

**A RESPONSE TO THE ENFRAMING NATURE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY**

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**Abstract:** *The objective of this article is to reflect on the ontological solutions to the transcendental problems of modern technology underlined in my previous publications. My claim is that solutions to the transcendental and reconstituting power of modern technology should, above all, be ingrained in the human subject's self-understanding and not merely on technical experts. The think piece of this claim is that even though the problems of technology overwhelm the individual human subject, it does not necessarily imply that she remains a helpless victim on the face of technology; there is always a way forward. Recourse to ontological responses to the transcendental, manipulative powers of technology is all about bringing technology back home, to the genuine meaning it was originally intended to have, which is to disclose nature as meaningful, and to serve human purposes.*

**Key words:** *Enframing, Transcendental problems, ontological solutions.*

**Introduction**

In my previous publications, I discussed the downsides of modern technology and raised psychological self-awareness of its ontological problems without offering some line of action or a way forward. I realize this to be a mistake since it can influence a possible affiliation to a pessimistic and rigidly Luddite stances as resistance to technology, or even adoption of external, democratic and legislative interventions such as those proposed by Andrew Feenberg.<sup>i</sup> Such measures when applied are insufficient, and sometimes ineffective, inappropriate and self-alienating as they tend to duplicate the problem of equally instrumentalising the solutions to the transcendental problems of technology, instead of considering these in terms of their ontological influence, which the *enframed*<sup>ii</sup> subject owes a unique responsibility.

The objective of this article is to reflect on the ontological solutions to the transcendental problems of modern technology underlined in my previous publications. My claim is that solutions to the transcendental and reconstituting effects of technology should, above all, be ingrained in the human subject's self-understanding and not merely on some external agents. The think piece of this claim is the indubitable fact that the problems of technology overwhelm the individual human subject, but this does not necessarily imply that she remains a helpless victim on the face of technology; there is always a way forward. Recourse to ontological responses to the transcendental, manipulative powers of technology that are grounded in human agency is all about bringing technology back *home*, to the genuine meaning it was originally intended to have, which is to disclose nature as meaningful, and to serve human purposes.<sup>iii</sup> This claim for ontological and transcendental solutions is derived from Heidegger's insight into the predicaments of modern technology. Heidegger indicates that:

“We are thinking of the possibility that, the world civilization that is just now beginning might one day overcome its technological-scientific-industrial character as the sole criterion of man's world sojourn. This may happen, not of and through itself, but in virtue of the readiness of man for a determination which, whether heeded or not, always speaks in the destiny of man.”<sup>iv</sup>

Human subjectivity becomes decisive in the whole technological interface when technology is relocated to its right footing, which is to serve humans and nature. We should not be quick to go outside of both technology and the human subject to look for solutions to technological challenges we experience; nor

should we rely only on experts or on politicians to give us technical solutions even to ontological problems of technology, as Feenberg assumes, with his socio-political account of technology. Any attempt to do so will be a failure to take responsibility for our own lives, and instead, transfer it to somebody or to some external agent to determine human destiny.

I want to indicate that the ontological response to transcendental problems of modern technology offered in this article should not be considered as a matter of mere descriptions and prescriptions that advise us on how to act in a given technological situation. We cannot achieve solutions to technological problems simply by acting ethically. Although various problems of technology contain ethical implications, my objective is not to give ethical or technical solutions, nor to give us an ethics of technology. Rather, as it has been claimed, the major assessment of technology is essentially ontological and metaphysical, which calls for transcendental solutions without undermining technical ones. In this regard, I consider the ontological account of the solutions to the challenges of modern technology to be the most adequate because of its ability to go beyond mere technical considerations, to transform our instrumental regard to technology into an internal relationship, which empowers us to be *resolute* whenever we employ technology as opposed to Feenberg's socio-political reconstruction of technology, for instance.

### **Resoluteness or Self and Technological Consciousness**

To understand the relevance of *resoluteness* or self and technological consciousness in the technological frame of evidence, it is fundamental to concede to the indubitable reality of modern technology. Technology has occupied a vital place in the thinking and lived-experience of modern subjects. We are living in a technological world and technology is a constitutive element of our being to the height where it is impossible to envisage a life devoid of technological systems of influence. In its positive construction, technology has made our lives easier by helping us technically to manage our tasks, the environment, record and store useful information that we need in a secure manner. **Technology facilitates** humans to work efficiently, while saving time, which can further be spent on other constructive activities.

