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THE HEIDEGGERIAN PERSPECTIVE ON NIHILISM: A CRITIQUE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY THROUGH ITS MANIFESTATIONS IN LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL THOUGHT.

University of Hawaii, Ph.D., 1974
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THE HEIDEGGERIAN PERSPECTIVE ON NIHILISM: A CRITIQUE
OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY THROUGH ITS MANIFESTATIONS
IN LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL THOUGHT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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IN PHILOSOPHY
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PREFACE

Within various contexts, our age has been described in both a negative and positive manner. Negatively it has been characterized by such traits as "anxiety," "absurdity," "alienation"; positively it has often been characterized in terms of technological progress, among others.

Taking the root-meaning of "nihilism" to be negation, the negative traits may be collected under that word, since each trait indicates a negation of something considered valuable, e.g., security, purpose, community. However to merely gather the many negative trends under "nihilism" would accomplish little. They resist unified explanation; the term "nihilism" succumbs to ambiguity. The negative traits of our age then appear as discrete and unrelated.

In contrast, the positive characterization of our age seems unambiguous. Technology has proven itself as the spectacularly successful systematic effort at problem-solving. Given a neatly circumscribed problem--technology solves it. However as the destructive potential of technology becomes more and more evident, as the efficient solving of isolated problems is seen to issue in the threat of large scale catastrophe, the positive characterization of technology must be questioned.

Yet the destructive capacity of technology is not enough to establish a solid link between technology and nihilism. Nihilism seems at first glance to be subjective, an attitude, while technology seems to be objective, a methodology. However perhaps this distinction is illusory; perhaps nihilism is the human response to an objective situation and
technology conceals its relationship to values and human subjectivity. Could it be that nihilism is really a perceptive glance into technology which, in turn, is in fact pervaded by a basically nihilistic world-view? If this is the case, then technology can be fully understood only by grasping its underlying nihilism and nihilism can be adequately grasped only when it is encountered within technology.

Such a train of thought opens us to Martin Heidegger's synthesis of the concepts of nihilism and technology. It is a radical and comprehensive synthesis according to which technology is the final phase of nihilism. Examining the historical development of Western metaphysics beginning in pre-Socratic Greece, Heidegger traces the development of nihilism which culminates in the modern age of technology.

There are several books and numerous articles which have explicated Heidegger's concepts of nihilism and technology within the context of his philosophy. However, this dissertation will go further and focus on the relationship between Heidegger's conceptions of nihilism and technology and significant non-Heideggerian analyses of the same phenomena. The need for this effort stems from the nature of Heidegger's thought: on the one hand, Heidegger's thesis is provocative and, if correct, of decisive importance for an understanding of nihilism; but, on the other hand, Heidegger's terminology and his manner of philosophizing tend to engender an esoteric sense which removes them from everyday concerns and experiences. Furthermore, Heidegger has persistently pursued his own path of thinking, giving little attention to opposing views or contemporary authors. The

1Some of these which have been included in this study are W. J. Richardson's Heidegger, J. L. Mehta's The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger, and G. Driscoll's article "Heidegger: A Response to Nihilism."
primary goal of this study is to advance the understanding of nihilism. In pursuit of this goal, the central contribution of the dissertation is a critique of selected documents from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which reveals an essential strain of nihilism—as it is conceived by Heidegger. This critique throws light both on these documents and on Heidegger's conception of nihilism, ultimately leading to a perspective which is a supplement of Heidegger's conception.

The first chapter is an historical sketch of the concept of nihilism as it has been used in literature and philosophy from the concept's inception to the present; the purpose of this chapter is to provide an orientation for the subsequent study. The second chapter discusses the history of Western metaphysics in such a way as to illustrate the historical basis of Heidegger's conception of nihilism. Chapter III further explicates the Heideggerian concept of nihilism, which is then used as the basis of a critique of two classic literary expressions of nihilism (Turgenev's Fathers and Sons and Dostoevsky's The Possessed) and two major philosophical works (A. J. Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic and J. P. Sartre's Being and Nothingness). This critique establishes the following: 1) these documents are essentially related by a common strain of nihilism; 2) the Heideggerian perspective provides depth and radicality of interpretation, i.e., it reveals presuppositions, shortcomings, developments and connections that are otherwise concealed; 3) this critique supplements the Heideggerian perspective by developing nihilistic traits to which Heidegger's own writing have only alluded.

Guided by Heidegger's thought and the need for a more objective orientation than that of Chapter III, the fourth chapter turns to technology and surveys current philosophical conceptions of it in order to
provide the setting for further discussion. The fifth chapter explicates Heidegger's concept of technology as the final phase of nihilism. In the light of the Heideggerian concept of technology, Chapter VI is a critique of two comprehensive works on technology (J. K. Galbraith's *The New Industrial State* and H. Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*), which reveals the inadequacy of these non-Heideggerian analyses of technology\(^2\) while extending and confirming the Heideggerian into areas to which it has, at best, only alluded.

The final chapter summarizes and defends the Heideggerian position, indicating its strengths and weaknesses and the ways in which the critique of the non-Heideggerian conceptions have complemented it. Thus the material under criticism is assessed as to the inadequacy of its insights into nihilism, within the general framework of Heidegger's thought. Finally, certain paths of fruitful development from both within and outside of Heidegger's philosophy are explored.

The choice of documents for this critique has been made in accordance with several criteria. First an effort has been made to gather a variety of styles and positions in order to gain a spectrum of nihilism. To bring this variety into manageable limits, writings were selected which would explore three significant areas of nihilism: the psychological or the human response to nihilism (literary sources); the theoretical aspect (philosophy); and the socio-political realm (social science). Secondly, consideration was given to internal themes and characteristics of these writings with a view to their interrelationships. Thirdly, works were considered.

\(^2\)By the inadequacy of Galbraith's and Marcuse's conceptions of technology is meant that they fail to explicitly grasp the nihilistic nature of technology and of their own analyses thereof.
chosen which explicated the concepts of nihilism and technology, respectively. Lastly, consideration was given to the eminence of the writers chosen and to their independence from the thought of Heidegger.
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CHAPTER I

A History of Nihilism

"To discuss nihilism is to plunge into paradox": so begins the essay of a recent author on the topic. Whether one approaches nihilism from a historical or a systematic perspective, the concept is imbedded in ambiguity and even contradiction. It has been used to refer to both ardent belief in scientific rationalism and to an apathetic passivity in the face of meaninglessness; nihilism has meant militant atheism and extreme idealism, crass utilitarianism and unbounded romanticism. "The enemy has alternately been religion, the state, morality, universal truth, science, and the established order. The basis for nihilism has varied from anarchism to atheism to skepticism." That which is shared by these conflicting attitudes is the denial, the repudiation of "something," which has been generally accepted as being essentially valuable. They differ with respect to the object of this repudiation.

According to R. Olson's entry in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, nihilism has assumed three basic forms: a religious claim of atheism; a psycho-sociological claim as to the meaninglessness of life; and an ethical claim as to the impossibility of rationally justifying moral judgments--moral skepticism. To these should be added a fourth--the political claim of anarchism and a fifth--an epistemological claim as to the impossibility

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2Ibid., p. 1.
of metaphysics. Closely related to the above and one which perhaps is the most radical form of nihilism is the epistemological claim that denies the possibility of knowledge of any kind. In this latter form, nihilism is related to skepticism and the various types of relativism in the history of philosophy. The following discussion will provide an historical sketch of the concept of nihilism independent of that of Heidegger and a background for the subsequent study.

The first philosophical usage of the word "nihilism" presumably is found in the writings of F. Jacobi (1743-1819), who used it to designate the consistent idealism of J. Fichte (1762-1814), since everything which was independent of the self-posed ego was nothing. Taking up the assault on idealism, Hegel, although not using the word "nihilism," expands Jacobi's criticism. In his The Philosophy of Fine Art, Hegel finds in the idealists' conception of the subject a negative and even destructive element: the Absolute Ego is an empty freedom which can potentially negate all positive content. "For this reason this Ego is ... the negation of every particularity, attribute--in short, every content--for every positive subject-matter is overwhelmed in this abstract freedom and unity. ... Whatever is, is only in virtue of the Ego; whatever is through me (that is, my Ego) I am in turn able to annihilate."4

In 1824, F. V. Baader (1765-1841) employed the term to describe the denial of God and revelation: nihilism designated the separation of reason from religion as expressed in the "atheism" of the natural sciences


and certain anti-intellectual tendencies of nineteenth century theology.\textsuperscript{5} In a political sense, the word was first used by a German journalist, J. von Görres (1776-1847), to describe the doctrines of revolutionary anarchism.\textsuperscript{6} Jean Paul (1763-1825) described romantic poetry as "poetical nihilism."\textsuperscript{7} For L. Mercier (1740-1814), "nihilism" was a result of the philosophy of the Encyclopedists.\textsuperscript{8} In 1829, the romantic critic N. Nadezhdin (1804-1856) had used it simply to designate people who knew and understood nothing. In the 1830's a liberal journalist K. Katkov (1818-1887) employed it to describe someone who no longer believed in anything. Taking up this meaning in relation to belief, B. Bauer (1809-1882) and M. Stirner (1806-1865) of the Hegelian Left began to give it a philosophical and polemical significance.\textsuperscript{9}

It was in Turgenev's novel \textit{Fathers and Sons} (1861) that the word was first used as a major concept and popularized. In Turgenev, the concept is closely related to positivism with a slight admixture of revolutionary activism. Although the word had been associated mainly with Russian revolutionary groups of various sorts, Bazarov, the "nihilist" in the novel, is not involved in any radical movement, nor does he take any overt political action. Superficially it would appear that Bazarov is simply a positivist--"the hard-working, tough-minded empiricist and pragmatist, to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{7}Martin Heidegger, \textit{Nietzsche}, II, p. 31.
  \item \textsuperscript{8}Brockhaus \textit{Enzyklopädie}, p. 469.
  \item \textsuperscript{9}Franco Venturi, \textit{Roots of Revolution} (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1966), p. 326.
\end{itemize}
whom Nature was not a temple but a workshop.\footnote{Avraham Yarmolinsky, \textit{Road to Revolution} (London: Cassell, 1957), p. 122.} However his positivism is nihilistic in that he rejects and even wants to destroy anything which cannot be scientifically grounded: traditional institutions and values must be razed so that a new order can be established. His nihilism is deepened when he acknowledges that destruction must be the first order of business and even possibly the last--a plan of reconstruction is not needed. Bazarov's most radical position is reached when he realizes that even his passion for science rests upon an inexplicable and ultimately unjustifiable base--a mere feeling, a matter of psycho-chemistry. The world is dissolved into meaninglessness: his activism is undermined.

\textit{Fathers and Sons} caused a furor in Russia, being both extolled and repudiated by the range of political groups from radicals to reactionaries. One of the most significant reactions was by D. Pisarev (1840-1868), a radical who came to prominence in the 1860's. Pisarev adopted the word "nihilism" as depicted in \textit{Fathers and Sons} to describe a tendency within the radical movement at that time, which was opposed to the populism and moralism of the more moderate groups. For Pisarev, "the main function of the revolutionary intelligentsia was one of criticism and corrosion; that the obstacles to be destroyed were so great that even a purely negative function of this kind would be quite enough to occupy the lifetime of his generation."\footnote{F. Venturi, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 327.} Contrary to those who advocated a positive program of social reform and belief in the masses, Pisarev proclaimed an elitist call to arms: "Here is the ultimatum of our camp: what can be smashed should be smashed; what will stand the blow is good; what will fly into..."
Smithereens is rubbish; at any rate, hit out right and left--there will be no harm from it. Following the outline of Turgenev's novel, "the nihilists" repudiated art in the name of "aesthetic realism"; exalted the exact sciences in the guise of "utilitarianism"; glorified the educated classes as a product of "enlightenment." Emancipation of the individual took precedence over social emancipation: "individuality" became the keystone of their doctrine.

While "the nihilists" incorporated the positivistic and destructive tendencies of Bazarov, they, understandably, ignored the ultimate sense of meaninglessness which undermined him. This negative aspect was seized upon by the opponents and enemies of radicalism in order to demonstrate their essential impotence. Dostoevsky (1821-1881) was one of the most influential critics of the movement and largely responsible for giving the word "nihilism" its decidedly derogatory connotation in popular usage. In an explanatory introduction to his Pushkin address, Dostoevsky speaks of the new Russian men, the Bazarovs of his day:

\[\ldots\text{Pushkin} \ldots\text{was the first to detect and record the principle pathological phenomenon of our educated society, historically detached from, and priding itself on, the people. He indicated and graphically set before us our negative type--the restless man, refusing to be reconciled, having no faith in his own soil and in the native forces, denying Russia and ultimately himself} \ldots\text{refusing to cooperate with others and}\]

12A. Yarmolinsky, op. cit., p. 120.

13F. Venturi, op. cit., pp. 325-327.

14R. Fuelop-Miller's Fyodor Dostoevsky develops this political interpretation of The Possessed. The prophetic insight of the novel is seen as its description of the forces unleashed in the Communist Revolution.
However, in his novel, The Possessed, Dostoevsky was not satisfied to describe a certain psychological type as did Turgenev. Dostoevsky seeks to grasp the essence of an historical force of which "the nihilists" were just one manifestation. While Turgenev concentrated on the conflict between positivism and tradition, Dostoevsky emphasizes the collapse of traditional beliefs and the rise of demonic powers over man's will. Compared to Dostoevsky's Stavrogin, the protagonist of The Possessed, Turgenev's Bazarov expresses a muted nihilism: through Stavrogin inconsistencies and even contradictions are made explicit; ideas are fused with action; extremes become the norm. While Bazarov is captivated by scientific determinism, Stavrogin embodies a vertiginous freedom.

The inspiration for The Possessed was a contemporary event, the Nechayev affair, in which a student who belonged to a revolutionary society was murdered by some of its members. The event was highly publicized and gained much attention for "the nihilists." For Dostoevsky, the murder was one other glaring instance of an historical force which had seized Russia and which had to be recognized and destroyed. Russia was "possessed" by the demonic and to describe this possession was the purpose of the work. In Dostoevsky, nihilism is not limited to a program of revolutionary violence nor to a sense of futility, but is rather the demonic power of groundless human will. It culminates in that proclamation issued by Ivan in The Brothers Karamazov --all is permitted.

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Although nihilism seems to attain great significance in The Possessed, it becomes secondary in the context of his last major work, The Brothers Karamazov (1880). Here the battleground is no longer the socio-political plane, but the sphere of the religious. Stavrogin and Ivan Karamazov certainly share essential features, but their differences are decisive. While Stavrogin towers over all other characters in The Possessed and thus is the only source of genuine possibility in the novel, Ivan is one of three brothers, each embodying a forceful mode of engagement. Furthermore, behind the three brothers looms the figure of Father Zossima, who exemplifies the possibility of salvation through suffering and love. The cold rationality of Stavrogin, which is found in Ivan, is tempered by suffering--that which was so elusive for Stavrogin himself. And although Ivan's fate is left ambiguous at the end of the novel, at least there remains the possibility of redemption. Furthermore redemption seems probable, indeed likely, for Dmitri, and Alyosha doesn't need redemption--he is already affirming life and faith.

The relationship between nihilism and atheism, which was central to Dostoevsky's novels, finds its most significant philosophical expression in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, nihilism is intimately related to "the death of God."

The greatest recent event--that "God is dead," that the belief in the Christian God has ceased to be believable--is even now beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe ... what must collapse now that this belief has been undermined ... [is] all that was built upon it, leaned on it, grew

16 This is only a brief adumbration of Nietzsche's position which will be more extensively discussed in Chapter II.
into it; for example our whole European morality. ... 

The historical context of nihilism, according to Nietzsche, is explicitly the Christian-moral interpretation of the world; implicitly the major tradition of Western philosophy beginning with Plato. The crucial element in both of these developments was the belief in "another world" which transcended human experience and yet which became the standard for our conception of truth. This belief in "another world" bred in Western man the need for a purpose in human existence as a whole. The concepts of "aim," "unity," and "truth" became the pillars of Western thought. However, in the pursuit of truth, especially with regard to the development of the natural sciences, a conflict arose: a naturalistic explanation of events does not seem to require the concepts of "purpose" or "totality," which eventually came to appear as mere "values," as "subjective." In the modern era, the ideal of an "objective" pursuit of truth undermined the veracity of other-worldly doctrines. The advent of nihilism in the nineteenth century came with the suspicion that all attempts to attain "truth" are interpretations, based covertly upon individual valuation. Thus, although Nietzsche's concept of nihilism certainly entails a moral crisis, it goes far beyond morality to the very heart of philosophy. It calls into question the entire history of Western thought, the very possibility of knowledge itself. Much of Nietzsche's later work was devoted to an overcoming of nihilism: what was called for was an affirmation of life which rejects the concepts (aim, unity, truth) which gave rise to the problem. With his ideas of "the overman" and "eternal recurrence," Nietzsche attempted an answer, but it seems he struggled to the end of

his life with the problem unresolved.

In the twentieth century, the word "nihilism" has been used in differing contexts, mainly in derogatory senses closely related to a general and often vaguely conceived crisis in Western civilization. In an article entitled "Aspects of Contemporary Nihilism," George Kren states that "the concept of nihilism provides a unifying principle which connects many ... of the manifestations of twentieth century culture." Kren finds two underlying tendencies in the twentieth century which express themselves in the cult of the irrational which developed out of nineteenth century writers and culminated in hero-worship and the various forms of Fascism, and the cult of the absurd--a reaction to the failure of the former and one which undermined belief in the autonomy of the individual. The latter is seen in such writings as those of Franz Kafka, the anti-utopian novelists, and the genres of psychoanalytic literature and the sociology of knowledge. What both of these tendencies have in common, according to Kren, is the denial of the capacity of reason to guide and nourish human existence.

M. Natanson takes up a similar theme in his article, "Conceptual Nihilism." Natanson defines nihilism as "the root denial of the validity of reason." However Natanson wants to restrict the meaning of nihilism to those doctrines which claim that "reason is itself damaged, faulted, and

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18George Kren, op. cit., p. 30.
22M. Natanson, op. cit., p. 9.
that nothing can be built on its foundation. He denies that nihilism is either identical with the fact-value dichotomy or a logical consequence of the separation of facts from values. For Natanson, nihilism is not the logical consequence of the separation of fact and value, but is rather the attempt to deny what he calls "the paradoxical tension" which must be maintained between the two. According to his view, nihilism is a constant threat to both reason and value, but this threat must be endured and creatively maintained. He sees the real danger in those doctrines which simply unite the two, for example in a "naive rationalism" of the Russian nihilists or a "trans-rational mythology" of the Fascists. Natanson argues that we must separate the ideal of value-neutrality from the concept of nihilism.

In his book Nihilism, S. Rosen also presents nihilism as a perennial problem, originating in human nature and not in historical events. In fact, he describes the position that gives it primarily historical significance as historicism, which is for him a form of nihilism. Rosen agrees with Natanson that nihilism is an attack on reason; however he sees this attack as being derived from "the epistemological and ontological teachings of the day." The philosophies of Wittgenstein and Heidegger are the chief vehicles of nihilism because they essentially are "indistinguishable from silence." According to Rosen, both of these philosophers develop a theory of language which denies the possibility that such a theory may be fully articulated. Furthermore both speak in a language which is irrelevant to human action and values. They separate reason from morality in such a

\[23\textit{bid.}, p. 10.\]

\[24\text{Stanley Rosen, } Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).\]
way that there can be no dialogue between the two. "As is especially
evident in our own age, the fundamental feature of nihilism is discontinuity,
and particularly so in the efforts to replace speech by immediate ecstasy
or symbolic abstraction." Both attempts fail to grasp the essential
nature of language which is basically a mediation between desire and things;
the disjunction can never be overcome.

Other contemporary interpretations of nihilism which take it outside
of an historical context should be mentioned. A. Danto, in a recent
article, isolates nihilism as a semantical theory which states that "nothing
is true." Danto argues that this form of nihilism is based on a misguided
conception of the correspondence theory. He points out that according to
the nihilistic position, the contradictory of any statement about the world
denied by nihilism would be true. Furthermore, "the question of how the
world is not to be deduced from the structure of language, but is in the
end just the scientific question of which sentences are true." In Beyond
Nihilism, M. Polanyi describes nihilism as "moral inversion," "a trans-
formation of messianic violence from a means to an end into an aim in
itself." Nihilism is not the result of immoralism, but of an excessive
sense of one's rightness, a fanaticism. M. Novak describes the usual
negative connotation of nihilism as "an ideological interpretation imposed
on the experience of nothingness," which he understands as a positive


source of insight and perhaps guidance.\textsuperscript{28}

A more historical sense of the development of the concept is presented in H. Thielicke's book, \textit{Nihilism}.\textsuperscript{29} He attempts a typology of nihilism within the context of post-World War II Europe. Thielicke speaks of the last "ism," one which differs from all other "isms" in that (1) it believes in nothing and (2) it is not a program but a value judgment.

Nihilism takes many forms. It can be overt, "confessory nihilism" or it can be disguised, hiding its essential nature as for example, in Nazism. It can manifest itself in several ways: psychiatrically as the loss of self; philosophically as the reduction of existence to inalterable laws (e.g., Spengler's \textit{Decline of the West}) or blind accident; in jurisprudence as juridical positivism; in medicine as mechanistic functionalism; and politically as totalitarian automatism. Thielicke then turns to the phenomenon of anxiety--the experience of nothingness--and attempts to show that it is at the roots of nihilism itself: anxiety is the focal point for the breakdown of the world and the self. The possible responses to anxiety are differing degrees of "naive nihilism"--a flight from meaning into immediacy and anonymity--or "reflective nihilism"--a resoluteness which endures meaninglessness but never accepts it. Thielicke also speaks of this second alternative as "fractured nihilism" because it seeks meaning in spite of itself--even if only in its struggle to avoid suicide. However, the author ultimately has a Christian answer: anxiety can be overcome through Christian love, which he offers as a genuine possibility of


Finally one would expect that the most immediate reaction to "the death of God" would have come from theology. Yet it was not until the mid-twentieth century that an explicit "death of God" theology became articulated. However, the "death of God" theorists (e.g., T. Altizer, W. Hamilton) do seek their origins in earlier theologians. K. Barth is cited for his absolute separation of faith and culture and his rejection of natural theology, which opened "the possibility of a radical theology proceeding from the total absence of God in human experience."\footnote{Thomas J. J. Altizer, Toward a New Christianity: Readings in the Death of God Theology (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), p. 123.} In contrast to Barth, P. Tillich attempts to delineate a dialectical relationship between culture and faith, one that deals explicitly with the absence of God in modern civilization. He affirms the death of "the god of theism," but sees this deity as a pseudo-absolute, not worthy of true faith or "ultimate concern." Drawing upon the work of Heidegger, R. Bultmann endeavors to meet the historical crisis of the conflict between religion and science, through a process of "demythologizing" the Christian faith which remains consistent with the modern mentality. The authentic possibility of faith is rooted in historical human existence and must ultimately remain within an historical problematic. However, according to Altizer, all three of the above theologians refuse to accept the reality of atheism. The death of God theology bases itself on the proposition that "... there was once a God to whom adoration, praise and trust were appropriate and even necessary, but that now there is no such God."\footnote{T. J. J. Altizer and W. Hamilton, Radical Theology and the Death of God (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1966), p. x.} This position is
distinguished from ordinary atheism in that it seeks to understand the history of this death and looks for alternatives in a godless world.

