While the human body is not a point of focus in Heidegger’s later philosophy of technology, I argue that considering our contemporary relationship to our own bodies provides crucial support to Heidegger’s account. Heidegger suggests that, in our contemporary age of technology, humans are taken to be “human resources”: like natural resources and technological devices, humans should be available for efficient and flexible incorporation into any number of projects. I argue that the contemporary attitude toward the human body provides evidence confirming this suggestion. Moreover, I identify the body as a unique site of resistance to the age of technology, an anomaly to the technological paradigm, as the body constantly resists our attempts to transform it into a resource.

Malgré que le corps humain ne soit pas un objet d’analyse central dans la philosophie de la technique de Heidegger, je soutiens qu’une attention particulière à notre point de vue contemporain sur le corps apporte un appui crucial aux analyses qu’il offre. Heidegger suggère que, dans notre époque contemporaine de la technique, les humains sont considérés comme des “ressources humaines,” c’est à dire que comme les ressources naturelles et les appareils technologiques, les humains devraient être disponibles afin d’être incorporés de façon efficace et flexible dans plusieurs projets. Je propose que l’attitude contemporaine envers le corps humain offre la preuve à l’appui de cette affirmation. De plus, je pose le corps comme site unique de résistance à l’époque de la technique, une anomalie du paradigme technique, car le corps résiste constamment à nos efforts pour le transformer en une ressource.
Martin Heidegger's neglect of the body in his early phenomenology is widely recognized. While his phenomenology attempts to recover the realm of our everyday experience, Heidegger fails to treat in any depth a pervasive component of that experience: the human body. This neglect earned Heidegger criticism from French phenomenologists in particular, with several theorists offering phenomenologies that correct Heidegger's oversight. In particular, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* provides the much-needed treatment of the body that Heidegger's early work lacked.

The body is similarly neglected in Heidegger's later philosophy of technology, though this neglect has received less scholarly attention. Heidegger in his later work relegates his reflections on the body to tertiary discussions that do not inform his larger conclusions about technology. Heidegger offers his central analysis of technology in his 1953 lecture, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in which he claims that the current technological age creates an estranged relationship to oneself, such that one fails to understand

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I wrote the first draft of this paper while taking a graduate seminar on Heidegger's later philosophy taught by Mark Wrathall. I would like to thank him for the instruction and conversation that helped me to develop the ideas in this paper, especially those in Section 1. Of course, any mistakes are my own. I would also like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft. Finally, I would like to thank Lauren Leydon-Hardy and Christine Daigle for their help translating the abstract into French.


4 One notable exception to Heidegger’s tendency to under-theorize the human body is his later *Zollikon Seminars* (1959–1971), where he takes on “the problem of the body.” Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols, Conversations, Letters*, (ed.) M. Boss, (tr.) F. Mayr, and R. Askay (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 40. However, this lecture series considers the body through the lens of Heidegger's early phenomenology. Therefore, some reconstructive work would be required to show what bearing this discussion might have on his later analysis of technology. Heidegger also comments on the body in his treatment of Nietzsche, which I will discuss later in this paper.
oneself. As Heidegger puts this point, “[P]recisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e. his essence.”

Despite Heidegger’s emphasis on the way technology distorts our understanding of ourselves, he does not refer to the human body at all in his discussion. The reader assumes that efficiently processing the “patients for a clinic” must take account of their bodily existence, and that the forester “commanded by profit-making in the lumber industry” uses his limbs to walk the forest path (QCT, 18). Yet, the body plays no explicit role when Heidegger spells out the pernicious relationship to oneself that comes to reign in the age of technology.

My purpose in this essay is not to lambast Heidegger for his oversights, but to suggest that extending Heidegger’s analysis of technology to the body has considerable theoretical payoffs. I argue that considering the body offers crucial support to Heidegger’s later philosophy of technology. Further, I suggest that the body offers a unique site of resistance to the age of technology. In particular, the body has the potential to disrupt the estranged relationship that the human being has to herself in the age of technology.