In my previous publications on the subject of modern technology, I argued that technology is a transcendental phenomenon that is more than a mere instrument for achieving particular calculated ends; it is an internal relationship, which relates us to the world. Technology works on a deeper transcendental level of reconstituting and restructuring both humans and nature.<sup>v</sup>It is a global, all-encompassing phenomenon, which determines almost every aspect of life assessment, thereby threatening human self-consciousness. As a reconstituting phenomenon, technology cannot be classified as entirely good or entirely bad, but paradoxical in nature, with the capacity to produce both bad and good results.<sup>vi</sup>

Treating technology as external objects we use leads to critical questions such as: should we be caught up in seeking for mere scientific and technological satisfaction as response to our material needs? Should we be determined by a one-sided instrumental relationship with technology? Any attempt to give a *yes* answer to these questions would imply falling under the technical frame of technological consideration, which does not tell us much about the complex nature of technology. It would also imply that we act as mere agents of technology to promote its course of efficient production for maximum consumption and business purposes without our own individual determination. Technology in its negative visage tends to serve technologization; that is, the reduction of all entities, including humans to intrinsically meaningless resources standing by for optimization.<sup>vii</sup>Subjectively, humans are turned to be

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the servers of their own development; they become not ends but means to serve technology, thereby being denied the possibility for technological self-consciousness or *resoluteness*.<sup>viii</sup>

*Resoluteness* in the technological frame of influence signifies growth in the awareness of the *enframed* nature of human subjectivity in technology and the desire to grow out of it through the resurgence of human abilities for self-determination. This occurs not by trying to escape the potential *dangers* of technology for fear of its negative impacts, and condemning it out-rightly, but by transforming the same dangers into an empowering force that will motivate a deep reflection on the human condition, while searching for appropriate answers with respect to the problems of technological *enframing*.<sup>ix</sup> Under such claims, *resoluteness* should not just be lived as actuality, when careful concrete decisions are to be taken, but more deeply as a possibility projected ahead of ourselves, a kind of open awareness of the human condition, amidst technological forces that tend to obscure human ability for self-determination. Such awareness prepares us to take up various technologies in positive ways that stand firm against the underlying technologization. A text from John Macquarrie helps to elucidate the argument: "Conscience can at best *awaken* in the fallen man the awareness of the lost possibility of being. It can disclose to him his ontological possibility of authenticity."<sup>x</sup>

The call for technological consciousness in a technologically complex society is advanced by Martin Heidegger in his work *The Question Concerning Technology*; Andrew Feenberg in his work *Questioning Technology*, and by Iain Thomson's latest work *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (2005). In developing self and technological consciousness, Heidegger claimed that "where *danger* is, grows the *saving power* also."<sup>xi</sup> To be 'saved' in Heideggerian terms means to be *resolute* as a technique to relocate technology to its proper place of serving human purposes, which manifests itself through *self-care*, where humans have a responsibility toward themselves; a kind of openness to the disclosure of their being in relation to the world of their comportment.<sup>xii</sup> Heidegger in *Being and Time* argues that "...*resoluteness* does not detach *Dasein* from its world, nor does it isolate it as a free floating ego. How could it, if *resoluteness* as authentic disclosedness is, after all, nothing other than authentically *being-in-the-world*? *Resoluteness* brings the self right into its being together with things at hand, actually taking care of them."<sup>xiii</sup>

Echoing Heidegger's sentiments, it is absolutely unfeasible to run away from the technologically determined world we find ourselves in, but through *resoluteness*, we listen to our existence calling us. *Resoluteness* enables us to listen to the unsettling character of our being as that which is manipulated and reconstituted by technology, thereby enabling us to make ontological *decisions* that reflect a meaningful manner of being in the technological world. This is fundamentally important if we are to recover our subjectivity and live as humans in a world that is directed and determined by hi-tech forces. In *resoluteness* we run ahead of the possible reconstituting dangers of whatever technology we crave to use, before making a decisive move to employ it. Failure to embrace *resoluteness* eventually complicates our comportment to technology, adding up to an inauthentic relationship with it.

It is regrettable that most of the time, particularly in our day-to-day use of technology, we seem not to be *resolute* or *conscious* of our condition in technology; we seem not to make authentic decisions about our existence in its technologically reconstituted and restructured valuation. Instead, we just drift along, think and do what the minds behind the technologies we use think and do for us, giving ourselves up unconsciously to technological manipulation without thinking of its effects. We think that those who make the technology also make decisions on our behalf and we only need to fulfil or implement them. Worse still, it only becomes an issue for us when we realize the technologies we use to make our lives comfortable do not go as well as we expected. When the technologies do not serve us the way we want,

we choose to shift, probably to another already existing technology or to redesign a new one. This is precisely what Feenberg, with his social account of technology, seems to suggest, failing to reflect sufficiently upon its ontological impact on those who employ the technology. Taking technical approaches would mean ontologically that our existence is interpreted externally or from objectified technological forces that determine it, limiting our subjectivity to a mere technical management of technology, while obscuring all possible future understanding of its determining effects.

