

Week 4: The Question Concerning Technology

Essay divided into 3 parts:

- first part on chalice, four causes
- middle part
 - o What are the essential features of our current technology?
 - o Different acts of technology
- history of being

Q: Is there a sharp difference between modern world picturing versus the post-modern mode of revealing?

3 distinguishable stories of technology:

1. instrumental use of technology and equipment to do jobs (primitive)

-technology of the peasants

2. subject-object dominating view of technology: controlling understanding of being (modern technology)

-three characteristics: efficiency, optimization, standardization

-extremist form of subject-object mode of revealing: forcing things into our form

3. post modern technology

-our modern technology is something entirely new

When Heidegger states that "modern technology is entirely new", he is actually referring to the change between peasant to subject/object.)

pg. 12 - "Technology is therefore no mere means[...]"

- "Technology is a way of revealing [...]"
 - o This is the understanding of being

- o For instance subject/object revolves around: efficiency, optimizing, standardizing, *forcing things into our normative realm*

Pg. 5 – when Heidegger says something entirely new, “The instrumental definition of technology is indeed so uncannily correct [...] something completely different and therefore new”

- We think there is something new after subject/object, we call this the post-modern
- Heidegger’s questioning is unclear, whether it is for the modern, subject/object or for the really new, the post-modern
 - o Sometimes he hints at the loss of objects and subjects
 - o Other times he is talking purely about the modern

Post-modernism has replaced subject-object mode of revealing

- has been replaced by resources called standing-reserves
- “standing-reserve” is post-modern
 - it is a means with no end
 - o ex: build a highway system = modern, build a computer = post-modern
 - and ordering to be constantly re-ordered

What is the essence?

- means "how does it work?"
- how the technology installs and perpetuates itself
- the way something pursues its course
- how it IS all the time
- essence of technology: how our practices get organized in such a way that there can be a new way of revealing
 - every mode of revealing has its own skill and practices
 - these modes govern the way things show up or unconceal themselves

** The essence of technology are the practices that make things work.

Introduction xxix:

- 2nd paragraph: distinguishing between the modern and post-modern, although Heidegger never does so explicitly
- "serving some end" and "toward getting everything under control"- Professor Dreyfus says this is actually the subject/object modern, not the post-modern as the writer of the introduction proposes

Problem: we are half in the modern and half in the post-modern
-we have ends, but we also have a new way of doing things without an end

Pg. 16:

- "The revealing that rules throughout [post-]modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, [...] *ever anew*" (my emphasis)
- electricity as character that has no specific ends
- revealing does not come to an end, it reveals to itself its own interlocking paths, through regulating their course
- bottom of pg 16: Dreyfus says this seems wrong, the regulating and securing has to do with the modern, not at all the post-modern

- it's not just indeterminate
i.e. the internet isn't secure, isn't fixed, and has no ends
- the post-modern is flexible

Dreyfus: there are two clear modes of revealing (modern and post-modern) and we are moving from one to the other--not that there are intermittent modes of revealing

Another way to look at the topic: we are no longer the subjects ordering and doing the regulating and securing for the object

- instead, we have become cogs in a machine in the post-modern
- > ordering for its own sake?

Heidegger wants us to see that the "people with hands" don't really matter anymore

Airplane example

- one argument: the airplane is modernist because it is used for an ends--for instance, to make money
- counter argument: airplane as a technology itself can be plugged into different kinds of systems and used for different purposes and functions
- conclusion: the airplane itself isn't modern or post-modern so perhaps there IS an intermittent mode of revealing

Flexibility – a quality of post-modern technology, technologies used for all sorts of things, ability to **transform**

Post-modern:

- "standing-reserve": waiting and standing there to be used for all sorts of things
 - i.e. plastics
- transformative
 - o keeps open possibilities of constant transformation
 - o we too turn into this, having adaptable skills
 - o we become resources, being a temp person for everything

pg. 14-15:

- post-modern technology is not a bringing forth
- it is a challenging forth
 - o "calls nature the demand that it supply energy that can be extracte and stored as such" (windmill does not do this)

the windmill still sounds very modern even if it is able to store and distribute energy

Agriculture as mechanized food industry

- optimizing, controlling
- Heidegger hinting at the new thing in this, but distinguishes it from peasant technology, not modern technology
- Kris suggests that today's agribusiness is moving from modern to post-modern, for example the usage of corn as sweetener, cups, fuel

Subject-Object discrepancy:

-in the post-modern, the object is no longer just an object and that you are somehow distant from it

-the object is still there, but you are able to change (transform) it so it is no longer an object in the previous understanding of the word

Q: Which epoch is trying to get maximum yield at minimum expense?

