The Fourfold and the Framework: Heidegger's Topological Critique of Technology

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The essay that first introduces Heidegger's fully-developed account of the fourfold, 'The Thing', was first given as a lecture in conjunction with three other lectures in Bremen in 1949 under the titles 'The Thing' ('Das Ding'), 'The Framework' ('Das Ge-stell'), 'The Danger' ('Die Gefahr') and 'The Turning' ('Die Kehre') and that were the basis for the essays later published as 'The Thing', 'The Turning' and 'The Question Concerning Technology'.[1] The discussion of the thing is thus already situated in relation to a question about technology, and the character of the contemporary world, and this is clearly reflected in the way that discussion begins with a comment on the apparent transformation of space and time in the face of modern technology. Here is the relevant passage from 'The Thing' in its entirety:

All distances in time and space are shrinking. Man now reaches overnight, by plane, places which formerly took weeks and months of travel. He now receives instant information, by radio, of events which he formerly learned about only years later, if at all. The germination and growth of plants, which remained hidden throughout the seasons, is now exhibited publicly in a minute, on film. Distant sites of the most ancient cultures are shown on film as if they stood this very moment amidst today's street traffic. Moreover, the film attests to what it shows by presenting also the camera and its operators at work. The peak of this abolition of every possibility of remoteness is reached by television, which will soon pervade and dominate the whole machinery of communication. Man puts the longest distances behind him in the shortest time. He puts the greatest distances behind himself and thus puts everything before himself at the shortest range. Yet the frantic abolition of all distances brings no nearness; for nearness does not consist in shortness of distance. What is least remote from us in point of distance, by virtue of its picture on film or its sound on the radio, can remain far from us. What is incalculably far from us in point of distance can be near to us. Short distance is not in itself nearness. Nor is great

[1] The latter two are both included in 'The Question Concerning Technology' and Other Essays, trans. William Lovitt (NewYork: Harper & Row, 1977). Heidegger's thinking on technology is spread across many works, but in addition to 'The Thing', 'The Question Concerning Technology' and 'The Turning', the latter two both included in 'The Question Concerning Technology' and Other Essays, the most important are perhaps 'The Age of the World Picture' (1938), and 'Why Poets? (1946), both of which are included in Off the Beaten Track, and also 'On the Question of Being' (1955), included in Pathmarks.

distance remoteness.[2]

Of all the ways in which modern technology has brought about a transformation in the world and our experience of it, it is in our relation to space – and thereby also time – that its effects have been most striking and pervasive. Indeed, technological development has often taken as its icons images of speed and power that are representative of precisely the technological mastery of space – the locomotive, the airplane, the automobile. Moreover, many of the technologies that have been most significant in their impact on everyday life have been those that enable the overcoming of distance through new forms, not only of transportation, but of communication as well. In 1950, Heidegger took television to represent what he there called 'the peak of this abolition of every possibility of remoteness'. The further development of telecommunication, computer and telerobotic technologies, and especially their combination, from the 1990s onwards, in the internet, has achieved an even more radical abolition of 'remoteness', allowing us not merely to see and hear, but also to act in relation to things far removed from us in physical space.[3]

Yet what is most striking about Heidegger's approach to this characteristic phenomenon of contemporary life – a phenomenon often referred to as 'time-space compression' – is that his account of this phenomenon, while it begins with a claim concerning the apparent abolition of distance, ends with what might appear a quite contrary conclusion concerning the apparent disappearance of nearness. In the modern world, it seems, not only is nothing at a distance anymore, but neither is anything brought close – 'everything is equally near and equally far…everything gets lumped together into uniform distancelessness'[4] – a comment echoed, with respect to television, by Jerzy Kosinski in Being There, 'Everything on TV was tangled and mixed and yet smoothed out: night and day, big and small, tough and brittle, soft and rough, hot and cold, near and far'.[5] In this abolition of both nearness and distance, Heidegger argues, the thing as thing also disappears – 'The failure of nearness to materialize in consequence of the abolition of all distances has brought the distanceless to dominance. In the default of nearness the thing remains annihilated as a thing…'[6] Moreover, the default of nearness, and the annihilation of the thing, must also

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[2] 'The Thing', Poetry, Language, Thought, p.165 [7:167].

[3] See Ken Goldberg (ed.), The Robot in the Garden: Telerobotics and Telepistemology on the Internet (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

[4] 'The Thing', Poetry Language Thought, p.166 [7:167-68].

[5] Jerzy Kosinski, Being There (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p.5. In many respects, this story, and the Peter Sellers film based on it, can be read as a fable concerning the character of modern technology.

[6] 'The Thing', Poetry Language Thought, p.181 [7:183].

mean, if we take seriously Heidegger's account of the relation between the happening of the fourfold and the thing, the loss of the world. Indeed, one of the most important themes, perhaps the most important theme, in Heidegger's later thinking is his account of the contemporary world as suffering from an 'oblivion of being' that is directly tied to the dominance of the technological – we live, he says, in a 'desolate time', a time of destitution, a time of the 'world's night'.[7]

This contemporary destitution is not a matter of some merely contingent combination of circumstances, but is rather something 'metaphysical'. It is, in Heidegger's analysis, a matter of our almost complete forgetfulness of being. Such forgetfulness is precisely that which characterises the essence of metaphysics, [8] and it is also that which underpins nihilism. 'The essence of nihilism' says Heidegger, 'resides in the oblivion of being',[9] and so 'the essential locale of nihilism shows itself to be the source of metaphysics…metaphysics… shelters nihilism within it.'[10] Our contemporary world is characterised by such 'nihilism' – a nihilism that may even be evident in the assertion of 'values' (rather than in their apparent 'rejection'), since, according to Heidegger, the preoccupation with 'value' as 'value' is itself a symptom of the loss of what is valued.[11] Inasmuch as the nihilism of metaphysics is forgetfulness of being, so such nihilism, and metaphysics with it, also consists in a failure of questioning. This is not a failure in the asking of questions, since metaphysics clearly has no difficulty in doing that, nor in providing answers; the failure is instead the much more fundamental one to which I drew attention at the end of §5.2 above, the failure to attend to the questionability that consists in the opening up of things in the difference of what they are – the questionability that is also a 'letting beings be'. Consequently, Heidegger says that, 'If we try to determine the present situation of man on earth metaphysically – thus not historiographically and not in terms of world-view – then it must be said that man is beginning to enter the age of the total unquestionableness of all things and of all contrivances.'[12] Inasmuch as it is the age of the failure of questioning, then, as I noted earlier, this is also the age in which homelessness has come to prevail as the almost universal condition for human being. Such homelessness is manifest in a failure on the part of mortals

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[7] The phrase 'a desolate time' is used by Heidegger in 'Why Poets?', Off the Beaten Track, pp.200ff [5:269ff], and is taken from Hölderlin's elegy 'Bread and Wine', providing the guiding question for the essay as a whole: '…and why poets in a desolate time?'

[8] 'On the Question of Being', Pathmarks, pp.306ff [9:405ff].

[9] 'On the Question of Being', Pathmarks, p.319 [9:422].

[10] 'On the Question of Being', Pathmarks, p.313 [9:414].

[11] In 'Letter on "Humanism"', Pathmarks, p.265 [9:349], Heidegger writes that 'precisely through the characterization of something as "a value" what is so valued is robbed of its worth'. See also the discussion in Introduction to Metaphysics, pp.213-14[40:207-08].

[12] Basic Questions of Philosophy,p.13 [45:13].

to grasp their own being as mortals, and, linked to this, a loss of any sense of the holy or a proper connection to the gods – as Hölderlin puts it, 'the gods have fled,' and their shrines and temples are empty.[13]

The metaphysical nihilism that lies at the heart of this destitution is essentially tied to the technological character of the contemporary world. Indeed, Heidegger sees technology as itself metaphysically determined – its essence is given in the metaphysical appropriation of being that Heidegger names 'das Gestell'. In ordinary German, 'das Gestell' means a rack or a stand that is used to keep things together – say books or bottles of wine – it can also mean a frame or framework on which something hangs or that gives it its shape – as does the frame of an umbrella; 'stellen', from which the term is derived, means 'to set' or 'to put in place', and 'stellen' is itself related to 'vorstellen', often translated as 'to represent', but also as 'to imagine', and to 'herstellen', meaning 'to produce'. In keeping with the common tendency to translate Heidegger's own terms, which in his later thinking especially are almost always drawn from ordinary German (even if they stretch the ordinary meanings of those terms), by means of English neologisms, 'das Gestell' has often been referred to as 'Enframing' (this is the translation employed by William Lovitt in his translation of 'The Question Concerning Technology'[14]). Rather than 'Enframing', however, I will simply use 'the Framework' (keeping the definite article, since the Framework does indeed refer to something quite specific). The distinction between technology and the essence of technology is a critical one in Heidegger's thinking. It means that Heidegger's critique of technology cannot be viewed as an attack on any particular instance of technology as such (although such instances may well be used to illustrate general features of technology's essence), nor is he recommending the abandonment of any particular technological device or system. The problem of technology is not to be found in any of the particular deliverances of technology, but rather in that out of which technology itself comes, and which determines it, that which is its essence: the Framework. The Framework is no device or mechanism, but is itself a mode of presencing or disclosedness. As such, it is less evident in particular technological devices such as the computer or the genetically modified organism, as in much broader features of the

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[13] Julian Young characterizes the destitution of the contemporary world in terms of the loss of the gods (which also means loss of community), inability to 'own' death, and the 'violence' of modern technology (these latter two, Young says, are both aspects of the loss of being at home in the world) – see Young, Heidegger's Later Philosophy, pp.32-4. I take the loss of the gods and the inability to own death as both aspects of 'homelessness', and as underlaid by the dominance of that 'violent' mode of disclosedness that is evident in technology, which is itself, of course, tied to metaphysical nihilism.

