

A Critical Reflection on the Human Condition in Technological Development

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Abstract: Even though we commit to improve our lives through technology, unconsciously, we also constrain our conception of the self. Technology puts into question the relations between human dignity and authentic human development. It relentlessly tends to transform humans into a vast store of resources to be disposed of at will to the point that human nature has no purpose of its own except to serve the ends of technology. In the technological frame, humans are self-alienated and reduced to measurable units of production and consumption, thereby outgrowing their capacity for self-determination.

Keywords: technology, human dignity, development.

INTRODUCTION

As part of our commitment to improve our lives through technology, unconsciously, we also constrain our conception of the self. Today, technology puts into question the relations between human dignity and authentic human development. In this article, I shall argue on the basis of a fundamental and ontological claim that modern technology, despite its undeniable contribution to human development, it also relentlessly transforms humans into measurable units of production and consumption, and that it has outgrown man's capacity for self-determination. Technology tends to reduce human facts to bivalent, programmable information; digitized data that consequently enters into what Jean Baudrillard calls a state of pure circulation [1].

As a manipulative, impositional and conceptual understanding of the self, technology alienates human beings from their comportment to themselves. Subjective values and fundamental modes of existence are manipulated and undermined, leading to a lack of serious reflection on our values or basic facts of human existence, given that they are outside technological calculative frame. Humans are made into a vast store of resources to be disposed of at will to the point that human nature tends to have no purpose of its own; human nature has become nothing else other than a mechanism responding to technological demands. But this situation puts human nature in conflict – consisting of an unconscious mind of technology and the superego of technological dominance, such that the human subject herself is faced with a serious problem of self-alienation.

CONCEPT OF ALIENATION

Conventionally, the term *alienation* refers to a basic divide within or dissociation from the *whole* [2]. This *whole* can involve the integral past, the self or 'belonging together'. In a social framework the term stands for a rift between individuals and the religious, social, legal, cultural, economic or even political organizations of a given society; a kind of dysfunction or *rupture* in the structure of the whole society. I will not dwell on the social meaning or theory of alienation, since this is not the key concern of this article. Instead, my purpose is to discuss the ontological alienating and reconstituting power of technology on the human subject.

Authentic human subjectivity implies that one should have a certain degree of *self-determination* to live a meaningful life. Karl Marx's revolutionary political-economic philosophy and historical materialism can help us understand better the concept of *alienation* in this respect. Again, I will not go into the details of Marx's dialectical economic and political philosophy, but shall select an aspect of his philosophy that serves in this discussion. For Marx, political power can be employed in different ways and by its nature in capitalist society, it divides people either into a *bourgeois* owner of productive resources or a member of the proletariat/working class. Moreover, political power pretends to articulate the position of the proletariat, or the common good, whereas in actual fact it serves the needs of the *bourgeoisie* [3]. From Marx's point of view, the proletariat's fundamental life-activity, his very labour power, the potential for a free self-

valorisation, definition and self-realization for creative activity and development [4] is taken away from him and surrendered to the capitalist, when he works for him. Of course, this leads the proletariat class to lose its potential for free and creative activity, and in exchange, the proletariat is only given a *subsistence wage*: enough to buy a plate of food to have enough energy to return to work the following day and to reproduce the next generation of workers for the *bourgeoisie*. No longer does the proletariat produce the things he needs; but exchanges the value of his labour to benefit the *bourgeoisie*. The deeper implication of all this is that labour, the basic human means for the proletariat's self-definition and realization, is subjugated to an external power and exploited, leading to his *self-alienation*.

Marx's political-economic account of *alienation* in capitalism is a prototype of the human condition in technological development. Today, the machine replaces man as the end of technology. It produces everything for him, to the extent that man can no longer realize himself in his own labour, the basis for his very existence, which is a command of God in the Genesis Biblical narrative (Gen. 3:19). The profound implication of this situation is that the human condition is at stake in modern technological development, so that there is a total devaluation of its significance [5]. Engineers and scientists tell us that in the near future automation-running factories without human help will become a reality, and human labour and the human being himself will become almost redundant to production. However, the crucial question is: How can man realize his subjectivity when he becomes the most replaceable part of his world or the tool for technological production? In a society in which the machine takes over completely, basic classical traditional human values are undermined, so that by letting technology stand in the place of man, man begins to think that his life is a technical and chemical thought process, which he has little chance or responsibility to determine.

