The World Through Technology
The Possibility of Politics in Modernity

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines how technology underpins our modern understanding of self and other as political actors. As such, it also functions as an attempt to study modernity and its most salient idiosyncrasies. My paper begins by accepting as a basis the phenomenological approach to fundamental ontology and technology put forward by Martin Heidegger. Drawing on Heidegger, I contend that man and his world have been *enframed*. In effect, this new world has ushered in a momentous shift in both perspective and understanding that remains to be fully understood. Following this, I venture to pinpoint why the centrality of Death as negate-ive, coupled with curiosity and humankind's insatiable pining for freedom, has delivered man to this technological destiny. In the third chapter, I examine the *polis/oikos* distinction in modernity, paying particular mind to the social realm and the internet as an appendage of technology. In the latter portion of this chapter, I reason that political action in a world given over to technology is that which exposes, disrupts, and resists the parameters of thought and action determined by technopower. In the final chapter, I examine how modern political institutions stifle the possibility of politically acting. Here, I focus particularly on the public affairs apparatus as antithetical to the common understanding of politics. Accordingly, I conclude by determining that all true political action in the modern age must take place over – and against – technology.

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Introduction

Just as *dasein* comes into being without having chosen to be, modern man is born unwittingly into a profoundly technological age. Any analysis of modern life that does not seriously reckon with this fact seems not only incomplete, but wholly pointless.[1] It appears perfectly clear to me, among many others, that in this very moment, humankind's collective affirmation of technology is the unquestionable and resounding "Yes" defining the modern paradigm. When asked what we "do," we respond with how we have most functionally embedded ourselves into the economy; when asked where we live, we respond with a specific geographic location corresponding to a specific systematized grid; when asking how "best" to carry out a task, we really mean to ask what the advisable method is for optimal efficiency. In every sphere of life, modern dasein's relations to and with people, places, and things have become inseparably bound with the markings of technology.

A thought experiment: Imagine, for a moment, a dramatic change in our current neoliberal political system. Perhaps we look to South America, adopting socialist politics in the vain of Venezuela or Bolivia. This, while unlikely, is conceivably possible; we must acknowledge that the spectre of communism still haunts certain countries and is, in a global network, still related to capitalist democratic states. We can then reason that although unlikely, a significant systemic, political change is thus possible. However, for sake of comparison, can we imagine similarly different technological systems? Can we consider a variety of fully actualized technological paradigms? Likely not: a spectrum of fully actualized yet different technological

[1] Throughout this thesis, "dasein*"* and "human being" are used interchangeably. As well, by "*modern* dasein," I do not mean to claim that dasein's being is qualifiedly different than was Heidegger outlined in *Being and Time*. Rather, I am speaking only of dasein's temporal location as being-in contemporary to right now.

systems is, in its essence, *inconceivable* given the interconnectedness and totalizing nature of technology itself.[2] Instead, what we imagine are only varying degrees of technology's unfolding, stages of the incremental march towards the technological comfort the West enjoys.

Push this further – can we imagine a contemporary world without technological instruments, devices, and the mathematics and scientific rationality that afford them justification? Again, not likely. Why? It seems that to imagine technology's influence as being not just mitigated, but wholly uprooted – to imagine a radical shift in the modern technological paradigm – one must entertain quite seriously the possibility of some sort of apocalyptic war or other cataclysmic upheaval. And yet if we think this hypothetical world with clarity, we realize that inherent in almost every scenario of humanity's independence from technology is technology's role as catalyst to its own destruction – either by exacerbating something like climate change to ensure an apocalyptic natural disaster or enabling and realizing the potential of modern atomic warfare.

It is with this explicit awareness of technology's modern influence in mind that I set forth in this work. I believe that in order to understand the distinctly technological way that dasein *is* in-the-world of modernity – which is modern man's inescapable historical circumstance – the relationship between man and technology must first be explicated. If man's relationship to

[2] One might object here that capitalist liberal democracies seem to rest at the teleological end of political development and that all political systems therefore are in some stage or another evolving toward liberal democracy. Hegel believed this. Marx would obviously assert the opposite. Regardless, it is not the nature of politics *proper* to be homogenizing and imperial – only insofar as politics *become technological* do they become totalizing, especially like we see now on a global scale. Capitalist liberal democracies happen to align with technological rationality in such a way that the rapid and often violent imposition of supposedly liberal democracies onto less democratic nations, simply *occurs* under the guise of spreading a political ideology. Of course, the ideology is imperative and very real as well, but *political* ideology itself is not the main engine of expansion. This is all to say that the imperial nature of capitalist liberal democracies results more from its alignment with technology's goals than anything germane to liberal democracy's central political tenets. This arises from the hyper-individualism, materialism, and other factors identified years ago by George Grant.

technology is truly the definitive relationship of modernity, we must look here first in our attempts to understand where we are in the arc of history.

Accordingly, this paper begins from the premise that we must rethink what we understand as "politics" in light of the radically transformative role technology has played in shaping both our world and ourselves; it concludes that all truly political action in modernity is, most essentially, therefore an overcoming of technology itself. In the interim, I examine the significance of the Internet as a new, global perspective without a horizon; the immutable potential of human as *vita activa;* and how technology functions to order, normalize, and discipline by materializing boundaries and structures. It is my objective throughout this work to elucidate the extent to which technology and technological rationality have, and continue to, propel and shape the Western worldview. In doing this, my ultimate goal is to connect seemingly disparate dots between politics and everyday life, tugging on the thread of technology that binds together the modern Western paradigm. I seek not for this fabric unravel, but simply to point out that we do, in fact, bear markings of technology in discourses and modes of being that we, collectively, may have begun to take for granted. At my most hopeful, I am venturing to make what is increasingly familiar once again unfamiliar. Ideally, if only for a moment, I wish to encourage a re-evaluation not only of the world and ourselves, but, more centrally, of this relationship and thus our potential modes of being in the world as humans.

Method

I will begin by constructing, or perhaps laying bare, the framework within which this inquiry will unfold. I would like to provide a few brief exculpatory remarks regarding the phenomenological basis of my investigation. First, I take as bedrock of this thesis the writings of

Martin Heidegger, predominantly relying on his ontological expositions of dasein, being-in-the-world, and death, as explicated in *Being and Time*. I see no irresolvable conflict here as regards the use of Hannah Arendt's writings, for whom I lean on in latter chapters to inform the potentialities of man's being-in-the-world. However, and secondly, I also acknowledge that in Chapter 2, I rely partially on Hegelian thought to deepen my understanding of why freedom, death, and negativity are central to man's relationship with technology. While I recognize the likely irreconcilable conflict between Hegel's pure teleology of Spirit and Heidegger's unanchored, non-deterministic conception of the presencing of Being, my reading of the "radically anthropogenic" nature of man is mediated through Kojève, himself a noted Heideggerian.[3] As such, I see no real tension or obligation toward committing to Hegelian teleology – the section of Kojève I adapt is independently coherent and does not itself lead to the Universal Homogenous State or End of History. In fact, as far as I can tell, Kojève's writings on negativity and Man are clearly drawn from Heidegger's account of temporality and death as affective and constitutive in its imminent potentiality. Third, and lastly – as for my use of Michel Foucault's genealogical method in the final chapters, I will address the potential disagreements between Foucault and Heidegger within the chapter itself, once we have sufficiently established the tools, terminology, and background to address this. Following these comments, I see no insurmountable methodological antagonisms between the philosophers I draw from throughout this work.

I will clarify further the terminology I adopt as I work through my arguments.

[3] "Irreconcilable," not in spite of Heidegger's trying to subsume Spirit under the guise of an inquiry into Being in his commentary on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit.*

Chapter 1: Dasein and Technology

"For the point of the matter is, of course, that modern science – no matter what its origin and original goals – has changed and reconstructed the world we live in so radically that it could be argued that the layman and the humanist, still trusting their common sense and communicating in everyday language, are out of touch with reality."

Hannah Arendt, *The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man*[4]

This chapter is, in part, dedicated to laying the groundwork for subsequent chapters. As such, it focuses on establishing our terminology, thoroughly examining how technology has uprooted our understanding of our world, and exposing the degree to which technology has actualized what I consider to be its largely unchallenged hegemony. Accordingly, our inquiry first begins by clarifying exactly what is meant in this paper by "technology" and substantiating the other Heideggerian definitions I adopt. This beginning portion will focus primarily on dasein's being-in-the-world, the phenomena of understanding, and being-with. Following this, I examine the manner in which technology has changed dasein's understanding of the world in modernity, combining Heidegger's ontological understanding of beings as relational and Carl Schmitt's writings in Land and Sea. Lastly, I will demonstrate how, despite Heidegger's suggestion that the enframing of dasein was impossible, modern technology *has* allowed for the wholesale enframing of man.

Considering the main thrust of this thesis hinges partly on convincing the reader that the technological age of modern mass society has an inherent conception of politics, we shall begin by elucidating what is meant by "technology." Taking cues from George Grant and Jacques Ellul, I insist on returning for this definition to the thinker that thought the *essence* of technology most forcefully – Martin Heidegger. Following Heidegger, for the purposes of this paper I define

[4] Arendt, Hannah, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 268.

technology as: "the co-penetration between making and knowing that gathers being, revealing its constituent components and the ways it can be utilized."[5] To this end, the technologically dominated perspective of the world effectively collapses all intersectional considerations of ethics, politics, religion, and so forth, powerfully drawing thinking toward the knowable means and ends relationship of absolute rationality.[6] Ultimately, by subsuming or dismantling the fields of thought that do not seek pure efficiency, the gravity of technology pulls us increasingly toward the dictates of logic and reason. Thus, the essence of modern technology paves over our primordial relationship to Being and draws our world towards instrumentality, pure rational efficiency, and homogeneity – in both thought and action. Moreover, it must be understood that modern technology's essence is to be found specifically in its unique mode of revealing: "*enframing*."[7] The technological mode of revealing *enframes*, meaning that it sets upon being to order it as "standing reserve," ready to be harvested and employed toward clearly defined ends. Technology enframes such that it "challenges" or "sets upon" nature, rather than Being being "brought forth" into nature.[8] This definition will be revisited in greater detail later in this chapter.

Without question, technology's place as the "ontology of the age" has already been thought by much more profound thinkers than I.[9] However, while the philosopher I am most indebted to, Martin Heidegger, is exceedingly helpful in bringing to light the essence of technology, my focus throughout this thesis focuses instead on the extent to which this essence has actualized and unfolded itself in modernity. With this in mind, the real intellectual advantage I gain over the thinkers I draw on arises from having pored over their texts and, living later in history, simply

[5] Darin Barney, *Prometheus Wired: The Hope for Democracy in the Age of Network Technology* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 41-45
[6] Ellul, *The Technological Society*, 4.
[7] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays,* trans. by William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 24.
[8] Ibid.
[9] George Grant, *Technology and Justice* (Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Ltd., 1986), 32.

having had the opportunity to observe and experience technology setting forth such as it has. It should then be understood why I hope to perceive modernity more clearly and fully atop their shoulders. I believe if these thinkers were living today, they would be equal parts intrigued and frightened by the issues I seek to apply their thinking to.

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To begin explicating the relationship between technology and modern dasein, one must return to Heidegger's 1927 magnum opus, Being and Time. It is in this text that that our subject, our jumping-off point for inquiry, is thought with tremendous clarity. It is in Being and Time that Heidegger re-approaches dasein and its being-in-the-world, aiming always toward a more "fundamental ontology" and looking to elucidate Being more clearly than scientific theories or purely rationally informed philosophies ever could.[10] Accordingly, it is Heidegger that we turn to for the basis of our investigation. But before we begin, we must, as Nietzsche wrote, "go back like anyone who wants to attempt a big jump."[11]

Throughout *Being and Time*, Heidegger seeks to reanimate the question of Being. Philosophically and scientifically, Heidegger argues, the question of Being – the most fundamental question underlying all others – has been forgotten. To restore man's relationship with Being, Heidegger's *Being and Time* offers an analysis of what it is to *be* by taking cues from what *is,* always seeking to reach further toward the roots of existence in Being itself. In fewer words, Heidegger looks to our experiences and comportments within the world as guide to his investigation. The failing of the entirety of the Western canon, Heidegger contends, beginning with Plato and culminating in Nietzsche's *Will to Power*, has been a metaphysical

[10] Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, Trans. by Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010) 8-10.
[11] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (New York: Random House, Inc, 1989) 53.

tradition privileging *thingly* beings over the potentiality of existence outpouring from Being itself.[12] For example, Plato's metaphysical hierarchy reasons that highest goods are *forms*, which represents perfection of some such object. Therefore, all objects resembling this immutable form, actually partake in the form to varying degrees while coming to be and passing away. However, Plato's forms, in their highest existence, are still differentiated from other forms, having concrete boundaries demarcating what they *are* from what they *are not*. In other words, they are all entirely *thingly* beings. But if the primordial question posed to man seeks as its answer an approximation of Being itself, then Plato's forms fail us and become equally as unsatisfactory as any dogmatic religious or scientific explanation of Being. Clearly, the pursuit of the highest forms remains predicated on a still unclear and uncovered relationship to Being itself. By accepting Plato as canonical precedent, one commits to a metaphysical tradition that already privileges beings over Being.

Responding directly to Plato and the subsequent canon, Heidegger attempts to re-examine dasein's concealed relationship toward Being.[13] Moreover, Heidegger's inquiry works to ply apart all thinking derivative of Plato's fundamental error. Ultimately, in rectifying this longstanding error and reaching behind the Platonic metaphysical tradition, Heidegger effectively makes metaphysics itself unsustainable. The logic here is simple: anything that appeals to something *thingly* as its measure is already predicated on an unquestioned acceptance of beings as differentiated from Being. In opposition to this, Heidegger's task remains more foundational than even metaphysics – fundamental ontology. In Heidegger's own words, "higher than actuality stands possibility."[14]

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[12] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 2.
[13] With a few exceptions of course. Heidegger credits Kant, Descartes, Hegel, Schelling, and Parmenides – among other pre-Socratics – as all respectively approaching the question of Being in some capacity.
[14] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 36.

At the outset of his search for a fundamental ontology, Heidegger asserts that dasein and its phenomenological modes of being-in-the-world must be explicated first and foremost. Heidegger reasons that actively thinking Being can originate only from beings that can question Being and thus, dasein is particularly privileged with access to Being itself – *Da Sein*, meaning "the there," is the presencing of Being temporally in the world.[15] And it is human beings' experiences in the world, primarily our *unthinking*, everyday experiences as beings absorbed in the world that truly comprise the majority of our existence. So, why is this experiential fact of existence not central in any philosophical analysis seeking a holistic account of man? Carrying forward this premise, Heidegger opens *Being and Time* with a "preparatory" analysis of dasein, "the-there" of Being in the world. In its reflexive capacity to question itself, dasein exists as a thinking being that can think Being. However, what *is* dasein? What are its constituent components, defining characteristics, and modes of being in its world?

This thesis is not, and cannot be, concerned with Heidegger's all-encompassing analyses of dasein and its modes of being. However, in order to offer insight into contemporary dasein's relationship with technology, worldliness and the relational structure of being-with must be examined.

Heidegger's analysis of dasein discerns immediately that dasein is inextricably bound up in being-in-a-world, and as such, has as a central characteristic "worldliness." This follows quite simply from the premise that if dasein *is*, it must *be* in a world. But what, then, is a world? And how does dasein comport itself toward other beings and things within this "world"? We know from our own experience that dasein cannot be said to be *in* this world in the same way that, for

[15] Ibid., 53.

example, water is *in* a glass.[16] The importance of this unique *in-ness* cannot be overstated. "World," as we experience, is not simply a locative noun – and worldliness not a distinct set of characteristics explained by quantifiable metrics like size, location within a solar system, distance from other planets, or any other sort of theoretical explanation. Rather, our experience of worldliness – the world dasein *is in, acts within, and occupies* – is intuitively grasped much differently than the superimposed theoretical, rational accounts of the world.[17] If Heidegger is to preserve and account for the "original and distinctive character of our interaction" within the world, his phenomenological investigation must look beyond the existing philosophical and scientific explanations of the world and instead search for a descriptive interpretation of the way dasein *experiences* being-in-the-world.[18]

As was made clear, dasein's experience of worldliness cannot be theoretically captured and preserved. We do not, for example, experience being-in-the-world as a constant awareness of our precise latitude or longitude within the mapped network of a Global Positioning System. So, Heidegger reasons, our approach must reach behind the theoretical overlay we use to explain our lives. Heidegger turns then to examine the way that dasein *is* and conducts itself in the world through its relations, first beginning with the simplest and most common interactions in the world – those seemingly negligible interactions with intramundane entities, or tools. Note here, that by the word "tools," Heidegger means anything with the specific characteristic of being a "what-for."[19] In the widest sense, Heidegger means that any and all entities usable by dasein with the intent of achieving one or another end are to be admitted under the umbrella of "tool."[20]

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[16] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 54.
[17] Ibid., 63-66.
[18] Sembera, Richard, *Rephrasing Heidegger: a Companion to Being and Time* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2007) 65.
[19] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 64.
[20] Ibid., 71.