[14] 'The Question Concerning Technology', trans. William Lovitt, The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

contemporary world. The most obvious such feature is undoubtedly to be seen in the treatment of the natural world as a source of 'raw material' for human production and as open to human manipulation and control, but it is also elsewhere: in the rise of generalized notions of efficiency and flexibility in organisational structure and planning; in the tendency to take, as the primary determinant of all social interactions, the abstract and rational decision-making of individual actors; in the application of the rationality of the market to all domains of action; in the prioritisation of quantitative indicators, often purely numerical or financial, in assessments of that which is 'qualitative' – including human well-being; in the idea of the world as a single 'globalized' network that transcends the boundaries of place and space.[15] The Framework thus refers to a mode that allows the world, and the beings within it, to appear only insofar as they are available to an all-encompassing ordering, calculating, and controlling. It is a mode of revealing that allows beings to appear, not as things, nor even as objects, but as 'Bestand' – as that which is available for sale ('stock'), or which is held 'in reserve' – most broadly, that which is ready as 'resource'.

Inasmuch as something is usually understood as a resource in relation to some other productive activity – as timber may be a resource for furniture production – so one might be led to understand Heidegger's account of technology on the model of Being and Time's account of the ordering of equipment in the context of work – in both cases, it would seem, things appear in terms of a larger system of instrumental relations. The ordering of the technological is all-encompassing, however, in a way that the ordering of equipment is not; the technological organizes itself, not in terms of the places and regions that characterize the equipmental, but instead as a single leveled-out and interconnected 'space' in which everything is reduced to the 'same'. Moreover, while the equipmental stands always in relation to what is an essentially human projection, and so to human ends, the technological has no ends as such other than the ordering of things as available, as orderable, as resource.

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[15] Many of these features have been seen, of course, as hallmarks of the various forms of neo-liberalism that have been so dominant within both the public and private sectors over the last two decades. Yet it is not neo-liberal thinking that is at issue here, but rather a mode of revealing that, while it may be expressed in political ideology, is no mere 'ideology' as such. Indeed, many of these features are no longer seen as being associated with any particular political orientation, but have become part of the way in which the contemporary world understands itself. Indeed, why would one oppose such obvious common-sense notions as the need for greater 'rationality' in decision-making or improved efficiency in organisations? Heidegger's answer is not that one should not be concerned about such things, but that one should be concerned in a way that also understands that way in which such concerns are themselves grounded, and so the limits within which those concerns are properly set. The dominance of the technological consists, in large part, in the inability for the question of such a grounding, or of the question of boundedness that comes with it, to appear as a question – on this, see the further discussion below.

As Heidegger writes, 'Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering.'[16] This ordering is also essentially tied to the measurable and the calculable so that, in the ordering of things as resource, the technological 'brings all beings into the business of calculation, which dominates most fiercely precisely where numbers are not needed'.[17] The compass of the technological is so wide that even the human falls within it, and is taken up as another resource to be transformed, stored, deployed, calculated, consumed – 'The current talk about human resources, about the supply of patients for a clinic, gives evidence of this'.[18] Technology is thus not something that stands at the disposal of humans, nor is technology to be understood merely as a form of instrumentalism, instead, as it is determined by the Framework, technology appropriates everything to a single ordered totality. The metaphysical disclosure of things as 'objects' itself gives way to the technological ordering of things as resource so that 'today there are no longer objects (no beings, insofar as these would stand against a subject taking them into view) – there are now only resources [Bestand] (beings that are held in readiness for being consumed)'.[19] There are thus no limits to technological ordering, nothing that stands outside its compass, nothing that is not taken into its global calculation.

Heidegger's characterization of the nature of technology seems to describe a phenomenon very similar to that which is described by Ludwig Clauss in his 1932 book, Die nordische Seele (to which I referred in chapter one above – see §1.2). But whereas Heidegger is critical of this phenomenon, Clauss extols it as one of the strengths of the 'Nordic' soul and style. According to Clauss:

> [The Nordic soul] …aims to penetrate simply everything, and accordingly, to integrate it into its style and subject it to its law. Everything that has not yet been grasped and stamped by it, stretches out before it as a new land – its new land – which must be discovered, explored, put under cultivation, and hence conquered. In the last analysis it will recognize only the limits of the possible as its own limits. It may even happen that at this point it will fall ill and will try to ignore all limitations – a characteristically Nordic illness.[20]

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[16] 'The Question Concerning Technology', 'The Question Concerning Technology' and Other Essays, p.17 [7:17].

[17] 'Why Poets?', Off the Beaten Track, p.219 [5:292].

[18] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', 'The Question Concerning Technology' and Other Essays, p.18 [7:18]. Heidegger also emphasises that the technological is 'no merely human doing' ('The Question Concerning Technology', p.19 [7:20]).

[19] 'Seminar in Le Thor 1969', Four Seminars, p.61 [15:367-68]. Translation modified.

[20] Clauss, 'Racial Soul…', in Mosse, Nazi Culture, p. 73, taken from Clauss, Die nordische Seele, pp.30-32.

This impetus to control and to encompass – to encompass even the entire globe, so that Clauss can write that 'The Nordic soul, needful of space, had no choice but to recast the whole world in accordance with its image and inner landscape'[21] – seems almost exactly the impetus that sustains the reign of the technological – of the 'Framework'. To quote from Clauss once more: 'To assert that the world becomes Nordic means that countless hidden values are being opened up and made useful and productive – mines of iron ore, oil wells, water power, as well as animal and man power; they are useful in the Nordic sense, they become material to be formed by Nordic hands.'[22] Of course, Heidegger does not regard technology as specifically Nordic, it has its origins in Greek thought,[23] although Heidegger sometimes also characterises contemporary technological dominance in terms of the dominance of 'Americanism.'[24]

These passages from Clauss indicate the extent to which Heidegger's thinking about technology can be seen to reflect, and presumably to draw upon, themes and ideas that were already common in the period prior to the Second World War,[25] no less than in the period

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[21] Clauss, 'Racial Soul…', in Mosse, p.73; Clauss, Die nordische Seele, p.30.

[22] Clauss, 'Racial Soul..', in Mosse, Nazi Culture, p.75; Clauss, Die nordische Seele, p.32.

[23] For Clauss, the early Greeks seem to represent a 'southern' variety of Nordic man (the Greek is thus subsidiary to the 'Nordic'); for Heidegger German culture, on the other hand, as well as European or Western culture as such, is fundamentally Greek.

[24] See, for instance, Heidegger, 'Why Poets?' (1946), Off the Beaten Track, p.218 [5:291] [insert additional references]. Heidegger's anti-Americanism is undoubtedly strongest during the 1930s and 1940s. It is commonly noted as one of those objectionable elements in Heidegger's writing that reflects his provincialism, 'Germano-centrism', or else 'Euro-centrism'. There are undoubtedly objectionable elements to Heidegger's anti-Americanism, especially when, with America's entry into the war into 1941, he seems completely unable to think beyond his own German loyalties. At the same time, however, the political, military, economic, and cultural dominance of the United States in the contemporary world (and it is significant that 'America' does not mean the American continent as such, but rather a particular part of the political configuration of that continent), as well as the manner in which that dominance seems to be accompanied by an inability on the part of many of the United States' leaders and citizens to distinguish between the interests of the United States and the interests of the rest of the world, is indicative of the way in which what might be termed 'Americanism' does indeed seem to designate a problematic feature of the world today – albeit, perhaps, more evident to those outside the United States, than within it.