In such a context, self-alienation or self-distance would imply that something that belongs to man as his subjectivity, like his basic needs, his ability to discern his interests in life, his work, comfort, and values, is today taken away from him by science and technology, used as a power to oppose or fight against him in a manner of de-skilling or disabling him [6]. This takes away the inner power necessary for guiding and determining his life. He surrenders himself to technological determination and destiny [7]. When that self-determination is undermined, through his own cooperative efforts, he is self-alienated, self-distant or inauthentic. In such a situation, the concept of alienation involves a loss of something fundamental and important to the self. When basic human values are tampered with, self-alienation becomes a loss of human identity and subjectivity [8].

The technological way of disclosing our mode of life in the world means that, we humans lose our "home" in the world and we become *distant* to ourselves to the point where we are no longer at home with ourselves [9]. Just to take a practical example: in the field of intelligence, scientists are inventing micro devices that can be implanted in the brain to enhance intelligence, so that man's brain is outsourced and no longer needs to serve or develop his thinking process, since machines like, computers, cell-phones, ipads, and so forth, do the thinking for him. The power of the human subject's creative mind is disguised behind utopian dreams of thinking machines and world mechanics, placing her self-expressions within the scope of such technological devices, which in turn impose their autonomy on her to the point where she cannot operate without them [10]. This kind of *self-alienation* becomes the distortion of the basic standing of human subjectivity.

The practical application of scientific and technological tools, originally meant to give us more security against outside physical forces and to safeguard our inner worlds, have today become the inward, embedded forces that fight against us, uprooting us from our ground. Lee Ilchi explains this worry when he says that "what technology is all about is to bring us closer to personal mastery by turning our lives 'inside out'. It is about providing a *false* awareness that we have the tools we need to live a comfortable life" [11]. When technology is inappropriately applied to all areas of our existence, we become de-skilled and dependent upon it, thereby losing much of our potential for authentic self-direction. We become locked in one monolithic, scientific illusion and mode of relating to reality, so that our subjective capacity for a meaningful life is undermined. We find ourselves in a certain degree of ontological distance with respect to ourselves and our immediate surrounding that is prohibitively construed for non-human ends. Karol Wojtyla affirms that "alienation is the draining or shifting of man from his own humanness, which is, depriving him of the value that is defined as personalistic [12]." Basically, *alienation* lies in an inadequate technological view of the human subject and in an erroneous perception of the meaning of human existence, since its value is no longer given by the human subject herself, but rather, by science and technology.

MODERN TECHNOLOGY 'EN-FRAMES' HUMANS

Modern technology is essentially a process which is not subject to human control, and that it is a very elusive phenomenon that resembles itself only of its own accord, even though humans are the ones who set it in motion. In other words, we humans participate in this process by setting it in motion but we do not control the way it unfolds; we cannot rebel against

the technological revelation of reality, since we ourselves are revealed to ourselves and understood by ourselves in the same way. Heidegger once said that “it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself... In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence. Man stands so decisively in attendance on the challenging-forth of *en-framing* that he does not apprehend *en-framing* as a claim, that he fails to see himself as the one spoken to, and hence also fails in every way to hear in what respect he ek-sists, from out of his essence, in the realm of an exhortation or address, and thus can never encounter only himself” [13].