Effectively, this encapsulates nearly all relationships with things in the world that are not dasein itself. However, it is also important to understand that just because we now have begun to explore our worldly interactions, we cannot simply collectivize these individual phenomenological interactions to achieve a comprehensive, ontological account of worldliness. In a word, worldliness *cannot* be understood as the sum of dasein*'s* phenomenological experiences. However, it can be said that in analyzing dasein's relations with tools, we begin to illuminate the preparatory *pathway* that offers more fundamental insight toward understanding dasein and the world in which it resides.

In searching for the defining structural features of the world, Heidegger's focus on dasein's relation to tools uncovers several essential features of worldliness. First, it appears that it is through our relation to tools that the world – and our concurrent being-in-the-world – is made conspicuous and thus knowable.[21] Heidegger discerns first that all tools in our environment are initially and primordially grasped as "ready-at-hand." Essentially, this term refers to intramundane entities simply existing within our environment, not being utilized. The obverse of this, "to-handedness," or "ready-to-hand," is when dasein employs a tool toward its what-for, using it for the sake of bringing something else about. What Heidegger finds particularly noteworthy about to-handedness is that when we find ourselves using a tool for some task or another, there seems to be a seamless yet transitory mode of being-in-the-world that dasein enters into.[22] In these moments, the tool functions and dasein functions uninterrupted alongside, with, and through it. It is as if the world slips away when one carries out tasks with to-handed tools. However, it also inevitably occurs that we either finish a task or the tool makes itself conspicuous again by breaking, becoming deficient somehow, or the task being completed. At

[21] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 74-76.
[22] Ibid., 66-71.

this moment, dasein is suddenly inundated with an awareness of environment and externalities. It results from this *interruption* of seamless laboring, made conspicuous by the sudden deficiency of a once to-handed tool, that the worldliness of the world rushes in and phenomenologically inundates dasein. Thus, it is exactly *because* the world is always pre-disclosed yet does not constantly make itself known that we are able to comport ourselves toward using tools at all.[23]

When a tool, in the midst of its use as to-handed, becomes at-handed, dasein is struck with sudden awareness of the referential system within which it was laboring. Having established this, Heidegger proceeds toward his second deduction regarding dasein and its worldly relation to tools: the fact that tools disclose the referential worldly system they operate within by becoming conspicuous, changing from to-hand to at-hand. Heidegger contends that because worldliness is uncovered through the interruption of acting-in-the-world, the very possibility of *being interrupted* presupposes the connectivity of an *already grasped* referential structure dasein has pre-disclosed to itself. Further, in order to utilize a tool to bring about its what-for, it is also pre-supposed in this relationship that dasein has comported itself toward a specific purpose of this specific tool *within its specific context*. In other words, the very ontological structure of comportment towards a to-handed tool pre-supposes an awareness of the whole. In fact, Heidegger stresses the fact that tools are never found in isolation, but rather, only ever in contexts of environment or tool-wholes. Thus, there is always a "together…with…" that *refers* to something else as a *fundamental feature of what tools are*.[24] Herein we find the determining ontological feature of tools in their referential contexts: all tools have *relevance*, meaning a "toward-what" of "serviceability" and a "what-for of applicability."[25] In understanding

[23] Sembera, *Rephrasing Heidegger,* 71.
[24] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 82.
[25] Ibid.

something to *be* relevant, dasein demonstrates an initial and primordial grasping of the total context in which it is able to *free* tools for their what-for. Heidegger concludes that the worldliness of the world is always pre-disclosed in dasein's activity of discovering tools as what-fors within already grasped referential contexts.

Heidegger's explication of worldliness implicates one of the central innovations of his thought – his peculiar notion of understanding. Heidegger states in section 18 that understanding "holds the indicated relations in a preliminary disclosure. In its familiar being-in-relevance, understanding holds itself *before* that disclosure as that within which its reference moves."[26] Undermining the Cartesian subject-object divide, Heidegger proposes that understanding is instead a *comportment* of dasein, rather than act of apprehension wherein an object is perceived rationally with unquestionable clarity. Instead, understanding is a relation dasein enters into with overarching contextual structures of reference and the connections that bind together entities within. This definitive capability of dasein to apprehend tools *in their tool-wholes* emerges then as the means through which dasein comes to understand the world. In understanding the world by discovering intramundane entities in different contexts, dasein also referentially apprehends an environment within which these entities are connected. This, for Heidegger, is the phenomenon of the world and how dasein can come, at times, to "understand" it. Said more simply, the world is the whole system of references that emerge from dasein's understanding and which serves as the field within which dasein can discover entities. Thus, Heidegger's operative usage of understanding means comportment toward innerworldly and intramundane entities that reveals both the referential structures of the world and the ways dasein can relate to them.[27]

[26] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 85.
[27] Sembera, *Rephrasing Heidegger*, 74.

Implicated in Heidegger's conception of understanding is the necessity of perspective. Necessarily, the unconcealing of worldliness that occurs through understanding must occur from a particular vantage point within particular referential contexts. Therefore, one's situational perspective is intimately tied to their relational understanding. If understanding is then conceived of as the relation of a particular or collective dasein to the definite possibilities of innerworldly beings, then dasein *must* have a fixed perspective from which to understand.

Now, let us pause for a moment and turn to another text – *Land and Sea: A World Historical Meditation.* Here, Carl Schmitt builds a relevant argument supporting Heidegger's conception of understanding. As such, it appears the Heideggerian focus on perspective and understanding, put into conversation with the connection between vantage point and possibility, also informs the latent thesis at the heart of Carl Schmitt's *Land and Sea*. In this text, Schmitt contends that Great Britain's specific geographical location as an island, isolated just off the European continent, afforded it a particularly unique *understanding* of the world such that imperialism became a very real relational potentiality between Great Britain and the rest of the globe.[28] Schmitt contends that when presented with this understanding of itself relative to other nations, Britain determined to set out rather than remain isolated, perpetually defending against the other competing world powers like Spain. This is not to say that, for example, Italy could not have been a similarly seafaring imperial nation, but rather to emphasize that Great Britain's constant seafaring paired with the particular circumstances of its military prowess effectively functioned to unconceal a specific *understanding* of the possible opportunities the ocean and colonial conquest afforded. [29]

[28] Schmitt, Carl, *Land and Sea: A World-Historical Meditation*, Edited by Russell A. Berman and Samuel Garrett Zeitlin (Candor, NY: Telos Press Publishing, 2015) 7-10.
[29] Obviously, Rome was at times precisely this.

According to Schmitt, this shift in perspective – what he terms Great Britain's "spatial revolution" – that enabled an entirely new understanding of the world resulted from Britain's successful defense against the flotilla of Spanish ships' attempted invasion in 1588. When the Spanish Armada had been defeated – through serendipitous winds of circumstance – Great Britain disclosed to itself a particular way of being-in-the-world that changed entirely the course of its future.[30] Its relations to the continental world adjusted accordingly. Great Britain's weapons – its tools – were no longer defensive but offensive, given new meaning in light of new aspirations, new ends, and newly realized potentialities. This pivotal moment, this very fundamental alteration of a collective dasein's understanding, reverberates deeply throughout all Western history. It was from this point on Great Britain was no longer an isolationist, island nation, but an insatiable and bloodthirsty *leviathan*.[31]

Just as Great Britain's understanding of the world and the possibilities available to it was fundamentally altered, modern dasein's perspective on the world has undergone an equally – if not more – radical spatial revolution. With technology's indefatigable and constant expansion, now nearly every aspect of our life has implemented some degree of technological reform.[32] And in accordance with technology's totalizing and ever-expanding aims, boundaries dasein once knew as defining the relational structures of being-in-the-world have melted into air, allowing for an entirely new and unprecedented understanding of the world *through and as* technology. [33] In response, dasein must once again, on a grander scale than Schmitt ever could have imagined,

[30] Schmitt, Carl, *Land and Sea,* 22-26.
[31] Ibid., 14.
[32] As we shall come to see, perhaps this formulation is backward: New technology has implemented nearly every aspect of our life.
[33] Marx, Karl, *Selected Writings*, Edited by Lawrence Hugh Simon (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994) 161-162.

wrestle with a new perspectival understanding of potential and possibility – and come to know the implications of that understanding.

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Consider the ubiquity of the Internet – an infinitely complex and impossibly dense interconnected world offering an endless catalogue of content. Ostensibly, the Internet is a *tool* – in the Heideggerian sense – to be utilized however we please, allowing us access to all sorts of knowledge and information. The Internet as a tool is, then, a resource we engage with at our leisure to seek answers or, oftentimes, entertain ourselves. And when we use the Internet, our experience is much like the way Heidegger explains experiences with other intramundane entities – we slip in and out of focus, the world occasionally making itself conspicuous and forcing itself upon us. We often lose ourselves while working until our task is completed or we sit entertained and unthinking for long periods of time. All things considered, we seem to enter into the transitory worldliness Heidegger provides an account for.

However, this is a deeply unsatisfying explanation of the Internet for several reasons. First, the Internet is not an isolated occurrence in the history of technological advancements, just as the computer and the automobile before it were not isolated events in history of the West. Rather, they are milestones, incremental achievements, in a much larger "technological destiny" of the West.[34] It is backwards to think these innovations are simply entirely original breakthroughs in technological development. Technology opens up fields upon fields of technological exploration – technology utilizes us to further explore technological ends. We do not "come to" to the Internet to utilize as we wish – its rationality and technological perspective are deeply woven into the very fabric of modern society. *It imposes on and over us* as

[34] Grant, *Technology and Justice*, 21-25.

technological fate gives shape to our very history and all events that have led to this point. And further, our collective history will continue to be conditioned by and advance through technology – not only by the increasingly prevalent dominance of the technological rationality that brought about the Internet in the first place, but also by the very reality of our collective history being cached, documented, made by, and housed on the Internet. For these reasons, we cannot simply say that we utilize the Internet as we please, but rather that we participate in the Internet, thereby fuelling the inevitable expansion of technological influence in modernity. Thus, the Internet is only, as Heidegger would say, an *ontic*, superficial indication of a much more fundamental holding sway of technology. The very possibility of the Internet is only made a potential on the grounds of profoundly widespread technological thought and influence.

In Heidegger's 1954 essay titled *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger coins a term already introduced in this paper: *enframing*. Beginning from the premise that modern technology is a type of "revealing," meaning a bringing-forth into presence, Heidegger describes enframing as the specific way technology reveals, as a "challenging forth."[35] This challenging forth gathers whatever it sets upon to reveal being, such that its "supply energy…can be extracted and stored as such."[36] To demonstrate this more concretely, Heidegger here uses the example of a field once tilled by a peasant. In the traditional relationship between peasant and field, when the peasant sows and cultivates grain in a field, he does so with an acceptance of the natural processes that legislate seasons to the growth cycle. In accordance with this, the peasant understands that the presencing of grain is an unalterable process – a product of nature's organic "forces of growth."[37] However, the *challenging forth* of modern technology overthrows and

[35] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology,* 24.
[36] Ibid., 14.
[37] Ibid., 15.

uproots these processes. Technology, through challenging forth what it sets upon, expedites the once natural processes, enframing the field such that its resources are to be understood in an entirely different way: set-in-order for maximum yield and efficiency. The air is harvested for nitrogen; the earth set upon to yield minerals; the minerals to yield chemical energy.[38] This enframing ruthlessly displaces the peasant's view and *understanding* of the field. The forces of growth that once belonged to nature are now given over to cataloguing, tracking, and organization, the process now re-directed and challenged to produce as efficiently as possible.

Heidegger explains that this setting-upon of technology expedites the forces of nature in two ways. First, it "unlocks and exposes."[39] By organizing and challenging forth into presence the energies of nature, technology paves over and conceals dasein's original relationship to its surroundings. Instead, all beings are culled and herded into "standing-reserve," meaning summoned forth – unlocked – to be stored as *usable* energy, exposed. At this point, that which is enframed is organized and no longer harvestable by nature's whim, but dasein*'s*.[40] This cycle of unlocking, transforming, storing, and distributing sustains itself perpetually, intensifying in scope and focus as its rationality becomes more pervasive, more transferable to other scenarios. Second, as was already discussed, Heidegger tells us modern technology even sets upon man himself. Yet, Heidegger also writes in *The Question Concerning Technology* that man is patently unique such that he cannot be made into standing reserve or organized himself. Instead, man is set upon in such a way that he is challenged forth at the behest of technology to reveal his world in the mode of ordering, organization, and usefulness. Heidegger terms this tasking the "destining*"* of man.[41] Man is set upon, ordained by technology and sent-forth to challenge and

[38] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology,* 15.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 17.
[41] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 24.

enframe his world as standing-reserve, uprooting and re-understanding innerworldly beings in light of their utility and efficiency.

It is both dismissive and ignorant to not consider the Internet as being a decisive and unprecedented step in precisely this setting-forth that modern technology demands. How else can the Internet fundamentally be understood other than *pure technological reality?* All things existing within its seemingly endless boundaries are compressed and manipulated, gathered and made to presence in one aspatial "location." Within its flattened geography, all things are necessarily quantified and set-upon, ordered and utilized as one pleases. Landmarks, histories, literature, currency, even future events – all has become *data*.[42] Modern technology has challenged man to reveal his world as standing reserve, and with stunning ingenuity he has succeeded.

From where we stand, we are now able to answer the question posed at the outset of this chapter: *how* is dasein to understand its world in the current stage of technology's unfolding? This can be broken down further into two, now answerable, questions. First, if dasein *understands* its world through relations, how has the Internet's infinitely expansive and immediately accessible rendering of the world, which is available to almost anyone at any time, affected dasein's perspective and worldliness? Second, if dasein relies on initially apprehending relational structures in order to offer meaning to individual *things*, how are we to understand that which *is* on the Internet?

[42] James Somers recently published a fascinating article for *The Atlantic* discussing Google's failed attempt to create the Library of Alexandria. This would essentially be an online database of every single text ever written, accessible from anywhere with Internet access. For decades, Google has been scanning books under the codename "Project Ocean," enlisting both humans and machines to digitize *every single book that exists*. Eventually, Google ended up failing to settle in a decisive court case, ultimately rendering the project illegal on copyright grounds. However, the result of this is that 25-million books have already been scanned onto a hard-drive. As Somers points out at the end of the article, all that would have to be done today to make these 25-million books public is create an online host database and push a button.

Beginning with the first question, it can be said flatly that one *cannot grasp* any overarching contextual basis to situate things encountered on the Internet without importing a referential structure from being-in-the-world. The Internet, or pure technological reality, is simply not a *physical* world dasein – *as* dasein – can exist in. Thus, the structure of understanding remains referential to the world dasein *is* in. Given that the pre-theoretical significance dasein grasps from its environment is contingent on its worldliness, and therefore its physical, phenomenological being-in-the-world, dasein simply cannot *be* in pure technological reality. In effect, this means dasein retains its immediate referential structure for understanding yet has access to an unthinkable amount of information existing on the Internet, originating from anywhere else in the world. And in accordance with the project of bringing about an interconnected database of information such as the Internet, we evaluate this set-upon information only in terms of its usefulness. We must. The only way we can evaluate data is usefulness, efficiency. Despite Heidegger's prescient warning, we have gathered the physical world and demanded it presence as standing reserve. All that exists in pure technological reality is, in the end, revealed as quantifiable, succinctly expressed, and digitized, ready to be called upon.[43] The only metric of evaluating that which exists in pure technological reality is the very standard which led us to create the Internet – the technological standard itself, or that of absolute efficiency. The implications of this for modernity reach far beyond the scope of this thesis.

In response to our second question, we must turn back to *Being and Time*. It has been shown that what exists in pure technological reality is a set-upon representation of something.

