

TURN: PURITY

THE CLAIM THAT THE PLAN CAN'T ESCAPE FROM THE OVERWHELMING DANGERS OF WESTERN METAPHYSICS ESSENTIALIZES HISTORY IN A QUEST FOR PURE EXISTENCE - THEIR IMPACT CLAIMS AREN'T TRUE AND ESTABLISH A MORE HEGEMONIC RELATION TO BEING.

Bruno Latour, professor of sociology, School of Mines (*We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Porter, pp. 65-67) 19

But immediately the philosopher loses this well-intentioned simplicity. Why? Ironically, he himself indicates the reason for this, in an apologue on Heraclitus who used to take shelter in a baker's oven. 'Einai gar kai entautha theous' - 'here, too, the gods are present,' said Heraclitus to visitors who were astonished to see him warming his poor carcass like an ordinary mortal (Heidegger, 1977b, p. 233). 'Auch hier nämlichwesen Götter an.' But Heidegger is taken in as much as those naive visitors, since he and his epigones do not expect to find Being except along the Black Forest Holzwege. Being cannot reside in ordinary beings. Everywhere, there is desert. The gods cannot reside in technology - that pure Enframing (Zimmerman, 1990) of being [Ge-Stell], that ineluctable fate [Geschick], that supreme danger [Gefahr]. They are not to be sought in science, either, since science has no other essence but that of technology (Heidegger, 1977b). They are absent from politics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, history - which is the history of Being, and counts its

epochs in millennia. The gods cannot reside in economics - that pure calculation forever mired in beings and worry. They are not to be found in philosophy, either, or in ontology, both of which lost sight of their destiny 2,500 years ago. Thus Heidegger treats the modern world as the visitors treat Heraclitus: with contempt.

And yet - 'here too the gods are present': in a hydroelectric plant on the banks of the Rhine, in subatomic particles, in Adidas shoes as well as in the old wooden clogs hollowed out by hand, in agribusiness as well as in timeworn landscapes, in shopkeepers' calculations as well as in Hölderlin's heartrending verse. But why do those philosophers no longer recognize them? Because they believe what the modern Constitution says about itself! This paradox should no longer astonish us. The moderns indeed declare that technology is nothing but pure instrumental mastery, science pure Enframing and pure Stamping [Das Ge-Stell], that economics is pure calculation, capitalism pure reproduction, the subject pure consciousness. Purity everywhere! They claim this, but we must be careful not to take them at their word, since what they are asserting is only half of the modern world, the work of purification that distills what the work of hybridization supplies.

Who has forgotten Being? No one, no one ever has, otherwise Nature would be truly available as a pure 'stock'. Look around you: scientific objects are circulating simultaneously as subjects objects and discourse! Networks are full of Being. As for machines, they are laden with subjects and collectives. How could a being lose its difference, its incompleteness, its mark, its trace of Being? This is never in anyone's power; otherwise we should have to imagine that we have truly been modern, we should be taken in by the upper half of the modern Constitution



↓ ↓ ↓

Has someone, however, actually forgotten Being? Yes, anyone who really thinks that Being has really been forgotten. As Lévi-Strauss says, 'the barbarian is first and foremost the man who believes in barbarism.' (Lévi-Strauss, [1952] 1987, p. 12). Those who have failed to undertake empirical studies of sciences, technologies, law, politics, economics, religion or fiction have lost the traces of Being that are distributed everywhere among beings. If, scorning empiricism, you opt out of the exact sciences, then the human sciences, then traditional philosophy, then the sciences of language, and you hunker down in your forest – then you will indeed feel a tragic loss. But what is missing is you yourself, not the world! Heidegger's epigones have converted that glaring weakness into a strength. We don't know anything empirical, but that doesn't matter, since your world is empty of Being. We are keeping the little flame of Being safe from everything, and you, who have all the rest, have nothing. On the contrary, we have everything, since we have Being, and beings, and we have never lost track of the difference between Being

and beings. We are carrying out the impossible project undertaken by Heidegger, who believed what the modern Constitution said about itself without understanding that what is at issue there is only half of a larger mechanism which has never abandoned the old anthropological matrix. No one can forget Being, since there has never been a modern world, or, by the same token, metaphysics. We have always remained pre-Socratic, pre-Cartesian, pre-Kantian, pre-Nietzschean. No radical revolution can separate us from these pasts, so there is no need for reactionary counter-revolutions to lead us back to what has never been abandoned. Yes, Heraclitus is a surer guide than Heidegger: *'Einai gar kai entautha theous.'*

