

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
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The Essence of Technology and Modern Views of Death, Suffering, and Medicine

SARA KATHERINE GOTTER  
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Reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Nicolas de Warren  
Professor of Philosophy and Jewish Studies  
Thesis Supervisor

Brady Bowman  
Associate Professor of Philosophy  
Honors Adviser

\* Electronic approvals are on file.

## ABSTRACT

The modern age and the technological revolutions that accompanied it have resulted in a paradigm shift in society. The way in which technology holds sway in the modern world, termed by Martin Heidegger as Enframing, results in a very different mode of perceiving reality. As man becomes increasingly able to use technological advancements to bend the world to his will, he begins to view reality as a collection of tools at his disposal. The ensuing belief that he can fully conquer nature leads him to reduce reality to only what is knowable and manipulable. In doing so, his ability to perceive the essences of things, including his own essence, greatly diminishes. The fundamental shift in his relationship with reality affects a multitude of elements in his life, particularly his attitude towards pain, suffering, and death. These foundational changes will be explored in this thesis, especially with regard to effects on the view and practice of modern medicine. Ultimately, the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the role of technology in modern medicine has resulted in the objectification of the patient body, obscuring the patient's identity as a human being and, therefore, resulting in a failure to treat the whole person.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the effects of technology on modern medicine, specifically with regard to the objectification of the human body and the subsequent ways in which medicine is reduced to a scientific procedure rather than a care for the entire person. Although this objectification has allowed for scientific advancements and more efficient treatments, it results in a failure to see the patient as a human being. Because of this, I argue that in many ways, modern medicine is a failure to address the humanity of the patient. My personal interest in the subject is largely due to the fact that I will be attending medical school after college; in order to best care for my future patients, I must examine the underlying foundations of medicine and the practical implications of such attitudes. Furthermore, as an undergraduate student in engineering, my studies have been largely devoted to technology itself, so I have witnessed firsthand the vast effects it can have on a person's perception of reality. The logical culmination of my undergraduate experience, therefore, is an analysis of the essence of technology, especially with regard to how it has influenced the foundations of modern medicine.

As technology gains an ever-growing influence in the modern age, it is becoming increasingly prominent as a subject of philosophy. Technological advancements are accompanied by a host of effects, only a small portion of which are immediately recognizable upon reflection. Man<sup>1</sup> is now capable of much more than what the Ancient Greeks, or any other pre-modern philosophers, could have ever

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<sup>1</sup> This paper will utilize the traditional usage of "man" to signify a gender-neutral member of the human race. Although this terminology may be considered sexist by some, this is not the intention of the author. Terms such as "humanity" or "humankind", though more correct in their gender neutrality, do not adequately encompass the individual experience of a singular human being, rather denoting an abstract collective experience of the species. Other replacement terms were deemed by the author to result in too cumbersome of writing and would detract from the flow of the paper. Finally, the use of the term man reflects the language used by several of the foundational sources of this thesis, including Heidegger and Becker, and was therefore used to adhere more closely to their work.

dreamed. The underlying paradigm shift that has made these advancements possible has transformed man's mode of rational thought in an unprecedented way, meaning the mode in which man engages with reality is vastly different from the pre-modern era. Thus, man can no longer rely solely on thousands of years of philosophical traditions to face the most pressing questions of his time. This thesis will continue the analysis of modern philosophers who have begun the discussion of technology's vast impacts on the modern age, drawing at length upon the works of Heidegger and Grant. Heidegger (1977) pioneered the philosophical study of technology and the resulting changes in man's relationship with reality, especially from an ontological perspective, and thus is instrumental to this discussion. In short, he argues that technology encourages man to objectify the world into a collection of tools that can be manipulated at his will, a mindset which exalts him to a position of mastery over the universe and, therefore, has vast effects on his relationship with all of reality. Grant (1986), whose thought relies mostly on Heidegger, supplies slightly different language (such as "knowing and making" rather than Heidegger's complex concept of Enframing) that is more easily relatable to the other authors used in this thesis. In addition, he supplies concrete considerations of Heidegger's abstract concepts, specifically related to modern medicine, that make him valuable in the practical applications of this thesis.

Of the influences of technology on society, those applied to medicine are some of the most pressing, since these effects are directed toward humanity itself. Thus, the essence of technology will be discussed particularly with regard to medicine, which will in turn be used to exemplify the paradigm shift of modernity. Foucault's analysis of the reverberations of modernity with regard to medicine will be utilized as a foundation for this section, since his thesis *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973) was a revolutionary examination of medicine. His term, "the medical gaze", denoting the objectification of the patient body, is now used frequently not only in academia and graduate work but throughout the medical field itself. Jeffrey Bishop also provides a unique perspective to this thesis, as he is a medical doctor by trade who also holds a Ph.D. in philosophy and can, therefore, provide insight into the practical reverberations of modern medicine while also considering the philosophical foundations. A large focus of his writings is on

the medical care of the dying and how this practice has been affected by technology, specifically with regard to the medical gaze. Thus, his work fits well into this discussion. Elvira Parravicini, a doctor who has pioneered neonatal hospice and has written extensively about her experience, will also be briefly mentioned in reference to the concrete reverberations of the medical gaze. Since her practice of caring for terminally ill babies is distinctly unusual but related to Bishop's writings, the extreme conditions of her work very clearly reveal the implications of modern medicine.

Mortality itself, fundamental to the essence of man, is implicitly questioned by the technological foundation of modern medicine that denies man's limitations by exalting him to master and possessor of nature. Thus, death, pain, and suffering must first be understood in order to explore technology's implications in the medical field. The works of Becker and Scarry will be used to shed light on the natures of death and pain, respectively, before medicine itself is discussed. Ernest Becker (2020), who is known for his philosophical and psychological analyses of the fear of death, provides a synthesis of major psychoanalysts' theories and weaves their ideas into his argument. In short, he argues that human beings allocate significant energy to both convincing themselves of their immortality while denying their mortal vulnerability, an argument which echoes the effects of technology as exalting man to his place as orderer of the standing-reserve while denying his limitations. Elaine Scarry (1988) supplies an original examination of the concept of pain by considering the most extreme examples of pain, in the form of human torture, and the cultural reactions to these instances. Her analysis particularly examines how pain counters the human being's activities of making in the world; thus, this is directly relevant to the concept of mortal limitations as conflicting man's mission of making via technology.

The problem of technology is inextricable from any discussion of the modern era. Due to the elusive nature of the essence of technology, the complete effects of technology are often unrecognized and, therefore, require careful and thorough consideration. As a result, in order to fully understand the foundation of modern medicine, technology must first be discussed at length.

## Chapter 2

### Ontological Analyses of Man and Technology

The desire for Being, central to the essence of man, is evidence of a relationship addressed by Heidegger (1977) in detail. In Heidegger's usage, Being is an ontological term denoting, at its simplest explanation, the essence which is the foundation of all of reality. In order for anything to be, it must partake in and draw from Being. Thus, everything that exists has a fundamental relationship with Being. Man is unique in his participation with Being as a co-creator; his essence is characterized in part by his intellect and free will, allowing him to not only receive Being as existence but to form an intimacy with Being in the forms of knowing and making. More specifically, Being is the ultimate sense of what it means to be, received by man as a question that inherently requires a position of non-mastery (N. De Warren, personal communication, April 2, 2023). For man to live in relationship with Being is to live a life in continuous openness, questioning the meaning of his own existence without assuming he can fully know the answer. With the proliferation of technology and the advent of modernity, however, man's participation in Being, specifically his ways of knowing and making in the world and his openness to the question of what it means to be, have drastically changed. The implications of this paradigm shift radiate into all aspects of man's life, demanding philosophical attention.

