Will Dolores Pass the Dasein Test?

In episode 2 of *Westworld* the newly-arrived guest William (last name unknown; played by Jimmi Simpson) is escorted to his changing room by a drop-dead beauty tastefully coming on to him. She looks at him and says, "You want to ask, so ask." William: "Are you real?" She answers with a smile, "Well if you can't tell, does it matter?"

In episode 3 the head of the Programing Division, Bernard Lowe (Jeffrey Wright), and Park Director Robert Ford (Anthony Hopkins) are in Ford's office. Lowe is there to discuss in private the glitches tht hve bgn to appear in the latest upgrade of the 'hosts.'[1] The conversation leads Ford to recall the beginnings of the venture, before Lowe joined the staff:

> "For three years we lived here in the Park, refining the hosts before a single guest put a foot inside. Myself, a team of engineers, and my partner. Those earliest years were glorious. No guests, no Board meetings, just pure creation. Our hosts [the robots, the 'creations'] began to pass the Turing test after the first year."

What does it mean 'to pass the Turing test'? Alan Turing called his test "the imitation game."[2] In his famous paper Turing first describes the game as played with three people: a man (A) and a woman (B) in one room, and an interrogator (either sex) in another. Communicating through a teleprinter, the interrogator poses questions to the two people

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[1] The term 'glitch' understates the problem. After an upgraded host has massacred six others and terrified a couple of guests (human beings) trapped in the mayhem, the exasperated Operations Manager Theresa Cullen (Sidse Babett Knudsen) barks at Lowe: "The hosts are supposed to stick to their scripts, stay within their loops, with *minor* improvisation. This is not a minor improvisation. This is a fucking shitstorm." We learn that the faulty upgrade has been installed in about 200 hosts, 10% of the host population; making the total population of hosts around 2,000. The number of guests in the Park at any one time is around 1,400.

[2] A. M. Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," 59 *Mind* 433 (1950). http://loebner.net/Prizef/TuringArticle.html As the Man in Black (Ed Harris) says of Westworld, "There's a deeper meaning to this game." Turing was a gay man in an all-too-straight culture, and as such had first-hand acquaintance with the deceptions necessary for concealing sexual preference: 'playing straight' is a prototype of the imitation game.

by their assigned identifiers X and Y. They answer by teleprinter. The object of the game for the interrogator is to determine which of the other two is the man and which is the woman. The object of the game for B is to help the interrogator make the correct identification. The object of the game for A is to cause the interrogator to make the wrong identification. So if the man (A) has been assigned identifier X, and the interrogator asks, "Will X please tell me the length of his or her hair?" then the man (A) may answer something like, "My hair is shingled, and the longest strands are about nine inches long." (Well, it would have been a deceptive answer in 1950.) And so on.

Then Turing replaces the question he originally posed – Can machines think? – with the questions "What will happen when a machine takes the part of A in this game? Will the interrogator decide wrongly as often when the game is played like this as he does when the game is played between a man and a woman?"

In the new game the interrogator's objective is to determine which of the two respondents is a machine and which a human being. Or, assimilating the game with the necessary restrictions to a *viva voce* examination, whether the sole respondent is human or machine. Turing supplies specimen questions and answers to illustrate this new game:

"Q: Please write me a sonnet on the subject of the Forth Bridge.
A : Count me out on this one. I never could write poetry.
Q: Add 34957 to 70764.
A: (Pause about 30 seconds and then give as answer) 105621.
Q: Do you play chess?
A: Yes.
Q: I have K at my K1, and no other pieces. You have only K at K6 and R at R1. It is your move. What do you play?
A: (After a pause of 15 seconds) R-R8 mate."

Turing then raises the question of 'what is a machine?' After brief discussion he lays it down that "we only permit digital computers to take part in our game." A digital computer, he says, "can usually be regarded as consisting of three parts: (i) Store. (ii) Executive unit. (iii) Control."

