About philosophy of technology

- Different approaches reflect different relationships between human-technology-world

- 3 approaches
  - Instrumentalism
  - Technological determinism
  - Mediation theory

https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/technology/

Instrumentalism

- Technology = (collection of) instruments that people use to achieve their goals
- Usually material objects, by extension also: skills, organisations,…
- Basic idea: “Technical cyclus”
  - Factual situation compared to desired situation
  - Discrepancy? Action → technology!

(Martin Meganck)

Instrumentalism
(Neutral flavour)

- Typical arguments:
  - Technology is like a knife…
  - Guns do not kill people…people kill people
  - Existence is not the same as use: difference use / abuse

- Possible objections
  - …any ideas?

(Martin Meganck)

Technological determinism

- Technological change comes from outside society as part of an autonomous scientific development
- Technologies have their own **inertia,** totally separate from the influences of people.
- At the extreme, technology *causes* social change

Consequences of Technological Determinism

- At the Macro level, technology causes social and historical changes.

- At the Micro level, technology affects social and social-psychological processes as individuals use technology and tools.

Criticism on both instrumentalism and technological determinism

Instrumentalism: too ‘thin’

Technological determinism: too ‘thick’

External approaches

Mediation theory

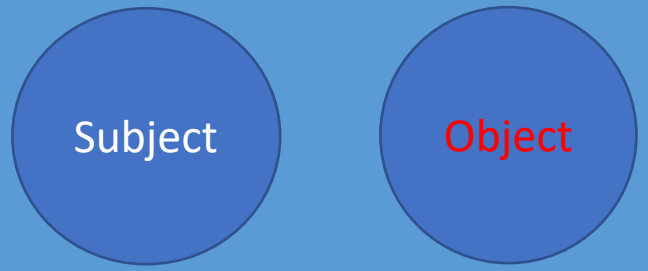
The theory of technological mediation offers a framework to analyze the roles technologies play in human existence and in society. Its central idea is that technologies, when they are used, help to shape the relations between human beings and the world. Rather approaching technologies as material objects opposed to human subjects, or as mere extensions of human beings, it sees them as mediators of human-world relations. Mediation theory is rooted in the ‘post-phenomenological’ approach in philosophy of technology, which was founded by Don Ihde.

https://ppverbeek.wordpress.com/mediation-theory/

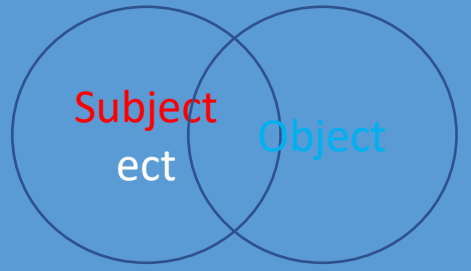
If the thesis of mediation theory is plausible…

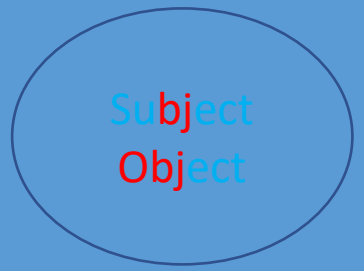
…the relationship subject / object changes dramatically!

External relationship



Technological mediation





Transhumanism!