Shealy: Annotated Bibliography ENC5369, Discourse and Technology

M. W. Shealy

11/01/13

Texas Tech University

English/Technical Communication & Rhetoric

Friesen, Norm and Andrew Feenberg (2007). 'Ed Tech in Reverse': information technologies and the cognitive revolution. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 39 (7), 720-736.

Examines how the failure of cognitivism, which equates mind with computer and has influenced educational technology's concerns of both mind and computer, demands that educational technology theories consider non-cognitivist directions. The field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that developed within cognitive studies is based on a concept of cognition reducible to machine design and behavior that results in software systems modeled as statistical, semantic, encoded or algorithmic with consequences for educational psychology and technology that a study of the mind is identified with testing and constructing intelligent computer systems. An identification of mind with machine has provided a tie between psychological theory and the educational technology; human intelligence models are developed, in reverse, using the model of AI, in order to make human cognitive operations as efficient as those computer-based. A "strong AI hypothesis" recently rejected in the computer sciences remains embraced in educational studies, which should now go outside ideas of correspondence with mind and machine to gain insights into the educational value of information and communication.

Norm and Feenberg's review of the failure of cognition as an overreaching theory of mind in the social sciences speaks to my interest in non-AI based notions of mind, of student/teacher as subject/object relation, in the design of educational software and online class design. By focusing on the lived experience of the phenomenological subject (however fragmented) rather than the design of the virtual class as an extension of the mental learning experience, one might develop an educational environment that retains elements of real world human exchanges.

Friesen, Norm, Andrew Feenberg and Grace Smith (2009). Phenomenology and surveillance studies: returning to the things themselves. *The Information Society*, 25, 84–90.

Considers a theoretical and methodological "re-alignment" in surveillance studies from the "Foucauldian, macro-level, structural or poststructural" to the "existential–phenomenological." By comparing Sartre's description of "the look" to the experience of surveillance via an ATM transaction, the authors show how a study of the lived experience of surveillance highlights the role of the human body, of social conventions, and of individual agency in surveillance practices. By accounting for the subject-formation not just via a mechanics of surveillance mechanics but also of subjective interiority, the authors explore the heuristic value of phenomenology for exploring a socially constructed subject to include the significance of the "lived body" in the data correlates of physical experience.

This question of a base existential (Sartrean) and phenomenological (Husserl et. al) reality is at the core of my concerns with a rejection of purely social, constructivist or

materialist, structuralist theory and methodology for the design of learning systems. By relying on hard data in the form of computer systems coding for software design yet grounding this data in a phenomenological, qualitative assumptions (perhaps addressed by qualitative case studies), I hope to frame a broad approach to the use of learning systems data for a more realistic and human-centered online experience.

Gibbs, Paul (2010). A Heideggerian phenomenology approach to higher education as workplace: a consideration of academic professionalism. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 29, 275–285.

Takes a Heideggerian phenomenological approach to understanding the academic workplace and describes the functioning of higher education for professionals. In his "History of the Concept of Time" Heidegger describes humans in a work world engaged with equipment rather than mere behavior, with "circumspection" for human interaction with objects that are "ready-to-hand." The usability of tools in such a work environment takes place within a framework of meaning and basic human values. The author addresses Marcuse's contention that humans must claim every situation through mediation and Arendt's emphasis on labor as central to the human condition. Changes in the academic workplace for professors who previously focused on lecturing and researching now demand that such academics address computer technology as Heideggerian equipment ready-to-hand, as tools that must be mediated and conditioned by labor in order to prevent initial reactions to such technology from creating disruptions or academic unease.

This article addresses one facet of my paper: the issue of instructor responsibilities and attitudes in accommodating new technology and computer-based learning rather than rejecting such innovations in Luddite fashion. Before the basics of lesson design or online class design can take place, the instructor must confront her own assumptions, fears, and fantasies regarding computer-based learning and online education so that real engagement with new technologies as ready-to-hand, capable of generating human freedoms, and central to a socially unconditioned human condition can be embraced and internalized. The cart must come, apparently, before the horse.

Idhe, Don (2012). Can continental philosophy deal with the new technologies? *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 26 (2), 321-332.

Creatively narrates the 50-year history of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), the second-largest philosophy group in America, and how technologies and their treatment by continental philosophies have evolved. For the analytic philosophical community of the 1960's, positivism and philosophy of science were being overthrown by a Kuhnian revolution, while for the continental crowd, an embracing of Heidegger (via his disciple Marcuse) was creating an autonomous

technology; Heidegger's death in 1976 being for Idhe a watershed between old and the new technology and the birth of a philosophy of technology based in praxis, at how science is embodied in technology. Current nano-, bio-, info-, robo- and cogno-technologies (as micro-phenomena) differ in fundamental ways from the mega-, mechanical, industrial technologies called "modern" by Heidegger and related mid-twentieth-century thinkers. Such new technologies follow miniaturization trajectories and transform experienced space-time into a cyber reality that is conditioned by multistable/multitasking and wireless connections. Heidegger's "ready-to-hand" objects placed within natural environments are replaced by such objects as the cell phone that are democratic and global, that do not fit into the familiar framework of *epochs of being, epistemes,* or *paradigm shifts* and refuse a one-size-fits-all category. Ihde recommends a postphenomenological approach to technoscience studies, especially one that takes into account cutting edge research and development.