Their K can't solve the impacts of the case and promotes patriarchal structures of dominance

Michael E. Zimmerman, Professor of Philosophy at Tulane University, 1990, "Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity"

Second, I examine what some regard as the political danger involved in Heidegger's determinism and in his deconstruction of the foundations of Western metaphysics, including the foundations of the humanistic, emancipatory project of the Enlightenment. A number of contemporary pragmatists argue that while Heidegger and his deconstructionist followers are correct in criticizing the foundationalist pretensions at work in much of Western metaphysics and in pointing out the dark side of the Enlightenment's push for technological power over nature, those deconstructionist critics are ahistorical and politically naive in their failure to see that the Enlightenment promoted genuine political, economic, and civil liberties which may be ignored and condemned only at great risk. Heidegger took such a risk by aligning his own critique of Enlightenment metaphysics with the Nazi attack on the "alien" (French, British, American, and German!) Enlightenment commitment to individual liberty, toleration, rationality, and universal human solidarity. Pragmatists argue that the critique of foundationalism does not go hand in hand with a reactionary determinism which effaces human freedom. From this perspective, modern technology is not a destiny imposed upon humanity, but rather a manifestation of the effort by humanity to gain a measure of control over the forces of nature. Even if humanity is in important respects capable of self-determination, the question remains open whether humanity can direct the developments of modern technology in a way that avoids the nightmarish alternatives of nuclear war, environmental catastrophe, or new forms of totalitarianism.

Heidegger's account of the development and character of modern technology has been widely influential, but is only one of many such accounts. Marxists, Hegelians, liberals, theologians, anthropologists, and feminists (among others) offer competing accounts. Heideggereans have accused such alternative accounts of being trapped within metaphysical discourse, but such an argument presupposes the validity of Heidegger's own critique of the history of productionist-foundationalist metaphysics. Many of these alternative accounts question the validity of Heidegger's own "meta-narrative" of Western history. Here, I shall address only one of the above-mentioned alternatives, namely, the feminist one. Many feminists agree with Heidegger regarding the domineering character of modern technology, but they argue that this character stems from blindness not to the ontological difference but rather to the sexual difference. The contemporary drive for total control, then, may be regarded as a late stage in the patriarchal quest to exclude, repress, and deny all difference, all otherness which threatens the security of the masculinist ego. By de-centering Heidegger's self-enclosed narrative, the feminist narrative reveals that there may be a totalizing and thus a metaphysical impulse at work in the thinker most famous for his critique of metaphysics.

Heidegger's critic justifies genocide and sees no possibility of human freedom

Michael E. **Zimmerman**, Professor of Philosophy at Tulane University, 1990, "Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity"

While influenced by Hegel's historical determinism, then, Heidegger renounced the progressive dimension of that determinism, a progressivism which was transformed by Marx into his own vision of human progress. Influenced by Nietzsche and by such reactionary Nietzscheans as Jünger, Heidegger had no confidence in the Enlightenment vision of "progress." Hence, he made both Hegel and Marx walk on their heads, in the sense of claiming that their progressive view of history would be better read as a history of decline and degeneration. For Heidegger, the liberatory promise of the Enlightenment in fact paved the way for an epoch of total human enslavement. Viewing the Enlightenment as a crucial phase in the rise of the technological Will to Power is what enabled Heidegger to equate extermination camps with mechanized agriculture and hydroelectric dams. For Heidegger, genocide was a predictable outcome of the reckless power impulse at work in the Enlightenment, an impulse given free rein in modern technology. Ernesto Laclau has objected to this view of Western history: "When the theorists of the eighteenth century are presented as the initiators of a project of 'mastery' that would eventually lead to Auschwitz, it is forgotten that Auschwitz was repudiated by a set of values that, in large part, also stem from the eighteenth century." 6 Like so many Germans of his generation, however, and like a number of recent French thinkers, Heidegger saw only the "dark side" of the Enlightenment project and also discounted the possibility of human freedom.

