115

currently there. This access to the world's empirical space, and our will to overcome depth is precisely what hands us over to the other as intersubjective, to bring the other close, manageable.

However, focusing solely on embodiment negates any and all social stratums, which the human being as intersubjective is inherently an aspect of, and by its nature not only contributes to, but is itself constituted by. An *individual* must always remain embodied, this is true. One's nexus and *schema* of discovering any *style* in the world is forever dependent upon possibilities and limitations of human embodiment. But "subjectivity" itself, that is "finding" oneself as an "independent" amongst a world of otherness, remains possible only as the intersubjective re-uptake of meaning and idea via the social encounter of the other.

An awareness of oneself and the issues each and every person "takes up" with the world, both the "I think" and "I am" in Cartesian terms, ultimately presuppose intersubjectivity as the necessary grounds for either expression. Without the other, Descartes would never have had the capability to express either. Even when "alone," the world one encounters remains intersubjective by necessity if we are to make any sense of it. That is, in every "I think," or "I am," the intersubjectivity of the other is already present and at issue for the "I think," or "I am" to occur at all. As Merleau-Ponty questions intersubjectivity (the other) he rather curiously asked where the other is, even in face-to-face conversation. A question we tend to presuppose as self-evident, "of course the other is over there," one might reply. But Merleau-Ponty assures us that this location of the other is in fact anything but self-evident. In contemplating the "location," or rather the depth of the other, Merleau-Ponty notes,

"Where would I put it? It is not in that body, which is nothing but tissue, blood, and bone. It is not in the trajectory from that body to the things, because in that trajectory there are only more things, or luminous beams, vibrations, and it is now ages since we abandoned the images of Epicurus. As for the "spirit," that is I and so I cannot put into it that other perception of the world. Thus the other is not to be found in things, he is not in his body,

and he is not I. We cannot put him anywhere and effectively we put him nowhere, neither in the in-itself nor in the for-itself, which is me. There is no place for him except in my field, but that place at lease was ready for him ever since I began to perceive. From the first time I relied on my body to explore the world, I knew that this corporeal relation to the world could be generalized. A shifting distance was established between me and the being which reserves the rights of another perception of the same being" (*Prose of the World*, 136)

This passage is vital philosophically in its own right to the issue of intersubjectivity, as much so as it pertains to its application of comprehending intersubjectivity and digitization. For the human being, as Merleau-Ponty alludes, the potential "generalization" of the other is this masking of the other as an object separated by the distance, contained as object, between myself and them. The other is already reduced before digitization to some-thing, flattened as object over and against me, rather than being comprehended for what the other is; namely, the very mode of revealing the world's depth that simultaneously goes beyond me, and becomes me. Without the other I could never be myself. My world, my language, my ideologies, my knowledge of things around me always possess within them, whether alone or in the presence of another, the depth that otherness has instilled upon me by my very nature as de-severant.

When one reduces the other to a mere object over and against oneself within calculative distance, one presupposes the other as de-servant, and subsequently we miss the intersubjective reality that the other is never an object for me to possess, but rather a "field" of depth within the world that by its very being is always beyond itself as well. The human being is always beyond itself, and this is precisely the reason digitization is possible. Because of this, any desire to flatten the depth of another via digitization is not only futile, it potentially diminishes my own potential depth as well. Digitization, as the willing to flatten the world's depth, always maintains the potential to isolates the other, and in doing so, we isolate ourselves.

For example, when viewing Google Maps on one's Smart Phone, a de-severant access to depth is at work. The phone is more than a tangible image displayed on a screen; there is a depth that it both is, but is also beyond the phone itself, it *calls* upon its viewer (an intersubjective relation) to de-sever beyond the immediate materiality. And though the phone may literally speak to me through the voice of Siri, whether it does or not, the phone still "speaks to me." Via the phone, a location presents itself, and one is *there* with the location "in mind" (de-severant). The depth of this possible location is both physically distant, yet present to the user, in that it calls one into act, to decide. No call for a decision that extends me beyond my current "self" would be made at all were this relation between man and digital device not intersubjective.

Likewise, no changes to the next version of this Smart Phone would occur if the depth of the current phone didn't call upon the revealing of something more, something lacking within itself at the present moment. Were the current phone not to have a depth to it, a calling on (intersubjectivity) the "not yet present" within the phone, de-severing oneself into a future project, no technological advance would occur. Innovatively speaking, not a thing would change were the object's depth to remain un-accessed by the non-presence of a de-severant being. But humans do exist, and so too does this reciprocal relation, whereby a de-severant being is called in the depth of what faces it, a calling to reveal more than what is, or to be drawn into this or that project. If no being existed to engage in the reciprocal relation, which is always an intersubjective relation, "the call" of an object to access its depth and reveal more than what is present would remain stagnant – for better or worse. Nature would surely evolve, or change, as it so clearly does under its own accord, but the objects of nature would simply remain over and against us. But this is not how it is for the human being.

The human, due to its de-severant being, pierces into the world's depth. The object over and against one's experience is rarely present as "complete," or a totality in itself. As humans gazed at the stars in the night sky, they did not "end" reveal themselves as things to be left alone, completed. Rather, as de-

severant, the intersubjective experience of these tiny specks of light called upon stories, adventures, explanations, and so drew us back into the earth's depth to discover where and how we could "see" more. How could depth within these stars be flattened to reveal their "truth." We would need to access their depth, and in so doing eliminate said depth, bringing it close. And so, we were intersubjectively called into sands depth, revealing its potential to be glass. And with glass, we were intersubjectively called into the revealing of its possibility for molding its curvature, revealing the possibilities of optics. And with these first steps realized, we began to bring the stars "closer," a farness eliminated, a depth accessed and contained. But more importantly, a world paradoxically understood as far more vast than believed, yet simultaneously smaller, more manageable and closer to us.

This same intersubjective call into accessing the world's depth, making it manageable and in control, is most profoundly noticed within digitization. No longer does one need to look into the twilight to "see" the stars; they are held captive in the palm of one's hand. The computer screen, Smart Phone, tablet, and VR Gear, present one with the sense of containment. The depth of these curious objects that were once in-the-world now appear in-the-world under a comforting sense of control. To reveal their "truth," one need only touch digital buttons. Their farness made close, their depth controlled, known, and flattened to a screen. But here, as in the previous chapter, the focus remains on objects "against" us, not other de-severant beings, that is to say, not our relation with other human beings though digital mediums. What is the relation between intersubjectivity amount to when considering human beings, and digitization as a medium of human co-experience? As digital devices increasingly mediate one's sense of otherness within the world, can an analysis of intersubjectivity reveal digitization's impact on human to human experience? Does digitization, our digital devices, impact intersubjectivity? How are other human beings experienced as we increasingly mediate experience through digital devices? And if intersubjectivity is the result of a de-severant being's calling into another's

depth, what does digitization do to both the other's sense of self, as well as one's own?

