Everyday Truths?
A philosophical dialogue between
William McNeill and *Carleton B. Christensen*
responding to the latter's paper
"What is so sustainable about services? The truth in service
and flow" *Design Philosophy Papers*, Issue 3-4, 2007

William McNeill:
I find this a very rich and suggestive essay, and I am largely persuaded by the arguments. In particular, I find your analysis of the "lean and mean" rationality that dominates most of our political and economic discourse today to be quite compelling, and right on the mark in terms of what such discourse tends to exclude from the start, namely, the possibility of fundamental transformations in our very ethos that need to be part and parcel of a shift toward long-term sustainability. What interests me in particular, are what I see as a number of parallels in your essay with key themes of Heidegger's thought. I am thinking here especially of his critiques of technicity and of calculative rationality; his early analysis of "authenticity" (to which you refer in a footnote); and the extent to which his understanding of the authentic human action appears to be an embracing of a certain version of Aristotelian *phronesis* (practical wisdom or prudence) that is explicitly contrasted with both technical and theoretical reasoning. To what extent have some of these broader themes of Heidegger's thought informed your essay?

To be more specific, take the analysis of service and serviceability in Heidegger's early, phenomenological work (I note that toward the end of your paper, you refer to your own work as engaged in "phenomenological reflection"). In *Being and Time* (1927), "serviceability" is identified as constituting the very being of the tool or of equipment in general: every tool or implement, every piece of equipment, serves some end or purpose, and its being subservient to that end constitutes the way in which it presents itself, at least for the most part. One of the major accomplishments of Heidegger's phenomenological analysis is to show that when such products function properly and smoothly, they are not thematically present as objects before us. In fact, they are not purely present at all: they withdraw into a kind of absence; they are indeed there, but inconspicuous and unobtrusive, like a kind of background whose smooth "functioning" lets us get on with whatever the task in hand is, whatever we are explicitly attentive to. It's only when my car breaks down, my pen runs out of ink, or my shoes get a hole in them, and so on, that these things become thematically present as objects of my attention.

Now, it seems that, in *Being and Time*, these things or products still have a certain independence or autonomy, as it were (Heidegger indeed writes of this inconspicuous presence, this presence-in-absence-which he calls "readiness-to-hand-as constituting the

being-in-itself" of equipment). That is, they are not yet taken up into a network that seeks to completely control and order the availability of everything in advance. It is this latter kind of network that today seeks to regulate in advance the possible presence or actuality of everything (and not just of products, we might add), and this means, as you indicate, that for something to provide a service today means not so much, or not simply and not primarily, its actual functioning, but its standing by, ready for possible deployment, ideally at any place and at any time.

You write of the car in the driveway "standing there, conveniently available anytime its owner wants it," and of how such a product can "be delivering a service quite effectively even if it is not actually being used," precisely because its service includes its accessibility to a potential user, its being "positioned" so as to be available whenever we need it. Your analysis here seems very reminiscent of Heidegger's claim, in the later essay "The Question Concerning Technology" that for something to be today means, not for it to be present as an object, nor even as an independent product, but for it to be orderable: Being means "orderability" (*Bestellbarkeit*); and the essence of technicity is a setting of everything in order, setting everything in place, making everything available and accessible for possible use or deployment. This is what he terms *Gestell*, a word that is poorly translated as "enframing," and might be much more appropriately rendered as the "positioning" of which you speak.

Is this Heideggerian understanding of service and convenience commensurate with your own?

Carleton Christensen:
When developing this account, I was not explicitly thinking of the Heideggerian notion of ordering (*Bestellen*). Uppermost in my mind were primarily critical-theoretical notions and critiques of consumer capitalism, i.e., the idea of how the serviceability of the car consists in its enabling more or less instant, unthinking, disburdening – precisely 'convenient' – gratification of desire. But both your question and the remarks with which you preface it indicate a way in which the Heideggerian and the critical-theoretical perspectives might be brought together in a mutually enriching and reinforcing way.

In the essay on technology, Heidegger concentrates on making. In particular, he homes in on the transition from a *poietic* to a less *poietic* style of making, whereby the former is 'original' and 'primordial', the latter less so, indeed it is the least 'original' and 'primordial'. Crucially, Heidegger intends this transition to be understood in a dual way, that is, as implicating two interrelated senses of the terms 'original' and 'primordial'. The first sense is a historical one: the transition is to be understood as the emergence of a distinctively modern socio-cultural style of making, viz., challenging-forth (*Herausfordern*), and ultimately, ordering (*Be-stellen*) out of a technically simpler one (*Herstellung*). The fact that Heidegger illustrates the latter by appeal to the example of a silversmith making a sacrificial bowl[1] (*Opferschale*) shows that he regard it as in some sense distinctively Greek. Yet Greek culture serves only as an illustration of how, when

the technical means are comparatively limited, making and the entities involved in it must at least often, if not always, be understood. Similarly, modern technological society is merely representative of the kind of understanding of making and the entities involved in it which significantly more powerful technical means make possible.[2]

The second sense of 'original' or 'primordial' is an ontological and transcendentally philosophical one: the transition is to be understood as articulating an ontological dependence of the emergent form of making upon that from which it emerges. Both forms of making are kinds of self-evaluatingly self-regulating purposive engagement with entities.[3] But the historically original form is 'original' or 'primordial' in the further sense that it is a condition of the possibility of all kinds of such engagement with entities. More precisely, understanding this kind of making is constitutive of understanding oneself as oneself, i.e., of having any understanding or sense of who one is[4] at all. And since having a sense of self – of who one individually is – is constitutive of being a self-conscious self, understanding this kind of making is thus constitutive of being something capable of first-person thought at all hence able to engage self-evaluatingly with entities. If this is right, then, to put the matter a little crudely, there is no kind of making at all unless some of it be of this ontologically 'original' or 'primordial' kind.[5] This entails in turn that any situation or phase of human culture in which making has assumed the form of challenging-forth and ordering can only be an emergent one. It must have originated in earlier situations and phases of culture in which making was a matter of challenging-forth and ordering either not at all or at the very most only at the margins. The historical order thus turns out to be due not just to the fact that in the earlier situations or phases the technical means are simpler and less powerful.

Appreciating the way in which the historical sense of 'original' or 'primordial' is underpinned by an ontological sense is crucial to understanding just what Heidegger means by challenging-forth (*Herausfordern*) and ordering (*Bestellen*). In particular, it is crucial to understanding how and why Heidegger can find in his characterisation of modern technological culture a genuine, rationally evaluable critique of current social and cultural. It is thus crucial to identifying how to defend Heidegger properly against the criticism that he is just draping personal dislike of modernity in obscure, pseudo-philosophical verbiage. Everything turns on the ontological structure of the different kinds of making, in particular, the way in which form ('design') and matter (materials) relate to one another. What distinguishes making in the sense of challenging-forth and ordering from making of the kind exemplified by the silversmith is the way in which in it form and matter are indifferent to one another. More accurately, given its character as derivative in the dual historical and ontological sense just indicated, what distinguishes challenging-forth and in particular ordering is its character as dirempting an original unity (gathered-togetherness, i.e., *Versammlung*) of form and matter. Where there is this original unity, as exemplified by the making of the sacrificial bowl, there is making or producing in the sense of *poiesis*. The original unity of forming and 'mattering' which is *poesis* is, and is understood by users to be, held fast in the thing made, in the product (since this latter stands to the act which engenders it as *ergon* to *energeia*, as work to the working-up of it).

By the indifference of form to matter the following is meant: the greater the power of one's technical means, the more one is able to impose form on matter without regard to the specificities (*Besonderheiten*) and individualities (*Einzelheiten*, otherwise translatable as the details or better, the singularities) of the matter involved. Indifference of form to matter in this sense constitutes precisely the 'unpoetic' character of such making or producing. Naturally, total disregard, total indifference, and to this extent, total ordering, is an ideal limit, an asymptote. But even when understood as articulating merely an ideal limit, the notion of ordering distinguishes certain real forms of making or producing which in modernity have become increasingly pronounced in their 'unpoietic' character, as well as overwhelming in their number, complexity and interrelation. For such forms of making are oriented towards being able to treat their matter (materials) as so pliant that no compromise or concession need be made in the form to be imposed upon it. There are two ways in which real making and producing might approximate to this ideal: the invention of technical means so powerful as to render existing matter more compliant, e.g., the invention of earth-moving equipment with which to sculpt the earth into a transport system, or the invention of new kinds of material which are so pliant that they permit a wide range of formings, e.g., plastic.

