Philosophy of Technology

I. Technology is derived from two Greek words Techne and

logos

A. In Greek culture it referred to a certain kind of

knowledge, "how to"

B. One of several types of knowledge, but not the highest,

dialectics, phronesis

C. Two aspects of technology in western society

1. type of knowledge which I have called instrumental

- mastery and control over the natural world

- model for all knowledge, what is the use value,

practical value

2. technology are the techniques and products of this

type of knowledge

II. Three Philosophies of Technology

A. Instrumental or Common Sense view of technology

1. technology is an instrument, or tool.

- it is defined by its function, solving a

problem, filling a need, resolving a conflict

- a gun, a hammer, car, an axe, an atom bomb

- the technology is neutral with regard to ends

2. it is universally applicable, it can be used anywhere

anyplace or anytime

- world is world of science, laws of phyics the

same everywhere

- technology executes scientific discoveries

- a hammer hammers in any culture, any

country, any planet

3. the idea of technology implies the idea of progress

- linear and progressive, better and better

- autonomous, proceeds by its own logic of

discovery and development, compare to

'close encounters' mor advanced but same

track

- can't imagine a more advanced society that

is low tech

- can't stop it and can't reverse it

4. ultimately technological progress will culminate in

a utopian society

- a technocracy like the Jetsons

- fun hi-tec jobs with all the technological

amenities

5. modernization or developmental theory means that

the technological societies of the world

- are bringing technology to other cultures who are

primitive by comparison

- introducing them to technology will modernize

them, helping both them and us

B. Substantive Theory of Technology is the opposite of the

instrumental theory

1. Technology is not neutral and is not just an instrument

and is not leading to a utopian society

2. It does proceed by its own logic towards an end, but

the end is dystopian - domination

3. There is essence to technology -- mastery and control

over the natural world

4. nature becomes "standing reserve" or dead matter

5. out of dead matter technology creates a world, a

technosphere, or social reality, "second nature"

6. this 'second nature' appears as the real world,

inevitable, unchangeable

7. it demands conformity and adaptability, one needs

to adapt to survive

-success equals surviving in this technosphere

-humans are standing reserve

- its power seems to eliminate other options

8. technological rationality penetrates into the most

private spheres of our lives,

- human beings become objects of technical manipulation

-experts are teaching us how to love, have orgasms

9. The technosphere and the logic of technology and technical experts perpetuate themselves

- technocracy seems to proceed along the path

natural laws

- technology and experts can solve all problem

10. Downward spiral of alienation from the natural world,

our own human nature, human freedom, individuality,

uniqueness, dystopia

11. Values which underlie the technosphere are

efficiency, predictability and control

12. knowledge becomes quantification, how much

information - teaching "how to process information"

13. Thinking equals technical success

14. human values are subjective, personal or private,

or ideology

C. Critical Theory of Technology

1. Technology is neither dystopian nor utopian

2. it is not autonomous, not linear

3. technology is cultural

- technologies are cultural artifacts, studying

technology would tell us not how far advanced

a society was

- but what they value, who they were

4. we live in class society where institutions including

academic, scientific and technological are controlled by

those in power

5. technologies embody the interests and values of

of the powerful --

6. not progress, or a particular type of progress, but power is the logic behind the technosphere

7. power shapes the technosphere and the new

and newer technologies of the technosphere

2001: Space Odyssey

I. Principle structural principle is the negation of the myth of progress

A. starved and bickering apes = smooth, affable, descendants,

actions of apes doubled in actions of their descendants

1. eating, unappetizing, out of need

2. confronting their rivals, armed with casual politeness,

power in the briefcase

3. women watch the men fight it out

4. alienated from nature, apes because of its inhospitality,

the newer humans are hermetically sealed in their

artificial inhospitable reality

B. Fear of the natural world, survival, brings about technologies for survival now we are trapped in our technology

1. absolute containment by our own apparatus

C. the scientist - Dr. Floyd, neutral, non-emotional, separated from reality

1. representing humanity, or the elite, which he represents

2. a new kind of power, body language, managerial techniques -- his inferiors are kissing up to him,

just as the apes inferiors

D. technosphere is antiseptic, but unfreedom

1. bureacracies which are hierarchical

2. demanding conformity, lost of individuality

E. technosphere and humans

1. technosphere is graceful, dancing to the waltz

2. the stewardesses clumsy, can't move, totally dependent

on artificial environment

F. humans aliented from each other

1.posture, deportment, chill exteriors

2. meaningless reflexive courtesies

3. Dr. Floyd's isolation from others

4. "home" as a module that separates peopl

G. Technosphere takes care of our needs, occupies our time, and

isolates us from each other

1. the astronauts, mere images, absolutely separate

II. Why don't we now recognize this as a dystopia

A. Our world has begun to be like this techno-dystopia and

we call it good

B. Isolation = atomization= the elimination of the commons

C. a technosphere which is managed by digital technology

1. commercials selling this world, father talking to

daughter on her birthday, no difference

D. Spectator view of the world