Heidegger's Philosophy of Technology

PHIL 4310 - Philosophy of Technology
Fall 2014 - Lecture 11

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

hermeneutics

existentialism

phenomenology

what is the meaning of *Being*?

the phenomenology of everydayness

what is technology?

"Everyone knows the two statements that answer our question. One says: Technology is a means to an end. The other says: Technology is a human activity." (p. 9)

"The manufacture and utilization of equipment, tools, and machines, the manufactured and used things themselves, all belong to what technology is. The whole complex of these contrivances is technology." (p. 9)

Instrumental and anthropological definition of technology

- Technology is (i) a means to an end and (ii) a human activity.

"But suppose now that technology were no mere means... Yet we said, did we not, that the instrumental definition of technology is correct? To be sure. The correct always fixes upon something pertinent in whatever is under consideration. However, in order to be correct, this fixing by no means needs to uncover the thing in question in its essence. Only at the point where such an uncovering happens does the true come to pass." (10)

"For that reason the merely correct is not yet the true. Only the true brings us into a free relationship with that which concerns us from out of its essence. Accordingly, the correct instrumental definition of technology still does not show us technology's essence. In order that we may arrive at this, or at least come close to it, we must seek the true by way of the correct. We must ask: What is the instrumental itself?" (10)

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the essence of

what is ^technology?

technology is a kind of truth / revealing

bringing-forth in the sense of *poiēsis*

setting-upon and challenging-forth

technology is a way of understanding *Being*

things

resources

understanding of *Being*??

implicit in social practice is an understanding of *Being*

1. What it is to be a human self

2. What it is to be a thing

3. What society is

clearing

opening

background

framework

clearing

opening

background

framework

things

resources

"[E]verything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve." (14)

standing-reserve [*Bestand*]

"Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object." (14)

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"This setting-upon that challenges the energies of nature is an expediting... toward driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense." (14)
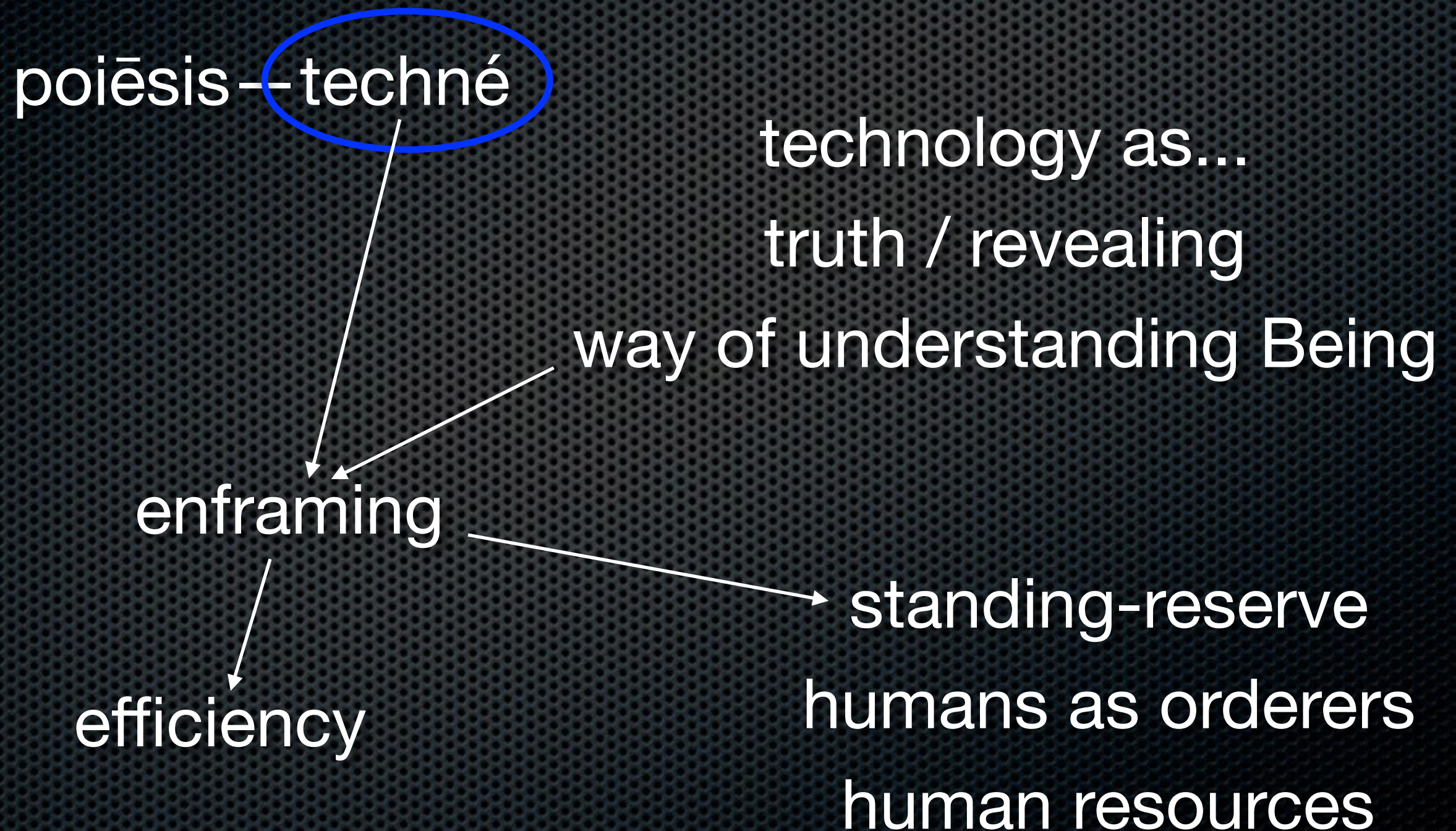
Enframing [*Ge-stell*]