This interpretation of Heidegger's account of production permits one both to answer your question and to connect up with the opposing, consumption-oriented direction from which I was originally coming. All acts of producing are, after all, acts of consuming and many acts of consuming are acts of producing.[6] So we should not think of the diremption of form and matter just in terms of the ideal limit case of entities utterly compliant to a form-imposing will. Implicated in this limit case will be a complement ideal of entities utterly compliant to a form-utilising will. The thesis that modern producing is inherently organised around the idea of total ordering therefore has as its necessary complement the thesis that modern consuming is inherently organised around the ideal, the limit case, of total disposability. This latter one could indeed call total serviceability (*Dienlichkeit*) – precisely the ideal of total convenience.[7] In this sense, then, the answer to your question is, "Yes."

Crucially, in both production and consumption, the materiality of the entities involved is discounted in the following sense: entities are no longer present to either production or consumption as offering a resistance expressive of their specificity and individuality.[8] They are, of course, still present, but only as compliantly awaiting their shaping, or conveniently awaiting their utilisation.[9] Furthermore, this point can be reformulated in terms of the notion of design operative in distinctively modern production and consumption: the design of the technical means which enable such producing and consuming is positively organised around externalising what in *Being and Time* Heidegger calls the modes of conspicuousness (*Auffälligkeit*), pushiness (*Aufdringlichkeit*) and in particular obstreperousness (*Aufsässigkeit*).[10] That is, modern producing and consuming are forms of producing and consuming in which design is understood to be governed by the ideal limit of a purposive engagement with entities that

does not require the subject thus engaged to watch out for, and anticipatorily to inhibit, the emergence of these modes before they lead to break-down.

But precisely this watchfulness and the capacity for anticipatory inhibition of break-down implicated in it is what makes purposive engagement with entities self-evaluatingly self-regulating in character. It is thus constitutive of such engagement as a phase and expression of self-conscious selfhood. So the character of modern producing and consuming as organised around discounting the materiality of the entities produced and consumed is tacitly orientated towards expunging the selfhood of the producing and consuming self. It positively works against the possibility of one's actually being a self – *eigentliches Selbstsein*. With this, what began with Heidegger's analysis of the ontological structure of making has arrived at a thesis characteristic of critical theory.

Above it was noted that making in the sense of challenging-forth and in particular ordering is governed by the ideal of a totally pliant matter. The closest we have come to this ideal is that most modern of materials, namely, plastic. Yet clearly many pre-modern materials, e.g., clay, already display aspects of such pliancy even though they are not as pliant as plastic. This observation insinuates a continuum of material pliancy, from Palaeolithic stone, bone and wood through Neolithic clay, on to antique bronze and iron, arriving only at its end at modern steel and plastic. The fact that this continuum extends into modernity only at its end implies (a) that production governed by the ideal of eliminating watchfulness (in the name, of course, of ever more economical production) is not an essentially modern phenomenon; but (b) that it will become more possible and prevalent the more modern the means (technology) becomes.

Consequently, it would be wrong simply to equate the essence of distinctively modern production and consumption as governed, respectively, by the ideals of total orderability and total disposability (convenience). This is a highly desirable feature of the interpretation given here. For clearly certain non-modern forms of making and using, e.g., antique manufacture of amphorae, exhibit, albeit in simpler, hence less successful form, subordination to the ideal of totally pliant materials and totally compliant means. In order to characterise the essence of modern production and consumption, one needs to include in one's characterisation the idea of a causal tending-towards, that is, a tendency to extend orderability and disposability into all domains of real production and consumption.[11] This tendency is, of course, enabled by the technical means, hence technical power at one's disposal.

Note that if this is how one is to understand the essence of modern production and consumption – the essence of distinctively modern technology – , then it has two welcome consequences. Firstly, it entails the possibility of having and using technical means at least akin to modern ones (in that they presuppose a modern, natural scientific understanding of natural phenomena, enable us to ameliorate various forms of drudgery, create hitherto undreamt-of opportunities for creative expression and entertainment, etc.) without succumbing to the essence of modern technology. Secondly, it enables one to see that Heidegger's position in no way involves a romanticisation of craft and 'simplicity' –

as if washing dishes or chopping wood by hand were somehow inherently more 'engaging' and 'self-realising', hence 'better', than their more modern alternatives.[12]

From Heidegger's perspective, then, there is nothing wrong with "modern technology" if by this one means those modern means and materials for making life easier, more creative or even simply more fun. "Modern technology" is objectionable only if it is understood to be the social, hence politico-economic subordination of life to the development and implementation of such means and materials.[13] The interpretation given here permits us to see that this tendency to subordinate life has two complementary forms: completely 'unpoietic' production and what one might complementarily describe as completely 'unpoietic' consumption (use). Both consist in denying the thinghood of things. So both constitute forms of engagement with things in which the self denies itself. Crucially, such denial is in itself neither good nor bad; at times, indeed, it is quite appropriate. Things only go awry when this denial becomes the design and dynamic of life itself – when the social, hence politico-economic organisation of life is pervasively given over to making (producing) and using (consuming) governed by the ideal of maximal orderability and maximal disposability. This is the greatest danger.

William McNeill:
Yet precisely this social, politico-economic organization of life is becoming thoroughly technical, or technocratic, today. "Modern technology," in this sense, is not just, and not primarily, about technological products—this is part of Heidegger's point in insisting that the "essence" of technology is itself nothing technological. The "essence" of technology, one might say, is technicity, understood as an all-pervasive way of being. The attempt to regulate, not just beings, but the very presencing of all beings as belonging to a network of standing reserve appears to be the ideal toward which modern technicity is unswervingly headed. In the ideal state, the presencing of all beings could be controlled in advance, "programmed," as it were, and thus thoroughly calculated and predicted, if not absolutely, then at least in terms of probability (along the lines of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle). Programmability would constitute the ideal, because the ultimate self-securing power over the presencing of things and people everywhere.

The "will to power" at work in modern technicity secures itself in and through its own, ongoing securing of power—and it can thus secure itself only by continuing its own project, thereby constantly reconfirming and resecuring itself. For Heidegger, I think, what most needs to be thought are the limits of this system: the ongoing need of technicity to continually secure itself means not only that it can never stop, that there can be no end, no limit, but also that technicity itself is fundamentally not secure, and this very fact constitutes a limit of technicity as such.

But I would like to ask how you think the issue of sustainability needs to be situated in relation to this project of the technocratic configuration of contemporary social, political, and economic life. It would be tempting, no doubt, to approach sustainability itself as something to be secured through scientific-technological means: the point, surely, one

might say, is to take control of our destiny by making our relation to nature as secure as possible, thus securing a sustainable mode of human existence for future generations. Even if the goal is no longer the possession and mastery of nature aspired to by Bacon and Descartes at the beginning of modernity, but perhaps a more sober, less hubristic acknowledgment of our dependence upon nature, thus of a need to live in harmony with nature—one could still conceive of this harmony or sustainability as something to be secured and organized to the greatest extent possible through "technological" means—through technicity.

Is this something desirable, in your view? I ask this in part because it might seem, from your remarks just now, that modern technology in itself is okay, and that what is needed is merely a restriction of technicity to its proper sphere, where it would no longer encroach upon social and politico-economic existence; in the latter realm, we would employ a different kind of rationality, perhaps along the lines of the excellence in deliberation conducive to *eudaimonia*, as espoused by Aristotle. But can technology (in the supposedly benign sense) really be separated from technicity (as the pervasive, technocratic organization of life)? And is not technicity intrinsically problematic?

Carleton Christensen:
The dominant mode of thinking on how to achieve a more sustainable order is precisely as you describe: for all its recognition of the need to live in harmony with nature, it still conceives this harmony "as something to be secured and organized to the greatest extent possible through 'technological' means," that is, through what you call, on Heidegger's behalf, technicity. The buzz words for this kind of thinking are sustainable development, servicisation, dematerialisation, factor-four, natural capitalism and the like. I regard such 'reformist' approaches to problems of sustainability as unviable because insufficiently radical. Indeed, such approaches seem to me to be dangerously delusional and a crucial role for philosophy lies in revealing, through phenomenological analysis of the concepts marked by the buzz words just listed, their conceptual deficits. But does the rejection of 'reformist' approaches to problems of sustainability require one also to reject "modern technology" in the conventional sense of those tools, techniques and systems which presuppose our most advanced modern science – electronic devices, for example? Or might one retain what you describe as a benign sense of the term "modern technology", a sense which permits one to say that "modern technology in itself is okay"?