Several of Heidegger's terms are relevant to this discussion, particularly with regard to the ways in which Being is revealed in reality. *Poiēsis* is defined as a bringing-forth of a thing into Being. Something which did not before exist is now brought into the present existence, such as the blooming of a flower or the carving of a wooden sculpture. There are two relevant types of *poiēsis*, i.e., two ways in which a thing is brought forth into existence. *Physis* can be seen as the more original form, in which the bursting-forth into being arises from within the thing itself. With the blooming of a flower as an example, *physis* is closely tied to nature and denotes something becoming itself more fully. On the other hand, *technē* is a form of *poiēsis* in which a thing becomes something other than itself. The origin of *technē* is man's craft, such as in woodworking or sculpting, so it depends upon the activity of man. In the case of a



wooden carving, the carving is brought forth out of the wood by man, so the wood becomes something other than itself.

Besides *poiēsis*, another form of the revealing of Being is what Heidegger calls Enframing. Rather than the bringing-forth into being of *poiēsis*, Enframing is a challenging-forth into being that relies on man to challenge reality into what Heidegger terms a standing-reserve, or a stockpile of tools to be ordered-for-use. In other words, the world becomes a reservoir of instruments to be used as man pleases. As Grant describes, Enframing arises from the novel indistinguishability of knowing and making, as science becomes oriented solely toward technology. Enframing is the primary way in which technology affects our world, therefore forming the essence of technology. Thus, Enframing forms the paradigm shift of modernity, since it forms the foundation of modern science and technology. As Heidegger explains, the essence of modernity is technology.

### **Man and *Technē***

The emergence of the ego has made man unique among creation, a small god amongst the animals. With the ego, two gifts differentiate him from the animal: self-awareness and autonomy. For the first time, there exists a creature whose response to reality is not merely instinctual, but who has the capability of rational thought and reflection. This reflection gives him freedom from the bonds of reactivity, impulsivity, and his instincts, giving him the power to direct his thoughts and actions as he wills. He is not merely conditioned by stimuli but understands cause and effect, can think theoretically, and considers the future. He is capable of determining not just what he needs to survive, but what he wants and how to attain it. As he explores his place in the world he feels reality respond to him, shaping at first subtly to his will, then more and more as he grows in understanding. It is this self-consciousness, therefore, that allows for his stewardship over nature.

All of man's energies, at their simplest level, strive for Being. That is, he strives to grasp the whole of reality in his hands; even further, to grasp the very essence which underlies that reality. He wants more life itself, not just continued survival in the coming years but a vibrancy in every moment, time that is worthwhile. He seeks the freedom to fully actualize his will, the full expansion of the ego, and the ability to participate fully in reality as a co-creator. He glimpses the vastness of reality, its endless potential and everlasting newness, and wants to taste the thrill of discovery. He wants to be swept away and enraptured, to come face-to-face with the eternal, to meet something that requires the full application of all his capacities. He is constantly driven forward – rather, pulled – as the infinite lies before him. He has a boundless desire for Being that drives him to plunge himself ever-deeper into life, seeking the permanent and the captivating. Due to the nature of man, this desire for Being begets his unique role as a co-creator in reality, particularly in the forms of thinking and making.

It is man's relationship with Being that truly sets him apart from the animals, particularly in the form of *technē*: the revealing and coming to presence of Being with the intercession of man (Heidegger, 1977). In *technē*, man participates in the creation of reality, bringing forth that which did not exist before in the form of the arts, the skills of the craftsman, or the arts of the mind. For example, a craftsman has before him materials and in his mind the concept, both necessary to make the product. Through his work, he brings forth the product from an abstract concept and raw materials into a physical thing. The product, which did not exist before, now stands before him, whereas the materials are brought forth into something else. In order for the thing to exist, it relies on the skill and labor of man. Thus, man does not merely manipulate nature, but reveals Being. This reception of and stewardship over reality, over the revealing of Being, or the unconcealment of the concealed, is the "highest dignity of his essence" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 32).

*Technē* is a form of *poiēsis*, a term that refers to the bringing-forth of a thing into Being. In *poiēsis*, that which did not exist is brought forth into the present, into existence. *Physis* is the most original form of *poiēsis*, in which the bursting-forth of a thing into being arises from within the thing

itself, such as in the case of a flower blooming into existence. *Technē*, on the other hand, is the form of *poiēsis* in which the bursting-forth of the thing lies in a vessel of this revealing, i.e., in man. Both forms of revealing are original to reality; *physis* is the mysterious revealing of nature while *technē* is the highest part of man's essence. In both, there is a cooperation between reality and Being, but man participates uniquely in *technē* as a co-creator by assisting the revealing of Being.

### **Enframing, the Essence of Technology**

Enframing, another form of revealing, contrasts with *poiēsis*. In Enframing, reality is revealed to man as tools to be ordered-for-use, forming a store of readily available instruments termed by Heidegger as a standing-reserve. Thus, rather than the bringing-forth of *poiēsis*, Enframing is a challenging-forth; man challenges reality to be ordered into the standing-reserve according to his standards. As Grant describes, the novelty of Enframing lies in the fact that knowing and making become intertwined; science and technology are co-dependent to the point of being one and the same (Grant, 1991, p. 12). Man ceases to study the world simply to receive its truth, only seeking knowledge in order to gain a more thorough control over nature. Science becomes “folded towards” mastery over nature, or is pursued for that purpose only (Grant, 1991, p. 14).

In this way, man not only sees how things can be manipulated to his will, but begins to reduce reality to how it can serve him or how its energy can be harvested for his use. All his assessments, standards, and even his very way of thinking become molded to Enframing. He begins to believe that every aspect of reality is intelligible, quantifiable, and predictable, that there must be laws to govern everything, and that reality can be exhaustively explained by the causes and effects of forces. This, of course, describes the basic assumptions of the discipline of physics and the ever-increasing domination of scientism.

The more man engages in Enframing, the more it dominates his life. As he sees the potential uses of every aspect of reality, he begins to view reality only in that way, and he begins to estrange himself from understanding or even sensing the essence of things, or the way things hold sway in reality. Although his calculations and assumptions are correct, they do not encompass the whole of the truth; for truth is not just what is correct, but is the unconcealment of an essence. His analyses accurately depict how things appear within the realm of Enframing, but he ceases to be able to think outside of the context of Enframing. Everything is seen to be dominated or created by man, rather than appearing as it is, as a world outside of himself capable of evoking wonder with a greater existence than what he can immediately comprehend. Thus, though Enframing drives man to pursue what is correct, it distances him from the origin and essence of things.

Furthermore, the essence of man himself is concealed by Enframing. His mission to order reality into a standing-reserve presupposes his domination over nature; in order to fulfill his role as the orderer of the standing-reserve, he must be able to both know and control reality. By assuming his power in this way, man comes to believe his will is the ultimate determinant of his role in reality, i.e., he believes his will is what comprises his essence as man. However, the view of man as having absolute power over reality is false; despite the greatest scientific and technological advancements, there will always be a portion of reality beyond his control, something that his will cannot conquer. Therefore, although Enframing is a form of revealing, it also conceals the limitations, and consequently the essence, of man.