It is essentially important to take into account that *resoluteness* as a response to technological human challenges should not be thought only when there is a situation of crisis or danger; it does not happen overnight, it has to be done steadfastly and consistently, allowing us to become increasingly aware of our transcendental essence through which the ontological meaning of technology is disclosed and experienced with greater clarity. *Resoluteness* is as an ongoing process, which underlines our everyday experience with technology since we live in a world that calls for a constant reminder of our transient life circumstances and engagement with it as we carefully make *decisions* that will re-affirm our subjectivity amidst technological *destining* and reconstituting forces becomes indispensable. A *resolute* acceptance of our fallen condition in technology requires us to open ourselves up and to trust in the power of our individual subjectivities. This does not mean to change what we are, nor does it mean we disengage from the technological world, but to develop consciousness that promotes a careful and free relationship with technology and a significant sense of *dwelling* in the hi-tech world. This promotes the idea of *being at home* in a mechanically structured world in which we live and operate as humans with a responsibility toward ourselves. Promoting self and technological consciousness (*resoluteness*) is to develop not merely the **outward** looking approaches to life, but *inward* and self-engaging relation, where we have to turn deep into the basis of our consciousness, sometimes into our own technologically manipulated condition, with the cause to participate actively and intelligently in rechanneling technology to rightfully serve our purposes.

### Questioning Technology

The greatest philosophical problem today lies with our uncritical attitude towards technology; we moderns relate to it from a merely instrumental standpoint, without ever pausing to understand critically its complex ontological structure. This leaves us with a gap that can only be filled by a critical attitude, not to regard technology merely as an external instrument, or as an issue that requires technical solutions. In my previous publications, I emphasized that *enframing* has become a general way of *revealing* reality in the technological society, not in their original and pristine manner, but as a manipulated stockpile of resources for exploitation. The reflective stance to this situation motivated by Heidegger is that of *questioning* technology, which is a reflection on its structural workings geared both towards a general knowledge and existential awareness of technology's *enframing* nature. *Questioning* has a twofold function: first, to *question* the transcendental ontology of technology with the purpose of bringing technology back to its innovative function, as an internal relationship that relates us to the world, where entities are supposed to be revealed in their ontological significance. Second, we also *question* our naive attitudes to technology that have made it an external phenomenon and instrument for particular ends, impeding recognition of its manipulative structural operations.

#### a. *Questioning the Transcendental Ontology of Technology*

As underlined, *questioning* is the most fundamental way of getting to know the metaphysical operations of technology. The rationale of *questioning* is not for sheer technical **control** of technology as an external incursion in the *ontic* level of human relationship with it (a position assumed by Feenberg, as I showed in the previous chapter). Rather, the issue at hand concerns a **defence** of technology's ontological significance, which has been obscured by our superficial, instrumental regard, making

humans incapable of recognizing its significance. Instead of seeing technology negatively as essentially *de-centring* us, we should *question* it or consider it as a reality that interrogates us. Technology interrogates us to find the ontological significance of entities it tends to disclose and our proper place in the modern technologically sophisticated world. It is more of a calling for self-affirmation in the disclosure of the ontological significance of entities that is now overshadowed by the manipulative technological disclosure of reality. In the beginning of his essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger states the importance of *questioning* technology, namely, "*Questioning* builds a way."<sup>xiv</sup> That is, it builds an alternative path toward understanding the dynamics of its metaphysical operations and its ontological downsides, where both humans and nature are reconstituted as a *standing-in-reserve*.

