

Martin Heidegger

Note: The main work from which text was drawn is "The Question Concerning Technology" by Martin Heidegger.

Martin Heidegger was a German philosopher, who developed existential phenomenology and has been widely regarded as the most original 20th-century philosopher. His works include complicated essays such as "An introduction to Metaphysics" and "The Question Concerning Technology." In his essay "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger attempts to create several intricate arguments regarding technology and the significance of information. One prominent theme in this essay is the idea and meaning of information.

Heidegger presents his thoughts by searching for the roots of the ideas behind information. He includes many references to German, Greek and Latin vocabulary to better explain his ideas. In order to fully understand the meaning and significance of information, one must be educated as to the accurate definitions of some basic vocabulary regarding information. The first word that is significant to the idea of information that Heidegger explains to the reader is "episteme." Episteme in basic translation can be defined as "knowledge." "(Episteme is a term)... for knowing in the widest sense... (it) means to be entirely at home with something, to understand and be expert in it. Such knowing provides an opening up. As an opening it up it is a revealing." This leads to the next expression, "alethia." Alethia is used by Heidegger the same way it was defined by the ancient Greeks; "revealing." This same word is translated by the Romans to "veritas." Again, "veritas" in English is used to mean "truth" which can be understood as "correctness and representation." It is in this change, due to translation of ideas, that Heidegger notices some inconsistencies.

Information is an often misused term in Heidegger's opinion. As previously noted, the translation from one language to another can often turn true definitions of words askew, and this can cause serious problems with larger concepts of technology and an idea of "enframing" (gestell).

Gestell is a German word whose direct translation means "enframing."
The
idea of enframing is also quite prevalent in this essay.

"We now name that challenging claim which gathers man thither to order
the
self-revealing as standing-reserve: "ge-stell" (enframing). We dare to
use
this word in a sense that has been thoroughly unfamiliar up to now.
According to ordinary usage, the word

Gestell (frame) means some kind of apparatus, e.g., a bookrack.
Gestell
is also the name for a skeleton. And the employment of the word
Gestell(enframing) that is now required of us seems equally eerie, not
to
speak of the arbitrariness with which words of a mature language are so
misused."

Heidegger

"Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon that sets
man
upon man, i.e., challenges him to bring forth, to reveal the real, in
the
mode of ordering, as standing reserve. Enframing means that way of
revealing that holds sway in the essence of modern technology and that
it
is itself nothing technological." Heidegger is portraying the idea that
gestell is not a tangible object but more of a concept, a way of
classifying. Although it may seem possible to step away from this
"gestell" it is impossible. Regardless of outside influences there is
still the underlying revelation that occurs through gestell. In the
idea
of gestell lies the idea of information. Information is indebted (aion)
to
enframing (gestell), just as enframing is indebted (ai on) to revealing
(alethia). Alethia is then indebted (aion) to knowledge (episteme).
These
cycles of indebtedness are recognized by Heidegger and are called the
four
causes.

the causa materialis, the material, the matter out of which, for
example,
a silver chalice is made.

the causa formalis, the form, the shape into which the material enters.

the causa finalis, the end, for example, the sacrificial rite to which
the
chalice required is determined as to its form and matter

the causa efficiens, which brings about the effect that is the
finished,
actual chalice, in this instance, the silversmith.

The significance of these four causes becomes more readily apparent when the definition of indebtedness is further understood. The basic idea of indebtedness and of being responsible is often misinterpreted. Again, Heidegger introduces terminology that will better describe what is meant by indebtedness and responsibility. "Poiesis" literally means "bringing-forth" and this is the definition that Heidegger intended when describing the four causes. Heidegger recognizes that the "causa finalis" is brought forth by a combination of other causes and is incapable of "repaying" the debt that is produced. It simply exists. "Bringing-forth brings out of concealment into unconcealment. Bringing forth comes to pass only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment." Poiesis is rooted in the word "aletheia" (which was previously mentioned.)

This ever cyclical concept about information was one of the main features of Heidegger's work in "The Question Concerning Technology." Each idea is linked to another which joins other ideas to produce a web of thoughts and ideas. The whole of any piece is not as significant as the sum of the parts. Every part, whether it be as simple as an idea on making a silver chalice or as complicated as the essence of technology, is not viewed upon alone and this idea of many parts being inseparable is noted by Martin Heidegger. As to if he agrees that this is a good thing, the answer would be no. He thinks that in order to find the place of an object or notion, one must be completely separate from it and view it from a completely unbiased viewpoint. This would be impossible. Human fallibility creates *gestell* (enframing) that links and associates all ideas together.