In an even broader sense, Enframing obscures man's relationship with Being. Since Being, for man, is the openness to the question of what it means to be, this openness is in direct conflict with the attitude of mastery imposed by Enframing. In assuming his ability to completely know and understand all of reality, he is blinded to the original position of non-mastery, i.e., of reception, required by the act of pondering Being. He does not see Being as a continuous question with an answer beyond his grasp, since he surmises to know the answer to all questions. In this way, too, his essence is concealed; he does not understand himself as the one who questions and listens, but rather as the one who already knows.

Enframing comprises the essence of technology; in other words, Enframing is the manner in which technology holds sway in the world. Modern technology is designed to calculate and manipulate reality, a paradigm shift from the bringing-forth of *technē* in previous eras. Thus, technology frames our way of thinking, as its very existence asserts that reality can be ordered into the standing-reserve. As Grant argues, the view of technology as neutral instruments whose only effects come from their uses is false; the mere existence of technological instruments presupposes the “destiny” (i.e., Enframing) from within which they were made (Grant, 1991, p. 22). Enframing is a destiny of man that imposes, central to the technological civilizations in which it roams.

### **Technology As the Essence of Modernity**

Heidegger asserts that technology forms the essence of modernity. Starting with the Enlightenment, the self became the primary point of reference in rational thought. Truth was reduced to that which was able to be grasped and understood by man, presupposing the ability of man to know and experience the whole of reality. In other words, the mind was assumed to have no limitations and to be able to master reality via logic and rational thought, while any unknown that threatened this perceived power began to be reduced or ignored. Given the association between knowledge and power, a mastery in logic implicitly asserted an absolute mastery. Rationalism, individualism, and the Scientific Revolution naturally followed, developing eventually into the Industrial Revolution and the other modern technological revolutions. Through all of these developments, science became increasingly “folded towards” dominating nature (in the words of Grant), interlacing the activities of knowing and making by directing the activity of knowing to the aim of making. Therefore, Enframing is allowed to hold an ever-increasing sway in man’s thought, as his activities become increasingly led to solidify his role as the orderer of the standing-reserve. Ultimately, the foundation of modernity can be summarized as the

deployment of technology to achieve mastery over nature, an attitude that underlies almost all areas of modern thought.

From another perspective, modernity can be characterized by the shift of man's role in reality, from one who contemplates the subject to the subject itself. In the time of the Ancient Greeks, the subject signified that-which-lies-before, or the world emerging before man's gaze. Reality as subject imposes itself on man, forming the primary point of reference in man's thought. However, with the advent of the modern era and the spreading of Descartes' thought, man replaces reality as subject (Heidegger, 1977). His attention is shifted from that beyond him to his own self-consciousness while reducing reality to a simple representation of the mind. This representation is able to be wholly grasped in the limitations of his thoughts, eliminating the aspects of reality that he is unable to understand. Furthermore, as man becomes the focus of his own thoughts, reality is only seen as it is in relation to man, secondary to himself. Every inquiry into reality, such as the various scientific endeavors of recent history, still has man as its primary focus, causing reality to be seen as subjected to man and given meaning by him. In this way, placing man as the principal subject of contemplation asserts his mastery over nature, paving the way for the various scientific and technological revolutions of modernity.

However, with the further indulgence of Enframing, man loses his place even as subject (Heidegger, 1977, p. 27). When reality is reduced to purely a part of his standing-reserve, it loses its value as an object, since it no longer stands on its own but now derives its essence from its role in the standing-reserve. All objects in reality are stripped of any previous or inherent meaning besides their part in the standing-reserve, considered only with regard to how they can be manipulated by man. These objects are, therefore, conquered both literally by physical technology and figuratively by the conceptual authority of the standing-reserve. Since the standing-reserve itself is encompassed by the authority of the subject, all of reality is defined by its subjugation to man and ceases to carry any significance independent of man. In a sense, reality is diminished to slavery or property, rather than an object outside of man. Within this objectlessness, man is no longer considered the subject, since he lacks the relationship with something

outside himself that is characteristic of subjects; rather, he is solely the orderer of the standing-reserve. In being reduced in this way, he himself is considered solely by his use (as the role of orderer) in reference to the standing-reserve, bringing him to the “brink of the standing-reserve”, as termed by Heidegger. Since no aspect of man is considered other than his supposed mastery of nature, Enframing conceals his essence with regard to his participation in *poiēsis* and his role as one who receives Being and Truth from reality.

It is this objectlessness that prompts Heidegger (1977) to say “it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself” (p. 27). Since he asserts himself as the primary point of reference in thought, he views objects only in their relation to himself, positing himself as the essence of the world around him. Viewing reality as his property allows him to feel he is constantly surrounded by himself; from his creations of skyscrapers and concrete jungles to the soon-to-be harvested lumber of the forests, his own mastery underlies every conception of the world around him. Reality, as part of the standing-reserve, becomes an extension of man, a symbol of his mastery over nature; whatever man sees, he sees in it his own power and his potential for domination. However, through his attempt to subsume all of reality to himself, he estranges himself from his own essence. None of reality truly reflects man because it only reflects his self-proclaimed mastery of nature, a mastery which is never as absolute as he pretends. Although he participates in reality as a co-creator, he is unavoidably limited, both in his endeavors to conquer nature and in his mortality. Despite his best efforts, he cannot ever truly claim mastery over nature, nor even over himself. In his most fundamental essence, his capacities for knowing and making are inextricably linked with the limitations of his finite mind and body, so to deny one’s limitations is to deny a vital part of one’s essence. Thus, as Heidegger (1977) states, “*In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence*” (p. 27). In positing himself as the primary reference point for all of reality and by searching for himself in everything outside of him, man is blinded to his true place in reality as a limited, mortal man entrusted with *technē* despite his finitude. Only by the power of Being is he called to Enframing, not by his own capacities. Therefore,

although he pursues what is correct, he fails to see Truth, i.e., he is blinded to the essences of both himself and of reality. Thus, though man feels increasingly self-assured of his place in reality, he is far from it, lost amongst the false mirrors of Enframing.



## Chapter 3

### The Problems of Death and Suffering

It is within the context of Being and Enframing that man's fear of death and avoidance of suffering, as detailed by Becker, takes on novel significance. As man is exalted to his place as the orderer of the standing-reserve, the world seems to reflect only him and his power as he bends it to his will. The more secure he feels in his role, the more he sees himself as the absolute master and possessor of nature, even over himself. Within the self-assuredness of Enframing, he begins to believe he can cheat death by ordering even life and death to his use, especially through the medical and biological sciences. His mortality becomes an increasingly distant concept as he becomes more and more blind to his limitations and, therefore, to his essence as man. His mission to possess all of reality is also driven by his boundless desire for life, leading him to pursue immortality as a mode to procure infinite life. Despite his conviction, however, he can never completely achieve immortality, destining him to a life of repressed death anxiety, violently rebelling against any hint of his limitations that would threaten his perceived mastery over nature. In *The Denial of Death*, Becker (2020) describes these coping mechanisms, along with their effects, in great detail, forming the foundation for this section.