[25] As Julian Young points out, Heidegger's critique of technology picks up on elements more broadly present as part of what has been called the 'conservative revolution' in German thought, and that is evident in the work of Jünger and Ludwig Klages, as well as Heidegger, prior to the 1940s. Young cites Michael Grossheim's Ökologie oder Technokratie? (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1995) as providing an excellent account of this development, while Jeffery Herf's Reactionary Modernism is

after, but they also indicate the way in which the theme of technology could be seen as connected with central elements of National Socialist ideology. In this respect, Heidegger's critique of technology can be seen as constituting an implicit critique of a certain understanding of Nazism, particularly inasmuch as that critique itself develops, in Heidegger's thinking, out of his engagement with Nietzsche, with the idea of the 'will to power', and so with metaphysical 'nihilism'. Indeed, Heidegger himself seems to have viewed his own thinking of technology as closely tied to his engagement with Nazism, both in terms of that which drew him to it – something reflected in his infamous comment concerning the 'inner truth and greatness of this movement [namely, the encounter between technology and modern humanity]'[26] – and that which was also associated with his later 'critique' of the movement, particularly as he claimed that to have been developed through his engagement with Nietzsche.[27]

The question of the extent to which Heidegger's critique of technology can indeed be understood as also a critique of Nazism, and how adequate it is as such a critique, is a complex question, and not one that I can adequately deal with here. However, there are some points that should be noted in this regard. It seems that there can be little doubt that Heidegger did indeed see his critique of technology as also constituting a critique of Nazism – and comments such as those just cited confirm this. Moreover, there are also important elements in Nazism, and in fascism more generally, that indicate that an adequate understanding of these phenomena requires an appreciation of their specifically 'modern' character – not only insofar as they rely on 'modern' technologies, especially those of mass propaganda and information, but also inasmuch as they constitute a certain modern technology of the state and the nation as such.[28] Yet Nazism and fascism also contain significant anti-modernist, and what may even be viewed as 'anti-technological', elements within them, as well as elements that have little or nothing to do with the modern or the technological as such. Thus Nazism (and this also seems true of fascism generally) seems to

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also relevant. Other figures who contributed to the pre-war focus on technology include Ernst Cassirer, 'Form und Technik' (1930), in: Ernst Cassirer, Symbol, Technik, Sprache (Hamburg: Meiner, 1985) and Friedrich Dessauer, Philosophie der Technik (Bonn: Cohen, 1927). The idea of a 'philosophy of technology' appears much earlier, however, in the work of Ernst Kapp, Grundlinien einer Philosophie der Technik (Braunschweig: Westermann, 1877).

[26] Introduction to Metaphysics, p.213 [40:208].

[27] [Insert reference]

[28] While Jeffrey Herf has argued for a view of Nazism as a form of 'reactionary modernism' – see Herf, Reactionary modernism : technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) – there are many other works that focus more directly on the integration of Nazsim and fascism with aspects of the modern, even while they also operate in ways that are often antagonistic to modernism. See [insert reference].

have been configured around an opportunistic and brutalist approach to power – an approach in which the personal ambitions of individuals loom large – that is not especially modern or technological in character at all; both Nazism and fascism were driven by objectives that have actually little to do with the smooth ordering that technology aims to accomplish (though seldom achieves), but rather consist in the attempt simply to order by an act of individual will alone, and through the enforcement of individual command, with the result that the Nazi and fascist state often exhibits an arbitrary and 'irrational' character. Moreover, modern technological organization is primarily geared towards productive activity, and yet one of the features of Nazism that makes it most horrifying is its willingness to engage in wilful destruction (something not disconnected with its character as arising out of and partially determined by a set of personal ambitions and characteristics).

This latter point becomes of particular importance in relation to Heidegger's famous, indeed notorious comment, that asserts the essential sameness of 'mechanized agricultural production' with 'the production of corpses in gas chamber'.[29] Putting other considerations aside, this passage seems to involve a misunderstanding of Heidegger's own account of the technological. The 'production' of corpses in the ovens of Auschwitz and elsewhere is only a nightmarish parody of production. In the sense relevant to the productive activity of technology, there was nothing 'produced' in the 'extermination camps' – nothing that that could be taken up (except incidentally) into the ordering of production, transformation and consumption that is characteristic of technological ordering. Indeed, even in terms of the ordering of technology alone, Auschwitz, and the many other places like it, constitute 'dead-ends' – points at which the ordering of technology simply ceases. Even from the perspective of the 'Framework', then, the Holocaust constitutes an absence of meaning, rather than any fulfilment of technological 'essence'.[30] Heidegger's mistaken reading of the Holocaust is itself indicative of his tendency to think of Nazism, and its actions, in terms of an idealized conception of the movement that fails to take account of its actual character. Thus, in 1933, he saw Nazism as the possible site for a decisive counter-movement to nihilism; in 1950, he saw Nazism as the site for the realization of the essence of nihilism in the form of technological dominance. In both cases, Heidegger seems to have projected his own thinking onto the

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[29] [insert reference]

[30] One of the lessons of the Holocaust, however, is surely that human evil persists even in the face of technological progress, and that such progress may itself amplify the capacity to do evil. Moreover, our own confidence in such progress, our own confidence in technology, may serve to obscure such persistence, and may also enable the appearance of evil in ways we had not previously envisaged or encountered. In this latter respect, the way in which technology can serve to 'distance' us from our engagement in the world, and so from the persons and things with whom we engage, plays a particularly important role.

historical phenomena in a way that paid all too little attention to those phenomena as such.[31] Irrespective of the role of National Socialism in his critique of technology, however, the engagement with Nietzsche provides an important point of reference for the development of Heidegger's thinking in relation to technology.[32] I noted at the end of chapter four the central role played by Nietzsche, along with Hölderlin in the turning of Heidegger's thinking in the 1920s, and Nietzsche's importance here is in the way he shows us the character of our own thinking as arising out of Greek thought, and as it stands in relation to what Nietzsche proclaims to be the death of God. In Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, the death of God appears to have two aspects: on the one hand it accurately depicts our own situation in the loss of any transcendent source of value (and in this respect can be seen to express something close to what Heidegger also articulates in terms of the 'ungroundedness' of being); on the other hand, it also signifies the advent of nihilism (apparent in the idea not merely of the denial of value, but even, as I indicated above, of a 'crisis' of value) and so of what we have already seen Heidegger understands in terms of the 'oblivion of being'. It is in this latter sense that the death of God refers us to the same event that appears in Hölderlin as the 'flight of the gods', the loss of the holy, which also marks the 'destitution' of our times.

In its doing away with any transcendent source of value the death of God opens up the possibility of a complete revaluation of values that overcomes the previous 'metaphysics of value' – it is this revaluation that occurs in the appearance of the will to power as 'the

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[31] It seems to me that there is a sense in which Heidegger's reading of Nazism in this way, particularly his reading in the post-war period, was a consequence of his own attempt to come terms with what had happened in the 1930s and 1940s, both in terms of his personal involvement, and the involvement of Germany as a whole. I am not suggesting that this was Heidegger's attempt to excuse himself or Germany from blame by demonstrating that what was at issue here was a movement of 'world-history', rather than merely of German-history or of personal biography, but that Heidegger may well have been incapable of making sense of what occurred in the 1930s and 1940s in any other way. Here what becomes evident, I would suggest, is the way in which even great thinkers can be hampered and blinded by the personal and historical situatedness that also enables their thought. For a contrary view, however, that does indeed see what is at issue here in terms of Heidegger's attempt to excuse himself from blame, see Richard Wolin [insert reference].

[32] Indeed, Joseph Fell argues that the relation between Heidegger and Nietzsche can be understood in terms of the relation between the Framework (Gestell) and the fourfold (Geviert): 'There is an important sense in which the Nietzsche/Heidegger relation can be read as representing the Ge-stell/Geviet relation. As the Fourfold is disclosed by a converting or re-tuning (Um-stimmung) of the Com-position [Ge-stell], so the thinking of Heidegger comes to pass from a retrieve by Heidegger of the relation of mortals to gods in the thought of Nietzsche' – Joseph Fell, 'Heidegger's Mortals and Gods', Research in Phenomenology 15 (1985), p.36. Fell thus gives a central role to Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God as that which requires a retrieval of the holy.

principle of the dispensation of value.'[33] In Nietzsche, 'value' does not merely refer to that which human beings assess as valuable, but rather that on the basis of which any stand in relation to things is possible. Thus 'value' itself stands in direct relation to what Heidegger understands as 'truth', and Nietzsche's placing of value under the determination of the will to power means the placing of the happening of 'truth', the happening of being, under its sway also. Thus Heidegger asserts that 'being has become value…And yet, by being appreciated as a value, being is deprecated as a mere condition set by the will to power itself'.[34] Inasmuch as Nietzsche proclaims the rule of the will to power, so he attempts to overcome nihilism, and yet in doing so he also remains caught within nihilism and within metaphysics. Indeed, Heidegger claims that '[t]he value-thinking of the metaphysics of the will to power is deadly in an extreme sense because it does not permit being itself to come into the dawning, i.e., the vitality, of its essence.'[35] As the herald of the death of God and the triumph of the will to power, Nietzsche also appears as the herald of the age of technological nihilism – the will to power is the drive for complete mastery over all things, in which everything is taken up in representation, production, exploitation.[36] As a consequence, Heidegger emphasises Nietzsche's importance as having 'heard a calling that demands that human beings prepare for assuming domination over the earth. He saw and understood the erupting struggle for domination'.[37] Of course, in this struggle, the very essence of human being is itself at stake, and thus, while it may appear as a struggle in which human beings are called to exert mastery, in fact, it is the domination of the will to power, of the technological drive to mastery as such, which is at issue here.