[43] It is worth noting here the absence of digital art, or *poeisis*, that *remains* in and on the Internet to be viewed. Certainly, there are countless occasions of art being made possible or influenced by the Internet, but the closest thing to pure Internet art would be perhaps graphic design, which, within the confines of the Internet, is purely for functional purposes and evaluated accordingly. Is art even capable *within* pure technological reality, not exported to the "real" world?

One might perhaps notice that, approaching Heidegger's explication of tools as being able to reveal and allow worldliness to become conspicuous, we frequently lose ourselves in computers – perhaps more than when laboring with tools. In fact, as of December 2016, it is estimated that the average United States citizen spends nearly four hours a day engaging either with their television, smart phone, or desktop computer.[44] However, it is not simply that which is accessed through the computer and represented on the Internet that we are losing ourselves in. Our experience is mediated. At base, we are engaging with the computer itself, as an intramundane entity – *as a tool to access the Internet*. This is easily demonstrated by looking to any of the three ways Heidegger tells us that tools illuminate worldliness. If, for example, the computer's hard drive were to fail while we were deeply engaged with reading something online or watching a film, the sudden being-made-aware of the world that rushes in on us does not result from what we were reading, but rather the *tool* we were using to access it. In these moments, the computer is instantaneously understood as the deficient object, failing to achieve its usefulness.[45] This is to say, it is a mistake to think we can understand pure technological reality and the beings represented through it as tools themselves: computers, smart phones, and other similar devices are the tools through which we access this data available on the Internet, which must then be considered something separate.

This raises further questions. What, then, is it that we perceive in pure technological reality? We have established that since whatever is perceived is not constituent of our immediate environment when we are in-the-world, our only metric for judging content in pure technological reality is its usefulness in being called upon as standing reserve. We have also determined that which is represented are clearly not themselves tools that we can engage with like other

[44] "E-Marketer," US Mobile Usage: Top 5 Stats to Know, April 1, 2016.
[45] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 72-73.

intramundane entities. However, it must be admitted that we at least perceive *something thingly* being represented, albeit as standing reserve and already set-upon. Again, Heidegger's earlier explication of worldliness in *Being and Time* proves helpful in this analysis. Pure technological reality presents us with something somewhat similar to Heidegger's description of "*signs*." Heidegger writes that signs are "useful things which explicitly bring a totality of useful things to circumspection so that the worldly character of what is at hand makes itself known at the same time."[46] In unpacking this, we see that similar to the earlier characterization of standing-reserve, signs are themselves inherently useful. Further, signs are always referential and implicate a totality of further connected, useful things – they help illuminate our overarching context. However, since we have determined there cannot be a pre-theoretical meaning-whole made intuitively available to us in pure technological reality and that what we perceive in pure technological reality are not tools and cannot be at-hand, this seems problematic.

The perceived contradiction is perhaps first best rectified ontically. It seems apparent – and consistent with previous analysis – that in one sense, the Internet offers us a database of standing-reserve that we utilize periodically. Further, this usefulness can educate us about a myriad of things in our immediate environment – I can watch tutorials on how to construct something, receive advice regarding carrying out a task, and so forth. Thus, content in pure technological reality can be useful, just as signs are. Moreover, the Internet is increasingly the primary means through which information about the contemporary world – national and international news – is disseminated. Undoubtedly, this interconnectedness massively alters our referential context in a way also not unlike Heidegger's description of signs. The worldly character of the world, meaning the way we experience being *in*-the-world, is determined by our

[46] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 81.

intuitively understood and pre-theoretically grasped *in-ness*. For example, if we hear news of bombs being dropped by our government on a country on the opposite side of the world, we *understand* prior to any sort of factual processing or verification of veracity that *if* this event occurred, it occurred *somewhere in our world*. This is more than simply a spatial understanding. Even prior to our recognition of an event being worldly, the initial premise of this event having taken place in *our world* is ultimately predicated on an understanding of both being-in and a shared, dasein-with *in-ness*. With technology drastically expanding our referential context, the scope of dasein*'s* worldliness has been significantly rewired. And, as Schmitt argued, this re-wiring has drastic implications for the understanding of modern being-in-the-world. Effectively, it was when this paradigmatic technological shift occurred in perspective and understanding – the spatial shift spearheaded by the Internet – that we became truly *global citizens*.

On a more fundamental level, we can say that what is perceived in pure technological reality functions *similarly* but not identically to what Heidegger describes as a sign. Certainly, that which is represented can indicate and disclose to us the existence of other dasein more intimately than ever before. This disclosedness expands infinitely the boundaries that demarcate the referential totality within which we understand beings. Thus, while unlike a sign and not at-hand for reasons aforementioned, that which is perceived on the Internet profoundly alters dasein's understanding of the "worldly character" of what *is* at hand by situating us within a much larger, referential context or "world." For example, our food is no longer simply something to consume – we, as newly global citizens, cannot help but situate our food within the global context after a new awareness of interconnectedness offered through technology. This fundamentally *changes* our understanding of the worldly character of objects at-hand. Indeed, our relationship to the world changes in concert. For example, most people in the West now

ascribe an ethical dimension to what we consume, understanding the severity of exploitation germane to outsourced, late capitalism. Whether we choose to act on this implicit understanding or not is irrelevant. Ultimately, Dasein's collective understanding of the objects of consumption has undergone a twofold process – first, our world was enframed, then, it became interconnected through sprawling and intimate networks of pure technological reality.

As regards this uniquely modern, uniquely *technological* interconnectedness, perhaps the least philosophically examined modern occurrence is "social media." Returning to Heidegger, the ontological reason for the pre-eminence of social media is easily explained – being-with is a constituent element of dasein's being-in-the-world. Thus, in an ontological sense, dasein is never not-with others. The very existential structure of being-in-the-world as dasein ontologically implicates being-with-others; the sheer possibility of encountering someone else in daily life presupposes the inescapability of being-with. Just as dasein cannot be truly worldless, dasein can only be "without others" in an ontically privative sense, while remaining ontologically connected.[47] With this in mind, the phenomena of a technological expression of being-with – social media – is predicated on the potentiality of all socialness already inherent in the existential structure of dasein's being-in-the-world. Given the technological advancements and capabilities to create platforms exploring being-with and interacting more frequently, it seems perfectly obvious that the ontic expression of being-with would evolve into something resembling social media. In essence, social media is being-with-through-technology. What we see is the ontic expression of a marriage between technology and the ontological structure of being-with. At the same time, we also see the gradual giving over of dasein to technology, such that dasein increasingly experiences being-in-the-world through the lens of technology.

[47] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 116-121.

In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger argues that man's destining "in the mode of enframing" is the highest danger of technology. He then points to two different ways this danger "attests itself to us."[48] First, man's destining in the mode of enframing sets upon the world to turn it into standing reserve, de-mystifying and reducing all things to harvestable energy, ordered for efficiency and usability. In the midst of a world totally enframed, man "comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve." However, Heidegger importantly writes that this does not occur. In response to technology, man "exalts his posture to the lord of the earth."[49] When man himself becomes threatened by technology, standing amidst the objectlessness of total standing-reserve, his hubris lifts his wings to the sun.

In Heidegger's analysis of man's destining, he is careful to not go so far as to say that man *will* enframe himself. Instead, Heidegger seems to suggest that once man has enframed all things around him, this version of man *is* enframed man given over to technological rationality, concealing the truth of Being with corrosive, hyper-analytical and utilitarian reasoning. In fact, Heidegger does not even go so far as to say that man *can* enframe himself. His fear is rather that man, sent forth to gather and reveal Being only to utilize it, sees only the world only as his construct to be manipulated and called upon. With this understanding of the world – of beings – man can only fail to apprehend the *true, authentic* relationship to Being. Man does not hear himself called upon by Being, nor can he access the essence of any beings' existence in enframed unconcealment. Man in this mode has lost all rootedness, failing not only to question the ontological structures of existence but fundamentally unable to. Man's destining will have pried apart and dissolved the bonds of referential totalities to isolate entities for ordering.[50]

[48] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 26.
[49] Ibid., 27.
[50] Ibid., 27-29.

As regards man's capacity to enframe himself and his kin, there is good reason to think Heidegger would have thought it unlikely. In Chapter 4 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger explicates the structures of dasein's worldly existence and examines how being-with-other-dasein is a constituent, ontological element of existence. Throughout Chapter 4, Heidegger goes to great lengths to ensure that given the very structures of existence, dasein's relational understanding of another dasein cannot be misunderstood – dasein are *not* tools one can comport towards to *use*. This is simply understood *a priori.* As such, dasein cannot be at-hand or ready-to-hand, and the way dasein comports towards one another is characterized by the "care" structure rather than a what-for understanding or comportment dasein would project toward an intramundane entity.[51] This seem to suggest it unfathomable for dasein to enframe and order other *dasein*. However, I believe that Heidegger, having not been able to anticipate anything like the degree to which modernity has entrenched and welcomed technology, could not have seen *how* man could become enframed. Man *has* been enframed – his destining ultimately turned onto being-with and inward onto the self.

While the technological expression of being-with through social media is easily explainable, this should not distract one from the seriousness of the technological dominance in this relationship. In essence, the technological coup of being-with means that dasein *itself* has entered into and been re-created in pure technological reality. While this might seem innocuous given the trend of technology's increasing hegemony, I believe it is the *most* important step in Heidegger's enframing. We have willingly given ourselves over to technology. Ontically, this claim perhaps seems alarmist – bordering Luddite – but ontologically, the extent to which

[51] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 116-121.

technology has been woven into the fabric of modern existence is undeniable. What has emerged is a remarkably unthought mode of man's being-in-the-world – being-in-technological-reality.

We can now exist in modes unthinkable in Heidegger's time. Our capacity to act *within* technology is staggering. Through modern technological instruments, dasein *is* ordered, described, quantified, and re-imagined. Moreover, as things like currency, location tracking, and detailed histories of our technological behavior – searches, purchases, and so forth – are cached and stored, we are gradually building dense and deeply representative identities in pure technological reality. In essence, man in pure technological reality has become a flattened and ordered virtual object, equal to all other objects represented and gathered by technology. Man in pure technological reality is no different than other objects; he is a composite of quantifiable and knowable constituent elements. He can be advertised to according to algorithms that attend to his interests, all calculated from his search and browsing history; he can be surveiled and tracked, monitored for errant behavior, peculiar financial transfers, or potentially illegal activity; he can have his identity "stolen" if the most important parts of him embedded in technology are compromised. In this condensed and ordered being-in-technological-reality, man *is* bereft of humanness yet still remains uniquely idiosyncratic. Man-in-technological-reality is, as such, *usable* in a way dasein never could be. Man is slowly gathering *himself* into presencing in pure technological reality, changing both dasein's relationship to itself and to its world in an unprecedented way.

We see clearly, now, that *modern dasein is enframed.* By this point in our investigation, we have begun to outline the relationship between man and technology more clearly – and the perimeters defining the modern paradigm take shape with more clarity than before. Dasein-in-technological-reality is definitive of the contemporary technological relationship, which itself is

the most authoritative and foundational relationship of modernity. And if technology lies at the heart of modernity, then determining man has destined even himself into technological enframing should offer insight into other peculiarly modern conditions and occurrences.

The enframing of dasein raises many more questions yet to be explored. On what grounds do the flight into pure technological reality occur? How have man's authentic and inauthentic modes of being been mitigated or exacerbated in response to being given over to technology? Can man *act* politically within technological modernity? And how does technology come to bear on the structures and institutions meant to facilitate political discourse? These questions require further explication and will allow deeper insight into the circumstances of history to which we have been delivered. These are the questions I seek to answer in the following chapters.

Dasein*'s* modern relation to technology is not such that dasein is enframed in the world by other dasein, somehow reduced to a tool. Rather, dasein has recreated himself in pure technological reality such that he *can* be used, with very real consequences. The very possibility of dasein*'s* enframing is uniquely contemporary, only made available to us at this specific moment in the technological destiny of the West. Our historical situation demands that we must see clearly the apparatuses that condition our existence and the degree to which they have been co-opted by technology. Our philosophical inquiries must respond by first understanding man in his relation to the contemporary world if we seek to understand modern politics and the places it can occur. The West no longer follows Plato's sun nor laments the death of God. Instead, modern dasein demands politics respond to the domain of efficient management and religion respond to the realm of reason. If all things are permitted, then we must carry them out as efficiently as possible.

Thus, to conclude this chapter. I do not mean to suggest Heidegger was inaccurate with regards to the influence and import of technology, only that he could not have divined technology's unfolding in specifically this way. Along with being-in-technological-reality as a newly available and yet to be understood mode of being-in, technology has decimated the regional boundaries that once limited the referential structures of dasein. Our referential structure – the world dasein carries with it – keeps staking out more and more territory, burrowing further and further into the lives of all people and making known all that is knowable. And, as we have seen, technology's constantly expanding reach has finally begun to subsume that which perpetuates it – dasein itself. As we increasingly establish the structures that allow for technological representation and continue to migrate parts of our identity into pure technological reality, Heidegger's dasein is more decisively reproduced as being-in-technological-reality, ordered and ready to use. The consequences of this enframing are paramount not only for the future of Western society, but also for the very fate of dasein itself.

Chapter 2: Technology and Death

Following the previous chapter, which interrogated the technological relationship between Dasein and his world, this chapter has as its central question the fundamental relationship between modern man and technology. More specifically, I set forward in this chapter with the goal of utilizing Heidegger and Kojève's conceptions of dasein as jumping-off points for a further investigation into what lies at the heart of this relationship – ultimately attempting to answer the question of *why* technology has become Lord of the modern world. To this end, I begin by introducing Alexandre Kojève's understanding of death in Hegel's philosophy, focusing specifically on the negate-ive function of man's being-in-the-world and the therefore constituent role death plays in comprising the "radically anthropogenic" man. Second, keeping with Heidegger's fundamental phenomenological method, I explore the corollary importance of death as regards both dasein and technology. Third, I will demonstrate *how*, using both Kojève and Heidegger, we can determine *why* man's modern embrace of technology results from the centrality of death as negation in both man and technology. Lastly, I briefly explore the logical ontic outcome of man's merging with technology: transhumanism and the death of death.

It is of paramount importance to understanding the modern lordship of technology that one not isolate technology from the mediums through which it acts. As such, it is a necessary, if often overlooked, fact that understanding the expansion and primacy of technology requires one to first understand man, through whom technology acts and enframes. It is through and by man that technology has declared its precedence and, therefore, it is through man that technology has become society's most central component. And, as I take as foundational to this chapter, it is in understanding the similarities between technology and man that one may begin to look backwards and understand *why* technology came to permeate all theatres of modernity.

In attempts to elucidate man and technology's relationship, I begin with Kojève. I believe it is through Kojève's analysis of Hegel that we are able to see more clearly the central, yet unstated, assumptions of Heidegger's dasein. By supplementing Heidegger with Kojève, it appears that Heidegger's dasein was destined to embrace technology as it has in modernity. Accordingly, we turn now to Alexandre Kojève's transcribed lecture, *The Idea of Death In Hegel's Philosophy*. In this lecture, Kojève parses the philosophical tour-de-force that is Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit,* dissecting Hegel's *Phenomenology* to draw out several key claims instrumental in Hegel's philosophy. First, Kojève discerns that for Hegel, crucial to his dialectic is the understanding that man is historical insofar as he regularly works toward actualizing a deliberated ideal made possible through decisions in his past. Thus, Kojève deduces, man is historical insofar as he negates given being with a mind to some future project he aspires to create. Put another way, man's create-ive action only creates insofar is it concurrently *negates* what is – man's create-ive action is negate-ive of given being, and is actualized through laborious action the world. Essentially, historical man actualizes his deliberated-upon future by negating the conditions that currently pertain, so as to bring about, or create, the future. Second, and also following from Hegel, Kojève determines that Hegel's man is "radically anthropocentric."[52] This understanding begins with Kojève's believing Hegel to be essentially re-formulating and re-asserting a wholly secularized Judeo-Christian tradition. In sum, this is the assertion that Man himself *is* spirit-in-the-world, "who lives in a world without God and who speaks of all that exists in it and of all that he creates in it, including himself."[53] Thus by using the term "radically anthropocentric," Kojève means to say that man is free, historical being, insofar as he creates and actively opposes himself to the natural world. This opposition, which

[52] Kojève, Alexandre, "The Idea of Death In the Philosophy of Hegel," *Interpretation* (Winter 1973): 120.
[53] Ibid., 114-57.

actualizes as negation, functions to thereby negate nature both in man himself and in the world. This negate-ive function of man, set upon both himself and nature, is precisely the process that establishes the autonomy of unique, *human* individuality and the historicality of Man's existence in a temporal world. Third, and continuing along this line of reasoning, Hegel's Man is capable of transcending. However, Man can achieve transcendence *only* insofar as he is capable of both negating – being historical in-the-world – and himself being negated – dying. Therefore, man *must* be both mortal and temporal. Kojève summarizes:

> "Now to describe Man as a free historical Individual is to describe him thus: as "finite" in and through himself, on the ontological level; as "worldly" or spatial and temporal, on the metaphysical level; and as "mortal" on the phenomenological level. On this last level, Man "appears as a being who is always conscious of his death, [who] often freely accepts it, and, aware of what he is doing, sometime inflicts it on himself. Thus the "dialectical" or anthropological philosophy of Hegel is in the final analysis a *philosophy of death* (or, what is the same thing: of atheism)."[54]

The implications of Kojève's analysis are far-reaching and resonate beyond the scope and purposes of this work. However, the main thesis of Kojève's analysis is of the utmost relevance and rings true: Death is absolutely central to Hegel's philosophy. And, importantly, can we not say the same of Heidegger's dasein? It seems obvious that Kojève's conception of Man is reached through Heidegger's explication of dasein*'s* temporality – including its necessary cessation. In *Being and Time,* Heidegger himself notes that dasein, as the being-there of Being, necessarily carries the burden of nothingness as its infinite potential. Insofar as dasein exists, the potentiality of death and the negation of self is the inescapable ontological consequence of dasein*'s* very existence – death is the congenital birthmark of existence to never be removed, only comported toward in various ways until its actualization. Being-toward-death, for Heidegger, is also a fundamental mode of being-in-the-world, and one that has profound

[54] Kojève, "The Idea of Death In the Philosophy of Hegel," 114-57.

consequence for the authenticity and relationship between dasein and Being.[55] In this way, the always-present possibility of existence's termination is a direct consequence of temporally bound existence itself. Therefore, Death is central not only to Hegel's Man, but also to Heidegger's dasein.