Heidegger’s analysis of technology is dispersed over several works, and illuminating the payoffs of considering the body for Heidegger’s broader analysis will require more than a single essay. For the purposes of the present essay, I focus on Heidegger’s canonical work on the subject, “The Question Concerning Technology” (QCT). After providing an overview of Heidegger’s analysis of technology in Section 1, I suggest in Section 2 that considering the body confirms Heidegger’s suggestion in QCT that we have come to regard human beings as “human resources” in the current technological age. Further, I argue in Section 3 that considering the body helps to

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6 Why does Heidegger neglect the body? Heidegger provides a hint when he admits that the body is “the most difficult [to understand]” in Martin Heidegger, Zollikon Seminars: Protocols, Conversations, Letters, (ed.) M. Boss, (tr.) F. Mayr and R. Askay (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 231. In line with this admission, Heidegger might leave out the body as a way to avoid theoretical complexities. Vallega-Neu identifies one of the complexities, namely that Heidegger wishes to avoid representationalist thinking (where a “subject” represents an “object”), which is difficult to do when discussing the body. See Daniela Vallega-Neu, Heidegger’s Poietic Writings (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 49–50. In what follows, I hope to show that it is worth engaging with these complexities regardless, as considering the body supports Heidegger’s analysis of technology, and concretizes his recommendations for surpassing technology.
elaborate Heidegger’s enigmatic claims in QCT about overcoming the age of technology. Specifically, I show that the body can helpfully supplement a contemporary Anglophone interpretation of Heidegger’s comments, which interprets Heidegger in Kuhnian terms: to surpass the age of technology, we require a paradigm shift that can be provoked by anomalies that resist the current technological paradigm. In the context of this interpretation, I suggest that the body is a particularly promising anomaly. My work here highlights the theoretical payoffs of supplementing Heidegger’s classic essay on technology with a consideration of the body; these payoffs suggest that future work treating Heidegger’s broader corpus on technology may be similarly productive.

1. Technology and Resources

When Heidegger discusses technology, he is not talking about specific machines, devices, or processes. Rather, he is concerned with the drive that underlies the development of specific technologies: the overwhelming urge to harness and subordinate nature to our projects. Heidegger argues that in our age of technology, we see nature as something to be subdued and brought under human control, so that its energies can be optimized for efficient incorporation into human projects. Heidegger suggests that we see natural entities as mere resources that should stand by, ready for efficient and flexible incorporation into human projects. As he puts this point, “[N]ature

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7 Indeed, I confine myself to the Anglophone scholarship on Heidegger’s critique of technology in this essay, though a complete treatment of this topic would consider French, Italian, and German scholarship.

becomes a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry.”

As my references to “the age of technology” already suggest, Heidegger contends that our technological relationship to the world around us is a historically new phenomenon. Technology represents only the most recent way that we make sense of the world. The technological age, Heidegger suggests, is the culmination of a long metaphysical tradition. Each distinctive age of this metaphysical tradition offers a single overarching conception of Being. The conception of Being specifies what is most important or salient about an entity (“beings as such”), and how entities fit together with one another (“beings as a whole”). This conception of Being in turn determines how particular beings are “revealed.” For example, Heidegger contends that our technological age was preceded by a Christian age and a modern age. In the Christian age, what is most important about entities is that they are created; natural beings were created by God, while tools and artwork were created by man.10 As a whole, entities are ordered in relation to their proximity to God; to borrow an example from Mark Wrathall’s reconstruction of Heidegger, human beings in the Christian age are experienced as “good or bad to the degree that they submit themselves to God’s will.”11 The Christian age evolved into the modern one, where all entities are revealed in relation to the human being, who determines an entity by use of the sciences and seeks to explicate all entities in terms of calculable cause-effect relationships. The modern conception of Being eventually evolved into the technological one. While “modern science’s way of representing pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces” (QCT, 21), modern technology puts those forces to use.12

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12 In Contributions to Philosophy, Heidegger indicates that the history of metaphysics fits into a broader “history of Being [Seyn]” (CP, 95). Since the ancient Greeks, Western history has witnessed an era of “machination” (Machenschaft) that attempts to stabilize, quantify, and make predictions about beings (CP, 99f.).
Heidegger specifies the technological conception of Being in his Nietzsche lectures, as Heidegger takes Nietzsche to be the technological thinker *par excellence*; while Descartes’s philosophy captures the conception of Being that characterizes the modern age, Nietzsche captures that of the technological age. Heidegger says that, for Nietzsche, beings as such are “will to power” (N3, 193). This means that the world is “essentially’ chaos” waiting to be overcome by the human will (N3, 198). While entities are inherently “value-less,” it is the role of humans to imbue them with value (N3, 209). Humans imbue entities with value by putting them toward some use; this use is something that we devise, rather than something inherent in their nature. Thus, we see it fitting to incorporate the “energy” of an entity into a human project (QCT, 16). There is nothing about the entity that ought to be respected or maintained during the process of incorporation. By contrast, being as a whole is characterized as “eternal recurrence of the same” (N3, 210). We always find ourselves at the same starting point with the whole of entities; regardless of how we have arranged entities before, they are always ready to be reconfigured, and put into new relationships; “eternal recurrence is the most constant permanentizing of the unstable” (N3, 212). A multitude of options are available to us at any given time, because our current arrangement of entities has no bearing on our next arrangement. In the technological age, “the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is distributed is switched about ever anew” (QCT, 16).