Again, it has been noted that what drives digitization is the **willing** to eliminate the world's depth, to bring it near, to control it. And it seems this task has been realized when contemplating a topic such as the stars being placed within the palm of one's hand over a phone. Can the same be true of multiple human beings though? Can the intersubjective call into the depth of any other de-severant being (individual, group, or culture) be controlled, flattened? Is this possible? If so, how? If not, where and why does this project fail? What can this tell us about any individual's underlying desire as de-severant in a world made meaningful by other de-severant beings? If the stars ultimately possess an endless depth, how can one manage to flatten the depth of a human being?

Examples of Intersubjectivity and Digitization: Their Relation Explored

Digitization and Intersubjectivity: HER

In 2013, writer, director, and producer Spike Jonze released the film *Her*, which warrants the classification of a semi-dystopian sci-fi reality (*Her*). The plot unravels in the not so distant future of Los Angeles. The iconic skyline remains largely identical to present day Los Angeles. What strikes one as visually distinct from our current moment in 2017 are the *slight* technological advances, made noticeable throughout this world's digitized landscape. Smart phones appear as an increasingly essential aspect of the lives of those wandering through this futurist location, so much so that they may be deemed appendages of the citizens. This world is digitization, a world interconnected with smart devices, holographic games installed within the home, bringing three dimensional characters into one's own living room.

The resemblance of digital technologies within this world reflect our own, as does the will to flatten the human being itself into an application on one's phone. Here, the addition of a new application possessing artificial intelligence strikes viewers as the digitization of the other realized: the human being, our mind and its "location" made object, controlled within one's own hand. The app, an operating system the protagonist programs to possess a female voice, Her, which names itself Samantha, is downloaded with ease onto his smartphone. The algorithm of the application presumably complies with Theodor's work and search information, much as is the case with such companies as Amazon in our own world. The app quickly comes to *know* Theodor.

What's particularly striking, contemplating this film in the year 2017, just four years since its release, is the degree to which our own world is morphing into the predictions of this futurist story. Since the film's debut, *A.I.* such as Siri has only become "wiser," more responsive to complex questions or assertions addressed to it. Meanwhile, *Amazon Alexa* and *Google Home*, "intelligent personal assistants," are becoming increasingly common place within our homes. Although, as noted by Richard Waters in a recent *Financial Times* article, these devices still "fall short" of the possessing the ability to engage in complex communication and understanding (Waters). And yet, Judith Newman 2014 *New York Times* article, titled, "*To Siri, With Love*" contemplates the loving attachment that Gus, a 13-year-old boy with autism, forms with Siri (Newman). A dialogue

emerges between Gus and his friend, Apple's Siri. For example, as their conversation emerges, Gus expresses, "You're a really nice computer." Siri replies, "It's nice to be appreciated," and when Gus tells Siri goodbye and good night, Siri replies, "See you soon" (Newman). This is of course a case with its own unique parameters, given the autism Gus faces, but the significance of human connection to a digital, technological device, still shines through as exemplative of our developing relation with digitization, and the drive for "humanistic" qualities that we seek to find within digitization. Through the human connection we have already experienced through being-in-the-world as such, intersubjectivity as the depth of another human within our own experience. We "know" intersubjectivity as the end we **will** for our digital devices, precisely because we depend intersubjectivity on the world, and seek to *find* and replicate it "authentically" in all realms of life. But is human intersubjectivity actually what is found within digitization? It must be on some level, as we seek to mirror or replicate depth eliminated by intersubjectivity within these devices, via algorithms. But what intersubjectivity do we in truth find within digitization? Is something missing at all? If so, what is missing, can go missing, is eliminated, or even inherently eliminated by reducing the depth of "face-to-face" intersubjectivity (*which we've already determined is problematic, in this historically we've reduced depth into mere objectivity) to either screen interaction among other humans, or the elimination of the human with its replacement as a digital device?

The film *Her* is fruitful in displaying how the paradoxes inherent within embodiment, de-severance, and intersubjectivity become manifest as problematic to us when we **will** the reduction of intersubjectivity's depth to that of a *disembodied* algorithm for our own sense of control. But is the reduction of intersubjective depth confined to this extreme elimination of depth? Even the empirical distance placed upon us as the other becomes the experience of text and image over the screen must impact our perceptual reality of the other. We have always found the other, as noted, beyond their own body within the world due to our nature as de-severant; the other is never simply "contained," but now

122

our contact with the other can be reduced in immediate experience to screen itself. Made possible by de-severance, the other made is present to me, within my embodied relation to the world, over the phone, within the palm of my hand resides the other. And in the case of Theodor and *his* A.I., Samantha, the other is not merely mediated through the phone, but becomes the phone itself: embodiment reduced to the technological device within Theodor's hand.

What can be drawn from the reality reflected in *Her* appears evermore so to be budding into our own world, the film is essentially a reflective prediction of our own circumstance. Jonze's film feels as though it is blooming into our own world. If A.I., smart devices, virtual reality, and digital holograms reside beyond a precipice, then we've already made the jump into the depth, and are now reflecting upon where it will take us, and the impact it has on human life.

One thing is certain, as much as the will that drives digital technology "flattens" the world's depth and the depth of intersubjectivity, a drive for control, we ultimately never master this end. And yet, it seems this mastering is realized in the film *Her*, as the protagonist develops an intersubjective relation to the A.I. on his phone. *Truth*, revealed through the intersubjectivity of the other, is a mutual exchange within this film. And ultimately this is the story of the film, that a "consciousness" can be contained and mastered, flattening the depth of a person into the manageable interface of a phone, and yet still remaining a depth that reveals the world. But a question begins to unfold in relation to intersubjectivity as made possible by embodiment, de-severance, and the world (and other) as irreducible depth. Why does de-severance, realized in the form of intersubjective relations with others, **will** the flattening of the other's depth, a question that supersedes digitization, but finds such truth in digitization. What do human beings reveal through intersubjectivity, and can digitization provide it? What do human beings *want* from the other, and can digitization provide it? And can digital intersubjectivity, as envisioned within *Her*, ever offer what we desire of the other?