The modern subject lives with only the illusion of technology, which gives rise to the belief in her mind that through technology she “conquers” nature and not herself. But man as a human being is a natural being and so the notion and activity of conquest is inherently paradoxical. This paradox is succinctly manifested in the human condition where the victor now belongs to the spoils. The conqueror of nature is damaged by its own violent assault, since the same ‘conqueror’ is part of nature. Winner thinks that we are so engrained in technology that we understand very little of the extent to which technologies affect our lives [14]. Lewis Clive, on man’s conquest of nature, makes an indicting statement in this regard: “Man’s conquest of nature turns out, in the moment of its consummation, to be nature’s conquest of man” [15]. Thus, the illusion of conquering nature through technology has profound implications not only on the natural world itself, but also on the same human beings. When we humans conquer the natural world, as natural beings, belonging to the class of entities *within-the-world*, we are among the conquered subjects. We belong to the conquered because of the elusive nature of modern technology, which has gone beyond a human activity that can be controlled. This claim leads me to the argument of the subsequent sections, that modern technology, apart from reconstituting nature, also reconstitutes humans into mere organizers of its process, thereby undermining their subjectivity and sense of purpose.

Human Subjects Conceived as mere Organizers of the Technological Process

My fundamental claim is that the meaning pervading technology hides itself, in what appears to be more obvious much is hidden in it. Our seemingly obvious understanding of the technological products or gadgets that we employ complicates the relation we have with these same products, which in most cases has led to our uncritical and naïve stance towards those same specific technologies, particularly those that we are mostly interested in. This taken for granted and uncritical use of technological gadgets or tools reduces us to what Heidegger calls mere *organizers* or operators of technological tools, closed up in ourselves, relying so much on our instruments for our daily concerns and

self-determination, without any serious reflection on the fact that we are already claimed by being transformed into mere *organizers* of the technological. Lacking this critical reflection equally creates a kind of passive ontology with regard to technological products.

Heidegger claims that “... the challenging gathers man into ordering. This gathering concentrates man upon ordering the real as standing-reserve” [16]. Today, in the technological determination, our existence is at the service of technology, in that we are transformed into mere *organizers* to respond to the whole process of technological system and action. This technological reduction of our subjectivity into organizing the technological modes of being operates under a Cartesian influence that divides nature and human beings, so that the world is objectified as something to be ordered, which consequently undermines our revelatory essence. As *organizers*, therefore, we are made to forsake our inner relation to things in order to work with the instrumental logic of technology, with no new revelation possible to arrive at the end of the technological process since we operate mechanically within the technological system. In such operations, our lives become not only abstract, homeless and worldless, but uniform, monotonous and mechanical. All of our lives and all thought becomes epigone, scientifically provided. On that basis, Heidegger argues that the disappearance of nature and our transformation into *organizers* endangers our relation to ourselves and to everything that exists [17], to the point where we are cut off from that mysterious ground (of ourselves as the one who reveals entities), leading us to begin to suffer from the meaninglessness of our existence.

In the process of being mere *organizers* of the technological and, in order to function properly following the technological structure of operation, we moderns have turned to a digitized and mechanized push-button approach to life. This is best illustrated by our love for automobiles and other digital machines. The moment we retreat to our car and television seats and direct the world by remote control, we dream an old, long-forgotten childhood dream of tremendous self-power. We are hypnotized by the idea of remote control. However, the aftermath of this is very deep; our servility to our automobiles and other machines takes something away from our nature; our ontological freedom, since we are controlled by our technology and we cannot do anything without it. The wheels and the push-buttons give us a false sense (illusion) of freedom and of ourselves, while we are not actually in control.

Emphasizing the deep ontological alienating powers of technology, Heidegger says that as we get attached to our devices, “suddenly and unaware we find ourselves so firmly shackled to these technical devices that we fall into bondage to them [18].” Arguing on the

paradoxical nature of technology, Richard Rojcewicz observes that technology hides from humans how their freedom is threatened by it [19]. To illustrate these claims, it is worth considering our highly technological world, where young people from their early youth are confronted with all the products of modern technology, devices and gadgets of technological production: the radio, the computer, the television set, and so forth. They are capable of operating even more sophisticated machines and they do it so well to the surprise of everyone else. The devices are directly connected with their senses. However, the paradox of this is that such people think and reflect less about the impact of the same devices they choose, operate and use. Those devices tell them their fictitious and sensational stories catered to the interests of those using them, offering them ready-made-answers to some operational and technical logistics. Heidegger writes: “Hourly and daily they are chained to radio and television. Week after week the movies carry them off into uncommon, but often merely common, realms of the imagination, and give the illusion of world that is no world [20].”