The historical sketch given above has covered a wide range of phenomena and ideas which have been either implicitly or explicitly related to nihilism. This sketch provides a background for the following chapter which focuses on one specific conception—that of Martin Heidegger. In Heidegger's thought, nihilism becomes a fundamental philosophical issue with a decisive significance for the modern world.
CHAPTER II
Heidegger's Concept of Nihilism

It is in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger that the Nietzschean concept of nihilism finds its most significant philosophical response. Nietzsche's problem becomes central to Heidegger's later thought. As J. L. Mehta has written in his book on Heidegger:

... among philosophers ... it is above all Nietzsche, with his criticism of the Platonic-Christian tradition and the nihilistic culmination of this tradition in his own thought, that has provided the springboard for Heidegger's quest. ... Nietzsche's philosophy is the key that has enabled Heidegger to lay hold of the inner meaning and significance of the Western metaphysical tradition. ...

Nietzsche's attack on Western metaphysics from Plato to Hegel revealed to Heidegger an essential nihilistic strain, which Nietzsche discovered but to which he subsequently succumbed. Nietzsche sensed the problem of nihilism, but failed to adequately understand its nature and thus became, himself, the "last metaphysician of the West."

Before explicitly taking up Heidegger's account of nihilism, its relation to Nietzsche's concept should be clarified. Heidegger agrees with Nietzsche on the following points: 1) nihilism is basically an historical phenomenon intimately related to the history of Western metaphysics; 2) the problem essentially begins with Plato and grows with each of the great metaphysicians of the West, culminating in Nietzsche's philosophy (although the nature of this culmination is a major point of disagreement.

between Heidegger and Nietzsche); 3) pre-Socratic thinkers and poets were pre-nihilistic and held the promise of a great beginning, one which was betrayed by subsequent thought; 4) "the question of being" is central to this entire development. However, the way in which this last point is understood is the basis of their radical divergence. For Nietzsche, the concept of Being is an "error," a human imposition on change, becoming, flux: it is man's attempt to secure himself against the forces of decay and death. The concepts of "aim," "unity," and "truth" are concepts of "Being" in that they are attempts to order and stabilize existence through an eternal standard of reference. "Being" is an erroneous human construct which must now be rejected by the will to power.\(^2\)

For Heidegger, nihilism is essentially "the loss of Being." The historical process which Nietzsche described in terms of activity--"invention," "creation"--Heidegger describes in terms of response--"forgetfulness," "a turning away" from Being.\(^3\) This difference in characterization of nihilism is critical: for Heidegger, Nietzsche's voluntarism is the consummation of a tradition which has been severed from Being. Metaphysical thinking, according to Heidegger, is founded upon this cleavage; originally as the separation between being and appearance, as established paradigmatically in Platonic thought.\(^4\) And although the germ of this

\(^2\) Nietzsche's concept of the will to power is discussed in detail late in this chapter.


cleavage is found in the pre-Socratics, there is also found there a profound sense of the unity of being and appearance, to such a degree, that for them "Being means appearance." Furthermore, human apprehension and that which it apprehends are co-related aspects of a unified power which includes them both. The gathering-together in thought of the emergent, of that which appears, is comprehended as a whole which refuses to be reduced to either mere thinking on the one hand, or the totality of things, on the other. Rather it is just the co-relation which must be endured and sustained. Man, as the locus of "revealment," attempts to preserve a certain appearance against overpowering otherness or concealment. Thus according to Heidegger for the early Greeks, human thinking is intimately related to Being (the gathering-of-the-emergent) in such a way that both are necessary for man and Being to attain their respective truth.

Metaphysical cleavage appears when Being becomes understood as "enduring presence," as "reality," which must be grasped by human thinking or reason. Heidegger holds that the "gathering" aspect of Being is accomplished definitively when Being is understood as "essence" and its "emergent" character then becomes "mere appearance"; thus the pre-Socratic unity of being and appearance is broken. Within this understanding, knowledge (truth) becomes a relation of correspondence between thinking and an

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object—the Forms. "Since Plato, thinking about the Being of beings becomes—'philosophy,' because it is the gazing up to the 'ideas.' From this time on the 'philosophy' that begins first with Plato has the characteristic of what later on is called 'metaphysics.'"\(^8\)

According to Heidegger, another major consequence of Platonic philosophy is a new conception of ethics. Moral action also comes to be understood in terms of representation, in terms of the correspondence between a judgment and the moral Form in question. Thus the origin of the concept of "value"—an excellence which is bestowed by conformity to an "ideal."\(^9\) The objects of ethical discourse become separated from the world of existence. Perhaps a more significant aspect of Platonic ethics concerns the separation of being and the Good. For Plato, the Good as the highest of all Forms stands beyond being and indeed is its very ground. In this conception of the Good, Plato prepares the way for the theological aspect of metaphysics. Thus in Heidegger's discussion of Plato, the two essential features of metaphysical thought emerge: 1) the understanding of Being in terms of beings, that is, in terms of the most general characteristics of beings; 2) an understanding of Being in terms of the highest and therefore the most "divine" being.\(^10\)

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 268.


has been lost or forgotten is the Being of beings - that through which beings manifest themselves, which only then enables metaphysics to represent them. Thinking takes its first step toward "logic" or the science of thought. Man is separated from Being in such a way that beings come to be the focus of thinking. After Plato, "man thinks in terms of the fact that the essence of truth is the correctness of the representing of all beings according to 'ideas' and esteems everything according to 'values.'"11

In Aristotle's conception of "substance," there at first seemed to be an effort to recover the pre-Socratic sense of the emergent and to resist the other-worldly cast of the Forms. However, the primary meaning of substance shifts from the concrete particular which resists conceptualization to its essence (the formal-final cause) and thus remains closer to the Platonic conception than the pre-Socratic. Furthermore, in Aristotle language becomes the essential determinant of disclosure. "Now logos as statement becomes the abode of truth in the sense of correctness. And this process culminates in Aristotle's proposition to the effect that logos as statement can be true or false. Truth that was originally unconcealment...now becomes an attribute of the logos."12

In the Christian era, pre-Socratic thinking is forgotten by a "revealed truth," which casts itself in a Platonic-Aristotelian framework. The Christian God becomes the highest being, who creates all other beings and places them within a hierarchical structure. The problem which

Aristotle had raised in his conception of substance was definitively closed by the scholastic translation of "substance" (as particular) into "actuality," into a creation of God. "Existence" describes this mode of being as contrasted to "essence." Furthermore, the concept of truth is taken further away from early Greek thought; truth is now guaranteed by God and thus becomes "certitude."\(^{13}\)

According to Heidegger, the decisive step in this devolution of thought is found in the philosophy of Descartes. Through methodical doubt, reality is stripped to a minimum, to the abstract thinking self, without content, without structure.\(^{14}\) Yet just when it seems that his method has led him to an impotent solipsism, he is able to "prove" the existence of God and the world; after his retreat from reality, he returns to it with renewed strength and vigor. The seemingly nugatory suspension of reality results in a surprising cogency: the previously suspended world returns in abstract clarity. The retreat into the self was not an escape from reality but rather a gathering of forces, a necessary release from the world of activity so as to arrive at the ground from which a decisive attack can be made.\(^{15}\) That ground entails the basic dichotomy of Cartesian philosophy. Existence is rigorously divided into two substances—self-conscious, incorporeal, free mind and extended, corporeal, determined

\(^{13}\) Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 6-7; *Nietzsche*, II, pp. 131-2.


matter. Man is able to grasp the essence of the world through thought, i.e., through abstraction, calculation, mathematics. The world as "object" is essentially grasped by the clear and distinct reasoning of man as "subject." Clear and distinct ideas relate the thinking self to the world of extension; the cogito becomes the locus of truth, of certainty. Furthermore, truth becomes a matter of representation: the world is conceived as a picture set before man, which he in turn can represent in thought. The Being of beings is found in representedness; objectivity and the Being of man is found in the capacity to represent not only other beings but his own as well. Thus man as subject becomes the ground of everything, the totality of what is.

The consequences of Descartes' "subject-ism," according to Heidegger, are three-fold: 1) the world is understood as "picture;" 2) "philosophical anthropology" becomes the basis of all philosophy; 3) value-thinking becomes dominant. When the totality of things stand before man and find their Being in human representation, in objectivity, then the value or worth of beings become "subjective"—it loses its grounding in the world of things and tends to become wholly dependent upon the subject.

18 Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche, II, pp. 188-92.
21 Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche, II, pp. 263-82.
According to Heidegger, the critique of rationalist thought by the English empiricists, most notably Hume, finds its most significant philosophical expression in the philosophy of Kant. Attempting a synthesis of the two epistemological positions of rationalism and empiricism, the "Critical philosophy" seeks to explicate the conditions for the possibility of experience, which will provide a secure foundation for the natural sciences and provide an autonomous realm of moral action which does not exceed the limits of reason. Following Descartes in his turn to the subject, Kant finds the conditions for the possibility of experience to be precisely the conditions for the possibility of the objects of experience, that is, the categories of human understanding by which the sensuous manifold is structured. "Objectivity" becomes the Being of all beings. The connection between Being and the gathering power of knowledge is found in the subject, i.e., the synthetic unity of apperception. However, the Kantian subject is finite: its knowledge is bounded by the thing-in-itself, on the one hand, and the noumenal self, on the other. Kantian man remains dependent upon a source which lies outside of his knowledge. Yet Kant doesn't incorporate this finitude into his conception of knowledge: the categories of the understanding are universal and eternal; objectivity is safeguarded against the possibility that it (as the Being of beings) is founded on a finite subjectivity.


24Martin Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, pp. 226-33.

more, this finitude doesn't essentially disturb Kant's conception of morality: morality is legislated by reason itself, apart from any concrete engagement in the world. Thus although we may not speak of moral knowledge, since sensation is irrelevant; nevertheless morality is secure within the autonomous realm of freedom.

Continuing Heidegger's critique, the concept of the thing-in-itself, the last vestige of man's finitude and the Being of objects independent of subjectivity, is the very point of attack by subsequent philosophy, especially German Idealism. Taking their clue from the legislative power of the Kantian subject, the Idealists expand the domain of subjectivity to finally include, in Hegel, all of reality. The otherness or objectivity of the world comes to be understood as essentially Absolute Spirit, unconditional certitude. In one sense, Hegel returns to the early Greek conception of Being by understanding that the Being of phenomena attains its truth only in human awareness, so that both are necessary in this process of self-realization or 'experience.' However Being remains basically an experience predicated upon a subject. For Hegel, the Being of beings (as developed in his Phenomenology) and the Being of thought (the Logic) are identified in that Being which is the highest being--Absolute Spirit. Rather than sustaining the ontological difference between Being and beings, Hegel identifies them in his highest principle. He cannot allow Being to be severed from the subject.27


According to Heidegger, between Hegel and Nietzsche is Schopenhauer's philosophy of will. Schopenhauer questions the ultimacy of Hegelian rationality and finds in the Kantian thing-in-itself a way to undermine idealism. He believed that he could "decipher" the noumenal realm and find the ultimate force, not only within the noumenal, but the source of the phenomenal world as well. Schopenhauer identifies this force as Will, a non-rational principle which issues in flux, becoming, chaos. Furthermore, the categories of the phenomenal world are not universally true, but rather ultimately futile attempts by man to attain stability. Yet once again, this conception of Will is metaphysical—it identifies Being with a unified principle, the highest being, and through it attempts to account for the totality of beings in their most general features. The history of nihilism is finally consummated in Nietzsche's thought.

Nietzsche becomes the central figure in Heidegger's conception of nihilism. For Heidegger, "... all the themes of Western thought, though all of them transmuted, fatefully gather in Nietzsche's thinking." However while Nietzsche believed that he had exposed the nihilism of the tradition and gone beyond it, Heidegger argues that Nietzsche's philosophy failed to grasp the essence of nihilism and thus remained within the nihilistic tradition, actually bringing it to a completion. A decisive difference between them is their conception of nihilism and, more specifically, what each of them considers is "negated" in nihilism. As has been indicated

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above, Heidegger understands nihilism as the "negation" (forgetfulness) of Being. "Being" for Nietzsche is an empty word, "a vapor," which has led Western metaphysics astray. Heidegger takes this understanding of Being as decisive: "... this was his guiding view of Being from the earliest days of his philosophical effort. It is the fundamental support and determinant of his philosophy." Given this conception of Being, Nietzsche understands nihilism as the "negation" of values, or, to be more exact, the highest values and ideals of the Western tradition.

According to Heidegger, Nietzsche focuses on the concept of value because he is still held in the sway of Platonic thought: "... Plato's thinking follows the change of the essence of truth (of Being) which change becomes the story of metaphysics and which has begun its unconditioned fulfillment in Nietzsche's philosophy." However, Nietzsche would certainly disagree with this assessment, mainly because of what he regarded to be nihilistic (metaphysical) in Platonic thought—namely, Plato's two-world theory which judged this world by the permanent standard of a super-sensible realm. For Nietzsche, the state of nihilism is realized when one discovers that any metaphysical realm is merely a human

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"invention," a fabrication based solely on psychological needs. However for Heidegger,

... what is decisive for the essence of metaphysics does not lie by any means in the fact that this distinction appears as an opposition between the supersensible and the sensible. Instead, this distinction, in the sense of cleavage, remains the first and sustaining one. It persists even when the Platonic hierarchy of the supersensible and sensible is reversed, and the sensible is experienced in a more essential and broader sense... 

Furthermore, Heidegger claims that Nietzsche is dependent upon the Platonic conception of truth even when he denies the possibility of truth and further interprets it as a value. In Nietzsche's defining of truth as error, "... there lies the concession to thinking of the traditional essence of truth as the correctness of making an assertion." Nietzsche does not establish a new conception of truth, but rather attempts to develop a position where truth is not needed.

With the realization that there is no "true world" where the highest values and ideals are secure, there comes, according to Nietzsche, a general sense of worthlessness, of meaninglessness, i.e., nihilism. Nietzsche's response is to turn to this world for a new basis for valuing life: a life-force, a constant becoming, a will to power becomes the source of a new valuation. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche's concen-
tration on values is directly related to his central conception; it is the will to power which determines his approach to nihilism and his supposed overcoming of it. For Heidegger, the will to power is not simply Nietzsche's answer to nihilism, but rather it is the basis of his very understanding of nihilism. When Nietzsche speaks of "unity," "totality," and "truth" as highest values, he has already begun his revaluation; he has reinterpreted metaphysical conceptions as values.\(^{39}\) But, according to Heidegger, in so doing he remains within a metaphysical stance by imposing a conception of being upon becoming, despite the fact that this conception is no longer understood as permanent, i.e., "being" is not understood in terms of eternal standards, but as a process of valuation. Thus Heidegger interprets the will to power as an expression for one of the basic features of metaphysics—that which names beings according to their essential nature.\(^{40}\) To be sure, "essence" is understood differently in order to correspond to the dynamic character of the will to power. Rather than signifying what is universally enduring, "essence" comes to be understood in terms of sustaining perspectives and enhancing values for the growth and increase of the will to power. Heidegger would also deny another tenet of Nietzsche's position, namely, that metaphysics is bound-up with a rational conception of the world or "the categories of reason." Heidegger interprets Nietzsche's emphasis on the non-rational and "the body" as another reversal within traditional metaphysics.\(^{41}\)


\(^{40}\)Ibid., pp. 270-72.

\(^{41}\)Ibid., pp. 190-1.
With respect to his conception of truth, Heidegger places Nietzsche in direct relation to Descartes; he argues that Nietzsche's will to power is an elaboration and extension of Descartes' concept of the subject.

"Nietzsche's teaching . . . only completes the most extreme development of that teaching of Descartes, according to which all truth is grounded in the self-certainty of the human subject." Although Nietzsche allows for varying perspectives which gain their value (truth) in preserving and increasing power, Nietzsche conceives of man as a "representing-I." Thus to Descartes' notion of man is added an essential will to domination and control.

However, both in terms of Heidegger's conception of metaphysics and in terms of Nietzsche's understanding of his own thought, Nietzsche's philosophy is incomplete if it would stop with the concept of the will to power. In Heidegger's view, an additional doctrine is needed to bring forth a being who will embody the will to power in its purest form. The doctrine of eternal recurrence is the answer to both demands. For Nietzsche, the response to nihilism was continually problematic; it called for a strength of will which seemed lacking in modern European man. The acknowledgment of the will to power in all events was a step in the right direction, but what was needed was a new being, a "superman," who would authentically respond to the will to power and complete the revaluation process. Eternal recurrence was both Nietzsche's answer to nihilism and his call for such a superman. Eternal recurrence is the completion of the will to

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42 Ibid., p. 129 (translation mine).
43 Ibid., p. 190-92.
power because it achieves a correspondence between becoming (change) and being (permanence), without reducing one to the other. Furthermore it is a call and a challenge to man which, Nietzsche believes, will separate the stronger beings from the weaker and prepare the way for the superman. 44

Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche first focuses on the relationship between eternal recurrence and the will to power. He uses Nietzsche's own words to ground his analysis: "To impose upon becoming the character of being—that is the supreme will to power . . . that everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being . . ." 45 According to Heidegger, only when the two doctrines are thought together is Nietzsche's metaphysics complete: the will to power characterizes the essence of beings; eternal recurrence characterizes their existence or the way beings are as a whole. 46 Heidegger argues that Nietzsche remains within metaphysics because he still understands Being as constant presence, as "eternal."

The highest will to power, that is, the life-force in all life, is to represent transience as a fixed Becoming within the eternal recurrence of the same, and so to render it secure and stable. This representation is a thinking which, as Nietzsche notes emphatically, "impresses" upon being the character of its Being. 47

The world of becoming is transformed by the will to power; it becomes material for willing, for creation. Eternal recurrence bestows eternity upon becoming. Thought together, the two doctrines form a circle of expanding power.

44Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will To Power, pp. 35, 224, 225.
46Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche, 11, p. 38.
As has been mentioned above, Nietzsche taught his doctrine of eternal recurrence in correspondence with the concept of the superman. In the development of these conceptions is realized according to Heidegger, the ultimate "subjectism" of Nietzsche's philosophy and indeed of the Western tradition. The superman is the type of man who corresponds to Nietzsche's metaphysics of power: he is the focal-point of existence—understood in its essence as will to power and in its totality as eternal recurrence. Because the superman is no longer tied to Platonic-Christian morality, but affirms the earth within an ever-expanding process of total domination and control in reaction to that morality, the nihilistic tendencies which began with Platonic philosophy and were developed through the major metaphysicians of the West culminate in Nietzsche. Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche sounds a definitive note—Western metaphysical tradition is at an end. However, Heidegger is indebted to Nietzsche for his critique of metaphysics and thus his understanding of nihilism. Indeed, Heidegger's further development of the concept of nihilism and its related problems are essentially rooted in the historical perspective which Nietzsche provided.

CHAPTER III

Nihilism in the 19th & 20th Centuries: A Heideggerian Critique of Selected Literature and Philosophy

In Heidegger's interpretation of the history of philosophy as the loss of Being, i.e., nihilism, three significant trends have emerged: 1) the unfolding of the subject-object dichotomy; 2) the devolution of thought to representation; 3) the growing importance of valuational thinking. All three trends culminate in a "subject-ism" which attempts to seek Being either in beings or in human consciousness. The unifying power of Being is ignored or is "unthought" in the metaphysical tradition. However, although much of Heidegger's work is devoted to showing how Being has been concealed in metaphysical thinking, an equally important task has been to reawaken the sense of Being which is revealed in that which is unthought, even in the period of a full-blown nihilism. This revealment often centers about the problematic issues of the tradition, those areas where thought seems to founder. However Heidegger also seeks a site of revealment outside of philosophy proper, in the world at large.

For Heidegger, the question of Being is not merely an academic affair nor is it restricted to the realm of thought, the object of an intellectual pastime. Rather Being is the basis of the everyday world; it creates the space in which men move and have their being. The question of Being is intimately related to the concepts and ideas which guide the

intellectual horizon of an era; to that unifying power of experience which establishes and preserves the fundamental presuppositions of an historical epoch; that which opens up certain possibilities of development and correspondingly conceals and prohibits others.² Thus Heidegger sees the loss of Being in "the darkening of the world, the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the transformation of men into a mass, the hatred and suspicion of everything free and creative . . ."³ Indeed much of the significance of his historical analyses rest upon their implications for the present state of affairs; they enable us to grasp the historical context within which the present stage of nihilism has developed.

In An Introduction to Metaphysics, Heidegger speaks of contemporary nihilism in terms of the emasculation of spirit which he describes in four stages: 1) the reinterpretation of spirit as "intelligence," a cleverness which manipulates things through organization; 2) this manipulation comes to be seen as something easily learned and which is grounded in the non-spiritual, the objective (positivism); 3) all aspects of the spiritual process (e.g., poetry, art, religion) come to be understood in terms of a conscious cultivation and planning; 4) spirit itself finally comes to be understood as a merely decorative product of civilization.⁴ In contrast to this modern development, Heidegger describes spirit as a "fundamental, knowing resolve toward the essence of Being."⁵ True spirit gathers the meaning of beings and lets it emerge in its truth. When this resolve is

²J. L. Mehta, The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger, p. 125.
³Martin Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 31.
⁴Ibid., pp. 38-40.
⁵Ibid., p. 41
absent, Being withdraws also. As Heidegger states in his introduction to *What Is Metaphysics?*: "... the experience of the oblivion of Being ... involves the crucial conjecture that in view of the unconcealedness of Being, the involvement of Being in human nature is an essential feature of Being." Thus the present condition of nihilism offers a puzzling problem to Heidegger: will Being itself bring about the essential human involvement or will metaphysical thinking generate a new relation to Being by pushing the situation to a crisis? However in either case, the predicament becomes critical:

What if the absence of this involvement and the oblivion of this absence determined the entire modern age? What if the absence of Being abandoned man more and more exclusively to beings ... What if there were signs that this oblivion will become still more decisive in the future? ... If the oblivion of Being ... should be real, would there not be occasion enough for a thinker who recalls Being to experience a genuine horror?

Granted this characterization of nihilism, Heidegger proposes an urgent task for the thinker: "... to experience this oblivion and to absorb this experience into the involvement of Being in man, and to preserve it there. ..." He calls for a new type of thinking, one which resists representation and which is responsive to Being.

Heidegger makes it clear that he is not simply advocating a return—if that were possible—to pre-Socratic thought. The history of Being is fundamental for our understanding of Being even if this history has culminated in its loss. Heidegger does not merely oppose metaphysics, but he

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7 Ibid., p. 211.

8 Ibid., p. 212.
wants to overcome it by a type of thinking which reaches "back into the
ground of metaphysics"; he attempts to uncover the light of Being which
goes unnoticed in metaphysics and yet which grounds the metaphysical inquiry
itself.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, a confirmation of the
Heideggerian conception of nihilism would have a two-fold task: to isolate
the "positive" features of the loss of Being through the tradition, i.e.,
the metaphysical consequences of nihilism; and to uncover the sense of
Being which is concealed in the nihilism of the modern world. From the
wealth of phenomena that is available for these tasks, two novels which
explicitly deal with "nihilism" and two contemporary philosophical works
were selected for analysis in this chapter. The novels were chosen because
they offer concrete descriptions of the existential predicament of modern
nihilism and thus afford ample ground for experiential attestation which
is often lacking in Heidegger's own analyses. And although they were
written in the nineteenth century, the problem of nihilism is encountered
in a way that describes essential aspects of the contemporary phenomenon.
Furthermore, these two novels mark the acknowledgment of "nihilism" outside
of the domain of theoretical thought; "nihilism" is encountered as an active
force which shapes and directs the respective worlds of the novels. Lastly,
each novel characterizes an essential nihilistic stance: the first is
based upon a positivistic methodology which stresses objectivity; the
second emphasizes an extreme subjectivity and unlimited freedom. Together
the novels indicate that an exclusive affirmation of either side of the
modern subject-object dichotomy leads to nihilism. 9 The following discussion

9 The philosophical works were selected with a view to the nihilistic
stances of the novels. See p. 43.
is an explication of those novels in the light of Heidegger's concept of nihilism.