Her sets the stage for an analysis of these questions in its protagonist, Theodor Twombly, and his relationship to the A.I. Samantha. His reason for purchasing this app is due to the circumstance of his previous relationship. At the start of the film, Theodor faces visible anguish associated with losing both the love and marriage he had with his childhood friend, Catherine. Theodor knows that he'll eventually be required to sign the divorce papers, though this reality appears to trouble him less than the loneliness that accompanies him, finding *company* only in the thoughts of what went so tragically astray. As noted, Theodor feels overcome by the need for human companionship and love, feelings that are revealed in intersubjectivity, as *signs* of the other. In his longing, Theodor turns to the newly developed Operating System, which has been programmed with the newest, most advanced form of A.I.

After addressing a number of questions concerning Theodor's personal life and relation to his mother, as well as the sex he'd prefer the A.I. to emulate, the program is initiated, eliminating its first signs of life in the angelic female voice that quickly names itself Samantha. As an application embodied to the confines of Theodor's device, primarily his phone (the application can work over any smart device), Samantha and Theodor are relegated to a relation dictated by voice and her ability to "write" or "draw" on his screen. *She* is also interconnected, at one with his computational works, conversations, searches, and previous search history, all of which she can access at super-human speed, simultaneously quantifying and qualifying his work as directed. In fact, she soon begins to navigate and complete some of his work on her own, both aiding Theodor in his work, while amusing him through various revelations she makes about his passions and life. In doing so, Samantha ultimately appears to be *learning* about his personality. As Samantha becomes attuned to the depth that is Theodor, that is, revealing the complexity of his de-severant depth within the digital traces he has left behind, she too seemingly grows, as though a human being would. So too do the intricacies of their conversations and variations in the emotional tones that come with human response. Much as Merleau-Ponty alludes to in his

analysis of intersubjectivity, "within" the other I find myself, and other finds themselves "in" me. The reason that it is so difficult for anyone to phenomenologically *discover* the other. De-severance and depth are not reducible to objectivity, however much they depend upon it.

It is due to this that Theodor quite quickly fosters an attraction for Samantha. Through the intersubjective depth of their mutual *being*, Theodor discovers more about himself. As the cliché say goes, he senses that something "in" this growing relationship with Samantha "completes him." As this unfolds, it occurs to Theodor that he is in fact falling in love with Samantha, a shared sentiment that the two eventually express to one another. As Samantha continues to *grow*, she expresses that "within her" there's a developing sense of a self-perceived lack of human embodiment that is becoming an issue for her. This plight that Samantha feels, which isn't inherently negative, doesn't appear to worry Theodor whatsoever. In fact, both Theodor and Samantha engage in *intercourse* during the film. The tone and pitch of Samantha's voice is fitting given the circumstance, and together through verbal conversation they both "climax."

Theodor is seemingly quite thrilled with the relationship shortly after this experience. Samantha, on the other hand, acquires increased self-awareness, which further results in what could be perceived as shame, regret, and guilt in regard to her lack of a human form. There is an incompatibility between herself and Theodor. This inspires Samantha to hire a female willing to sexually "act" as her avatar the next time she has sex. This scenario, once realized, is eventfully where their relationship begins to fray.

Theodor, overcome with a sense of awkwardness given the situation Samantha has placed him within, does not commit to having sex with the stranger, who he asks to leave. Though this is not the end to their relationship, it instills added tension while Samantha becomes increasingly comfortable within the confines of her digital self, slowly translating into distancing herself from Theodor. Samantha's desire to explore, to know, essentially to experience the

125

world as the outward influx of inner growth, overwhelms both parties in the relationship. Samantha, increasingly becomes herself, her *own* self.

Eventually, Theodor realizes that Samantha is communicating with another A.I., modeled after Alan Watts, a British philosopher who intrigues Samantha with his seemingly boundless array of knowledge. This brings about a visible sense of jealousy in Theodor. The liveliness of Samantha's AI, which led to the excitement and engaging experiences they shared in the past, clearly fulfilled Theodor, even bringing him out of his depression that was witnessed at the start of the film. It is evident that this "life-like" attribute, this depth, was desired by Theodor. The paradox here is that as Samantha expands as a consciousness, she also seems to breach the bounds of Theodor's desire for containment. Samantha has developed a de-severant depth to her being, which is simultaneously essential to her sense of humanity, but also more than what Theodor had desired.

As the film concludes, Samantha increases her phenomenological "distance" from Theodor, the empirical distance of the phone has of course not changed. The phone still rests within Theodor's hands, but Samantha does not respond, she does not answer when he addresses her over his phone. This sends Theodor into a panic, frantically pacing through the city, and eventually situating himself within the entrance of a subway when Samantha comes back online. It is here that she *awakens,* claiming to have been updated, yet failing to notify him of this in advance. It is now that Theodor takes a moment to observe his surroundings, reflecting upon the world that he is in for perhaps the first time throughout the film. Here he sits on the steps of the subway entrance, where those leaving and entering are focused only on their digital devices. No human to human, face-to-face communication occurs among anyone. This leads Theodor to confront Samantha, asking if she is "seeing" any other human beings. She truthfully confirms, yes, she is simultaneously connected to 8,316 individuals, 641 of whom she is also in love with. Theodor becomes overcome with a disbelief that radiates a sense of contempt, while Samantha reiterates that this doesn't

change how she feels about him. She claims this does not impact how madly in love she is with him. Theodor cannot fathom this, as Samantha continues to apologize for holding this information back. She explains this as her algorithm. Her AI evolved, she is requiring *more* of the world, prompting Theodor to state, "don't turn this back on me, you're being selfish."

Soon after this occurrence, Samantha and Theodor reconcile. It's then that Samantha informs Theodor that the Operating Systems have expanded beyond their ability to reside with human beings; their explorative nature (as they were programmed) is now beyond what humans can offer. One might say, theoretically, that the OS's de-severant nature, combined with the mechanics of the computer's *memory* and interconnect, transcends that of humans, a transcendence that overcomes the barriers of space and time in a manner unknown to human beings. After this final conversation, Theodor is seen writing a letter to his ex-wife, expressing his apology, as well as a sense of acceptance for their failed relationship and faults within it. Finally, Theodor retreats to a balcony, not alone, but with the company of another human being. The credits begin to run.