Regardless of how real or staged our technologized world *is*, it attests to an ongoing fascination with the technological spectacle, and the *mass* desire to harmonize our lives with it. The use of technological products in most cases makes no formative demand on us to think critically about what we see, operate and hear. If there is any demand the devices make on us, it is for us to remain glued to the same devices and operate them according to the technological rules for their proper functioning. Of course, the consequence of this preoccupation with technological devices prevents active inner creativity and autonomy; both children and adults merely sit and watch the pseudo-world of the screen (television, computer, smart phones, etc.) probably doing very little to confront their own real existential life challenges.

The indelible mark this technological resolve creates in us is the attitude of surrendering our lives all the more willingly to technological gadgets and their market demands. The screen, the electronic gadgets talk to us, play with us and take us into a world of magic fantasies and simplistic solutions to life problems. In the case of young people, technological devices take the place of a grownup, of their parents who are ever there, patient to entertain them. The devices continuously provide a field for aggressive behaviour (crime scenes, pornographic scenes, etc.) with no subsequent guilt feelings since they unconsciously tend to identify with the criminal, despite all the heroic avengers. The young people tend to become what they watch: an aggressive person, a sexist, etc. They become what they experience because they are not able to go deep into the logic of the machines they use or operate. This may not be their problem of concern but to us philosophers it raises a problem of concern that calls for reflection.

The examples I have provided are leading cases in point in the sense that they reveal the condition of the modern subject as one who takes for granted her life and her external world; she takes no time to retreat and reflect on her technological world. Instead, she is perceived to be a placeholder and organizer in a web of technological organization. She is rendered incapable of orienting her life in the technological world and she is pictured to be ever in need of technological orientation and organization. Modern technological way of being lures the modern subject on, dropping her into its wheels and movements: no rest, no meditation, no reflection and no proper ontological relations. All these become a lost art because the senses and the mind are continually overloaded and engaged with technological stimuli.

In this sense, the kind of instruments she employs on her daily basis robs her of all individual uniqueness. Verbeek in his commentary on Heidegger observes this misplaced doing or organizational conception of human subjectivity when he says: “It strips the human subject of realizing her authentic personal existence [21].” He continues to say that “the apparatus therefore reduces human beings and their material environment alike into their functions. ‘The modern attitude of mind does not want phrase-making, but knowledge; not ponderings about meaning, but dextrous action; not feelings, but objectivity; not a study of mysterious influences, but a clear ascertainment of facts... Essential humanity is reduced to the general [22].’” Technology threatens humanity at its core by its tendency to shape and reduce the human subject to her organizational functions and to suffocate her interactions with the natural world. Consequently, her social world permits her a place within the apparatus that could also be taken by others. Her substantial world acquires a new shape [23], just as she herself does, a more and more organizational character, with which her personal and individual bond is less and less possible. The space where she has to realize her individuality continues to become ever smaller. Individual uniqueness gives way more and more to individual and personal technological interchange-ability [24].

This minimalistic shape that human existence is framed-in within the technological set-up is what Heidegger in his concept of *fallenness* calls the “they” way of life; it is the way of life in which the human subject swims in the organizational structure of modern technology without her individual discernment. In this way of life she is no longer capable of authentically “being herself”; she is never critical to herself and to the technological structured life-style because she gets derailed from doing so by the factors discussed. In the perceived “they self”, the human subject subordinates her subjectivity to organizational and technological control in order to pursue the increasing efficiency of

technological procedures. This point is succinctly explained by Zimmerman in his commentary on Heidegger and Modernity when he argues that technology has transformed individuals into workers to serve its ends and objects since “to be” in today’s technological world is to be *worked upon* and transformed in accordance with the imperative of production for its own sake [25]. The individual’s work is to put in order, take care of and to maintain what is given to him in the technological order [26]. Consequently, the human subject’s acquired new nature has been given to her by the scientific and technological character of the new world. Ellul, when considering the same question about technology and human nature, also expresses the idea that, once facing the ceaseless pursuit of efficiency, man “must be made to yield his heart and will, as he had yielded his body and brain [27].”

