

# Questioning Heidegger on Modern Technology

## Abstract

In his famous essay on modern technology – “The Question Concerning Technology” – Heidegger proposes a (then) new way of thinking about technology, eschewing its technical dimension to examine its ontological “essence”. This way of thinking is often criticized because it lends little attention to empirical nuances involved in the study of particular technologies. However, it seems unfair to discredit Heidegger’s views without examining how his ontological perspective on technology can be extended into more practical, everyday technological concerns. This paper seeks to rebuild Heidegger’s perspective on modern technology in a way which allows us to elaborate on its practical aspects. The argument is built in interrogative form, proceeding with three successive questions in mind: 1) what is “essence” in Heidegger’s view?; 2) what is the “essence” of modern technology?; and 3) what are its practical consequences? Our central argument is that Heidegger’s views open our modern technological world to becoming a series of pure, usable, exploitable potentials. This leads us, in turn, to suggest two directions in which we can think about modern technologies as potentials: 1) thinking about what general purpose these technologies are enabled to fulfill; and 2) thinking about how modern technologies interact with one another qua potentials.