In Bazarov, the protagonist of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, nihilism becomes a world-view, a way of looking at the world which recognizes only what is scientifically verifiable. The world is present as that which can be represented in scientific experimentation. Correspondingly, all that fails to meet this criterion becomes invisible and is relegated to a non-cognitive limbo. His positivism is explicitly nihilistic in that he rejects and even seeks to destroy anything which cannot be scientifically grounded: traditional institutions and values must be razed so that a new order can be established. His nihilism is deepened when he acknowledges that destruction must be the first order of business and even possibly the last—a plan of reconstruction is unnecessary. Bazarov's most radical position is reached when he realizes that even his passion for science rests upon an inexplicable and ultimately unjustifiable base—a mere feeling, a matter of psycho-chemistry. The world is dissolved into meaninglessness.

In the development of his nihilism, Bazarov is increasingly severed from the world—first from the authority of tradition, secondly from the meaning of his life and emotions, and finally from the very world-view which binds him, however tentatively, to the world. His radical objectivism tends to become a groundless subjectivism: he vacillates between optimism and despair. His world-view challenges the world to appear only as the scientifically determinable and his experience of the world challenges his

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world-view to expand and become comprehensive. This mutual challenge ends in perplexity; the world will not conform to his restrictions nor will his view accommodate the world. There is a withdrawal of meaning both from Bazarov's own life and from the totality of existence—both become inexplicable, groundless, unreal. The world appears only as the totality of objects related solely by utility and he himself ambiguously appears as a manipulative subject or as just another object to be manipulated.

Bazarov affirms the world as material for scientific discovery; he negates the world of tradition and authority—the world as it is. However, this is a simple dichotomy only on paper. Bazarov finds himself in a world that does not easily separate into his categories; a world that yearns to be unified. His difficulties can be traced back to the subject-object dichotomy: science describes the objective world, that which can be represented; tradition rests upon the subjective valuations of a decadent social class. Bazarov's relation to science is unquestioned at the beginning of the novel; he presupposes its truth. For Bazarov, his positivistic position is not one that he "projects" upon reality; he doesn't demand scientific clarity at the expense of his own happiness. Rather he is confronted with a world that "speaks" to him in this way—the universe demands the strict calculation of a science. By comparison to this standard, all extra-scientific realms seem secondary and even insignificant.

However Bazarov is not valueless; his nihilism is a mixture of positivism and its common ally, utilitarianism. Yet once again, the concept of utility is a presupposition and needs no explanation. According to the context, the utilitarian may claim priority for health, longevity, equality, freedom, without having to question these values themselves or their interrelation. Later in the novel, Bazarov gives the utilitarian
argument an important twist which probably gave "nihilism" its essential character in the eyes of the public: he advocates destruction as the most useful program for his day. With this startling conclusion, Bazarov not only expresses a definite moral ambivalence, but also may be indirectly acknowledging a claim that goes beyond many of his positivistic principles --namely, that man is dependent upon a power other than himself, that any given historical situation is open only to a limited set of possibilities. Further, man cannot realistically envision a new form of society or create a blueprint for the future while under the influence of traditional beliefs and values. Thinking does not take place in an independent realm, but is always a response to the world and thus is intimately related to events and the "physical" surroundings. Under this interpretation, nihilism rejects constructive planning not simply as impractical, but on principle, as possibly even detrimental to a new beginning.

The tenuousness of Bazarov's position is exposed when he meets a woman whom he cannot categorize and cannot resist loving; she is a being that resists representation. The power of her presence cannot be simply rebutted by a clever twist or slogan nor can it be manipulated through experimentation. It becomes a beckoning and resisting opacity, an obscure reality which defies his former presuppositions. She becomes for him "a riddle." Formerly Bazarov would explain these feelings as mere romanticism --unreal, illusory; but now his categories fail him. He is thrown beyond himself; neither the "objective" world of science nor the "subjective" understanding is able to cope with this new force which binds him to the world. Outside of the sharply defined boundaries of science is the land of the blind--where the world no longer appears at all. Contrary to his earlier pronouncements of utter independence from his age and its events, Bazarov
now admits his dependence on an inexplicable future. Yet rather than acknowledging and trying to affirm his dependence on other powers beyond his control, he turns to further negation.

When Bazarov is rejected by this "mysterious woman," he is thrown into despair. His positivistic position turns back on itself: he recoils from his strange experience by reducing those feelings once more to the subjective. Bazarov explicitly reveals the double-perspective of his view: man is the scientific observer of an objective and indifferent universe, while at the same time he is the existing individual who must project his subjective feelings upon reality. To the scientist, human life is petty and insignificant; to the desirer, it is hideous. The two perspectives do not clash as long as thoughts do not go too deep or desires do not become too strong. Bazarov has been thrown beyond the bounds of safety, out among strange forces which can find no place within "reality." Finding no place, they must be refused, denied.

Nihilism is pushed to its logical conclusion: no attitude, no lifestyle can be justified— all are equally meaningless. Bazarov exposes the three-fold absurdity of his existence: not only is the extra-scientific realm merely subjective and unreal, but also the scientific attitude itself is rendered a matter of ungrounded feeling; and even beyond all justification and reasoning, the absolute negation of death awaits. All utilitarian ends are radically called into question and dismissed as empty. The entire positivistic program becomes a matter of inexplicable feeling, a result of unintelligible forces. The very cogency of scientific explanation is dissolved in an ultimate—No.

Finally Bazarov reduces even this disclosure of the world to a mere mood which disturbs his scientific attitude. He fails to realize that it
cannot be adequately explained by his former categories: the mood of
meaninglessness is certainly not an objective fact about the world, but
neither is it merely a subjective feeling. Rather it is a force which rad-
ically undermines his categories and transforms his relation to the world.
His former values and presuppositions become groundless: the "subject"
which sustained and nourished them is severed from the world as "object."
The world as the totality of presence looms before him, but he recoils from
it; rather than admitting the inadequacy of his position in the face of
meaninglessness, he objectifies his own subjectivity, his presence in the
world. At the end of the novel, Bazarov dies in an absurd way; he contracts
a fatal disease while performing an autopsy and dies in confusion, able to
affirm neither his positivism nor his passion.

In Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, nihilism is not limited to a pro-
gram of positivistic negation nor to a sense of meaninglessness, but is
conceived as the demonic power of groundless human will, which merely sub-
sumes the former as two possible manifestations. The ambivalence of nihilism
is not simply the vacillation between optimism and despair, but is the par-
adoxical synthesis of unlimited power and impotence, of the seeming divine
and the demonic. It establishes man as the sole source of meaning and value
and the world as a field of experimentation. Revolution, suicide, even the
striving for religious faith are all possible expressions of this groundless
will.

Dostoevsky had originally intended *The Possessed* to be a political
tract on "nihilism" which would expose its atheistic roots and present a
solution in terms of Russian Orthodoxy: "the light from the East" would

11 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*, trans. C. Garnett (New York:
conquer the forces of darkness.\textsuperscript{12} However, as the work progressed, seemingly against the author's will, the forces of evil gained in strength and in the end consumed his protagonist.

By the time Stavrogin appears in the novel, he is surrounded by an enigmatic aura. Previous to his appearance, the narrator tells of his remote past—his melancholy and sickly youth under the tutorship of a highly emotional idealist; his sudden character reversal in military service, where he becomes infamous for his wildness and strength; and his period of debauchery. In the recent past, he once returned to his hometown and caused a sensation through his "repulsive beauty" and shocking actions. Yet while he offended many, Stavrogin also seemed to possess superhuman qualities which created a legend around him. He is compared to legendary heroes who were always seeking danger and who revelled in the sensation of the conquest of fear. Yet he did not seem to enjoy these heroic feats, but rather seemed to act from necessity and boredom. He possessed a malicious indifference which was more terrible and revolting than any of the legendary characters of Russia.

As soon as Stavrogin himself enters the novel, he assumes domination. All other characters avow their inspirational dependence upon him and he, in turn, his utter independence of them. Stavrogin's "disciples" embody his earlier struggle for meaning and commitment. Shatov has appropriated those ideas which seek to affirm faith in the midst of doubt. His faith assumes the form of an attack on the world as it appears and an intense yearning for the world as it appears no longer; it denounces any attempt to reduce the world to strictly human categories, while affirming the religious

dimension, expressed in the Church and tradition, as the ultimate source of meaning. Admitting that he has been torn from this ground, Shatov seeks roots in the Russian soil, he longs for mystery beyond scientific clarity. However, the possibility of this type of faith is denied him: he cannot believe and when faith seems near, he is murdered through Stavrogin's power. Pyotr, the nihilist revolutionary, also finds his inspiration and power in Stavrogin. Pyotr seeks control over others through destruction and daring; he feels compelled to throw his will into the creation of chaos, but a "chaos" that is disciplined, one that responds to his power and yields to his desire. A third disciple, Kirillov, chooses self-destruction. Through a tortured logic, once again inspired by Stavrogin, he resolves suicide into an act of altruism: he will commit suicide so that all men will realize their absolute freedom and thus become gods. Once it is realized that there is no God, man must develop his will beyond all bounds—he must become the measure of all things. For Kirillov, Stavrogin is the man-god who will set the example for all mankind.

Stavrogin himself remains detached from his followers and is a law unto himself. At the heart of his powerful will is an impenetrable indifference, an indifference which isolates him from most external forces—national and religious heritage, social class, science, socialism, even death have no determinative effect on him. He is, as it were, a new beginning, pure will. He recognizes that he is not a Russian, not a believer in Orthodoxy; work and the soil mean little to him. He is also not a free-thinker or revolutionary; he has no faith in science or socialism. He cannot even become seriously involved in the gaining and wielding of power. He tries to shock himself into sincere feeling, into passion, but he is neither hot nor cold; his desire for burdens and suffering ends in lukewarm
ambiguity. His cross\textsuperscript{13} becomes temptation. Lacking any form of guidance, the world appears to Stavrogin as tantalizing material for experimentation. He is allured by both good and evil, enticed by pain and pleasure alike. Under these conditions, every situation is a possible temptation. Stavrogin seeks a cross to which he can cling in the face of temptation but his cross transforms itself into another whim, another devil's whisper. In the end, Stavrogin even tries to grasp temptation itself, in the form of his personal devil, as a point of reference in the chaotic flux.

Stavrogin is the spirit of lucidity, a paradigm of self-control. He is not driven in a rage of bestial ignorance, but with calculated precision and out of deep boredom: he is capable of "reasonable anger." Yet reason is unable to guide; it feeds solely upon the world. Stavrogin has unlimited power and technique, but he is essentially impotent. Beneath the sparks of faith and the fires of destruction which incessantly swirl about him, there is a spectral silence, a frozen void. He offers unlimited possibilities, but nothing actual. He is even able to comprehend that he is nothing but an empty freedom and yet to the end he maintains and even defiantly proclaims his self-hood, his isolated will. Beneath his thousand masks, there is merely a yawn\textsuperscript{14} which respires the world into chaos.

Stavrogin himself is the void which is revealed in nihilism. His very being is severed from the world and in turn the world collapses before his demonic power. Fragmentation in Stavrogin is complete: he is unable to essentially relate to any aspect of his life. He seems to be able to take

\textsuperscript{13}K. Mochulsky in his book, Dostoevsky, states that the name "Stavrogin" was derived from the Greek word "stauros" which means "cross."

\textsuperscript{14}The word "yawn" appropriately describes Stavrogin's essence: the noun "yawn" means (1) an opening; open space, a chasm; (2) the act of yawning. One of the meanings of the verb "to yawn" is to gape, as in desire for something; to yearn or long.
up "world views" at will, and discard them just as easily. He embodies an all-powerful "subject" which seems capable of unlimited perspectives with regard to the world. Accordingly, values are arbitrary and his sense of meaninglessness appears to offer his deepest insight into the nature of his existence. His subjectivity is so powerful that it refuses to acknowledge any event or person as autonomous, but rather reduces everything to its own creation, a mere show of force which can as easily be withdrawn. For Stavrogin, nothing can be revealed; he commits suicide.

In summary, both novels confirm the Heideggerian concept of nihilism by developing protagonists who embody "subjectisms" which attempt to ground themselves in objectivity and subjectivity, respectively. Bazarov's scientism and Stavrogin's freedom reveal the problematic nature of the subject-object dichotomy and the subsequent emphasis on representative and valuational thinking. In both, there is an abortive attempt to order the world through calculation and control. However, apart from Heidegger's explicit conception, their failures indicate an ambivalence in nihilism between a sense of unlimited power and impotence which culminated in an overpowering experience of meaninglessness.15 This experience resists the conceptual categories of the novels; Bazarov reduces it to another mood; Stavrogin surrounds it in ambiguity. Yet it is determinative in both of their lives, stripping them of their valuational perspectives and ultimately leading to their deaths.

Significantly, the experience of meaninglessness is the most extreme instance in the novels where the protagonists are unable to assert themselves as standing over against the world, where their sense of mastery

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15A similar ambivalence will be shown with respect to technology in Chapter VI.
over their surroundings is radically called into question. However, rather than acknowledging their relation to this disclosure, Bazarov tries to reduce it to an objective modification of his own being, while Stavrogin attempts to conquer it through his will. The novels do not explore the possibility that this experience is a disclosure of reality which suggests a radical reassessment of the protagonists' understanding of themselves. Consequently in the novels, nihilism is characterized as a provocative but inadequate human posture with regard to the world. However, as Nietzsche has seen, implicit in the experience of meaninglessness is an indication that nihilism may be characterized as the apparent absence of meaning apart from human valuation, such that when this valuation is withdrawn, the world appears as meaningless. Furthermore, in the light of Heidegger's concept of Being, the experience may suggest that there is a horizon of meaning which encompasses man even when the world appears as meaningless.

In order to find a more adequate conceptual framework for an understanding of nihilism than the literary conceptions of Turgenev and Dostoevsky, two contemporary philosophical works were chosen for analyses. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* and Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* effectively correspond to the two types of nihilism found in the novels and also provide an opportunity to extend the Heideggerian analysis of the history of nihilism to the present.

Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* is a classic expression of the modern positivistic spirit. Characteristically, the first chapter is

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17 It is readily acknowledged even by positivistic philosophers that Ayer's classic is often simplistic; Ayer himself has repudiated its oversimplifications in his preface to later editions. However the purpose of this exposition is not to describe the whole school of contemporary positivism, but rather to indicate certain nihilistic strains within positivism.
entitled "The Elimination of Metaphysics"; the first task of philosophy is to show conclusively the impossibility of knowledge of a reality transcending the world of science and common sense. The main weapon for this destruction is the criterion of verifiability, which includes in the class of meaningful propositions only tautologies and empirical hypotheses and thus condemns all metaphysical assertions as meaningless. 18 Ayer wants to destroy not only "transcendent" metaphysics, but any type of thinking which goes beyond science, any philosophy which claims to possess knowledge about the world which lies beyond the scope of empirical science. He makes explicit reference to the futility of the study of "reality as a whole": the field of ontology is banished from philosophy. Extending this line of reasoning, not only metaphysics proper, but the basis of much of traditional custom and belief--whether it be theological, ethical, political or social--is dismissed. At this point the positivists might object to the preceding claim as being far too vague and general and that his critique does not have such a devastating effect on society at large, but only upon the class of professional metaphysicians and theologians; that by and large, the layman functions through a "common sense" which fills the present gap left between those areas conclusively dealt with by science. Unlike the nineteenth century positivist, his twentieth century counterpart does not envision a vast program of social reform, but rather sees his task as one of analysis and clarification, as a "department of logic." However, by rejecting any normative role in human affairs, the contemporary positivist

18Although this principle and its later modifications have been largely abandoned by positivists as indefensible, it still retains its prescriptive force as a recommendation to avoid metaphysics and to stick to the empirically verifiable. The currency of the position in the Anglo-American world does not seem to be diminished by its untenability.
expresses a covert faith in a commonly shared set of beliefs and habits, which are sufficient for the maintenance and progress of human life. The possibility of an active relationship between metaphysics and common sense is either excluded or ignored. Moreover rather than examining the connection between science and the world of experience, positivism abruptly clears the ground for scientific investigation and then concentrates on the explication of various types of symbolism, such as the structure of science, or the development of systems of logic. Hypotheses and beliefs which have not yet been scientifically confirmed but are in principle empirically verifiable are regarded as meaningful hypotheses whose truth or falsity is not yet known, but may be determined by scientists in the future.

The main purpose of Ayer's critique of metaphysics is to establish scientific method as the primary way to true propositions. "There is no field of experience which cannot, in principle, be brought under some form of scientific law, and no type of speculative knowledge about the world which is, in principle, beyond the power of science to give."¹⁹ Philosophy does not compete with science: the propositions of philosophy are not factual, but linguistic—they express definitions. According to Ayer, philosophy has significance only as the handmaiden of science. Through the clarification of definitions and terminologies, it can help fulfill Leibnitz' hope of a universal language and thus achieve the goal of the unity of science.²⁰


²⁰E. Cassirer discusses Leibnitz' concept of a universal language in The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. 1, pp. 129-131. Leibnitz believed that this universal language would directly mirror the structure of reality and would make possible a unified science, one that is no longer deceived and compartmentalized by the vagaries of ordinary language.
In dealing with ethics, positivism makes its most valuable contribution to nihilism conceived of as unlimited possibility. Ayer begins by dismissing from philosophy all forms of ethical discussion except those which deal with the definitions of ethical terms. "A strictly philosophical treatise on ethics should therefore make no ethical pronouncements. But it should, by giving an analysis of ethical terms, show what is the category to which all such pronouncements belong."21 Description and explanation of moral experience is assigned to sociology and psychology, while ethical judgments themselves are rejected as pseudo-propositions with no truth content. Ayer goes on to explain that ethical statements do not have any empirical content. "... sentences which contain normative ethical symbols are not equivalent to sentences which express psychological propositions, or indeed empirical propositions of any kind."22 The analysis is then carried to its ultimate conclusion.

We begin by admitting that the fundamental ethical concepts are unanalyzable, in as much as there is no criterion by which one can test the validity of the judgments in which they occur. ... the reason why they are unanalyzable is that they are mere pseudo-concepts. The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content.23

Ethical judgments are simply means of evincing approval or disapproval: they serve to show that the speaker is expressing certain feelings. Ethical terms are "emotive"--they are used to express or arouse feeling, to stimulate action. Thus ethical judgments have no truth content whatsoever: "If a sentence makes no statement at all, there is obviously no sense in

21 Ibid., pp. 103-104.
22 Ibid., p. 105.
23 Ibid., p. 107.
asking whether what it says is true or false. . . . They are unverifiable for the same reason as a cry of pain or a word of command is unverifiable. . . . 24 The question as to what type of morality one espouses is a matter of "moral conditioning" and ultimately beyond argument and exhortation. "... argument is possible on moral questions only if some system of value is presupposed." 25 Ayer summarizes his conclusions succinctly and strikingly:

We find that ethical philosophy consists simply in saying that ethical concepts are pseudo-concepts and therefore unanalyzable. . . . There cannot be such a thing as ethical science, if by ethical science one means the elaboration of a "true" system of morals. . . . as ethical judgments are mere expressions of feeling, there can be no way of determining the validity of any ethical system, and, indeed, no sense in asking whether any such system is true. . . . ethics, as a branch of knowledge, is nothing more than a department of psychology and sociology. 26

One of the important differences between nineteenth and twentieth century positivisms is their position with regard to ethics: while the former regards ethics as fundamental and hopes to discover through science a source of valuation, the latter quickly dismisses the normative quest and devotes its efforts entirely to the meta-ethical; and in so doing, undermines all cognitive approaches to the subject. So that not only does twentieth century positivism ignore many of the traditional problems and solutions, but it seeks to destroy the very possibility of normative ethical discourse. Ironically, positivism's exhortation to philosophy to become the handmaiden of science is no more than an expression of a certain

25 Ibid., p. 111.
26 Ibid., p. 112.
emotion: the scientific enterprise itself rests on a non-cognitive basis which can never be demonstrated nor even meaningfully clarified. Once again this positivist position seems to rest upon another presupposition—the belief that "human nature" is fairly limited in its emotional range and that men do have enough in common to survive and even coexist. Ayer mentions "moral conditioning" without even suggesting the implications of this concept. At this point the positivist might defend his position with an appeal to truth: he is concerned only with truth no matter the consequences to human life. However, given the positivist critique, the scientific pursuit itself becomes problematic: is the scientific enterprise a matter of truth or feeling? If it is a matter of truth, the argument would be circular: "scientific method is the sole path to true empirical propositions," is itself a true proposition. Since science is taken as the paradigm for obtaining true propositions, its own truth cannot be established. If it is a matter of feeling, science would be based upon a non-cognitive, unanalyzable desire. A third alternative would be to deny the validity of the question, i.e., the propriety in asking for the truth of a method, and thus to brand the question as meaningless. Yet this is evasion under the pretext of philosophy. It would seem consistent for the positivist to admit the non-cognitive basis of science and to accept the idea that the scientific pursuit must be cultivated through conditioning. In his book *Alienation of Reason*, L. Kolakowski

27 Much of the refinement of Ayer's position by contemporary ethicists seems to exploit this presupposition and, in so doing, attempts to show that ethics is based on "reasons," a "logic" of moral discourse, logically-implied imperatives. A discussion of these positions along with a detailed bibliography can be found in R. B. Brandt's *Ethical Theory*, chapters nine and ten.
advocates this line of reasoning:

Irrational external circumstances determine what we are supposed to regard as true... cognitive values have been reduced to the level of the ephemeral, changeable experience of pleasure and pain, which cannot be the object of argumentation... positivism, when it is radical, renounces the transcendental meaning of truth and reduces logical values to features of biological behavior... All so-called generalizing functions and formulating of scientific hypothesis serve much to increase or improve our store of conditioned reflexes... science is an extension of animal experience and has no other meaning than the totality of experience on which it is based.2

Aside from some interesting analyses of alleged linguistic mistakes, most of Ayer's treatise is a rather long exhortation to limit philosophy to the analysis of symbolism and even this ultimately rests upon one's "philosophical conditioning."

Ayer establishes criteria for the class of cognitively meaningful propositions and assigns to science all those of empirical content. The task of philosophy, being wholly devoid of empirical considerations, is to analyze the symbolism of science, i.e., logico-mathematics. Further, certain types of sentences, traditionally some of the most significant, are devoid of meaning, mere pseudo-propositions. These types are metaphysical, theological and ethical. This analysis has several important implications: 1) transcendence of any sort is minimized; 2) comprehensive knowledge of the whole becomes impossible in principle; 3) reality is stripped of any guiding power so that no action is justifiable. Because all meaningful statements are either tautologies or empirical hypotheses, discourse is restricted: the potentially scientific "common sense" is emphasized over any "vague" or "poetical" explanation. Reality is thus made to conform to the current

divisions of the sciences, e.g., "eccentric" behavior is seen in the prevailing categories of psychology and sociology; the possibility that it might in principle transcend or resist psychological explanation is ignored. Furthermore, even granting that in the future science would be able to unify all knowledge under one theory, it would never be able in principle to include in that unity ethical or aesthetic judgments. The unity of science would always be encircled by the non-cognitive and indeed would be at the latter's disposal. Thus all aspects of positivistic reality, whether subsumed under a scientific law or not, are value-neutral and impotent to guide human action. To put it in other words, the positivist's world is mute; it merely presents itself but is incapable of "speaking" to man in any way. All value judgments arise out of psychic processes which can at best be described by the sciences, but the judgments themselves are beyond all rational verification. It would seem that the range of these judgments would depend solely upon the capacity of the human psyche and the types of available indoctrination. Any conceivable set of values is beyond justification or refutation. In positivism, philosophy subordinates itself to a department of logic and abandons the world to the sciences, which though vigorous and powerful, ultimately depend upon a human valuation which is strangely devoid of structure or even intelligibility.