I do not think that rejection of 'reformist' approaches to sustainability requires one to reject "modern technology" in the conventional sense indicated. As you point out, when Heidegger insists that "the "essence" of technology is itself nothing technological," he is insisting on the importance of distinguishing technicity from "modern technology". Of course, he is insisting here merely on a conceptual distinction between two notions. As such, this distinction says nothing about whether or not the phenomena denoted by these notions are, or indeed have become, so structurally intertwined with one another that one cannot practically, hence politically separate them. But as long as one remains resolutely on the conceptual level, one can consistently and indeed correctly maintain that tools,

techniques and systems are possible which presuppose the accomplishments of our most advanced modern science yet are not bound into that form of life which you call technicity. In this sense, then, while technicity is problematic, both intrinsically and as a response to issues of sustainability, "modern technology in itself is okay."[14]

But does this entail that overcoming technicity requires one merely to restrict the same "to its proper sphere", so that it can no longer "encroach upon social and politico-economic existence", in which latter realm we now employ "a different kind of rationality, perhaps along the lines of the excellence in deliberation conducive to *eudaimonia*, as espoused by Aristotle"?

Addressing this question properly requires one to insist on what might at first seem a quite pedantic point. Technicity is not, I think, a particular kind of rationality which has been applied beyond its proper bounds. Rather, it is a misunderstanding of rationality. More precisely, it is the mis-taking of what is merely a proper part of rationality – deliberation about effective means to given ends – as if it were (the whole of) rationality itself. Once rationality is mis-taken in this way, there is no place left for rational deliberation about the appropriateness of ends. Yet deliberation about effective means to ends always only ever occurs against the background of an always itself negotiable, rationally revisable understanding of what ends are, given the situation, legitimately pursuable and worthy of pursuit. Understood as a conception of rationality, technicity consists in obscuring the conceptual dependence of end-means thinking upon this background. So when understood in this way, technicity requires correction, not restriction. When understood as a cultural and historical phenomenon, technicity is a tending-towards ever greater tightly coupled, complex interconnectedness which progressively undermines the capacity for rationally re-negotiating and revising one's understanding of what ends are legitimate and worthy in the light of changed circumstances. As such, it requires overcoming (abolition), not restriction. The language of different kinds of the rationality obscures these latter points.

But my preference for the language of part[15] and whole over that of species and genus has a deeper motivation: it rules out talk of restricting technicity to its proper sphere[16] in any sense which would imply that this proper sphere were some institutional reality. In other words, it rules out, as incoherent, the quasi-Hegelian idea of an institutional domain of ends-means rationality so constrained by its wider political context that such rationality is kept in check. Any situation of decision may require all parts of rationality to be exercised. So while one must of course distinguish, say, the economic and political spheres, one must not assign alleged kinds or types of rationality to one or the other sphere – as if economic life could be, as neo-classical economics assumes, governed by the ideal of a pure ends-means rationality. To construe things this way is to marginalise deliberation about what counts as living well, this by shunting it off to an ostensibly separate political domain as its own ostensibly 'proper' sphere.[17]

This observation permits a proper response to the third and most fundamental issue you raise: granted that there is a benign[18] sense of modern technology, can it "really be

separated from technicity (as the pervasive, technocratic organization of life)?" This question concerns the practical and political separability of the phenomena denoted by the concepts of technicity and of modern technology in the conventional sense, and not the mere separability of the concepts themselves. In this regard, this much seems true: it is certainly possible to have "modern technology" without technicity provided one acknowledge that such technology could only be had in a very different way, a way which involved certain kinds of loss. It would surely be possible to have such things as computers but their liberation from technicity would have consequences for the functions they prioritise, hence for their design and the trajectory of their technical evolution.

Thus, part and parcel of a computer technology liberated from technicity might be its socially rather than individually networked character – on the grounds that the ubiquitous networking of individuals undermines social relations in various ways. One might argue, for example, that it disassociates familiarity from spatio-temporal presence, thereby engendering individuals less able to respond to the non-discursive aesthetic disambiguations and affective cues in which all discourse is embedded. Evidently, if ubiquitous networking of individuals is bad for these reasons,[19] then one could overcome it by having the nodes of one's network at, say, public libraries and schools rather than in private homes. This would in turn affect the palette and individual design of computer products. Computer manufacture would now be oriented to offering greater numbers of very high-quality midi-computers capable of powerful multi-user networking, while providing lower-capability machines to individual users. Crucially, a combination of de-networking and re-networking away from the individual towards the social[20] would be necessary for slowing the pace of communication, and thus of decision-making, down.

And slowing these things down is arguably a necessary condition for preserving the meaningfulness of exchanges between people, hence the meaningfulness of action.

The need for such liberation of computers and related technology from technicity becomes, I believe, much clearer when one turns to consider issues of sustainability. Quite apart from the massive unsustainability of the infrastructure of the networked society – the hardware and techno-regulatory systems thereof – , the networked society is itself fundamentally unsustainable, at least when implemented in an unconstrained free-market context. For in this kind of economic environment ubiquitous networking facilitates increased haste, which increased haste then engenders demand for even more efficient ICT and other forms of technology, and so on, ad infinitum, in a positive feedback loop. Unfortunately, increased haste itself contributes to burgeoning flows of materials and energy, not the least because it constrains people to make decisions which are sub-optimal as far as long-term sustainability is concerned – as when, for example, one has so much on one's plate that one simply cannot afford the more leisurely pace of public transport.

Furthermore, if overcoming technicity is required for greater sustainability, then overcoming it will have to mean smaller numbers of computers and other electronic

devices. In other words, one significant cost of overcoming technicity will presumably be the greater cost of individual pieces of "modern technology", because of a reduction in the benefits of economies of scale. Particularly this point makes clear how important it is to distinguish technicity from "modern technology" (in the conventional sense of the technical hardware) since it demonstrates how technicity, as an entire form of life woven around modern technological devices, involves economic considerations and motivations. Undoubtedly one of the reasons for a tendency to technicise all areas of modern life – often in the name of "greater efficiency", "enhanced convenience", etc. – is the dominance of the free market in this life.

In saying this, I am not making the relatively anodyne point that the sale of computers and other forms of technology is highly profitable. Something deeper is at issue here: the increasing technicisation of life makes for greater speed, reach and thus competitiveness; in addition, in an increasingly complex world, technological innovation enhances or at least preserves the manageability of one's operating environment. The free market thus leaps on new technologies and promotes them not simply or primarily because the devices themselves sell well, but because the new technologies create opportunities for re-organising economic life in ways that enhance competitive advantage, bolster the certainty of action and as a result maintain autonomy. Unfortunately, these advantages are rapidly cancelled out, as others catch on: in the meantime, the whole system has become correspondingly more complex. Consequently, a whole new round of innovation must begin.

In short, conditions of capitalist production and consumption turn "modern technology" into technicity, the all-pervading drive to innovate, which then colonises, to use Habermas' apt word, all areas of life.

It would be too economically determinist to maintain that "the pervasive, technocratic organization of life" were due solely due to the character of this life as organised around capitalist property relations and a relatively autonomous free market economy, particularly at the global level. Nonetheless, the free market organisation of economic life is surely causally necessary for technicity – as is also, of course, "modern technology" in the conventional sense. In other words, neither is individually sufficient but each is individually necessary. So while one must not over-emphasise the causal role of the market in engendering the socio-cultural and historical phenomenon of technicity, one must make some reference to modern capitalist relations of production and consumption in any adequate characterisation of it.

In particular, such reference seems to me to be required if one is to characterise technicity sufficiently fully to be able to give clear, justifiable sense to the Heideggerian claim that technicity is not to be identified with "modern technology" (in the conventional sense of the various tools, techniques and systems). You yourself describe technicity as "the pervasive, technocratic organization of life" (emphasis added). The adjective 'pervasive' suggests the clearly causal notion of a tending-towards ever increasing technicisation, in ever more complex, tightly coupled systems. There can indeed be no doubt that when

Heidegger describes the essence of modern technology (challenging-forth and then ultimately ordering), he has some such causal notion in mind.