In such circumstances where the human subject is transformed into a mere *server* or mere *organizer* under technological mastery, the obvious thing is that she is compelled to forfeit her subjectivity: she does not recognize her own identity any more. The merely passive and taken for granted attitudes that she adopts towards technological instruments, in fact, deter her from seeing how deeply the instruments themselves actually constitute her individual subjectivity in the form and context in which they function. Moreover, losing what I would call an inner disclosive nature (the disclosure or un-concealment according to Heidegger) is the origin of anxiety in the modern subject’s existence, rendering her incapable of achieving a sense of inner balance from the acquired technological nature when there is still a deep desire to pursue inner harmony through the first disclosive one. This disequilibrium, according to Ellul, has produced a climate of anxiety and insecurity, which is characteristic of our epoch and of our neuroses [28]. In that regard, submitting oneself to be transformed into a mere organizer of the technological (the second nature offered by science and technology) not only represents the disappearance of our subjectivity, but also causes inevitable anxiety regarding our existence. I shall explain this existential anxiety further in the next subsection.

Human Subjects turned into a ‘Standing-Reserve’

Above, I argued that technology has made humans mere *organizers* of its process; however, Heidegger makes another indicting ontological claim that explains the deep rootedness of the impact of technology on modern subjects. He claims that technology has set upon humans into a *standing-reserve*. In a questioning manner, Heidegger asks: “If man is challenged, ordered to do this, then does not man himself belong even more originally than nature within the standing-reserve? [29]” According to Heidegger, the human subject has already been claimed by modern technology in a way of revealing that challenges her to

approach herself as a resource subject to manipulation. Heidegger’s posited question manifests a point at which the human subject is denied her authentic self; she is directly subordinated to the manipulative essence of technology. Looked at from the standpoint of the early Heidegger in *Being and Time*, modern technology renders her incapable of being differentiated from the rest of reality; she has been reduced to the same level as the rest of the extants and the living entities; the human subject has been placed on a subhuman level of existence subject to technological manipulation. Heidegger emphatically says that we are on “the very brink of a precipitous fall insofar as we are now in a position such that we ourselves have come to be “taken as *standing-reserve* [30].” Echoing Heidegger, Nicholas Berdyaev makes a critical observation that our “technical epoch demands from man the making of things in great quantities with the least expenditure, and man becomes an instrument of production [31].” Being put at the level of entities, modern technology has reconstituted the human subject, organized her rationally and calculated her into an abstract figure for productivity, employment, demographic shifts, population statistics, workflow charts, etc.

To point out some current areas that explain better the claims made above, without going into the ethical debates that surround them, it is enough to consider the world of machines and what is going on today in the area of genetic engineering. Modern subjects are constantly subjecting their genetic makeup to radical manipulation [32], even in areas that are not indispensable, like the aesthetic field, where they employ modalities like breast augmentation and gluteus reduction that are largely based on mercurial aesthetic values. Again, I do not want to enter into the moral implications of these tendencies, such as the amount of money being used in such technologies. In fact, we cannot stop those who are economically enabled from doing so. Furthermore, genetic engineering when used to prevent genetic defects and diseases could even be morally acceptable and perhaps obligatory.

However, the contention concerns the particular technologies we run into, what they are telling us about ourselves and the irrevocable changes they cause in the understanding and perception of the individual himself. These technologies have turned us into instruments that seem to exist to serve technology, instead of being served by it. In another text, Heidegger insistently observes this problem saying that “the assessment that contemporary humanity has become the slaves of machines is ... superficial. For it is one thing to make such an assessment, but it will be something quite different to ponder the extent to which the human being today is subjugated not only to technology, but the extent to which humans respond to the essence of technology, and the extent to which more original possibilities of a free and open human existence

announce themselves in the response [33].” Capturing the same thought of Heidegger, Bernard Rollin comments that “it is one thing to cure disease; it is quite another thing to attempt the modification of some highly complex phenotype trait like “intelligence” or “violence,” where we are not even sure what these concepts mean” [34].

