

On Technology

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Introduction: What Is the Technological Mentality?	3
Two Very Different Technologies	5
The Social Environment, Humanism and Technology	8
The Problem of Uprootedness: Expelled From Our Home	14
The Old Religion As Refuge	25
Notes	30

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE TECHNOLOGICAL MENTALITY?¹

A technology presupposes a mentality. Imagine yourself to be a woman who wants to create a family. You start to look for a man to be the father of your children, but you can't find him for whatever reason there might be.

Actually, finding a man is not an easy task. Even if you might find someone who, at a minimum, might satisfy you, you would not have any guarantee that he might be a good father or even that he could be a father in the clinical sense of the expression. So then you arrive at the conclusion that the best thing would be to raise the child yourself. Notwithstanding that, it is still necessary to become pregnant. But that is also a problem and a bother because you don't have the desire to ask such a thing of any of your friends. So, you fall back on technology to solve the problem and you discover that, in fact, yes, technology has a solution that is effective and efficient.

The most effective and efficient solution, the best way of starting a family, is to go to a web page where you can purchase sperm. There is a very good sperm bank in Denmark which will send you some pictures along with the corresponding instructions. Finally, you decide to do it. You pay with your credit card, you receive the sperm, you follow the instructions and after a few days you determine if you are pregnant. *Voila*, you have started a family in a way that is clean, comfortable and efficient.

Probably, you have gone through this process with some doubts, with many and long conversations with people that you trust. Or, perhaps, the

process will not depend on how much you have acquired a technological mentality. If what interested you was the result and the effectiveness of the process the decision would have been easy. If this were the case, then people would probably have shown their approval and admired your determination and your capacity for resolving things. Perhaps one of your friends would have viewed the whole process with a certain amount of skepticism and dislike. In any case, out of courtesy, this person would have hesitated to show you any animosity because we now live in a technological society and this kind of procedure is not only technically possible, but also, above all, is socially possible and acceptable. In fact, we live in a technological society and, if no one is hurt in the process, we are socially conditioned, at least in public, to accept this kind of short cut.²

The reason that we constantly choose technological short cuts is to satisfy our desires. These desires are all human and legitimate: having children, not dying due to illness, relieving our-

selves from work as soon as possible, multiplying the number of tasks that we are able to do in our workdays, having a cornstalk which produces more grain, making sure there are more goods available for everyone. None of these goals is truly objectionable. In fact, all of them follow a single and legitimate purpose: achieving legitimate human desires. If I may be allowed to say so, even the atomic bomb was in pursuit of the legitimate human goal of erasing all of your enemies when you are at war. Since when is it illegitimate to conquer your enemies when you are at war?

The technological mentality is that which, looking for the satisfaction of human desires, works within us in order to explore and take advantage of short cuts, jumping over the limits imposed as much by nature as by social custom. The technological society is that which declares that jumping over the limits imposed by nature is the correct thing to do, is good and desirable, and calls for breaking the limits imposed by social customs in each historical moment.

TWO VERY DIFFERENT TECHNOLOGIES³

It is true that human beings have always been technological. They have not survived by adapting themselves to the environment, but rather by getting the natural world to adapt to their needs. But it is necessary to bear in mind the difference between older and more modern technology.⁴

Older Technology

In older technology, nature still marked out some insurmountable limits and the environment was transformed only stubbornly, especially when compared to modern technology.

The ancients called technology *mechane*, which in some contexts came to signify more “shrewdness” than “mechanism”.⁵ For example, Archimedes says in his treatise on physics that, given the laws of nature, if we know how to set up a fulcrum and a lever, we can multiply our strength. Theoretically, with an adequate fulcrum and a bar that is sufficiently long, one could move the whole planet. Given

that such a fulcrum and such a bar do not exist, nature is imposing its limits necessarily. Both Archimedes and all the men who repeated this idea had it all clear. Only in modern times do we interpret this dictum as if we men in effect had the capacity of moving the planet with a lever.

Let’s move on to another example. A boat is *mechane*, a shrewd way to take advantage of the winds and the properties of the surface of water in order to move over the oceans without dying by drowning. But a sailboat is at the mercy of the water and the wind. It has some very clear and insuperable external limitations. A bad wave can make it capsize. A complete

calm makes it so that the *mechane* is worthless. In fact, sailing in that way was being still very close to the natural environment and being more conscious of all the limitations since it forced one to pay total attention to the sea, the wind and the stars. All of that increased in man the religious feeling of dependence with respect to the universe. It underscored the power of the universe rather than the power of man. The same can be said of traditional agriculture, of traditional hunting and of the traditional ways of constructing buildings. The saying according to which man is the transformer of his environment has a different meaning depending up whether we are considering the old technology or the modern one, because the old one hardly transformed the environment at all. Nor did it transform the mentality. In the end, it only fed the feeling of human dependence with respect to nature, with respect to the universe.