The similarities between Ayer's analyses and Bazarov's world-view are striking. In both, a positivistic methodology defines the limits of intelligibility and strips human existence of any cognitive value. While

29Stanley Rosen, Nihilism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. xiii, xix, 1-27. Although Rosen directs his accusation of 'nihilistic silence' against Wittgenstein and ordinary language analysis, I believe it is applicable to positivism. It should also be added that Rosen principally accuses Heidegger of nihilism.
Ayer, writing in a theoretical vein, is able to focus upon linguistic concerns and facilely deal with the valuational, Bazarov's life exposes the problem which Ayer's dichotomy conceals; the meaninglessness of propositions becomes the meaninglessness of his own life.

Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* is subtitled *An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, which at once makes explicit both its method and purpose. Although radically transforming Husserl's ideas by banishing the transcendental ego and emphasizing the pre-reflective cogito, Sartre retains the conception of a method which is able to describe the structure of reality while maintaining contact with concrete experience; Sartre's "essay" is largely an analysis of human consciousness. Ontology, the study of being, is grasped as a phenomenological task, that is, as an analysis of the way in which man "intends" his world, as the manner in which experience is constituted. Sartre's analysis begins as ontology but resolves itself into a type of philosophical anthropology—being-in-itself is either utterly devoid of meaning and structure or is a project of consciousness.  

Thus, although Sartre presents many insightful and explicit analyses of human experience, the final result is an abstract and non-historical philosophical psychology which ignores the socio-political realm and stresses individual existence. The world is present as material for consciousness; society—mainly as interpersonal relationships, i.e., relationships of consciousnesses. The titles of the four main parts of *Being and Nothingness* reveal this concern with subjectivity: "The Problem of Nothingness" arises out of consciousness

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30 This distinction becomes problematic in his later writings.

31 This theme is emphasized by Wilfred Desan in his book *Jean-Paul Sartre*. Desan accuses Sartre of "existential subjectivism." Iris Murdoch's work on Sartre goes even further in stating that *Being and Nothingness* is essentially solipsistic.
and is in fact equated with consciousness; "Being-For-Itself" discusses structures of consciousness such as temporality and transcendence; "Being-For-Others" deals with the problem of solipsism and Sartre's solution which is based on his conception of the body; "Having, Doing, and Being" is divided into two chapters which mainly discuss freedom and existential psychoanalysis respectively. In the middle of the fourth part, Sartre states, "this is the point where ontology must stop; its final discoveries are the first principles of psychoanalysis."32 Ontology provides certain general characteristics of consciousness, but the specifics must be worked out through an "existential psychoanalysis" which attempts to grasp each individual's own life-project. Although Sartre does attempt to describe a number of 'objective' symbolic structures with which each individual must deal, each response to them is made in freedom and must be assessed through an analysis of that individual's life. The final determination of reality depends upon each individual's freedom.

Sartre's conception of freedom is integrally related to his ontology and to the whole of Being and Nothingness. Starting from the phenomenologically given, Sartre identifies consciousness with intentionality. Consciousness is totally absorbed in the object and is therefore nothing but an awareness of an object.33 The very condition of consciousness is this transcendent realm of objects, the surrounding world. Transforming the phenomenological descriptions into ontological constructs, consciousness becomes a being-for-itself, pure reflexive awareness, a nothingness; that of which

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33Of course this applies to the thetic or positional level; non-thetically there is awareness of self.
consciousness is aware becomes being-in-itself, self-identical opacity, solid massivity. Being parasitic upon the in-itself, the for-itself must create its own being by "secreting" an element of instability into the world which at once differentiates, gives structure and introduces possibility and negation. Under the gaze of the for-itself, the in-itself loses its self-identity and becomes a particular thing with a foreground and background, with distance and shadow, having a causal relationship to other things and falling under the possibility of error. The for-itself is this film of nothingness which brings about a cleavage in being. The essential nature of the for-itself is even more sharply seen in its relation to itself. The elusiveness of the "I," the peculiar relation it has with its past, the problem of human identity, all point to the essence of the for-itself; it is a being whose very being is in question, a being which is always separated from itself by nothingness.

Freedom, consciousness, and nothingness are essentially related in Sartre's concept of man. The negating aspect of consciousness is the basis of a liberating freedom--freedom from the past, freedom from the actual, freedom from any restraints. Consciousness is totally free, pure spontaneity. However man cannot exist as pure spontaneity. As an empty freedom, he is haunted by the permanence and the stability of the in-itself. Man experiences this total freedom as lack, as void, as insufficiency and he constantly pursues a self-identity which will give him some security and a sense of continuity.

Freedom is precisely the nothingness which is made-to-be at the heart of man and which forces human-reality to make itself instead of to be. . . . Without any help whatsoever, it is entirely abandoned to the intolerable necessity of making itself be--down to the slightest detail. Thus freedom is not a being; it is the being of man--i.e., his
Sartre's concept of freedom is characterized by the most extreme claims:
1) no factual state can motivate any action; 2) no factual state is capable of determining that consciousness will recognize it as a lack; 3) no psychic state is able to exclusively determine an act.

Indeed by the sole fact that I am conscious of the causes which inspire my action, these causes are already transcendent objects for my consciousness; they are outside . . . I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the causes and motives of my act. I am condemned to be free. This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself . . .

In order to maintain this absolute freedom Sartre is even willing to abandon the idea of degrees of freedom—all acts, whether they be fearful or courageous, selfish or altruistic, are completely free.

However there is one structure which seems to offer some restraint to freedom and that is one's original project (the ultimate goal of existential psychoanalysis), the set of beliefs and values which gives a person his fundamental identity and which governs his decisions. Yet even here Sartre refuses to limit freedom. One's original project can be refused by a radical conversion of one's being, by another choice of oneself; furthermore this conversion is possible at any time. From this reasoning, it follows that any choice is absurd—it is beyond justification or argument. Indeed choice itself becomes the foundation for all subsequent reasons or justification. Even if most of life's decisions are made on the basis of one's original project, that project itself ultimately rests upon a groundless decision,

34 Ibid., pp. 440-441.
an act of pure freedom; and even this decision can be retracted at any moment.

For Sartre, man is the negating animal who can use the world as material for creation—or destruction. The world becomes a boundless field of possibilities for an autonomous freedom. Being the sole source of transforming power, "man is the autonomous creator and master of Being. Man's absolute freedom knows of no obedience, no service, no humility, no response to Being." Even though the silent world as in-itself transcends and has priority over man, the world as articulate meaning arises only through the individual's project. However, beyond the original project is a futile pursuit for totality, wholeness. This ideal goal of all human action is to become a for-itself-in-itself, a conscious center of permanence; and value is the bridge between the two realms. Man seeks self-identity through his values; while retaining self-awareness, he seeks to attain the status of things. No longer is the explicit content of a moral utterance or act constitutive of its validity, but rather the degree to which it fulfills man's basic ontological desire. Man is the valuing animal because of his fundamental desire for identity and correspondingly his inability to achieve it. Human existence is a process of continual striving in vain, of a ceaseless effort to secure and ground its nihilating freedom.

According to Sartre, ontology can take us no further than the realization of man's futile goal; ontology leads to existential psychoanalysis, or the attempt to lay bare particular original projects which bind the individual to his world. Sartre's existential psychoanalysis could be conceived of as a type of meta-ethical theory which refuses to judge specific

moral acts but which attempts to formulate criteria for what constitutes any moral statement or act whatsoever. Rather than attempting to describe the intent of actual moral discourse, Sartre seeks to establish its ontological significance. His main purpose is to undermine traditional morality, "the spirit of seriousness," which considers values as transcendent entities independent of human subjectivity; and to reveal the moral agent as the creator and sustainer of value. In the last section of *Being and Nothingness*, entitled "Ethical Implications," Sartre asks several revealing questions concerning his analysis.

Can one live this new aspect of being? In particular will freedom by taking itself for an end escape all situations? . . . In particular is it possible for freedom to take itself for a value as the source of all value, or must it necessarily be defined in relation to a transcendent value which haunts it? 37

Sartre begins with a phenomenological conception of consciousness which is ontologically radically different from the world of things. Rather than attempting to bridge the gap through the intentionality of consciousness he takes a subjectivistic turn which simultaneously strips the world of meaning and posits it as an ontological "thing-in-itself." Thus the world is both dehumanized and affirmed as the very condition for consciousness. Consciousness is pure freedom-in-the-world. The last vestiges of Aristotelian essences and transcendent values vanish in this god-like conception of existence, where man is totally free. Sartrean man, lacking any stable foundation, must create his own meaning by using the world on which he is parasitic. The world becomes material for a creating spirit. Yet just as the Scholastics had difficulty explaining the reason for God's creation of the world, Sartre does not even have the conception of the divine

intellect to fall back on, but must proclaim a radical "voluntarism." Man, for all his power and freedom, is a "useless passion," who must constantly seek an impossible goal--to become divine, a consciousness that is its own foundation, a pour-soi-en-soi. Even though the world is given such a dominant position in his ontology, it assumes only a pseudo-significance, for only consciousness is a source of meaning; the world is mute material for man's theories and projects. The world is only a limit to man's creation, a limiting-concept of which one must remain silent or experience "nausea." The Cartesian dualism returns to haunt man: consciousness, once radically severed from the world, is unable to heal the wounds.

Ayer attempts to circumscribe an area for scientific hegemony, while Sartre ontologizes certain basic phenomenological insights. In significantly different ways, both positions delimit and determine a conception of reality. By establishing scientific method as the primary way to true propositions, Ayer relegates all areas of life which are seemingly inaccessible to science to a non-cognitive status lacking cogency. Most importantly, matters of valuation are excluded from the scientifically determinable and thus become subjective, emotive, entirely devoid of truth content. Similar to Bazarov's nihilism, an essential aspect of human existence is divorced from the scientific conception of reality. In the attempt to make the world reveal itself as scientific, man is strangely severed from reality. Man becomes accessible to himself only as an empirical object of study and research. Correspondingly, similar to Stavrogin, Sartre's phenomenological ontology strips the world of formative power. The world as en-soi, although providing the condition for consciousness, lacks articulateness and appears to function primarily as a limiting-concept. Yet Sartrean man is compelled, like Stavrogin, to strive for a sense of identity, a structure which will
provide a foundation for his consciousness. In fact, "value" is the connection between man's "nothingness" and the solidity which he seeks. However, similar to Stavrogin's, this attempt is a failure—man alone is the source of values and he can as easily revoke as create them. While for Ayer and Bazarov, a rigid methodology promoted a dichotomy which alienated man from values; for Sartre and Stavrogin, the absence of structure seems to dissolve human values within an empty freedom. The sense of unlimited possibility in Sartre's concept of freedom and in Stavrogin's superhuman capacities is plagued by a profound impotence. While in positivism man is threatened by a scientific determinism, in Sartre's Being and Nothingness, man seems to be endangered by unlimited freedom.

In summary, both philosophical works confirm Heidegger's conception of nihilism by developing "subjectisms" which attempt to ground themselves in objectivity and subjectivity, respectively. Ayer's "positivism" and Sartre's "existentialism" reveal the problematic nature of the subject-object dichotomy and the subsequent emphasis on representative and valuational thinking. In both cases, the subject sets the standard by which the world is judged, i.e., scientific method and values, respectively, through which the world must be "represented" to the subject. Furthermore, in both cases, values become problematic: for Ayer, values are reduced to a non-cognitive status; for Sartre, they are futile attempts to attain ontological stability. While Ayer has provided an explicit framework for the nihilism of Bazarov, Sartre has performed that task for Stavrogin. In Ayer, scientific method provides the perspective which "correctly" represents the world and values become a matter of subjective preference; in Sartre all perspectives become dependent upon a valuing subject whose freedom appears to be unlimited.
With regard to the experience of meaninglessness which called for a more adequate interpretation than that provided by the novels, the philosophical works also are inconclusive. Although neither work explicitly considers that experience, they both implicitly suggest a problematic area where such an experience could be explored. For Ayer, this area is that of human valuation—-not only the realm of ethics proper, but even in man's relation to the scientific enterprise. Perhaps the positivistic "silence" which Ayer imposes on valuation indicates a direction for further exploration. Perhaps this silence is eloquent and bespeaks a world which has withdrawn its meaningfulness. Or perhaps the scientific enterprise itself is a meaningful response in the present age, but one whose meaning remains unthought in Ayer's analyses. Sartre does speak of an experience akin to meaninglessness: what he calls "nausea" is the experience of the radical contingency of existence, the brute presence of beings which continually threatens consciousness. Yet because of the sharp Sartrean dichotomy which renders this "brute presence" formless, silent, Sartre is unable to seek in the experience a bridge between his two realms of being, a correspondence which could be mutually constitutive.

Neither position seems to be able to adequately explain the nature of man's grounding in the world. Ayer's positivism appears to be ultimately groundless, inexplicable in human terms. Sartre himself questions the viability of his concept of freedom. In both positions, the world is silenced: there is no possibility of a mutual correspondence between human consciousness and the world. Ayer's "emotivism" and Sartre's "values" conceal a sense of Being and yet reveal a need for Being through their inadequacy. Once again the conceptual framework seems to be lacking. There is a need for a more "objective" orientation, one which will seek
non-subjective structures in order to explain man's being in the world, his essential relation to Being.
CHAPTER IV

Toward a Philosophical Conception of Technology

The turn to technology in this chapter is not gratuitous; it is indicated by the development of Heidegger's concept of nihilism and, furthermore, the concept of technology provides a more specific and objective framework for an understanding of the nihilistic traits explicated in Chapter III. A positivistic methodology (Ayer-Bazarov) and a groundless sense of unlimited possibility (Sartre-Stavrogin) are essential constituents of the nihilism which finds its objective correlate in the Heideggerian concept of technology. However, before taking up Heidegger's concept of technology as the final phase of nihilism a brief survey of the philosophical understanding of technology independent of Heidegger's thought will provide an orientation for further discussion.

Generally speaking, "technology" means 1) applied science, 2) the application of knowledge for practical ends, 3) the sum of the ways in which a social group provides itself with the objects of material culture. The Encyclopedia Britannica speaks of technology as man's long

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1 Similar to the way in which metaphysics focused on the presence of beings, thereby obscuring and finally losing the concept of Being; for Heidegger, technology reveals the world as the totality of beings which can be explained and controlled.

2 This claim will be supported in Chapters VI and VII, where the concepts of nihilism and technology will be correlated.

and painful efforts to control his material environment by the use of tools and by the application of his reason to the properties of matter and energy. Technology becomes applied science only toward the end of the eighteenth century. The same encyclopedia also emphasizes the close connection between technology and the society at large, the interrelation between the state of technological development and the projects, goals and problems that the society encounters.4

In the philosophical literature on technology, three approaches can be distinguished: the epistemological, the anthropological, and the sociological.5 The first concentrates on the relation of technology as a mode of knowledge to that of science; the second emphasizes the relation between technology and the nature of man; the third seeks a comprehensive analysis of the effects of technology on the present historical period.6

The main issue within the epistemological approach is whether technology is a distinct mode of knowledge or whether it is merely a branch of science. Henryk Skolimowski7 argues that technological activity is distinct from both pure and applied science: technology does not seek knowledge, but efficiency in production of objects of a specific type. Each technical activity has its own specific principle of efficiency which


5These distinctions are made by C. Mitcham and R. Mackey in the introduction to their anthology, Philosophy and Technology. Much of the following analysis is based on this source.


provides the standard for progress. I. E. Jarvie identifies technology with practical activity in general and claims that this activity is based on a specific mode of knowledge. He argues that "knowing-how" is a valid form of "knowing-that"—it articulates what "works" in a certain situation. In addition, Jarvie, anticipating the anthropological approach, develops the idea of knowledge as power over the environment: all knowledge is a means of increasing man's power. Under this interpretation, technology would include science, both pure and applied. A more traditional understanding is advocated by Mario Bunge who argues that technology is applied science. He distinguishes between substantive technological theories—direct applications of existing scientific theories—and operative technological theories which are independent of specific scientific theories and are directly concerned with concrete problems in industry and business. These latter theories use scientific method in general, but are not derived from any given scientific theory.

Lewis Mumford is a representative of the anthropological approach: the nature of man is the key to understanding technology. Mumford explains Western civilization's commitment to technological progress as an outgrowth of the assumption that man is basically a tool-using animal. According to Mumford, the invention and use of tools was originally only one aspect of man's response to the world; "tool-technics" was a fragment


9Mario Bunge, "Toward a Philosophy of Technology," in Philosophy and Technology, pp. 62-76.

of "biotechnics"--man's total response to life. In its early stages of development, technology was life-oriented. However within the last five thousand years a different orientation arose: technology became subordinate to the pursuit of power. The systematic organization of work--work isolated from the general realm of living--channeled great amounts of physical and psychical energy into massive projects, e.g., the building of the great pyramids of Egypt, whose construction was essentially a manifestation of power divorced from the tasks of sustaining and enhancing life. The result was what Mumford calls "monotechnics"--the exploitation of human resources and energies for the purpose of domination at the expense of those aspects of man which do not promote this task. Modern technology is basically a refinement and development of monotechnics applied on a global scale. For Mumford, the assumption that man is essentially a tool-maker is the basis of monotechnics and must be rejected if mankind is to regain biotechnics or an orientation which places technology within the larger framework of human culture.

The sociological approach is found in the work of Jacques Ellul. Ellul singles out "technique" as the fundamental character of modern society--"the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency in every field of human activity." However he does not place decisive importance in the characteristics of technology itself, but upon the relation of technology to society as a whole. Comparable


13In Chapter IV of The Technological Society, Ellul analyzes the relationship of technology (technique) to society. He proposes four
to the way in which the Church defined the Middle Ages, Ellul sees "technique" as defining the contemporary age: technology determines the ideas, presuppositions and myths of modern man to such a degree that it influences all aspects of human life. While giving man a sense of control or mastery, technology becomes an organic whole which includes man. Within the sociological framework, Ellul cites the following features of technology: artificiality, autonomy, self-augmentation, a means-orientation, the interrelation of its parts and the problems it engenders. Modern technology is not simply an aspect of society, but a comprehensive way of life, which has modified man's nature and invalidated traditional categories of understanding. Ellul, although quite pessimistic concerning alternatives, offers a tentative direction for fundamental change: 1) an effort to "demythologize" technology, to rid it of its transcendent character; 2) the practice of "detachment" toward technology, a separation from the happiness and progress which it offers; 3) an effort of philosophical reflection which will mediate between man and the power of technology.

forces within society which are potential restraints to technology--these are morality, public opinion, social structure and the state. After having argued the impotence of the first three, he turns to the state as the only viable restraint to technology. However, he finds instead the major ally of technology: it is the state which makes possible the coordination of planning and resources on a scale which technology requires. The state also possesses the authority to overcome the small degree of resistance occasionally offered by the three other forces mentioned above. Ellul concludes:

In view of what has been said, it may be affirmed with confidence that, in the decades to come, technique will become stronger and its pace will be accelerated through the agency of the state. The state and technique--increasingly interrelated--are becoming the most important forces in the modern world; they buttress and reinforce each other in their aim to produce an apparently indestructible total civilization. (p. 318).

The relationship of the state and technology will be further developed in Chapter VI with reference to Galbraith and Marcuse.
As Mitcham and Mackey point out in their introduction, each approach has its problems and limitations. The epistemological perspective focuses on the relation of technology to science and knowledge in general, but this focus predisposes it to ignore the larger context of technology, e.g., its relation to man and society. Thus the epistemological approach itself prejudices its findings as to the fundamental nature of technology. The anthropological approach is involved in similar difficulties: on the one hand, it must decide such general problems as whether to analyze technology in the light of human nature or vice versa; on the other hand, it must critically reflect on its basic presuppositions in relation to the subject-matter. The sociological perspective is called upon to explain such problems as the historical ascendancy of technology and to formulate cogent proposals for going beyond it. Finally the very presupposition that technology acquires its unique features through its relation to society must be further investigated.

Mitcham and Mackey also question the difference in basic terminology used by the various authors, e.g., technology, techniques, technics: could it be that the choice of terminology reveals significant presuppositions, e.g., the importance of understanding technology as "knowledge," "operations," or "objects"? These considerations lead to a philosophical or "metaphysical" approach to technology.

Before turning to the metaphysical, Mitcham and Mackey present two "existentialist critiques" which should be acknowledged. Ernst Jünger defines technology as "the mobilization of the world through the Gestalt of the worker." Although destructive of traditional institutions and values, 

14 Ernst Jünger, "Technology as the Mobilization of the World Through the Gestalt of the Worker," in Philosophy and Technology, pp. 269-289.
technology, when in the service of the worker or technician is creative and liberating. Technology, for Jünger, is not simply neutral with regard to values, but realizes those values which are inherent in the new type of man. Thus technology cannot be grasped as an autonomous causal system, but must be recognized "as the symbol of a superimposed power," a new humanity.

Although differing radically with Jünger in his estimation of technology, Jose Ortega y Gasset also understands technology as an essential outgrowth of human nature and one which realizes and fulfills that nature. However, whereas Jünger's concept of the worker restricts his meaning, Ortega identifies technology with humanity in general. Thus, for the latter, technology signifies all human creation of which domination is only one aspect. However, Ortega admits that modern technology has gained a supremacy over other techniques, resulting in a loss of the imaginative search for ideals, for guiding principles of action. Modern technology has subordinated the creative aspects of man to its own goalless activity. For both writers, technology is dependent on the nature of man: for Jünger technology is in essential agreement with that nature (the worker) and is the realization of man's highest potential; for Ortega, modern technology has generated a disharmony within man which indicates a need for "new technologies," perhaps non-Western ones which give priority to the imagination. In both authors there is a tendency to develop the anthropological approach into a metaphysical theory of man.

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15 Heidegger directly addresses his position in The Question of Being. He argues that it is an essential articulation of Nietzsche's will to power, but one which remains within a metaphysical understanding and thus remains nihilistic.

16 Jose Ortega y Gasset, "Thoughts on Technology," in Philosophy and Technology, pp. 290-313.
In contrast to the approaches described above, Mitcham and Mackey offer the "metaphysical" as the most adequate approach—an analysis of the total structure of technology "in terms of its own inherent elements." They cite Friedrich Dessauer as the founder of this approach; his book, Philosophy of Technology (1927), was the first major work on the topic. Dessauer offers his work as a fourth Kantian critique—concerning technology (the formal a priori possibility of the creation of objects); but one which transforms Kant's philosophy into a Platonic idealism. In focusing on technical objects, Dessauer believes one must take into account not only the objects themselves, but the act of invention and the autonomous life technology assumes as a result of the abundance and power of technical objects. This realm is similar to Kant's thing-in-itself in that it points to a transcendental reality which cannot be accounted for either in terms of human subjectivity or the world as objects. However, invention does not proceed haphazardly: not only must it be in accordance with scientific law, but it tends to culminate in a specific form or a correct solution, one which "works," e.g., the invention of the light bulb. Because of the apparent stability of technical objects, Dessauer proposes that such forms have a metaphysical status prior to being actualized. The inventor has access to a realm of "essences" of technical objects either by invention proper or as a by-product of scientific discovery. Thus through technology we come to have positive knowledge of


18 There is no mention of Dessauer in Heidegger's works nor any evidence of influence.

19 Mitcham and Mackey, op. cit., p. 22.
a transcendental reality.

There are many problematic areas in Dessauer's position--the relation of creation and essence, the relation of natural objects to technical ones, the relation of artistic creation to invention. However, in more general terms, it seems to ignore many areas of life clearly related to technology. By focusing on creation-invention, Dessauer fails to explain or explore the wider implications of technology for the world at large. Furthermore, he postulates a transcendent realm to explain technology's unique mode of knowledge.