In a similar vein, physical pain and psychological suffering are both harsh reminders of man's limitations and his failed mastery over nature. Both are the undoing of man's relationship with Being, either in the primal manner of pain or by the unfulfilled desires for Being characteristic of suffering. *The Body in Pain* by Elaine Scarry (1988) will be referenced to describe pain in a way relevant to this discussion.

### Man's Striving for Immortality

Inherent to the essence of man is his desire for Being manifest in his participation in reality as a co-creator, first through the craft of *technē* and then through the challenging-forth of Enframing. He

desires life and Being not just in the present moment, but for all eternity; i.e., he desires immortality. His mission of domination over nature becomes a symptom of this desire, as his desire for Being results in a desire for everything that is, driving him to subsume all of reality, or as much as he is able, unto himself via domination. However, this desire for eternal Being is sooner or later sharply severed by his death. His relationship with Being, that which comprises his very essence, will eventually cease, leaving behind nothing but a decaying body. The nature of man is built to strive for life, both in animalistic instincts and rational thought, but his mortality is just as inherent to his essence; his death is unavoidable.

His mortal fate, however, only drives his mission of conquest forward. The more he struggles against the wall of his inevitable death, the more he fails and the harder he tries to overcome it. Once he begins to believe the lie that he can cheat death, his struggle is only empowered. Enframing is ultimately an expression of this; in his driving to order reality into the standing-reserve, the final thing left to conquer is life and death, Being itself. Every other expression of his mastery over nature is a means to this end, a mission to accumulate a power that gives the illusion of complete control. His self-assured place in reality as a small god becomes a soothing mirage, allowing him to pretend he will achieve power even over death.

However, his wrestling with death is never successful, nor does the mirage of his immortality ever become true. Hidden below this subconscious power struggle is a death anxiety that drives everything he does. The full, conscious acknowledgment of his death would be too overwhelming, so this fear becomes woven into the fabric of his life. He learns coping mechanisms and tricks to make him feel eternal, always identifying with an idolized power. As a child, this comes in the form of identification with his parents, who seem to tower as invincible rulers of the world. As he grows older, he learns to bend himself to the seemingly eternal ideals of society or to dedicate himself to his own projects. Whether conscious of this fact or not, he is intent on finding something that outlives him and to which he can dedicate his life, termed by Becker as his *causa sui* project. Whether it be heroism, his life's work, promises of an afterlife, or the happiness of his children, his *causa sui* project is an attempt at

immortality. If he identifies himself with something that is immortal, his life does not lose its meaning once it ends, but is instead subsumed into the larger meaning of the universe. In other words, man's dedication to his personal cause is a way for him to circumvent the problem of his own mortality by allowing his *causa sui* project to serve as an immortal extension of himself. Since the *causa sui* project, now immortal, was created by him and emerged from his own capacities, it seems to be evidence of the strength within himself, thus assuring him of his own power and freedom.

This identification, which Becker terms transcendence, is the reliance of man on a power higher than himself, as he himself lacks the power to conquer death. By feeling indispensable in relation to a power greater than himself, he feels indispensable to all of reality and is assured of his permanence at least in memory, thus symbolically conquering death. Transcendence is most obviously demonstrated in the context of religion but extends to anything that man views as greater than himself: his country, the ideal of heroism, social status, the duty to his family, his *causa sui* project, or worldly control and monetary affluence. In any case, the practice of transcendence brings him freedom from his death anxiety by providing a false pretext of immortality, the illusory freedom to impose his will on reality.

The irony of this clever transcendence game is that the very things he uses to assure himself of his own freedom are what restrict that same freedom. The only path to true freedom is to embrace his essence, i.e., his mortality, and to confront objective reality. Doing so would force him to admit his own dependence and helplessness, which makes him feel much less of a man. In the face of his insignificance, he turns to the things that comfort him, those that bear him up in their net of security: his status, career, family, passions, or religion, all of which affirm his importance and, therefore, provide a vague reassurance of his immortality. In doing so, however, he restricts his freedom; the construct of his life is formed by his "screens against despair" rather than his own will as he so desperately craves. These screens support the lie from which he has woven his life by teaching him to hide from the reality of his own death and throw himself into a project whose only meaning is assigned by him. He feels enslaved to his *causa sui* project or strangled by the safety nets he has caught himself in, and rightly so, since he has

reduced his life to these successes. In order for man to quell his anxiety and stifle his aloneness, he must rely on something greater than himself; however, by relying on something beyond him, he abandons his supposed independence. In the dim recognition of his self-constraint, he begins to fight for his freedom, pushing back against the facade he has built for himself. He becomes increasingly driven, pursuing more and more of his constructed life and his false freedom in the hopes of quenching his thirst for reality and the freedom to fully confront it. He flails not against death, the source of his anxiety, but against his own constructed facade, his screens against despair, only allowing himself to see that which does not threaten his self-assurance. Despite all this, at his core, he desires to stand on his own two feet to face reality, a vision that he himself has made impossible.

In struggling against his screens of despair, his overwhelming death anxiety is also given an outlet. Since its full expression would threaten the practical functionality of man, it must be delocalized as a manageable problem. In this way, man struggles, but only against something he can conquer. He knows he is anxious but does not understand the source, so he creates an adversary in his life to both validate his anxiety and convince himself of his ability to conquer it. Hence, his restless anxiety is given an outlet by way of catharsis.

An alternative coping mechanism for his death anxiety, as opposed to the transcendence of the mind, is to distract himself from both his desire for eternity and the limitations of his condition. In this way, since he cannot escape death, his life becomes a desperate attempt to reduce himself to an animal so that he can forget it. He saturates his senses with stimulation, pleasure, and emotion, fleeing from the self-awareness of one who knows he does not want to die. He instead spends his life reducing his desire into something more manageable, more understandable, settling for pale imitations and distracting himself from his restless desire for more. Beneath the pleasures and distractions, however, he is dissatisfied with the finitude of his life. His desire for the infinite and the eternal, for immortality of his own, underlies everything he does, though he never comes face-to-face with it.

Thus, in the face of the duality of man as one who longs for eternal Being but is fatally mortal, the greatest temptation of man is to embrace one aspect of his humanity and deny the other. Either he embraces his body, becoming a slave to its passions and impulses while refusing to think of any higher order of life, or he views his body as nothing more than a deadweight chained to his soul. In the first case, he denies he is anything more than an animal, seeking instant gratification and indulging in bodily desires, whereas in the second case he convinces himself he is nothing short of an immortal god, nourishing his *causa sui* project and fantasized mastery over nature while conceptually distancing himself from the needs of his body. In neither reaction does he approach self-awareness; he is blind to his essence as long as he does not understand his humanity as composed of both his body and soul, his mortality and his desire for eternity.

Both reactions to this duality and the subsequent blinding of man to his essence can be traced back to Enframing. By exalting man to the orderer of the standing-reserve, Enframing encourages the domination of man over even his own body, allowing him to deny the limitations of his own humanity by affirming his own mastery. Rising above nature as master of the universe, he feels untouchable by death or any other harm, believing he is capable of ordering Being itself to create his own immortality. On the other hand, the view of everything in reality as raw material to be ordered-for-use teaches man to use even his own body as a tool to distract himself from his mortal condition through bodily pleasures and animalistic satisfactions. Thus, man becomes further and further estranged from his essence as he plummets into the abyss of Enframing.

