

Lukas Fuchshofen

A Theoretical and Historical Study of the Concept of Technology

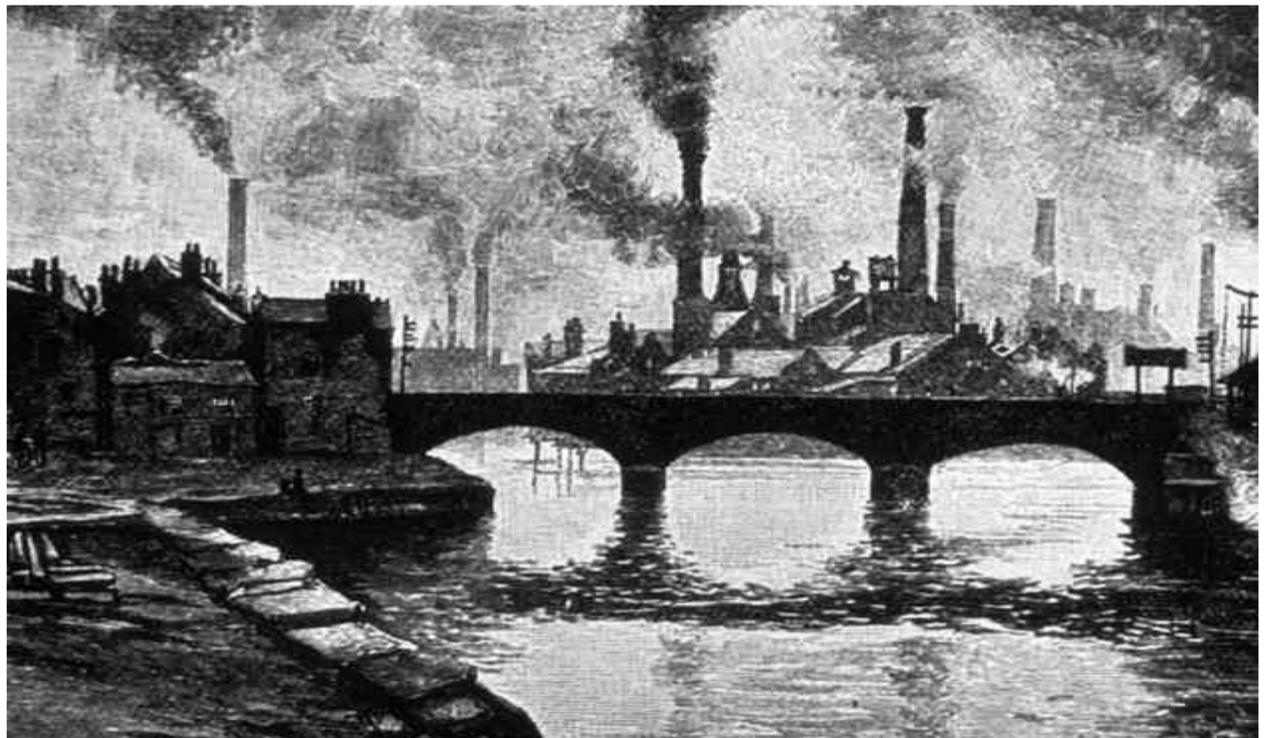
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During my time at Simon's Rock I have always split my efforts between my engineering and political theory studies. As I leave to study engineering full time I want to use this thesis to bridge that gap. For that reason I intend to study the concept and the idea of technology, as device, as knowledge, as a concept, etc... The idea of technology is one that we have grown so familiar with and so dependent upon, that we rarely regard it with any real curiosity, critique, or wonder. Moreover, the greater concept, the idea is something that rarely receives any real attention or thought. Questions concerning specific technologies are some of the most written about topics today. The internet, in all its various forms and presences, environmental effects, economical considerations, all these and many more are topics involving technologies that generate a huge amount of literature. However, the idea behind the scenes is something that is hardly ever questioned or analyzed in any of these lines of inquiry.

The question then becomes where to begin and inquiry into the concept of technology. Clearly it has become such a broad and expansive category that it can often be hard to define and demarcate. However, as expansive a presence as that category presents itself with today, it also has a long and involved history



which I believe is just as important to a nuanced understanding of the idea. For that reason I will begin by following a historical route through several eras, and thinkers, to highlight major advances and changes, both in the devices and processes that evolved as well as the idea itself. The areas I have chosen to focus on are the ancient Greeks, primarily through the writings of Aristotle. The Enlightenment period and the end of the guild era of the middle ages and the Renaissance through the Encyclopedia of Diderot et al, moving directly into the Industrial Revolution. Then the early industrial west that resulted from the Industrial Revolution through the labor politics of Marx. Finally, I will enter the beginning of what we might consider the age of 'modern' technologies with Heidegger's analysis of the question in the fifties.

One point that should be conceded right away that the choice of these historical moments, as well as the choice of what questions this thesis will and will not address, is a highly subjective choice born solely out of my studies and my thoughts. While I believe that most will agree with me that these are very important historical moments, I am sure a compelling case could be made for a number of others. The topic I am addressing is extremely broad and

multifaceted. I cannot hope to cover it in its entirety and it would certainly be a mistake to try. What I will do instead is focus on those points and connections which I find important to create a narrative of the genesis and evolution of the concept of technology and then use these concepts to inform the idea of technology as we find it in our society today. I do not yet know what the ultimate conclusion that this work will arrive at, and I intend to allow them to arise naturally out of my research. However, there are a few general questions, or lines of inquiry, that will form the backbone of this project. How does does the concept of technology change as the objects we identify with that category evolve? How does technology interact with the boundary between the human and nature, and how do these categories blend in the artificial spaces we produce? Finally, what promise does technology, and the progress of technology, hold for us, and more importantly how do we think about what hopes and what expectations do we place in technology and how does that affect our understanding of contemporary issues and challenges?