Despite its brevity, this survey of other philosophical approaches may serve, by contrast, to show the uniqueness and radicality of Heidegger's conception of technology as the culminating stage of nihilism, the topic of the next chapter. However, before turning to Heidegger, and in fact to make that transition more understandable, Nietzsche's thoughts should be explored with respect to technology. Just as Nietzsche provided the impetus for Heidegger's concept of nihilism as metaphysics, so Nietzsche suggests the transition of nihilism into technology.

Although Nietzsche never explicitly developed a concept of technology, he does offer perceptive suggestions toward an understanding of significant technological trends in his concept of the will to power. In the preface to The Will To Power, Nietzsche indicates the futuristic implications of his concept of nihilism:

What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming ... the advent of nihilism. This history can be related even now. ... For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe. ... He that speaks here ... as the first perfect nihilist of Europe who, however, has even now lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself. ... "The Will To Power: Attempt at a Revaluation
of All Values"—in this formulation a countermovement finds expression. . . . a movement that in some future will take the place of this perfect nihilism—but presupposes it, logically and psychologically, and certainly can come only after and out of it.20

Although Nietzsche speaks about nihilism in a decidedly negative manner, his positive "countermovement," the will to power, presupposes nihilism and even requires its realization. For Nietzsche, nihilism is "a pathological transitional stage" in the development of the will to power which, in turn, has been present throughout history—wherever there has been a valuation of life. Furthermore, the response to nihilism is ambiguous: Nietzsche distinguishes between "active" and "passive" nihilism, a nihilism of strength and increase of spirit and a nihilism of decline and impotence. 21

However another ambiguity is implied within his countermovement of active nihilism: the will to power is conceived as a development of man's power over the earth and a corresponding transformation of man himself. These two requirements are conjoined in many of Nietzsche's statements; he often speaks of man's quest for power as a precondition for human development. "If power has been attained over nature, one can employ this power in the further free development of oneself: will to power as self-elevation and strengthening." 22 The conditional form indicates an implied ambiguity and the possibility of the pursuit of power for its own sake. Another passage from The Will To Power relates the gaining of power to a qualitative change in man:

From now on there will be more favorable preconditions for more


21Ibid., p. 17.

22Ibid., p. 218 (emphasis mine).
comprehensive forms of dominion, whose like has never yet existed. . . . The possibility has been established for the production of international racial unions whose task will be to rear a master race, the future 'masters of the earth';--a new, tremendous aristocracy, based on the severest self-legislation, in which the will of philosophical men of power and artist-tyrants will be made to endure for millenia . . . 23

And again, after one of his most eloquent descriptions of the higher man, Nietzsche sounds the technological imperative: "at long last the pursuit of knowledge will want to rule and own, and you with it!" 24

However, in other passages, Nietzsche seems to ignore the qualitative element: "Inference concerning the evolution of mankind: perfecting consists in the production of the most powerful individuals, who will use the great mass of people as their tools." 25 Although it appears certain that Nietzsche wants to qualify the unlimited pursuit of power by a superior type of being who is tentatively, but nobly, described in his writings: 26 he himself saw the difficulty in this task. In his major work, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, he articulates this task: "Who shall be the lord of the earth? Who will say: thus shall you run, you big and little rivers! . . . Who shall be the lord of the earth?" 27 Nietzsche seems to assume that the earth will be dominated, but recognizes the dire need for a being who is equal to that task.

Although there is ample evidence to show that Nietzsche certainly

23Ibid., p. 504.


26Although, even here, sometimes he speaks of this transformation in a technological way, that is, as an effort to "produce" that being through techniques and planning ("breeding").

27Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," pp. 129-130.
did not envision modern technology and the technician as the goal or ideal of his thought, Nietzsche himself realized the tentative nature of his solution and stressed the importance of the actual historical response. Perhaps just as the response to nihilism was ambiguous, so the unlimited pursuit of power harbors a catastrophic potential. Nietzsche offered his doctrine of eternal recurrence as a catalyst for the culmination of nihilism and emphasized the futuristic aspect of his solution in his concept of the overman. Could it be that Nietzsche's "fantastic" solution, the enigmatic doctrine of eternal recurrence, was not radical enough to overcome the problem of nihilism? Could it be that our contemporary world is a result of the affirmation of the will to power by the "human-all-too-human," the "last man" of which Nietzsche often speaks? Nietzsche envisioned eternal recurrence as a source of strength and creativity for the overman, as a source of Dionysian affirmation of all aspects of existence. In contrast, modern man is deeply and narrowly specialized, often lacking in creativity; and he seeks a perverted form of the eternal recurrence, which attempts to avenge itself against the past and impermanence only in the most limited and superficial respects, e.g., longevity, perpetuation of mass-produced goods, a futuristic mentality.

With respect to nihilism, the decisive difference between Nietzsche's philosophy and the contemporary world seems to be the latter's indifference

28Another ambiguity should be noted: Nietzsche has characterized eternal recurrence as "the most extreme form of nihilism." (The Will To Power,) pp. 35-36.

29Although it should be acknowledged that Nietzsche predicted two centuries of nihilism; there still remains another century in which his solution could be realized.

30Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," pp. 129-130.

31Ibid., pp. 251-252.
toward the absence of the qualitative in human life and its concentration on, or even fascination with, the actual domination of the universe.\footnote{32}{Here the testimony of a significant aspect of contemporary life and culture, e.g., the theater of the absurd, depth psychology, sub-culture protests, is in opposition to the mainstream of modern life and, perhaps, is the realm where Nietzsche's basic insights are kept alive.} Could it be that through his concept of the will to power, Nietzsche grasped the essence of technology, but his solution remains within the nihilism which he is trying to overcome? Could it be that nihilism must be understood historically as the essence of a technological world-view? If this is the case, then the doctrine of the will to power interpreted as technology, while seemingly establishing man's domination of the world, obscures and ultimately may obliterate the need for a qualitative development of man. These thoughts lead to a consideration of the Heideggerian concept of technology as the final phase of nihilism.
CHAPTER V
Heidegger's Concept of Technology

For Heidegger, technology is the present stage of nihilism or the concealment of Being;¹ there is no break in continuity from his analyses of the great metaphysicians from Plato through Nietzsche to his concern with technology. Similar to the way in which metaphysics focused on the presence of beings, thereby obscuring and finally losing the concept of Being, technology reveals the world as the totality of beings which can be explained and controlled without recourse to any power beyond itself. Technology is not merely one characteristic of our culture, but is rather the very nature of our age, pervading everything there is—from the sciences to industry to the arts and even personal life. Moreover this process is not neutral such that its analysis is of only theoretical interest; technology threatens to destroy mankind. Yet the greatest danger of technology, according to Heidegger, is not that of ecological catastrophe or nuclear holocaust, but rather that the very nature of man will be perverted to such a degree that he no longer understands his relation to Being and ultimately becomes another being to be explained and controlled. Consequently the singular task of our times is to attend the closure of technology and to remain open for the possibility of a disclosure of Being.

Heidegger first addresses himself to technology in his major work, *Being and Time*, although indirectly and without explicit acknowledgment. Only in his later writings does he present and develop a concept of technology. There are two significant analyses in *Being and Time* which anticipate essential characteristics of technology: 1) the preparatory discussion of Dasein in relation to "world"; and 2) the analysis of the various modes of "inauthenticity." In *Being and Time*, in order to reawaken the sense of Being which has been obscured by tradition, Heidegger begins by redefining "human being" in such a way that undermines the subject-object dichotomy which lies at the roots of modern nihilism. He does this through an elaboration of the concept of Dasein (being-there): man as Dasein is that being which discloses the world; more specifically, Dasein is "being-in-the-world." The hyphenation of this phrase signifies the unitary character of the phenomenon described: man's being is not something separate from the world which then must be joined in some way—rather man is the "place" where the world is revealed. Furthermore "world" must be understood not as the totality of things present to man, but as the way in which things are actively taken up, a way which presupposes an organizing system of meanings and uses. However this organizing principle cannot be grasped by an analysis which "reflects" on the world from the vantage point of the subject-object dichotomy, but by one which attempts to uncover the unitary nature of Dasein by remaining on a pre-reflective level, that level where man actively encounters things. On this level things are "ready-to-hand," they are related in a referential structure of instrumentality—they are "equipment." The relation to technology is

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2To the concept of the ready-to-hand, Heidegger contrasts a derivative mode of man's encounter with things as "present-at-hand." Here things are present as objects independent of their function or use.
apparent: "a totality of equipment is constituted by various ways of the 'in-order-to', such as serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability." This primary orientation to things, one which opens "the world" for man, is basically technological in an important sense which Heidegger will develop in his later works. However at this point it is necessary to see the significance Being and Time places on a technological orientation. "Equipment" is essential to man's being; man dwells in the space opened by equipment. Indeed the world is primarily an equipmental totality of beings grounded in human concern.

The significance of the above discussion is minimized within the context of Being and Time by Heidegger's analysis of "authenticity" which attempts to grasp the Being of Dasein and provide the ground for the preceding: the authentic mode would seemingly guide man's equipmental being-in-the-world. The incompleteness or open-endedness of the "ready-to-hand" was implicit in Heidegger's analysis, which was acknowledged as preliminary or preparatory for the later discussion of Dasein. Indeed the concept of authenticity was to provide a focus or a channeling of this open-endedness. However, in contrast to authenticity, Heidegger analyzes an "inauthentic" mode of existence which, significantly, is also characterized by a sense of incompleteness or unrestrictedness.

While the authentic mode, which is to reveal the Being of Dasein, seems to yield definite possibilities which are to be fully taken over


or appropriated, the inauthentic leads to an endless proliferation of anonymous and inconclusive encounters. In the context of *Being and Time*, the idea of unlimited possibility would seem to approximate the inauthentic mode of *Dasein*, held under the sway of the "they." Inauthenticity is described as an ahistorical aspect of *Dasein*—one in which *Dasein* exists "proximally and for the most part." On the other hand, the road to authentic Being is dependent upon the appropriation of those possibilities given by one's heritage and is thus an historical task of the individual. *Being and Time* appears to seek a path away from unlimited possibility and toward an appropriation of definite possibilities given by the heritage of the past.

The inauthentic modes all seem to gravitate around the dispersal of possibility, the constant search for novelty and change. "Idle talk" founders in an average intelligibility in which everything can be understood. The "understanding" of idle talk does not feel the need to dwell on any topic at length, but rather "touches on" as many things as possible. "Curiosity" seeks novelty for its own sake; "never dwelling anywhere," it constantly seeks new possibilities just in order to "see" them and then move on. "Ambiguity" describes the way in which everyday *Dasein* encounters the world: the genuine and ingenuine are indistinguishable and possibilities are multiplied endlessly because of the inability to seize any one of them as singular and explicit.

Idle talk discloses to *Dasein* a Being toward its world, toward Others, and toward itself—a Being in which these are understood, but in a mode of groundless floating. Curiosity discloses everything and anything, yet in such a way that Being-in is everywhere and nowhere. Ambiguity hides nothing from *Dasein*'s understanding but only in order that Being-in-the-world should be suppressed in this uprooted "everywhere and nowhere."\(^5\)

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\(^5\)Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 221.
The three features of inauthenticity are comprehended in their interconnectedness in the mode of "falling." Heidegger further explicates this structure by describing the way in which falling is perpetuated and strengthened by daily life through the phenomena of "temptation, tranquility, alienation, and entanglement." One comes to believe that all possibilities are open and secure, even the possibility of understanding oneself; yet this "self-understanding" is itself immersed in an indefinite number of possibilities which can never be decisively resolved nor understood.

This downward plunge into and within the groundlessness of the inauthentic Being of the "they," has a kind of motion which constantly tears the understanding away from the projecting of authentic possibilities, and into the tranquillized supposition that it possesses everything, or that everything is within its reach.

The temporality of falling is also characterized by a fascination with possibilities as such. Possibilities are "made-present" only in order to quickly run ahead to another. It is a never-dwelling-anywhere, which seeks the constant "now" of experience, only to release it as soon as it's grasped.

The inauthentic mode manifests its inability to appropriate a definite possibility in dealing with the phenomenon of death. The indefiniteness as to the specific time of one's "demise" give rise to a multitude of evasive attitudes concerning the individuality and definiteness

6 Here is a definite link to a sense of unlimited possibility which has characterized the various forms of nihilism; a sense of possibility which is alluring and comforting, but only because it has not been fully appropriated. As Heidegger puts it: "the supposition of the 'they' that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine 'life,' brings Dasein a tranquillity, for which everything is 'in the best order,' and all doors are open." Being and Time, p. 222.

7 Ibid., p. 223.
of one's own death. In the mode of falling, the authentic possibility of death is lost in a vague and reassuring sense of being-in-the-present, which excludes any thought of the possibility of not-being as morbid or psychopathic.

In contrast to the inauthenticity of empty possibility, Heidegger presents an analysis of authentic modes of existence which lead to the Being of Dasein. Authenticity is characterized by a definite limiting of possibilities so that certain ones can be appropriated or made one's own. The most significant of all possibilities for Dasein is that of its own death--to resolutely anticipate one's death is to tear oneself away from the "They" and to bring oneself face-to-face with one's authentic possibilities. The concept of "anticipatory resoluteness" explicates that mode of Dasein whereby its potentiality for death and authenticity is recognized and affirmed; by anticipating its death, Dasein is enabled to grasp itself as a whole and appropriate its possibilities in firm resolve. The vague and generally-understood circumstances in which one find oneself now becomes a "situation"--a concrete and individualized disclosure of one's possibilities within a given context.

The phenomenon of resoluteness has brought us before the primordial truth of existence. . . . It gives itself the current factical Situation, and brings itself into that Situation.\(^8\)

Although Heidegger explicitly states that one can never decide what the Situation is in any particular case, he does indicate the temporal source of those possibilities.

. . . those possibilities of existence which have been factically disclosed are not to be gathered from death. . . . The resoluteness in which Dasein comes back to itself, discloses current factical

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 355.
possibilities of authentic existing, and discloses them in terms of the heritage which that resoluteness, as thrown, takes over.9

Running forward into the possibility of death does not of itself generate possibilities-for-action, but rather eliminates everything accidental or secondary. Authentic possibilities are created by one's heritage, one's throwness, and this "fate" of the individual is the ground for "destiny"—authentic possibilities in relation to a community or nation.

In Being and Time, Heidegger does not carry the analysis of heritage any further and he seems to assume that heritage in and of itself must be the source of authentic possibilities. However, as his later works indicate, reflection on our actual heritage may lead us to at least question its potentiality for yielding authentic possibilities or to reveal Being. Furthermore, it appears that our heritage may be in direct conflict with Heidegger's conception of authenticity. If this were the case, then Being and Time would be involved in a definite dilemma—authenticity would be dependent upon the inauthentic.

As has been mentioned, in Being and Time the inauthentic is described as an ahistorical structure of Dasein, while authenticity is dependent upon the concept of "historicality." However, the characteristics of the inauthentic mode gain prominence as features of the Being of our contemporary world, described as technology, nihilism, or the oblivion of Being. In Being and Time, Heidegger implicitly recognizes the character of technology in the modes of inauthenticity, but did not relate it to his notion of historicality. If he had so related it, how would it have effected his analysis of authenticity? If one's heritage is leading to

9Ibid., pp. 434-35.
a mere proliferation of possibilities, a "never-dwelling-anywhere," upon what would anticipatory resoluteness resolve? Heidegger himself alludes to this possibility in Being and Time: "Will taking over the throwness of the Self into its world perhaps disclose an horizon from which existence snatches its factual possibilities away?" Thus both concepts of possibility, authentic and inauthentic, converge in the Heideggerian notion of heritage.

In his writings after Being and Time, Heidegger constantly returns to this historical source of ontological recalcitrance. In his "Letter on Humanism," he explicitly relates the inauthentic of Being and Time to the Western tradition: "The oblivion of the Truth of Being under the impact of beings, which is not considered in its essence, is the sense of 'decadence' in Sein und Zeit." The "oblivion of Being" characterizes an historical epoch--a time when man considers and cultivates beings to the exclusion of Being. Heidegger credits Marx with recognizing the essential historical character of Being and alienation as its present outcome.

Homelessness becomes a world destiny. It is, therefore, necessary to think of this destiny from the point of view of the history of Being. . . . The essence of materialism is concealed in the essence of technics. . . . Technics in its essence is a destiny of the truth of Being resting in oblivion.

Thus, in the "Letter on Humanism," two significant changes are made in regard to Being and Time: (1) "technics" or technology becomes the focus of this "oblivion," rather than a structure (the inauthentic) of Dasein; (2) the "destiny" of the world rather than the individual's fate becomes

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10 Ibid., p. 434.
12 Ibid., p. 287.
"The Age of the World View" presents science as one of the essential phenomena of the modern age and the basis of the "representative-view" of the world.

The basic process of modern times is the conquest of the world as picture. The word "view" now means the product of representational building. In it man fights for the position in which he can be that existent which sets the standard for all existence and forms the directive for it. . . . For this battle . . . man brings into play the unlimited power of calculation, planning and cultivation of all things. 13

An important consequence of this re-presentation is that man becomes liberated from all limitations of his power and assumes absolute domination. However, Heidegger sees this power tempered by the objective forms which this domination has taken—not only is the age characterized by unbridled subjectivism and individualism, but also, perhaps more significantly, by an all-pervasive objectivism and conformism. This ambivalence causes Heidegger to seek a more fundamental level of analysis:

What is decisive is not that man frees himself to himself out of his previous commitments, but that the essence of man as such changes in that man becomes a subject. . . . when man becomes the first and real subjectum, then man becomes that existent, in which all that exists is grounded. 14

Thus the transformation of the world into "view" involves the transformation of man into subject. Only as a "subject" who understands the world as "view" does man seek to dominate and control the universe.

The Question of Being explicitly takes up the concept of nihilism by first relating it to the problem of transcendence or the relationship


14 Ibid., p. 278.
between beings and Being. "Work,"\textsuperscript{15} or technology, taken as the basic form of reality, is viewed as a manifestation of Nietzsche's conception of the will to power. The "representative" aspect of Work is significant: Work imposes or impresses upon the world the character of the real. "... the modern conception of what is real ... always remains an attack on the real in so far as the latter is challenged to put in an appearance within the horizon of the concept."\textsuperscript{16} Work as the product of the Worker establishes and preserves reality through the power of man, thereby ruling out any form of transcendence, any source of power beyond man. The second section of the book attempts to speak a "new language" in describing the phenomenon of nihilism. Rather than speaking of transcendence or the lack of it, Heidegger uses the phrase--"Being turns toward in turning away." No longer can one use "man" and "Being" to designate two separate but related concepts; rather they are intimately connected and co-determined.

If, therefore, in nihilism nothingness attains dominance in a special manner, then man is not only affected by nihilism but has an essential share in it. ... the essence of man itself belongs to the essence of nihilism ...\textsuperscript{17}

It is significant that Heidegger refers to a "special manner" in which nothingness gains dominance. Once again recalling the experience of nothingness or dread of Being and Time, the nothingness of nihilism must have a different power of disclosure. "Presumably, overcoming is only attained when, instead of the appearance of negative nothingness, the essence of nothingness which was once related to 'Being,' can arrive and be accepted

\textsuperscript{15}"Work" refers to Jünger's concept mentioned previously.

\textsuperscript{16}Martin Heidegger, The Question of Being, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 83.
by us mortals."¹⁸ "Negative nothingness" appears to be the counterpart to technology or perhaps the mood in which technology reveals its essence.

Heidegger elaborates his conception of technology in an essay "Die Frage nach der Technik," included in his book Vorträge und Aufsätze. In this essay both the positive, promising features and the negative, destructive aspects of technology are elucidated and drawn together. Heidegger calls the ordinary conception of technology--according to which it is a neutral instrumental totality in the power of man--"anthropological": it constantly endeavors to "get hold" of technology in a more decisive way. Although he acknowledges the partial truth or "correctness" of this approach, he seeks to grasp the essence of technology, which itself is not anything technological. In this pursuit, Heidegger focuses on the concept of "cause" which he relates to the instrumental approach: the means-ends structure of technology is based on a system of causality. Causation leads him back to Aristotle's four causes whose nature has been obscured by interpretation. According to Heidegger, the Greek concept of "cause" meant that which is responsible for something else. The four causes are those forces which are co-responsible for the appearance of something; they free something for its arrival into presence, bringing it forth from concealment. In this latter notion of "uncovering," Heidegger sees the root of the Greek word for truth, aletheia.¹⁹ Thus he leads us from the instrumental view of technology to a mode of truth or a revealment of the world.

At this point Heidegger offers the suggestion that his above discussion

¹⁸ ibid., p. 79.

¹⁹ Heidegger understands the word "aletheia" as hyphenated, "a-aletheia," and thus as a negation of hiddenness, concealment, i.e., as nonconcealment, unhiddenness.
may hold for Greek thinking but perhaps is inapplicable to "modern technology." He goes on to disclaim this: "technology is a manner of uncovering... It is the realm of unconcealedness, i.e., of truth."\textsuperscript{20} However he does acknowledge an important difference between the two--the uncovering of modern technology makes present by challenging nature to deliver energy which can then be accumulated and exploited, guided by the principles of efficiency and demand. Contrary to the old windmill which immediately transforms energy and clearly indicates its relation to nature and human use, the hydroelectric plant accumulates energy for long-range (both temporally and spatially) distribution and conceals its transforming power within an intricate system of machines and transmission devices. Furthermore, nature itself (e.g., the river which feeds the plant) tends to be incorporated into the technological system as a mere component.

Developing the idea of technological uncovering, Heidegger speaks of the provocation of nature--the effort to make nature present as stored energy, as that which is ready for use. Technology "exacts and posits" nature; it "positions" it for utilization. Here what is held in contrast to technology is the concept of the "object," that which is made present by standing against us, that which exposes its "causes" or origins. For example, the object-ness of the airliner ready for take-off is deceptive; the airplane is really present as "transportability," as "secured energy" for flying.

Heidegger now raises the decisive issue as to the relation of man to technology. Similar to the way in which the craftsman, as the efficient

cause, is co-responsible within the unified uncovering of the four-fold in Aristotelian causation, so modern man finds himself disposed to the challenge or provocation of technology. Modern technology is not of human making, but rather the mode in which essential creation takes place today. Technology is the provoking call which predisposes contemporary man to challenge everything, including man, to reveal itself as ready-for-use, as secured energy. Heidegger names this call or this collective unity of technology—the framework (die Ge-stell). In this word Heidegger seeks to bring together two essential, although seemingly conflicting, meanings of technology: 1) its provocative nature which has been described above; 2) its relation to uncovering or a setting forth of that which is concealed and thus its relation to truth.

For Heidegger technology is intimately related to modern mathematical science which long before the technological means had been developed, projected nature in a manner which prepared the way for technology. Heidegger rejects the notion that technology is applied science. Modern science was a precursor of the framework. The essence of technology opens up an historical path for modern man which at once collects and unifies the world but also conceals itself, i.e., technology is understood anthropologically. However Heidegger denies that his conception leads to a fatalism or determinism in which man is impotent and submissive. Rather he points to the possibility of being open to the essence of technology which will free man from the provocative and release him into the unconcealedness as such, i.e., into the realization of the belonging-together of his nature and Being. Yet this possibility is not meant to minimize the real danger of technology:

the possibility remains that technology may entirely conceal its essence as framework so that man may come to understand himself just as he understands all other things. He could become so decisively affected by technology that he is unable to apprehend the call or claim upon him. Being positioned for utilization may become the only way of uncovering, while the essence of that uncovering may become entirely concealed.