Turing's digital computer operates—my point at last—by 'temporality,' which is Heidegger's designation for "the unity of a future which makes present in the process of having been."[3]

'Store', Turing says, "corresponds to the paper on which [a person] does his calculations or that on which his book of rules is printed" and the person's memory as well; 'store' we may see is in the nature of 'having been,' retaining. 'Executive unit' is "the part which carries out the various individual operations involved in a calculation;" 'executive' is in the nature of making present.   "It is the duty of the control to see that these instructions ["the book of rules"] are obeyed correctly and in the right order." 'Control' is anticipating, expecting; specifically, forestalling error, ensuring accuracy; 'control' is futural.[4]

In meetings at Zollikon, Switzerland, Heidegger conducted for a group of psychiatrists "a crash course in some of the fundamental concepts of *Being and Time.*"[5] Trying to get across to them his notion of temporality he tells the group:

> "In having time for something, I am directed toward the what-for, toward what has to be done, toward what is forthcoming. I am expectant, but only in such a way that I dwell simultaneously on what is present to me just now— what I make present now. Furthermore, I simultaneously retain—whether directly considered or not—what concerned me just now, prior to this. The time that I have in this case I have in such a way that I am 'expecting' [*gewärtigend*], 'making present' [*gegenwärtigend*], and 'retaining' [*behaltend*] [time]. I am in this threefold mode, which is the 'having' time for this and that. This having, namely [in the

[3] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson 1962) 374. The German text I cite is the second volume of the *Gesamtausgabe,* 18th ed. of *Sein und Zeit,* 2001. Much thanks to Richard G. Klein for providing readers both texts in a bilingual edition here http://www.freud2lacan.com/docs/SZ_part1.pdf and here http://www.freud2lacan.com/docs/SZ_part2.pdf .

[4] Cullen, in bed with Lowe, remarks that unlike the taciturn Lowe the hosts "never shut up." Lowe replies, "They're always trying to error-correct. Make themselves more human. That's why they talk to each other."

[5] William J. Richardson, "Heidegger and Psychoanalysis?" 5 *Natureza Humana* 9 (2003) 12.

mode of] expecting, making present, and retaining, is the authentic character of time." [6]

In *Being and Time* the three temporal moments of retaining, making present, and expecting show up as, respectively, 'Being-already-in,' 'Being-amidst,' and 'Being-ahead-of-itself.'

> "The formally existential totality of Dasein's ontological structural whole must therefore be grasped in the following structure: the Being of Dasein means ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the world) as Being-amidst (entities encountered within-the-world)."[7]

"Being-ahead-of-oneself is grounded in the future. Already-being-in . . . makes known having-been. Being-together-with . . . is made possible in making present." [8]

The fundamental ontological characteristics of the entity Dasein, aka being-in-the-world, are, Heidegger says, existentiality, facticity, and being-fallen. [9] "Temporality," he adds, "makes possible the unity of existence, facticity, and falling, and in this way constitutes primordially the totality of the structure of care."[10]

Existence, facticity, and falling are grounded in temporality:

> "The self-project [*Sichentwerfen*] grounded in the 'for-the-sake-of-itself' [*Umwillen seiner selbst*] in the future is an essential quality of *existentiality*. *Its primary meaning [Sinn] is the future. . . .* Only because care is grounded in having-been [*Gewesenheit*], can Da-sein exist as the thrown being that it is. . . . The primary existential meaning of facticity lies in having-been. . . . *making-present* [*Gegenwärtigen*]*,* as the *primary* basis for the *falling prey* to things at hand and objectively present that we take care of, remains *included* in

[6] Martin Heidegger*, Zollikon Seminars: Protocols—Conversations—Letters* (ed. Medard Boss; tr. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay 2001) 65.

[7] *Being and Time* 237. 'Dasein' is his technical term for the human way of being.

[8] *Being and Time*; Joan Stambaugh's translation (1996) 301.

[9] *Being and Time* 235.