A critical reflection on the ontology of technology creates not only the awareness of its explicit benefits, but also of its manipulative power, setting us to be vigilant to its possible misgivings. Heidegger succinctly remarks:

"Everything, then, depends upon this: that we ponder this arising, and that, recollecting, we watch over it. How can this happen? Above all through our catching sight of what comes to presence in technology, instead of merely staring at the technological."<sup>xv</sup>

The objective of *questioning* is not to remain fixed on the instrumental meaning of technology and its benefits,<sup>xvi</sup> but to *keep watch* over what comes out of our entanglement with technology, as opposed to simply remaining on the hook of the technological network of apparatus and equipment. When we come to realize that technology levels us down by reducing us to *standing-in-reserve*, and that we do not control its revealing, but merely participate in that overwhelming mediated and manipulating revealing, then we are called to return to a proper relationship with it that respects our ontological significance, which does not necessarily imply we abandon technology because of its embedded dangers. Influenced by Heidegger, Jacques Ellul makes a fascinating observation when he says, "it is not a question of getting rid of technology, but an act of freedom, of transcending it."<sup>xvii</sup> The more we critically *question* and engage ourselves to think upon the multifaceted essence of technology, the more we come up with other ontological ways of relating with it. All purported to empower our subjectivity over technological *destiny*.<sup>xviii</sup> Further, having a comprehensive knowledge of the ontological implications of technology helps us to use it in a watchful and appropriate way that opposes its underlying, overwhelming and manipulating power.

*b. Questioning our Attitudes towards Technology*

*Questioning* our attitudes towards technology is all about reflecting on ourselves, on our naïve and instrumentally influenced stances toward technology, and also to interrogate our ways of life that seem to have been surrendered to technological *destiny* as remarked by Heidegger in his critical claim that "everywhere we remain un free and chained to technology."<sup>xix</sup> Being chained to technology creates a dependency syndrome that incapacitates our ability to effect anything without the use of technology, while we continue to function with relatively uninformed conceptions of its impact on us. This dependence has left us with virtually no alternative place to take up a critical position toward its manipulative monopoly of *revealing* reality. The instrumental approach to technology has prevented us from knowing or understanding the technical implications of the different appealing technologies that we employ. To *question* our instrumental and externalising attitudes to technology, therefore, helps to free us from the persuasion of being chained to it. This claim is profoundly explained by Heidegger in his remark:

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“We shall be questioning concerning *technology*, and in so doing we should like to prepare a free relationship to it. The relationship will be free if it opens our human existence to the essence of technology. When we can respond to this essence, we shall be able to experience the technological within its own bounds.”<sup>xx</sup>

Heidegger’s sentiment is that technology is an elusive and captivating phenomenon, any complex connections between humanity and technology demands that humans develop a proper and alert relationship with it. However, to attain such a relationship with technology demands that it should not be taken merely as a *present-at-hand* or *read-to-hand* instrument, used to realize exacting tasks. Any attempt to consider it in that way will ultimately chain humans to its captivating benefits, missing the chance of paying attention to its mysterious ontological *essence*.

We *question* our attitudes not only when the technological instruments, tools or gadgets we employ malfunction (rendered *present-at-hand*), but also when we use them transparently, since even good technologies have reconstituting effects on both humans and the world. In this regard, reflecting on our attitudes toward technology helps rid us of any naïve and instrumental regard for technology that tend to frustrate our attempt to overcome its reconstituting and restructuring power. Ellul had observed this when he wrote that “man must be capable of *questioning* at every step his use of his technical goods, able to refuse them and to force them to submit to determining factors other than the technical – say, the spiritual.”<sup>xxi</sup> *Questioning*, therefore, leads us to treat technology as more than just a matter of technical consideration. As Heidegger had earlier on elucidated in his assertion, “*questioning* is the piety of thought”<sup>xxii</sup> that opens us up to the true reality of modern technology with all its complex structural operations and implications.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Therefore, critically *questioning* both technology and human attitudes toward it should be considered indispensable if they are to understand the mysterious operations and the perils embedded in any technology they employ. It should take the form of ongoing reflection and interrogation of our instrumentally constrained stances, geared towards developing a free relationship with technology.

### Essential or Meditative Thinking

In my article on *The Ontological Paradox of Outsourcing Human Resources to Technology*, I argued that in the modern technological era, humans have become overly accustomed to scientific and technological Calculative Thinking (*CT*); they have taken it as the sole way of addressing their concerns. *CT* plans, calculates, and investigates, setting means to achieve efficient intended results, reducing things to their utility or measurability by the machine *will*.<sup>xxiv</sup> Certainly, *CT* is a brilliant thing, which is to be admired. However, this kind of thinking is problematic since it does not pause to consider the ontological meaning inherent in what is investigated or addressed.<sup>xxv</sup> Instead, it seeks to manipulate, exploit and optimise the reality in question.<sup>xxvi</sup> Graham uses the example of an industrial worker to explain the workings of *CT*, where the industrial factory worker merely throws a switch and achieves profitable results, without having to get to grips at all with the withdrawn ontological forces lying in the wood, so that all their significance is reduced to technological measurability.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Heidegger makes a provocative claim that even in our scientific and technological world “people still do not think.”<sup>xxviii</sup> Such a claim should not be construed to imply the dismissal of the importance of the human power of reason. Heidegger is aware there is a great deal of intellectual activity going on in the world today: there are many research projects, scientific and technological events all over the world. However, for the most part, such activity is carried out within the context and under the idea of scientific and technological *CT*, which in itself excludes other forms of life assessment. Graham,

