## *The Digital Cast of Being: Metaphysics, Mathematics, Cartesianism, Cybernetics, Capitalism, Communication*

Michael Eldred
Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 2009
ISBN:

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In this text Australian-German scholar Michael Eldred analyzes the "cast" or disclosure of being in its digital manifestation. The goal of the work, stated in Chapter One, is to clarify this digital cast ontologically and to uncover what must be given in order for "digital being" to have meaning. Eldred examines digital beings in their evolution from arithmetic roots in ancient metaphysics to their current dominance in areas such as telecommunication and trade. His interpretive framework largely draws on Heideggerian phenomenology circa *Being and Time* but also engages Marx's concepts of capital and value.

Chapters Two through Four comprise the text's principal investigative work. In the second chapter, Eldred engages Aristotle in exploring the Greek concept of number as the origin of digital beings. Following Heidegger's reading of Aristotle, Eldred posits that this concept abstracts from beings in a way that geometry does not. For the Greeks numbers are self-contained, discrete, and abstract from beings completely, whereas geometrical objects are subordinate to figure and spatial continuity. The Cartesian rendering of beings as *res extensa* in which mathematical symbols can quantify any type of being, including incommensurable magnitudes, represents the decisive modern appropriation of being's digitization. This transformation also has significant bearing on the classical understanding of time and motion because quantification supersedes understanding these in terms of *dunamis* or *entelechia*.

The third chapter examines digital beings from the current perspective of digital technology, focusing on the gulf between the invisible essence of digital beings and their use in everyday life. Eldred

argues that digital technology relies ontologically on the binary *logoi* of the electromagnetic medium. The *logoi* of this medium translate human understanding of the world into an outsourced, technical instruction. This arrangement has the limitation that it only appropriates beings through its language of digital decomposition. This chapter also holds that digital technology compromises being's topology, as digital beings by nature fail to convey the place from which the being they abstract originates.

In the fourth chapter, Eldred explores the "spatiality" of digital beings. In spatial terms, digital beings are not mere magnetic particles on a computer hard drive. Digital beings come to life in Dasein's capacity for de-distancing, in which Dasein as Being-in-the-World experiences space by bringing desired objects to hand. Cyberspace for instance contains a spatiality into which Dasein's own bodily experience of space fits seamlessly. Yet being's casting into a virtual world contains the possibility to feed back into bodily Being-in-the-World by virtue of its creative character as a *poesis*. Digitization therefore expresses the Western will to power as production.

The fifth chapter examines two exemplary spheres of digital being's totalization, telecommunication and banking. Telecommunication's digitization of information can only fulfill itself by encoding and streamlining all human interaction. Banking, driven by capital's demand for increase of value, must totalize itself via digitization of all commerce. The latter facilitates global, instantaneous circulation of money, in turn maximizing the potential for gain. The fifth chapter transitions to the sixth through broader reflection on how the digital cast of being, regardless of its seeming capacity for global totalization, nonetheless remains subject to the accidental, social ontology of human life. This insurmountable limitation recedes within digital being's disclosure. Eldred argues, however, that the questioner of digital being can cognize the groundlessness within this totalization; the future completion of being's digital cast must hit upon the obstruction that, as a disclosure of being to Dasein, it occurs within human life. New historical possibilities for Dasein may therefore follow the completion of being's digital cast.

A seventh chapter, given in the form of an appendix, seeks to clarify the uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics by consider-

ing its problematic within the Aristotelian ontology of motion. The problematic can be circumvented by regarding quantum motion as teleological *kinesis* instead of as a matrix of mathematical quantifications that reduce time and place to static magnitudes – a digitization that in large part creates the uncertainty principle.

Eldred's approach in this text is commendable because it does not judge the digital cast of being on moral grounds but rather unfolds this topic phenomenologically. His central argument concerning digital being's totalization and hidden groundlessness is valid based on the Heideggerian premise that any casting of being must be complete though it harbors concealment within its disclosure. The soundness of Eldred's case hinges upon whether one views digitization as an actual "cast" of being. His argument invites further questioning into what constitutes such a cast and of whether digitization falls within the greater rubric of Western metaphysics' cast of being as presence. On a formal level, the subject of the seventh chapter seems slightly out of step with the rest of Eldred's inquiry and may be better served treated in a separate work.