"when destining reigns in the mode of enframing, it is <u>the supreme danger</u>... As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall, that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing reserve." (19)

Where are we so far?

poiēsis—techné

technology as...

truth / revealing

way of understanding Being

enframing

standing-reserve

efficiency

humans as orderers

human resources

science and technology

"Modern physics is not experimental physics because it applies apparatus to the questioning of nature. The reverse is true. Because physics, indeed already as pure theory, sets nature up to exhibit itself as a coherence of forces calculable in advance, it orders its experiments precisely for the purpose of asking whether and how nature reports itself when set up in this way..." (16-17)

"The modern physical theory prepares the way not simply for technology but for the essence of modern technology... Modern physics is the herald of enframing." (17)

technology as applied science

science as theoretical technology

why does enframing come about?

"Only to the extent that man for his part is already challenged to exploit the energies of nature can this revealing which orders happen." (15)

"Yet precisely because man is challenged more originally than are the energies of nature, i.e., into the process of ordering, he never is transformed into mere standing-reserve. Since man drives technology forward, he takes part in ordering as a way of revealing." (15)

"But the unconcealment itself, within which ordering unfolds, is never human handiwork, any more than is the realm man traverses every time he as a subject relates to an object... Modern technology... is thus no mere human doing." (15)

"Human activity can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone can never banish it." (23)

"The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already afflicted man in his essence. The rule of enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth." (20)

"As compared with that other revealing, the setting-upon that challenges forth [i.e., technology, enframing] thrusts man into a relation to whatever is that is at once antithetical and rigorously ordered. Where enframing holds sway, regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing." (20)

"Human activity can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone can never banish it." (23)

what is to be done?

"It would be foolish to attack technology blindly. It would be shortsighted to condemn it as the work of the devil. We depend on technical devices; they even challenge us to ever greater advances."

"We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature."

(Dreyfus, p. 28)

But where danger is, grows
The saving power also.

— Hölderlin

(20)

1. Recognize the limitations and alternatives to technology

"It is precisely in Enframing, which threatens to sweep man away into ordering as the supposed single way of revealing, and so thrusts man into the danger of the surrender of his free essence – it is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost belongingness of man within granting may come to light, provided that we, for our part, begin to pay heed to the essence of technology." (22)

"Everything, then, depends upon this: that we ponder this arising and that we, recollecting, watch over it. How can this happen? Above all through our catching sight of what comes to presence in technology, instead of merely gaping at the technological. So long as we represent technology as an instrument, we remain transfixed in the will to master it. We press on past the essence of technology." (22)

"The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become." (24)

"We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside... as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. I would call this comportment toward technology which expresses 'yes' and at the same time 'no'... *releasement towards things.*" (Dreyfus: 30)

2. Find a "new God."

"Only a god can save us now."
(Dreyfus: 31)