Moreover, for Heidegger, death is not only central to dasein*'s* existence proper – I suggest also that death, manifest similar to Hegel as negativity, is also absolutely paramount to the activity of dasein in-the-world. If thought carefully, the direct parallels to Kojève's conceptualization of Hegelian Man here are unmistakable. As discussed in the previous chapter, dasein discloses the world insofar as it labors with tools. Accordingly, being-there as dasein implicates worldliness, which in turn implicates the being-at-hand of intramundane entities, tool-wholes, and a primordial and structural relationship between beings bound by the commonality of Being. Here emerges a parallel between Heidegger's dasein and Kojève's historical man – dasein is uniquely dasein insofar as it *labors* with a plan and is able to *question* that plan with an answer in mind. This anticipates precisely Kojève's historical man. Further, dasein*'s* laboring in the world – dasein*'s* worldy activity, uncovering and modifying its environment with tools *while intuitively comprehending it as an environment* – is unique to dasein. Thus, we can say that dasein uses tools to modify – or negate – aspects of tool-wholes in order to bring about a plan, or *project*, as Heidegger terms this phenomenon.[56] Accordingly, we now see that dasein is unique not only as it can question Being, but also insofar as it employs its negate-ive labor, negating given being to create or re-organize beings according to the project it seeks to actualize, ultimately within a structurally pre-conceived understanding of the world. Indeed, dasein, like

[55] This is why those choosing to read the latter portion of *Being and Time* as prescriptive are able to read Heidegger's discussion of authenticity as entailing the individual authentic acceptance of death as an ever-imminent potentiality.
[56] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 145-151.

Hegel's Man, is also radically anthropocentric and has negativity – death – at the center of its being both in its existence and in its relations in the world. [57]

Now, if we are willing to accept these explanations of dasein*'s* being and its central characteristics, we begin to see that the importance of death for both Hegel and Heidegger also offers a key to understanding technology in modernity. For it also seems patently clear that technology, as it is functions and is utilized, is similarly employed to negate given being – oftentimes with a scope and magnitude much grander than any one individual could actualize alone. In fact, the negate-ive capacity of technology has re-shaped and re-defined the modern world so profoundly through negating the ancient world that, as I stated at the outset of the first chapter, to speak strictly of ancient ideals confined to the past is to deny modernity as a deeply technological phenomenon, thereby misunderstanding the political processes of modernity. In the modern age, technology can manifest as a *tool* through which dasein re-orders and re-discovers the world's structure – an enframed world's structure. And informing the technological tool, technological thinking itself demands efficiency, order, strict causality, and the secular demystification of that which cannot be explained. Now, in modernity, even religion comes under the yoke of technological rationality. Nothing can remain sacred and unexplained, and all things must be reduced to their constituent components and prepared for use. Technology destines the natural world to be re-ordered and re-created as usable resource. Technology *demands* negation, just as Man does.[58]

[57] This thinking of Heidegger's would, of course, change in his later years as he shifted toward thinking that *Being and Time* was still *too* anthropocentric and therefore incapable of truly reaching behind the veneer of existence and questioning Being.

[58] In Andrew Mitchell's essay *Heidegger and Terrorism*, he argues similarly that our world is essentially enframed. As such, Mitchell opts to refer to our "world," in the Heideggerian sense, as the "unworld." While this is an interesting concept and, ultimately, very close to what I argue, I have not adopted his language as the terminology is not necessary and would ultimately be unhelpful with consistency throughout later chapters of this text.

We return, then, to the question raised at the outset of this paper. *How* is it that technology, and its mode of *enframing*, became God of modernity? We are now in a position to begin offering explanation.

It has been shown that for both Kojève and Heidegger, death lies paradoxically at the heart of human existence. Dasein is free and historical insofar as it negates that which is given, and it is through death – negation – that dasein discovers the world around it and is temporally bound. Thus dasein*'s* very existence, paradoxically, carries with it, as a *real potentiality*, its most utter opposite. This fact of dasein*'s* existence underlies all behavior in its world – our sustained being-in-the-world is conditional on us perpetually negating the *possibility* of our own negation. In other words, one of our primary modes of being in the world is an active turning-away from death and into existing in the world.[59] This anxiety that underlies our existence and, in turn, propels us into the world is precisely resultant of the finitude death demands. It is this very fundamental anxiety of existence by which dasein seeks to conceal the possibility of existential negation and thus strives to act within the world. This then brings us to technology.

The collapsing of distance between cause and effect in the name of efficiency has always been a goal in man's worldly interactions – tools demonstrate precisely this, even in their most base form. If man, as Aristotle posited, is a political animal, he is is also *technical* animal, by virtue of reason and the natural proclivity toward curiosity, efficiency, and freedom. Dasein*'s* relationship to tools, as explained by Heidegger, is one of discovery. It is through negating the given with tools that we are able to re-organize being, and thereby our world – the world we turn into given the underlying anxiety of death's imminence.[60] And it is the peculiarly modern and scientific technology that became most effective at negating, and therefore, most aligned with

[59] Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (HarperCollins: New York, 2008) 98-100.
[60] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 232-240.

and favored by man. As modern technology became more precise and exacting, the more *enframed* the world became – the more usable, accessible, and efficient our world became. As man adopted the technological calling-forth of the world around him, he negated further and further all being as was.

However, man no longer holds the reins of technological thinking: technology has consumed *all* relations in modernity. The moment technology became able to systematically explain, re-order, and determine being independently – the moment technology became ordained as "*science"* – it expanded rapidly as man naturally embraced it as the most effective way to negate. Of course, the ethical considerations of technology's advances were sidelined – there is no room for moral considerations of old within the new metrics of efficiency and utility.[61] Indeed, we can formulate our embrace of technology as such: Man's acceptance of technology is an escape to worldliness consistent with dasein*'s* ontological response to the inescapable and fundamental anxiety of death. It is because of dasein*'s* frail and finite existence that technology became the way in which we negate. Yet the create-ive product of technology's negation – that which man adopted and embraced – is one that seeks to homogenize, level, and order.

However, while both man and technology negate, technology lacks the distinctly human creativity of man's negate-ive function. As discussed, man negates with a *project* informed by creative desire for freedom, aesthetics, and so forth. The negation of technology proper, the negation on which technology fuels its intensification and subsistence, is only the imposition of a technologically dominating will. Technology itself lacks the potentiality for spontaneity and irrationality. All technological irrationality is distinctly non-human, as it must result in a calculable miscalculation. We need not reduce dasein to such explainable terms – we lose the

[61] It is no surprise that the main catalyst for technological development is war.

uniqueness of what is distinctly human if we try. This is all to say that there is an important distinction between how dasein and technology negate – dasein with a plan that has the potential of transcending means and ends, technology with the predictability of enframing. Yet man proceeds to employ and be employed by technology to negate, anyway he can.

Perhaps what is most uniquely modern about the contemporary embrace of technology is that man has now negated not only the mundane and worldly entities around us, but also dasein *itself*. What Heidegger believed to be impossible has become commonplace. As discussed in the previous chapter, the internet offers new potential for technological enframing of man himself. In essence, this technological coup of being-with means that, importantly, dasein *itself* has been set upon, negated, and re-created in pure technological reality. This process has been a turning point for technological hegemony. Man is now recreated through the very negate-ive powers of technology he sought to harness and apply to the world.

Indeed, man himself, through innovations like social media, has distilled and recreated himself through technological negation – to real consequences. Though Heidegger would have considered it unthinkable, the technological innovations of the 21st century have made the unimaginable monotonous. The creation of the Internet and its subsequent widespread accessibility now offers an endless sprawl of digital interconnectedness instantaneously available, from nearly any place in the world. The very basis of dasein*'s* modern *enframing* is uniquely contemporary, only made available to us at this specific moment in the technological destiny of the West. And as technology negates, it homogenizes. Man in pure technological reality is no different than other objects; he is a composite of quantifiable and knowable constituent elements. We return to our previous discussion, with perhaps new perspective: Man-in-technological-reality is, as such, *usable* in a way dasein never could possibly be. Man is

slowly gathering *himself* into presencing in pure technological reality, changing both dasein's relationship to itself and to its world in an unprecedented way. This is the technological negation of dasein, and it is offering man, in yet another sense, a form of death to carry with him at all times by uprooting the human relationship to being in the world.

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It is worth pausing here to examine the logical conclusion of technology's merging with man – the burgeoning "transhumanism" movement. As articulated by Mark Coeckelbergh, the transhumanist movement generally aims at varying degrees of "invulnerability and immortality."[62] In other words, the transhumanist movement generally seeks the emancipation of humankind's biological limitations, looking to human enhancement technologies to "transcend our present limited existence and become strong, invulnerable cyborgs or immortal minds living in an eternal, virtual world."[63] While a holistic treatment of the transhumanist movement and its reliance on technological advancement extend beyond the purposes of this thesis, I believe it is worth considering transhumanism, within the context of this chapter, as this is most essentially the total integration of technology into the very lifeblood of human beings.

What are the implications for mankind if the transhumanist movement, itself aligned with the hegemonic interests of technology, 'wins out,' so to speak? How are we to philosophically understand the potentiality of technology conquering the finitude which itself defines Heidegger's dasein?

It is useful here to situate transhumanism within the discussion we have engaged. It seems that fully actualized transhumanism – as suggested by the name *trans-humanism* – would ultimately amount to total "freedom" in the technological sense: an utter and absolute victory

[62] Coeckelbergh, Mark, *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 22, no. 1 (November 2011): 1.
[63] Ibid.

over the biological burdens of being. In varying degrees of severity, the transhumanist line of argument looks to "improve" the human by restoring perfect eyesight, expanding neurological capacity, making the human body impermeable to virus and disease. In my estimation, this movement offers nothing unexplained by the analysis already offered, if we are willing to, as I believe is correct, simply situate the transhumanist argument at the logical end of the procession heralding the technological marriage of man and machine. However, to offer further clarity, I suggest transcribing the crux of the transhumanist argument into the language we have already been using. In my reading, I understand transhumanism *most essentially* to advocate a technological domination that negates the possibility of absolute negation – that is, a movement bent on exacting the death of death. As the final struggle of technology's drive to negate, technology can be victorious only by truly negating man's always-imminent negative potentiality. By heralding the final triumph of technology, transhumanism trumpets the absolute end of that which roots dasein, that which allows temporality and thus meaning, and that which ultimately defines existence. Transhumanism, as the bringer of the death of death, is a movement aimed at technologically triumphing over that which is most fundamental to dasein: finitude and mortality.

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Returning to our discussion, then, we may conclude that the negation of given being to be re-ordered as standing reserve is well underway. As it has been shown, the heart of this phenomenon rests in the relationship of dasein to its own impermanence and the structural interrelatedness of being-in-the-world. It is through Heidegger and Kojève that we come to understand dasein's negativity – death – and it is through technology that man best negates. But man has given himself over both in word and deed to technology. He himself is negated and

recreated in technological reality to be gathered and called upon. Technological rationality and its instruments are now unfettered, free to breathe life and exhale over all things virtual and real. It is man's death that has pushed him toward technology, and it is with technology that man aims to destroy death.

The digital revolution and its largely unexamined philosophical implications have occurred so rapidly – and with such overwhelming, inescapable intrusion to both public and private life – that technology has often masked its influence through its sheers ubiquity, simply being everywhere at once. However, it must be understood that within this unprecedented technological paradigm comes a whirlwind of problems *and* solutions. With greater life expectancy due to medical advancements modern science body comes overpopulation and the nearly insurmountable task of food and resource re-distribution. Alongside the ceaseless 24-hour news cycle and citizen journalism burgeons the ever-ready public affairs apparatus and the exceedingly sagacious foresight of pre-written, scripted political discourse. And with the insatiable desire for resource extraction and increased dependence on oil lurks the corrosive desacralization of old-world traditions. As technology creeps further toward the heart of society, it will continue to displace previous cultural ways of life, ourselves instead bending knee at a more subtle, unassuming altar of technology.

Chapter 3: The Possibility of Politics in Modernity

"Electric circuitry has overthrown the regime of "Time" and "Space" and pours upon us instantly and continuously the concerns of all other men. It has re-constituted dialogue on a global scale. Its message is Total Change, ending psychic, social, economic, and political parochialism. The old civic, state, and national groupings have become unworkable. Nothing can be further from the spirit of the new technology than "a place for everything and everything in its place." You can't go home again."

- Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage*[64]

Halfway through the 20th century, something unprecedented and remarkable happened, forever rewiring man's relationship to his world. In 1957, humanity *saw* itself – not simply as reflection or through thought, but literally, in a photograph, as a blue-green spherical orb pressed against an endless backdrop of stars, planets, worlds, and galaxies. In an instant, the Archimedean point through which man had come to know his world shifted seismically, and perspective underwent a spatial revolution unlike any before.[65] At once, man was made both infinitesimally small and unquestionably certain. No longer was humankind earthbound, tethered to the world it once knew; instead, man understood his liberation from Planet Earth and its gravity lay in emerging technologies capable of conquering time and space. Orbited by *Sputnik 1*, Earth became something other than man's home – and man became worldless.[66]

Yet, remarkable as it was to gaze into the infinite blackness suspending Planet Earth, this new groundlessness demanded new understandings, new ways of rethinking the freshly outdated relations between man and his surroundings. In short, this new worldlessness required a new approach. Such is Hannah Arendt's stated aim in *The Human Condition*. Similarly, thinking

[64] Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects,* comp. Jerome Agel (New York: Bantam Books, 1967) 16.
[65] Schmitt, Carl, *Land and Sea: A World-Historical Meditation*, Edited by Russell A. Berman and Samuel Garrett Zeitlin (Candor, NY: Telos Press Publishing, 2015) 7-10.
[66] Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 1-6.

through the newness of modernity – its trappings, qualities, characteristics, and potentialities – also gave rise to two other notable thinkers I would like to put in conversation with Arendt throughout this chapter: Herbert Marcuse and Michel Foucault. I believe through a comparative analysis of these three thinkers – in addition to what has been discussed thus far – we can finally begin to shine light on what "politics" might look like in the technological age.

Throughout this chapter, I would like to reintroduce the centrality of dasein back into our analysis, resituating the being that questions Being once again at the heart of our investigation. By introducing Hannah Arendt's *vita activa* to our discussion thus far on the technological modern age, I believe that now, having cast light on the historical circumstance of modern man, we can begin to "work outwards," so to speak, and explore the prospects for political action in the deeply technological world we are exploring. Accordingly, I would like to deepen, or at least carry forward, the interpretation of man and the technological age proffered by Arendt in *The Human Condition*. To this end, I begin by examining Arendt's claim, accepting the premise that in order for "politics" to occur, specific conditions must first pertain.[67] As such, realms of conduct within which politics can occur must be delineated. Within this section, I will offer a brief analysis of Arendt's realms of conduct, the rise of the social, and the subsequent "folding-in" of the public into the private. Developing this analysis, I contend further that the Internet, as an appendage of technology and its rationality, contains within it an ever-expanding drive to envelop all aspects of life. Resulting from this is the further indistinguishability of the public from the private, and thus a world constituted primarily of the social.