This entertaining presentation does give me a context within which to consider my hands-on approach to using the LMS for phenomenologically-grounded ends, for thinking through the broad implications of feminism and cultural studies as a way of designing classes that work better for both teacher and student. If technology is no longer understood within one category or phenomenon, then how do we design classes to accommodate individual rather than group needs? What might a democratic, global version of current LMS and online class design look like?

Manen, Max van and Catherine Adams (2009). The phenomenology of space in writing online. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 41 (1), 10-21.

Considers whether online technologies affect writing in ways that differ from traditional or off-line environments. Online writing places the writer inside a virtual experience, which allows for a close study of phenomenological features, that may lend itself to the pedagogy of online seminars, teaching, and learning. If a radically altered writing environment changes the text itself, then observations of temporal and dimensional place/space are essential to defining an online text. The authors address traditional spaces for writing, the question of writing in public, how digital landscapes are a form of place, writing for the Other, writing over distances with variable proximities, and rethinking the definition of writing.

While this paper does not directly answer the fascinating questions it raises, it does serve as one model for the investigative, phenomenologically-informed query that explores with a variety of tangible examples and philosophical allusions how the writer and the written may be rethought in a cyber-environment. If I don't imitate the style of the paper, at least I will account for the subtle performativity of such essays into imaginary thinking that the paper exemplifies.

O'Hara, Daniel T. (2003). Neither gods nor monsters: an untimely critique of the ''Post/Human'' imagination. *boundary 2*, 30 (3), 107-122.

Uses Elaine L. Graham's *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* in relation to discourses of the post/human, generally critical of current political realities within Western culture, to addresses the issue of a purported nihilism and antihumanism within poststructuralist thought. Outlines Heidegger's ideas on modernity and the "will to power" to claim that Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche results in a technological essence that is a "will to will" (a universal, transhistorical will-to-power). Revolutions in biotechnology and digital technologies have created subcultures opposed to modernity.

Oddly enough, I enjoyed this rather unstructured and impressionistic essay: a chatty, informed & informative monologue (in *boundary 2* style) with bon mots scattered throughout. What most struck me as useful for my paper, however, is O'Hara's insistent overstatement that if modern science has uncovered falsity at the root of the Judeo-Christian tradition and led to the prospect that there are only appearances, such fabrications are useful to an eternally "self-revising will-to-will" itself; and that if this self-revising will-to-will (for Heidegger the "nihilistic value par excellence") IS, an essential technology as ultimate nihilism is exactly what I want to avoid meeting in my upcoming paper.

Pelt, Tamise Van (2002). The question concerning theory: humanism, subjectivity, and computing. *Computers and the Humanities*, 36, 307–318.

Questions whether enlightenment/humanist theories based in the rational subject or poststructuralist/anti-humanist theories derived from the symbolic Lacanian subject (that owe Heidegger) must both be revised due to current posthuman assumptions regarding technological environments and computing practices. Computing environments may need to be approached in a post-theory manner. Web sites, from the introductory to the advanced, devoted to "theory" (of gender, culture, class, etc.) distort differentiations between theory and object and demand the question of whether "the anti-humanist subject of theory [is] the post-human user of technology." 1. A humanism implicit in the view of computer technology as an updated tool and 2. an anti-humanism implied in the constructivist (Heideggerian-based) view of modern technology as autonomous and 3. a Lacanian cybernetic technology derived from binary computational laws of presence/absence; these frameworks for approaching the posthuman subject (as such) may be incapable of explaining unproblematically New Media radically different from the historical media of modernity through which such philosophies developed.

This dense, insightful essay into how a humanist posthumanism (if such is possible) might arise from the problematic of current concepts on what remains after theory

exhausts the possibilities framing the subject within a ubiquitous technological environ. I suppose for the sake of my paper that I'm assuming Tamise is right to raise complex questions for which there are no immediate answers. And that I will start working on my dissertation topic with the assumption that a reformed humanism is possible when constructing New Media environments.

Powell, Jeffrey L. (2010). Heidegger and the communicative world. *Research in Phenomenology,* 40 (2010) 55–71.

Focuses etymologically (in both German and Greek) on the treatment of communication ("Mitteilung") in Heidegger's *Being and Time* to conclude that, consistent with Aristotle, *community* is treated as the foundation of the political. While the author considers works by Heidegger before "die kehre" more than later notions of technology, there is sufficient emphasis on how interpretations of communication have developed among Heidegger scholars to justify questions on the centrality of Dasein as both being-in-the-world and being-with-others. The complex ontology of *Being and Time* is read in outline to rethink the centrality of communication for Heidegger in both early and later writings.