Heidegger argues that entities are revealed as resources (*Bestand*) in the technological age. Something is a resource when it stands ready for use in human projects. Heidegger’s standard example of a resource is the Rhine River. Whereas “the old wooden bridge that joined bank with bank for hundreds of years” was built over the
river as it stood, the modern technological hydroelectric plant dams up the river and is placed into its current (QCT, 16). Regardless of the river's previous configuration, which the old bridge did not alter, the technological human bends the river into the position where it will be of the most use—in this instance, for the project of providing electricity, which can then be used for a plethora of purposes. The technological human does not take the prior configuration of the river to be worth preserving; the river simply stands there as something to be put to use for human projects.

Man-made entities show up as resources, as well. The jetliner, for example, is constructed and stored in a certain way simply so it can be the most useful for providing transportation; “for this it must be in its whole structure and in every one of its constituent parts, on call for duty, i.e. ready for take off” (QCT, 17). Or, to use a more contemporary example, the smartphone is immediately available for any number of uses, including and also going far beyond transportation needs. A smartphone is a paradigmatic technological device, even more so than the Rhine or airplane, because of its immense flexibility when it comes to human projects. Indeed, it seems nearly impossible to finitely list all of the smartphone’s uses; it seamlessly fits into an immense number of human projects. And it does so without providing the least resistance (short of the occasional breakdown); everything we do with the smartphone is on our own time, as the smartphone is constantly ready for use. The smartphone does not require that we use it for any particular purpose, but enables our every passing whim, capable of being placed ever anew into new relationships for new purposes.

Heidegger names the technological conception of Being “Gestell” (often translated as “Enframing”). Gestell is a “destining of revealing” (QCT, 25); it determines that entities will be revealed as resources. Heidegger characterizes Gestell further as a “challenging claim” (QCT, 19); it challenges us to order entities so that they are ready for human use, available for flexible and efficient implementation into human projects. This does not imply that every entity we come across will be flexible in the way we would like it to be. Some can be stubborn to our wills, such that we are not quite able to seamlessly order them into all of our projects yet. However, in response to Gestell, we would like any resisting entity to become a resource; we would like it to become ever more flexible and easy to manipulate.15

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15 Wrathall also underscores this point: Heidegger “is only committed to the claim that when the technological understanding of being prevails, everything shows up as standing at some stage along the way to being placed in the inven-
Therefore, *Gestell* promotes not only a certain kind of understanding, but also an activity, of transforming the world around us into resources. In the age of technology, we try to "resourcify" the world around us.

Resources can run the gamut from objects that are ready for use, like the jetliner waiting on the runway (QCT, 17); to objects yet to be harnessed, like a field of crops yet to be processed into their most consumable form; to obstinate objects that we experience as resistant to our mechanizations, like the remaining untamed American wilderness (to borrow an example from Albert Borgmann).\(^{16}\) We might call these the three stages of resourcification.

With advances in technology, we become more and more successful at arranging the world efficiently and flexibly; for example, while former technological inventions (*i.e.*, the jetliner) served a wide array of transportation needs, we now have technology (like the smartphone) that can serve an even wider array of needs, like transportation, communication, even a flashlight. As an entity pushes toward complete resourcification, it becomes more flexible, and less demanding. As we improve on the smartphone, for example, we make its battery life longer-lasting so that upkeep is required less and less often. For the most part, we make demands on the smartphone, but it does not make demands on us. Complete resourcification would be achieved when it makes no demands whatsoever.

So far, I have outlined the technological conception of Being (*i.e.*, *Gestell*), and what this means for our contemporary understanding of the world around us, including natural and manmade objects. However, as I indicated above, Heidegger seems most concerned with how technology shapes how humans understand themselves. The next section will outline the understanding of humans that is particular to the technological age and extend Heidegger's analysis to the human body.

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\(^{16}\) Albert Borgmann says that "wilderness areas, within this framework, appear as the last bastions yet to be taken by technology, the last areas where we should be able to cut, drill, and extract." Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 185.
2. The Human Body as a Resource

Heidegger’s analysis of the age of technology highlights a continuity between the way we understand the entities around us—for example, natural entities like plants and rivers—and the way we understand humans. At first, it might seem like there is a strong distinction to make between human beings on the one hand and natural resources on the other. Indeed, Heidegger suggests, we often think of ourselves as “lords of the earth” (QCT, 18). Lacking any inherent value, our surrounding environment is for us and us alone, to do with what we will; we set upon it and rearrange it so that it serves our every passing whim. The environment should make no demands on us; rather, we lords of the earth will make demands on the environment.