reiterating what Heidegger says, comments that “humans today flee from thinking, even though it seems like we have become more educated. Thinking has turned into sheer calculation and efficiency.”<sup>xxxix</sup> Heidegger’s sentiment, reiterated by Graham, is that even though humans claim to be enlightened, the indubitable fact is that they have run away from real thinking, and instead, resorted to calculation and efficiency as the absolute and renowned way of being. This has led human, Heidegger thinks, to remain defenceless and perplexed victims at the mercy of the irresistible and superior power of technology.<sup>xxx</sup> In a controversial assertion, addressing science, Heidegger says: “... this situation is grounded in the fact that science itself does not think, and cannot think ....”<sup>xxxi</sup>

Heidegger’s point is not to refute the thinking employed in science and technology, which constitutes the framework of engagement with ourselves and the world to a mode of relationship confined by the parameters of research.<sup>xxxii</sup> Rather, he reckons, science does not think, because it has left out the basic aspects of human existence, and overlooks the ontological movement or principle of each entity. Entities are now objects of scientific investigation, not for their own sake, but for scientific ends, monopolizing their domain. Heidegger’s strong assertions against science can make many, particularly those attached to scientific and technological *CT* uncomfortable. However, the issue is that we need to train ourselves in the ability to think *essentially*, reflecting on the overall nature of things and on ourselves as disclosers of the ontological significance of entities. Scientific and technological *CT* has no ontological foundation, since it manipulates all other forms of assessment, and therefore, cannot count as *proper* thinking. David Krell in the introduction to Heidegger’s essay on *What Calls for Thinking*, thinks that *CT*, despite its importance to science, still does not fulfil all the requirements of man’s *Essential Thinking* (*ET*) nature, and therefore remains incomplete.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Since *CT* lacks ontological bearing, then, humans have to evaluate critically all misleading and instrumental notions around it. This is not to say they ought to disengage themselves from science and technology, waiting for the advent of a new *destiny*, rather, it is to see *CT* as just one way of thinking, one which should be complemented by *ET*. Heidegger succinctly explains this point, saying:

“Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it.”<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The claim is that *essential* or *meditative thinking* is to be regarded as a complement to *CT*.<sup>xxxv</sup> *ET* implies that we ought not to engage merely in rational calculations of *means* and *ends*, nor thinking in the sense of mental abstraction, in terms of grasping concepts, nor is such thinking even an activity.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Instead, *ET* is an existential mode of comportment that enhances and *reveals* the ontological significance of entities;<sup>xxxvii</sup> a general and practical way of our *being-in-the-world*, through an internal relationship or connectivity with other entities of our relational world. It is a positive attitude toward reality as a whole. It is to think in a manner that allows us to see ourselves as part of the natural world, with a responsibility towards it.

The notion of *ET* takes us to the issue of man’s comportment towards entities explained in my previous article on *The Ontological Paradox of Outsourcing Human Resources to Technology*, where we cannot separate the understanding of ourselves and our relationship with the world from the understanding of existence or life itself. *ET* is a kind of thinking that requires commitment, determination, care, while, as Heidegger claims, “helps as the simple inwardness of existence, insofar as this inwardness, although unable to exercise such thinking or only theoretical knowledge of it, kindles its own kind.”<sup>xxxviii</sup> The

argument is that, unlike technological *CT*, which is one-sided and manipulative,<sup>xxxix</sup> as manifested in its tendency to programme, measure and set upon things for optimization, *ET* takes an *inward-looking* approach to human existence and to man's relation to things in the natural world; it is open to nature and capable of arousing wonder in things. Emphasising the value of inwardness, Verbeek argues:

“When humans only think intellectually, they only solve technological problems, leaving their real problems unaffected. Only an authentic way of thinking in which individuals exist as themselves will allow them to turn the situation in which they find themselves into something for which they are responsible.”<sup>xi</sup>