"there must always be some being in the open [the clearing], something that is, in which the openness takes its stand and attains its constancy." (Dreyfus: 31)
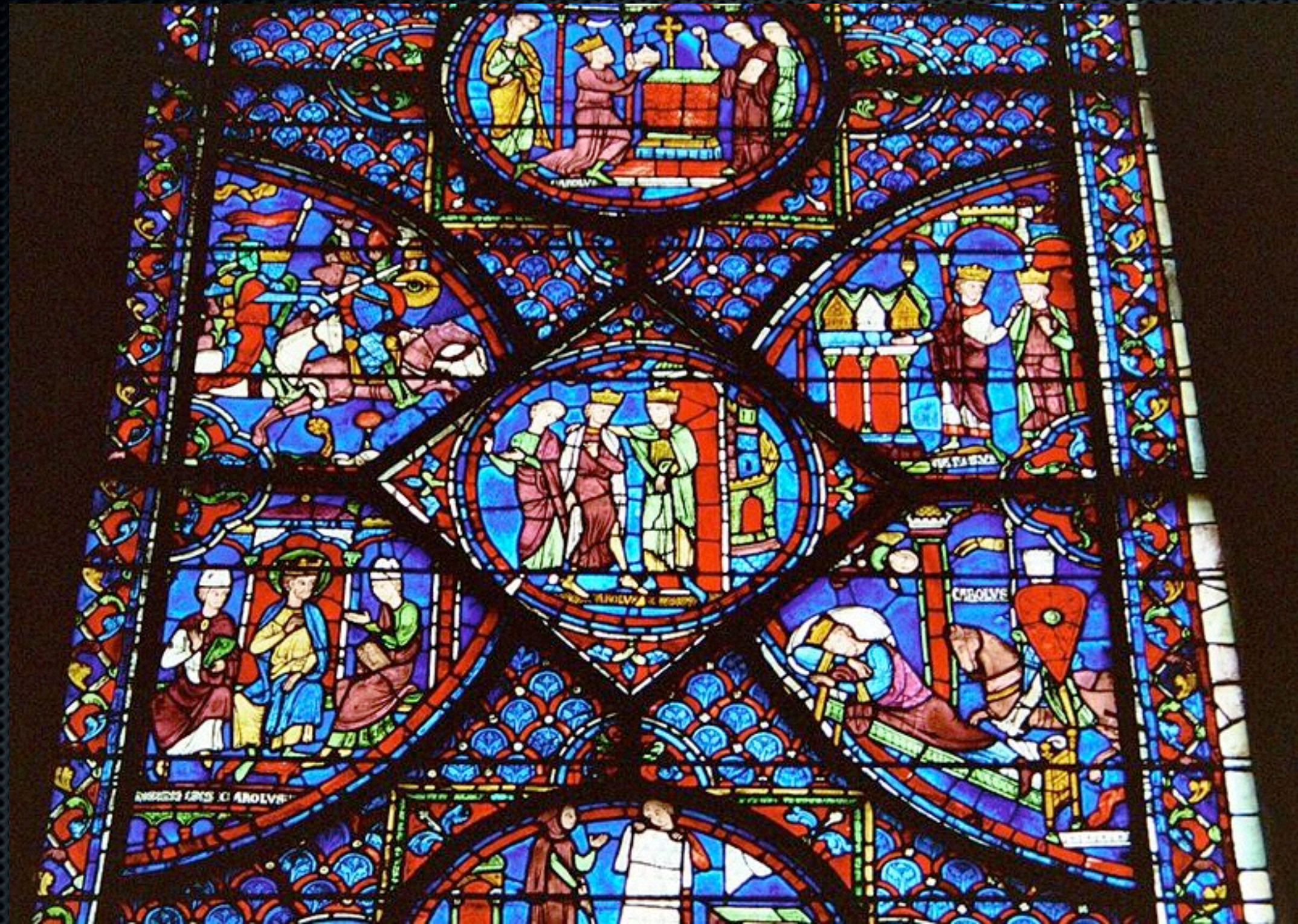
cultural paradigms

"There was time when it was not technology alone that bore the name *techné*... Once there was a time when the bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful was called *techné*. The *poiēsis* of the fine arts was also called *techné*." (23)

Next time...

- Marcuse & Critical Theory