The drive for mastery and control that characterizes the technological is evident in the idea of 'total mobilization' that was already present in the work of Ernst Jünger in the 1930s, and in Jünger's claim that the figure of the 'worker' presents a new 'Gestalt' that shapes the contemporary world as a whole.[38] Indeed, this idea is one Heidegger also finds in

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[33] See 'Nietzsche's Word "God is Dead"', Off the Beaten Track, p.178 [5:239]; also pp.169-193.

[34] 'Nietzsche's Word "God is Dead"', Off the Beaten Track, pp.192-93 [5:258].

[35] 'Nietzsche's Word "God is Dead"', Off the Beaten Track, p.196 [5:263].

[36] 'Nietzsche's Word "God is Dead"', Off the Beaten Track, p.191 [5:256].

[37] 'On the Question of Being', Pathmarks, p.321 [9:424] – Heidegger adds 'This is no war, but the Πόλεμος that first lets gods and humans, freemen and slaves, appear in their respective essence and leads to a critical encounter of beingX. Compared to this encounter, world wars remain superficial. They are less and less capable of deciding anything the more technological their armaments'. See also 'Nietzsche's Word "God is Dead"', Off the Beaten Track, p.191 [5:256].

[38] See 'On the Question of Being', Pathmarks, p.299 [9:396]. In his response to Ernst Jünger in this essay, Heidegger quotes from a note he wrote during 1939-40: 'Jünger's text The Worker is important because, in a different way from Spengler, it achieves what all Nietzsche literature thus far has been unable to achive, namely, to impart an experience of beings and the way in which they are, in the

Nietzsche. Writing in reference to Nietzsche's talk of 'workers', 'soldiers' and 'socialism' in certain passages from The Will to Power,[39] Heidegger comments that:

> The names 'worker' and 'soldier' are thus metaphysical titles and name the form of the human fulfillment of the being of beings, now become manifest, which Nietzsche presciently grasped as the 'will to power'…the names 'worker,' 'soldier,' and 'socialism' are already titles for the leading representatives of the main forms in which the will to power will be enacted![40]

The appearance of 'the worker' as the name for the 'human fulfilment of the being of beings' is indicative of the way in which human being is now almost entirely taken up in terms of the capacity for 'production' (and therefore also, one might say, for 'consumption') – in terms of what can also be understood as a form of 'materialism', although it is a materialism understood as the metaphysical determination 'according to which every being appears as the material of labor' and so, says Heidegger, '[t]he essence of materialism is concealed in the essence of technology'.[41] 'Labour' or 'work' can, of course, be taken to be a characteristic feature of human existence – something apparent in the way human dwelling always occurs through what Heidegger calls 'building' (which he characterizes in 'Building Dwelling Thinking' in terms of a mode of 'productive activity'[42]). In this respect, it may be supposed, in keeping with the comments from Heidegger quoted here, that the technological is continuous with the work-oriented character of human being.[43] Yet the domain of the technological is not the domain of mere 'work' nor is the technological identical with productive activity as such. The technological is an ordering of things that allows things to appear such that they can be taken up into the framework of production, calculation, transformation, consumption. Within this ordering, work takes on the form of 'production-consumption' – the dominance of the 'worker' is the dominance of this mode of work as the mode of human work, and, also, of

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light of Nietzsche's projection of beings as will to power'. And a few lines after this quotation, Heidegger says of 'The Question Concerning Technology' that it 'owes a lasting debt to the descriptions in The Worker' – 'On the Question of Being', Pathmarks, p.295 [9:391].

[39] Much of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche depends on his use of this work – a work then taken to be a legitimate part of Nietzsche's corpus, but actually a volume constructed by Nietzsche's sister from fragments and unpublished writings in a heavily edited form.

[40] Basic Concepts, pp.32-33 [51:36-37].

[41] 'Letter on "Humanism"', Pathmarks, p.259 [9:340].

[42] 'Building Dwelling Thinking', Poetry, Language, Thought, p.159 [7:161]. Heidegger also emphasizes here the character of building as always a 'letting dwell'.

[43] See Julian Young, Heidegger's Later Philosophy, pp.47-48. While it is certainly true that work is essential to human being, it is important to recognize the possibility of different 'modes' of work within which human being may be taken up.

human being.

In this respect, when understood in relation to work, Heidegger's account of technology can be said to direct attention to a shift in the character of work that is more explicitly taken up, though in different terms, by Hannah Arendt. Within the modern world, Arendt argues, 'work', which she takes to be the mode of production geared to the making of enduring things for further use (a mode of production that might be taken to overlap with Heidegger's 'building'), has been transformed into 'labour', which Arendt views as the mode of production that generates things for immediate consumption ('using up').[44] All activities of 'work', all activities of production, thereby appear solely in terms of the manufacture of commodities for consumption. Even the individual worker is taken up into this cycle of production and consumption, and so even the worker is assimilated to something to be consumed, to be 'used up' – in the terms of the contemporary 'efficiency-driven' workplace, this means as something that must be flexible and adjustable to meet the demands of business and 'the market'. Moreover, as the worker is transformed into something consumable, so does the consumer take on the character of producer: the act of consumption is itself productive – thus, economic activity is itself measured, in part, by consumer spending, and consumption becomes a mode of productive labour – while consumption is itself something produced by means of advertising and other 'promotional' activity. Albert Borgmann points out, independently of Arendt's analysis, that one of the effects of technology in everyday life is not only a transformation of things into commodities, but a conceptualization of human life itself around notions of desire and the satisfaction of desire through consumption[45] – life, as one recent columnist has it, becomes 'shopping'[46] – moreover, the concepts of 'desire' and 'satisfaction' that appear here are themselves framed in terms of the market, the customer, the 'end-user', while they also become commodities to be produced, sold, acquired.[47]

As technological ordering extends even to encompass the basic character of human life, so Heidegger writes of the danger of technology as consisting in just the possibility 'that

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[44] Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), p.126-27.

[45] Albert Borgmann, Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p.00.

[46] Martin Jacques, 'The death of intimacy', The Guardian, Saturday, September 18, 2004, p.17. Jacques's analysis argues that the rise of 'self' as the 'dominant interest', 'the relentless spread of the market into every part of society', and the rise of communication technologies, are eroding the 'very idea of what it means to be human'. Jacques sees the erosion at issue here as evident in a wide range of phenomena from the loss of intimacy in relationships to a loss of any real encounter with death. Jacques's analysis thus picks out many of the features to which Heidegger's critique of technological modernity also draws attention.

[47] The line of argument developed here is something explored further in my 'The Dualities of Work: Self-Creation and Self-Consumption', unpublished.

all revealing will be consumed by ordering and that everything will present itself only in the unconcealedness of available resource [Bestand].'[48] The exact nature of this danger – why and how technology threatens in this way – is something that requires more detailed consideration, but it is important to recognise, first, the way in which Heidegger's comment here indicates that, although technology threatens revealing, it is indeed, as I indicated earlier, also a mode of revealing in itself – it is just that mode in which everything appears only as resource and in which revealing or disclosedness appears only as ordering. The character of the Framework as such a mode of revealing is also suggested by the way in which, in the passage describing the bridge from 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (the passage discussed in §5.3 above), Heidegger included the modern highway bridge among the different ways in which a bridge may gather – in its case gathering things through tying them 'into the network of long-distance traffic, paced as calculated for maximum yield'.[49] In this example, the way in which the revealing accomplished through the highway bridge is indeed within the frame of the technological is also exhibited through its gathering of things in terms of a 'network' of traffic 'calculated' for maximization of 'yield', of 'production'. The gathering of things in the thing – of which the gathering in the highway bridge is supposed to be one example – is also, of course, what Heidegger takes to be an instance of the Event, but in that case it would seem that the Event takes place even in the happening of technological gathering that occurs, as one example, in the highway bridge. In fact, elsewhere Heidegger talks about the Event in direct relation to the essence of technology that is the Framework. Thus, in the Le Thor Seminar, we find a remark according to which 'the Framework [Gestell] is, as it were, the photographic negative of the Event [Ereignis]',[50] and similarly, in the 'Summary of a Seminar' from On Time and Being it is said that the Framework [Gestell] 'offers a double aspect, one might say, a Janus head. It can be understood as a kind of continuation of the will to will, thus as an extreme formation of Being. At the same time, however, it is a first form of the Event [Ereignis] itself.'[51] As a form of the Event, whether understood as the Event of a personal 'experience', of the 'other beginning', or of the everyday happening of world, it is clear that the Framework must be a form of the 'disclosive gathering of belonging', but if it is that, then how and why is it such a danger. And how can the ordering of technology threaten to 'consume' all revealing, to 'consume', presumably, the Event as such?