[10] *Being and Time* 376.

the future and in having-been in the mode of primordial temporality."[11]

"Temporality temporalizes, and indeed it temporalizes possible ways of itself." [*Zeitlichkeit zeitigt und zwar mögliche Weisen ihrer selbst.*][12]

"The reader," writes Turing, "must accept it as a fact that digital computers can be constructed, and indeed have been constructed, according to the principles we have described, and that they can in fact mimic the actions of a human computer [someone performing calculations] very closely." A digital computer is a 'way of temporality.' Computers are temporal because **we** are temporal and we have made computers after **our** image; have temporalized a possible way of temporality in a particular kind of artifact: "can in fact mimic the actions of a human computer."

Back to *Westworld* and the scene in Ford's office. The hosts' passing the Turing test, Ford continues, "wasn't enough for Arnold [Ford's long dead partner]. He wasn't interested in the *appearance* of intellect. He wanted the real thing. He wanted to create consciousness."

"He imagined it as a pyramid," says Ford, drawing a triangle on the blackboard. Ford speaks as he writes 'memory' at the base, 'improvisation' above that, and 'self-interest,' at the third level up. The space below the apex remains blank. Referring to this blank space Lowe asks, "At the top?" Ford: "Never got there. But he had a notion of what it might be."

Ignoring the metaphysical term 'consciousness' we recognize the structure of temporality again in the diagram Ford has drawn. 'Memory' is grounded in 'having been,' 'improvisation' in 'making-present,' and 'self-interest' – the self-project grounded in the 'for-the-sake-of-itself" – in the future: But the diagram is off insofar as it implies temporality is layered or hierarchical.

In this same Heideggerian vein we can take the blank space as standing for "that fundamental occurrence in which Dasein moves as such."[13]

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[11] *Being and Time;* Stambaugh's translation 301.
[12] *Being and Time* 377.

Heidegger gave the fundamental occurrence many names; he often called it 'the clearing,' *die Lichtung.* Another of his terms for the fundamental occurrence is 'the open,' *das Offene*:

> "The 'open' that dwells in ἀλήθεια[14] first lets beings emerge and come to presence as beings. Man alone sees this open. More specifically, man gets a glimpse of this open while comporting himself, as he always does, to beings, whether these beings are understood in the Greek sense as what emerges and comes to presence [*phusis*], or in the Christian sense as *ens creatum*, or in the modern sense as objects. In his comportment to beings, man in advance sees the open by dwelling within the opening and opened project of Being."[15]

The being of human being – "whose distinction and **peril** consist in [its] being open in manifold ways to beings as beings"[16] – means, as Thomas Sheehan puts it, that "I cannot *not* make sense of everything I meet because I cannot *not* be a priori opened up."[17]

Now unbeknownst to them that's precisely the problem confronting the staff of Westworld: the 'fundamental occurrence' is happening to the hosts who got the upgrade. They are beginning to try to make sense of their being. As of episode 5 no one realizes this, with the possible exception of Bernard Lowe. Robert Ford is still insisting (episode 3) that

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13 Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (tr. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker 1995) 360.

14 John D. Caputo writes that "Truth means the truth of assertions when the assertion conforms to the state of affairs about which it speaks; truth is correctness (*Richtigkeit, adequatio, homoiosis*). . . . Yet, Heidegger argues, *before* an assertion can be made about an entity, the entity must be manifest, out in the open. Hence the correctness of assertions presupposes the openness of entities. The self-grounding definition of truth has a concealed ground in the openness of beings. . . . the experience of the phenomenality of the being presupposes the openness of the open, the open realm of the clearing of Being itself (which is what is meant by *alētheia* as such)." In this radical sense "*alētheia* means the opening up of the realm of the unconcealed, the very granting of the presence of the present." "Demythologizing Heidegger: 'Alētheia' and the History of Being," 41 *The Review of Metaphysics* 519 (1988).

15 Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides* (tr. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz 1992) 159.