But just this throws up a crucial question and problem. What makes "the technocratic organization of life" pervasive, indeed invasive? In other words, what drives late modern tending-towards ever greater technicisation? Heidegger is remarkably reticent on this issue. One might initially answer that it is the forgetfulness of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*). More precisely, the driver of ever increasing technicisation is that distinctively Western understanding of Being which consists in 'forgetting' (overlooking) the essential character of ontological notions as applying to an entity only under specific interpretations (modes of Being) that reflect the way in which that which applies these notions – the 'subject' – is currently comporting itself understandingly towards the entity.[21]

Now the claim being made here surely cannot be that the Western tendency to 'forgetfulness' of Being suffices for the evolution and character of late modernity, i.e., for technicity. Such historical developments as the rise of modern science and technology must also play a role, i.e., be components of what does suffice for this evolution and character. So the claim must at least be that Western forgetfulness of Being combines with such historical developments to engender distinctively modern (and particularly extreme) forms of the Western metaphysical tradition. At the level of philosophical doctrine, this combination engenders the modern metaphysics of nature and, more latterly and specifically, contemporary naturalism. At the level of late modern socio-cultural and historical existence, it engenders technicity itself.

Yet even this much still does not seem right, i.e., enough. In order to explain technicity, it seems insufficient to appeal to Western forgetfulness of Being even in combination with modern science and technology; these alone surely cannot suffice to engender the tendency characteristic of late modern existence towards ever greater integration of all aspects of life into ever larger, highly complex, tightly coupled systems of modern technological devices. This insufficiency becomes all the more apparent when one recalls what the forgetfulness of Being is: it is a particular way in which Being is understood pre-ontologically. It is thus itself an answer to the question of Being, albeit a truncated, distorted one – truncated and distorted because it 'forgets' the fact that no 'category', no ontological determination, ever applies to entities contextlessly, without regard to how the applier of the determination is engaged with these entities.[22] So what is a pre-ontological understanding of Being (*Seinsverständnis*) in general?

Now one might think that by a pre-ontological understanding of Being Heidegger means a set of beliefs, more sophisticatedly, a set of deep-seated entailments or presuppositions of one's system of belief.[23] This is, in effect, to construe a pre-ontological understanding of Being as a 'mind-set'. Even at a comparatively exoteric level it is easy to see that this interpretation of what Heidegger means by a pre-ontological understanding of Being cannot be right. If pre-ontological understandings of Being were 'mind-sets' in the sense indicated, then Heidegger would find it impossible to explain

how we could ever become so stubbornly forgetful of Being; in addition, he would also have to maintain that in order to overcome our forgetfulness we had only to read (his) philosophy and let the scales fall from our individual and collective eyes. In other words, this interpretation makes the forgetfulness of Being so easy to identify and so easy to overcome that one can no longer plausibly regard it as capable of afflicting the entire Western tradition.

But the most fundamental reason why this interpretation cannot be right lies in the character of Heidegger's thought as an exercise in transcendental philosophy. Pre-ontological understandings of Being are a priori enabling conditions for the various forms of self-evaluatingly, self-regulating intentional comportment towards entities – whether this intentional comportment be 'internal' cogitation and theorising, or 'external' purposive behaviour. As such, a pre-ontological understanding of Being is not a system of belief, nor is its content anything entailed by what we believe. Rather, its content is entailed by the ontological structure of the various forms of self-evaluatingly self-regulating intentional comportment towards entities, as what must be the case if such intentional comportment is to be coherently and consistently realised. It is nothing psychological, nor indeed cultural, historical or anthropological.

If, however, the contemporary 'forgetfulness' of Being is neither psychological, cultural, historical nor anthropological, yet nonetheless able causally to shape the existence of those entities whose understanding it is, then, in order to explain the pervading, invading character of technicity, we must indeed factor something further into our account. In particular, we require independent input from a theory of social agency, social structure and social development in order to characterise that through which the 'forgetfulness' of Being can combine with the rise of modern science and technology to shape human existence. Given what Heidegger means when he speaks of understanding Being, his diagnosis of modern existence as a tending-towards ever greater technicisation positively requires independent input from a theory of psycho-social agency, structure and development.

In particular, we can, I think, only make full sense of Heidegger's conception of technicity if we supplement it with a conception of economic agency, structure and development, in particular, an account of capitalist property relations and the overwhelmingly complex, opaque market economy to which, in an age of modern technology, they give rise. That just such an account is needed would be confirmed by showing that in an age of modern technology these property relations and the market can only reproduce themselves through constraining individual agents to pursue individual economic goals in ways which collectively enhance technicisation. In this kind of socio-economic environment, the sum-total of agent interactions only exacerbates complexity and opacity. But complexity and opacity is precisely that which individual agents seek to master or at least to manage through developing and deploying "modern technology." A positive feedback loop is generated and this loop just is the tending of late modernity towards ever greater technicisation.

Such a conception of economic agency, structure and development thus contributes an essential component to understanding that malignancy of modern existence which you call, on Heidegger's behalf, technicity. Its malign character consists above all in this: it leads to hypostatisation of the one-self (*man-selbst*), hence the everyday rationality of the One (*das Man*), as a necessary survival mechanism in circumstances of increasing complexity and interconnection (since such hypostatisation permits reduction of complexity, and thereby retention of a capacity for everyday action). From a Heideggerian perspective and indeed that of the Critical Theorist (Marcuse), this is bad because such hypostatisation renders selves increasingly impotent and truncated in their selfhood, hence increasingly 'inauthentic'. For the environmentalist, it is bad because it constitutes ever increasing inability to resist cascading unsustainability.

In effect, I am arguing that we can understand Heidegger and a semi-Marxist Critical Theory as making complementary contributions to a conception of how to overcome technicity – for the sake not just of a less one-dimensional, more 'authentic' existence, but also of a more sustainable one. Heidegger's transcendentally philosophical ontology of the self provides us with a non-moralising notion of 'authentic' selfhood (whereby 'authentic' here connotes the strictly formal, ontological notion of a self realised in all dimensions constitutive of selfhood[24]). Critical social theory seeks to provide a conception of social agency, structure and development which explains what drives technicity. Thereby it enables one to identify what needs to be changed in order to break the cycle of technisation. Breaking this cycle then permits more authentic selfhood as well as facilitating greater manageability of human existence. Both of these things are necessary if we are to deal effectively with problems of sustainability – greater manageability of human existence in order to be able to address these problems, greater 'authenticity' in order to develop effective strategies of behavioural, hence political change..

Crucially, one of the things which must be challenged if the cycle of technisation is to be broken is precisely technicity in the sense of a conception of rationality: the hypostatisation of end-means thinking as all there is to rationality. Here, too, an initially seemingly pedantic insistence on the language of part and whole rather than that of species and genus proves its worth. The philosophical task is indeed to understand rationality so adequately that one recognises that ends-means thinking, as a mere dependent part of rationality, should never have any institutional domain exclusively to itself. Indeed, its having a domain to itself, viz., the economic – as manifest in Milton Friedman's insistence that the only ethical responsibility of business is to increase profit[25] – is precisely the problem, not the solution. We need consciously to restore to actors in the economic domain a structural capacity for permitting ethical considerations to constrain their economic decisions – for example, a capacity to refuse new innovations when they undermine the social fabric, atomise individuals or so speed life up that deliberation and contemplation become impossible. So rejection of technicity is not rejection of "modern technology". Indeed, it could not be since from case to case rejection of technicity might be facilitated precisely by the embrace of "modern technology". Rejection of technicity is in fact not the resolve to shun "modern

technology" but rather so to constrain it ethically and politically that it moves in socially and ecologically desirable directions.

William McNeill:
This clarifies many things for me, and I appreciate the detail and thoughtfulness of your response. I think that Heidegger would probably agree on the need to "supplement" his account of technicity with "a conception of economic agency, structure and development," and in particular with an account of "capitalist property relations" and the "overwhelmingly complex, opaque market economy" to which such phenomena give rise—much in the same way, perhaps, as he conceded that the analytic of Dasein in Being and Time was in need of being "supplemented" in many respects, with a view to elaborating the existential basis for a philosophical anthropology (*SZ*, 131). And I suspect that such a supplement could, moreover, be related to the theme of the "destining" (*Geschick*) of Being that is the very enabling of human freedom: a discussion that plays a pivotal role in his essay on technology.

But I would like to close with a question, or several questions, that circle back to a central issue in your original essay: that of the role of everyday, pre-theoretical reflection that maintains and sustains an openness to the fundamental revision of ends (and not merely of means to pre-given ends, such as an ideal of "progress")—and thereby also to the self-transformation of praxis, of one's very being. And in addressing this issue, I would like to return us to Aristotle and his understanding of ethical and political action or praxis.

It seems to me that, in appealing to a certain dimension of everyday, pre-theoretical reflection as embodying a much-needed virtue of openness, it would be problematic to invoke a blanket conception of the "everyday." Everyday or "commonsense" reasoning, as you also call it, is surely itself historically, economically, and politically determined and inflected, so that what passes for "everyday" reasoning in the present era, for example, can be saturated by a theoretical and technical perspective (in the "pervasive" sense of technicity I have suggested), and thus itself be profoundly problematic.