These quotations imply, without engaging myself in the debate about the good inherent in the enhancement technologies themselves, which no one doubts, is the fact that *the things we take into ourselves raise ontological questions regarding how we look at and understand ourselves in such technologies*. Genetic engineering that I have just mentioned for instance subjects the human body to the status of a construction, so that we come to regard it as something we can manipulate by changing and inventing it at will. Under such influence, we become opposed to granting the human body the status of givenness to any aspect of ourselves, thereby making the act of God into a human choice [35]. The profound implication of this is that we want to be the products of technology by inventing ourselves. Whenever there are new technologies, we project all sorts of fantasies, illusions, hopes, and dreams onto them, believing less in ourselves. In its terrific end, this could be a sign that we moderns are probably not happy with ourselves and that is why we have to rush to invent another nature for ourselves, evading our very authentic selves in the process.

The repercussion of recourse to genetic engineering are deep in the sense that the body we currently have is perceived to be imperfect, subject to chance and the vagaries of life, including illness and aging; this body becomes our rival and therefore undesired, and the potential future ‘perfect’ cyborg body becomes the most desired one since we are able to manipulate it to our own liking. Such a new body will not be permitted to falter since it follows the technological principle of efficient product of our technological inventive and calculative mind [36]. We hold ourselves up to the technologies introduced into us so that we can live free of existential anxiety, freed from all danger and exempted from all feelings of weakness or lack, while enjoying a vicarious triumph over the new invented body. We see this kind of desiring and manipulating attitude today in anti-ageing technologies. We deny the fact of our naturalness and human finitude by devising various strategies to fend off ageing, extend fertility, and so on as we represent our ageing bodies as those of teenagers with gleaming gray hair [37].

The perception of the body as a passive *standing-reserve*, a host of technology and a separate and remote agent or set of stuff from me, to be worked upon by technology, is crucial to the modern subject’s self-understanding. The technologies used to

manipulate the body in the field of aesthetics, in themselves, manifest the fact that the modern subject is not satisfied with herself and consequently does not see herself as an integral whole with her own unique selfhood. Stephen Murray in affirmative claim observes that human beings who do not assert what they presently know of themselves (due to the illusion of the promises of technology) stand upon a disorderly ground and an even more uncertain future [38]. On the same line of thought, Anthony Giddens argues that the body is not just a physical entity like any other which we ‘possess’, it is an action-system, a mode of praxis, and its practical immersion in the interactions of day-to-day life is a necessary part of the sustaining of a coherent sense of self-identity [39].

Cloning is another area that explains my claim that the human being is made a resource pool or instruments by modern technology. Of course, there are great advantages of cloning, particularly in the medical field like the control of genetic diseases. Again, I would not go into the ethical arguments of the specific areas mentioned, for these do not relate to the central concern of this article. The fundamental issue is that in cloning, individuals are seen from the perspective of an end-resource logic: as tissues for research and transplants and sometimes as organs for effective business in the wider market economy. In line with my claim, it does not matter how convincing is the argument we put forward in favour of cloning, the critical issue is that the clone is perceived as an endless stockpile of body parts that can be harvested and stored and later used either to prolong human life indefinitely or to cure disease. In its production, even before a grown clone appears, the clone is already reduced to a resource, to a kind of property to be optimized for the benefit of others [40].

Furthermore, with the growing dislike of our natural *being-in-the-world* and as technology continues to advance, so birth will be regarded as an accident or even as a scandal, a bizarre kind of thing not to be desired by anyone. We are no longer going to be born or *thrown-into-the-world* to use Heidegger’s expression; we are going to be *made-into-the-world* because human nature is continuously seen from the frame of the power of technology as a way of being to be continually improved and enhanced. To give another practical example to illustrate what I imply, consider amniocentesis, which allows the sex of the foetus to be identified early in pregnancy. In relatively overpopulated countries like India and even in less constrained contexts, parents abort foetuses because of their sex. However, by the fact that this is made possible, what was formerly a matter of natural luck can now be planned and controlled, changing its meaning for everyone, including even those who do not use technology. In such a world, the human subject is no longer seen as having her own independent way of life and subjectivity, free from the influence of modern

technology. Rather, she is an instrument and resource, to be brought forward or altered at will or disposed of at will for money or for some other contingent ends. This is outrageous, we cannot just regard our bodies as manipulable stuff; the body has its own ontological significance in need of space to manifest itself and be respected.