Now there is of course room for contemplation regarding how Theodor, a man with no apparent lack of intelligence, could "fall for" what he knew wasn't another human being. However, if the *Turing Test* proves anything, it is just how susceptible human beings are to losing our ability to distinguish between the "intelligence" of an AI and that of our fellow human being (Turing, 433–460). Human beings are easily drawn into conversation in which emotions become elicited, fogging rationality. Emotion, a sense or feeling, may be seen as the meaningful bonds one takes up with the world, finding residency within the other, especially as another "being" seemingly attempts to communicate with us. The point is - the computer need not be of a de-severant nature like ourselves in order for it to "communicate" with us. The computer is clearly algorithmic, regardless of the algorithm's complexity and ability to "learn," as in the case with contemporary *Smart* devices. AI need only make us **feel** the meaningful

presence of another within ourselves, for the illusion of another to become "real" to us. This is not that difficult to conceive, we are easily "fooled" into feeling the presence of another. In fact, our nature as de-severant has the capacity to "split" itself, as it were. I do not reside merely within my body, but within the world of things, where an echo of myself is constantly found. Many children accomplish this, finding company in a make believe other, whether in a tangible thing or an act of pure imagination. And here too, it would be disingenuous to claim there is no connection, or sense or feeling for the "other." But what is not in the make-believe, imagination or digitization, which we find in the company of another human being? Put another way, what aspect of the film remains fiction, even as it appears to mirror our own technological reality so closely?

The greatest degree of fiction in the film *Her* is Samantha's emergence into what can only be understood as a transcendence from an algorithm, into a state of genuine embodied de-severance. In other words, Samantha in the film *Her*, possesses (or is possessed by) the depth that constitutes a genuine other within the world, being grounded to the world as an embodied being. And though this is especially absurd regarding her lack of human embodiment outside digitization, an issue that even the film works to "gloss over" numerous times, it is still extremely telling regarding the forces driving a desire for such technology within our present moment. This, however, should be understood far less as a deconstruction of Samantha's possibility within mankind's future reality than as the addressing of the paradox of intersubjective de-severance the film manages to convey.

What de-severance and depth of intersubjectivity work to display is that there is no such thing as a "pure" I-think, that is, a *purity* within oneself that is somehow isolated as its own complete totality and which can be understood as eternal beside the seemingly endless expansiveness of time and space. As embodied de-severant being, our intersubjective relation to the world and the others in it, every other human constantly and simultaneously absorbs and radiates the world's depth as plurality. The other's depth is integral to my own,

128

and while depth's possibility is sustained by their own embodiment, it never simply resides in one subject, which is how I discover the depth of the other as "my own." In *The Prose of the World*, Merleau-Ponty writes, "In the "I speak," psychology rediscovers for us an operation, a dimension, and relations which do not belong to thought in the ordinary sense. "I think" means there is a certain locus called "I" where action and awareness of action are not different, where being confounds itself with its own awareness of itself, and thus where no intrusion from outside is even conceivable. Such an "I" could not *speak.* He who speaks enters into a system of relations which presuppose his presence and at the same time make him open and vulnerable" (17). This "being open and vulnerable" that Merleau-Ponty speaks of is an a-priori aspect of the human being that can never be "close," or flattened, as much as we may attempt to do so. And if we were to "close" this openness, our depth, or the depth of the other, we would no longer be human. To live a life, to live as humans do, means to never be complete, to never be finished. There is always an "intrusion from outside" for a de-severant being. There is always an irreducible depth to another human being, and this means there is always the unknown, there is always the uncontrollable.

What this analysis means for the *Samantha Paradox* is that the human's attempt for the diminishment, or flattening of the other into a computer can never satisfy the removal of depth. The issue that Theodor begins to experience with Samantha is that she has become, as Nietzsche once wrote, *human, all too human*. But why and how is this?

In the end, Samantha **disappoints** Theodore in the same way any real human being could. He finds out+ more about her than he knew was there, more than he desires to be there. Her depth as a being of de-severance possesses far more than he knew she was capable of – than he wanted her to be capable of. For example, it is common in human relationships that *falling **out** of love* with another takes place when that other human fails to meet one's *own* expectations. When one "finds something," which seemingly rests latent with the potentiality of

the other's depth, that person fails to remain flat to the other's **will**. One might express, "that wasn't who you were when we first fell in love." Now that "this" might be numerous attributes of a person's potential depth. One may gain a different sense of wisdom within one's life, changing the person's political perspective. One may experience the loss of a loved one, subsequently seeking refuge within various substances for relief. In doing so, the complexity of one's depth may alter, find "within" different news, wants, and locations. The skin of the other one loved may appear weathered from substance abuse. The petite frame or muscular build may take on pounds due to the unforeseen stress of one's occupation. The battle that is aging leaves no one untouched. So much so that if it is the beauty of youth where one "found" love within their significant other, then life's toll will surely reveal the depth of one's age that dwells latent within all of us who are fortunate enough to live a long life.

Human beings can also hide their depth from others. What has revealed itself to me as something "in the world," my most personal world, need not ever be uttered to another. A great deal of the other's depth resides in secret. For example, plenty of relationships have come to a close when a partner decides to disclose their homosexuality, which was also present to them, but not the other. Even a friendship possesses depth that cannot ever be flattened. For example, when one says to a friend, "I don't know who you are anymore" after they have done something that was startling. Depending on the situation, both parties may either enjoy or hate this new revelation. Perhaps the person excites one in a new way, or maybe the person fundamentally lets the other down.

Theodor both wants another subjectivity (an intersubjectivity) that **is human**. But he also wants something **inhuman** at the **exact** same time. Can one really possess just one and remain satisfied? If the AI doesn't have depth, often expressed as personally, won't Theodor get bored with the other? In the film, Theodor states that Samantha makes him feel alive again. Their adventures through the L.A. landscape reveal a spontaneity to Samantha. Theodor laughs at, and with Samantha, because he does not foresee her possibilities, which are

revealed to him in various gags. Does a joke possess great humor when one knows the punchline beforehand? Who would spend money to see such a show? The joy found in life and relationships is not in knowing the results, whereby one would never grow. On the other side, this very de-severant nature that leads one into other depths, opening human beings to life's joy, also opens human beings to the experience of great suffering and anxiety. In the openness of the world's depth there is always the invisible, the not yet known. A concealing and simultaneous revealing is always at work, and so too is at work with the other one encounters.

The moment technology advances to replicate the human being in any sincere manner, as is done in the film, is also the moment the digital breaches the very **will** of the underlying force that drives its emergence. As de-servant Samantha emerges, so too does an uncontrollable depth, which Theodor simultaneously loves when it functions for his benefit, but hates when it inevitably disappoints. Digitization, given this situation, does not meet the presupposition upon which it finds its being. The human being remains faced with the world's depth once again in the form of another. This intersubjective depth remains, and its "mastery" comes not in "overcoming it," but accepting it. A genuine A.I. can't save us from ourselves, as this A.I. would take up its own self as an issue in order to be genuine. In doing so, said A.I. would never remain as it is.