Following this analysis, I turn to Herbert Marcuse, intellectual darling of the New Left's cultural and philosophical revolution during the 60's. I believe Marcuse is particularly interesting

[67] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 23.

to juxtapose with Arendt because Marcuse's understanding of politics and its relation to technology is rife with an optimism otherwise absent in Arendt. Further, Marcuse is a useful foil because he eloquently articulates a whole host of techno-optimism common to modern political discourse. The arguments Marcuse articulates most clearly ultimately buttress a similar mantra found commonly in the modern tech world, expressed less clearly by S&T giants like Elon Musk[68] and Mark Zuckerberg:[69] technology has unlocked endless potential for recreating our world. Thus, in a sense, I look to Marcuse because Marcuse's *An Essay on Human Liberation* stakes out a particularly well-articulated, yet still radical, position regarding the emancipatory potentiality of technology in the modern age – one that dramatically re-envisions technology and its affective jurisdiction in mass society. In fulfilling this role and "moving the goalpost," Marcuse offers us another route through which to envision the modern age contra Heidegger and Arendt, among other thinkers I source. However, while I sympathize with and am intrigued by Marcuse's intent to render technology servant of socialism, I ultimately disagree with the premise of Marcuse's technological solution. In the latter part of this section, I argue that Marcuse's utopic freedom results from a fundamental misunderstanding of man's relationship to technology, and thus offers no viable way forward for Arendtian politics.

At this point, we are thrown back to Arendt's discontent with the possibility of politics in modern mass society. Here, contra Marcuse, I turn to Michel Foucault as proposing a separate, competing – and compelling – vision of modernity *as it is, not as it could be*.[70] I believe that Foucault's analysis offers us a clearer lens through which to understand the modern social and

[68] Musk, Elon, "Making Humans a Multi-Planetary Species," *New Space* 5, no. 2 (2017): 46-61.
[69] Shinal, John. "Mark Zuckerberg: more technology can fix U.S. school system."
[70] I am certainly aware of the fundamental difference between Foucault's lectures and Marcuse's *Essay on Liberation*, namely that Marcuse's text is ambitious in its *prescriptive* elements, and that Foucault's lectures are prescient in their *descriptive* qualities. However, in true Arendtian fashion, I propose here that we first understand the circumstances contemporaneous with our ambitions for a better world in order to evaluate their viability, rather than simply working backwards from the end we desire.

thus the possibility of politics. Foucault's thinking allows us to better understand mass society and the way in which disparate and disjunct fields of power organize, surveil and interrogate, in the name of discipline, efficiency, and expediency. Accepting and utilizing Foucault's description of "governmentality" and the heterogeneous societal techniques as those that mold, shape, conditioning conduct, I finally circle back to Arendt. I conclude that although Arendt's spatial divisions are no longer possible, Arendtian politics – existing as an imminent potentiality in all human beings – *are still possible.* However, in order to actualize them, we must rethink the meaning of politics and political space in modernity.

In the opening pages of *The Human Condition*, Arendt posits two fundamental and interrelated points: first, human essence cannot be known by anything less than a god.[71] [72] The corollary of this, and the second point, is that our criterion for coming to know human beings should therefore work backwards, derived from their observable modes of being-in-the-world. Thus, Arendt divides man into three constituent components based on his natural proclivities toward activity. Parsing Marx's understanding of the *vita laborans*, Arendt tells us that human activity, as we understand it, actually has three distinct instantiations: labor, work, and action.[73] Labor consists in the necessary activities humans engage in to subsist; work is the activity of changing man's environment so as to make the world liveable; action is the *appearance* of oneself, a shining forth of something uniquely human, transcendent and potentially infinite.[74] In Arendt's formulation, action has no succinctly determined end, nor does it aim at one. Through action, man's being-in-the-world extends boundlessly beyond the graspable framework of the

[71] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 10.
[72] "The moment we say "who" someone is, our vocabulary leads us astray into saying "what" he is; we get entangled in a deception of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or "character" in the old meaning of the word, with the results that his specific uniqueness escapes us." P.181.
[73] Arendt, *The Human Condition, 7.*
[74] Ibid., 9.

present, "forc[ing] open all limitations and cut[ting] across all boundaries."[75] And regardless of circumstance, one who acts contains in themselves a natality and ability to create something truly new. In this limitlessness, one can sow seeds to alter the course of constellations. As such, it is through action that one's influence can reverberate through hallways of history, shaking the intangible webs of human interrelation and exemplifying the plurality of mankind's being-in-the-world. Action is man's writing of history. Yet, importantly, this uniquely revelatory character of action cannot be predetermined or choreographed: the spontaneity of man is inherent to the human condition.

Intimately connected to these modes of being-in-the-world are the regions in which their activities take place. Accordingly, by way of revisiting ancient Greek philosophy, Arendt dedicates the first portion of *The Human Condition* to the rise of modern mass society and its malaise by first differentiating spaces of conduct, and second, conducts proper to human beings – and how this relation of location and activity can be re-understood in the modern age. Beginning with Ancient Greece and Rome, Arendt returns to the fundamental societal division between polis and household. In antiquity, Arendt contends, societies clearly demarcated the differences between public and private. Public, or *polis*, was the realm of the political, and as such the place of *appearance*.[76] In the polis, politics were ubiquitous simply because for Arendt, politics consist in "being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves," thereby representing, within a democratic state, a vibrant multiplicity of viewpoints.[77] This comment deserves pause – key to this understanding of Arendtian politics is that politics need not necessarily approximate the Good, but that public deliberation *itself*, undertaken by members of the polis in the public, allows

[75] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 190
[76] Ibid., 28-29.
[77] Ibid., 50.

for individuals to *act and appear,* engage democratically and express agency toward their chosen end. Situated opposite the public realm, Arendt recalls the realm of the private, or the *oikos.* In antiquity, the *oikos* was dedicated exclusively and without exception to household organization, management, and necessity. Here, Arendt even traces the etymological root of "private" to demonstrate that originally, "privacy" was conceived of in such diametrical opposition to the public that the very word itself is derivative, meaning "de-privation," or a denial of the political obligation of man to the public sphere.[78] [79]

Further, Arendt writes that antiquity's demarcation between public and private and their proper modes of activity were not only central to societal organization, but also widely understood to be "self-evident and axiomatic."[80] Arendt demonstrates this clearly with Aristotle's *Politics*, remarking that the exposition of the household offers a study of the private, which is defined by necessity and biological mastery. As Aristotle himself then states, this private realm of the household – comprised of management and necessity – must remain private, not to be confused with the public realm. The polis is where politics take place; the private is for organizing personal affairs. Importantly, this is not to say that the household, or the "pre-political" realm of the private is unimportant – rather, it is to assert that mastering the necessities of the household is the very condition upon which the public sphere plays host to free, political action.[81] In other words, it is because the household affords dictatorship over biological necessity that the polis can enable men to *act* democratically and politically.

This brings us, then, to modernity. In the modern age, Arendt explains, the once clear line dividing public and private has blurred. In Section 6, "The Rise of the Social," Arendt traces the

[78] Of course, here I use the term "man" literally.
[79] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 38.
[80] Ibid., 28.
[81] Ibid., 27-30.

development of a third sphere of conduct, which gradually occupies a widening middle ground in the Venn diagram between private and public. This new realm, wherein all are ruled by the depersonalized invisible judge and jury of bureaucracy, first materialized as a result of the Romantics – *à la* Rousseau, Goethe, and the like – who, spurred on by unrestrained passion, revolutionized philosophy and thereby society, spilling intimate affairs of private into the public. In this new sphere of conduct, man's primary mode of being is *vita laborans,* vacillating between labor and work and ultimately neglecting the human dimension of natality and action.[82] This co-penetration of public and private – exacerbated by an increasing emphasis on the capitalist pursuit of private property, the impartial rule of law, and the atomism of liberal faux-individuality – has created the defining modern location: the "social." In the social realm, behavior, rather than action, is man's performative activity; governance is regulated by a robotic, impersonal leviathan, reduced to an impartial "rule by none" style system.[83] Man's subsequent conformism stifles true individuality, marked by appearance, which was once cultivated by the public sphere. Thus, Arendt articulates the central question facing the modern paradigm: with the rise of the social and the diminution – the collapse – of the public into the private and vice versa, where are politics to take place? Which realm is left properly conducive to the appearance of man through action?

The rise of the social realm Arendt correctly identified in *The Human Condition* expands seemingly inexorably. The rise of the social, and the age of mass society that followed, has continued encroaching on both public and private, particularly with liberal ideology and its creeping global sprawl in the wake of the West's victory over communism. The "automatism in human affairs" proceeds, and our societal hyperfocus on efficiency has largely confined us to

[82] Arendt, *The Human Condition*., 43.
[83] Ibid., 40.

means-ends rationality, especially within our "political" discourse.[84] We have lost the conception of proper spatial conduct, and we see affairs meant for the private playing out in the public, and opposite, continuously. However, the person is political only insofar as the private is social. Resulting from these confusions, the private realm of necessity continues to shrink, increasingly made comfortable by technological aids; and what were once shadowed affairs of privacy are increasingly illuminated and subjected to the public eye. Meanwhile, public "politics," which now typically mean administrative governance, is increasingly characterized by national or international household management. At base, not only do we not have a proper conception of a public, we do not have a proper understanding of ourselves and the difference between necessity, instrumentality, and the "unique distinctness" of the human condition.[85]

Although I believe Arendt's prognosis was correct, I feel her diagnosis did not sufficiently credit the greater emergence of the essence of technology with the rise of the social. Thus, Arendt's account of the social, while otherwise helpful, now must be re-assessed in light of technology's unfolding. It seems patently clear now that the realm of the private recedes not because of an organic expansion of the social realm *proper,* but primarily because of the force with which the realm of the social, now thoroughly *technological*, eviscerates the distinction between public and private. Consider the most salient expression of the technological age: the Internet. With the rise of the Internet – a non-geographical, conceptual space wherein all things are represented and humans can re-create themselves – the social realm and mass society as its vanguard have permeated every facet of man's world. Through social media, man is simultaneously alone, isolated, atomized, and *with* millions of others if he so chooses. Yet at the same time, man is not *with* others such that he can appear and act, as this requires spatiality.

[84] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 43.
[85] Ibid., 207.

Through technology, we are both inextricably and endlessly connected, yet fully lacking the concrete conditions for Arendtian politics.

Through the internet, man recreates a virtual existence. And in this virtual existence, he is homogenized as binary code alongside all others, quantifiable and equalized in the purest sense. With the rise of the technological public affairs apparatus, even moreso than when Arendt wrote, current official governmental discourse consists in anticipatory pre-written lines and risk calculation. "Politics" is hardly considered the appearance of oneself in the public realm, but rather the making known of calculative deliberation and resource management, just as Arendt foresaw. And with the destructive technological enframing distinctive to the modern age, we are estranged from Being-as-such, uprooted and disconnected from our most essential relation as humans. Such is the age of mass *technological* society.

The Human Condition is partially notable for its non-prescriptive element. Beyond lamenting the loss of truly political action found in Ancient Greece and Rome, Arendt offers no comfort in the form a quick-fix or proper direction to re-route. The rise of technological mass society – *oikos* into *polis,* the expansion of the infrastructure for totalitarianism, and the victory of the *homo laborans* – is simply posed as the modern paradox. We, as political animals, exist, yet are only partially actualized; our potential is stifled, marked by configuring the public as a harshly anti-political, highly technologized realm. In brief, by consolidating absolute power over the social, technology has shifted our primary mode of questioning from "why and what" to "how."[86] With this, Arendt then leaves us to contemplate: *where* next?

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[86] Arendt, *The Human Condition, 296.*

Picking up on the same undeniable modern discontent as Arendt, Herbert Marcuse pens *An Essay on Liberation* in 1969, 12 years post-*Sputnik*. Revolution was palpable: during this time, the civil rights movement, anti-war protests, and a plethora of other progressive social movements were coalescing in the United States, slowly but surely reconfiguring the social and political landscape underfoot. However, in striking opposition to Arendt, Marcuse opens *An Essay on Liberation'*s introduction with a forceful endorsement of the emancipatory potential of modern technology. Here, it is perhaps useful to juxtapose *An Essay on Liberation* directly with *The Human Condition*'s prologue to demonstrate their differences. No longer does our philosophical subject treat technology and its interplanetary ambition with hesitance and suspicion. Quite the contrary – Marcuse asserts that technology is now the singular vehicle we must hang our hopes and dreams on.[87] No longer should we reflect on the worldlessness of man; the time is nigh for the world to reflect the endless potential of technological man. In Marcuse's view, with this boundless technological progress, our focus must shift from the "prevailing conditions and institutions" to the "utopian possibilities…inherent in the technical and technological forces of advanced capitalism and socialism."[88] In the fully technological social realm, the word "utopia" loses its unattainable or ephemeral character. In the technological age, all things can be recreated, including reality. Utopia, therefore, becomes simply a technological reimagining of our current reality.[89]

Despite Arendt and Marcuse's obvious differences, it is worth noting that they do, in fact, have in common two basic fundamental premises. First, they both believe that technology is not only restructuring the world man inhabits, but beyond that, that man himself is profoundly

[87] Marcuse, Herbert, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 2000) 3-6.
[88] Ibid., 4.
[89] Ibid.

reoriented as a result of this change. Arendt, for example, notes that the question of human nature is unanswerable, and suggests instead that we must understand ourselves as conditioned by all things we encounter. Therefore, as our world becomes increasingly technological, so does our condition. Marcuse, not dissimilarly, contends that moral imperatives, once established as norms, become a "biological" component of human beings.[90] Accordingly, unfettered techno-capitalism in the form of consumerism and rampant commodification have created a "second nature of man," and we are profoundly altered in response to our condition.[91] Marcuse's objective, which we will arrive at shortly, will eventually be to pry apart capitalism and technology in hopes of eradicating the former and liberating the latter.

Second, Arendt and Marcuse also agree that in a world so holistically given over to technology, we must rethink the signifiers of abstract notions we once held. For Marcuse, the understanding of "utopia" and "freedom" as that which is restricted in its traditional understanding need not be unachievable any longer; for Arendt, we have confused what we once understood to be "public" and "private." We must venture to re-understand and re-explore them *not as they were, but as they are.* In essence, both thinkers begin by stating technology has utterly and rapidly recreated both man and his world. Following this, their respective works focus on how to properly establish their new necessary relationship.

Marcuse's *An Essay on Liberation* provides an interesting case study following Arendt because Marcuse finds confidence where Arendt finds caution. The relevant aspects of Marcuse's text are as follows: Marcuse begins by heralding a new age of potential equality. With contemporary scientific advances, we no longer need to toil tirelessly in abject conditions, shackled as wage slaves to corporate commodity culture. Thus, man can change his very nature,

[90] Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 11.
[91] Ibid.

"because technical progress has reached a stage in which reality no longer need be defined by the debilitating competition for social survival and advancement."[92] However, in order to do so, we must break with the techno-capitalist trajectory that repeatedly reifies and reasserts itself. By remodelling the infrastructure of man, we can disengage, Refuse the Establishment, and aim at a "radical transvaluation of values."[93] In essence, do we seek capitalist emancipation or human emancipation? By re-making the human we seek to emancipate, we can now achieve both.

After creating new horizons – or simply erasing the horizons altogether – Marcus argues that if society can internalize certain moral norms with unshakeable resolve, there might perhaps be, as was mentioned earlier, a "biological" basis for socialism. Importantly, Marcuse immediately qualifies this statement in a footnote, noting that by "biological," he means "inclinations, behavior patterns, and aspirations become vital needs which, if not satisfied, would cause dysfunction of the organism."[94] So, in other words, not *biologically* at all in the proper sense. However, this re-imagining of the specific meaning of Greek prefix *bio-* and suffix *-logos* is consistent with Marcuse's approach to both language and meaning in *An Essay on Liberation*; with technology, all things can be set upon and re-imagined as we wish.