While it may seem empowering that the entire world should be arranged to serve human ends, Heidegger suggests that humans are likewise rendered mere resources in our contemporary age. In an early draft of QCT, his 1949 Bremen lecture entitled “Das Ge-Stell,” Heidegger uses the example of machines to make this point: “Admittedly, the human also belongs to what has been so enframed, though in his own way, be it that he serves the machine, be it that he constructs and builds the machine…. In his own way, the human being is a piece of the standing-reserve [i.e., a resource].”17 Our conception of Being challenges us to transform our surroundings into resources that can be used as efficiently and flexibly as possible, by humans with a wide variety of projects. However, humans are implicated at every step of this process: we must extract the natural resources, manufacture the automobiles (for example), and finally man the vehicles (available to others at all hours through a ridesharing application). In the new world order, the role of humans is to manufacture, organize, and control resources, and to do so as efficiently and flexibly as possible; and, in order to do so effectively, humans must also become more efficient and more flexible. We are, as Heidegger puts it, “human resources” (QCT, 18).

In the Bremen lecture, Heidegger also discusses the resourcification of the human being in the context of work relationships:

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17 Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, (tr.) A. J. Mitchell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 35, see also 42. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as BFL. I adjust quotations from this lecture course to cohere with the translation of *Gestell* as “enframing” (rather than Mitchell’s “positionality”).
Men and women must place themselves in the work service. They are ordered. They are met by an enframing that places them, i.e. commandeers them. One places the other. He retains him. He positions him. He requires information and an accounting from him. He challenges him forth. (BFL, 26)

We make ourselves available as resources of a certain kind when we enter a profession. In this capacity, we are ordered by others, and we order others, with both kinds of ordering oriented toward the larger aims of the technological age, efficiency, and flexibility (in this sense, one is not only the employee of a company, but also “an employee of resourcifying [Be-stellen]). The other, for example, retains us in this particular work service, or perhaps moves us to a position that will better utilize our capacities (for the time being)—maximizing our output. Likewise, we might be put over others, whose output we seek to maximize. While work relationships provide a prime example of human resourcification, Heidegger is clear that the latter is not limited to such relationships. For example, in the final version of QCT, Heidegger adds the medical example wherein patients in a clinic are arranged to maximize the efficiency of the clinic (QCT, 18). Similarly, one often treats others as resources as a consumer, as when one demands efficiency and flexibility from a rideshare driver.

Because the human appears as a resource in the age of technology, one might expect that, in Heidegger’s view, the human body in particular appears as a resource to control and optimize. Indeed, Heidegger’s brief comments on the body in his Nietzsche lectures confirm that the resourcification of human beings extends to their bodies. These illuminating but still underdeveloped comments on the body are provoked by Nietzsche’s own privileging of the body, such that the body is “the guideline of [Nietzsche’s] interpretation of the world” (N3, 155). In his commentary on Nietzsche, Heidegger assimilates the body to the “chaos” that is constantly dominated and reorganized in the service of human projects: “[T]hat chaos of our region of sensibility which we know as the region of the body is only one section of the great chaos that the ‘world’ itself is” (N3, 80). Heidegger suggests that, on the Nietzschean view, closer inquiry into familiar objects, like a chalkboard, reveals them to be nothing but “a mass of sensations” (N3, 79). These sensations are delivered “through our bodies” (N3, 78), which are themselves masses of sensations; not only are they the conduits for sensing outer objects, but they are also sources of sensations, such as when we sense

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18 BFL, 29; trans. mod.
“bodily states” like pain and hunger (N3, 79). Essentially meaningless, these sensations are the chaos that can be reordered and imbued with meaning by the human will—as Heidegger puts it in the Nietzsche lectures, “transfigured” by artistic activity (N3, 81). The body, along with the rest of the world, appears as raw material to be put to use—a resource. As Nietzsche is the technological thinker, this discussion brings out the role of the body in the technological age.19

I suggest that our contemporary attitude toward our own bodies provides evidence in favor of Heidegger’s claim that humans, too, are rendered mere resources in the age of technology. We view the body as something to control and optimize, plying it with five-hour energy drinks, gym machinery, and pharmaceuticals that will make it more alert and more productive. Phenomenologically, this technological approach to the body becomes salient when the body frustrates our projects—for example, when the body interrupts work that could continue well into the night. The frustration that results from such a barrier reveals the sensibility that our bodies ought to efficiently and flexibly serve any project that we take up. Something is going wrong when they do not. We take up practices that try to overcome the frustrating barriers that we can encounter in the body—those things that signal the body is not completely at our disposal, those things that are recalcitrant as we attempt to pursue our projects. These practices attempt to control and manipulate the body, optimizing its functioning so that it is more efficient and more flexible. We see our own bodies as resources; in our relationship to our own bodies, we respond to the challenge of Gestell.