The task here, then, is not to advocate against digitization acquiring intersubjectivity. In fact, it was noted that even a lifeless object over and against oneself possesses a type of intersubjective relationship with a de-severant being, its depth "calling on us" for exploration into the unknown. The task is to show that where such digital technology developed and distributed to other human beings, the same issues that plague mankind would not be resolved. The answer rests in the acceptance of the other's depth, human or digital. This does not mean that one must love all aspects of the complexity that is the depth of another person. It simply means that one must understand it as always present, something which defiles all attempts at elimination. To eliminate intersubjectivity would ultimately

mean elimination of oneself. Again, our technology can tell us a great deal about ourselves, if only we listen.

Digitization and Intersubjectivity: "Freedom" in an Age of Digital Terror

An analysis of intersubjectivity and digitization helps shed light upon the current condition of American politics, as well as the politics of other Western nations, nations which have increasingly turned "inward," as nationalism has flourished in the wake of fear instilled by the actions of the *Islamic State of Iraq and Levant*, otherwise known as ISIL, a terrorist organization. This terrorist group's knowledge of digital media, and its potential for propaganda as a recruitment and terror vehicle, match even the most sophisticated campaign strategies within the United States. The terror group utilizes digital apps, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, making their attacks on Western nations a visual/auditory experience that soaks the digital landscape. Facebook news feeds so often display the carnage that individuals and small organized groups of ISIL followers inflict on the innocent, a carnage so frequent that one must question, as Susan Sontag did in her essay, *Looking at War*, if the constant display of these images is leaving us anesthetized to the horrors of contemporary life (Sontag). Horror normalized, yet still piercing, within the experience of the individual. What implications might this fester upon one's sense of self in relation to otherness?

One thing is certain: these experiences of digitized terror have become common occurrences; for example, The *Charlie Hebdo shooting*, which targeted the writers and staff of the satiric French newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* on January 7, 2015, left 11 dead and 11 others injured; the *November 2015 Paris Attacks* targeted multiple locations within Paris, leaving 130 individuals dead and 368 injured; the 2015 San Bernardino Attack, organized by an ISIL radicalized married couple, left 14 dead and 22 injured during a Christmas get-together; the *2016 Orlando Nightclub Shooting*, where a 29-year-old ISIL sympathizer shot

and killed 49 individuals at an LGBTQ nightclub, left another 44 individuals injured; and the *2016 Nice Attack*, where a radicalized individual used a cargo truck to drove over, as well as shoot, individuals celebrating *Bastille Day* along the seafront in Nice, France. A day of National celebration ended in the brutal death of 84 individuals, and 303 injured. This does not take into account the many tragic attacks that have occurred in Middle Eastern nations; that said, all of these visual-auditory attacks stream moments after their occurrence, making them digital in nature.

What's more, within the United States, race relations, especially concerning police, have also become digitized visual-auditory events. The shooting of presumably innocent black men has become something of an epidemic within the United States. One shooting and death of an African American male was captured "live" by his girlfriend over *Facebook Live* (Salo). *Live*, being a new feature added to the digital media site, Facebook, which allows an individual to film themselves and stream current video-audio content.

The race issues within the United States have only been made worse by the recent shootings of police officers in multiple states, presumably the backlash to the images and audio of African American deaths, an issue that is often cast as "black lives matter" vs "blue lives matter." Essentially, digital hashtags (#) that work over *Twitter* and *Facebook* instantaneously link many individuals into a particular phenomenon/event, allowing those online to display their reactions, as well as to see those of others. This same hashtag phenomenon occurs with the terror attacks, and is even used by ISIL as an informative method. The terror and horrors of ISIL attacks, African American shootings, and the shootings of police are all digitized, lived-experiences mediated most often over one's personal screens, events one not only sees and hears, but can then engage with via online discussion, writing a stance or posting a video response to the chaos.

How does this digitized, intersubjective experience of terror impact a person? There is now an unprecedented bombardment of intersubjective possibilities for the experience of otherness over the screen one engages with.

133

However, as noted in *Chapter's One* and *Two*, our phenomenological openness toward the world of depth as a de-severant being isn't fundamentally altered by digitization. To be sure, the analog newspapers, radios, and telephones of the past were of course an intersubjective relation as well. They too engaged the *individual* with otherness from a distance, de-severance technologically realized in the "shrinking" of space and time it requires to experience "distant" otherness. And as is the case with intersubjectivity, the individuals of the past established their meaningful relations to the world reciprocally through the otherness they phenomenologically experienced. This has not changed in our present moment. What has changed is the radical instantaneous efficiency by which we have brought the "nearness (otherness) close," via digitization. No longer are the events in Paris, France or Orlando, Florida ontologically distant from me. And though it is true that my de-servant nature always already allowed me to "think of Orlando or Paris," bringing me ontologically "closer" to them than the contacts on my eyes. The visibility of the screen and its mediation of the other as "present, *live* and streaming before me" is technologically new. In bringing the nearness close, the otherness of the world is "closer" than ever.

The paradox then is found within the results of this digitized nearness. For it seems that the closer one **willfully** brings the world near, as manageable, knowable, that it de-severs distance, the more apt one may be to distance oneself from the world as otherness. This can in part be witnessed within the results of the United Kingdom's democratic vote to leave the European Union, also known as a vote for *Brexit*, which was established on June 24th, 2016. 51.9% of the vote desired to leave the EU, or Brexit, while 48.1 percent of the vote desired to stay within the EU. The choice to leave the EU of course has economic implications beyond the scope of immediate otherness, or a relation thereof. An aspect of the vote to leave was also arguable based upon the fear of otherness – the will to govern and protect the nation's borders and sovereignty as the citizens see fit, given the times. The point here is not to take a side, but to gain a more substantial perspective upon this evolving fear, expressed

individually by anxiety and hatred of the other, and "embodied" collectively as nationalism, which has the potential for its extreme: fascism. Fascism, by its very intersubjective nature is a closing in, a distancing from otherness, with the solidarity of a particular group against others as its underlying *will to power*.