If society internalizes virtuous norms, Marcuse adds, thus integrating them into the "biology" of the societal unit, our subsistence of exploitation, excess, and brute capitalism will quickly become antithetical to our new consciousness. To carry forward the metaphor, capitalism, and its central tenets, would become a virus in the social body. Thus, our collective consciousness would yearn once more for the "open space of the human existence" and the ineradicable human desire for freedom, currently suppressed by the stultifying opiate of capitalist

[92] Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 4.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., 10.

comforts, would be set loose.[95] As this "new sensibility" takes hold, our collective societal *Geist* grapples with and regains control of its rudders, rerouting society toward a new reality, with more equitable conditions, a new language, and new values.[96] Marcuse then explores the ways in which this fundamental change may be aestheticized, noting the potential groups that might carry with them the seeds of newness – students, civil rights activists, anti-war demonstrators. In the concluding chapters of *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse expands on his central tenets, basically arguing further that the emancipation of man requires severing the psychological and social reliance on capitalism in favor of new lexicons, new biologies, and a new reality.

Marcuse's work is littered with admissions of the fantastical nature of his proposition. For example, on page 21, he notes that this new society would require "men who would speak a different language, have different gestures, *follow different impulses*."[97] [98] Or, that science and technology must be "[r]eleased from their service in the cause of exploitation,… mobilized for the global elimination of poverty and toil."[99] This theme of re-creation and the plasticity of self reoccurs constantly throughout Marcuse's essay. Marcuse sums up the paradox that rests at the very heart of his work as such:

> "For freedom indeed depends largely on technical progress, on the advancement of science. But this fact easily obscures the central pre-condition: in order to become vehicles of freedom, science and technology would have to change their present directions and goals; they would have to be reconstructed in accord with a new sensibility – the demands of the life instincts." [100]

In essence, Marcuse requires technology, and science as its conduit, to function in a specific way – but only to a point. Once the re-organization and re-writing of the world is possible, technology

[95] Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation,* 18.
[96] Ibid., 33.
[97] My own emphasis added.
[98] Ibid., 21
[99] Ibid., 23.
[100] Ibid., 19.

must cease enframing wholesale, and be reined in, re-directed to be used only for the communal good. In other words, at the point when we can utilize technology to be free, technology must become something *other than technology*.

My objective here is not to diminish Marcuse's project, which is admirable and guided by sincere principles. However, I believe the path Marcuse advocates is both dangerous and unrealistic. In a way, Marcuse is *precisely* the unthinking scientist Arendt sees as worldless. Words, biology – these things have no established meaning in a world that technology can recreate. Marcuse's Archimedean point is at once everywhere and nowhere. As a precondition to our emancipation, Marcuse needs technology to have achieved, on a global scale, the potentiality for a massive restructuring of the means of production and the subsequent re-distribution of goods. Surely, the fact that we live in a world where, since the time of Marcuse's writing, the wealth gap has *exponentially* increased is not a debilitating rebuttal to the practicality of Marcuse's thought. Yet, the fact that the United States, arguably the most technologically advanced society in the modern age, has living in it at the same time Jeff Bezos, owner of techno-empire Amazon and worth over $100 *billion* dollars, and Shane Boyle, who died after a crowdfunding campaign for insulin came $50 short, should give us pause. [101] [102] Perhaps technology is *not* a neutral medium through which we can find liberation, or that we can wrest from the arsenal of capitalism. At the very least, we should be skeptical of Marcuse's technological endorsements.

The unspoken premise in *An Essay on Liberation* is that technology, with all of its power to restructure, *can ultimately change its own essence.* Marcuse's argument is contingent on

[101] Caroline Cakebread, "Thanks to Thanksgiving shoppers, Jeff Bezos is now the world's only living $100-billion man," Yahoo! Finance, November 28, 2017.
[102] "American Dies After Coming up $50 Short for Insulin," The Intellectualist, November 24, 2017.

humankind using technology until the point where we determine we can, in fact, realize utopia. At this point, we fundamentally re-route our sensibilities and employ technology toward a different end. Marcuse's fundamental flaw, as Arendt foresaw in her writings, is thinking that we control technology rather than the other way around. Marcuse seems to overlook entirely the fact that we are bound up in an ever-increasing technological world. At this point, the drive to enframe, compartmentalize, quantify, categorize, and utilize is built into the very mechanisms, structures, and institutions we use to define the parameters of our being. Technology cannot be used against itself to recreate itself as something different – this only intensifies its prominence. If Marcuse's central premise requires technology to immediately stop *being technological*, everything that follows is moot. If technology is technology in aiding to recreate reality, yet must cease being technological once that reality is actualized, the very fabric of Marcuse's – and the modern techno-sycophant's – new reality evaporates.

This is not to say that all effects or potentialities of technology are necessarily deleterious. Of course, I would be remiss to ignore the immense benefits technology can and has provided to our society and others. This is not the goal of my work. However, it is quite another thing to argue that science and technology hold the keys to "freedom" in the new world it creates for us. We are already given over to technology – the conditions have existed for many, many years and yet we have not had meaningful wealth or resource redistribution on a global scale. One must recognize that if we used nuclear energy for fueling nations rather than leveling them, the *ethos* that compelled us to split the atom still motivates both tasks in the first place. While there are qualitative differences in the outcome, the inevitability of technology actualizing its singularly-focused potentiality cannot easily be corralled. As we mentioned, technology and its scientists have no interest in "what" or "why," only "how." If we are speaking seriously, we

must recognize that while Marcuse's intentions are noble, his methods are misguided. If Marcuse truly wishes to use technology to re-imagine not only human beings, but technology itself, his utopian discussion is unfortunately doomed. We cannot endorse endless technological development as a way past the modern social – boundless technological advancement brought with it the realm of the social and confusion of self in the first place.

What, then, does Marcuse's failed idyllic project show us with regards to Arendt's understanding of modernity? I believe the most important takeaway in Marcuse's shortcoming is not that we should expect something different of technology but rather that we must think, in concrete terms, about the conditions and parameters that shape our current paradigm. In a word, we must understand how best to situate ourselves within technological modernity such that we may *act* within mass society. Marcuse can be instructive insofar as he perhaps outlines the resource equity that would characterize an idealized community, but if his means of achieving this end are through further embracing technology, his political prescription is, from the outset, entirely compromised. As we have shown, technological politics *cannot* breathe life into the deflated public or separate out the minimal, bare distinctions between the private and public. Thus, we must return to Arendt's Sisyphean tasking: we must rethink modernity.

If Marcuse's central failing was misunderstanding man's relationship to technology, and thus the multiplicity of techniques by which modernity is configured and confined, it seems to me we must begin again, starting over by establishing our basis in contemporary society, within Arendt's mass society. If we ever seek to overcome, reorganize, or embrace the social, we must first feel our way along its boundaries. To this end, we must return to our foundation, return to Arendt, and attempt a new way forward, first finding the light that allows us to do so.

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In *The Subject and Power*, Michel Foucault writes: "What has been the goal of my work during the last twenty years…. has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects."[103] As such, Foucault's central concerns hinge on developing a study of the modes and methods by which the human subject is objectified and, in a sense, produced. Through these investigations, Foucault sought to uncover the deeply complicated and multi-faceted relationships of power, paying particular attention to how they manifest themselves through various heterogeneous sites of domination, subjugation, repression, and, in the modern era, discipline and regulated freedom. For our purposes, we need only look to Foucault for his method of analyzing power, his conception of *governmentality,* and his excavation of the disciplinary tactics and techniques deployed in modernity.

While initially Foucault and Arendt might appear at odds, there are, once again, two fundamental premises accepted by both thinkers that allow fruitful comparison. First, Arendt and Foucault both assert that the modern subject – the human subject – must be understood relational to that which it interacts with, acts on, and is acted upon by. For Arendt, this takes the form of humans being "conditioned" by everything they experience; for Foucault, this amounts to the subject's actualization in the interplay between freedom and relationships of power extant in localized institutions.[104] Second, both agree that political institutions in the modern arena are, in broad terms, increasingly rational, effectively centralizing and consolidating in order to act as better conduits for particular configurations of power dynamics. Moreover, this modern shift in the responsibility and capacity of the state, which both thinkers see as central to the modern era, is understood to be not unilateral but reciprocal between the state and citizen. For Arendt, both

[103] Foucault, Michel, *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 2002) 327.
[104] Ibid., 331.

man and the government he populates are responsible for the predominance of the *vita laborans* in mass society.[105] For Foucault, the birth of governmentality – that is, the entirely new deployment of techniques once focused on salvation, rerouted toward maintenance and upkeep of the body and population – is also the result of a simultaneous shift in both the *polis* and *oikos*.[106] In other words, both Arendt and Foucault inquire into what Arendt understands as modern mass society. We may now return to where we began: with Arendt, with the social, and with the possibility of politics.

In Foucault's 1977-78 lectures, he carefully traces the shift from "pastoral" governance toward what he terms "governmentality."[107] Pastoral power, Foucault dictates, was a Christian model of governance preoccupied with guiding souls of individuals and shepherding "the flock." In practice, this form of power allowed "shepherds" responsibility for the very salvation of their subjects. This onus of salvation in turn made the state privy to the deepest secrets and most minute of details regarding the behaviour – specifically the deviancies – of individuals. However, Foucault notes that the turn of the modern era aligns with a re-orientation of these power relations.[108] The gradual deployment of an entirely new host of techniques and tactics occurred around when the authority of the church eroded and state centralization arose, redirecting governments' focus from saving souls toward the "art of governing," – or, as Foucault coins it, "governmentality."[109] Governmentality, motivated by concerns of population, territory, and political economy, forces us to rethink the one-dimensional, hierarchical conception of power; it elucidates that, unlike sovereign power of kings, power in modernity is

[105] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 45.
[106] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population Lectures at the College De France, 1977-78,* ed. Francois Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, and Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 108-109.
[107] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 109.
[108] Ibid., 89.
[109] Ibid., 89, 109.

de-centralized and widely dispersed, circulating through different institutions and constantly reifying itself into truth discourses and procedures.[110] Thus, rather than the visceral and ostentatious punishment of gory excess during the Middle Ages, power is primarily expressed in modernity through discipline.[111] And in a disciplined society, man's primary mode of being is *behaving*. Here, again, Foucault and Arendt are not only in direct conversation, but in agreement.

In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault further explores the circulation of this power in modernity, specifically looking to illuminate the structures through which disciplinary practices are communicated. For Foucault, the central and "indefinitely generalizable" disciplinary model found throughout modern society is Jeremy Bentham's panopticon.[112] The panopticon is, in essence, a prism-shaped prison, wherein each prisoner is shackled in an open-air cell. In the center of the prism stands a guard-tower; the prisoners are unable to communicate with other prisoners or with the central figure in the tower. Crucially, at no time are the prisoners entirely certain whether they are being watched or not; it is the *threat* of surveillance that generates regulated behavior, not necessarily surveillance itself. With the weapon of observation looming, the prisoner defers to obeying established rules, which, of course, amount to modes of conduct approved by superior, authoritative figures. Subtly, the prisoner is thereby conditioned, and the panopticon's potential surveillance exerts profound influence on the likelihood of the prisoner acting out of order. Expanding on this process, Foucault reasons that panopticon-like apparatuses and arrangements, repeated *ad infinitum* throughout society, are one of several mechanisms that work to establish the norms and truths and directly inform our behavior.[113] Whether we are conscious of it or not, mechanisms of surveillance, perpetual visibility, and constant monitoring

[110] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 108-110.
[111] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 170-174.
[112] Ibid., 216.
[113] Ibid.,, 201-204.

exert unrecognized influence on what we can now consider, at best, a tenuous conception of "free" action. Instead, power and the institutions through which it is momentarily ensnared and expressed work to establish the margins of acceptability. Our "free" decisions and actions are largely curtailed as a result of the way power conditions the possibility of possibility.

What Marcuse saw as the emancipatory potential of technology and its instruments, Foucault rightly identifies as belonging to an immensely intricate web of disciplinary mechanisms that ultimately invigilate our conduct for the sake of obedience. This is the *true* nature of technology in the unthinking mass society – in man's worldless world, in hyper-scientific mass society, wherein all behavior must ultimately appeal to reason(s) as the unspoken normative measure of Good, *technology becomes, in its very essence, almost always synonymous with power*. In a hypertechnological society, power and technological rationality circulate along the same societal veins. Technology and power, both productive of boundaries of thought, discourse, behavior, and norms in mass society, become nearly undifferentiated. Foucault is indispensable because he, unlike Marcuse, encourages us to think with clarity the ways in which technopower establishes parameters of conduct within society – surreptitiously and, oftentimes, even without intent.[114] We are trampled underfoot of the seemingly inexorable march toward technological "innovation" and "progress" as technology, the ontology of our age, grafts itself

[114] Timothy Rayner goes to lengths, against the interpretation of Hubert Dreyfus in his technopower article, to argue that the nexus wherein Foucault's conception of power intersects and overlaps Heidegger's understanding of technology must be further clarified by Dreyfus because Heidegger's conception of power differs from Foucault's (Heidegger's understanding is more comparable to Nietzsche's self-affirming will to mastery. Conversely, for Foucault, power is shorthand for networks of strategic relations, and is the over-all effect of a complex strategical situation in a particular society). I see these both as indifferent to my point. In clearest terms, I am drawing from both independently. From Heidegger, I am borrowing his conception of the essence of technology as being the fundamental ontological comportment of dasein toward its world, primarily Being itself as a potentiality; from Foucault, I am adopting the notion of power as that which delimits fields of possibility. Thus, in my estimation, the two terms remain fully compatible given they operate on different levels – Heidegger in fundamental ontology, Foucault somewhat in the obverse of how, where, and why certain phenomena materializes.

onto and aligns with the modern circulation of power. [115] Not only are the citizens in mass society who are surveiled, spied on, and monitored through metadata collection conditioned *en masse* – those that hold the nets catching information are also swept up in the flood. Foucault helps us analyze fields of technopower that are reified and imposed on us to corral the conditions of possibility. Although it was initially the prison systems, army barracks, and organization of mundane, daily religious tasks that began monitoring and disciplining bodily conduct, it is through the ever-expanding realm of the Internet – as disciple of the social realm – that our newest, now *aspatial,* panopticon claims further jurisdiction over the everyday action of citizens. It was during the plague that the government first became responsible for neatly partitioning cities, establishing rules and curfews to limit access to the public, but it is now our preoccupation with the realm of the technological social that precludes us from understanding and engaging with what public realm we have left.[116]

Adopting Foucault's methodology, we can more fully understand not only technology, but also its modalities and relations, where and how it surfaces as instrument or product, and the way it alters thinking and being-in-the-world. We can begin to assess our world and the inherently technological discourses of truth that privilege and incentivize certain conducts of productivity and being. And, importantly, with a parallel reading of Arendt, we realize that despite these impositions, our capacity to act is never gone, only diminished by circumstance. We are worldless only insofar as we are unthinking and unquestioning about our modern world – our *technological* world.

To conclude – after having examined Arendt, Marcuse, and Foucault, it is only now that we may begin to elucidate possible solutions to actualize Arendtian politics in the modern

[115] George Grant, *Technology and Justice* (Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Ltd., 1986) 32.
[116] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 205.

technological social. It seems clear that the spatial divisions Arendt posed are irretrievable in the modern age, specifically with the interconnectedness of the Internet. Yet, we cannot in good conscience say that we have *no* public or private, just that we have to once again conceptualize of our public as places wherein we can interact, speak and be heard. Yes, we may *utilize* the social, and Internet, as a medium for recreating the conditions of appearance and politics in our physical world, but we should be cautious, intending only to *transcend* the social, organize, and allow ourselves to appear in properly public spaces. The first step toward rehabilitating our understanding of public space is to reaffirm politics in the Arendtian sense: as individuals appearing in public space. We must reject that notion that politics is a series of technocratic, institutionalized processes reserved for parliamentary bodies. Contra the popular modern political conception, this means modern politics cannot be conceived of as exclusive to "political" institutions. Given the nature of pre-meditated bureaucratic political discourse within ordained political institutions, the possibility of politics has already been fundamentally given over to technology; we must now question how – or if – these institutions can be rehabilitated.