The body, indeed, shows up in all three stages of resourcification that I introduced above. The body can reveal itself as something

19 Though Heidegger does not emphasize the body when he outlines his history of Western metaphysics, it is reasonable to assume that the metaphysics of the body morphs along with the conception of Being over the course of Western history. In medieval Christianity, the body is a creation, created by God and subordinate to his will; in the modern age, the body is conceived as extended and mechanical, a physical object to be calculated by the representing subject; and in the technological age, the mechanism of the body is subordinated and put to use by the human will. One benefit of extending Heidegger’s analysis of technology to the body is that it highlights how the relationship to the body changes over the course of Western history, and how historical developments might result in a distorted, alienated relationship to the body. We miss this dimension in ahistorical accounts of embodiment, such as Helmuth Plessner’s account, which identifies ahistorical structures that underlie historical changes. Cf. Helmuth Plessner, Levels of Organic Life and the Human, (tr.) M. Hyatt (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 314; or Heidegger’s own analyses in the Zollikon Seminars.
obstinate and resistant to our projects, a frustrating barrier that interrupts work that could continue well into the night. In this way, the body might be compared to Borgmann’s example of the American wilderness; it must be conquered, but we are not yet sure how to do so. The body can also appear as something yet to be harnessed, but that can be the subject of control given, say, the proper “fuel” (that is, food). Here, the path to resourcification is clear, and one simply needs to carry out the prescribed method to get this resource under control. Finally, we can experience the body as something that stands by ready for use. When working efficiently, I suggest, the body “withdraws” from our attention, just like the hammer that Heidegger discusses in *Being and Time*. When the hammer is functioning properly, we can concentrate on the task at hand, namely, the driving of the nail or the building of the table. Similarly, the efficient body works as we think it should, allowing us to attend to more pressing matters; the body conquered, we fold it into a project.

Kevin Aho also compares the body to a tool that can withdraw in his discussion of Heideggerian technology. Aho suggests that the “accelerated” pace of technological life makes the body especially susceptible to breaking down. In such breakdowns, the body is no longer transparent but conspicuous: “[T]he smooth bodily processes that are ordinarily inconspicuous emerge as objectlike; our breathing becomes difficult; digestion is interrupted; the back and neck are tightened; nervousness increases; and deep sleep is unreachable” (HNB, 112). While our typical, technological response to such barriers is to control them—perhaps through pharmacological intervention—I will suggest in the following section that the conspicuousness of the body presents a unique opportunity to resist the challenge of Gestell. Smoothing over these barriers—so that the body no longer makes demands on us, offering no resistance to our projects—would amount to its complete resourcification. I will suggest that the barriers presented by the body ought not be smoothed over, but cultivated. The obstacles and boundaries that the body puts in the way of our projects challenge the idea that the body is a resource. We should foster these moments rather than trying to overcome them.

Extending Heidegger’s analysis of technology to the human body provides a prime example of the technological way of revealing. Further, it provides evidence for Heidegger’s view that humans, too,
are ultimately revealed as resources in the age of technology. We see the body as a resource to conquer—to make more efficient and flexible so that it can fit all the more easily into our projects. Yet, the body continually evades us. In the next section, I will explore this evasion as a site of resistance to the challenge of *Gestell*.

### 3. The Body as a Site of Resistance

It is clear that Heidegger would like us to overcome the age of technology. According to Heidegger, *Gestell* “endangers man in his relationship to himself and everything that is” (QCT, 27). *Gestell* paints human beings alternately as lords of the earth and as human resources. This is dangerous, because humans fail to appreciate the role that they play in revealing the world around them; for Heidegger, this role is central to human existence. Human beings are not special because we can efficiently implement all that is; human beings are special because of our role in disclosing all that is. We can be drawn into a sense of what’s important and reveal the world in this light; we belong “to the coming-to-pass of truth” (QCT, 32). This fundamental role is apparent in the long metaphysical history that Heidegger outlines: humans do not live in a world of radically shifting forms, but one of radically shifting points of view. Additionally, in the age of technology, “it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself” (QCT, 27). None of the entities around us show up as being of any value in and of themselves; entities are only things to be ordered, and nothing more. Humans therefore find themselves in a world that is meaningless, where nothing matters outside of the “constructs” that we create—constructs that are not something to which we are committed in any final and long-lasting sense.