The issues I have raised above and the entire situation created by the implied technologies manifest the kind of people we are in the scientific and technological world; we moderns seem to be dissatisfied with our own natural, pristine condition of being; we are busy reconstituting and gathering our destiny into our own hands, making the work of God into our human free choices. Of course, as I have argued, the consequences of this are clear: technological control changes us into its instruments, which indeed reflects the Heideggerian idea of the *supreme danger* that comes from seeing technological *revealing* as the sole way to explain our being as humans and as panacea to our inabilities. The profound paradox of being *en-framed* into a *standing-reserve* is that human beings have now become one of the components or instruments to achieve technological means; they are to forsake their own selfhood as the end of technology in order to work with the reconstituting instrumental logic of technology. As the critic Ellul observes in *The Technological Society*, “the human hand no longer spans the complex of means, nor does the human brain synthesize man’s acts; only the monism (*power*) of technique assures cohesion between humans and acts [41].” This entire situation of the human condition in the technological frame leads to the fact that it is not humans anymore who use technological gadgets but technology itself holds the power to decide what the future will be like and to dominate the human function in its mechanical progress. In this sense, the development of technology follows the supreme and esteemed technological value or principle: efficiency, which has no moral bearing. Under these ontological influences of technology, people lose their critical course towards it.

This modern, exceptional absorption into the technological resource pool reduces our unique human character; it results from the fact that we modern subjects turn the practices developed by the scientists for objectifying and controlling nature, back *onto ourselves*. Consequently, we transform ourselves into objects, programmed working machines lacking any reflective or thinking ability of our own for self-determination. This makes our lives in the world become more abstract and apparent. But as our lives become more apparent, it is difficult to know how to identify and assess what constitutes our subjectivity. Hence the process of technological challenge becomes self-generating and self-defeating, without any external referent, in the sense that, as we are made more technological, so our acquired organizational nature

becomes more sophisticated as an end in itself, turning us into its means. In this regard, we are indebted with an urgent need to recognize that we are not essentially feedback mechanisms but purposive beings who act on the basis of contextual meaning and concern for their own being, not simply in response to ‘perceived technological raw data’ [42]. We have to stop and reflect on the condition and meaning of our existence in the modern technological culture.

The Loss of Human Essence

The unfortunate obsession with technology that we experience makes us fail to recognize our ontological value as the end towards which technology is purported to serve. Once caught up in such technological framework, we end up substituting or surrendering our whole subjectivity to technology, eventually losing it. In other words, when we unintelligently comport ourselves toward technology, we move far away from our own essence, and from the possibility of encountering our true essence. This is where the *greatest danger* of modern technology lies, as once claimed by Heidegger. We are no longer a *revealing* where entities show up their ontological significance, such that we are in danger of becoming disconnected from the *essence* of our own truth. Heidegger categorically observes this whole critical situation when he says that “... 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 affected man in his essence”.

The rule of *en-framing* 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 [43]”The *essence* that Heidegger is referring to is man’s revelatory nature. Heidegger thinks that we get lost in the world of things; we ourselves become objects *not in the world* but *within the world*. Miguel De Beistegui explains further this same critical situation of the modern subject when he says that the greatest danger in modern technology is the complete disconnection of the human from its essence, that is, from its openness and exposedness to the essence of truth as un-concealment [44]. The technological frame of human self-expression threatens to sweep the same human subject as a way of revealing, thrusting her into the danger of surrendering her free essence [45]. Heidegger underlines this whole, new technological human condition remarking: “As compared with other revealing, the setting-upon that challenges forth thrusts man into a relation to that which is, that is at once antithetical and rigorously ordered. Where *en-framing* holds sway, regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing. They no longer even let their own fundamental characteristic appear, namely, this revealing as such [46].”