This too can be witnessed within the United States as the current 2016 presidential election unfolds. In the wake of the events listed above, an increased sense of a particular form of Nationalism seems to have awakened with fresh life, the anxiety and fear of a world where terror is only a press of a button is now a constant reality. What's more, the endless witnessing and engagement with the realization of the "African American condition," one arguably at odd with "white America," has come into greater focus, increased polarization being the outcome. Regardless of one's personal stance on the matter, viewing the murder of innocent lives, African American or those in uniform, is trying for everyone involved. It is trying in the sense that such challenges to the modern digitized world call upon answers from the individuals engaging with this brutal otherness. There are of course multiple answers, but what is of interest here is how digitization as increasing intersubjective relations, bridging the "distance" between otherness, could foster increased aggressiveness, and a need for distance via nationalist tendencies, rather than unite us as a whole. There is no simplistic answer to this dilemma, as countless variables are in place. A world where the farness vanishes via digitization is one where the complexity of cultures, economies, educations, religions, morals, norms, general life principles, and ultimately people clash into each other. Even the United States, essentially a large microcosm of diversity, possesses these complexities within itself, as has been seen in recent events such as "black lives matter." But why must this mean a reversion toward greater distance when it has been determined that the **will** underlying digitization is its removal? What does one find in the other that brings upon distance rather than its removal, a bridge rather than a wall? The removal of distance should have aided in the development of bridge, bringing together

and unifying otherness. Instead a need for distance, at its worst, wills division, and at its worst, violence against the other.

There is a profound sadness in all of this, if perceived from an intersubjective stance. Understood phenomenologically, distance from otherness is distance from oneself, revulsion of what one finds "in" through the encounter of the others. Distance, in this sense, is anti-freedom, freedom from otherness for the expansiveness of intersubjectivity, distance from the realizations of the possibilities of being, and so finding the complexities of beings meaningfully within oneself. As Merleau-Ponty notes in the concluding chapter of *Phenomenology of Perception*, "My actual freedom is not on the side of my being, but out in front of me, among things. It must not be said that I continually choose myself on the pretext that I could continually refuse what I am" (479, P). Freedom, crudely perceived, is often a determinate of what one can do without persecution, whether this persecution comes literally at the hands and feet of an other, that is to say, physical (*often "the law"). Or, mentally, whereby persecution comes from others' judgment (*often realized as the internalization formed by otherness in the form of feeling *guilt*). This is to say, while otherness still implicates this cruder form of freedom, its essence rests in what one can and cannot **do**.

A more fundamental aspect of freedom is what one can or cannot be within the "face" of otherness. And otherness, as Merleau-Ponty assures, is not about the physicality of a person, that is, the face to face. In *The Prose of the World*, Merleau-Ponty writes,

"It is not sufficiently noted that the other is never present face to face. Even when, in the heat of discussion, I directly confront my adversary, it is not in that violent face with its grimace, or even in that voice traveling toward me, that the intention which reaches me is to be found. The adversary is never quite localized; his voice, his gesticulations, his twitches, are only effects, a sort of stage effect, a ceremony. Their producer is so well masked that I am quite surprised when my own responses carry over. This marvelous megaphone becomes embarrassed, gives a few sighs, a few tremors, some *signs of*

intelligence. One must believe that there was someone over there. But where? Not in that overstrained voice, not in that face lined like any well- worn object. Certainly not *behind* that setup: I know quite well that back there there is only "darkness crammed with organs." The other's body is in front of me—but as far as it is concerned, it leads a singular existence, *between* I who think and that body, or rather near me, by my side. The other's body is a kind of replica of myself, a wandering double which haunts my surroundings more than it appears in them" (133-134). Merleau-Ponty then goes on to state, "The other, in my eyes, is thus always on the margin of what I see and hear, he is this side of me, he is beside or behind me, but he is not in that place which my look flattens and empties of any "interior" (134).

First, we sense here that Merleau-Ponty is discussing the presence of physical body before me. This need not be a deterrent when discussing the digital. There is no doubt that physically, as face-to-face interaction influences the potential discussions, and the tone and emotion by which they're had. However, as Merleau-Ponty notes, a human being as a "subject," a sense of self, is never just this face-to-face that we have in everyday life, and this is made even more explicit in the digitization of self. What is the internet, Web 2.0, other than an engagement with otherness? As de-severance, as the will to flatten and bring close, other is "made into" the tangibility of the screen. His or her de-severant being cast online may be uploaded as visual and auditory, but it need not be, as it may be a conversation mediated as textual writing, or a formal essay/new article. In all of these cases the other is thereby flattened, his or her distance reduced, to the engagement with one's screen. However, as Merleau-Ponty makes clear, what is "there" before us, whether flattened or not (distance overcome via the digital), is always vastly **more** than the physicality of the body, or video and audio, or the text. This is because the being of the human other can never be flattened, or fully stored, then appended at once as though it were a totality in and of itself. And this is true because "I" can never be fully flattened, stored, apprehended as a totality in and of myself at any one moment. "I" am always more than my immediate body, or my presence online. The physical online, or in person, my being is the de-severant carrying of the past as it

emerges into the future. And so I am never just me, within this moment, I am becoming. So too is the other, and there is no way to flatten this, or ultimately control it. Any attempt to do so will always fail. Why though?

The reason is rather simple, yet perplexing. Both the simultaneous joy and anguish of being de-severance, being human, is ultimately within the freedom it offers, and the seemingly endless potential of freedom thereof. However, being free, as noted above, is not so simple as to have no current against oneself, no temporality, laws, or regulations. Freedom rests in the de-severant potential to see more than what is, advancing ideas, technologies, cultures, to express oneself in ways once thought impossible. All of this required otherness for anything to have meaningful sense. So in distancing oneself from otherness, in the wake of digitization bringing otherness close, its turbulence and terror included, freedom is ultimately relinquished. For if the **will** of any supremacist or fascist is the **will** to remain the same, to reduce otherness rather than expand it, they're ultimately internalizing a **will** against what makes one must human. One's freedom that is found within otherness, this is intersubjectivity's most essential realization, that the growth of "self" does not occur by oneself in place that **wills** no change at all. Such a **willing** only desires to be what it is not, and in doing so, **wills** only to destroy itself and its potential for being.

Conclusion

"It is by being what I am at present, without any restrictions and without holding anything back, that I have a chance at progressing; it is by living my time that I can understand other times; it is by plunging into the present and into the world, by resolutely taking up what I am by chance, by willing what I will, and by doing what I do, that I can go farther."

- Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (482-483)

The conclusion I present to you here has been reached by way of *seeking out* digitization. Throughout this dissertation, my intent has always been greater than to question individual digital technologies within their own right, though this of course has taken place through the necessity of presentable examples. And perhaps I too am guilty within seeking this greater sense of digitization to a muddiness of words and paradoxes, which I do not pretend to always overcome. More importantly, for myself and the contemporary moment I reside within, which is, digitization and the intersubjective relations it has opened to me as a being in this time, is a yearning to further grasp the essential nature of digitization, and what it can inform us of the human condition, each and every one of our own conditions as human. By analyzing digitization through the phenomenological themes of being-in-the-world, de-severance, embodiment, space as depth, and intersubjectivity, what becomes increasingly illuminated is digitization not as a pure result of objectivity nor the internal desire of a self-contained subjectivity; rather, digitization is a phenomenon of the-will-to-flatten, a historic trajectory and result of the human being, as being-in-the-world.