Opposite Marcuse, Foucault and Arendt allow us to understand that our liberation is not found within a utopian, technological expression of politics, but rather, that politics in modernity should be re-understood as the appearance of the self. And taken with Foucault, we learn that in order to appear politically in the technological modern public, one must defy and disrupt the unchallenged circulation of technological rationality and technological modes of being-in-the-world *within physically public spaces*. We must utilize what Arendt identified as "action" – our inalienable and spontaneous potential to *appear* – in order to disrupt the normalcy and pervasiveness of technological being, to expose and separate technopower into its constituent elements. Action will inevitably take place *against* the technological backdrop of modernity, and

thus the normalizing framework asserted by relations of technopower; any overcoming of the *homo laborans* entails a leap beyond firmly entrenched technological thinking. All else – especially managerialism masquerading as politics, seeking to discourage true, disruptive action – is, as Rancière understood, "police," bent on containing antagonistic political action while attempting to give the impression politics are taking place.[117] Ultimately, the objective must be to resist and expose the contemporary discourse of politics as fundamentally technological; we must once again allow humanness to take place on grounds of plurality and possibility, rather than under the weight of calculation. We must resist and displace the modern technorational understanding of both politics and Being.

Following Arendt, we should turn to Foucault. His method and thinking allows us to examine modernity with more depth and clarity than Marcuse and the modern technocrats are willing to grant. Foucault understands that capitalism, while undoubtedly foundational to the modern age, is only a singular matrix among many other complex domains through which technopower circulates and ultimately conditions behavior, conduct, and engagement. This is why Marcuse's emancipation of technology fundamentally misapprehends the relationship of man to technology: we cannot escape technology's grasp, especially if we concede further ground to it. While Marcuse is confined to a neo-Marxist conception of man constructed through material conditions, both Arendt and Foucault expand our conception of man to allow for an understanding of the modern human as conditioned and subjected to its environments, governmental and otherwise, characterized by a plurality of relationships acting both on and through the subject. We can never find liberation through the wholesale embrace of technology,

[117] Rancière, Jacques, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) 28-30.

as Marcuse et al suggest. Nor should we try. Instead, we should attempt to revitalize the human by understanding the ways in which technology in modernity impedes our inherently non-rational capacity to step beyond labor and means-ends relations. If we are so bold as to venture toward re-understanding our world in this way, we necessarily open the possibility of reshaping it.

Chapter 4: The Problem with Public Affairs: Idle "Political" Talk

"Bureaucracy develops more perfectly the more it is "dehumanized," the more it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation."

- Max Weber, *On Bureaucracy*[118]

As I have argued thus far, the spatial and material composition of the modern world has been dramatically reconfigured. This reconfiguration, I have argued further, is a direct result of technology's ever-expanding influence in the modern age. Following Heidegger et al, then, I have sought to outline the correlate to this new world: the unprecedented alteration of human understanding, and thereby of the relational comportments we use to navigate our newly globalized perceptions. While outlining these changes in understanding, I have contended that perhaps most saliently, our contemporary age is defined by the almost unimaginable insight technology affords us into the micro-specificities of others' lives – whether this information is willingly disclosed or captured by surreptitious means. As a simultaneous function of the techniques and disciplinary mechanisms in the Western world, operating in line with the overt and implicit requisitions of technological enframing and thinking, technopower, I contend, has become the uniquely modern horizon against which thought, action, and most worryingly, our common conception of politics take place. My final task, then, to be carried out in this chapter will be to interrogate how technopower, in this case made manifest through governmental public affairs apparatuses, not only stifles but, in fact, *paves over* the possibility for Arendtian politics.

In what follows, I aim to develop further how and why institutional politics – and political institutions – have become predominantly managerial and expressly technological. As my primary site of investigation, I take the official channels of governmental communication and

[118] Weber, Max, *The Essential Weber*, ed. by Sam Whimster (New York: New York: Routledge, 2004) 249.

discourse. More specifically, this chapter focuses on the bureaucratic organization and function of governmental public relations as one phenomena particularly emblematic of a much larger issue of technological "politics." This pivot on my part towards studying a *particular* phenomenon rather than remaining at a more abstract philosophical level might seem arbitrary. Yet, it is my belief that the immense communications apparatus utilized by contemporary liberal democracies, alongside the always-available communications platforms offered to citizens alike, is idiosyncratic and worthy of serious consideration in our increasingly digital age. Accordingly, I will begin by clarifying terms relevant to this inquiry, building on the previous chapter's usage of Arendt's spatial divisions, and developing the Arendtian conception of "public." This section will focus primarily on differentiating public from publicness, a recent development made possible with the advent of social networking technologies. Following this, I will attempt a rough sketch of the structure, scope, and techniques of the communications apparatus as it is deployed and utilized by the Canadian Government. Here, I will interrogate the functions and effects of the bureaucratic, ostensibly non-partisan communications structure by examining the federal government's use of products such as news releases, media advisories, backgrounders, and so forth. I suggest that deeper examination of the term and field of "communications" reveals a close relationship with the art of obfuscation than clarification, ensuring the glass is clear enough to discern shapes but opaque enough to require assistance for details. Further, in my estimation, the communications apparatus is the manifestation of technological rationality in union with the instantaneous distribution allowed by technological and digital networks. Both the rationale and function of the communications apparatus are unquestionably deferent to technological rationality, efficiency, and expediency.

Following these discussions of public and governmental public affairs, I revisit Heidegger's conception of "idle talk" and Carl Schmitt's perennial critique of liberal democracies, elucidating how the communications apparatus fits neatly into these criticisms.[119] Lastly, I suggest a counterbalance by adding nuance to the more general discussion on public affairs, the public relations apparatus, and the uncertain political possibility of disrupting technopower.

To begin, then, we return briefly to Arendt. As was discussed in the chapter prior, one of Arendt's many great insights was the historically-minded argument regarding the modern division of physical space. One will recall that in *The Human Condition*, Arendt's argument begins, first and foremost, with modern pangs of alienation. In juxtaposition with the Greeks – and less so, but similarly the Romans – Arendt contends that the modern condition is characterized by largely banal and vacuous mass culture populating the realm of the "social." Thus, the social realm, Arendt tells us, is the outcome of affairs of the private having eroded and washed away the levee separating public and private. Now, in this new, Romantically-charged middle ground, the social realm unfolds and expands, driving public and private realms to the margins. Importantly, this is not to say the public and private are extinguished – only diminished, to be seen from a new, almost unrecognizable perspective. As a result, we moderns are left with a misunderstanding of the world we exist in, and, concomitantly, a confusion of self. Arendt concludes that we must then journey to re-discover the division of man relative to the spaces in which he is to act, aiming at revitalizing the intersection of human agency, a proper public space, the infinite potentiality of human freedom, and the ultimately enigmatic appearance of the self.

[119] I acknowledge here that Heidegger's explication of "idle talk" is not a criticism but the uncovering of the ontological structure of "talk" as a result of "being-in-the-world." However, in this circumstance, I aim to show that idle talk is precisely what the communications apparatus aims at, and thus I intend it as a critique.

Now, if we turn our focus toward the practical, material conditions of modernity, it becomes apparent that the public, even from when Arendt wrote, has shifted drastically. Such is the inertia of technological development. Currently, according to a 2016 Pew study, 94% of teenagers in the United States access the Internet via their phones daily – 24% identify as being online "almost constantly." [120] Moreover, 71% use more than one social media platform and, according to a 2014 survey by *Variety*, YouTube stars are more popular and influential than mainstream celebrities in the eyes of American teenagers.[121] In fact, social media celebrity has become such a whirlwind phenomenon that now, more than ever, children under the age of 18 are becoming exorbitantly wealthy through broadcasting seemingly mundane aspects of their life to *millions* of adoring fans. In many cases, amassing this "content" amounts to filming the majority of one's day to be hosted on a third-party website like YouTube or Instagram.

This is all to say that say that, in a technological and specifically digital age wherein one can broadcast themselves online without pause, we must take steps to draw a meaningful distinction between what is properly public from what *appears* public. Oftentimes, what appears public is, in its essence, only exemplifying a specific and necessary quality of *being public* – "publicness," or "publicity." Here, by publicness, I mean the possibility of *being seen* by a community of people. Thus, we see that the visual dimension of the Internet is public *only in the qualified sense*, meaning that it exemplifies publicness. It can be seen, and thus, in a mitigated capacity has begun entering the public domain. However, this visibility does not carry with it the possibility of reciprocal and spontaneous speech and action. This is of the utmost importance:

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[120] Lenhart, Amanda, *Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015*, Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. April 08, 2015, Accessed January 28, 2018, http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/09/teens-social-media-technology-2015/.

[121] Ault, Susanne. *Survey: YouTube Stars More Popular Than Mainstream Celebs Among U.S. Teens*, Variety, August 05, 2014, Accessed January 28, 2018, http://variety.com/2014/digital/news/survey-youtube-stars-more-popular-than-mainstream-celebs-among-u-s-teens-1201275245/#!.

being public is *not* simply being seen. *Being public carries with it the possibility for reciprocity*. As such, being public requires the potentiality not just for discussion with language, but for multi-faceted discourse through more than just language. This, of course, is what is meant by Arendt and Heidegger's discussions of dasein*'s* potentiality for speech or "talk." And the real reason Arendt championed reciprocal speech in *The Human Condition* is because *real-time discourse* occurring in a proper public allows for – and encourages – the spontaneity and natality of human action. Certainly, we can see this attempt at discourse partially emulated in things like instant messaging or live-stream comments, but ultimately these platforms amount to deeply unsatisfying attempts at creating a real public.[122] In practice, these mechanisms of publicness are propped up to appear public, but inevitably fall short. While this may seem obvious, we must conclude that there cannot be a robust, vigorous public on the Internet. As we have seen, this arises directly from the difference between publicness and being public. Indeed, being public and publicness are distinct in the most important way: the potential for the appearance of human beings, and thus, the potential for political action.

The difference between publicness and being public brings us to our next point of inquiry: the "public" affairs apparatus and its purportedly political task of communicating on behalf of the Government of the day. In brief, we can say that the public affairs institution – finding its origins in longstanding traditions of influencing perception and legitimating given ideas and institutions – finds expression as the public face of the Canadian federal government. In this capacity, it is the responsibility of those working communications within the bureaucratic,

[122] When this diminished public stands in for communal public engagement, this no doubt impacts the atomization of youth – my own generation included. Several studies have concluded that time spent on in the Internet has begun to dull the capability for younger generations to contemplate, concentrate, and reflect, as well as read facial expressions and grasp subtle emotional cues (Small and Vorgan). It has also been shown that while Internet has not been conclusively linked to causing mental health issues in youth, it *does* exacerbate stress, decreased self-esteem, decreased emotional connection, attention fragmentation, erosion of empathy, and so forth (Fisher).

non-partisan public affairs infrastructure to liaise with ministers, prime ministers, and their respective representatives in order to craft "products" to be released on their behalf to Canadian citizens. This list of products includes media advisories, which notify news outlets of events or scheduled ministerial travel; news releases, which offer updates on governmental policy initiatives or summaries of diplomatic travels, engagements, and agreements; and statements, penned by communications staff working from a specific narrative direction on behalf of ministers to either condemn, congratulate, or commemorate. The list goes on.

As regards the process of distribution for these products, governmental public affairs typically have fairly rigorous internal approval chains, which often includes consultation with several different subject experts on teams inside and outside one's own department. Ultimately, by the time a product is published, depending on its profile, anywhere between five and thirty people have potentially edited the document. This, of course, will also include the respective minister's own office, which has significant vested interest in carefully articulated and choreographed publicity. This close relationship between the Government of the Day and its communications teams is particularly worrisome. Richard Nimijean, in *Domestic Brand Politics and the Modern Publicity State*, notes that the growth of the Canadian communications apparatus, alongside the pressure exerted from official bodies representing the government like the Privy Council Office (PCO), allows politicians to "use state resources not only to advance partisan agendas but also to link party to state and national image."[123] Nimijean remarks further that this has become more of an issue in recent years, specifically since the expansion of the Prime Minister's Office to further manage the bureaucracy – a maneuver which included the

[123] Nimijean, Richard, *Domestic Brand Politics and the Modern Publicity State*, ed. by Kirsten Kozolanka in *Publicity and the Canadian State: Critical Communication Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014) 188.

creation of a senior position at PCO to "control all public service communications."[124] Moreover, as Peter van Ham correctly argues, the real problem with such state-branding efforts is a greater shift toward a "postmodern world of images and influences," where citizens are considered first and foremost as "consumers" rather than part of an authentic public realm.[125] This centralization of power, in effect, married partisanship with an established and exceptionally intricate, well-oiled public affairs machine and its infrastructure. Ultimately, this institutional restructuring and reorientation has helped solidify governmental communications into little more than a governmental marketing firm.

The technological underpinnings of the highly meticulous and polished public relations machinery are glaringly obvious. Weber summarized succinctly: "the decisive reason for the advance of bureaucratic organization has always been its purely technical superiority over any other form of organization."[126] However, alongside the bureaucratic technological structure of the institutions, communications products themselves are also the result of deeply technological pathology. Communications products generally adhere to specific, uniform templates, with particular language, and, even if not overtly, serve a deeply ideological purpose to inculcate media and citizens, shaping issues of the day. The micromanaged and calculative risk assessment, carefully chosen messaging, and timing, frequency, and length of certain products is all tediously pre-meditated and deliberated upon. Even the sheer number of products released regularly by the Canadian Government – which, I might add, is astonishing – serves a particular function of over-representing, over-communicating. Each aspect of this highly efficient and exceedingly rational machine serves technological ends.

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[124] Nimijean, Richard, *Domestic Brand Politics and the Modern Publicity State*, 190.
[125] Ibid,. 173-174.
[126] Weber, Max, *The Essential Weber*, ed. by Sam Whimster (New York: New York: Routledge, 2004) 247.

Note here that none of this is meant hyperbolically, and I do not mean to suggest the Canadian government's public relations are simply propaganda pumped out with the world-creating force of Nietzschean willing. I am trying here only to nuance the common understanding of political discourse. To this end, it should also be acknowledged that public relations oftentimes are not even solely meant for the consideration of the government's own citizens or media, but as strategic maneuvering in the field of international relations. Further, this is by no means meant as a partisan critique, although one could certainly be leveled at any government and the specific ways they utilize public relations. Instead, my critique is of the system itself and the fact that an incredibly dense public affairs infrastructure exists independent of, and precedes any, government that controls it. While the government may change hands, each party stepping into power immediately inherits an immense network of communications potentiality. Certainly, the Liberal and Conservative governments have deployed different tactics in public relations that vary in degree and scope, but the fundamental purpose served by the communications apparatus remains singularly focused.

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Alongside the external-facing products bureaucrats manufacture on behalf of the government, there are also a plethora of internal products that serve to ensure the smooth and well-coordinated appearance of an exceedingly complex governmental structure. One such product are "media response lines" (MRLs). In anticipation of policy changes or announcements, the release of financial reports, or any other governmental activity that might garner media attention, preparatory governmental positions are reasoned, consulted, and systematically solidified, should any queries be submitted by media. In effect, these pre-written, anticipatory responses allow for a coordinated, stylistically and substantially coherent "position" within the

acceptable narrative of governmental top-down direction. These responses are all assessed and analyzed with an eye to risk management or any further inquiries as well, which allows the information to be stored in databases should any relevant issue arise at a later time. This compilation of data then further adds to a more expansive database of pre-determined responses.

Beyond anticipatory MRLs developed for media inquiries, these approved lines also serve a much larger function. In part, these lines are also utilized for any minister's binder when attending Question Period. This measure is of particular interest to our discussion, given the analysis of public spaces we have undertaken. By all accounts, Question Period should be one of many places ripe for truly political action. First, the members of Parliament are in particularly unique positions as regards both their representational responsibility towards their constituency, as well as their literal, spatial proximity to the highest official governmental position, the prime minister. Second, not only is Question Period public in an immediate sense – a gathering of citizens assembled to engage in potentially disruptive discourse – it is also public in the sense of publicness, since that it is available for viewing or listening from anyone with access to internet, television, or radio. Considering *all* of these conditions, we *should* hypothetically see the regular appearance of the human. Yet, we do not, and instead we see and hear virtue signaling, incoherent conversations, and partisan squabbling. I would suggest that this is because the plasticity and spontaneity Arendt requires for truly political action is intentionally curbed to avoid *precisely* the kind of plasticity and spontaneity Arendt requires for truly political action. As we have seen, ministers that hold cabinet positions and thus field the majority of criticism from opposition parties all have pre-meditated, arithmetically precise answers pre-written in line with an officially consistent narrative. As such, the acceptable discourse opens within parameters set by the government of the day. Potentially fruitful discussions are sidelined – or blatantly

suffocated – as ministers adhere to official lines offered by communications and public relations staff.[127] This ultimately gives the impression that ministers and members of parliament in Question Period "talk past" one another, which they are, in essence, doing. On one level, this creates an almost disorienting and tremendously frustrating spectacle of banter. On another level, the public relations management of official discourse represents much more pernicious aspects of a multi-pronged co-opting of democratic politics by technology: endless discourse and technological idle talk.