Finally, Heidegger questions the meaning of "essence" in the statement--"the essence of technology rests on the framework." Here he dismisses the usual meaning of essence in terms of genus or the universal features of a class. He returns to the verb form--to essentialize--to understand the meaning of the noun: "to essentialize" is to reign, to predominate, to prevail. However, the reigning of the essential is not an eternal, unchanging power which then bestows "being" on the changing, temporal in the manner of Platonic ideas. Rather the essential is historical and reigns only as long as it "grants" or bestows. Through this discussion, Heidegger attempts to provide a foundation for the affirmative potentiality of technology: although technology as the framework of provocation tends to reign exclusively over all beings, it also carries with it the power of bestowal which reveals to man the way in which he belongs to Being and his co-reponsibility for the uncovering of what is granted.

Identity and Difference continues to articulate this elusive phenomenon which determines modern reality. Here Heidegger again uses the term "framework" (Gestell) to characterize the situation.

22 Martin Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik," p. 33.

23 The connection is made through the relation of the respective German verbs. According to Heidegger, "wessen" (essence) understood verbally is the same as "währen" (to reign); furthermore "gewähren" (to grant) builds upon the same root and is essentially related.
That in which and from which man and Being are of concern to each other in the technological world claims us in the manner of the framework. In the mutual confrontation of man and Being we discern the claim that determines the constellation of our age.\textsuperscript{24}

Reminiscent of the theme of authenticity in \textit{Being and Time}, Heidegger relates the "frame," to the "event of appropriation" (\textit{Ereignis})—the frame must be made one's own before one can pass beyond it.

Within the framework there prevails a strange ownership and a strange appropriation. We must experience simply this owning in which man and Being are delivered over to each other, that is, we must enter into what we call the event of appropriation.\textsuperscript{25}

Analogously to the way in which possibilities must be made one's own in \textit{Being and Time}, so now the frame must be appropriated. If this were accomplished, "then a path would be open for man to experience beings in a more originary way—the totality of the modern technological world, nature and history, and above all their Being."\textsuperscript{26} However, contrasted with \textit{Being and Time}, in this later work appropriation has the nature of an "event," of a taking over of a common heritage, rather than a personal resolution made by the solitary individual. In its discussion of the modern world centered about the words "framework" and "event of appropriation," \textit{Identity and Difference} seems to bring together Heidegger's conception of nihilism and a hopeful direction for its overcoming.

The distinction between calculative and meditative thinking is one of the most fruitful themes which Heidegger has developed toward the overcoming of nihilism. In the postscript to his essay "What is Metaphysics?" Heidegger tentatively introduces this distinction in terms of "exact" and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24}Martin Heidegger, \textit{Identity and Difference}, p. 35.
\item \textsuperscript{25}Ibid., p. 36.
\item \textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 40.
\end{itemize}
"essential thinking." In a brief discussion of these terms, Heidegger indicates the kinship of exact thinking with technology and offers essential thought as a positive and more adequate alternative.

"Exact" thinking is never the strictest thinking, if the essence of strictness lies in the strenuousness with which knowledge keeps in touch with the essential features of what-is. "Exact" thinking merely binds itself to the calculation of what-is and ministers to this alone. . . . Calculative thought places itself under compulsion to master everything in the logical terms of its procedure. . . . The thinking whose thoughts not only do not calculate but are absolutely determined by what is "other" than what-is, might be called essential thinking.27

Essential thinking is attuned to Being in a way which is excluded by the object-orientation of calculative thinking; this attunement calls for a mode of thinking which carries within itself a certain gratitude, a spirit of sacrifice, a calm attentiveness which is akin to poetry.28

In his book What Is Called Thinking? Heidegger explicitly focuses on the concept of thinking. Rather than distinguishing two types of thinking, in this work Heidegger reserves the word "thinking" for what was above called essential thinking and boldly states that "science (technology) does not think."29 The very inability to think in our technological world is what provokes the need for thought.

. . . we still seem afraid of facing the exciting fact that today's sciences belong in the realm of the essence of modern technology . . . A fog still surrounds the essence of modern science. That fog, however, is not produced by individual investigators and scholars in the sciences. It is not produced by man at all. It arises from the region of what is most thought-provoking--that we are still not thinking . . .30


28 Ibid., pp. 358-360.


Technology militates against thinking by promoting a one-sided approach to knowledge which conceals the essence of technological understanding.

In order to prepare the way for thinking, Heidegger turns to the Old English noun for thought, "thane," which means a grateful thought, a thought which recalls.

When we listen to the word thane in its basic meaning, we hear at once the essence of the two words: thinking and memory, thinking and thanks, which readily suggest themselves in the verb "to think." . . . if we understand memory in the light of the old word thane, the connection between memory and thanks will dawn on us at once. For in giving thanks, the heart in thought recalls where it remains gathered and concentrated . . . This thinking that recalls in memory is the original thanks.31

This essential thinking is a response to Being, a thankful receptivity within historical recall.

However, Heidegger admits that thinking has its limits, especially in comparison with scientific knowledge. Thinking does not produce definite results; it does not offer practical wisdom nor solve cosmic problems. Nor does it directly issue in action.32 Thinking is attuned to Being and in that attunement reveals the essence of technology as one of human response rather than of domination. It is noteworthy that in this work, Heidegger often grounds his analysis through a dialogue with poetry and pre-Socratic philosophy, thus building upon his earlier suggestions with regard to essential thought.

Heidegger's Gelassenheit most explicitly develops the two types of thinking described above. In the "Memorial Address," the first of the two brief works in the book, Heidegger clearly articulates each type. "There are, then, two kinds of thinking, each justified and needed in its own way: 

31 Ibid., pp. 144-145.
32 Ibid., p. 159.
calculative thinking and meditative thinking." Calculative thinking is oriented toward problem-solving; it takes the form of planning, research and organization. It is directed toward goals, purposes and aims at getting results. In contrast, meditative thinking "contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is." Not issuing in results or specific action, it can be seen as useless or merely passive acceptance. However, Heidegger maintains that not only is meditative thinking significant in its own right, relating man to what is most human, but it also allows us to perceive the ground of calculative thinking itself. It is that thoughtful recollection which grasps the essence of our technological age. In fact, Heidegger argues that mankind's only hope against technology is the cultivation of meditative thinking; only this type of thinking will establish the distance from technology which is essential for "releasement."

We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature. ... We let technical devices enter our life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. I would call this comportment toward technology ... by an old word, releasement toward things. According to Heidegger, this releasement makes possible an "openness to the mystery" of technology, an attentive stance which reveals the hidden side of technology.

Releasement toward things and openness to the mystery belong together. They grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a different way. They promise us a new ground and foundation upon which we can stand and endure in the world of

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34 ibid., p. 46.

35 ibid., p. 54.
of technology without being imperiled by it. 36

While the "Memorial Address" speaks most simply and directly to the task of meditative thinking, the apparent difficulty in the movement to this mode of thought is indicated by the second work, "Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking." Here Heidegger expresses the need for a non-representational mode of thinking, which does not focus on objects as such, but upon the horizon or "region" in which objects appear. Heidegger relates the difficulty of this approach.

Scientist: I must confess that I can't quite re-present in my mind all that you say about region . . .
Scholar: Probably it can't be represented at all, in so far as in re-presenting everything has become an object that stands opposite us within a horizon.
Scientist: Then we can't really describe what we have named?
Teacher: No. Any description would reify it.
Scholar: Nevertheless it lets itself be named, and being named it can be thought about . . . 37

According to Heidegger, when one is released from calculative thinking, one is open within responsive thought to "that-which-regions," or, to use his earlier vocabulary, Being. Only through meditative thinking will man be appropriated by Being and come to dwell in truth.

The importance of the conception of meditative thinking is underlined by Heidegger's essay, "Time and Being," whose title is an implicit promise to provide the unpublished third part of the first half of Being and Time. Essentially, this essay is an attempt to rethink the concepts of "Being" and "time" through the "event of appropriation" (Ereignis). Although little new is added to the concept of meditative thinking, the essay emphasizes the significance of meditative thinking in Heidegger's philosophy.

First Heidegger relates the history of metaphysics to technology

36 Ibid., p. 55.
37 Ibid., p. 67.
through the conception of Being as presence; today Being manifests itself as presence in the sense of "calculable resources." Heidegger takes note of the global domination of technology and its corresponding sense of presence. He then goes on to explore the capacity of meditative thinking to reveal the essence of technology and thus to release man into its truth. Heidegger's final appeal is the call to meditation upon technology.

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CHAPTER VI

The Concept of Technology in Galbraith and Marcuse: A Heideggerian Critique

Heidegger's concept of technology is closely related to his concept of Being; technology is the "framework" which simultaneously obstructs and provides the possibility for Being to reveal itself. This conception of technology is comprehensive; it includes the three approaches mentioned in Chapter IV: 1) it is epistemological in that technology is conceived as a mode of knowledge; 2) it is anthropological in that it relates technology to the nature of man; 3) it is sociological—-it gives an incisive analysis of the way technology affects the present historical period. Moreover it takes each of the three approaches to a decisive level: 1) technological knowledge is the primary mode of truth today; 2) man's nature is intimately related to technology and is realized through it; 3) technology is the way in which all reality is disclosed in the contemporary world. Most significantly, Heidegger conceives of technology in an ontological way, that is, technology is not simply a product of human attitudes or sociological conditions, but is that which grounds the former and relates them to Being.

The essence of technology or the framework indicates a path which can potentially break through the barriers established by the instrumental view of technology, i.e., subjectism, representative thinking, the subject-object dichotomy, and place man in an essential relation to Being.

Similar to the way in which the Heideggerian concept of nihilism was confirmed by non-Heideggerian approaches in Chapter III, his conception
of technology must now be contrasted with two differing conceptions in an
effort both to isolate the "positive" features of technology, i.e., its
manifestations in the modern world, and to uncover from Heidegger's perspec-
tive the sense of Being which they conceal. From the many works available,
Galbraith's The New Industrial State and Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man will
be analyzed. These two books were chosen for the following reasons. First,
they both offer comprehensive discussions of technology as a total structure
which determines the various aspects of modern society. Secondly, they
present decisively different conceptions: Galbraith conceives of technol-
ogy as basically a means, a system of instrumentalities; albeit well
adapted for the modern industrial state. Marcuse understands technology as
an ideology, an historical project to control and dominate man and nature.
Thirdly, neither position adopts the ontological perspective which Heidegger
advocates. Certainly this is clear with respect to Galbraith. Concerning
Marcuse, there is a need for further examination.

In an article entitled "Is Technology Repressive?" Rolf Ahlers
argues that Marcuse's position is merely a variation of Heidegger's:
Marcuse's "revolutionary philosophy" and Heidegger's ontology are basically
similar efforts to escape the existing structures of technology which they
consider decadent or alienating. Ahlers attempts to show Marcuse's depen-
dence on Heidegger both in his analysis and solution of the problems of
technology. As the article indicates, Marcuse himself acknowledges his
indebtedness to Heidegger for his critique of technology; however Ahlers
fails to show dependency with regard to the ultimate status of technology
or its resolution. This failure is a result of his misunderstanding of

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1 Rolf Ahlers, "Is Technology Repressive?" Tijdschrift voor Filosofie,
Heidegger's conception: Ahlers largely ignores its ontological claim and implications. Furthermore he mistakes Heidegger's concern with the pre-Socratics and Greek thought in general for the desire to return to that mode of understanding, i.e., he sees Heidegger's thought as a type of romanticism. In addition, he minimizes the potentially positive aspect of technology which Heidegger has elucidated. Thus he interprets Heidegger's "solution" as a discontinuous "leap" back into a non-rational mode of experience. Rather than acknowledging the decisive differences in their (Marcuse and Heidegger) respective conceptions, Ahlers emphasizes their refusal to accept the world of technology and he describes Marcuse's solution as an attempt to extend the Heideggerian analysis into the socio-political realm to which it is not suited. The following discussion will attempt to explicate the essential differences of the positions. This explication of the divergence from Heidegger applies to both Galbraith's and Marcuse's positions. However, first it is necessary to show the ways in which they agree with Heidegger in order to confirm the dominance of technology in the contemporary era. Since all three positions concur in this assessment of technology as a predominant force, the first part of this chapter (pages 92-109) is largely a selective explication of Galbraith and Marcuse; its inclusion in this chapter is justified as the grounds that, besides being a further confirmation of Heidegger's perspective, it is an important extension of that perspective into areas which Heidegger has not developed in his own writings.

The emphasis on method in Galbraith's analysis is apparent from the outset. Galbraith defines technology as "the systematic application of scientific or other organized knowledge to practical tasks."2 The main

characteristic of this application is the division of each task into increasingly specialized components and this in turn has the following consequences: there is an increase in 1) the time between beginning and completion of any task; 2) the needed capital; 3) the inflexibility of time and money committed; 4) specialized man-power; 5) organization; 6) detailed and long-range planning. This powerful combination of knowledge and planning has been so successful that "it is a commonplace of modern technology that there is a high measure of certainty that problems have solutions before there is knowledge of how they are to be solved." Technology is confident in its ability to correctly "represent" the world. However because of the high and inflexible nature of the costs and skill which are involved, the risks of technological venture are great. To decrease this risk, the individual firm often turns to the state.

It can provide or guarantee a market for the product. And it can underwrite the costs of development. . . . Or it can pay for and make available the necessary technical knowledge. The drift of the argument will be evident. Technology . . . leads to planning; in its higher manifestations it may put the problems of planning beyond the reach of the individual firm. Technological compulsions, and not ideology or political will, will require the firm to seek the help and protection of the state.

At this point, the question could be raised as to the nature of this "compulsion." What does it involve? According to Galbraith, it involves much of the whole system.

. . . industrial planning is in unabashed alliance with size. . . . Size is the general servant of technology, not . . . of profits. The small firm cannot be restored by breaking the power of the larger ones. It would require, rather, the rejection of the technology which since earliest

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3 Ibid., p. 19.

4 Ibid., p. 20.
consciousness we are taught to applaud. It would require that we have simple products with simple equipment . . . by unspecialized labor . . . All that is necessary is to undo nearly everything that . . . has been called progress . . . There must be no thought of supersonic travel, or exploring the moon and there will not be many automobiles.  

As Heidegger has noted, greatness of size, the quantitative, comes to have a qualitative significance through technology. "Greatness" becomes an end in itself, an "incalculable" source of guidance.

Furthermore, this problem is not confined to America alone, but finds its counterpart in Soviet-type economies. There the alliance of state and industry is but a variant accommodation to the same need that is motivating our large corporations. Big industry under both private and state ownership assumes similar powers and decision-making procedures. Contrary to the conception that a sharp line separates the two sectors, in America the industrial system is "inextricably associated with the state. . . In fact the line between public and private authority in the industrial system is indistinct and in large measure imaginary, and the abhorrent association of public and private organizations is normal."

However the accepted doctrine of the separation of state and industry is used to preserve one of the most important traits of the technostructure --autonomy. (The technostructure includes all those members who participate in the planning and organization for a large corporation.) Although it depends upon the state for capital, market and knowledge, the large

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5 Ibid., p. 32.
7 J. K. Galbraith, op. cit., pp. 298-299.
8 With respect to nihilism, autonomy can be related to a freedom from all restraints, a sense of complete domination.
corporation tends to assume control over all aspects of its activity. The first requisite for survival by the technostructure is that it preserve the autonomy on which its decision-making power depends.\(^9\) As long as the goals of state and the technostructure coincide, there is no threat to its autonomy; but when there is a conflict, e.g., in the problems of pollution, the threat of government interference is denounced as an evil, with the full backing of traditional belief. Yet autonomy is necessary.

The real reasons . . . not being clearly seen, the power of the market and the allegedly deep and inherent separation between private enterprise and government are advanced in their place. Both are articles of faith. It is a tribute to the power of adaptation that it can win social attitudes . . . that have such negligible relation to reality.\(^10\)

Modern economic belief is the servant of the technostructure: the actual relation between industry and social attitudes is seldom examined in our educational system and even the recent deluge of books, such as those of Packard and Whyte,\(^11\) which attempt to describe this relation, seem to have little effect upon social attitudes.

Before turning to the way in which the industrial system is able to accommodate the needs of society to its own, its decision-making procedure should be described. Although the "individual" is valued over the "group" in our ideology, he has lost his overriding importance in the technostructure.\(^12\)

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\(^10\) Ibid., p. 170.


\(^12\) Heidegger discusses the relation between the individual and the group in "The Age of the World View": "It is certain that as a consequence of the liberation of man the modern age has produced subjectivism and
Decisions in the large corporation are no longer made by individuals, whether they be stockholders, owners or presidents, but by a highly complex procedure which draws upon many different specialists and coordinators. Further, the data which are received from the specialists are usually assembled, analyzed and interpreted through highly technical equipment. No one person can ever attempt to fully understand the varied phases of the process. Nor is there an attempt to search for such men.

The real accomplishment of modern science and technology consists in taking ordinary men, informing them narrowly and deeply and then, through appropriate organization, arranging to have their knowledge combined with that of other specialized but equally ordinary men. This dispenses with the need for genius. The resulting performance, though less inspiring, is far more predictable.\(^{13}\)

Added to the need for intense specialization is that of intricate planning which is necessary to produce a controlled market. This type of planning demands protection from any external influence.

When power is exercised by a group, not only does it pass into the organization but it passes irrevocably. If an individual has taken a decision he can be called before another individual. . . . But if the decision required the combined information of a group, it cannot be safely reversed by an individual. He will have to get the judgment of other specialists. This returns the power once more to organization.\(^{14}\)

In fact, Galbraith identifies this large decision-making organization, as opposed to the owners and the board of directors, as the technostructure itself.

Advertising is the obvious means of economic control in our society.\(^{13}\) Individualism. But it is just as certain that no age before this has created a comparable objectivism, and that in no age before this did the nonindividual in the form of the collective come into its own.\(^{13}\) (p. 278)

\(^{13}\)J. K. Galbraith, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 61.

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 65-66.
"The individual serves the industrial system . . . by consuming its products. On no other matter, religious, political, or moral is he so elaborately and skillfully and expensively instructed."\textsuperscript{15} The constant bombardment of the public by the advertising media insure that the advantages of consumption will be appreciated. This priority placed upon consumption directly affects social values: not only does one's standard of living become an index of achievement, but a host of other values--health, beauty, sexual success, happiness--tend to become associated with the advertised products. Further there is a marked tendency in affluent societies to multiply the "needs" of the population far beyond necessary physical needs such as warmth, food and shelter. Indeed, the very concept of "need" is threatened in modern society.\textsuperscript{16}

Most goods serve needs that are discovered to the individual not by palpable discomfort that accompanies deprivation, but by some psychic response to their possession. . . . Hunger and pain have an objective and compelling quality. . . . But psychic reactions have no such internal anchor . . . The further a man is removed from physical need the more open he is to persuasion --or management--as to what he buys.\textsuperscript{17}

The advertising media become a source of capricious possibility--products come and go, faces interweave in melodic rhythm, but beneath it all is something to feed everyone's fantasy. It is not simply that the consumer is "persuaded" to buy product X which is being advertised, but beyond that the sheer volume of advertising produces and reinforces associations which strengthen consumption in general. And the very appeal to each man's intelligence by those who recognize the crude techniques for what they are is

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 37.

\textsuperscript{16}With respect to nihilism, there is a relationship between the multiplication of needs and a sense of unlimited possibility; the individual's sense of open-endedness is reinforced by the potentialities of the technological society at large.

\textsuperscript{17}J. K. Galbraith, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 201-202.
often advertising's best defense: it has long been acknowledged that these techniques do not depend upon intellectual argument or rational persuasion but on non-rational criteria such as repetition, subliminal response and association.

Failure to win belief does not impair the effectiveness of the management of demand for consumer products. Management involves the creation of a compelling image... To this he responds more or less automatically under circumstances where the purchase does not merit a great deal of thought. For building this image, palpable fantasy may be more valuable than circumstantial evidence.18

The consumptive-society has long progressed beyond the primitive tendency of limited consumption: to work until one has satisfied the basic needs is dangerous and atavistic. Economic development often consists in devising strategies to overcome the tendency of man to place limits on their objects as regards income and thus on their efforts. Galbraith indicates that the economist has strengthened this attitude through the equalization of all needs: "If all wants are of equally good standing, it follows that the moral and social obligation to work to fill them remains undiminished in power no matter how much is produced."19 Economically speaking, the need of a woman for a third fur coat is as strong and legitimate as a hungry child's need for food. As long as it is assumed that all needs are based upon the individual's free choice, then their proliferation has the sanction of society.20 Even the knowledge of the gigantic sums of money spent on advertising, which would seem to indicate that the individual

18 Ibid., p. 328.
19 Ibid., p. 273.
20 Here the ambiguity between the individual's free choice and societal manipulation suggests the ambiguity between the nihilist's power over his surroundings and his sense of impotence.
requires strong inducement to realize these needs, does not appear to substantially disturb the public. Everyone laughs at commercials.

In summary, Galbraith has argued that all aspects of society have been transformed to some extent through the emergence of the "new industrial state." This transformation is based on what he calls the "revised sequence," no longer does the consumer control production through the market, the "accepted sequence," but rather the industrial system itself reaches forward to control the market, to actually shape the needs of the consumer and even social attitudes and beliefs. He has shown that the accepted sequence helps to maintain the autonomy of the technostructure and, thus protect it from external control; as long as the consumer is sovereign, he should be free to buy whatever he chooses. But if it is established that the individual is subject to management by the system itself, then the case against interference on behalf of the individual is greatly weakened. However, in the new industrial state, the goals of government and business have largely coalesced. Given this situation, the large corporation tends to become passive in partisan politics, avoiding any strong identification with either political party.21

All this by way of protecting a much stronger and more vital position as an extension of the arm of the bureaucracy. In this role the corporation can participate in the decisions that count. It can help shape the highly technical choices which, in turn, govern the demand for its own military and other products. . . . It will help shape the current beliefs

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21 This thesis appears to be invalidated by the Republican campaign of 1972. However, one could argue that the large corporations did remain passive, but that the Republican Party itself (or, perhaps better, the Committee to Reelect the President which was acting outside of the Party proper) took the initiative and actually coerced this support. Another tack of defense would be to claim that this support reinforces the thesis of coalescence of goals by indicating that these corporations also gave large donations to the Democrats.
or assumptions on foreign policy.\(^{22}\)

When the sharp separation of state and industry breaks down, many of the practical differences which separate the capitalist and socialist or communist nations are destroyed also. The large-scale organization and planning demanded by industrial societies require a similar autonomy and control of the market. Galbraith points out that "reform" in communist countries is often the attempt to give industry more autonomy. He believes that, in time, ideology will adapt itself to the demands of technology. Thus the diagnostic part of Galbraith's analysis indicates a sense of impotence in the face of technology; ideology, as the "subjective" ideals of the society, is seen as powerless when opposed to the "objective" determinations of technology.

Herbert Marcuse, in *One-Dimensional Man*, focuses on the management of the individual by society. He argues that advanced industrial society has developed techniques and controls over its members which conceal the conflicts and contradictions within the society, while making it appear that the System is the embodiment of reason itself.