While critical of the age of technology, Heidegger is vague about how we can overcome the overwhelming drive to control and optimize everything we encounter. For example, Heidegger enigmatically suggests that we will only be “truly free” if we become “one who listens and hears, rather than one who is simply constrained to obey” (QCT, 25). Heidegger would rather that we abandon the technological challenge to reveal the world around us as resources, which constrains us to obey. But what does it mean to listen and to hear? And, crucially, to what (or whom) do we listen?

Hubert Dreyfus offers an influential interpretation of Heidegger’s enigmatic comments, which has been taken up by contemporary interpreters like Iain Thomson and Mark Wrathall. In particular, these theorists borrow Kuhnian terms to consider how we might
move beyond the technological “paradigm.” This line of expansion suggests that objects that are resistant to our technological mechanizations can challenge our contemporary attitude and enact change; these obstinate objects constitute “anomalies” that challenge our prevailing paradigm.22

Dreyfus develops the comparison between Heidegger and Kuhn in the following passage:

It is the job of normal science to eliminate anomalies by showing how they fit into the total theory the paradigm sketches out in advance. In a similar way, the technological paradigm embodies and furthers our technological understanding of being according to which what does not fit in with our current paradigm—that is, that which is not yet at our disposal to use efficiently (e.g., the wilderness, friendship, the stars)—will finally be brought under our control, and turned into a resource.23

In Kuhn’s account of scientific paradigms, “normal science” attempts to explain one’s object of study using the “total theory” offered by the paradigm (its fundamental concepts, assumptions, and approach to explaining phenomena). The normal scientist takes on entities that initially seem anomalous and attempts to explain them—to show that these entities are, in fact, explicable under this basic scientific framework.24 Similarly, Dreyfus suggests, the technological paradigm challenges us to transform the world around us into resources. When we take up this challenge, however, we occasionally encounter anomalies that are resistant to our ordering; they are, as Dreyfus puts it, “recalcitrant.” For example, consider again the remaining American wilderness. We would like to put it to use—extracting its energies and putting them into circulation—but it is not clear how best to harness this resource. When obeying the challenge of Gestell, we try, as far as possible, to eliminate the anomalies that seem to

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22 One potential problem for this view is that Heidegger argues in the Contributions that our “lived experience” conforms to the technological paradigm (CP, 104–105). Nevertheless, it is clear that Heidegger thinks some of our experiences can exceed and challenge the technological paradigm; anomalies are possible. However, this is a large question and must remain outside of the scope of this study. In what follows, I assume with Heidegger that some of our experiences can challenge the prevailing paradigm.


resist our technological paradigm (for example, by transforming the recalcitrant object into a resource).

On a Kuhnian view, a scientific paradigm can withstand some anomalies; however, as they continue to rack up, this provokes a paradigm shift to a paradigm that can better explain those anomalies. Similarly, Dreyfus suggests that we can provoke the shift away from the technological paradigm by way of its anomalies. However, merely encountering an anomaly will not undermine our technological way of seeing, since *Gestell* bids us to transform recalcitrant entities into resources. Wrathall makes this point in a recent essay, stating that in the age of technology,

> Anomalous entities will simply show up as needing to be reconfigured and rearranged so as to sustain the world’s sense. To change our understanding of the world, then, we would need to change the background practices that give rise to our affective preferences for the particular style of the prevailing world order.²⁵

It is not enough that we encounter the anomalous; beyond encountering anomalous entities, we must be pulled into *practices* that challenge the technological ordering of the world—what Dreyfus calls “saving practices.” In particular, Dreyfus and Wrathall both suggest that saving practices are open and “responsive to entities”²⁶—contending with the anomalous entity without attempting to order it. In the technological age, we enter into relationships with the entities around us that are unidirectional; we are the ones making demands, and we demand above all that entities be efficient and flexible. A saving practice, by contrast, would resist our first impulse to eliminate the anomalies we encounter, subordinating them to the prevailing technological paradigm by turning them into resources. Rather, a saving practice cultivates anomalies by allowing the entity to make demands on oneself rather than simply placing demands upon it. In such practices, we “listen [to] and hear” the entities with which we contend, rather than being “simply constrained to obey” the technological challenge.