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[48] 'The Question Concerning Technology', 'The Question Concerning Technology' and Other Essays, pp.00-00 [7:00].

[49] 'Building Dwelling Thinking', Poetry, Language, Thought, p.152 [7:155].

[50] 'Seminar in Le Thor 1969', Four Seminars, p.60 [15:366].

[51] 'Summary of a Seminar', in On Time and Being, p.53; Zur Sache des Denkens, p.00. Translation modified. See also 'Seminar in Le Thor 1969', Four Seminars, p.60 [15:366}.

What technology and the Framework threaten is the transformation of revealing, and so the gathering of the Event that is the happening of the fourfold, into nothing more than ordering, and so allowing a mode of appearance to all and everything that is only that of 'resource'. The threat that is posed here is particular to technology and the Framework. Consequently, it must be the case that other modes of revealing, and we know that Heidegger thinks there are such, do not pose such a threat – do not transform revealing into ordering, do not reveal things only as resource. Indeed, Heidegger's characterization of the nature of revealing, of the Event, and of the gathering of the fourfold, takes such revealing to be a 'letting be' of things; understood in relation to dwelling, it is a 'sparing and preserving', a 'caring for'; in terms of the concealing-revealing of aletheia, it is a 'sheltering' that also 'clears'. These various characterizations are all directed at the idea that what occurs in the revealing of things is both a coming to presence of things in a particular way that is proper to the thing, and yet, in such coming to presence, the thing is also 'preserved' in its being as that which goes beyond what comes to presence in that revealing. The thing is revealed, but it is also, in being preserved and 'sheltered', concealed. Meanwhile, in such revealing, the happening of revealing, the happening of being, itself withdraws, and so maintains itself as different from the thing that comes forth into presence. In the mode of revealing that is the technological, however, the thing appears only as resource, while revealing as such is almost completely obliterated – the technological does not present itself as one mode of revealing among others, and so does not present itself as a mode of revealing at all, but instead appears as simply that which enables things to be grasped as what they are and as all that they are.

There is, of course, a sense in which every mode of revealing obscures its own character as revealing, while also obscuring other possible modes of revealing at the same time, but the way this occurs in relation to technology, as compared with other such modes, is rather different – and this is the crucial point.[52] While the revealing of things within a particular mode of what we may term 'the holy', whereby things show up in terms of, for

[52] In 'The Question Concerning Technology', p.22 [7:23], Heidegger writes: 'All coming to presence, not only modern technology, keeps itself everywhere concealed to the last. Nevertheless, it remains, with respect to its holding sway, that which precedes all: the earliest. The Greek thinkers already knew of this when they said: That which is earlier with regard to the arising that holds sway becomes manifest to us men only later. That which is primally early shows itself only ultimately to men.' Here Heidegger is concerned to point out the way the character of any mode of revealing becomes evident only very late in its unfolding. Thus the essence of technoloogy in ordering things as pure resource only comes to light in the extreme manifestation of technology that we see emerging in the contemporary world. This is a slightly different sense in which modes of revealing conceal themselves than the one at issue in my discussion above – my concern is with the way modes of revealing conceal themselves as modes of revealing by 'blocking' access to other such modes.

instance, their relation to the God of the medieval Christian world, certainly blocks out other modes of revealing. One cannot properly grasp the world as revealed in the latter way and yet also be open to the revealing of the world that occurs through modern technology – things will simply show up differently in each case, and while one may be able to conceptualise these different modes of revealing, they will be accessible as such conceptualisations rather than as real happenings of the world. Yet there is also a crucial difference between these modes of revealing that goes beyond the mere fact that they each reveal differently.

The mode of revealing of the holy that occurs in medieval Christendom is a mode of revealing that opens up a world that is truly heterogeneous. It is heterogeneous in that it encompasses many different places that are so distinct from one another as not to be equally accessible from one another – this is true both of the 'hierarchical' organisation of the world into the realms of the sacred and profane, the divine and the earthly (and the infernal), but also of the differentiation evident in the earth as such, its separation into the centre (the holy city itself) and the periphery (the outer reaches of the earth), in the ordering of places among the various spheres that make up the heavens, and the 'natural places' relating to the basic elements that govern the movements of ordinary bodies. It is also heterogeneous in that it recognises, even if it battles against, the presence within it of other modes of revealing as truly 'other' – the presence within it of other modes of being, the pagan, the infidel, even, perhaps, the 'demonic'. Its heterogeneity is evident too in the impossibility of the world, even in its character as 'created', being completely fathomed through reason.[53]

In contrast, the mode of technological revealing that dominates our contemporary world opens up a world that is homogeneous in almost every respect that the holy world of medieval Christendom was heterogeneous: the world that is opened up in technology encompasses no 'places' other than as locations in place, and all are equally accessible such that there is no 'differentiation' of places and spaces corresponding to that between sacred and profane, centre and periphery, divine and human, between the natural places of the elements; there is no 'other' that stands in contrast to it, indeed, even pre-technological peoples and cultures are understood as having a rudimentary technology that just happens to be not as developed as our own; and nothing is taken to stand outside of the capacity of technology to fathom it and to harness it – there is only the ever-onward press of the expansion of knowledge and capacity that recognises no limits to its knowledge and capacity

[53] The same point could be made using other modes of revealing, for instance, that of the Classical Greeks, of pre-European Maori or indigenous Australian culture, of medieval Islam, or of Classical China. Of course, modern technological revealing has its own origins in Greek culture, and yet at that stage the essence of technology had not yet been realized, and was not the dominant mode of revealing that it has become in the contemporary world.

as such.[54] In this respect, opposition to technology, from the perspective of technology, can only appear as irrational, misguided, even nonsensical, since technology just is the rational 'knowing' that underpins the productive activity – the 'work' – in which we are always, to some extent, engaged. The university professor who takes issue with the imposition of a new system of academic 'accountability' supposedly geared to ensuring more 'effective' use of resources and 'higher quality' outcomes is thereby seen merely as defending the inefficiencies and inequities of an outdated system; the environmentalist who argues for the preservation of old-growth forests, in the face of their obvious value in providing employment and a means of economic growth, is seen as not living in the 'real' world; the urban preservationist who campaigns against the demolition of old inner-city neighbourhoods to make way for high-rise commercial premises simply does not understand the need to stimulate inner-city development and growth.

The revealing that occurs in technology thus presents itself as, one might say, completely 'neutral', and as geared simply to dealing with things 'objectively', although here, given that even objectivity is replaced by the being of 'resource', that means something more like 'pragmatically' or 'instrumentally' (but without any sense of an 'end' which they can be said instrumentally to serve). It is the apparent 'neutrality' of technology, and its inability to recognise any mode of questioning that is not itself framed from within technology as such, that is part of what leads Heidegger to talk of ours as 'the age of the complete questionlessness of the essential'[55] and of 'the total unquestionableness of all things and of all contrivances.'[56] The inability of technology even to represent to itself the possibility of its own questionability is itself a reflection of the inability of technology to allow itself to appear as a mode of revealing – technology is always disguised and incapable of grasping its own essence.[57] It is indicative also of the reign of technology as consisting in the oblivion of being – a time in which 'modern man is a slave to the forgetfulness of being'.[58] The question of being cannot emerge as a question, within a technological frame, because technology cannot emerge as a question. In this respect, we are brought right back to the original claim in Being and Time that ties the question of being to the being of questionability – and to Heidegger's constant insistence that the remembrance of being, the turning back to being, is always a

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[54] One might argue that there are limits that have become apparent within physics, notably in respect of the very large (events on a cosmological scale) and the very small (events on the quantum scale), but the extent to which the constitutes the same sort of 'unfathomability' and 'mystery' that is associated with the revealing given in the world as 'holy' is a matter for debate.