A: Dreyfus says it is the modern.

Modern:

- Tailorizing
- Optimization

The "challenging forth" is no longer in the subject/object realm.

Humans are no longer subjects doing anything specific with objects, but become resources as well.

Pg. 17:

- Post-modern as ordering for it's own sake
- to make more and more order

[Aside, Ordering and Scientific Research:

- This is supposed to be subject/object according to Heidegger
- Ongoing activity complicates this... in the postmodern, there is a new end: ordering for its own sake
- everything is ordered so things could be reordered - optimizing reordering
- ongoing research is not the same as ordering for its own sake
- research starts out as pure subject-object domination and then turns into the post-modern practice (similar to how technology starts as the subject object and then becomes flexible)

Q: Does Heidegger think that it is inevitable that the world picture turn into the research man who is bustling around, constantly moving with no real end?

Q: Why does the world picture romanticized by the Galileo type scientist turn into research units within institutions, with people running around doing different tasks?

Q: Why does modern technology turn to post-modern technology?]

Pg. 18:

- everything and everybody is getting challenged forth

- supply of patients for a clinic are people as a resource (the danger is that we will end up treating ourselves as resources)
- everybody has possibilities - figuring out how we can do the most jobs, we will be flexible resources when we try to get the most out of ourselves
- if this is the case, people will no longer be doing what we should be doing, so what should then humans be doing???

“I’m using my abilities to the utmost, what more could a rational man desire?” – Hal, very post-modern understanding of being

What it means to be a human being, according to Heidegger:

- Human beings are world disclosers, innovators in the sense of being able to open up new worlds of thinking
- When humans just become a cog in the system they can no longer disclose worlds
- In the post-modern, humans will lose their job as world-disclosers

Man takes part in ordering as a way of revealing, but the unconcealment is never human handiwork.

Pg. 18 (bottom):

- Where does the unconcealing come from?
- the “That”
 - o the way the practices work so that there is a new way of understanding

- o we can be sensitive to a calling, we are capable of receiving a calling to a new world through our practices

- if people aren't there with their practices, there wouldn't be new disclosures

- but people don't disclose through their own will, some people are responsive to these changes when they are occurring through

- o the way people generally behave

- The people don't reveal out of will, but people are able to be responsive to changes to reveal a new world (ex: Descartes was responding to this "destining")

- There is something more powerful out there (not God) that is driving the change because it's not of the will of humans. People further that something.

Heidegger is interested in the way that subjects and objects became what we are

- there is a sender, not God

- we are receivers of this sending

We have an understanding of being now that makes it look like we have everything under control, while there is a new understanding coming into being. Somehow, realizing the subject-object domination obtains the ability to see what we all are and therefore, we are able to receive this new calling. When we receive it, we understand an entirely new picture.

What is the saving thing for humans?

- realizing that we are receivers of destining

- the post-modern helping us realize we are not autonomous sources, we are not the revealers
- realizing that we are not only resources either

pg. 26:

- the supreme danger
 - o man as resource
 - o man viewing himself as lord of the earth
- it is possible that when we are about to fall into standing reserve, somebody will come and show us that we are disclosers (Heidegger)

What's really happening to us vs. what we think is happening to us

- there is a conflict between thinking that we rule over everything, but actually becoming resources
- as we realize we are resources we will start to be open to new worlds
- we need to realize that we are neither master nor mere cog in the system/maching
- we have a way out by being receivers, responders, disclosers

pg 33:

- Heidegger suggests/hints that there is a saving power in the humble things
- Things that take us out of subjects/object
 - o ex: celebratory food, sporting events, etc.