In summary, the death anxiety posited by Becker and the aspiration for eternal Being as the underlying foundations of man's actions can be another way to interpret Heidegger's work. His infinite yearning for life itself, i.e., his desire for immortality, is manifested in the urge to possess all of reality, which serves as the foundation for Enframing's mission of domination. In turn, Enframing teaches him to further seek dominion over all things, including eventually over even himself; once the reality in front of him is conquered, he turns his attention to the biggest question, that of his own mortality. In order to

eliminate his mortality, the biggest and most permanent threat to the self-made man, it must be seen as something outside of him that he can act upon and conquer. This leads to the denial of either his body or soul, respectively via distractions and *causa sui* projects. The resulting reduction of man's essence makes it possible to distance himself from his mortality, allowing him to believe he can act upon it and conquer it. Since this belief is radically and continuously frustrated, along with his hope for achieving immortality, his thoughts and actions become subconsciously consumed with an underlying death anxiety. His life subsequently becomes an endeavor to master all of nature, including Being itself, a mission which allows him to cling to the idea of his own immortality by possessing all of nature.

### **Suffering and Pain**

In order for man to deny his mortality and maintain any pretext of immortality, he must, without fail, remove or conceal every connection to death in his life. Through his carefully constructed walls of repression and catharsis barge the unwelcome guests of psychological suffering and physical pain, bringing with them an excruciating reminder of the human condition. They represent a weakness in man's position, a hint of his estrangement from Being.

Physical pain, the more primal of the two, results in a clear estrangement from Being by wounding man's relationship with and experience of reality. Since it is a result of the physical destruction of or harm to the body, it attacks man's relationship with Being on the most basic, biological level by wounding the vehicle of man's existence and the most primitive part of his essence (Scarry, 1985). His activities are limited by the pain, creating a helplessness that limits his power and shatters his self-image as a god. Through this primal attack, pain consumes man, his body demanding his immediate and constant attention, making it seemingly impossible to focus on the lofty pursuits of the mind. At its fullest, pain becomes "world-destroying", filling his consciousness with nothing but the feeling of pain and obliterating his ability to see the world around him (Scarry, 1985, p. 29).

Other emotions and feelings, though they may be consuming, have another object in reality (love for someone, hatred of something, disappointment in something, etc.). In every instance, man is linked with his surrounding reality through an experiential mode. Therefore, most emotional phenomena serve as “a consistent affirmation of the human being’s capacity to move out beyond the boundaries of his or her own body into the external, shareable world” (Scarry, 1985, p. 5). By contrast, pain has no object, thereby distracting man from the outside world rather than encouraging his participation in it. The inability to fully participate in reality is contrary to his nature, as man was made for active participation rather than passive observation. Furthermore, the experience of pain includes “the feeling of being acted upon”, a violation of the self-autonomy of man and a harsh reminder of his ultimate lack of control (Scarry, 1985, p. 7). This serves as a brutal reminder of his death, penetrating the walls of protection he has built around his ego. When man is overwhelmed with pain, he is completely unable to see anything beyond the pain, wounding his relationship with reality and, therefore, with Being.

Man in pain also experiences helplessness and isolation due to its unshareable and inexpressible nature. Since pain lacks an object, it cannot be objectified in language and remains uncommunicable. Language, the vehicle of both man’s self-expression and of his higher interaction with the world, is abandoned in favor of whimpers and cries, reducing man to the order of an animal (Scarry, 1985). A barrier between fellow men is created, as what fills the reality of one is unable to be communicated and, therefore, completely absent in the reality of another, creating radically different experiences that cannot be reconciled. Ergo, man in pain is isolated and helpless, estranged from Being and detached from anything except the experience of pain.

Psychological suffering is an attack on the higher nature of man rather than his bodily existence. Simply phrased, suffering is the result of an unfulfilled desire for Being; it is a failure of the ego’s full expansion into reality, a recognition of the limits of man and his true place in reality. Something is denied him in his desire for more life, for his full engagement with reality. In many cases, this comes in a recognition of the dullness of life when it is devoid of his object of desire; the death of a spouse can easily

send man into the mentality that there is nothing left for him in this world, that there is nothing that can make him feel the same way. Contrary to his ideal, man cannot bend reality to suit his needs and fancies, but is dependent on what lies before him. Thus, much like pain, suffering comes with the realization of man's limitations and the frustration of the ego.

Pain and suffering estrange man from his idealized role as ruler over nature, as well as hindering his original relationship with Being, i.e., with his pursuit of life. By making it more difficult for man to be open to the reality before him, they restrict man from reaching his full essence as a creature in front of Being. Since they ultimately serve as harsh reminders of man's finitude and insignificance, man attempts to eliminate every source of pain and suffering in his life. Although he cannot simply hide behind his *causa sui* project as he can with the terror of death, pain and suffering have concrete causes that he works tirelessly to eliminate. Thus, his striving to conquer nature comes not just as a result of his desire for experience, but as a desperate attempt to eliminate any threat posed to him. In the context of Enframing, life is reduced from the *poiēsis* of experiencing reality into a series of tools available to avoid pain or suffering and fill his life with comfort and satisfaction.

In the extreme case, his avoidance of pain and suffering becomes an obsession, turning what was originally a courageous striving for life into a cowardly shrinking from death. This is most evident in the modern age, where technological advancements tempt man into hiding within his readily available convenience and instant gratification. Not even a single second can be still but must be filled with constant stimulation and activity, in case he is met in the silence by an unfulfilled longing. Though initially natural, this unchecked avoidance of suffering brings man, once again, into Enframing; his primary judgment on reality depends upon its service to him, or whether it causes pain or pleasure. Rather than receiving reality as it comes, he seeks to dominate it, reducing in his mind that which he cannot understand or control. His refusal of pain and suffering is a denial of his limitations and of his mortality, both of which are inherent to his humanity, so he estranges himself once more to his own essence.



## Chapter 4

### The Medical Gaze

The ultimate foe of man's mastery over nature is his death. Modern medicine, with the goal of unmaking man's mortality, is the full application of his effort towards this mastery; man employs his calculations and analyses in the study of the human body for the purposes of avoiding his impending death and eliminating any pain or suffering. He becomes able to act upon his condition, rather than remaining as the one acted upon by pain. Through Enframing, his body appears to him as a tool to be ordered-for-use, a machine that can be, with time, fully understood and wholly subjected to his will. It is only in viewing his body this way, echoing the Cartesian idea that the body is separate from the self, that he can wield authority over it. Hence, he fails to see his body as a vital part of his essence as man, instead conceptually distancing himself from his body and the limitations it represents. The so-called "medical gaze", a concept originally introduced in Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973) and now an essential part of any discussion in medical philosophy, is another term to describe the viewing of the human body as a purely material object or a machine to be manipulated rather than part of the essence of man; thus, the medical gaze itself is a symptom of Enframing.

Numerous implications of the medical gaze can also be found in Foucault's writing, especially with regard to man's death anxiety and pain as the feeling of being acted upon. Accordingly, Foucault's work will be analyzed in this section with regard to the concepts proposed by Heidegger, Becker, and Scarry. Several essays by Jeffrey Bishop will also be referenced, as they show similar patterns of understanding based on his own clinical experience, as well as the later sections of Grant's *Technology and Justice* (1986) that deal with medical phenomena.