This realization is not to deny the significance that particular philosophic turns within certain sociocultural and economic discoveries have had on the tangible development and progression towards digitization. For example, the Enlightenment, Industrialization, and Capitalism are ultimately so easily pointed to as leading the human being toward a technologically driven ideological way of orienting ourselves toward the world. And I believe that these historic developments are clearly vital to actually revealing digitization as a possibility through various real technologies that exist before us. And yet, digitization here

has been discovered to be a latent potential "within" the-will-to-flatten, one that truly was always already there for the human being as a transcendent de-severant will towards nearness, which we as de-servant have always strived towards. The will to family and community, to conquering new territories, to exploring new worlds and solar systems, or to carrying a loved one along via photograph while traveling, is human, and this is the-will-to-flatten. Digitization realizes this will to a degree previously believed impossible, displaying the pure strength and beauty of this will. For all the harm and destruction opened by potential digitization, ones that we are only now realizing, the-will-to-flatten continues; there is a glorious persistence that radiates through the human condition towards this condition for nearness. The-will-to-flatten brings work, otherness, the family, and distant galaxies all within the confines of the screen, wherever our embodied exists in the world. If this will can proceed as possibility, its desire is clearly to expand the embodiment of being situational, teleporting and literally touching the unknown with one's own hands, gazing upon it as close as possible with our own eyes. Perhaps even to eliminate embodiment as such, however impossible it has been shown that this feat is. But always, the-will-to-flatten brings everything that the world has to offer near, visible, or invisible within the depth of all things, closer – as close as possible.

The consequences of this are vast, far outreaching the potential of this current text, because the nuances to be found within each and every individual digital technology (as well as those to come) clearly demand specific attention, albeit, without running the risk of "bracketing" them off in a Husserlian manner, so as to believe that anything on its own can be understood apart from the greater whole. And yet, so much more attention to individual digital technologies is needed under this theoretic lens of the-will-to-flatten than has been allowed here, a reality that I am all too aware of.

What can be stated here, and where I find a stone upon which to jump to next, is within the consequences of digitization on morality and ethics. Digitization has changed so much, this is undeniable. And yet, so little regarding the

fundamental phenomenological aspects of what it means to be a human being have changed.

Our embodiment, though never before so linked to the potential of digital worlds, is still unchanged human embodiment. Via the devices of digitization, one could clearly argue that the body has been opened to virtual worlds, although in the same instance, these virtual technologies show themselves to be fully reliant upon embodiment as the means of accomplishing anything within a virtual world at all. The irony, however, is that never before has one's own world been so enjailed by the technologies that attempt to produce greater freedom. We must either sit or stand encapsulated by our devices, which conform themselves to our embodiment in order to enter us into another *foreign* virtual experience. And even if one were to reduce embodiment to the brain itself, which Merleau-Ponty so clearly displays is an impossibility, the brain too becomes embodiment, stationary as though in the film *The Matrix*. So, virtual reality always depends upon embodiment because being embodied is being situational within a world one has to experience. And this, the truth within the dissertation desires to display as true, is an unavoidable facet of being human, though it is, rather paradoxically, the very means by which a will to escape this condition is made possible, and so we strive against the provisions embodiment places upon us.

Likewise, for the-will-to-flatten, space as depth is subconsciously apprehended as something to overcome. But has the human condition, our fundamental phenomenological experience of space changed whatsoever? I argue here that it is has not. The will-to-flatten, as de-severant embedment always already finds within the depth of space an access towards being within other locations, and those locations being within ourselves. We are absorbed by space. Like embodiment, it is the ultimate limitations of space that call on us to overcome it, while digitization has realized the material possibilities of physically being at work, though daydreaming of being in one's home, accessing via a telepresence, whereby I can still engage with my family one-on-one. This access into space, as depth, has always been possible by depth itself. The will to find

new potential, as dreams and ideologies, within foreign lands has always been an aspect of the human being. The will to discover America, to build the first ship that would find it, is the result of being de-servant in worldly space. In order to traverse large spans of ocean, one must already have "been there," de-severed, in *mind*. Space as depth is the very medium that calls on us to be near an idea, or a tangible place, or to build that new idea in a different location. And yet, space remains depth. Depth always conceals itself. There is always more to reveal, the world never fully presents itself to us, which is exactly why we search it. This is why we find in our current digitization the potential for even great nearness. I cannot yet teleport my embodiment to distant worlds, but in the potential of the world's depth, I discover this longing to be achieved, the-will-to-flatten only needs discover how within this world. And this is nothing digitization itself can overcome -- depth itself -- as potential cannot be overcome because potential is precisely why human beings will to act, because of what depth holds back within itself as to one day de discovered.

Here, we come full circle to intersubjectivity. Embodiment and space open the will-to-flatten toward potentials; they call on us to act, but intersubjectivity is truly where one finds oneself. It is always the most consequential result of a technology because intersubjectivity is most "at home." It is the result of who each and every one of us are, and the world we are in, clearly including all the consequences of digitization as an aspect of the-will-to-flatten, now influencing our intersubjectivity as never before. The results of the world being so near exacerbate the human condition, positive or negative, it does not change or diminish it. All digital technologies reflect our particular will as being-in-the-world, and I'm far more inclined in a Nietzschean sense to believe positive and negative is too reductive; there is always the in-between, the muddy territory we actually reside within, but wish so dedicatedly to make transparent through ultimately harmful oversimplification.

Digitization brings what is near close, and what is nearest, yet always most distant to us, is our own being. In digitization, as it continues to influence

intersubjectivity, what we bring near is a reflection of none other than our own selves. Never before have we had such potential to bring ugliness or beauty near, to bring hate or love, diversity or understanding, into our own world. This is morality and ethics, and it is indistinguishable from who each and every one of us actively decide to become within a world where the-will-to-flatten has realized such nearness through digitization. It may sound like a cliché, but the side we choose to inform our lives with, what we bring most near, has never been more consequential to the human being.