This paper delves deeply into considerations of Greek and German language niceties regarding a relatively nice concept itself couched inside the broad system of *Being and Time* and is, therefore, beyond my paper's emphasis on general Heideggerian ideas of technology and Idhe's interpretation of such ideas. However, I include it because the importance of community (human group speak) for Dasein is relevant to my small investigation into how teachers and students can "be" within the phenomenological uncanniness of a cyber-space yet also be "for" each other in an existentialist (New Humanist?) manner.

Quaintance, Morgan. Being online. *Art Monthly* issue 363, Jan. 2013, 13-16.

Critiques works by contemporary net-based artists such as Jemma Pixie Hixon, Thomson & Craighead, Dennis Knopf, Hipster Runoff, Ryan Trecartin, to explore core dichotomies of existence/essence, reality/virtual, chaotic/controlled, public/private, and normal/abnormal by drawing on major ideas in Sartre, Heidegger, and Kierkegaard. Uses examples to show how commercial online services constrict social behaviors and creative practices on the net and how certain artists are highlighting and responding to this marketing phenomenon. The writer draws on ideas of "being" to claim that web technology has created a public space that forces users into narrow limitations, supports homogeneity and standardizes expression.

While this interesting article is not scholarly, it does speak to my interest in experimental art and the use of new media and the net to explore the limits of aesthetic communication. My paper addresses a need for "humanizing" online education, ironically, through an increased use of New Media to allow students (and teachers) to create dialogues, entities,

avatars, virtual subjects, and such to expand engagement through new spaces. If this sounds bohemian, then I would claim that unconstructed creative behaviors have a place within online classrooms that are increasingly circumscribed and programmed for digital responses rather than analog interlocutions.

Waddington, David (2005). A field guide to Heidegger: understanding 'The Question Concerning Technology' *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 37 *(4)*, 567-583.

Outlines basic concepts in Heidegger's essay "The Question Concerning Technology" for education scholars who may avoid it due to the complex language and addresses some inadequate uses of Heidegger's ideas on technology by other education scholars; clarifies how the seminal essay "focuses on the ways of thinking that lie behind technology" rather than the mere uses of technology and defines specialized terms (such as "Gestell") in plain English for a general readership. After critiquing unfavorably several scholarly articles from education journals, the author stresses that future scholars need to account for a broader understanding of Heidegger rather than focus only on specifics of his thought concerning education.

In addition to being a well-written introduction to "The Question Concerning Technology" for a general audience, the essay is a pertinent reminder that scholarship outside specialized philosophical arenas needs to insure that applications of ideas by towering figures such as Heidegger—insofar as is possible—place specific concepts that may apply to the topic at hand within a sufficiently broad context to allow for interdisciplinary exchange and sound ethos.

Zachry, Mark. (2007). An interview with Andrew Feenberg. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 16 (4), 453–472.

Interview with Feenberg, whose scholarship "offers a way of moving beyond the binary division between those who are philosophically opposed to technological development and those who champion it." Feenberg speaks to theorizing human agency and communicative practices, to his longtime interest in medical experimentation and computers, and to the importance of usability in the redesign of technology. Asked about "critical theory," Feenberg discusses his intellectual history with the Frankfurt School and Marcuse, with how "a critical theory of technology is a critique of domination exercised through the organization of technically mediated institutions," expressing that a "concrete" form of Marcuse might demand a more democratic organization of technological society that "implies a redesign of many technologies underlying these institutions," using the example of Rupert Murdoch. He says the internet is still "an important factor in the democratization of so-called democratic societies…may actually get us back to the point where people are able to think for themselves instead of just parroting clichés put out by propaganda machines," which strikes the reader as desirable

if idealistic until he adds that it's "also possible that the same guys who have corrupted the public sphere through broadcasting will take over the Internet and render it too completely useless for any kind of democratic discourse." Feenberg speaks of the need for appropriation in the form of hacking and other creative uses of technology as "a feedback loop through which users clearly can influence the design of technologies" but speaks against possible "social neutrality" in engineering user-friendly spaces. He considers the profession of technical communication and the need for nontechnical mediation between experts and users and how understanding usability can solve many "translation" difficulties. One particularly intriguing reply was on how Feenberg "from hanging out with corporate people" realized "that the world of technology is much more contingent then we had imagined, or than is suggested in Heidegger and Marcuse and critical theory. There is much less logic to it and much more randomness and unpredictability than we imagined. And that is confirmed by contemporary technology studies."

This fascinating interview (which I read twice) offered casual insights (as interviews often do) into the thought processes of a major thinker in philosophy of technology. Some of the take aways for my paper: 1. allow for the chaotic and aleatory in humane design, 2. one must always account for personal preconceptions when designing software, 3. that there is still hope that a really free "net" can serve as a mass voice, 4. that certain hegemonic institutions (Time-Warner, Bain, Comcast, etc.) may need to be undone from the tech-ground up.