[55] Basic Questions of Philosophy, p.158 [45:183].

[56] Basic Questions of Philosophy, p.13 [45:13].

[57] 'The Turning', pp.46-48; see also Parmenides, pp.00-00.

[58] See 'Seminar in Le Thor 1969', Four Seminars, p.63 [15:370].

turning back to questionability. Such questionability is also evident in the character of the concealing-revealing that occurs in the gathering of the thing as a 'sheltering' or a 'preserving' of the thing as more than is given in any single mode of such gathering, and so of the possibility always of questioning that mode of gathering and the revealing that occurs in and through it.

Technological revealing thus has a special character in both covering over its own being as a mode of revealing, and in covering over the being of things in their complexity and richness. Technology presents itself as essentially a mode of pure transparency, but in doing just this, it also essentially obscures. When Heidegger talks about the 'violence' of technology, what is at issue is just the way in which technology refuses, through its denial of itself as a mode of revealing, to allow other modes of revealing to be evident along with it, and the way in which it refuses to allow things to appear other than in the mode of resource alone – technology is violent through its imposition on to the world, and onto things, of a single mode of revealing and of presencing. The violence of technology, in this respect, is quite compatible with technology's own presentation of itself as gentle and attentive. Thus, if we look to the technological transformation of modern work, we can see the gradual disappearance of the wearing and wearying conditions, not only of the early industrial era, but also of pre-industrial agrarian production, and the development of what may appear to be much less physically demanding, and less 'violent' modes of work. The violence of technology lies in the demands it places on things, and so also on human beings, in terms of their being; – it is not primarily a violence done to things in terms of physical or even psychological harm, at least not as we usually understand it. Yet equally, the violence of technology in relation to being can have violent consequences, and it is just those consequences that can be seen all around us from increasing environmental degradation, to the destruction of species and their habitats, to the devastation of human communities, to the loss of a sense of significance and meaning in individual human life.

In describing the contrast between the mode of revealing evident in contemporary technology and the mode that might be taken to be found in medieval Christendom, one of the key points of contrast was in relation to the way space and place appear within those two modes. In fact, given the character of revealing, and of the Event, as itself topological in character, and as standing, therefore, in an essential relation to place and space, as well as time, then one would expect that place and space would take on a particular character in relation to technological revealing. More radically, perhaps, one might even argue that the character of technology is such that, within its frame, place no longer has any significance. Certainly, as we saw in chapter one, the latter conclusion appears as an element in some common critiques of the Heideggerian emphasis on place such as that advanced, for instance, by Neil Leach (see §1.2 above). The considerations that have been explored in these pages,

however, suggest that, inasmuch as all revealing is bound to place, so the particular mode of revealing that occurs in technology must also be so bound. What technology does, however, is to hide its own character as a mode of revealing, and, in so doing, it hides its own place-bound character, while also transforming, and indeed, obscuring place as such. In this respect, understanding the problematic character of technology, and the 'danger' it presents, necessarily involves understand the way technological reveals works in relation to place, and in relation to space and time, and, of course, this is just the point at which my discussion of the technological began – through Heidegger's consideration of technology as it relates to the thing. What is at issue there is the way in which technology changes our relation to things through its effect in the transformation of nearness and distance – technology, says Heidegger, prevents things from appearing as things, and it does this through its abolition of distance, and so also of nearness.

The technological ordering of the world operates, in fact, through a certain form of 'spatialization' of the world and everything within it. In this respect, the prominence of the technologies of transport and communication, particularly in the historically early stages of modernity is indicative of the close connection between technology and the manipulation of space – something evident too in the pre-eminence of architecture within the development of 'modernism' as a mode of thought and practice. At a more fundamental level, the fact that such a connection should obtain can itself be seen as a reflection of the character of disclosedness as essentially topological in character, and so as always occurring in and through place, and whereby place itself shows up in ways that are themselves dependent on the mode of disclosedness at issue. As a consequence, place 'shows up' within technological modernity as nothing other than spatial 'position' (which means that 'place' as such does not appear at all), while things appear as nothing more than nodes within a uniform and extended spatial array. Thus, if the Event is to be understood, as Joseph Fell suggests, as 'the "turn" of space ... "into" place, which it originally and always is',[59] then we can view the Framework as the 'turning' of place 'into' space – and so of the covering up of the place out of which space itself emerges. The way this operates within technological ordering has two aspects to it: first, technological revealing gives priority to a specific aspect of spatiality over other such aspects, as well as over both place and time, namely, to space as homogeneous extension; second, technological revealing presents this transformed spatiality as that which is determinative of the world as such – the world just is the spatial, and things are nothing other than as they are given in and through such spatiality.

Historically, the emergence of modern technology occurs in close conjunction with the development of the distinctive understanding of spatiality that we have already encountered at a number of points in the preceding pages and according to which space

[59] Fell, Heidegger and Sartre, p.204.

appears as homogeneous, measurable extension often articulated through the notion of the co-ordinate system or grid. With this understanding of space goes a reduction of place to simple location (often a mere 'point') or leveled-down 'site'. Although this conception of space has its origins in Greek thought, particularly in early atomistic thinking, it is with modern philosophers such as Galileo, Descartes, Leibniz, and later Newton, that it reaches its clearest formulation. Space is the neutral container, everywhere the same, in which bodies, and the elements of bodies, move and interact according to uniform geometrical and mathematical patterns. The changed view of space and place that came with the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not, however, merely a consequence of the shift towards the modern 'scientific' understanding of the world, but was itself crucial in making that shift possible. Thus, the change from Ptolemaic to Copernican thinking, and the move, as Koyré puts it, from the 'closed world to the infinite universe' lay at the very heart of the new science that took matter and motion, quantity and number, extension and infinity as its determining ideas.

While space was itself understood, on this view, according to notions of uniform, quantifiable extension, it also provided the necessary framework within which geometrical and mathematical principles could be applied universally. Even though contemporary physics understands space differently from the way in which it was viewed by Newton (notably in its shift away from Euclidean geometry and its adoption of a 'field' or 'continuum' view), the crucial elements in the modern view of space that were decisive in underpinning the rise of modern science remain. Space is understood as that universal structure describable in terms of uniform, mathematical principles by means of which all other entities can be located. If space is now understood as necessarily conjoined with time, then time itself is understood in a way that assimilates it to space – as another dimension of the so-called 'block universe' in which location can be plotted according to both temporal and spatial axes. Henri Bergson famously talked of the modern tendency towards a 'spatialized' view of time. But such spatialisation is merely indicative of the more widespread tendency to think of all things in the formal, quantifiable, uniform terms associated with the modern view of space. It is this view, of course, with which Heidegger grapples in Being and Time – the modern, 'Cartesian' ontology of the world in which things are understood in terms of present-at-hand 'objects' of knowledge is itself based on an essentially spatialized mode of understanding. Inasmuch as Heidegger claims that modern science is itself driven by a technological imperative – a consequence of Heidegger's view of technology as indeed a mode of world-disclosure (and so no mere 'application' of the deliverances of science)[60] – so the development of this understanding of space can be seen as driven by a technological ordering that aims to bring

[60] See 'The Question Concerning Technology', 'The Question Concerning Technology' and Other Essays, p.00 [7:00].

things within a single, uniform framework within which they can be produced, transformed and controlled, within which 'anything can take the place of anything else'.[61] If space is understood in this manner, then space, and so also time and place, becomes immediately amenable to the manipulation that occurs through the ability to operate directly upon such space. Moreover, inasmuch as technological ordering is given over to such manipulation and control, so the appearance of the world as available to such manipulation is also the appearance of the world as spatial.

Significantly, while the spatialization of the world that occurs here is an obliteration of place, and of space and time, as anything other than homogeneous extendedness, it also turns out to involve a certain disappearance of space. Distance, whether the distance of the small or of the great, no longer appears in the way that it did previously – it becomes something entirely taken up in the operation of technology and its calculations. At the present time, this reduction or abolition of distance is evident at its most dramatic and most commonplace in relation to media and computer technology. Seated before my computer I may find that something physically far removed from me is actually closer, through its electronic accessibility, than something in my immediate environment – an electronic text held on a web server two thousand miles away may actually be closer than the hard copy of the same text that sits on the shelf in the next room. The result of this obliteration of the difference between near and far is a corresponding obliteration or covering over, not only of the difference between things, of even of the differences in the spatial ordering of things, not merely in my immediate vicinity, but throughout the world as a whole. Given the role of space in the differentiation of things, and of world, that we explored in the section immediately above, then the near-obliteration of distance means the near-obliteration of the differentiation between things that allows them to appear as properly distinct from one another. Difference becomes simply a matter of difference in spatial positioning and in the way in which items connect up within the overall structure of such positionings. One way of describing the disappearance of things that occurs here is to say that things are increasingly replaced by images and representations (Vorstellungen)[62] of things (that is, by things as they are removed from their original place – transformed and re-presented from within a particular 'frame'), except that even the idea of representation still refers us to something represented. Within the mode of revealing that emerges here, however, there are only representations, and so they cease to appear even as representations – as Heidegger puts it, there are not even any objects, only resources.