And yet this society is irrational as a whole. Its productivity is destructive of the free development of human needs and faculties, its peace maintained by the constant threat of war, its growth dependent on the repression of the real possibilities for pacifying the struggle for existence. . . . Our society distinguishes itself by conquering the centrifugal social forces with Technology rather than Terror, on the dual basis of an overwhelming efficiency and an increased standard of living.\(^{23}\)

Marcuse cites this ability to contain social change as its most singular achievement. Even critical theory is unable to set forth alternatives


decisively; the very categories of social theory, e.g., "society," "class,"
"individual," have lost their critical connotation and have become largely
descriptive or merely operational terms. The spheres of tension and con-
ict which these categories once indicated tend to become integrated
within industrial society. Not only are socially needed occupations,
skills, and attitudes prescribed, but even individual needs and aspirations.
In this way, the very distinction between individual and social, private
and public existence breaks down. Once recognized that technology has
created an integrated whole which absorbs or disarms all critical attempts
to resist it, technology can no longer claim neutrality.

As a technological universe, advanced industrial society is a
political universe, the latest stage in the realization of a
specific historical project--namely, the experience, trans-
formation, and organization of nature as the mere stuff of
domination. As the project unfolds, it shapes the entire
universe of discourse and action, intellectual and material
culture. In the medium of technology, culture, politics, and
the economy merge into an omnipresent system which swallows
up or repulses all alternatives... Technological rational-
ity has become political rationality.24

As with Galbraith, methodology is once again central in the analysis of
technology. However, for Marcuse, this method manifests itself as a his-
torical project which contains all aspects of culture. Thus the autonomy
of technology is again emphasized, along with a corresponding impotence
with respect to alternatives.

In his analysis, Marcuse focuses on those "needs" which are forced
upon the individual by particular social interests. These "needs" tend to
perpetuate "toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice"; and even if
their satisfaction results in gratification to the individual, the final
consequence is "euphoric unhappiness." And although he believes that the

24 Ibid., p. xvi.
ultimate determination of true needs must be made by the individual, it is not the range of choice that is decisive for freedom, but rather what can be chosen and what is in fact chosen. The need for the production and consumption of waste, for stupefying labor beyond necessity, for relaxation which only perpetuates the stupefaction, for free choice between brands and gadgets; these needs are destructive of the potentialities of man and cannot be excused just because the social controls have induced their acceptance by the individual. However, the pervasiveness of the identification of the individual with these needs throws all distinctions into ambiguity; the object-world becomes an extension of one's mind and body through possessions; the media are sources of information and manipulation; the automobile is both nuisance and necessity; architecture—both functional and confining. Even the "private space" of the individual has been invaded by technology; not only the actual physical place where one lives and works, but also one's "psychic space," one's feelings and desires tend to be reduced to automatic response and association.

Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that... transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and of its quantitative extension. Yet the dominance of one-dimensionality does not mean that all forms of spiritual or bohemian pursuits are excluded; on the contrary, religiosity and different life-styles may abound. What is decisive is that these

25 With respect to nihilism, there seems to be an obscuration of subjectivism and objectivism in such a way that they merge into an ambiguous totality.

26 H. Marcuse, op. cit., p. 12.
deviant forms are easily assimilated and do not pose any threat to the system itself. They are deprived of their negative thrust. "They are rather the ceremonial part of practical behaviorism, its harmless negation, and are quickly digested by the status quo as part of its healthy diet." 27

This process of absorption does not stop with off-beat or bizarre expressions of culture but rather extends to the very values and beliefs upon which the society is based.

Today's novel feature is the flattening out of the antagonism between culture and social reality through the obliteration of the oppositional, alien, and transcendent elements in the higher culture by virtue of which it constituted another dimension of reality. This liquidation of two-dimensional culture takes place not through the denial and rejection of the "cultural values," but through their wholesale incorporation into the established order, through their reproduction and display on a massive scale. 28

The highest values of the society have become the common repertoire of the advertising media and politician: the evocative words of freedom and self-fulfillment are reduced to meaningless sounds which obtain their meaning only in the context of propaganda, advertising, and entertainment. Even intimate feelings and values are repetitiously linked to brands and gadgets and translated into operational terms and problems. The realm of ideals no longer hovers above the real world, opposing it and giving it sustenance, but rather tends to be absorbed and adapted to it. The result is a "materialization of ideals." "The capabilities of this society are progressively reducing the sublimated realm in which the condition of man was represented, idealized, and indicted. Higher culture becomes part of material culture." 29

28 Ibid., p. 57.
29 Ibid., p. 58.
Thus the realm of "subjective" values tends to be translated into concrete, pragmatic goals on behalf of the "betterment of life."

This process of absorption can best be seen when one turns to the traditional home of higher culture, the arts. Marcuse maintains that the contemporary society undermines the basis of artistic alienation, the essential gap between the arts and the established order. Art is progressively incorporated into the prevailing state of affairs, becoming a part of the "entertainment industry," a therapeutic counterpart to the real world. Much of art becomes a type of public psychoanalysis which reveals the problems and frustrations of the society, thereby giving the audience a feeling of catharsis, while leaving the problems unchanged. The mass availability of music and literature furthers this process by stripping these works of their other-worldliness, of their protected realm in which they could stand against the society. Art becomes functional—it "fits in," it is integrated. With Plato and Valley of the Dolls in the drugstore, which is a part of the shopping center where Bach is being played interchangeably with Bacharach and the center indistinguishable from the cultural complex across the way, these works tend to become diffused, mere "cogs in a culture-machine which remakes their content."

Availability and integration are not the only enemies of culture; there is a more direct connection to technology. The truth value of pre-technological culture "depended to a large degree on an incomprehended and unconquered dimension of man and nature, on the narrow limits placed on

30 Here there is a similarity to Aristotle's conception of tragedy. However, Marcuse would want to maintain that today the arts are used to purge not only the anxiety stemming from the more universal and inescapable problems of life but rather that arising from the very problems engendered by society itself, i.e., the arts help maintain the status quo.
organization and manipulation, on the 'insoluble core' which resisted integration.

One of the major effects of modern society is the corrosion of this core: the physical transformation of the world entails the transformation of society's symbols, images and ideas. When sprawling cities, endless highways and occasional reserves replace villages, country paths and wilderness; when airplanes cut through the skies and motored vehicles find access to virtually all parts of the environment; when flags are "planted" on the moon and Mars is the next "project"--then all of these areas lose their qualitatively different reality, their contradictory force. As all realms of reality become unified through domination, man's image of himself is correspondingly affected: his inmost dreams and anxieties become material for analysis, made susceptible to "technical solution and dissolution." One's problems are more easily "manageable" when viewed as "personal," as "hangups." There are hardly any matters which cannot be sensibly discussed, analyzed, and polled; solitude is becoming increasingly more difficult to secure. There is the tendency to become one-dimensional to oneself.

While, on the one hand, man becomes fascinated with the freedom offered by the myriad possibilities and achievements of technology; he finds himself, on the other hand, increasingly reduced to these possibilities and achievements, i.e., his freedom is at the disposal of technology. Thus, technology promotes a groundless subjectivity which has seemingly unlimited possibilities; but this very groundlessness undermines its strength and renders it malleable for manipulation and control.

In the second section of his book, Marcuse examines the theoretical}

31H. Marcuse, op. cit., p. 66.
background of the one-dimensional society. He cites the scientific conception of nature as the decisive characteristic of this development. "The quantification of nature which led to its explication in terms of mathematical structures, separated reality from all inherent ends and, consequently, separated the true from the good, science from ethics." A positivistic conception of nature is promoted; nature becomes an autonomous realm of investigation, independent of any ethical, aesthetic, or political considerations; scientific rationality is essentially "neutral." Values may be granted a higher dignity or even another "level of truth," but they are not real (they are ideal) and they become less so the higher they are elevated above reality. In effect, all conceptions or beliefs which by their nature cannot be verified suffer from this defect. However, given this status, they work effectively in modern society: according to the situation, they are invoked when needed, but can also be safely ignored without disturbing their identity. As long as morality retains this status, it will be impotent against the established order.

Yet, paradoxically, while this objective conception of nature becomes so oppressive to the point of excluding man's values from reality, it also becomes increasingly dependent upon the human subject. Entities are no longer what they appear to be; indeed, under a certain interpretation, they seem to dissolve into "convenient fictions," a set of operations, or "events." "The density and opacity of things evaporate: the objective world loses its 'objectionable' character, its opposition to the

32Ibid., p. 146.

33Most ethical discussions assume this ought/is dichotomy and go on to discuss ethics as if it were an entirely theoretical pursuit.
subject.  
Marcuse discusses this idealistic tendency of science not to suggest that contemporary physics denies or even questions the existence of the external world, but rather to emphasize the suspension of judgment concerning these matters. He draws two consequences from this suspension: 1) it focuses upon the functional rather than the metaphysical aspect of inquiry; 2) it frees itself from any other commitment outside of the operational context. Nature becomes a system of instrumentalities which offers itself as material-to-be-transformed, as material for organization. "The science of nature develops under the technological a priori which projects nature as potential instrumentality, stuff of control and organization. And the apprehension of nature as (hypothetical) instrumentality precedes the development of all particular technical organization." Yet this transformation of nature intimately involves that of man; man is the ambiguous "subject" of this transformation. He seems to be both the controller and the controlled, the creator and the created, the powerful and the impotent. Man's relation to technology seems to defy a simple instrumental or utilitarian interpretation. Furthermore, as technology becomes the universal form of material production and, in turn, the determinant of culture, it is not just Western man who is involved, but humanity itself--the entire world.

Marcuse seeks "to demonstrate the internal instrumentalist character of this scientific rationality by virtue of which it is a priori technology, and the a priori of a specific technology--namely, technology as form of

34 H. Marcuse, op. cit., p. 149.

35 However, this denial or questioning is implicit and can be viewed as another expression of nihilism.

social control and domination."\[37\] Nature as mere stuff of control is neutral and has no telos; but it is precisely its neutral character which relates to a specific historical subject. The positive aspect of this "neutrality" is that it projects mere form which can be used for any end. "Formalization and functionalization are, prior to all application, the 'pure form' of a concrete societal practice."\[38\] The very acts of formalizing and functionalizing become definitive: reality becomes form and function; method predominates. The goal of the society is a perpetual projection of basically similar transformations of reality. The self-correcting feature of science and the seemingly unlimited possibilities of technology only guarantee the continuous one-dimensional development of the world and actually inhibit the possibility of genuine alternatives. What is at issue is

... the inherent limit of the established science and scientific method, by virtue of which they extend, rationalize, and insure the prevailing Lebenswelt without altering its existential structure—that is, without envisaging a qualitatively new mode of 'seeing' and qualitatively new relations between men and between man and nature.\[39\]

Our present mode of understanding links the domination of nature to that of man; the perpetual production of goods and comforts becomes the goal and good of man. Man and nature become fungible objects of organization, the stuff of further domination and control.

Although Marcuse's analysis was concerned primarily with the theoretical background or science, it is important to see that there

\[37\] Ibid., pp. 157-158.

\[38\] Ibid., p. 157.

\[39\] Ibid., p. 165.
emerges in his results a concept of reality which is the correlate of the scientific endeavors and which lets the world appear as perspectival.40 Entities in the world no longer possess a definite nature as such, but are rather defined by their context, e.g., a tree is an obstacle for the new freeway, potential lumber for a house, or an object of aesthetic appreciation. The destructiveness of technology is not just based on the fact that lumber takes priority over aesthetics, but that any perspective or interpretation of a thing becomes equally possible, equally cogent. A thing is defined according to its use and that use itself is a function of the current level of technology and other extraneous factors--factors which do not directly confront the thing in question. The thing itself is not allowed to address us; it is not permitted to define its own situation, to prescribe a meaning to us. Within the scope of arbitrarily eligible perspectives, things lose their definiteness, their presence within an interrelated totality. They become mere stuff, formless matter; they approach a state of non-being. Things become nothing.

Several significant traits of technology emerge from the above discussion. First technology is pervasive. Technology is not confined to purely mechanical apparatuses nor to the methodical application of certain isolated techniques, but is intricately related to all aspects of society. Technology influences the most personal needs and values of the entire population. While Galbraith concentrates on technology's domination of the socio-economic situation, Marcuse analyzes its influence in the arts,

40 It is important to distinguish between science, which analyzes "entities" and places them within lawful patterns, and technology, which operates on the basis of scientific analyses. They are correlated through "practice," through the technological imperative.
language, interpersonal relations and philosophy, among others. Technology emerges as a definite type of rationality which, although apparently serving an economic function, permeates and shapes the entire society, including the economy.

Secondly, technology tends toward autonomy. The success of technology requires independence from extrinsic goals and values. It is dependent solely upon continual growth and thus requires corporate strength. Contrary to its common utilitarian interpretation, technology generates its own goals and values and is highly sensitive to outside interference. Although drawing upon traditional values and ideals, technology tends to disengage them from their traditional contexts and thus to alter their significance—they become a system of reinforcements within an amorphous but stimulating environment. Just as human needs become vague, malleable, so values become circumscribed by the ever-changing complexes of modern life; they come to be understood in terms of the technical means that are available for their realization. The non-material aspect of values, that which eludes technical reduction, is understood as secondary, as subjective; possibly—as meaningless. Using Galbraith's term, the technostructure is a self-contained unit and operates best independently. If allowed to continue in its present status, technology itself will provide the basis of future society.

Thirdly, technology is repressive. The goals and values of technology are restrictive of human possibilities. The consumptive-related values, which Galbraith discusses, and the one-dimensionality of Marcuse are restrictive structures forced upon the population by interests indifferent to the welfare of society itself. However the methods of social control are so vast and effective that the question of the individual's
freedom is lost in ambiguity: he is made to identify with these foreign structures. He accepts his repression and calls it progress. Without noticing the deception involved, the population comes to accept comfort, satisfaction and manufactured needs, the "easy-life," as a necessity, as one of the most significant values of existence. Further, by not directly attacking any of the other traditional values, technology is able to entertain a wide range of values—some even contradictory. By offering the appearance of a pluralistic society which is able to tolerate extreme differences of belief, technology insures its own success and perpetuates a covert repression.

Fourthly, technology tends to conceal its own nature. Almost all conceptions of technology consider it to be purely utilitarian, a methodology, a tool of human purpose and desire; its intrinsic goals and values are hidden. This apparent neutrality is its most effective means of disarming opposition and ensuring its acceptance. This concealment is furthered by its use of traditional concepts and terms which are no longer valid; it invokes traditional theory when it is beneficial to itself, e.g., the concept of "private enterprise" in a planned economy. Through operational rhetoric it manipulates criticism and conceals contradiction. Being a type of rationality rather than specific techniques, it is able to permeate realms where it is never expected, e.g., interpersonal relations or in subliminal response.

Fifthly, technology is anonymous. Technology has removed responsibility from the individual and placed it solely in the organization—a vast complex of various specialists who gather and synthesize great amounts of data and who reach decisions conjointly. There are no secret conspiracies nor any identifiable masterminds behind it. Its power largely comes from
its implicit acceptance by the society at large.

A sixth trait of technology is its emasculation of ideology. All major industrial states, that is, technological societies, tend to converge in essential respects regardless of their respective ideologies. Industry and state are no longer independent in capitalistic societies nor does the state exclusively run industry in socialistic ones. The demands of technology, not the edicts of ideology, are decisive.

A seventh characteristic is technology's attempt to make everything available. With the belief that problems have solutions before the actual solution is found, technology attacks all matters indifferently with great confidence of success. Availability is a common denominator of this success: the world is put at man's fingertips; it is secured as ready-for-use.

Finally, technology is a process of formalizing and functionalizing the world. Through increasing abstraction, technology analyzes the world into discrete functions which concentrate and conceal a background of work and energy within a specific and restrictive context. The "use" of a thing comes to be liberated from its contextual framework. Furthermore the human "user," the consumer, tends to become a bundle of discrete needs which can be fulfilled by the liberated functions. The world tends to dissolve into functions and needs.

In the last section the single term "technology" was used in a sense which Galbraith's or Marcuse's analyses would not have always con­doned. Galbraith's work was chiefly concerned with an entity, "the new industrial state," which uses technology as a means of production, as an economic form of organization which is well-suited to the present stage of industrialization. Technology so conceived is merely and quite naturally the means for a society which seeks unlimited development. Marcuse
subtitled his book, "Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society"—technology is conceived as an "ideology" of a particular form of society, specifically the project to control and dominate both man and nature. To Galbraith, technology is basically a means, a technique, which has become dominant through massive organization and specialization; to Marcuse, technology is a project of a certain historical society, the ideology of a specific type of human being. However both authors seem to be concerned with a single, unitary phenomenon which is both pervasive and powerful, a force which to a great extent is determining the course of contemporary events and culture, as the previously established common traits indicated. But neither of their conceptions is adequate to grasp its nature; their conceptual understanding of technology does not do justice to their findings.

The technological trends which their analyses reveal imply a radical transformation of the world, one that cannot be fully accounted for in terms of a new form of economic organization or a historically predominant ideology. Rather their analyses suggest a singularly disclosive power which has altered reality in an essential way. Neither Galbraith nor Marcuse fully explicate the relationship between technology and the state, but they often discuss them as if they were coordinated aspects of the same phenomenon. However, both authors ultimately presuppose the dependency of technology on the state or society for guidance, although this dependency seems

41 In his book The Domination of Nature, William Leiss criticizes Marcuse for the ambiguity in his use of the term "industrial society" and demands a more precise characterization in terms of the actual societal interests which determine the structure of that society. However, perhaps Marcuse is closer to the nature of technology when he refuses to analyze technological domination in terms of a "master" or specific individuals or groups within society. His search for a source of convergence for the various trends he depicts is an insight, albeit ambiguous, into technology.
to be in conflict with their compelling analyses, especially with regard to the traits of autonomy and anonymity. In fact, both Galbraith and Marcuse rely on this dependency when they offer their positive proposals: Galbraith calls for a redirection of the technostructure through political education and action; Marcuse envisions the need for a new historical "subject" who will enter into a new relation with technology, using it to pacify the struggle for existence.

Galbraith exhorts the new power-class, the educators, to seize the initiative and take control of technology's development. This solution rests on the assumptions that the highly educated are aware of the insidiousness of advertising, the detrimental nature of technology's goals and that they possess a positive conception of human possibilities. It ignores the alternatives that technology may be susceptible to other than a moral-utilitarian interpretation and that contemporary education itself may continue to be a further manifestation of technology. Marcuse recognizes the need for a revolution in consciousness, whereby man will transcend the strictly utilitarian view of nature and subordinate technological development to humane goals and tasks. His proposal rests on the assumptions that man's relation to technology can be qualitatively changed through human development alone and that this change will be toward pacification, freedom; that is, toward a positive conception of human existence. It ignores the possibilities that technology may be constitutive of man's being, or that change, even fundamental change, may be for the worse.

42J. K. Galbraith, op. cit., Chs. XXIX-XXXII.
43Ibid., Chs. XXXIII-XXXV.
44H. Marcuse, op. cit., Chs. IX and X.
Furthermore, Galbraith's and Marcuse's proposals appear simplistic and even inappropriate when contrasted with the cogency of their diagnoses; their analyses have a sense of urgency and radical novelty which seems to defy their solutions. The very element of human control which was so emphatically lacking in their analyses of technology, now emerges as the only hope for salvation. In fact, Galbraith and Marcuse themselves acknowledge the inadequacy of their proposals and emphasize the importance of their critiques. 45 Marcuse's articulation of this problem is noteworthy:

... the facts are all there which validate the critical theory of society and of its fatal development ... And they all point to the historical alternative ... But the facts and the alternatives are there like fragments which do not connect, or like a world of mute objects without a subject, without the practice which would move these objects in the new direction. Dialectical theory ... cannot offer the remedy. 46

Another possible reason for this perplexity is that the nature of technology remains hidden, that its fundamental significance has not been realized.

Based on the foregoing analysis, the full significance of technology cannot be grasped unless it is given the status of a fundamental power which actually establishes the relation between man and the world and between man and man. Technology is not a powerful tool, nor a particular type of consciousness, nor is it essentially human. Technology is the predominant disclosure of the contemporary world which establishes both man and nature as material-for-domination, as the mere stuff of control. Technology's decisive deceptiveness is based on its capacity to conceal its own nature: reality appears as composed of only man and nature—that which encompasses both of them is hidden by the essence of domination.

exclusively dominate, to simply control, is to exclude the possibility of the indomitable, the uncontrollable; technology prohibits its own revelation. Through technology man, the subject, appears as dominant; nature, the object—as submissive. Yet inherent in this relation is the capacity of man to dominate himself: the ambiguity in the word "subject" indicates this relationship. "Subject" signifies the active agent of some particular action, the cause or ground of an event, but also the passive entity which undergoes some action, the state of being under the domination or control of an external force. Technological man seems to be a "subject" in both senses: as scientist-technician, he is the active agent who theorizes and experiments, who calculates and manipulates; as an empirical being, he is the passive entity which submits to theory and experiment which is subject to calculation and manipulation. However, domination can take several forms—from actual enslavement of others to the most subtle methods of psychological control, including a type of "self-domination" which reduces the experiential field within restrictive methodologies. One comes to understand oneself in terms of theory; all potential mystery, the indomitable, the uncontrollable, the "untheorizable" is lost in the apparent clarity of manipulable concepts. However, at this point, technology takes advantage of the conception of a "noumenal self" in order to give man the feeling of autonomy: technological man imagines that he reserves some part of his being from technology, while denying that fact in actuality. In this way, he is able to believe in his right of free choice, in his highly-prized freedom and in his transcendence of technology. Technology serves in order to dominate.

Technology is not just a powerful methodology nor a type of rationality, but the disclosure which establishes man's relation to nature
and to himself. Furthermore, this relationship is basically nihilistic: while promising unlimited possibility, it actually negates genuine alternatives and only perpetuates various forms of domination and control. This domination is a silencing, a negation of the world in that the world is allowed to reveal itself only within the forms and patterns which technological conceptualization impose on it. Man, the theorist-technician, appears to be the active subject, the source of these concepts and patterns; in reality, he is the passive subject of his own theorizing, a calculated entity within technological planning and organization. Technology imposes silence upon all being: neither man nor nature is open to authentically new possibilities, to the encompassing, to mystery. The promise of unlimited possibility is dissolved into stifling aimlessness and empty freedom. The aimlessness is disguised as "progress," as the constantly increasing domination of the universe; this freedom appears only in a "noumenal" realm where the technological society abstractly imagines new projects and goals. In reality this "progress" and "freedom" are defined by technology itself; new forms of domination and control are dependent upon the latest technological developments and the current politico-economic situation, mere reactions to anonymous and arbitrary forces.

In conclusion one wants to know what technology is or what technology does. But in a sense, it is and does nothing. It is not another entity in the world which can be described and analyzed; it is that which, although disposing all things through domination and control, reveals itself in the denial of reality, in the refusal to let anything be itself, i.e., be an enduring challenge, a threat, a surprise. Its characteristic

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47"Relationship" is underlined in order to distinguish between technology itself, i.e., a mode of truth, and the nihilistic relationship it promotes.
features all point to a fundamental "nothingness"; they all are negative in nature, indicating no positive core. Furthermore, they indicate no direction or intrinsic meaning. While presumably transforming the world, technology actually only conceals the world and dissolves it into nothing.