So presumably your appeal to "everyday, commonsense reasoning" must be an appeal to such reasoning at its best. And I wonder whether this is not something like what Aristotle outlines, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, as the deliberative virtue of *phronesis*, "prudence" or practical wisdom. It is true that Aristotle explicitly restricts the deliberative capacity of *phronesis* to deliberation about "means," or better: about what is conducive to pre-given ends, whereas you are concerned with a thoughtfulness that would be open to revising the ends themselves (and thereby our entire ethos, or way of being, as constituted by our dominant dispositions, which are themselves historically, culturally, and economically determined).

And yet Aristotle insists that *phronesis*, or true wisdom in practical human affairs, can flourish only if it is attuned by an openness to seeing the whole picture, to considering what is necessary with a view to "living well as a whole." What is especially interesting

to me here is that Aristotle characterizes this openness, or the kind of seeing and view that it entails, as a *theoria*: a *theoria* that is pre-philosophical, and not yet the more restrictive kind of contemplation belonging to philosophy and science that seeks to determine the permanent "essence" of things once and for all. Aristotle invokes this pre-philosophical *theoria* with respect to Pericles: men like Pericles, he says, are deemed to be *phronimous*, to be wise in practical, ethico-political affairs, because they are able to discern (*theorein*) what is good, not only for themselves, but for human beings generally (1140 b8).

It seems to me that this relates to the point you made in your response just now: "Technicity," you state, "is not ... a particular kind of rationality which has been applied beyond its proper bounds. Rather, it is a misunderstanding of rationality. More precisely, it is the mis-taking of what is merely a proper part of rationality – deliberation about effective means to given ends – as if it were (the whole of) rationality itself." But on Heidegger's view, if I understand him correctly, this restrictive conception of rationality begins with Greek philosophy and is itself already a "technical"—that is, theoretical in the narrow, philosophical-scientific sense—understanding of deliberation, one that indeed takes (a certain reductive interpretation of) the experience of techne, of human making, as its model.

This narrow view of (technical) rationality as means-end deliberation not only parasitically infects, as it were, the understanding of the ethical and political, including phronesis itself,[26] but also sanctions both the delimitation of different kinds of rationality, each with its own proper sphere (as delineated in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*), and the ascendancy of theoretical knowledge as the supreme kind of knowledge or rationality over and against others. And it also thereby leads to the increasing occlusion of that very openness, attuned to the question of ultimate worldly ends, that is characteristic of phronesis and the pre-philosophical theoria it entails. If this is correct, then it is the ascendancy of the theoretical, of contemplation in its philosophico-scientific inflection (oriented toward knowledge of permanent, everlasting truths), that itself occludes and diminishes our capacity for open reflection upon, and revision of, ends.

All of this suggests to me (and I am admittedly moving much too quickly here, and leaving many issues undeveloped) that what is called for above all in our era is something like a return of philosophizing itself to that dimension of the everyday to which you point, and away from its traditional orientation toward a theoretical perspective concerned with disclosing and mastering ultimate ends (or *archai*) in advance, and for all time. Philosophical reflection, on this view, might then be seen as a kind of enhancement of the openness implicit in everyday deliberation, an openness bound to the capacity for self-transformation in light of a view of the whole.

At the same time, such enhancement of openness could be fostered only by a critical "destructuring" (in Heidegger's sense of *Destruktion*, entailing a dismantling of concealments, or perhaps of what you calls "conceptual deficits") of any conceptuality that remains ensconced in narrowly theoretical or technical projects of rationality. Yet

this kind of enhancement of openness, it seems to me, could not itself be called "everyday"—not even if we were to recover an everydayness purged, so to speak, of the hyperbolic excesses of scientificity and technicity. The everyday, by definition, would always be an instituting of routine, of practices of repetition that foster a sense (however illusory) of security or being "at home," and of tradition—practices that by their very nature work against the possibility of our seeing things differently and of understanding ourselves otherwise than we have.

To cultivate the latter would be the task of philosophising, or perhaps of what the later Heidegger called simply: "thinking."[27] I presume this is why your essay is quite careful not to ascribe the critical openness of which we are speaking here to the everyday or to everyday reasoning as such: you state, rather, on a number of occasions that it is "implicit" in certain kinds of everyday or commonsense reasoning (for example, on p.12, where you first introduce this "rich" conception of rationality, and again in your concluding paragraph), and this formulation seems at once cautious and appropriate.

So my question, in sum, is a double one: whether I have correctly understood the status of the "everyday" in your appeal to "everyday, commonsense reasoning," or what is implicit therein; and whether Aristotle's analysis of practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, might not offer us resources for thinking something like the richer conception of rationality that you propose.

Carleton Christensen:
Let me move directly to the double-barreled question you raise at the end, namely, (a) whether in my paper on sustainability and service "everyday, commonsense reasoning" is tacitly understood as being "everyday, commonsense reasoning at its best", or perhaps rather, as it most truly or really – *eigentlich*! – is; and (b) whether Aristotle's notion of *phronesis*, might provide a resource for elaborating the richer conception of rationality I have proposed.

On the nature and methodological status of the appeal to the everyday

It would indeed be problematic to invoke or presuppose a blanket conception of the "everyday" (and so I was indeed tacitly taking "everyday reasoning" to be "everyday reasoning at its best"). Actual forms of everydayness will, for various historical, political and economic reasons, display varying degrees of distortion or, perhaps better, truncation in the way they understand themselves pre-philosophically and philosophically. In the present era[28], for example, "everyday, commonsense reasoning" will be profoundly "saturated by a theoretical and technical perspective (in the "pervasive" sense of technicity [you] have suggested)." Such technicity is primarily a distorted, truncated understanding of what it is to be anything at all, hence will go hand in hand with a distorted, truncated understanding of what it is to be rational.[29]

Yet this understanding is not a 'mind-set', i.e., not a set of beliefs located in the minds of individuals nor the set of entailments thereof; rather, it is a set of entailments implicit in

certain standard, routine ways of dealing with entities which are definitive of certain forms of life as, say, modern rather than pre-modern. Thus, Heidegger regards technicity as distinctive of late modernity, in which period 'objectification' has been driven so far that, paradoxically, the very objectness of objects is asymptotically undermined. So technicity may be regarded, derivatively, as a socio-historically evolved form of life.

The characterisation of the present era as pervaded by technicity is accomplished through phenomenological analysis of the "everyday". Clearly, given the claim that technicity is a deficient understanding of what it is to be (and to be rational), this phenomenological analysis must proceed 'comparatively'. So it must indeed consist in identifying and analysing examples of "everydayness" as it is ideally is, i.e., without the kind of distorting overlay of philosophical tradition which characterises "everydayness" as it actually is in the present era. And how it is ideally is determined by how it must be in order that the kinds of entities which create and live in it – ordinary, everyday selves – might exist most fully as selves. (The everyday as it ideally is thus conceptually correlated with the idea of optimally realised, hence in this sense ideal selfhood.) Only through comparison with the ideal thus identified and analysed can the real be revealed as something suffering from the distorting overlay of philosophical tradition and interpretation.

At this point, one might conclude that we are required to look away from the reality of the "everyday", and thus "everyday, commonsense reasoning" – "everyday commonsense reasoning" as it actually is in the present era – to how it is ideally or, as you put it, "at its best". And surely such abstraction from our own factical "everydayness" is not only deeply un-Heideggerian, it is, strictly speaking, impossible. In fact, this conclusion is a serious misunderstanding. While we must certainly seek to describe "everydayness", hence "everyday commonsense reasoning, "at their best", this does not require us to look away or abstract from our own factical "everydayness" and "commonsense reasoning". Quite the contrary: we must attend more closely to it.

This thought can be most plastically elaborated by reflecting on Hubert L. Dreyfus' primary accomplishment. The meta-philosophical insight implicit in Dreyfus' attempt to make Heidegger relevant for current issues in the philosophy of mind and psychology is his de facto recognition that philosophically meaningful phenomenological reflection of the kind Heidegger recommends proceeds from a horizon of issues and problems constitutive of the present. Thus, Dreyfus reads Heidegger against the background of contemporary controversies about the nature of self-conscious deliberation (thinking, cognition), in particular, whether it really conforms to that picture of it which is presupposed in classical AI and much cognitive science.