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[61] 'Seminar in Le Thor 1969', Four Seminars, p.62 [15:368-69].

[62] The connection, via 'stellen', between 'vorstellen' and 'Gestell' should not be overlooked here. See also 'The Age of the World Picture', in Off the Beaten Track, pp.66-69 [5:88-92], for more on the idea of 'representation'.

One of the most obvious consequences of the technological disruption in spatial and topological ordering is a disruption in our sense of location – our 'sense of place'. Not only does this affect our capacity to access what is physically removed from us – in everyday terms, events across the world are now as 'close' as our television screen, friends and relatives separated from us by thousands of miles are as 'near' as the 'phone – but it also brings about important changes in the ways in which we encounter ourselves and others, and the character of those encounters. Technology transforms even the character of social role and function – important elements in the constitution of social identity – through breaking down the boundaries that restrict access to different social contexts and locations. As Joshua Meyrowitz writes 'We still live in and interact in segregated physical locales. But television and other electronic media have broken the age-old connection between where we are and what we know and experience. Children may still be sheltered at home, but television now takes them across the globe before parents give them permission to cross the street'.[63] Meyrowitz goes on to point out that the effect of these changes is both an increasing homogeneity of behaviour and attitude across society – such that divisions of class, gender, age and so forth lose much of their significance – as well as an increasing heterogeneity of options available to individuals. The technology of the mobile phone, and the various forms of communication and information devices now being linked to it, has brought about an acceleration of the phenomenon Meyrovich describes. The mobile phone connects each individual directly into the network of communication, information, access and availability, and it can do so in a way that shows no regard for the differences between the life of work and home or of public and private.

The changes that Meyrovich identifies in terms of the way technology changes the character of social relations constitutes, however, only one of a much broader set of transformations that technological ordering brings about. Not only does it change the way human identity is constituted as well as the character of human belonging-together, but it also cuts us off from, things and from the world, no longer allowing earth and sky, gods and mortals to appear as such. Our experience of the world may come to focus on a much narrower or segregated range of sensory and interactive modalities – in the case of the television, and the computer, primarily those of sound and vision rather than of the engagement of the body in its entirety – and thus one no longer 'sees' the sky or 'touches' the earth. We no longer encounter things in their complexity – in their being revealed and

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[63] Meyrovich, [insert reference]. 'Medium Theory', in David Crowley and David Mitchell (eds.), Communication Theory Today (Polity Press, 1994), p.67. What Meyrovich seems to miss is the way in which the changes wrought by the technological do not affect the basic tie between place and human being, but only the manner in which that appears – and, of course, in the technological world, part of that appearance is such as to hide the connection with place itself.

concealed, in the 'iridescence' of their being – and neither do we encounter our own being as it stands in relation to the fourfold, in its character as a standing before the gods, as standing always in the face of death, of nothingness. Technological ordering thus involves, as Heidegger puts it in 'The Thing', a loss of 'nearness' to things in the rise of a 'uniform distancelessness', a loss of nearness, and so also of 'place', and an essential 'homelessness'. From the perspective of the mode of technological revealing itself, that mode of revealing appears as no 'revealing' at all, but as merely the world in its transparent simplicity, stripped of the coverings of superstition and irrationality. Inasmuch as technology appears as no mode of appearance at all, so there is no thematization of technology itself – there is no mode of revealing that is technological and neither is there any 'essence' to technology.[64] This means also that technology cannot envisage any limit to the mode of ordering that it imposes – it cannot, in fact, even envisage its own ordering as an ordering.

Moreover, in its blindness to its own limits, technology cannot grasp the possibility of its own failure or its own predilection to failure. Technology thus presents itself as a source of solutions, rather than of problems, and technological development appears as a steady progression – a process of 'continuous improvement', as the language of 'quality management' would have it. Yet as technological systems become more complex, the failure of those systems becomes an increasing problem. The simpler the technology, the more easily can breakdowns within that technology be coped with – the more complex the technology, the more even small failures give rise to difficulties. At the same time, the increasing complexity of technological systems – their very character, in fact, in drawing more and more elements into their sway – also increases the possibilities for failure, often requiring the development of new technologies designed to deal specifically with such possibilities. This is not to say that technology is unsuccessful, but that its success is always faltering, and always brings new problems, new difficulties, in its train. Yet technology hides its own failing character, in this regard, viewing its failures as an indication of the need for greater technological perfection, of a more encompassing grasp of the elements that comprise the technological system, and shifting the focus on the 'problem space' in which it operates, so that technological success is always measured with respect to just those aspects in relation to which technology is successful, while neglecting or ignoring those aspects in relation to

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[64] In this respect, Tom Rockmore's objection to the Heideggerian analysis to the effect that Heidegger is mistaken in attributing an 'essence' to technology, since technology has no essence – see Rockmore [insert reference] – misses a crucial element in Heidegger's analysis (which is not to say that one might not be able to argue against Heidegger on this matter, but that one will need to engage with Heidegger at a more detailed level of argument).

which it fails.[65] The dominance of the technological is thus best understood in terms of the dominance of the drive towards a total ordering, rather than the achievement of any such ordering – it is only in technology's own self-presentation that such a total ordering, such totalised control, ever appears as even a possibility, and that it does so appear is itself part of technology's own self-disguising character.[66] Ironically, perhaps, Heidegger himself seems sometimes to be blinded by this aspect of technology's self-image, often talking as if the total ordering envisaged by technology were indeed something that might someday be realized. Yet the fact that technology constantly drives towards what it cannot realise is part of the problemtic and self-deceptive character of technology as such – it is crucial to technology's own inability to recognise the limitation that is intrinsic to it.[67]

The concept of limit that appears here is an important one. The limit or bound of a thing, as with the limit or bound of a space, is not that at which the thing or the space merely comes to a halt, but is rather that which allows the thing or space to appears as what it is. This is one reason why we can say that, from a Heideggerian viewpoint, the technological world contains no spaces, even space becomes a problematic notion, since there is no place from which a limit on such a space could be determined, and so no space as such. This absence of limit is something that another critic of modernity, although one who comes from a very different cultural and political perspective, Albert Camus, also identifies with the character of the modern world – a world he sees as 'European' in contrast to 'Greek'. Camus writes:

> Greek thought always took its stand upon the idea of limit. It carried nothing to extremes, neither religion nor reason, because it denied nothing, neither reason nor religion. It gave everything its share, balancing light with shade. Our Europe, on the contrary, eager for the conquest of totality, is the daughter of excess. It denies beauty, as it denies everything it does not extol. And, although in diverse

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[65] Thus the employment of concepts of 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' that are so often taken as 'neutral' measures of success turn out to be notions that are themselves completely dependent on the particular technologies with respect to which they operate. There is no 'neutrality' to these notions and what counts as efficiency within one setting may not count as efficiency in another. Indeed, increases in efficiency are often, though not always, as much to do with shifts in what counts as a measure of efficiency – this is all the more so when the systems whose efficiency is at issue are those that rely heavily on human engagement and interaction, for instance, in education and in most office and service-based activities.

[66] For such a total ordering to be realized would also be for the image of the world as pure spatialized, measureable extendedness to be realized – such a realization would entail, not merely the obscuring, but the obliteration, of all sense of place, and so too the complete blocking-off of the Event in its self-disclosive character.