As Verbeek claims, technological *CT* can solve technological problems, but it cannot solve the deeper ontological problems of technology, since they are beyond the technical sphere. The metaphysical nature of technology calls upon humans to open themselves to ontological realm of their being,<sup>xii</sup> which is not attuned to the manipulative operations of modern technology. This openness resists the misconception of seeing technology as a mere collection of technical artefacts that serves as means for human stipulated ends in terms of their use-value. Ontological openness to human existence is to regard nature as having its own purpose of being, which is to arouse the mystery, sense of wonder, beauty, and the whole function of the ecosystem, and not to regard it as an object to be manipulated and exploited by man's calculative will. *ET* manifested in art and poetry promotes a comportment to reality that respects and enhances a relationship that is akin to the value of nature and humans.<sup>xiii</sup>

Humans think *properly*, therefore, when they think ontologically in terms of addressing concerns that go beyond the manipulative scientific and technological influence. At the same time they need to make an attempt to restore technology, as a medium that relates them to the world, to its original ontological meaning of bestowing value and purposes on things. Heidegger observes this function of *ET*, saying:

“Everything, then, depends upon this: that we reflect on its emergence [i.e., on the emergence of that which might save] and, in recollection, tend it. How does that happen? Before anything else, by our seeing the essence of technology instead of merely gaping at technological things.”<sup>xliii</sup>

*ET* enables humans to see once again the original, positive and valuable essence of technology, as *techné*, that is meant to serve human purposes. It is all about adopting a positive attitude in our dealings not only with technology, but also with ourselves (since we are part of nature), which is open to all human beings.<sup>xliii</sup> Human beings are the only entities that can listen to the call of *ET*; that is, to a call to their own subjectivity and responsibility toward themselves. *ET* does not objectify reality as calculative scientific and technological manipulative thinking does. Rather, it engages us to contemplate the ontological meaning in everything that forms part of our engagement, helping us to appreciate things as they are, while taking up responsibility towards them. Unlike *CT* that is exclusive, *ET* is inclusive: in its structural operation, it includes *CT* as well. For example, a botanist working in a seed company develops new maize seeds, reflecting on the condition of the soil that will favour the growth of the seeds, while also contemplating their beauty by sharing the direct, immediate and spontaneous experience of those seeds that constitute his world of meaning and significance.

Therefore, humans have to affirm the fact that *CT* is an essential and unavoidable aspect of modern man's existence, but such thinking (present in science and technology) is insufficient and has to be balanced with *essential* or *meditative thinking*, if they are to face up to the manipulative challenges of modern technology. In embracing *ET*, humans break away from the influence of Cartesian and Kantian rationalistic interpretation of human subjectivity epitomized in *CT*, where the human subject on one

handis conceived of as a thinking substance, separate from the world. While on the other hand, the world is considered a projection and product of mental cognition (which has given rise to scientific and technological manipulation of nature). *ET* is a move beyond scientific and technological *calculative* relation with nature, away from superficial instrumental stances to technology. It transcends the horizon of technology, to what pertains to the nature of reality in general, and to our nature as humans in particular.<sup>xlv</sup>

### Detachment or *Releasement*

Earlier on I argued that technology is not a phenomenon whose significance and effects humans can deny, nor can they totally get rid of its restructuring and reconstituting influence. Why? Because, ubiquitously humans are chained to it, dependent upon it; they cannot do without technology. However, this situation, of being captivated and chained to technology, creates a dilemma, since on the one hand technology impoverishes our relationship with the world and with ourselves by undermining direct human engagement, while on the other hand the use of technology is so fundamentally important that we cannot do without it.<sup>xlvi</sup> How can we solve this dilemma? Appropriating Heidegger, the possible means out of this dilemma is through detachment,<sup>xlvii</sup> which is a particular mind-set<sup>xlviii</sup> and comportment. Detachment is all about taking a standpoint, or a kind of active and positive attitude toward technology as a whole;<sup>xlix</sup> it is to take a responsibility for ourselves, and to be in the technological world without losing our subjective responsibility toward ourselves. It further means being in the technological world and using hi-tech devices as they ought to be used, while letting them alone as something that does not dominate and determine our inner sphere of being,<sup>l</sup> our subjectivity. Heidegger directly claims that the comportment towards technology which expresses *yes* and at the same time *nois releasement* toward things of our interest.<sup>li</sup> This means that detachment as a position of relating to technology has two forms of self-manifestation: a) to say *no* to technology (*lets technology goof*); and b) to say *yes* to technology *letsit go on*.