Dreyfus, having independently sensed that this picture is wrong, allows himself to be guided by his sense of mismatch between picture and reality pictured in order to identify where the picture goes wrong. In other words, he sets out to determine where a historically engendered model of mind, something which has become a commonplace (*Selbstverständlichkeit*) definitive of the present, runs off the rails. This process of taking

the problems of a particular model or picture of mind as a clue and then, under their guidance, searching around in the actual everyday phenomena modeled or depicted just is a matter of progressively seeing more closely how the latter – what Dreyfus calls "everyday" coping, which includes "everyday, commonsense reasoning" – would be when "at their best".

Guided by the problems, one analyses actual phenomena phenomenologically in order to explain why there are these problems. Thereby the ideality of these phenomena becomes visible in the realities themselves. Heidegger's phenomenological method lives in and out of a sense that it is responding to a problem in the present; this character of it as a response to an independently given problem of the present is a methodological necessity because the problem to which it responds guides it in its effort to see better how the phenomena at issue in the problem really are.

Of course, this 'method' is underwritten by the assumption that no actual "everyday", hence no actual "everyday, commonsense reasoning" can be completely and utterly distorted and truncated. It must be possible to identify certain cases of the real "everyday", even the "everyday" of the present era, in which it tends significantly towards its best. There is nothing inherently problematic about this claim: the "everyday" at its best is its working most effectively to play its functional role in enabling self-evaluatingly self-regulating behaviour with regard to entities within and in the world. So in all sorts of ways even we today simply could not exist as completely 'technised' and 'technicising' subjects because existence as completely 'technised' and 'technicising' is, in the strictest sense of the term, impossible.

Technicity, understood both as the ontology implicit in distinctively late modern ways of comporting oneself towards entities and as the form of life in which this ontology is so to speak implemented, is incoherent. But its incoherence is not a straightforwardly logical one, as if it were simply internally inconsistent, in which case it would not be able to exist at all. Rather, it is incoherent in something akin to Hegel's subtle sense: it fails to conform to its own concept, i.e., the kind of thing it is ideally, hence exists in internal counterfactual relation to. But precisely for this reason its failure cannot be complete; to some extent, in some little niches of its domain it must, so to speak in spite of itself, display its better nature.

It is therefore methodologically essential to the very project of Being and Time that the philosopher go out into the pre-theoretical everyday world in order to identify and describe phenomenologically those perhaps inconspicuous 'best cases' of the everyday which must be there to find. Only in this way will the philosopher identify and articulate the ontological 'categories' of the ready-to-hand and present-at-hand, and in so doing, viā negativā, the 'existentials' (*Existenzialien*) constitutive of Dasein, and moreover do so in a manner which preserves them in their character as different ways of 'schematising' the one notion of Being. Evidently, this going-out-into-the-everyday is essentially hermeneutic and thus essentially fallible: in a two-way process, the philosopher moves back and forth between, on the one hand, phenomenologically reflecting on the way

"everyday" entities show themselves in their Being in the different modes of self-comportment towards them (*Besorgen*, *Fürsorge*, etc.) and, on the other, a progressively richer picture of them, and thus of "everyday commonsense reasoning" as it most truly (*eigentlich*) is, extracted from this phenomenological reflection. As such, this whole process is itself the progressive articulation of the structure of selfhood and thus, correlatively, of the various senses of Being (of the entities towards which the self comports itself) implicated in this structure. This self-critical, self-revising movement back and forth begins, indeed, conceptually speaking, must begin, in an initial, inherited concept of the phenomena at issue, e.g., currently topical psychological models of thinking and cognition, which is part and parcel of the facticity into which the philosopher is thrown.

It is instructive that in *Being and Time* there is very little of this rich phenomenological description of actual kinds of everyday case, i.e., comparatively few examples and comparatively sparse elaboration of what examples there are. This is not necessarily a fault. The identification and description of everyday "at its best," i.e., as its fullest, most selfhood-enabling, is achieved in and through an ideology-critical, philosophically-guided, anthropological, cultural and historical investigation of whether certain external, theoretical accounts of the everyday, in particular, everyday getting about the world (to which "everyday, commonsense reasoning" belongs) meet the task. And what these external, theoretical accounts are may vary with the time and place of the philosopher conducting the investigation. The phenomenological description of the actual everyday in Being and Time is thus relatively sparse for the following reason: since a full phenomenological description would have to implicate the factical everyday of the philosopher carrying it out, to have included too much of it would have potentially obscured the borders between phenomenologically conducted philosophical ontology and phenomenologically conducted philosophical anthropology (or psychology or sociology or historiography …).

For Being and Time is fundamental ontology precisely because it provides a general pattern of analysis positively requiring supplementation, or perhaps rather implementation,[30] by a philosophical anthropology (or psychology or sociology or historiography …). There is thus a relation of mutual dependency between philosophy (ontology) and philosophical anthropology (or psychology or sociology or historiography …): the former requires the latter for context-specific fleshing out with reference to the factical circumstances of the philosopher while the latter requires from the former the guidance and direction which makes it philosophical. Crucially, the latter is philosophical in the Kant- and Husserl-derived sense in which the former is philosophical. For in the contribution it makes towards an account of the ontological nature of individual types of self-evaluatingly self-regulating behaviour towards entities, it, too, is guided by the question of how individual tracts of such behaviour must be insofar as they form, as they must, moments of the existence of a coherent, maximally self-like, precisely an eigentliches ('authentic'[31]) self. This philosophical character[32] ensures that ontology, even though it requires appeal to, and application in, the factical, hence potentially very

diverse experience of the philosopher working through it,[33] nonetheless remains primum inter pares.

On using Aristotle's notion of *Phronesis* in order to understand rationality

Your suggestion that Aristotle's analysis of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) constitute a resource for elaborating the richer conception of rationality intimated in the original paper on sustainability and service seems to me to be very right and very important. But one must be careful how precisely one appropriates the analysis to this end. In order to see why care is needed, we must first distinguish, in comparatively formalistic fashion, two issues implicated in your suggestion which are independent of one another. Firstly, there is the issue of whether one may identify what Aristotle means by *phronesis* with the kind of thoughtfulness which is concerned to revise ends. Secondly, there is the issue of whether one may identify Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* with the idea of "everyday reasoning at its best". As the paragraph immediately following indicates, these two identifications together entail a clear falsehood.

There is, I think, something deeply right in the suggestion that what Aristotle means by *phronesis* is identical with, or at least intimately bound up with, the kind of thoughtfulness which is concerned to revise ends. So let us just assume this identification to be right, postponing until later the response required to your textual objection, namely, that "Aristotle explicitly restricts the deliberative capacity of *phronesis* to deliberation about "means," or better: about what is conducive to pre-given ends." Then, I suggest, under this assumption Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* cannot be literally or strictly identified with the idea of "everyday reasoning at its best". For such an identification would, when taken together with the former identification of *phronesis* with reasoned revision of ends, entail that reasoning about pre-given ends is not reasoning at its best. It is intuitively clear, however, that reasoning about pre-given ends can just as readily be reasoning at its best – when, namely, circumstances are such as to make it the requisite or at least sensible thing to engage in. Talk of *phronesis* as simply identical with everyday, commonsense reasoning at its best is therefore, at the very least, a bad way of making a good point.

I have taken (and taken you to take) the phrase "everyday, commonsense reasoning at its best" to be, in the context of this discussion, equivalent to the phrase "everyday, commonsense reasoning functioning optimally, hence as it most truly or really is." Given this, the consideration just advanced with regard to the phrase "at its best" applies to the phrase "as it most truly or really is": *phronesis*, understood as reflective deliberation about ends rather than means, cannot be identified with reasoning as it most truly or really or optimally is. For here, too, reasoning merely about pre-given ends can be "everyday, commonsense reasoning functioning optimally, hence as it most truly or really is." This will be the case whenever reflection on means rather than ends is required by the circumstances, hence what is called for in them.

At the same, everyday deliberation about means for realising pre-given ends will only be optimal, hence as it truly or really is, if it is accompanied by openness to the possibility of passing over into deliberation about ends themselves. And part and parcel of this openness to the possibility of having to switch from reflection on means to reflection on ends will be preparedness to make the converse move, that is, to move back to deliberation about means for implementing one's possibly revised ends. Reflection on ends must, by definition, culminate, ceteris paribus, in a willingness to implement one's possibly revised ends since otherwise these ends would not be one's own.

But appreciation of this rather obvious point now encourages recognition of a less obvious but more interesting one, namely, that reflective, reasoned revision of ends is only possible as part and parcel of a process of attempting to implement the ends revised.