Heidegger scholars offer a number of different contenders for “saving practices.” These contenders follow Heidegger’s suggestion


²⁶ Ibid.
that we can resist Gestell “here and now and in little things” (QCT, 33); while overcoming the technological paradigm would likely have global, revolutionary implications, the revolution must begin with localized practices that challenge the technological paradigm. We might, as Dreyfus suggests, attend the 1969 Woodstock festival, which promoted values that were “marginal” given the technological concerns of that time: attendees practiced “enjoyment of nature, dancing, and Dionysian ecstasy, along with neglected Christian concerns with peace, tolerance, and non-exclusive love of one’s neighbor.”27 The festival, indeed, follows the parameters for saving practices that are outlined above. These practices are not oriented toward efficiency and flexibility. The Dionysian practices, for example, are not pursued as a means for “letting off steam” so that one can be more productive in one’s day-to-day life, but are pursued for their own sake. Rather than resourcifying their surroundings, demanding efficiency and flexibility, the concertgoers open themselves to demands: in interpersonal relationships (of non-exclusive love, tolerance, etc.), one opens oneself to the other’s demands; in enjoying nature, the surrounding nature (e.g., a birdsong) commands one’s attention.

However, the festival that Dreyfus describes is a rare occurrence; opportunities for resistance of this kind are few and far between. Aho offers examples that allow for a broader application: “walking slowly in the nearby woods, playing music with friends, sitting quietly by a lake, looking deeply into a lover’s eyes, or perhaps even focusing on one’s breath when stuck in traffic” (HNB, 140–41). However, many of these practices seem compatible with a daily existence that concerns itself, for the most part, with technological mechanization. If our everyday lives are dominated by technology, with rare punctuations of resistance, can we really expect to overturn the technological paradigm? What we need, I contend, is to cultivate an anomaly that infiltrates our everyday lives, rather than anomalies that only operate at the edges of everyday life.

It is at this juncture that a consideration of the body can, again, further Heidegger’s project; indeed, note that among Aho’s examples, the practice that could be incorporated most easily into our everyday lives is a bodily practice, namely breathing exercises. I argue that the human body is a particularly promising anomaly to the technological paradigm. Though recent efforts have succeeded in making the body

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more pliable, it continues to make demands on us; for example, unlike a jetliner or a smartphone, the body has its own, inflexible schedule that we must work around.\(^{28}\) The body, at least in its current state, evades complete resourcification. Ideally, a resource would make no demands on us. As noted in Section 1, even the smartphone fails to meet this metric; it breaks down sometimes and requires charging. In comparison to the smartphone, the body makes constant demands. If we manage to subdue it, it only withdraws for a short period. Technology reveals the body as a resource, and the body pushes back.\(^{29}\) Perhaps technological advances (whether genetic or machine) will eventually remove these barriers; but for the time being, the body continues to resist resourcification.\(^{30}\)

Further, unlike obstinate objects that we might occasionally encounter, the body is our constant companion. It makes continual demands on us over the course of a day—demands for nourishment, comfort, and rest. Indeed, these bodily demands are evidenced by the fact that the workday remains at least somewhat bound to the time of the body, with breaks for meals and hours that allow for rest. These boundaries, however, are beginning to wear down as workers ‘work through lunch’ or keep themselves continually on call—checking emails at all hours, constantly chained to a smartphone. Cultivating this anomaly has the potential to disrupt and transform

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\(^{28}\) Indeed, Vallega-Neu emphasizes that the body has a “temporality” that can be in tension with other temporalities. Daniela Vallega-Neu, \textit{Bodily Dimension in Thinking} (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 126.

\(^{29}\) In his account of embodiment, Plessner also emphasizes our receptivity to the limitations or boundaries of the body; in the human being’s “eccentric positionality,” he “knows himself to be free and despite this freedom to be bound in an existence with which he struggles and that inhibits him.” Helmuth Plessner, \textit{Levels of Organic Life and the Human}, (tr.) M. Hyatt (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 271. Plessner’s emphasis on human receptivity to the body sits well with Heidegger’s emphasis on human receptivity in other domains (though, again, the historical dimension of Heidegger’s treatment of receptivity marks a departure from Plessner—see footnote 19). For a recent comparison of Heidegger and Plessner on human receptivity, see Thomas Schwarz Wentzer, “Rethinking Transcendence: Heidegger, Plessner and the Problem of Anthropology,” \textit{International Journal of Philosophical Studies}, vol. 25, no. 3 (2017): 348–62.

\(^{30}\) Since technological devices continue to have their limitations and breakdowns, prosthetic devices too can function as an anomaly. Though the shape of the demands might differ (e.g., a technical glitch, as opposed to the daily need for rest), the “cyborg body” continues to make demands. I borrow the term from Donna Haraway’s classic essay, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” in \textit{Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature} (New York: Routledge, 1991).
our ordinary lives in a way that the wilderness or a music festival cannot.