[67] On the general issue of failure and the technological see Jeff Malpas and Gary Wickham, 'Governance and the World: From Joe DiMaggio to Michel Foucault', The UTS Review, 3 (1997), pp.91-108.

ways, it extols only one thing: the future empire of reason. In its madness it pushes back the eternal limits, and at once dark Furies swoop down upon it to destroy. Nemesis is watching, goddess of moderation, not of vengeance. All those who go beyond the limit are by her pitilessly chastised… It is by acknowledging our ignorance, refusing to be fanatics, recognizing the boundaries of man and the world, through the faces we love, in short, through beauty, that we shall rejoin the Greeks.[68]

The inability to grasp limit is, for Camus, at its most essential in its inability to recognise beauty, which means to recognise the transient, the vulnerable and the fragile as that which is nevertheless the most worthy. Indeed, Camus' reference to beauty here is suggestive of what Heidegger, following Hölderlin, calls the 'holy – the way in which we, the moderns, have 'exiled' beauty, as Camus puts it, is the analogue to the loss of the gods, and of the holy, in Heidegger and in Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin. In calling for a return to beauty, and to the Greeks, Camus calls for something that appears very like what appears in Heidegger as the 'other beginning' of the turning back to being that occurs in the disclosive gathering of belonging that is the Event – a turning in which we regain a proper relatedness to the world and ourselves, in which we recognize the proper place, and so the boundaries, of our dwelling. This turning is not a move to another world, not a move away from the place in which we already find ourselves, but a recognition of our being in that very place where we already are – 'It is indeed my life that I am staking here, a life that tastes of warm stone, that is full of the sighs of the sea and the rising song of the crickets'.[69] Thus Heidegger also tells us that the problem is not that we need to be somewhere other than we are, but that, as our dwelling is determined by the technological, so 'we do not reside sufficiently as yet where in reality [eigentlich] we already are.'[70] This lies at the very heart of the problematic character of technology – not only does it cover over what it itself is, but it also displaces us from the place we nevertheless cannot leave.

On this matter, although Heidegger emphasises that any 're-turning' from the obliteration and forgetfulness that is so characteristic of technological modernity cannot be accomplished by mere human 'decision' or 'action' (and is, indeed, something that can only be 'awaited'), such a 're-turning', which is the turning of the Event, must involve a recovery of a sense of human dwelling, a recovery, one might say, of a sense of place, a recovery of the proper space within which disclosedness in the sense at issue is possible. Thus Heidegger writes that: 'Unless man first establishes himself beforehand in the space proper to his

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[68] Albert Camus, 'Helen's Exile', Selected Essays and Notebooks (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p.136 & 140.

[69] In Albert Camus, Lyrical and Critical Essays, ed. Philip Thody (Vintage, n.p, n.d.), p.69, translation by Ellen Conroy Kennedy; from the French, 'Noces à Tipasa', in Camus, Noces (Paris: Gallimard: 1959), pp.11-21, quotation on p.16.

[70] Identity and Difference, p.33.

essence and there takes up his dwelling, he will not be capable of anything essential within the destining now holding sway'.[71] Yet how is such a return to dwelling – such a turning back to the happening of disclosedness – possible at all? What can any individual do in the face of the 'destitution' that technology appears to bring with it?

The Event, it will be recalled, is both a happening of disclosedness and a disclosedness of that happening. It is the happening of that disclosedness in a way that is determinative of an entire era – as 'world-historical' – but it is also the happening of that disclosedness as it occurs in relation to the particular thing and the individual person. As a turning in world-historical disclosure, the Event is something that can only be awaited, that cannot be directly brought about, any more than one can directly bring about any hoped for world-historical change. Here Heidegger need not be viewed as any more nor less pessimistic than, for instance, Karl Popper in his rejection of social engineering – the point is that there is no 'technology' to be applied to bring about the turning, and certainly there is no technology that can be used to overcome technology as such. Yet the 'awaiting' of the world-historical turning may take many forms, and it seems there is no reason why it cannot be awaited through activism, so long as it is wary of itself being taken up into the technological mode of revealing against which it also struggles, and so long as it is aware of its own limits, and even its likely failure – such 'activism' must, in this sense, always be guided by a recognition of the 'poetic'.[72] As it may occur in an individual life, however, and so as it concerns our own comportment towards the world and towards things, the Event need not only be awaited. Indeed, we can each cultivate a mode of being that constitutes a 'turning back' to being, that is a 'remembrance', that is a mode of dwelling. For us, of course, the question is how to achieve this in the face of the contemporary dominance of technology.

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[71] 'The Turning', 'The Question Concerning Technology' and Other Essays, pp.39-40 [.

[72] The theme of release from the domination of technology and technological devices has, somewhat ironically, become a familiar and recurrent theme in contemporary popular culture. Thus Keanu Reeves battles against the domination of the 'machines' in 'The Matrix', Arnold Schwarzenegger appears as a machine who is first an enemy, and then a defender against a more sophisticated version of his kind, in the 'Terminator' movies (providing a wonderful source of metaphor in which to describe his subsequent political career), and in 'I, Robot', Will Smith fights against a rebellion of the robotic slaves on whom human society has come to rely. Drawing on an older set of ideas an images, 'The Lord of the Rings' portrays a battle against what is essentially a mode of technological domination in which the use of a certain all-encompassing technology (the 'One Ring') is foresworn precisely of its dominating and transforming power. What is ironic about all of this, of course, is that the theme of the struggle against technological dominance (against 'the rule of the machines') becomes a commodity produced and marketed by the very movie industry, and its increasingly diverse off-shoots, that is itself a manifestation of the technological ordering of the contemporary world.

Heidegger does not respond to this latter question by urging the abandonment of technology[73] – but instead suggests that what must be done is to adopt a way of being with technology that does not give in to its domination:

> We can use technical devices as they ought to be used, and also let them alone as something which does not affect our real and inner core. We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature. But will not saying yes and no this way to technical devices make our relation to technology ambivalent and insecure? On the contrary! Our relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed. We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. I would call this comportment toward technology which expresses 'yes' and at the same time 'no,' by an old word, releasement toward things [Gelassenheit].[74]

'Gelassenheit', in ordinary German, carries connotations of 'composure' and 'tranquility'; in the sense of 'releasement toward things' that Heidegger employs it, a sense deriving from Meister Eckart, it signifies a way of being in relation to technology that does not allow technology to dominate us, but leaves us, and so also things, free in relation to it. Such 'releasement' depends, as Heidegger indicates here, on technological devices being placed in such a way that they are seen 'as nothing absolute but …dependent on something higher' – that is, it requires such things to be seen in the light of a mode of revealing that is not simply that of the technological as such. The mode of revealing that is at issue here is surely that of 'poetic dwelling' that is attuned to the Event as such, and so to the gathering of the fourfold, and thereby allows the 'letting be' even of technology and its devices. Such a mode of comportment will let technology appear in its own character, thereby allowing its own proper bounds and limits to appear with it. The comportment that goes with releasement is one that we can each cultivate ourselves – and it is, indeed, a comportment that should not be unfamiliar – but individual comportment will not itself rescue the world from its current 'destitution'. Moreover, such comportment will have to maintain itself in the face of the challenging of technology – a challenging that, as technology pervades more and more aspects of our lives (the mobile phone being perhaps the most pervasive of its contemporary forms) becomes increasingly harder to stand aside from.

The character of the Event, whether in relation to an individual life or the happening of world history, is the opening up of the world in its disclosedness and its concealment. It is

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[73] See 'The Question Concerning Technology', in 'The Question Concerning Technology' and Other Essays, p.00 [7:00].

[74] Discourse on Thinking, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p.54.

essentially an opening up of things in their 'excess' and their finitude. As such, it is also an opening up of the world, and of things, in their essential questionability. The Event, in contrast to the Framework, is thus in no way a 'violent' mode of revealing, but allows things to come forth in their difference and unity, in their distance and their nearness. Unlike the Framework, the Event allows the fourfold to appear in terms of the mirroring interplay, the 'round-dance', of the elements that are brought to appearance within it. Unlike the Framework, the Event is no domination either of human being or of world, and, in this sense, the Event must be a turning away from all modes of 'decisionism' or 'authoritarianism'. This must apply as much in the domain of the political as elsewhere – indeed, the contemporary holding-sway of the technological is itself a form of 'authoritarianism', a 'tyranny', that is as antithetical to, and destructive, of the 'human', and of human community, as it is of the things of 'nature'.[75] In this respect, it is notable that Camus' condemnation of the drive for mastery that characterizes the 'European' and the 'modern' is closely allied with his own commitment to a politics of 'moderation' that is essentially attentive to the fragility and vulnerability of individual human life, and that is also committed to a form of democratic politics. So long as democracy is understood as a mode of politics that is fundamentally tied to contestation as well as to negotiation, and therefore to the limitation as well as dispersal of power, then it would seem that it would also be in a turning to some form of democracy that the turning of the Event would itself be manifest. In this respect, Heidegger's own anti-democratic disposition, which remained at least until the time of the Der Spiegel interview in 1966, and which also stands in marked contrast to Camus's politics, seems simply inconsistent with his own articulation of the Event as that stands against the disguised authoritarianism of the technological.

[75] In this respect, Heidegger's own 'turning' is a turning away from the intoxication with the power of a certain form of 'technology' – that which appeared in the form of the National Socialist 'Revolution' in 1933. On the shift in Heidegger's thinking in this respect, and especially his attempt to articulate an alternative to the violence of technological revealing, see Clare Pearson Geiman, 'Heidegger's Antigones', in Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (eds.), Companion to Heidegegr's Introduction to Metaphysics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp.161-182.