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In *Being and Time*, Heidegger determines that "talk," or the "meaningful articulation of understandability," is a uniquely important and fundamental feature of dasein's being-in-the-world.[128] Not only does talk illuminate the interconnected referential context by which the world is structured, it is also a mode of comportment through which meaning-wholes – or overarching referential contexts – are able to be meaningfully constructed. However, Heidegger notes that the predominant comportment of interaction – recall that talk is a potentiality and thus pre-verbal and pre-linguistic – is "idle talk." Idle talk is, most essentially, a form of comportment wherein "what is *spoken* is emphasized in place of what is *discussed*."[129] As Heidegger understands it, the function of idle talk is, intentionally or unintentionally, to obscure or distract from the "entity or entitial state of affairs discussed by talk."[130] This inauthentic comportment is notably characteristic of what Heidegger terms "the They," which is more-or-less dasein's unthinking,

[127] Note that these binders do not consist only of the bureaucratic MRLs and lines, but also of partisan staff party responsible for coordinating public relations on their behalf.
[128] Sembera, Richard, *Rephrasing Heidegger: A Companion to Being and Time* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2007) 253.
[129] Ibid., 236.
[130] Ibid.

collectivized mode of being wherein one abdicates their own being-unto-death in favor of mindless, unthought being-in-the-world.[131]

For fear of being banal, I hesitate to point out what appears obvious: the communications apparatus, particularly the more fundamental ways in which it solidifies parameters of acceptable discourse within institutional politics, traffics almost exclusively as incessant idle talk. The very purpose of the comprehensive pre-written talking points, as we have seen, is to control and limit conversation within an acceptable range. Moreover, the extensive reliance on meticulously crafted communications products serves a particular ideological function in avoiding controversial issues, while ostensibly presenting the movements of government – in a sense, acting publicly while undermining the public. Not only do these actions have dire consequences for the potential of politics as we have come to define them, but these ontic manifestations of idle talk also function primarily to gloss over the actual issues at hand – either through particular and precise narrative boundaries, or simply sheer volume of communication.[132]

Ultimately, these observations of the communications processes and practices in liberal democracies must lead us back to Carl Schmitt's most trenchant critique of liberalism. As was mentioned in the first chapter, liberal democracies such as Canada's are particularly amenable to technological ways of thinking and being, both ontologically and ontically. Accordingly, if we return to Carl Schmitt's pointedly anti-liberal writings in *The Concept of the Political*, we gain further insight into the relationships between technology, governmental public relations, and the expansive web of bureaucracy that supports and sustains constant communication. In *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt, during his excoriation of liberalism, notes that liberal tenets

[131] Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, Trans. by Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010) 126-130.
[132] Comparing Members of Parliament in 2017 to 2015, 15% more use Twitter, 10% more use Facebook, 56% more use Instagram, and 5% more use YouTube (Samara 2017).

ultimately undermine liberal political institutions and structures themselves. This liberal impotence, Schmitt argues, is rooted in an inability to commit to what he defines as the central "political" distinction – the "friend-enemy distinction." Now, we do not have to accept Schmitt's definition of politics in order to adopt his critique. We have already explored the ways in which human beings are, in their essence, unexplainable and capable of endless potentiality. Schmitt's rigid, dichotomous stricture of "friend" and "enemy," given our understanding of dasein as being infinitely unique, thus strikes one as unhelpfully reductive.[133] Yet, this need not matter if we adopt Schmitt's critique. In fact, Schmitt is correct to say that liberalism tends to undermine its potential for real political action by instead demoting all action to endless, circular discourse.[134] This rings painfully true. As we have seen, the marriage between technological rationality and technological capability has ushered in an age wherein democratic liberal states rely almost exclusively on a public relations apparatus for information presented to the general public. This is not even simply for responsive messaging. Rather, it is often is expressed actively, through assertive and choreographed publicity campaigns undertaken seemingly without pause, which work to confine and impose borders on the spontaneous potential of truly political action. Thus, Schmitt's critique has taken on another meaning in the hyper-technological age: the government's public affair apparatus, which includes their discourse in Question Period and other public events, is actively engaged in undermining the prospect of politics itself. And what we are left with is simply resource management and vacant speeches of moral indignation.

Darin Barney, in his article *Political Communication: Media, State, Public*, makes several contributions worth considering in this discussion. First, Barney notes that the

[133] Schmitt, Carl, *The Concept of the Political*, Trans. by George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 37, 57.
[134] We can here substitute Arendt's understanding of action.

relationship between publicness, the technologies of publicness, including social media, and disruptive political action is entirely relative to context and material circumstance. For example, what became the "Arab Spring" was aided directly by the democratization of voices afforded by technological instruments like social media. Importantly, this is not to say that technology and the diversification of voices was itself the catalyst for the Arab Spring, as the material conditions – autocratic dictatorships, squalid poverty, brutal micro-policing by the state – had been in place for years. Rather, Barney argues that, whether or not the "revolutions" are retroactively understood to be successful or not, the important takeaway from the Arab revolts is that technology's disruptive potential is contingent on the referential context and material conditions that pertain in locations where publicness becomes available. In other words, the more localized the public is, the more impetus there is to participate and therefore act spontaneously. During the Arab Spring, under the thumb of an autocrat, technological *tools* were instrumental in garnering support and organizing these massive protests. In these oppressive conditions, the opportunity to communicate broadly – an opportunity afforded by technological tools – expands the "horizon of publicity," and opens up political possibilities of moving beyond publicness to revitalize truly free *publics* where there were none before.[135] Put another way, in societies ruled by violence and terror, any piece of "underground information" can potentially have the effect of "breaking the camel's back," driving people to disrupt the prevailing order, to chart a new, uncertain course, and to engage *politically*.[136] Yet, the question we must ask is: can we universalize the democratizing effect of technological tools? Is social media a tool of democratization in the Western world under liberal democracies? Barney argues that in the Western liberal democratic

[135] Barney, Darin*, Publics without Politics: Surplus Publicity as Depoliticization*, ed. by Kirsten Kozolanka in *Publicity and the Canadian State: Critical Communication Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014) 72-79.
[136] Ibid., 79.

context, the type of publicity offered by the technological channels of social media does not in fact help democracy, but actually functions contra democratic interests. Furthermore, Barney argues that in liberal, capitalist democracies wherein emerging technologies and media platforms continue to proliferate, the unprecedented publicity offered to citizens actually has the opposite effect: depoliticization.[137]

Developing his critique of technology as depoliticizing in capitalist democracies, Barney also correctly notes that in Western nations, whenever there is a threat to the prevailing order – that is, a potential disruption of technopolitical management – the answer from the official regime is *more, better communication*. However, as we have just seen, "better" communication means more clearly demarcating boundaries, shifting narrative control back into the hands of those that utilize the public relations apparatus. In effect, we have arrived once more at Schmitt's critique of liberalism as endless discourse. Politics in liberal democracies, broadly understood, are thus reduced to "communicative acts, to speaking and saying and exposing and explaining, a reduction key to a democracy conceived in terms of discussion and deliberation."[138] As a result, these "norms of liberal publicity" – meaning tailored communications products, regularly released data-filled report and pre-established processes of participation – stand in for the ends of social, economic, and political justice that liberal democracies might otherwise purport to serve.[139] As this unfolds, over-communication and publicity begins to stand in for a public, masking the structural inequalities that liberal democracies necessitate.

Consequently, as politics are reduced to communicative acts, emerging technologies like social media afford citizens a much easier option than action: commentary. Barney observes that

[137] Barney, *Publics without Politics,76.*
[138] Dean, Jodi, *Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009) 32.
[139] Barney, *Public without Politics,* 80.

our move toward endless pedantry and incessant critique is not caused by externally imposed engagement with the system, but by our implicit acceptance of the *norms* of participation.[140] I would contend further that we have accepted these norms as we have developed our relationship with technological instruments of Western democracy, which have ultimately led to the borders of our political life being determined by technopower. This is precisely the way that technology functions around and on us in the regulatory, normative sense explored last chapter – and it is just as much for the reasons of convenience as it is apathy that we deny ourselves the possibility of disrupting this order.[141] Thus, the depoliticization that occurs in technological capitalist liberal democracies is not one of oppressive and forceful deterrence; technology actualizes in necessarily different ways under different political regimes and in different material contexts. More accurately, depoliticization in Western regimes is borne out paradoxically through the encouragement of participation, engagement, discussion, and the "logic of publicity" – a logic that germinates and takes root in a society that thrives, and even economically incentivizes, the publicness of being-in-technological-reality.[142]

In conclusion, we have seen that the public affairs apparatus is, in a sense, the crown technological jewel of any modern liberal democratic government. Through the use of communications tools filtered through a voracious 24-hour news cycle, official narratives and selective information are allowed, even adamantly encouraged, for debate. Through the

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[140] Barney, *Public without Politics,* 80.

[141] This perhaps sheds light on the modern phenomena of divestment and its obvious political power and influence. For example, the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction movement aimed at stunting economic support for the companies that benefit from the Occupied Territories under Israel has become a global issue because it both highlights and challenges through disruption the established, hypertechnological and meticulous control over Palestinians' lives. Or, for example, the recent record-breaking fossil fuel divestment undertaken by both New York City and the Catholic Church. Of course, this is directly tied to material, economic conditions, but more importantly, it challenges and disrupts the commodification of natural resources and the highly technological starvation of the Palestinian people.

[142] Barney, *Public without Politics*, 84.

unrelenting communication released through public relations products, the acceptable is slowly delineated from the unacceptable. Gradually, these parameters of discussion then inform Question Period, then oftentimes the greater "political" conversation at large. With this rigidity and inflexibility, how could we call what prevails as "politics" anything other than managerialism? This lowering of horizons is debilitating for the potential of an authentic appearance of actors in public spaces like the House of Commons.

Following Heidegger and Carl Schmitt, we examined the idle talk of public relations and the endless discourse of liberalism. More emphatically, we concluded that if politics are truly as burdensome and uncomfortable as to oppose technopower and the way it organizes and imposes itself on us, then the depoliticizing "impulses" of technological societies are, in fact, those that encourage participation with pre-established borders.[143] Further, I have also argued in this chapter that the role technologies play in moving citizens to create public spaces and *appear*, meaning to act politically over and against technopower, is contextual and relative to material circumstance. Of course, I do not mean to assert that because liberal democracies and technological societies are hand-in-glove that there is no potential for citizens to act politically and disrupt. Occupy heavily relied on the Internet to organize its disruptive camp-in directed at revolting against a speculative banking market that prized a ballooning economy over the lives and homes of middle- and lower-class Americans; videos shared on Twitter displaying cruel and wanton abuses of power by police forces across the Americas have served to galvanize the Black Lives Matter movement; Idle No More utilized social media to unite in opposition to economic degradation, legislative disregard for treaty rights, and squalid conditions on reserves. This is, perhaps, the saving power that Heidegger so vaguely references in his *Essay Concerning the*

[143] Barney, *Public without Politics*, 84.

Question on Technology. It *is* possible to use technological instruments to disrupt and disturb their own essence, if we are willing to understand technology once more as a tool, and not a world.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that my lifetime will see immeasurable expansion in fields of medicine, mathematics, astrophysics, agriculture, automation, virtual reality, and more – to say nothing of the countless technological gadgets that will be churned out for quick profit. As technological proficiency increases in youth, the world's population will become more saturated with technologically literate citizens who understand and rely on the world to be profoundly technological, as well as those who are capable of expanding technology into new frontiers. As this epistemological shift continues, future generations will undoubtedly increase the efficiency and speed with which technology is developed. This will, as it has thus far, continue exponentially increasing technology's impact as it transcends borders and boundaries, connecting people all around the world. Some of tomorrow's developments, undoubtedly, will become privy only to the highest class of bidders; some of them, however, will be either given to the people or rightfully taken. As was stated in the introduction, it is unlikely, barring any catastrophic remodelling of society or Earth itself, that we can imagine Western society without technology. Technology has become too bound up with our collective identity: we have literally and figuratively changed the fabric of our being-in-the-world through technology.

Yet, even now, as we gain greater insight into the lives of others – and, particularly as we come to *expect* this insight – the world becomes exceedingly complex, nuanced, and incomprehensible. With this deluge of information and data arrives the dysphoria of the modern world. Overwhelmingly, we are made to question the veracity of the world and those acting in it as it is represented to us through our technological devices. This is a tremendously exhausting process that has given rise to very peculiar phenomena. With this modern atomization and uncertainty – this misplaced Cartesian doubt – alongside an extraordinary income and wealth

gap, we have seen a return to absurdism, large pockets of neo-dada-esque movements cultivated online; we have seen the visceral political campaign ISIL waged against modernity, armed with Twitter and 1080p beheadings perfectly formatted and edited for mass distribution; we have seen a resurgence of flat-earth and anti-vaccination movements disseminating patently false claims through channels like Facebook and YouTube, garnering tens of thousands of shares and views. And this is to say nothing of the increasing perception of oppression against white males, particularly younger, middle-class white males that resort to irony, race-baiting, and conspiracy as a means of mocking a limp and unresponsive political structure.

It is this incomprehensible world that I hoped to explore throughout these pages. Accordingly, I looked toward that which I believe draws together the Western world, if not the entire world by this point. The centrality of technology in any effective analysis of modern life is impossible to overstate. As such, it was my goal at the outset to develop a robust analysis of technology itself, along with the ways dasein is in-the-world. Toward this goal, I developed arguments in my first two chapters regarding the newness of global perspectives, enframed dasein, and the importance of death to being. Following this, my third chapter sought to develop our understanding of dasein, slowly moving beyond the individual to the collective. In doing so, I argued for the endless spontaneity and inalienable potential human beings carry within them. Moreover, I argued that the unique capacity humans carry within them for natality is meant for the public, where the political can appear.

It is here that I paused to consider, and vehemently refute, the arguments for extending the jurisdiction and influence of technology. In my estimation, there are no convincing arguments that suggest technology has any proclivity toward justice. Accordingly, there is no salvation to be found by further putting our faith in technology. Instead, as I argued in the latter

portion of the third chapter, I believe that politics are precisely that which opens new possibility over and against currently prevailing mechanisms and their logical underpinnings. This is to say that politics is the appearance of the self, aimed at disrupting the norms and unjustified expectations of our hypertechnological society. It is for the purposes of identifying these veins, structures, mechanisms, and procedures that I have developed my concept of technopower. If, as I have argued, our modern society is conditioned by a technological rationality much more deeply ingrained than the devices we furnish our home with, identifying the distribution of power will also disclose the degree to which technology has become germane to our lives. Fortunately, where there is technopower, there can be resistance.[144]

I chose to dedicate the last portion of my thesis toward delineating precisely what I had outlined in Chapter Three. It is exactly through our common assumptions of "politics" that we can begin to unearth the extent to which our discourses bear the markings of technological rationality and power, or technopower. The public relations apparatus and the mechanistic function it serves on behalf of the federal government is simply one of many ways our true political potential has been diminished and increasingly replaced with endless, over communicative idle talk. To remedy this, we must breathe life once more into local publics. This *is* possible, and it is possible precisely by utilizing publicness toward the end of a robust, autonomous public realm wherein people are free to act and appear against normalization, surveillance, and depoliticization. Yet, for this to happen en masse, we already presuppose a rejection of the world of technology in favor of re-understanding our technological tools, re-orienting our relationship with technology, understanding devices as what-fors with tangible ends.

[144] Rayner, Timothy, *Foucault's Heidegger: Philosophy and Transformative Experience* (London: Continuum, 2007) 95.

The fact that human beings are able to create something potentially infinite is, as I understand it, that which is most vital to the entirety of this work. It is this fact that cannot be robbed from anyone, cannot be taken or removed, and, most importantly, must not be forgotten. This rings particularly true in an increasingly technological society where we prize publicness over a public and processes over politics. Again, as was stated at the outset of this work, the technological teleology seems inescapable. Technological development appears at home on a spectrum, not as an option among options. Yet, this should only strike one as paralyzing if they forget the always underestimated possibility of human creativity and natality. Indeed, we cannot imagine, in concrete terms, another world bereft of technology. But should this be our task? I suggest not. Instead, our task should be to understand our world, and by doing so, transform it.

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