In line with Dreyfus’ suggestion, moving beyond the technological challenge requires resisting the urge to make the body more efficient and flexible. Rather, we must cultivate this anomaly. To do so, I suggest, we ought to refrain from practices that impose on the body, and instead practice openness toward the body—listening to the body and responding to its needs, rather than obeying the technological challenge to control it. I will conclude this section by working through three examples to elucidate this distinction:

(1) Sleep cycles. In Section 2, I argued that practices aimed at overriding the sleep cycle betray the technological challenge to resourcify. In response to the body’s inflexible need for rest, one attempts to dictate when the body will sleep, and when it will be maximally alert. Alternately, one could allow oneself to be interrupted by the body’s need for rest. At a moment of exhaustion, one does not respond by tightening the reins on one’s bodily processes, but by taking the feeling of tiredness as a cue—to rest.

(2) Childbirth. Dana Belu’s recent work highlights that contemporary childbirth practices, whether technophilic (embracing medical regulation and pharmacological intervention) or technophobic (Lamaze birth), are aimed at “expediting” the birthing process. The technophilic method of elective cesareans, for example, avoids the “inconvenience of unknown variables, such as waiting for labor to start, the process of pushing the baby out and feeling the pain (or pleasure) of the birthing experience.” Alternately, one could allow the body to determine the schedule of the birthing process—responding to the course set by the body rather than controlling it from the start.

(3) Moods. Commentators like Daniela Vallega-Neu find a place for the body in Heidegger’s phenomenology by linking it to moods: embodied phenomena that come over us rather than being rationally chosen. In the technological age, moods are also subjected to control; for example, one attempts to suppress discomforting and “useless” moods like boredom or anxiety by distracting oneself—

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32 Ibid., 22 n. 7.
33 Daniela Vallega-Neu, Heidegger’s Poietic Writings (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 50; see also HNB, 5.
watching television, surfing the internet, and generally turning away from what brings discomfort. Alternately, one could sit with the discomfort, inquiring into these moods (e.g., inquiring into their sources, such as the lack of anything meaningful with which to occupy oneself, or the recognition that current ways of living are wreaking havoc on the environment).

I would like to make two comments on these examples. First, these suggestions are not offered as universal moral obligations. They represent opportunities to opt out of a dominating relationship to one’s body, but they are not put forth as requirements for everybody. There are indeed cases where technological intervention seems appropriate (e.g., acute illness). As other commentators have noted, overcoming technology for Heidegger does not mean doing away with all technological devices.\textsuperscript{34} Rather, Heidegger supports developing a “free relationship” to technology (QCT, 3), where one can determine when technological intervention is and is not appropriate. We have no such free relationship when control and intervention is our default stance on every being we encounter.\textsuperscript{35} Practices like those I have outlined above undermine this default in one’s treatment of the body.

Second, one’s ability to take on these suggestions may be limited by socioeconomic factors; for example, the laborer assigned to a twelve-hour shift may not be able to indulge the need for rest. While I cannot treat this point in detail, I would like to note that accepting the limitations of one’s own body as a legitimate boundary goes hand in hand with accepting the limitations of other bodies (limitations that, indeed, may be different from one’s own). What I suggest here is consistent with broader social policies that respect the needs of working bodies, and interpersonal relationships that refrain from attempting to control and optimize the capacities of other bodies (e.g., not demanding an email response at all hours).\textsuperscript{36} One can listen to other bodies as one listens to one’s own body.

Listening to the body, we allow it to make demands on us, and we respond to those demands. These practices reshape our everyday, subtly challenging the technological assumption that efficiency and flexibility are the only demands worthy of our consideration.

\textsuperscript{34} Cf. Iain Thomson, \textit{Heidegger on Ontotheology} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 72–73.

\textsuperscript{35} I thank Kevin Aho for reminding me of this aspect of Heidegger’s analysis, and for helping me to think through the points I make in this paragraph.

Conclusion

I have argued that our relationship to our own bodies reflects the “challenging claim” of the technological age; one attempts to transform one’s own body into a resource that can be incorporated seamlessly into human projects with each passing whim. In this way, considering the body provides evidence for Heidegger’s claim that, in the age of technology, humans are ultimately revealed as “human resources.” However, I have also argued that the body evades our attempts to turn it into a resource; despite our manipulation, the body still confronts us with barriers that impede our projects and frustrate us. For this reason, I have argued that the body provides a unique site of resistance to our technological mechanizations. Unlike other areas of human life that are marginalized or resistant to the challenging claim of technology, the body is our constant companion. Therefore, cultivating new practices in relation to the body—listening and responding to its needs, rather than attempting to control it—has the potential to enact a thorough and powerful change to our current, technological ways of seeing.

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