### **The Final Dominance**

Through Enframing, man's conquest to realize himself as the master and possessor of nature comes to a climax in the face of his death. His death anxiety and desire for immortality are both a symptom and cause of his yearning for power; the more he denies his own death and feigns immortality, the more helpless he becomes against his anxiety and the stronger he struggles against it. The final fruition of this power, if it was possible, would be the complete conquering of life and death themselves, elevating man to the place of a small, immortal god without the limitations of his mortal body. The application of science to this undertaking is manifested in modern medicine, novel with respect to older forms of medicine because of its characterization by the medical gaze.

Foucault described the framework from which physicians encounter their patients as the "medical gaze", a way of reducing the patient to a physiological body for more efficient analysis; i.e., by viewing the body as a purely material object, a machine to be manipulated at the will of man. The very act of seeing is embedded within a framework of medical knowledge and clinical experience, drawing the physician's attention only to that which he knows to be important and discarding that which he deems irrelevant. All too often, this disregarding includes a portion of the patient's experiences. An abundance of visual, auditory, and chemical cues are filtered as they are observed, subjected to the physician's judgment and the medical algorithm he has learned. The act of ordering-for-use, therefore, begins even with the observation; through this gaze and the subsequent prescriptions that follow, the patient's body is yielded to the physician's authority in the hopes of being ordered to health by his mastery. A side effect of this authority and perceived mastery is an unhealthy tendency within society to see physicians as godlike figures, almost magical beings who hold power over life and death.

While the scientific conclusions that stem from the medical gaze are, at least for the most part, correct, they fail to consider the essence of man as the unity of his body and soul and, therefore, do not result in the unconcealment of Truth. In the false belief that the whole can be reduced to the sum of its parts, the physician sees no longer a person but a mind and body conglomerate, according to the dualism

conceived by Descartes; the self is seen as separate from and above the material object of the body. In accord with the attitude of Enframing, each part of the patient, the body and the psyche, appears to the physician as a complicated series of reactions that, once known, can be manipulated accordingly. As Bishop (2017) describes from his clinical experience, “[This rationality] sees all of reality - the mind, the body and even the spirit - as a mechanism, a machine waiting to be discovered and ordered to the relief of humanity at best or a machine waiting to fulfill the whims of our constricted imaginations at worst” (“Enchanting Medicine”). When a full understanding of these mechanisms is reached, allowing medicine to finally manipulate the patient’s physiology with perfect success, the body will be restored to its natural place as completely subordinate to the will. Rather than a burdensome attachment to man demanding his attention, the body will resume its role as nothing more than the ego’s mode of interacting with the material world.

The physician, however, is not the only one blinded to the essence of the patient; in his frantic attempt to escape death, the patient himself fails to understand mortality as a vital part of his essence. The irony in this approach is that while man seems to be obsessed with the self in modern medicine, scrutinizing every aspect of his health to ensure self-preservation, he is, in reality, blinded to himself. Henceforth, even when man attempts to consider the mortal parts of himself (i.e., his physical or mental health), he only considers them with regard to his mastery, or how he can conspire to dominate them, rather than parts of his unified identity of body and soul. The words of Heidegger seem to be even more true in medicine than in any other context: although it seems as though man encounters only himself, he ceases to do so by denying his essence.

Furthermore, as in any other instance of Enframing’s influence, man is unable to maintain an openness to the question of his own existence, to the query of Being. His attempts at mastery once again make it difficult to approach Being from a humble position of non-mastery, as he has convinced himself that nothing is beyond his understanding. Therefore, he fails to recognize the ultimate question, the same asked throughout human history, including by Socrates himself: the question of a good death, ultimately

determined by a good life. This is another form of the same question posed by Being, the fundamental question of what it means for man to be. But in his hastiness to survive, man's question becomes solely how to cheat death, not how to confront it, so through the practice of medicine he ceases to consider his relationship to Being and, thusly, his essence.

While this attitude may seem harmless at first glance, especially considering the wondrous advancements made by the medical field, it has extensive effects on the role of medicine in society. Rather than an embrace of the person in illness or death, medicine has become a scrupulous modulation of the body. The limitations of man are eliminated at all costs, even when doing so acts against the Hippocratic oath to protect life. Euthanasia is the most extreme example of this, as man's life holds no objective value once the inhibitions of his mortality overwhelm his freedom (Grant, 1991). The objective value of his life is, therefore, defined by his ability; in other words, his essence is reduced to his capacity to participate in reality as the orderer of the standing-reserve. In the helplessness of a terminal illness, he relies on medicine to grasp the only capacity for self-mastery that remains, in the form of hastening his own death; although he realizes he cannot stop his death from occurring, he retains the choice of when it comes. Thus, in the face of his powerlessness, man puts forth one last attempt at power in the only way possible. In other words, his primary point of reference, i.e., the subject, is his will rather than the reality before him. Whereas other treatments center on alleviating pain, sometimes with the consequence of shortening life, the focus of euthanasia becomes control rather than the medical care of the patient. In a sense, therefore, the phenomenon of euthanasia stems from the lie that man alone determines the meaning of reality and can order all things to his use, even death, while in doing so he denies the unity of his essence as body and soul.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Euthanasia is, of course, a much more complicated topic than what is covered by the scope of this paper, with a thorough analysis requiring an entire thesis of its own. The concept of euthanasia was introduced here specifically as an example of Enframing and the medical gaze, although there are a multitude of other factors that complicate the issue when considering its morality as a whole; therefore, the author is not making an argument regarding its morality. In light of this, euthanasia would be a good topic for further consideration and discussion.

Just as in euthanasia, other scenarios demonstrate that when the scientific mastery of medicine is exhausted, physicians no longer know how to respond to the burden of the patient in front of them. There are, for example, instances of expecting mothers with inviable pregnancies wishing to carry their babies to term, but who are only offered care in the form of abortion; many of these cases are encountered by Parravicini (2014) in her clinical experience as a neonatologist providing hospice care for newborns. Stripped of the power of Enframing when clinical expertise is not enough to cure their patients, physicians come to believe they are helpless in their role of caretaker of their patients. The only way left to eliminate the suffering is to eliminate the life that suffers, in the form of an abortion. Thus, in the case of inviable pregnancies, the logical conclusion of Enframing is to prescribe an abortion and any other choice by the mother is met with an uncertainty in approach. Compassion, the act of suffering with the patient regardless of the scientific success of the treatments, seems entirely foreign to the role of a physician due to the infrequency with which it is required, a byproduct of the marvelous technological advancements that have occurred. Since Enframing discourages man to admit his limits, he no longer knows how to respond when the limits of others are met. Therefore, although the scientific scope of medicine has greatly increased, the foundation of the care for the person has been lost, which is why recent years have brought a push within the field toward holistic care. Unfortunately, in most cases, this is approached in a secondary mode of changing the physician's actions themselves, rather than a recognition of the underlying paradigm shift that has accumulated to these actions.