To *let technology go of*, basically means to give up the use of a particular technology when it is consciously deemed to impact negatively on human life or when there is a possible alternative to it. It is to renounce our willingness to use a particular technology, depending on its possible effect in our lives, which in itself is a form of *self-care*. By declining to use technology, *releasement* allows for a diversity of open subjective possibilities, where the individual prepares herself to make a more or less a complete break with whatever constrains her in technology and to ponder other better ways of using it; ways that do not lead to further technological manipulation. This attitude of self-care does not imply to embrace a Luddite and conservative stance to technology, but it deeply means standing for and taking responsibility for the ways in which one's existence is affected by technology; to engage in relationships which respect or promote one's subjectivity. It is not to be cynical about the reality of technology, but to be conscientious and responsive, capable of saying *no* to some of those reconstituting forces in order to decide one's own life or *destiny*.<sup>lii</sup> To attain this level, as Zimmerman argues, demands individual maturity or enlightenment, where the individual subject no longer conceives of herself as merely needing technology as an external instrument to realize some of her calculated objectives, constantly seduced and thus compelled to dominate the world around her through technology. Instead, she should consider technology as an internal relationship with a possibility of unconstructively reconstituting her being and opening her whole life-world to technologicalmanipulative frame of evidence.<sup>liii</sup>

Under the consideration of detachment as *letting technology go*, human authentic subjectivity and self-understanding in the phase of technology becomes a project for which humans are accountable, leading to their being *at home* with technology itself. By this I mean it is not just what technology tells about us, but we are also answerable to what we make of ourselves, either consciously or unconsciously, in each

and every moment of our lived experience with technology. Therefore, *to let technology go*, demands that we relinquish its use when necessary, according to its possible effects in our lives. When we recognize this accountability to ourselves, and how a particular technology can affect our lives unconsciously, then we choose to *let go* both technology and our will to use it.

*Letting technology go on* is the reverse of *letting go* technology. It basically means that humans should use technology in a manner that serves the purposes of relating them to the world of their existential structure and concerns. In general, it is to take a cautious and keen position towards technology in terms of integral human development. Ingrid Scheibler terms this *openness* to technology, for it to properly serve humans.<sup>iv</sup> Certainly, *letting technology go on* leads us to a fundamental question: How feasible is it? We can use technological gadgets diligently to serve our purposes and still be free from bondage to them, denying them an exclusive and manipulative claim over us as. This claim can be enlightened by the text from Heidegger:

“We can use technical devices, and yet with the proper use also keep ourselves so free of them, that we may let go of them at any time.... We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the ‘right’ to dominate us, and so to pervert, confuse, and lay waste our nature.”<sup>iv</sup>

In *letting technology go on*, the basis is not to regard it as the ultimate and final value or *destiny* that defines the meaning of our being and the being of reality in general; it is not the antidote to all human problems. Rather, technology should be treated as an internal relationship, which constantly calls for human conscious awareness of the field to which its objects belong and in which structure they operate.<sup>vi</sup> It is an awareness of the horizon of technological devices rather than regarding them as determinants of human *destiny*. As Rojcewicz would argue, a relationship, which is exemplified by detachment continually uses things and places them in their ontological significance; it avoids the danger of being taken as a *standing reserve*.<sup>vii</sup> Echoing Heidegger, Ellul, asserts that “as long as man does not learn to use technical objects in the right way he must remain their slave.”<sup>lviii</sup> Somewhere else, Heidegger asserts:

“Our relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed. We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute.”<sup>lix</sup>

As it was pointed out earlier, moderns have first to recognize that they are actually hooked into technology, and must have the willingness to *let go/get off* of that reconstituting hook, as Zimmerman directly remarks: “We can be “released” from its grip only to the extent that we recognize that we are in its grip: this is the paradox.”<sup>lx</sup> With such consciousness, humans cannot simply abandon technologies such as: radios, internet, newspapers, cell phones, power plants, and so on. The appropriate use of these technologies in our everyday lives implies that we can employ them and still say *no* to their attempt to claim us in terms of possessing us to the point of turning us to be helpless without them. The provocation to say *no* and *yes* to technology is fundamentally for *self-care* as self-responsibility. Francois Raffoul asserts this claim when he says: “This determination of *Dasein*[man] from the outset defines the self as a responsibility of itself.”<sup>lxi</sup> Instead of keeping a disconnected distance from technology in the sense of avoiding it or simply thinking of it as a transparent instrument used to realize particular ends, detachment opens our attitude of openness to technology and to ourselves, recognizing technology as a reconstituting phenomenon that should be carefully chosen, particularly when the situation dictates. It is a kind of waiting.<sup>lxii</sup>