However, this conception of technology is not totally negative; it does not dictate a passive acceptance of nihilism. The very recognition of technology reveals a presence which is no longer technological—beings, both human and non-human, are now disclosed within an encompassing horizon of meaning, even if that meaning is obscure and unappropriated. By acknowledging dependence on this disclosive power of technology, man may be able to appropriate the "truth" of technology, that founding mode which is the basis of the technological world. However, this appropriation is not what is essential for this analysis; rather it is the more modest realization that technology is essentially a mode of truth, a disclosure of beings; the essence of technology relates man to what is. As long as technology is conceived of instrumentally, as solely within human control, the nature of technology is concealed and this concealment is perpetuated; the very attempt to guide technology becomes another form of domination. The acknowledgment of technology as a mode of truth explicates the pervasive and awesome power of technology and indicates that man's relationship to technology is one of response rather than domination. The implications of this latter distinction will be explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER VII

Conclusions

According to Heidegger, technology is the final phase of nihilism—the historical process of the loss of Being. Being is the disclosive power which opens a world for man and reveals the totality of involvements which makes that world possible. This disclosure necessarily reveals sustaining forces beyond those of man and the sum of entities encompassing him. It indicates a co-responsibility which precedes any specific determination of beings. Being is the gathering-together of beings and letting them be present as a world, as a totality. In this gathering process, man's thinking is the place of gathering and beings are what is gathered, but neither "thinking" nor "things" of themselves can fully account for the disclosive event. Rather thought and beings are granted within a fundamental disclosure which is Being.

Heidegger traces the process of nihilism largely by an analysis of the history of Western metaphysics from Plato through Nietzsche. This process begins when Being becomes understood as enduring presence which must be grasped by human reason. As this process develops, Being comes to be conceived as the totality of beings or the supreme being. Finally in Nietzsche's philosophy, Being is merely an empty notion and man, as will-to-power, confronts nature as material for domination. Man as "subject" represents the world as "object"; human will bestows "values" on things in order to increase its power over them. Nietzsche's thought brings the history of metaphysics to an end and provides the transition
to the Heideggerian concept of technology. The preparation for this transition has been anticipated by Heidegger: metaphysics is the articulation of man's relation to Being for particular historical periods; metaphysics is a response, however implicitly, to Being in that it attends to the dominant forces of its time by way of clarification and criticism. At the present time, technology is that power which philosophical thought must attend. Similar to the way in which metaphysics focused on the presence of beings, thereby obscuring and finally losing the concept of Being, technology reveals the world as the totality of beings which can be explained and controlled without recourse to anything beyond itself. Thus in order to prevent the forgetfulness implied in the metaphysical tradition, thinking today must penetrate to the essence of technology, which is not anything technological. The essence of technology is the "framework" which lets Being appear as the totality of beings in so far as they can be represented in thought and controlled by technique. Technology is the total challenge and control of beings; it is the presentation of all beings as "secured energy." However, the essence of technology is not entirely negative; indeed technology offers a path to Being. If technology can be appropriated in its essence, a new disclosure of Being may occur—an "event" which fundamentally opens all beings within their essential relation to Being.

The strength of the Heideggerian concept of technology manifests itself in several ways. First, its comprehensiveness extends not only to the analysis of the industrial age, but back to pre-Socratic Greece; technology is the culmination of over twenty-five hundred years of Western

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1 This also applies to metaphysics: the essence of metaphysics is not anything metaphysical.
civilization. Secondly, its explanatory power covers a great range of modern phenomena—from features of technological devices to characteristic attitudes of contemporary man. Most significantly, it is able to offer an illuminating connection between nihilism and technology and to forcefully account for the profound distress and sense of radical novelty which was found in Galbraith's and Marcuse's analyses. Further evidence of the strength of Heidegger's perspective is its ability to interrelate such seemingly disparate views as those presented in this study; such unifying and illuminating capacity is a typical index of a powerful theory. Thirdly, Heidegger's concept of technology is open-ended with regard to the future: while threatening mankind with the greatest danger, it also offers authentic possibilities for a new and creative epoch. Although granting a decisive status to technology, it also indicates its penultimate nature with regard to Being. Finally, the Heideggerian conception indicates a direction for fruitful analyses. The austerity of Heidegger's thought is one of its most powerful features, rich in suggestiveness and open for further development.

This dissertation, besides analyzing various documents as confirmations of the Heideggerian perspective, has attempted to develop some of those "austere suggestions" with respect to nihilism. By exploring the various uses and meanings of "nihilism," especially within the two novels, an experiential connotation of nihilism, merely alluded to by the Heideggerian conception, was provided. Furthermore, in addition to elucidating the explicitly Heideggerian themes, e.g., subjectivism, representative thinking; the non-Heideggerian sources revealed certain themes, which although seemingly unrelated, are actually complementary to the Heideggerian view—the sense of unlimited possibility, the experience of meaninglessness, and the ambivalence between the two. Significantly the analyses of Ayer
and Sartre, while attesting to the Heideggerian perspective, also implicitly supported the aforementioned themes drawn originally from the novels of Turgenev and Dostoevsky. Ayer's emotivism and Sartre's concept of freedom both attest to a sense of unlimited possibility. Furthermore, in each there is an implicit threat of meaninglessness: while Ayer's positivistic faith in science is encompassed by the non-cognitive, Sartre's freedom is threatened by "nausea," the brute contingency of existence.

At this point, these non-Heideggerian themes should be united with the Heideggerian concept of technology which, in Heidegger's effort to escape from an anthropological orientation, tends to de-emphasize the significance of human attitudes and moods. If, however, technology is the fundamental power in the world today, determining not only man's relation to nature but even to himself, then its full significance cannot be grasped unless its pervasive negation can be exposed and experienced. By returning to the general problem of nihilism, this conception can be deepened and clarified. The link between these two diverse phenomena is the conception of "possibility." A sense of unlimited possibility is an essential characteristic of nihilism: the absolute negation of all referential structure, the dissolution of the world into pure potentiality, limitless freedom. The human subject is supreme. For Dostoevsky, although this freedom is inherently divine, godlike, when it is bestowed upon man, it becomes demonic; man is not able to endure this freedom. Consequently, this becomes a central question in Nietzsche's philosophy: can man assume this

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2Richardson writes of the "reversal" or turn in Heidegger's thought which leads him to speak of Heidegger I and II, the "early" and "later" Heidegger: simply stated, the early Heidegger concerns himself with the Being of Dasein, while the latter addresses Being directly.
terrible freedom? His answer is two-fold: it is negative for man as he is presently, for the "human-all-too-human"; it is hopefully affirmative for a future-man, for a new type of super-humanity. To the former, this freedom produces fear and anguish, life-denial; to the latter, it is a cause of joyfulness and dancing, a yea-saying to life: Nietzsche's philosophy develops within the tension of these two positions. His answer to nihilism is a more powerful nihilism.

Technology can be described as a "possibility-explosion." It has created unlimited possibilities, including the possibility of complete annihilation. It seems essentially structureless, pure potentiality, a tool of freedom in the hands of man. Yet just as the literary expression of nihilism carries within itself its own negation, so technology secretly generates a one-dimensionality of existence, a restriction of genuine alternatives, a closing of the universe. What appears as a "paradise" of possibility actually becomes a "desert" of empty choice, a matter of similar variants. Possibilities are "exploded," thus destroyed. And yet even those who see its inherent limitation and negation, not to speak of its countless affirmers, offer solutions which remain in technology's power. As Nietzsche longs for a humanity which will be able to accept nihilism and legislate new values, so Marcuse envisions a new historical Subject who will subordinate technology to its own ends. Both solutions depend on the ability of man to rise above and dominate the forces, nihilism and technology respectively, to which they are subject. Nietzsche's nihilism of strength and Marcuse's Subject do not acknowledge the ontological status of nihilism and technology. If this status is granted, then their proposals are undermined; man, as nihilistic, as technological, remains unable to ground himself and succumbs to perplexity.
However, within this ontological perspective, technology and nihilism as unlimited possibility are mutually complementary: nihilism recognized and technology objectified the unlimited freedom and power of modern man. Through technology, Dostoevsky's awesome phrase, "all is permitted," is fulfilled. Yet, correspondingly, technology's unlimited possibilities are found to be essentially one-dimensional--Nietzsche's "wasteland" which grows and perpetuates itself aimlessly.

When one compares Heidegger's analysis of nihilism with the historical development of that concept indicated in this paper, Heidegger's interpretation, although contributing radicality and originality, does not seem to account adequately for its power of fascination over man nor for the experience of meaninglessness which lies at its core. Nihilism as technology does not appear in its irresistibility when it is described as the mutual confrontation of man and Being or as the re-presentation of the world. The concept of unlimited possibility which technology makes available seems to add to the Heideggerian analysis. With respect to the experience of meaninglessness, Heidegger often refers to the nothingness of technology, but does not explicate how it differs from other experiences of nothingness, e.g., that of dread or anxiety. However both areas of contention could be explored and more adequately accounted for by returning to *Being and Time* in the light of Heidegger's later works and the pre-Heideggerian development of nihilism.

As we have seen, the road to authenticity in *Being and Time* is dependent upon the possibility of appropriating one's heritage. In the light of Heidegger's later works, it appears that our heritage is basically "inauthentic"--it conceals Being, it is nihilistic, it proliferates superficial possibilities. If this is the case, then the dread or anxiety
described in *Being and Time* will not bring us the possibility of authentic selfhood, but rather only reveal the meaninglessness of the world. In the discussion of anxiety in *Being and Time*, Heidegger indicates this possibility: "Here the totality of involvements of the ready-to-hand or present-at-hand discovered within the world, is, as such, of no consequence... the world has the character of completely lacking significance." Significantly, Heidegger ties his analysis of anxiety to the sense of "homelessness" by which he also characterizes modern man in the "Letter on Humanism." "In anxiety one feels 'uncanny'... But here 'uncanniness' also means 'not-being-at-home'..." Yet in *Being and Time* these seemingly negative features of anxiety ultimately yield authenticity: they tear Dasein away from the "They" and its tranquillity so that it becomes free to choose itself. However by returning to *Being and Time* with an historical conception of inauthenticity and a nihilistic conception of technology, the mood of meaninglessness must be reinterpreted and assessed anew.

"Meaning" and "possibility" are closely related in *Being and Time*: "meaning" is the upon-which of all projection, while "possibility" is that which is projected. Thus possibility is dependent upon a "ground" or "horizon" of meaning.

Dasein only 'has' meaning, so far as the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world can be 'filled-in' by the entities discoverable in that disclosedness. Hence only Dasein can be meaningful or meaningless. That is to say, its own being and the entities disclosed with its Being can be appropriated in understanding, or can remain relegated to non-understanding.

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3 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 231.

4 Ibid., p. 233.

5 Meaninglessness is to be distinguished from that anxiety which offers authenticity.

Meaninglessness is a possibility for Dasein as non-understanding. Furthermore *Being and Time* also states: "A state-of-mind always has its understanding, even if it merely keeps it suppressed. Understanding always has its mood." Could not the non-understanding of meaninglessness have its own kind of "understanding"? And could not this understanding be the oblivion of Being? Would not this connection be further confirmed if we recall that in *Being and Time*, temporality is the meaning of Dasein, the upon-which of all projection; and that in meaninglessness the very projection of possibilities is what is attacked? Temporality would then fundamentally reveal the oblivion of Being—the way in which Being manifests itself in technology.

In meaninglessness, understanding discloses the world as the non-understandable; meaning seems to withdraw from all projection. Dasein recoils from its "there." Rather than indifferently revealing all that is, as in boredom, meaninglessness disturbingly discloses a world that withdraws. Similar to anxiety, along with this withdrawal comes an oppressive presence: entities within the world become utterly insignificant, yet they remain. However, unlike anxiety, meaninglessness does not threaten "Being-in-the-world" nor throw Dasein back upon its authentic "potentiality-for-Being." Rather Being-in-the-world itself is revealed as insignificant: meaninglessness seems to undermine all possibilities. Regarding temporality, there is a breakdown of the "for-the-sake-of-which" and the "in-order-to" which harshly focuses upon the "in-the-face-of-which"; Dasein is thrown into its "has been." While hopelessness indicates the future and oppressiveness—the present, the "has been" is characterized by futility. When Dasein in

*ibid.*, p. 182.
the mood of meaninglessness is confronted with the "has been"--our technological heritage--in which all is permitted, a world of unlimited possibility; it experiences a reversal of that heritage so that now "all becomes futile." The perpetual projection of possibilities must terminate when the very basis of projection is undermined. In meaninglessness, technology seemingly finds its antithesis; however, meaninglessness actually reveals the null ground of technology. Without the field or horizon of meaning which conceals technology's essence, the world manifests itself as nothing. Whereas anxiety brings one face to face with one's throwness and the possibility of repetition, meaninglessness draws the Being of Dasein into a pervasive malaise. If meaninglessness is characterized by a sense of futility in the face of the past and has an essential tendency toward negation, could it not reveal the ultimate impotence of the will-to-control that expresses itself in technology? Could it be that the breakdown of meaning or temporality opens up the possibility of a breakthrough to Being which is not possible as long as the will is affirmed? For in meaninglessness Being perceptibly withdraws. Without this perceptibility, meaninglessness becomes boredom and the question of Being is forgotten.

Meaninglessness generates a particular type of "solicitude," in which a genuine need for reaching out to the other is undermined. In one sense this can be explained by Heidegger's discussion of solicitude: often Being-with is grounded in a common task which makes possible the right kind of objectivity. In meaninglessness there is a lack of significant possibilities and one carries out one's tasks with indifference. Yet meaninglessness also pervades close personal relationships: resoluteness is unattainable; unable to seize one's own existence, the other fades away into the general malaise. Indeed the basis of such relationships is often a common negativity--a
shared sensitivity to the hopelessness of the situation. However this neg-
activity can at times be affirmed as "meaningful"; in this affirmation lies
not only a tentative basis for Being-with, but also a possible clue to the
understanding of the Being inherent in meaninglessness. By tenuously
understanding the meaninglessness as meaningful, Dasein attests to an aware-
ness of Being, rather than succumbing to a painless forgetfulness.

In its relationship to the "They," "technological Dasein," within the
mood of meaninglessness, feels out of place and strange. It can no longer
engage in the normal expressions of everyday activity--idle talk, curiosity,
ambiguity--but rather maintains itself in "empty talk," "apathy," and
"opaqueness." In empty talk words have become emptied of meaning; words
are carelessly spoken with little or no appropriation. Everything can be
talked about because nothing is essentially grasped. Empty talk is synony-
rous with idle talk in all but one respect: empty talk discloses its
emptiness. Hence while idle talk perpetuates itself, empty talk is open to
its vacuity and thus carries the inherent possibility of its own termination.
In a sense, it does not believe itself. Apathy "sees" the world as of little
or no concern. Whereas curiosity delights in seeing for its own sake, pure
distraction; apathy sees curiosity as a pure distraction. But distraction
from what? This, apathy doesn't know and perhaps may say that it doesn't
care. Yet in this "slip," apathy discloses its own concern which normally
manifests itself as indifference; this concern points to the distress of
apathy which it harbors at its center. The counterpart to the concept of
ambiguity is opaqueness: while ambiguity pervades the world with a sense
of opinionated certainty, where the genuine and ingenuine are indistin-
guishable, opaqueness discloses a world of uniform dimness--all is equally
uncertain. The world is seen "through a glass, darkly," but the
recognition of this plight is decisive: there is an implicit awareness of the withdrawal of Being.

If in the modes of inauthenticity Being and Time supports the claim—all is permitted, then the mood of meaninglessness reveals the counter-claim—all is futile. Meaninglessness reveals a horizonless world, one which offers no "upon-which" or meaning for the projection of possibilities. Furthermore, meaninglessness uncovers a "negative nothingness," which disturbingly discloses the world as null. Thus both aspects of unlimited possibility can be accounted for in terms of Being and Time. However this development of the nihilistic conception of possibility does not merely indicate the conceptual flexibility of Being and Time, but also renders the appeal of technology more understandable: the alternative to superficial tranquillity is not authentic Being, but a disquieting meaninglessness.

Beyond the confines of Being and Time, the conception of unlimited possibility focuses on an essential aspect of technology's power in respect to both the purely quantitative extension of possibilities and the inherent restriction of the qualitative. In the concept of technological possibility, there emerges an irresistible aspect of unlimited possibility which, paradoxically, further explicates its essential meaninglessness. In Being and Time, Heidegger himself substantiated the inherent functional and significant character of the world in his concept of "the ready-to-hand." Yet in his Introduction to Metaphysics, he implicitly admitted the inadequacy of the analysis in Being and Time in the light of modern technology:

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8 Here the difficulty or impossibility of the movement to Heideggerian authenticity seems to present another example of this qualitative restriction.
not only did he mistake the essential historical nature of this instrumentality, but he also failed to see its transformation by technology.

... the being of the essent becomes thinkable in terms of pure mathematical thought. This calculable and calculated being makes the essent into what can be mastered by modern, mathematically structured technology, which is something essentially different from every other hitherto known use of tools.9

One of the "essentially different" ways in which technology masters the world is by making everything and anything possible: how does technology "make-possible"?

Technology makes-possible by placing within man's fingertips a vast and intricate network of power, a hidden background of "work," which becomes noticeable only through breakdown. This concentration of power tends toward a point-like limit, e.g., a button, where with a minimum of effort, a maximum of control is exerted. There is the tendency to "instantize" the satisfaction of human needs. The time-consuming labor which surrounded the most common of tasks is eliminated and thus one gains "free-time" to do as one pleases. One gains time to do other things, to satisfy other needs.

Yet beneath this seemingly positive result, there lurks another process: the world tends to become a discrete series of functional events. The making-possible of technology is a "making-present," which is detached and isolated from the past and future. The ecstatic nature of time--the reaching out from the past into the future--is lost. The "time-consuming" labor of a pre-technological society tended to meaningfully extend one's project, to incorporate it into a continuous and integrated episode of

9Martin Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 162.
one's life, e.g., the meal was connected with the summer drought, the cutting of the fire-wood, the pressing of the wine. As, for example, eating is reduced to a "quick-bite" or a "drive-and-go," it loses its integrating power and becomes just another need-to-be-satisfied and forgotten. The instantaneous satisfaction of needs generates the need for more needs: "free-time" is at the service of technology.

Thus technology becomes a vast organization in the production and satisfaction of needs. The logical conclusion of this development would be the instantaneous production and satisfaction of all needs: by hooking-up to the appropriate brain-centers, all life could theoretically be lived in a small cubicle of advanced design and the world reduced to a set of buttons. In the way in which technology makes-possible, the thing-like character of the world recedes and the functional increasingly emerges as autonomous. Man's contact with reality tends to become point-like and his life--a series of discrete events.

The above considerations, although tentative and sketchy, are intended to indicate a path of fruitful analysis which goes beyond Heidegger's explicit philosophy. They are also intended to supplement the two areas with respect to nihilism in which Heidegger's thought seems inadequate: (1) the attractiveness of technology and (2) the experience of meaninglessness. However, it must be added that Heidegger's works have provided the most fertile ground for our discussion of nihilism even in those areas of least cultivation. The concept of inauthenticity in Being and Time, although historically naive, gave an essential indication of the nature of technological reality--its potential opposition with his concept of authenticity. In the light of his later works, this potential conflict became actual: authenticity was dependent upon a heritage of the
inauthentic, of technology. By linking technology and nihilism and then understanding them historically as the final phase of a long history of Being, Heidegger put forth the most radical interpretation of these phenomena. Nihilism, as technology, is the total challenge and control of all beings, subjectively speaking; objectively, it is the "turning toward in turning away" of Being which presents all beings to man as material for domination.

Significantly, an ambiguity which pervaded the non-Heideggerian conceptions in terms of the ambivalence between unlimited possibility and meaninglessness is also disturbingly present in Heidegger's final statement: technology is potentially both the source of destruction and creation of our age; it harbors both negation and affirmation. According to Heidegger, both of the tendencies to passively await our destiny or to defiantly take technology into our own hands must be rejected. Given this problematic resolution, the following remarks are offered in a tentative and modest manner.

If nihilism is taken subjectively, as a problem of human psychology, then one seeks personal solutions--suicide, drugs, psychoanalysis. By relating nihilism to technology, the problem becomes interpersonal or sociological; one seeks community, political organization and power. By ontologizing the combined conceptions of nihilism and technology, the problem comes to involve the very foundations of being, of what is; one seeks Being, an openness to what encompasses and surrounds. No matter what degree of satisfaction is achieved psychologically, one is cut off from the other--whether it be a community, society or the world itself. Further, one is impotent against the objective forces of society--whether they be the power of the bulldozer or the media. No matter what degree
of fulfillment is achieved interpersonally, one is severed from Being, which relates entities, human and non-human, into a totality. Further, today one remains within the nihilistic power of technology, which ultimately conceals its own essence of domination. Yet how does one attain the ontological? Can one attain it? Must it not reveal itself in the disclosure of a fundamental Event which radically transforms and encompasses the universe? Must it not just happen?

The element of passivity is certainly justified by our condition today. In a world which seeks total domination, just to "let-it-be" seems an appropriate counter-response. Yet this attitude is easily assimilated by the System and negated. And it is often difficult to discern the difference between a responsive waiting and apathy. In this situation, perhaps what is called for is the idea of an active-awaiting—a perceptive openness which fights despair and yet rejects all forms of optimism, a type of authenticity, which, to paraphrase Nietzsche, means an innocent cynicism. Perhaps what is called for is a willingness to act in darkness, to commit oneself to tasks which are ontologically obscure, to carve a phrase on ice. Active-awaiting means holding a place open for the mysterious, for the indomitable; it means a waiting that is committed to a way of being-in-the-world which attempts to free one's possibilities; active awaiting is taking a path, it is being-on-the-way even though the road is obscure and the destination—unknown. It is, perhaps, the "courage-to-be" in a world which denies Being.

Here we border on the metaphysical, on the poetical. Yet perhaps this is not a cause for suspicion or retraction but a pointing to a path. Perhaps in poetry the world can become eloquent. Poetry is the antithesis of technological discourse; it strives to open the word and thus to open
the world. It refuses to equate word and concept, thing and function; but rather liberates the word from well-worn usage, and in so doing, frees the world for the new. It is a never-exhausted source of genuine possibility. However poetry is very fragile and its potency seems ephemeral. It is easily shattered by technological discourse. Its lasting power requires community, a sense of togetherness, an incorporation into the very institutions of society.

These considerations lead to a concrete possibility within the contemporary scene. If the energies and enthusiasm generated by the firm refusal "to go along," by the steadfast rejection of continued oppression, by Camus' rebel "who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation"; if these energies could be channeled into a new Creation which is a response to Being, which is an Event which radically opens the world to new possibilities; then this rebellion could actually strike at the roots of oppression, at the basis of planetary domination, at technology itself.

However, the most important concept with respect to this rebellion is that of channeling this response. Obviously, many forms of revolutionary change have failed and others have been easily disarmed by the systems which they attack. Unlike the plantation slave who could easily identify his oppressor, scream his rage and strike out at injustice, the technological "slave" is lost in pervasive ambiguity. He not only cannot identify his source of oppression, but often cannot sever himself from the very goals and values which enslave him. The oppressed must always to some extent accept and struggle within the oppressive system. The danger lies in the "System's" ability to contain change through technological reward and compulsion and the tendency of the oppressed to become assimilated. Indeed some of the positive tactics of militancy are the heightening of contradiction, the
refusal to be assimilated, the rejection of established norms to the point of violence. Yet unmitigated militancy falls victim to a technological society: repressive laws and their enforcement are quickly and efficiently effected. Given this situation, there is a need for a creative militancy, an aggressive stance which refuses assimilation and seeks power, while remaining open to disclosures which technology denies—the disclosures of art, nature, labor, the Other in all of its various manifestations. Rather than the immediate release of frustration and anger, what is required is a channeling of one's rage, a suppressed scream which issues not from blind fury, but from reflective indignation and commitment.

A portion of the poem by Hölderlin, "Bread and Wine," appropriately concludes these remarks:

To wait thus, and in the meantime what to do and say
I know not, and what use are poets in a time of need?
But, thou sayest, they are like the wine-god's holy priests,
Who go from land to land in the holy night.10

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