The subtle consequences of the medical gaze, however, are even more comprehensive. The act of seeing is itself changed as the invisible becomes visible for the first time due to the intervention of scientific and technological advancements. Knowing and seeing are equated, with that which is beyond man's limits of perceiving disregarded. The physiological body, therefore, is presumed to be the only source of truth or information. Every part of the body is opened for analysis, culminating in an autopsy as the final act of seeing to determine the cause of death. This, however, is incorrect, as not every aspect of the human person can be reduced to its material counterpart; for example, the intricacies of the human

mind cannot be known by any scan or dissection of the brain, no matter how thorough. The association between knowing and seeing is, therefore, a symptom of Enframing in the sense that it diminishes Truth to what can be readily accessed by man.

Pain itself, since it cannot be seen or measured except through the expression of the patient, proves to serve a great opposition to the conquest of knowing by seeing. Pain does not lend itself to be articulated in language, at its worst bringing man to the level of an animal through cries and whimpers. Regardless of intensity, it cannot be fully conveyed to another, causing what fills the reality of the patient to be inaccessible to the doctor. Because of this, attempts to quantify or categorize the experience of pain have mounted, but it remains elusive to objectification due to its subjective nature. The opportunity then arises for the pain to be reduced or ignored by the physician since it does not fit the critical scope of the medical gaze.

Through the medical gaze of the physician, the physician's clinical experience, rather than the reality of the patient's experience, becomes the primary point of reference in defining the disease. In other words, the physician becomes the subject, with the patient before him as the corresponding object of his judgments, preconceptions, and decisions. Since seeing is intricately intertwined with a system of knowledge only accessible to the doctor, the patient is excluded from making his own judgments on his experience. Diseases only carry meaning insofar as they are classified and categorized, with undefined patient experiences deemed as less legitimate. Another symptom of this system is medical terminology serving as a pseudo-foreign language inaccessible to the patients without the intervention of the physician. The mystery that results heightens the perceived authority of the physicians, encouraging the view of medicine (from the perspective of a patient) as a mysterious, inaccessible, and all-encompassing power. The physician is, accordingly, posited as the master of nature, including over the patient's own body.

In reality, however, the physician does not see the patient on his own terms, but rather as a composite sketch of a vast multitude of case studies (Bishop, 2017, "Enchanting Medicine"). Under the

guise of statistics and trends, the patient is constrained to the generalization of previous knowledge.

Reducing the patient to the generalized composite is a form of challenging-forth that attempts to capture the patient by comparing him to those of previous encounters, while the patient's essence cannot be reduced to a drawing and, therefore, eludes the physician. Hence, this is part of the larger role of Enframing; man assumes the world exists exactly as it appears in his scientific depictions of it, blinded to anything hidden to his analysis. In the end, the composite sketches are drawn in order to determine the success of the prescribed treatments, i.e., to measure the control of the physician over the reality. By constricting the patient's response in a way that is more efficient for this analysis, the physician is, in reality, only seeing what he presumes to see. Here Bishop (2017) quotes the poet Schiller: "thou readest in her what thou thyself hast there written" ("Enchanting Medicine"). The medical gaze is, therefore, a lens from which to see the patient, but by no means allows for the reception of the patient in his entirety.

The patient-physician power dynamic introduced by the medical gaze contributes to two of the strategies to overcome death anxiety, as detailed by Ernest Becker. Firstly, the patient becomes the physician's *causa sui* project; although this project is not immortal, the physician feels as though he has indirectly conquered death. It was his skills and judgment, his power, that kept death at bay, so the physician's literal, but temporary, triumph over death becomes a mode of symbolic immortality. Likewise, the patient practices the coping mechanism of transcendence when assured of the power of his physician. Just as a child identifies with the protective figure of his parents, the patient can trust that his immortality will be preserved through the safeguarding power of medicine, represented in his physician. As a short digression, it seems as though the demographics that trust physicians the least, such as those in rural areas, are also the ones who have a lower life expectancy and, therefore, more likely have had to confront their death anxiety. This logically supports the concept of medicine as a coping mechanism for death anxiety, as more confrontation with death anxiety reduces its severity, thus diminishing the need for the transcendence aspect of medicine. In any case, when the patient's trust is established in the authority of the physician, medicine becomes a way for both parties to avoid death anxiety.

In short, the medical gaze represents a complete shift in man's relationship with reality, part of the larger phenomenon of Enframing. Pain, suffering, and death are reduced from experiences that either wound or destroy man's relationship with Being to aspects of reality that can be analyzed, controlled, and prevented. Man is no longer one acted upon by pain but is the one who acts, both upon his pain and his death. In his striving for complete mastery over reality, his final foe is Being itself; he strives to become the one who determines the conditions of his own existence, free from the slavery of his own mortality. This is pursued through modern medicine, a field that strives to be all-knowing and, therefore, all-powerful with regards to life and death. In particular, the medical gaze is used to reduce the patient to a physiological body that can be manipulated through medical interventions, thus increasing the scope and efficiency of science to include humanity. Enframing becomes applied to even man himself, concealing man's essence from himself by convincing him he can conquer his mortality. With the technological and scientific developments that result from Enframing, man is increasingly able to avoid confronting his death anxiety, thus leaving him dependent upon the coping mechanisms associated with the authority of the physician. Ultimately, the essence of man is concealed in medicine; he is no longer recognized by himself or by others as one who is fatally limited despite his desire for the eternal, as the unity of his body and soul.

### **Death As the Primary Factor of Reality**

From his clinical experience, Bishop (2012) highlights an interesting phenomenon regarding the origin of the medical gaze; he argues that the medical gaze has emerged as death has been perceived as the primary factor of reality, the default state of nature. It is possible that the death anxiety described by Becker, coupled with the modern ability of man to avoid his mortality through Enframing and technology, has triggered an obsession with death, just as Freud was obsessed with the idea of his own death while denying he experienced any fear of it (Becker, 2020). Regardless of its source, however, it has become



clear that the modern perception of death is vastly different from that of the ancients, particularly affecting the modern fields of science and medicine.

Long before the dawn of the modern age, the ancients perceived reality as full of *anima*, with no obvious distinction between living and nonliving matter. One encountered life at every turn, with even the inanimate factors of reality teeming with new growth and regeneration. What seemed to be the most hostile environments featured a diversity of species, such as the farthest depths of the ocean. As Hans Jonas argued, life was the default, obviously inherent in nature, with death as an anomaly that required reconciliation with the universality of living matter (Bishop, 2012, “The phenomenon of life”).

The modern age, however, brought with it a shift in viewpoint. Death is now the universal, with life as an interesting phenomenon that can be reduced to nonliving matter subject to a series of complex reactions. Motion is created by inorganic substances forcefully acting on each other, calculable transferences of energy. Turning his gaze beyond earth to the universe, man sees a vast lifelessness, a conglomerate of matter whose entropy is always increasing. Life is deemed so rare that he searches for it on other planets, meeting it with surprise when it usurps the expectation of death. He deems the universe to be dying, its increasing entropy an ever-present sign of life’s losing battle against death. He is dust and to dust he shall return.

Without the inherent property of life to animate the world, reality is just an agglomerate of substances waiting to be ordered-for-use, a collection of resources and energy that can be harvested for the will of man. Since the default characteristic of the world is death, it lacks any dignity associated with life, allowing its only meaning to be that which is imposed by man. He yields death as a tool to shape his environment, replacing forests with layers of concrete and driving out entire species as pests. In the end, the only life he is surrounded by is his own, along with whatever life he has deemed beneficial to his existence in the form of pets, aesthetics, or consumption. It seems, therefore, as though the only life that exists is due to the power and will of man. In other words, Enframing triumphs over the lifelessness of reality, exalting man to a position of dictatorship.