Thus, to embrace detachment as a way of relating to modern technology puts forward our ability to adopt a certain flexibility and reflexivity in our stances toward it. By flexibility I imply our human ability to adjust sometimes our superficial, naïve and conventional regard to technology (as a mere instrument), which sometimes, if not in most cases, frustrates our critical stances to it. We should not be tempted to remain in the technical and instrumental stance, which focuses only on how technology efficiently responds to our objectives of life, but instead, adopt alternative and open stances to it, beyond mere technical considerations.<sup>lxiii</sup> Such reflexivity involves our cognisant ability to have an *inward-looking* and critical loom that leads to the understanding of the way technology works in reconstituting the ways we relate to ourselves and to the world.<sup>lxiv</sup> It is in recognizing that technological entities or products tend to affect our modes of being that we take up measures that will help us correct this imminent risk. We cannot let technology to run its course in us on its own accord without this *inward-looking* and reflective involvement with it.

I am conscious that to choose detachment as a transcendental solution to technological influence may not be entirely illuminating for the technologists, the designers, or the decision makers interested in how this comportment to technology relates to their practices as designers and decision makers. In detachment there appears to be lacking any positive program for intervention. It appears to urge them to remove themselves from their business. But as a philosopher (not a technical expert) detachment is among the best instruments humans can employ to face the problem of technological monopoly and influence. This does not mean we should take a disinterested stance or a withdrawal from the technological world, nor is it the denial of worldly things, particularly technological enticements. Detachment does not consist in avoiding technologically mediated experiences or settings. Even less is it an escape from technology. It is not a minimisation of one's involvement with technology that could lead to a disinterested engagement with it. Rather, detachment involves the development of an explicit, active, watchful and continuous attitude of engagement with modern technology,<sup>lxv</sup> which results from a resolute acceptance of the unsettling character of our being in the technological frame, from *essential thinking* and from the *questioning* of technology. All is to develop a free and critical approach to technology that could lead to the understanding of its true essence and structural operations, while attempting to locate technology to its place, which is to properly serve both nature and humans in their relationship with the world of their engagement.<sup>lxvi</sup>

### Conclusion

I have attempted to offer some transcendental solutions to metaphysically reconstituting problems of modern technology, underlined in my previous publications. I have provided a philosophical basis through which the power of modern technology can be taken seriously, while at the same time avoiding the mistake of falsely thinking that we are helpless victims of technology. The above transcendental solutions are not aimed at giving practical instrumental techniques for managing the emerging problems of modern technology, but to retrieve our seemingly lost subjectivity in the face of technological forces and monopoly, so that we humans can develop a relationship with technology that is oriented toward the disclosure of reality, respecting its ontological significance, which should eventually lead us to a proper and balanced *dwelling* in the modern technological world. I am aware that transcendental responses to the complex nature of modern technology do not address every problem of technology, but it is one possible way of understanding and approaching it since technology is an area that can be approached from a variety of perspectives. The ontological account of the solutions is one of the many ways of approaching and dealing with the challenges of modern technology.

Furthermore, authentic solutions should originate from our conscious experience with technology and from recognition of our restructured and reconstituted condition, preceded by the will to *turn* away from those problems *toward* our subjectivity for self-decision. Given the transcendental nature of the problems of modern technology, then, the ontological response is more appropriate, particularly for its *inward-looking* character, which should be considered the basic starting point to an adequate relationship with technology, before resorting to other technical and external solutions. The purpose of turning toward ourselves is to enforce the role of our subjectivity for a proper *dwelling* in a technological world as a response to the alienation caused by a technological frame of life assessment.

The above transcendental solutions are subjective or *inward-looking* in nature; they signify a call to commit ourselves to our individual responsibility, if we are to overcome the manipulating power of technology and have authentic *dwelling* in the technologically determined world. We have to conceive of ourselves as subjects who have a responsibility toward ourselves, engaged in searching for answers to our own situation. This responsibility is realised through a *diligent* and critical regard for the different technologies we employ on a day-to-day basis; we have to affirm ourselves within the technological frame of manipulation and redirect technology to its proper end, which is to be at the service of both humans and nature; we should *think* seriously about our existence with technology in a critical way free from any instrumental influences of technology.

In addition, I want to affirm that the discussed transcendental solutions to the manipulating and reconstituting problems of modern technology are not the ultimate ones.<sup>lxvii</sup> There could be more ontological ways of interacting with technology like *poetry* and *art*,<sup>lxviii</sup> which should not be undermined by modern systems of expressing our commitment to a meaningful subjectivity.<sup>lxix</sup>

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