16 *Zollikon Seminars* 75. My emphasis.

17 Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift* (2015) 113.

a host "Doesn't get cold. Doesn't feel ashamed. Doesn't feel a solitary thing that we haven't told it to."

Dasein is the being whose being is at issue for it. A host's being is **not** at issue for it. At least that was the intention of Ford and his team. Ford tells Lowe that in his quest for consciousness Arnold forgot that "The last thing you want in a place like this is for the hosts to be conscious." What goes on in Westworld, to borrow a phrase from Dr. Hunter S. Thompson, is what all America would be doing on Saturday night if the Nazis had won the war. Guns and liquor everywhere and a brothel on the corner. Guests can do whatever they like with or to the hosts; including torture, rape, and murder. "You just can't hurt anybody you're not supposed to" (i.e., other guests). Fun for the whole family. A guest riding on the train into Westworld tells his fellow passenger: "First time I came here with my son. We went fishing, camping, hiking. Had a great time. Second time I came alone. Went straight evil. Best two weeks of my life."

Dasein is "a self-interpreting, self-articulating entity."[18] No other being wonders about, inquires about, seeks to understand its own being. No other being quests after its meaning. And *Westworld* is nothing if not a tissue of quests. Dasein "is an entity for which in its being, in its being-in-the-world, 'it goes about its very being' [*es geht um sein Sein selbst*], for which, that is, *its very being is at issue.*"[19]

This is what is happening, the fundamental occurrence, to the host Dolores Abernathy, the rancher's innocent daughter of marrying age.[20] She is changing, 'the Maiden's Tragedy,' and the experience terrifies her; as well it should. But she has begun to "choose her own hero," in

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[18] Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (tr. Theodore Kisiel 1985) 302.

[19] *History of the Concept of Time* 292.

[20] Her role, her 'necessary identity,' in Westworld is to be the demure virgin sexually accessible (by force) to any guest who wants her. Ford is interrogating Dolores's programmed love interest, a virile young bounty hunter with a vaguely troubled past. "Tell me, is that all you aspire to Teddy?" Teddy replies with a script we heard in an earlier scene: "There's a girl. Maybe someday soon we'll have the life we've both been dreaming of." Ford: "No. You never will. Your job is not to protect Dolores. It's to keep her here, to insure that the guests find her if they want to best the stalwart gunslinger and have their way with his girl." A story for every appetite.

Heidegger's phrase. She shocks a guest when she shoots dead all the hosts who are attacking him. "Dolores, how did you do that?" He means do something so off-script, so out of character for the wistful and passive creature he first met. She replies with a level tone, analysis mode, "I imagined a story in which I wasn't the damsel."

To wrap this up I want to glance back at Alan Turing's paper. He writes, "In the process of trying to imitate an adult human mind we are bound to think a good deal about the process which has brought it to the state that it is in. We may notice three components. (a) The initial state of the mind, say at birth, (b) The education to which it has been subjected, (c) Other experience, not to be described as education, to which it has been subjected." (What happens when this other experience – 'having been' – is ghastly and brutalizing is in part what *Westworld* is 'about.')

After some discussion of an experimenter 'educating' a child-machine he continues: "There is an obvious connection between this process and evolution, by the identifications
Structure of the child machine = hereditary material
Changes of the child machine = mutation,
Natural selection = judgment of the experimenter."

If we take these three moments as 'retention,' 'variation,' and 'selection,' we may glimpse the structure of temporality once more. Retention as 'having been' and selection as 'making present' are obvious enough. Why is variation futural? Variants are possibilities, the only resource the present has for building something different from the past. "The newcomers [guests]," Dolores says, "are just looking for the same thing we all are—possibilities."

Digital computers are temporal because Dasein made them so. And Dasein is temporal because Ur-temporality, natural selection, made it so. The symmetry of self-similarity is in 'the same' conserved under transformation of scale.

Really getting a kick out of *Westworld.* Highly recommended.

DCW 11/2/16