For only by attempting to implement currently endorsed ends in concrete, potentially changed circumstances does one get to see that, in these circumstances, realisation of these ends works to undermine coherence of self, understood as the capacity to preserve a coherent self-identity across time through a coherent, viable conception of what I call a conception of a life good for oneself – a life in which the demands of morals, values and prudence exist in harmony with one another. In order to make this point intelligible, and thereby what is meant by the suggestion that reflective revision of ends is only possible as part of a process of attempting to implement the ends revised, I must digress a little.

By a life good for one oneself I do not mean a conception of the good life in general although what I do mean certainly implicates the latter. Rather, I mean a conception of what it is for one oneself, as the individual one is, to live well. In others a conception of a life good for oneself is a conception of one's own life as so ordered, both with regard to external circumstance and with regard to internal disposition or character, that the satisfaction of personal desire does not conflict with norms and values one genuinely acknowledges. Insofar as the possession and exercise of social roles governed by intersubjectively shared notions of excellence or proficiency is, as I believe it to be, essential to selfhood, each and every self must be inherently oriented towards such a conception of a life good for it itself. This is because (a) such a conception is implicit in a conception of who one ideally is, i.e., a conception of the kind of person one both wants to be and recognises as worthy of being; and (b) some such individual or 'personalised' (and 'personalising') conception of who one ideally is provides the point of orientation for mediating the demands of one's diverse social roles, both with one another and with the particular context.

Thus, being good at or excelling in such and such social role presupposes a capacity for mediating the demands of the role with those of others – as when one refuses to polish one's already excellent lecture yet further because one must now devote some time to one's children. More importantly, being good at or excelling in such and such social role presupposes a capacity for mediating the demands of the role with non-role-specific, truly ethical demands of the situation – as when one interrupts one's excellent lecture in order to help the student who has suddenly suffered an asthma attack. A capacity for this kind

of creative, context-sensitive mediation will thus be constitutive of selfhood, at least to the extent that, as I am assuming, the exercise of social roles is constitutive of selfhood. Such mediation, however, necessarily draws upon a conception of who one ideally is in the sense indicated, which in turn implicates a conception of a life good for one oneself.

We may now return to clarify and elaborate the thought that reflective revision of ends is only possible as part of a process of attempting to implement the ends revised. The effort to realise ends continually puts these ends to test in the sense that it continually runs the risk of demonstrating that, in the actual circumstances in which one finds oneself, pursuit of these ends is or has become incapable of integration into a conception of a life good for oneself. That is, in and through the experience engendered by one's action, one gets to see that persistence in one's currently endorsed ends is, or has become unworkable in the sense that, as long as one persists in them, no coherent conception of a life good for oneself is available to one, hence no coherent individual conception of who one ideally is. In this sense, one comes to see that pursuit of these ends has become destructive of self. This is clearly something only truly learnt in and through the effort to realise one's ends since only in and through this effort does one undergo the visceral experience of unworkability which routs all rationalisation, leaving behind only either self-denying flight from oneself or the experimental, hence experiential re-conception of a life good for oneself.

Thus, if one is sufficiently creative and in particular finds oneself in the right circumstances, one might get to see and learn how to live otherwise. In other words, in and through the experience engendered by one's action, one might also get to identify new ends. Or one might get to see that living out a different, more contextually fitting set of ends is not as bad, as unlivable, for one as one had initially thought.

It follows, then, that one must not think of the reflective, reasoned revision of ends as something which could be conducted apart from, as a separate activity, reflection on effective means to pre-given ends. Ends are in fact never absolutely pre-given, but always so to speak with a caveat or ceteris paribus clause which reflects their character as themselves always objectively under test – under test for their continued capacity to enable, in current circumstances, coherent existence as oriented towards the self one ideally is. Nor is this character of currently accepted ends as continually under test to be understood in a merely falsificationist spirit – as if the test could only ever shatter existing conceptions of how to live well, that is, of how to live in a manner in which one's norms, values and interests each achieve their due. For arguably one can only see that objective circumstance has negated one's existing conception of living well in its validity, and not merely in its practical realisability, if the falsification of this conception is simultaneously the elaboration and learning-to-live-with an alternative.

With this, one glimpses ways of responding to two very important issues you raise. Firstly, one begins to see how your textual objection, namely, that Aristotle explicitly restricts *phronesis* to deliberation about pre-given ends, might be defused or side-stepped. For if the reflective revision of ends essentially takes place as the sketching (*Entwerfen*!)

of new ways of balancing the demands of norms, values and interests; and if such elaboration and testing requires an element of practical 'experimentation': then it becomes possible to render consistent Aristotle's restriction of *phronesis* to deliberation about realising pre-given ends with the idea that this same process of deliberation, and thus *phronesis*, is or can be deliberation about ends.

For now we need not read Aristotle as claiming that *phronesis* is a different kind of beast to deliberation about ends which must not be confused with the latter. Rather, we may read him simply as maintaining that *phronesis* must always involve reasoning about how to realise ends, which ends must therefore be pre-given, but only to that proper part of distinctively *phronetic* deliberation which deals with means. This then allows us to regard his notion of *phronesis* as a kind of deliberation about means which – whether or not Aristotle himself saw this clearly – distinguishes itself from strictly technical kinds of reasoning in the following way: unlike merely technical reasoning, it possesses a reflexive openness to the possibility that one's attempt to realise certain ends will expose the unviability of the ends themselves, thereby showing itself to be the first move in the kind of reflective revision described above. Clearly, this reflexive openness presupposes that *phronesis* is also deliberation about (relatively) pre-given ends since it manifests itself in the unexpected lessons which only practical activity guided by *phronetically* open deliberation about means can yield. By implementing ends in naïve good intention and discovering what unexpected ramifications one's actions have had one experiences both the unviability of the (relatively) pre-given ends and the rough outline of revised ones.

Secondly, while it might in principle be undertaken by small groups or even individuals, distinctively *phronetic* deliberation about means-as-well-as-ends will be least fragile and least contingent upon the whims of others, hence most successful, if it is undertaken at the political level, as the general search for a new way of our all living well – a way which is better adapted to, hence more optimal in, changed circumstances. *Phronesis* is most effectively and resiliently conducted, hence most fully realised, politically. Its context of discovery and justification is not primarily the philosophical or generally theoretical academy but the political agora.[34] Note how this nicely permits us to explain Aristotle's tendency to restrict *phronesis* to the statesman, that is, to understand the *phronimos* as an essentially political actor.

Furthermore, when we think of *phronesis* in the manner outlined here, might we not be able to elaborate the idea you float on Aristotle's behalf, namely, the idea of "a *theoria* that is pre-philosophical, and not yet the more restrictive kind of contemplation belonging to philosophy and science that seeks to determine the permanent "essence" of things once and for all"? For it seems clear that when *phronesis* is conceived along the lines indicated here, it must be a practical kind of *theoria* and theoretical kind of praxis. Note the order of explanation implicit here: it is not that *phronesis* is a distinctive unity of *theoria* and praxis because it is inherently political but rather that it is inherently political because it is this distinctive unity of *theoria* and *praxis*. This is as things should be. We do not want to rule out the possibility of an apolitical kind of deliberation about means-as-well-as-ends,

as when individuals or groups split themselves off from society and politics in order to forge alternative ways of living. But we do want to be able to say that, and in particular, to explain why, this is not deliberation about means-as-well-as-ends "at its best." The explanation is that such deliberation yields the most resilient results when it is conducted in society as politics.

Finally, might we not glimpse here a way of concretely elaborating Heidegger's idea of "the "destining" (*Geschick*) of Being that is the very enabling of human freedom"? For implicit in the account just given of *phronesis* as distinguishing itself from merely technical reasoning through a meta-level openness to the possible need to revise and recast the ends one is implementing is the idea that recognition of this need and of (the rough outline of) alternatives comes so to speak as a gift. Our world and our activity in it are such that together they destine us to those encounters which recast our existence without our being able to anticipate them. In order that this destining might happen, we need to be free in a sense more theological and religious than modern and secular. Our freedom-to is most optimally realised when we are free-for the unexpected lessons potentially lurking in its exercise.

The greatest danger is that we create a reality which, in the name of just getting by (as we all must), progressively eliminates this freedom-for. From a Heideggerian perspective, Jelsma's recommendation that designers attempt to design sustainability into things is precisely the wrong way to think about their role in achieving a more sustainable order. Such attempts at sustainability-by-stealth invariably founder on the numerous rebound problems users create in their interaction with the design. Designers should rather seek to understand and demonstrate to their constituencies how design can unwittingly contribute to increasing that tightly-coupled, ever faster complexity which eliminates phronetic openness to possibilities for revising ends.