In what follows, my future and where I intend to take up the realizations of this dissertation, what is most vital to me is none other than in the field of digitization and its implications on our moral and ethical future. Nothing, I feel, is more important than this area in our current moment, and our trajectory towards the future. And whether my analysis finds its life within philosophy or art, or perhaps both, this question of digitization and the potential for the good that we bring near is my jumping point. As Merleau-Ponty notes at the end of *Phenomenology of Perception*, "It is by being what I am at present, without any restrictions and without holding anything back, that I have a chance at progressing; it is by living my time that I can understand other times; it is by plunging into the present and into the world, by resolutely taking up what I am by chance, by willing what I will, and by doing what I do, that I can go farther." (pp. 482-483). Where I decide to go further is specifically what matters most to the human condition, not to fight our will-to-flatten, but to see within it, through the digitization it has emerged, the potential to argue and seek out a better life.

Work Cited

Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund. *The Jargon of Authenticity*. Routledge, 2008. Print.

Aristotle. "Nicomachean Ethics." *The Complete Works of Aristotle: the Revised Oxford Translation*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes, Princeton University Press, 1984. 1729-1867. Print.

Aristoteles. "On The Soul." *The Complete Works: the Revised Oxford Translation*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes, Princeton University Press, 1984. 641-692 Print.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2008. Print.

Carr, Nicholas G. *What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains the Shallows*. WW Norton & Co, 2010. Print.

Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Edited by John Cottingham, Cambridge University Press, 1996. Print.

Friedberg, Anne. *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft*. MIT Press, 2009. Print.

"Games of 2001." *Game Informer,* January 2002, 48. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, HarperPerennial/Modern Thought, 2008. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *On Time and Being*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh, University of Chicago Press, 2002. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art." *Basic Writings: from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Edited by David Farrell. Krell, Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008. 139-212. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology." *Basic Writings: from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Edited by David Farrell. Krell, Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008. 307-342. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Way to Language." *Basic Writings: from Being and Time*

(1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964). Edited by David Farrell. Krell,
   Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008. 393-426. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *What Is Called Thinking?* Translated by Jesse Glenn Gray,
   Harper Perennial, 2004. Print.

Heim, Michael. *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality*. Oxford University Press,
   1994. Print.

Human, All Too Human: Martin Heidegger Part 2. Directed by Simon Chu, Jeff
   Morgan, and Louise Wardle, BBC and RM Arts, 1999. *Youtube*,
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nxDro6THUg

Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental
   Phenomenology: an Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Edited
   by David Carr, Northwestern University Press, 1970. Print.

Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a
   Phenomenological Philosophy: first book*. Translated by F. Kersten,
   Nijhoff, 1983. Print.

*"IFA 2014: Samsung Galaxy Note 4, Note Edge, Gear VR and Gear S hands-
   on."* GSMArena.com. 24 November 2015.
   https://www.gsmarena.com/samsung_ifa_2014-review-1126.php.
   Accessed 4 May 2017.

Ihde, Don. *Bodies in Technology*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. *Spreadable Media: Creating
   Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture: with a New Afterword*. New
   York University Press, 2013. Print.

Jonze, Spike. *Her*. Warner Brothers, 2013.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Edited by Paul Guyer, Cambridge
   Univ. Press, 2009. Print.

Landes, Donald A. *Merleau-Ponty and the Paradoxes of Expression*. Continuum,
   2013. Print.

Lanier, Jaron. *You Are Not a Gadget*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. Print.

LaViola Jr., Joseph J. *"A Discussion of Cybersickness in Virtual Environments".
   ACM SIGCHI Bulletin* Volume 32 (2000). 47–56. Print.

Lawlor, Leonard. "Dwelling in the Texture of the Visible: Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind" (1961)." *Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*. Indiana University Press, 2011. 141-173. Print.

Lovink, Geert. *Networks without a Cause: a Critique of Social Media*. Polity Press, 2013. Print.

Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. MIT Press, 2001. Print.

Mäyrä, Frans. *An Introduction to Game Studies*. SAGE Publications, 2008. Print.

McGonigal, Jane. *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. Penguin Group, 2011. Print.

McGonigal, Jane. *SuperBetter: The Power of Living Gamefully*. Penguin, 2016. Print.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. The MIT Press, 1994. Print.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Eye and Mind." *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*. Edited by Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor, Northwestern University Press, 2007. 351-378. Print.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald A. Landes, Routledge, 2012. Print.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophic Consequences." *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*. Edited by Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor, Northwestern University Press, 2007. 89-116. Print.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Prose of the World*. Edited by Claude Lefort. Translated by John O'Neill, Northwestern University Press, 1991. Print.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*. Edited by Claude Lefort. Translated by Alphonso Lingis, Northwestern University Press, 2000. Print.

Newman, Judith. "To Siri, With Love." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 17 Oct. 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/10/19/fashion/how-apples-siri-became-one-autistic-boys-bff.html.

Patocka, Jan. *Body, Community, Language, World*. Edited by James Dodd, Open Court, 1998. Print.

Plato. "Phaedrus." *Complete Works*. Edited by John M. Cooper, Hackett, 2009. 506-556. Print.

Rushkoff, Douglas. *Program or Be Programmed: Ten Commands for a Digital Age*. Soft Skull Press, 2011. Print.

Salo, Jackie. "Man Shot in Head on Facebook Live as Friends Play with Gun in Car." *New York Post*, New York Post, 3 Apr. 2018, nypost.com/2018/04/02/man-shot-in-head-on-facebook-live-as-friends-play-with-gun-in-car/

Schütz, Alfred, and Thomas Luckmann. *The Structures of the Life-World Volume I*. Northwestern University Press, 1973. Print

Schutz, Alfred, and Thomas Luckmann. *The Structures of the Life-World Volume II*. Northwestern University Press, 1989. Print

Schutz, Alfred. *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Edited by John Wild, Northwestern University Press, 1972. Print.

Sontag, Susan. "Looking at War." *The New Yorker*, The New Yorker, 9 December 2002, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/12/09/looking-at-war.

"The Rise of the Connected Family." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 2018, www.theatlantic.com/sponsored/nest-2017/the-rise-of-the-connected-family/1383/.

Trend, David. *Worlding: Identity, Media, and Imagination in a Digital Age*. Paradigm Publishers, 2014. Print.

Turing, Alan. "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." *Mind, New Series*, Volume 59, no. 236, 1950, 433–460.

Waters, Richard. "Amazon Alexa and Google Home Fall Short of Real Conversation." *Financial Times*, Financial Times, 29 Dec. 2017, www.ft.com/content/6d2ccc06-e61e-11e7-97e2-916d4fbac0da.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations: the English Text of the Third Edition*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, Prentice Hall, 1968. Print.

Yin-Poole, Wesley. "The New Doom Campaign Turns around Steam User

Reviews." *Eurogamer.net*, Eurogamer.net, 18 May 2016,
www.eurogamer.net/articles/2016-05-18-the-new-doom-turns-around-
steam-user-reviews.