Heidegger's alternative is just an endless cycle and can't solve

Michael E. **Zimmerman**, Professor of Philosophy at Tulane University, 1990, "Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity"

Heidegger's relation to structuralist determinism was ambiguous. On the one hand, he conceded that human behavior in the epochs of Western history has been shaped by the various stages of the metaphysics of presence, i.e., by the successive rise of metaphysical foundations from Plato's forms to Nietzsche's Will to Power. On the other hand, Heidegger also argued that the structuralist quest for a stable foundation, center, or cornerstone to explain the activity taking place within a given system (whether it be the human psyche or the economic realm) was itself an expression of the totalizing impulse of foundationalist-productionist metaphysics. In other words, Heidegger conceded that a Gestalt organizes behavior in each historical epoch, but added that this Gestalt is itself ultimately groundless, foundationless, without purpose, an-archic, despite all appearances to the contrary. For any given history-organizing Gestalt is but a crystallized version of the originary and abysmal revelation, a revelation which has no "purpose," no "reason," no "goal," no transcendent "meaning."

The alternative isn't the "superhuman" event that is need to solve the technological problems of the world

Michael E. Zimmerman, Professor of Philosophy at Tulane University, 1990, "Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity"

Heidegger never claimed that the deconstructed, post-Cartesian "self" would be "free" in any traditional sense; for him, "freedom" meant submitting to the necessity of being. Apart from the meditative activity of deconstructing the history of Western metaphysics, Heidegger concluded that there was nothing that could be "done" to move beyond totalitarianism in an epoch stamped by the Gestalt of the worker. In One-Dimensional Man, Herbert Marcuse expanded on Heidegger's suggestion that the technological system not only undermines all opposition but actually transforms critique into a source of strength for that system.⁹ Just as Heidegger called for the "step back" from engagement within the technological system, so Marcuse spoke of the importance of the "great refusal" in the face of the totalizing impulse of the system. Both thinkers maintained some hope that great art might be able to disclose an alternative to technological nihilism, but they left us with the question: What could possibly motivate the production of such liberating works of art? If humanity is so dominated by Gestell, then it would appear that only a superhuman event could break its grip and initiate a new historical possibility. Heidegger attempted to deconstruct the totalizing, foundational impulse of Western metaphysics in order to struggle against those totalitarian technological ideologies—such as Bolshevism and Americanism—which proclaimed themselves to be progressive. We have followed both this struggle against technological totalitarianism and its paradoxical denouement in Heidegger's support for one of the greatest totalitarian movements of this century. Given this outcome of Heidegger's political decision, we may perhaps understand his increasingly despairing attitude regarding hopes of changing a system which can so easily divert revolutionary critique into support for the system itself. Heidegger's political engagement in 1933-34 led him to conclude that all merely human "revolutions" and "decisions" would simply reinforce the system already in play. The question for us is: Is that conclusion tenable? In his political decision of 1933, Heidegger acted on his belief that being free meant aligning himself with the new historical destiny dawning at that time. His political decision was motivated in part by his deconstruction of the metaphysical foundationalism which made possible the modern technology against which he fought. The political consequences of Heidegger's deconstruction of metaphysics have been dismissed by some as irrelevant to the validity of that deconstruction, but others have maintained there is an important connection between Heidegger's thought and his reactionary politics. Some of Heidegger's defenders, for example, maintain that deconstruction of foundationalist metaphysics is the best possible defense against the totalitarianism which justifies itself on the basis of such metaphysics, while many of his critics assert that his deconstruction of the foundations of Enlightenment humanism in fact allowed him to support a regime which also rejected those foundations. To examine the political implications of Heidegger's deconstruction of Western metaphysics and to evaluate his claims about human freedom, we cannot avoid a critical examination of that deconstruction itself.