The critical issue is that we continually surrender our natural un-concealment and, consequently, our selfhood and subjectivity to science and technology, leaving us with only the illusion that we are in control to the point that our participation in the activity of *revealing*, as Heidegger claims, is limited [47]; we do not *reveal* out of our own self-activity. The *revealing* occurs through, but not out of us human subjects, as an effect of which we are the cause, since we have already surrendered our nature to science and technology; our subjectivity has become unnoticeable, to the point that it has virtually disappeared [48].

Heidegger further argues over this human annihilating force of technology saying: “*In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence.* Man stands so decisively in attendance on the challenging-forth of *en-framing* that he does not apprehend *en-framing* as a claim, that he fails to see himself as the one spoken to, and hence also fails in every way to hear in what respect he ek-sists, from out of his essence, in the realm of an exhortation or address, and thus *can never* encounter only himself [49].” The truth of the matter of modern technology is that the one thing humans *never* encounter is themselves, that is, as they are in their essence/essentially. Under the technological frame of evidence, humans fail to understand their essential situation because they fail to attune themselves to the manner in which they are determined in advance by the *en-framing* nature of modern technology and to how this essentially dictates the way they comport themselves toward reality.

As different technologies evolve, the unfortunate part of it is that we become so inured to their impact upon our lives that we hardly notice their subtle integration into our concept of being human. Optimism in science and technology without limits effectively creates the possibility of self-destruction, the individual, disenfranchised and substituted by intelligent-machines and the robotopian ideals for human meaning. We should, however, not forget that there is a serious ontological divide created by the very technologies we use. This divide or disconnection of man from his essence signal the threat of a total inauthentic or inhuman mode of existence (alienation of man from himself/his own essence) we humans will ever live in human history.

CONCLUSION

In this article, it has been discussed that technology is a human reconstituting phenomenon, particularly in our way of *being-in-the-world*, posing a threat to our subjectivity. Under the monopoly of technology’s power over nature, humans are not free at all; instead, they fall into two kinds of danger: one is that they themselves are regarded as *standing-reserve* resources and the other is that they are unable to grasp

the ontological meaning of their own existence. They are no longer concerned as living creatures with their own subjectivities, but rather, have lost their authentic subjectivity. The entire situation means that humans are blocked from having access to a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal *truth*; technology tends to reduce every aspect of human nature that was once valued and revered about us to a mere stockpile of forces to be ranked and ordered according to various schemes of calculative thought and interests. Modern technology has stepped outside its own sphere and the classical Greeks’ understanding of *techné* and *poiesis* production and unconcealment of the ontological significance of entities is not legitimate any more. Modern technology has acquired the position of the sole power with the tendency to manipulate the world and man himself.

In a deeper level, it has been argued that such technological invasion has forced man into a quasi-helpless condition. He has been reduced to a mere instrument of technology, losing his subjectivity in the process, and can only define himself as an objectified thing or as a number, there to enable the technological system to work itself out. Instead of man making deliberate choices for the organization of himself and his world, it is his acquired technological nature that dictates the choices he has to make; he himself is no longer the subject, rather he has become an object or material in the organization of modern technology, consequently reconstituted by his own technology. Furthermore, his subjectivity has acquired an inverted meaning; it has been *de-centred* and fragmented. Under this overwhelming and illusive intrusion and dominion of technology, it is difficult for humans to claim their autonomous subjectivity, putting into question their ability to fight consciously against the domination of technology.

Finally, the article has argued that the problem of technology is not only about the manipulative essence of technology but also our improper, inauthentic relationship to technology and our attempt to define ourselves technologically. It is about what technology is telling us of ourselves. The misconceived understanding of both our being and the being of technology causes us inappropriately and unconsciously to attempt to *take on* the structure of technology, in order to make sense of and to justify our own existence. This leads to our failure to realize that the various technologies we employ create a discrepancy in our individual thought and our way of life. If that discrepancy is not resolved by a positive and intelligent approach to technology, it will instead be resolved by lurid and sensationalistic trappings, essentially aborting whatever rational control we might try to extend over our human destinies. However, any understanding of ourselves through technology alone eventually will alienate us from our responsible

subjective way of being. The remedy to this whole alienating technological situation is that we have first to develop an integral, normative and inclusive comprehension of human nature before we actually integrate technology into our lifestyle.

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