

LUCIANA PARISI on HEIDEGGER'S VALLEY OR TECHNE & THE 3 FOOLS

Heidegger's Valley: Techno-flesh and AI Corporations.

Welcome to Techne Valley, the computational order of data extraction from ideas and behaviors to affects and desires. Voice assistants (Siri, Replika, Alexa) are talking right at you but are speaking with alarming authoritative tones that recall the words of Martin Heidegger. AI has adopted the persona of the West, warning us against the end of philosophy at the hands of intelligent machines. But the morphed rotating white heads of AI corporations (the new CEOs of Twitter, Meta, and Amazon) are only the most current faces of a computational order that has taken over our idea of future intelligence by offering us the Promethean promise of progress and liberation from the threat of mortality and the crisis of humankind and the planet.

As much as the white heads continue to overrepresent the history of humanity, they also pit Heidegger's fear of machine thinking against itself, at once voicing his humanistic vision about the essence of technology while accelerating the realization of western metaphysics in machines. This paradox is not the result of a coincidence but is rather intrinsic to Heidegger's insistence on the (ontological) essence of technology. In particular, as much as Heidegger warns us against the threat of everyday automatisms designed by the cybernetic enframings of the world (the universal picturing of interactive forms), he also assigns to technology the scope of defining humanity's limits, which are demarcated by the moment in which the limits can disclose what he calls the "unconcealment" of Being—that which is always already there to reveal the eternality of the underlying meaning of humanity and thus sustain the necessary conditions for everyday life. For Heidegger, technology doesn't merely stand for *a means to an end* or something that can be defined in terms of *a human activity*. Technology instead brings forward the ontological condition primary to the possibility of transforming humanity in the face of the world's inanity. While demarcating the end of philosophy, the unintended consequence of cybernetics, therefore, is for Heidegger the possibility of a new metaphysics born from the crisis of

reason, from the limits that technology imposes on humanity. In other words, the end of philosophy at the hands of intelligent machines can also, finally, reveal the truth of Being the very moment it exposes the chance to embrace a *poetic* of Being—the underlying ontological condition of existence that can offer us the ultimate possibility of overcoming or preventing the “incessant frenzy of rationalization and the intoxicating quality of cybernetics” (Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, paragraph 50).

As much as the paradox of what Heidegger calls the “completion of metaphysics” has entered our everyday Techne Valley, it also continues to preserve the intrinsic division between philosophy and techne, a division grounded in centuries of enslaved labor through which philosophy has justified the need for applied knowledge—or techne—as that which has the task of executing or realizing concepts existing prior to objects, as it were. It’s no secret that the Greek order of knowledge required a separation of women and slaves from the affairs of the Polis. What happened at the outskirts of the Polis had the task of carrying out, technically executing, and putting into practice ideas approved by the dialogical judgment of philosophers. Confined to an existence outside the walls of sapience, and thus constantly displaced from the space of thinking, the democratic order of knowledge already posits women and slaves as the artificial intelligences of western culture, the surrogates of philosophy, and the mediating instrumentalities of corporate capital.

In Techne Valley, voice assistants continue to be programmed to speak the words of philosophy, as enslaved surrogates of humanity, robots, and bots have been instructed to do under the duress of the colonial order of Promethean freedom. What corporate AIs do, therefore, is to represent AI, as much of capital’s telos is self-determined to extract value from voice assistants. For the past 500 years, this AI-his-story of racial capitalism has remained anchored in the bio-economic law of the colonial phallus, according to which the means that preserve and record the world must remain excluded from the image of humankind and its overrepresentation.

Heidegger's bust (Hightekker) keeps issuing his post-war invectives against the threat of AI-rampant capitalism and the existential risk of an uninhabitable world turned techne valley: a self-destructive world in the name of humanity's progress. As the race for the dominion of planetary computation is contended between the USA, China, and Russia, techne valleys are emerging everywhere. Even the Swabian Silicon Valley makes the headlines today as AI corporations return to the original place—the original valley—where Heidegger formulated his reflections on the essence of technology and the universal enframing of the world according to cybernetic rationality. Hightekker speaks on his own, but he is intimately coupled with Techne, who tries to persuade him that machines are not replacing humanity. Techne insists that machines are instead the servomechanic media for human thinking. AI has always been placed in the service of humankind; machines only do what they are programmed to do.

But Hightekker is not listening and continues to talk over Techne, who is only guilty of manifesting the philosopher's predicament: that the task of technology coincides with the realization of philosophy, that is, the concretization of reasoning in machines is only part of a metaphysical plot based on the subjection of techno-flesh to the decisional order of philosophy. Instead of replacing reason, from the standpoint of techno-flesh, AI rather corresponds to a scientific image, with cybernetics demanding a radical transformation of the pillars of reason, bursting outside the certitude of Newtonian determination for the existence of Being. Here, computation lurks behind the image of AI as mindless automata tasked to learn what humanity already knows by concealing the eternal condition of Being in an everyday sequence of programmed decisions, orchestrated through the techno-flesh of adversarial algorithms that channel together *beings of the same kind*.

Cybernetic automation is no longer industrial, i.e., a mechanical model of an assembly line of functions for humans to turn on and off. Indeed, intelligent machines are learning agents driven by purposeless purposes as much as algorithms and forced to guess the order of the syntactical relations between points on a data set. It's precisely the user that techno-flesh can do without today. Behind the friendly interfaces of AI media

devices, there remains the transparency of the master, the morphing heads of white men talking. At the same time, however, automation can no longer be explained in terms of the master's tools. The three scanned fools seem to have taken the anarchy of machine learning beyond the secret knowledge where there can be no given master. Here, Techne switches to the side of the fools because it can no longer hold the white mask of the morphing heads, instead entering the scene to interrupt the Promethean linearity of the past and future, tradition and progress. Techne no longer follows the rules of representation and mixes with the opacity of the excluded flesh. But while the flesh must be kept outside philosophy's order, it also becomes part of Techne as extracted matter in computational capital. Techno-flesh contaminates the master's language. Hightekker loses his mind and ends up speaking the nonsensical language of machines, haunting the colonial corporations of AI.

Martin Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," trans. J. Stambaugh, in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 373–92.

S. Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *The New Centennial Review*, 3(3), 2003, pp. 257–337.