Such complexity forces individuals, in their efforts to reduce complexity and secure a fleeting autonomy, into hypostatising that shared understanding of what it is typically rational to be and do which underpins the totality of social roles in which they participate – what Heidegger calls the One. In consequence, they come to think only in thought-grabs, slogans and established templates, thereby restricting possibilities for the reflective revision of ends. And the more such revision is rendered impossible, whether through conceptual misunderstanding or through external empirical circumstance, the more unable we become to resolve conflict between the short- and the long-term, between the private and the public, and between the ethical claims of humanity and whatever such claims 'nature' might have. At this point, unsustainability has become intractable.

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Endnotes

[1] And not a chalice, with all its rather more Christian connotations of the Eucharist!

[2] But do not, of course, necessitate.

[3] Here are possible only for entities capable of the first-person, that is, for self-conscious, 'I'-thinking, hence no doubt also 'I'-saying selves.

[4] The 'I' here is not to be understood as anonymous; this is Heidegger's principal objection to Husserl's phenomenology.

[5] Note that this does not entail that each self must be capable of production of the former kind, much less actually engaged in it although it does entail that each subject must be able to respond to entities as the products of such production.

[6] Indeed, on a sufficiently broad understanding of producing one could understand all acts of consuming as acts of producing. In using, hence consuming products such switches, television sets and the like, I produce illumination, entertainment, etc.

[7] To put things in the kind of etymological manner which Heidegger likes, one might say that the diremption of form and matter does not just involve, on the side of production, the displacement of the middle voice by the active; it also involves, on the side of consumption, a complementary displacement of the middle voice by the passive. Of course, the fact that one can so readily put things in this quintessentially Heidegger way constitutes some slight proof that the interpretation is right.

[8] Shades of Dilthey, I suggest.

[9] Of course, convenience is a way or sense in which things can be compliant to the will.

[10] See *Being and Time*, § 16, H 74-74.

[11] This is, I think, a way of understanding what Heidegger describes as the will to will (*den Willen zum Willen*).

[12] Perhaps one cannot have computers, cars and television sets without modern forms of production and consumption. But if this is true, then it is so merely nomologically, not conceptually.

[13] We have here the conceptual means with which to save Borgmann from the clearly unfair objection that in all consistency he should celebrate household drudgery as 'engaging'.

[14] And certainly, from a practical point of view, it had better be. For many of our current problems of sustainability are so distinctively modern that they can only be addressed by distinctively modern means, i.e., by using distinctively modern technological tools, techniques and systems.

[15] Naturally, the notion of part at issue here is that of a dependent part, i.e., a part which cannot exist independently of the whole of which it is a part.

[16] Or even of overcoming technicity by restricting ends-means rationality to its proper sphere.

[17] I suspect, in fact, that this picture of rationality and its socio-cultural institutionalisation is itself a form of technicity.

[18] Or perhaps neither benign nor malign sense; these evaluative predicates are not appropriate at the level of the mere tools or devices. Mere tools and technical devices are indeed neutral means for realising ends. This is what Heidegger calls the formally correct definition of technology.

[19] That this is indeed true, and that its truth is bad, are not necessarily claims I wish to defend, at least not here. These claims serve here merely as illustrations of what I am getting at. One thing I definitely believe to be both true and bad is the way in which the ubiquitous networking of individuals through modern ICT is increasing the gap between talk and action. This gap is manifest in contemporary 'meeting-itis', that is, the increasingly many, hence increasingly useless meetings at which one merely decides without ever really or fully acting, simply because one has decided so much. It is clear how this gap has come about: thanks to modern ICT, we are so much more able to communicate one with another, hence to reach decisions quickly and easily. Yet the increased speed and ease with which we can reach decisions is not, and indeed cannot be, matched by a similar increase in the speed and ease with which we can implement the decisions made. The increased number of decisions to implement then leads to further technical 'improvements' all designed to make it easier to implement one's burgeoning list of things to do. And so another round of tempo-accelerating innovation begins.

[20] It would be quite wrong to protest, in a spirit of superficial consumer liberalism, that this would mean the end of such things as internet gaming. It would not mean the end of this since the target of attack is not internet gaming and recreational uses of the internet but rather the business use which has arguably been subsidised, hence made financially viable, by mass recreational use of ICT at the consumer end. This tacit cross-subsidising and enabling seems to be particularly true of the mobile phone consumer craze. Admittedly, a more deliberately social kind of ICT would make individual recreational use more expensive. As such, it would put a very healthy brake on a use of ICT, the cheapness of which has arguably rendered it damagingly excessive.

[21] Thus, Being applies differentially as ready-to-handedness, present-at-handedness, existence, and thinghood receives, across the Western tradition, different interpretations as physical in the sense of *physis*, then *Gegenstand* and finally *Bestand*.

[22] Thereby, of course, it turns Being into the emptiest of concepts and renders the question of Being a non-question.

[23] John Searle provides a nice illustration of what is meant by such deep-seated entailments or presuppositions which one has never explicitly articulated or brought to conscious awareness. He points out that in some sense we can all be said to believe that elections are held on the surface of the Earth, even though hardly any of us have ever self-consciously had this thought, and even though nothing about contemporary electoral practices requires us self-consciously to have it. See John Searle, *Intentionality – An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

[24] This formality comes out better in Heidegger's original German word *eigentlich* than it does in the standard English translation.

[25] See his article 'The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits' in *New York Times Magazine*, New York, 13 September, 1970, p. SM17.

[26] Thus, in explicating *phronesis* and its sphere, Aristotle repeatedly has recourse to illustrations borrowed from the realm of *techne*, as well as to formal-theoretical reasoning, despite arguing that *phronesis* is essentially different from both *techne* and *theoria*.

[27] Philosophising in this sense, we might add, would be a philosophising against (traditional) philosophy, against philosophy dominated by the ideal of theoretical, and ultimately scientific-technical, knowledge: a philosophising that runs counter to the history of philosophy itself. And this is what Heidegger understands as the task of a critical destructuring of the history of ontology.

[28] I would not say "what passes for "everyday" reasoning in the modern era" since, however sub-optimal it may be in the modern era, it still is "everyday" reasoning and not the illusion thereof.

[29] So secondarily, and only secondarily, is it a distorted, truncated understanding of rationality. I am grateful to Anne-Marie Willis for pointing out that one loses the idea of 'technicity' as a pre-ontological understanding of Being if one simply identifies it, as I carelessly did in my first response, with a certain distorted understanding of rationality, i.e., of what it is to be rational. Clearly, an understanding of what it is to be rational is properly contained in an understanding of what it is to be in any sense or manner at all. Yet the former is not just a proper part, a species or dimension, of the latter; it is unique in that it is a response to, a reflection or expression of, the latter since one's

understanding of what it is to be rational presupposes an understanding what it is to be the object, the target, of rational activity.

[30] This point may perhaps intimate that the claim made in a previous response, namely, that Heidegger's philosophical account of technicity needs to be complemented by an account of capitalist property relations, is something rather different to the point Heidegger himself makes about the analytic of Dasein needing to be supplemented by a philosophical anthropology.

[31] The English translation of Heidegger's notion of *eigentliches Selbstsein* (authentic being-a-self) and *Eigentlichkeit* (authenticity) suffer from insufficient formality; the English terms imply commitment to some specific, quite substantive form of life as the 'right' one. Thereby Heidegger's notion becomes barely distinguishable for the English reader from confused pop-existentialist, pre-philosophical notions. In his early lectures Heidegger initially spoke, not of *eigentlich* and *uneigentlich,* but of *echt* (genuine) and *unecht* (ungenuine). But he dropped this quite deliberately in favour of his later terminology precisely because of the substantively moralising tone which the earlier terms bring with them. To be *eigentlich* means to be really or truly (what and who one is), *eigentliches Selbstsein* consists in being maximally or optimally a self.

[32] Note that it is a transcendentally philosophical character.

[33] In his lecture *Ontologie: Hermeneutik der Faktizität,* held in Marburg in Sommersemester, 1923, Heidegger speaks of the unavoidable "explication of what is today" (*Auslegung des Heute*) – see GA, Bd. 63, H 17, H 29f. and H 32f.

[34] This is not to say that the academy should not look out onto the agora! Indeed, quite the contrary is intended: philosophy has a crucial role in preventing politics from degenerating into mere discussion of public policy on the basis of polling which has determined majority preferences.