This reduction of life to a series of mechanisms corresponds closely with the phenomenon of the medical gaze; life is essentially reduced to dead matter that can be calculable and controllable once the underlying forces and principles are understood. The consequences of this aspect of modernity are the same as those previously described: the blinding of man to his own essence, the reduction of the patient to the physiological body, and the simplification of disease to the symptoms and pathologies it causes. There is a certain nihilism in the view of death as the default, since the phenomenon of life is but a deviation from the natural order of things. Therefore, when the power of medicine fails, the solution is to simply hasten what is already man's fate, eliminating suffering at all costs. Even the way that medicine is learned reflects the modern reduction to death; the foundation of medicine is the cadaver, the corpse that teaches aspiring physicians what it entails to treat a patient. This is where the medical gaze begins, where the body is first reduced to an inanimate machine. In its essence, medicine primarily learns from death. By using death as the standard from which to judge reality, man once again no longer sees himself as the one who receives Being, but as one who can exert complete control over inanimate matter in the form of himself and the reality around him.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

Through the influence of technology on the modern age, Enframing has risen to a place of prominence in man's interaction with all of reality and with Being itself. In seeing the world as a collection of tools to be ordered-for-use, he believes he can bend all of reality to his will, including life and death, i.e., Being itself. The more influenced he is by Enframing, the more he reduces reality only to what is knowable, calculable, and manipulable by him until he is surrounded by a world that seems to only reflect his place as the master and possessor of nature. The implications are numerous, much greater than what can be covered by the scope of this thesis and should, therefore, be further explored. Phenomena such as euthanasia, abortion, the sexual revolution, the prevalence of instant gratification, relativism, individualism, the spread of legalism, and the rise of radical traditionalism all carry hints of Enframing,<sup>3</sup> demanding a thorough investigation into the effects of technology on Western culture.

The danger of Enframing lies in the blinding of man to his essence, the cessation of his openness to the question of Being as one who can never fully grasp the ultimate sense of what it means to be. In particular, he ceases to see his essence as composed of both body and soul, instead denying his mortality as the final limitation of his existence and likewise endeavoring to eliminate his pain and suffering, even at all costs. Rather than the care for the person, medicine becomes the folding towards of science to this mastery over nature, striving for complete possession of reality through complete understanding. As a result, the medical gaze is born, reducing the reality of the patient to a physiological body that can be ordered to health through the application of scientific and technological strategies. In believing he has at last achieved mastery over nature in his temporary triumph over death, man is blinded to his essence by

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<sup>3</sup> The way in which these concepts display hints of Enframing are in either their Cartesian separation of the body from the self (euthanasia, abortion, the sexual revolution), the view of man as master of the universe who ultimately determines the meaning of things (relativism, individualism, instant gratification), or their categorical and reductionist view of reality (legalism, radical traditionalism). These concepts will be developed in a later essay.

allowing for the denial of his immortality. The resulting effects are numerous, including an inadequacy in the face of the dying and an ultimate failure for medicine to address the patient's humanity, with many more potential consequences unknown.

Nevertheless, a good doctor knows that it takes much more than the medical gaze to treat a patient. Although Enframing holds an ever-increasing sway in the modern world, it is not absolute in its effects. There are still those, such as Parravicini (2014), who practice compassion in the truest sense of the word, suffering with those who cannot be saved from their death. The embrace of the whole person, the unconcealment of man's essence, is much more difficult than the analyses and calculations associated with the medical gaze. Nonetheless, this embrace should be the primary factor in the practice of medicine, a feat that is easier argued than practiced; to struggle against the temptations of Enframing would require constant reflection with a critical eye, always judging the motivations and implications of one's own actions. Regardless of the tediousness of this reflection, this is the type of doctor I will strive to be, seeking to preserve the unity of the patient's essence as body and soul and always open to the non-mastery of Being.

In the end, there are two ways of living in the world: a stance of power and a stance of asking and listening (Latar, 2023), of Enframing and of reception of Being as a continuous question. The first stance, though much more prevalent in the modern era, is dangerous in its reduction of both reality and the human body as purely material objects or machines that only exist to serve the will of man. The second stance, however, is much closer to the way man is meant to live: always asking a question over which we don't have full mastery, but seeking its unconcealment nonetheless.

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## ACADEMIC VITA

Sara Katherine Gotter

### EDUCATION

**The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA** Expected Graduation: May 2023  
Schreyer Honors College  
Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering (Biochemical Option, Pre-Medical Track)

**International Studies Institute, Florence, Italy** May – July 2022

### HONORS & CERTIFICATIONS

Leonhard Scholar, *The Pennsylvania State University College of Engineering* 2019 – Present  
Provost Award, *The Pennsylvania State University* 2019 – Present  
Emergency Medical Technician Certification, *National Registry of EMTs* 2021  
The President's Freshman Award, *The Pennsylvania State University* 2019

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Second Place Capstone Project, College of Engineering, Penn State** December 2022

Worked on a team of five to design a life-cycle testing apparatus for Philips Ultrasound

Earned second place at the end-of-semester Design Showcase, competing against 40 other teams

**Undergraduate Research Assistant, The Pritchard Lab at Penn State** August – November 2021

Performed bacterial transformations, plating, and MaxiPreps; split HEK-293 colonies

### LEADERSHIP, SERVICE, & INVOLVEMENT

**Responsible, Communion and Liberation, Penn State** February 2022 – Present

Founded a chapter of the national organization for Catholic university students at Penn State

Coordinates with the chapter in Washington, D.C. for three weekend-long events per semester

**Secretary, Newman Catholic Student Association Executive Board, Penn State** August 2022 – Present

Organizes shift sign-ups for a total of about 240 time slots

Takes diligent notes and facilitated discussions of about 20 board members

Designs and sends a weekly newsletter to about 300 people using MailChimp

**Vice President, Catholic Campus Ministry, Penn State** April 2021 – May 2022

Coordinated group activities and helped build authentic Catholic community at college

**Social Team Director, Newman Catholic Student Association Board, Penn State** April 2021 – May 2022

Led a team of 3 to organize weekly, semiweekly, or daily social events for up to 100 students

**Site Coach, Group Mission Trips, Erie, PA** August 2021

Directed teams of high schoolers to perform week-long home repair projects in low-income areas

**Medical Reserve Corps Active Volunteer, Virginia Dept. of Health, Fairfax, VA** May – August 2020

Helped administer COVID-19 tests to the staff/residents of care facilities and low-income areas

Served about 200 people per 8-hour shift during the first few months of the coronavirus pandemic

### WORK EXPERIENCE

**Facilitated Study Group Leader, Women in Engineering Program, Penn State** January – May 2021

Organized a Facilitated Study Group to help 7 undergraduate students succeed in physics

**GH Engineering, Inc. Summer Intern, Vienna, VA** June – August 2020

Worked as a Junior Web Developer performing updates to the company website's HTML code

Planned the annual Christmas Party of 60 employees, answered phones, and responded to emails