The traditional societies (like Europe until the time of the Renaissance) did not develop modern technology because the feelings of dependence with respect to the universe were too deeply rooted. The ancient Greeks relied on the religious concept of *hubris*. Any attempt to alter the natural order was understood not only as a sin, but also as foolishness. They expressed this idea in their religious rituals (tragedies were a liturgy) and in their myths, like the marvelous myth of the flight of Icarus or the myth of Prometheus. Also, the ancient Christians who built the Romanesque churches relied on beliefs like that of the hierarchical order of beings and in that order of the universe in which a human being occu-

ried a place, a concrete place. This is expressed, for example, by St. Francis of Assisi and by the Franciscanism that arose during that time.

Modern Technology

By contrast, the modern ship is immense, imposing and functions with almost complete independence from the conditions of nature surrounding it. A ship like that in no way reinforces the religious feeling of dependence with respect to the universe. Rather, on the contrary, it underscores the power of man more than the power of the universe. The difference between the older technology and the modern falls precisely there. While the older technology reinforced the connection and the dependence of the people who used it, the new one is that which reinforces the feeling of independence with respect to nature.

In other words, the new technology is exploitative. It doesn't see nature as an impassable limitation that only allows for certain human shrewdness, but rather sees it as a bank of resources that can be exploited by humankind. The change from one view of the universe to the other began during the Renaissance when the traditional Christian religion began to be replaced by Humanism.

Humanism legitimated social change, introducing a new idea of sacredness. One of the fundamental texts of Humanism is The Discourse on the Dignity of Man by that well-intentioned theologian Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. It piously affirmed that a human being did not have a reserved place in the order of the universe, but

rather could choose the place to be occupied. The text was truly not an invitation to rebellion, but the guardians of the traditional order – the Inquisition – saw it as a threat and expressed some objections to it.

This treatise anticipated an idea which, with time, became more extensive. That idea was that human beings were the new source of sacredness.

So, there arose a new religion which directly consecrated the human will to transcend its natural place in the universe. In other words, it legitimated indirectly the idea that it was not necessary to put limits on the successful achievement of human desires. From that point onward and by virtue of the development of human potentiality, social changes were legitimate.

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, HUMANISM AND TECHNOLOGY

Customs are always legitimated by religious beliefs, by the idea of sacredness. In the ancient societies, the order of the universe was considered sacred. The societies were structured in a static form that paid honor to this order. So then the traditional societies were also not interested in investing too many resources in developing technologies. All technological solutions, in order to be accepted, needed to be rooted in an adequate social environment. Nevertheless, in a large percentage of cases, the social environment is not prepared to accept the technological changes and needs itself to be modified in order to adapt to the technology.

If one wants to produce a cultural change, there is no better way than to introduce a new technology that allows you to satisfy old human desires. Thousands of historical examples exist which allow us to explain the conflict between a new technology and the customs of the society in which it arises.

The Example of the VOC⁶

One of the most paradigmatic examples of what we are explaining is the

creation of the VOC. We are not accustomed to thinking of that company as a technological company, but, as a matter of fact, the VOC is a product of the technological mentality. It is the response to the question of how to make commercial activity more efficient. The VOC responded to the legitimate desire of how to dispose of more merchandise.

That company stumbled over some social customs, in particular, the social convention that it was not licit to loan money on credit. A new cultural

change was necessary in order to make acceptable the idea that investing in a capitalist enterprise was not lending money on credit. It was incumbent on the company to convince people that buying shares in the VOC was something different than being a usurer, since usury was forbidden by traditional Christianity. Once this social convention was broken, the whole field of capitalism was opened. As a matter of fact, historians cite the VOC as the first capitalistic enterprise.⁷

The operation of the VOC turned out well. Change was produced because the social environment had begun to be transformed. The social changes and the technological changes fed off of each other and it is difficult to say which came first. The theory of Marx holds that the emergence of capitalism aroused the social changes and those of the mentality. The theory of Weber is that certain transformations within the Christian religion (in particular, the adoption of a certain ethic within Protestantism) made capitalism possible. As usual, it is the debate about which came first, the chicken or the egg.

The Humanist Religion

Humanism is the religion that has been substituted for Christianity in Europe, and, by extension, in the West. For Humanism, man is the most sacred being in the universe. There is no turning of the page. If our woman in the first example is respected in her various options, it is owing to the fact that her project calls for respect for its exercise of individual freedom and even more

because it is about such a sacred question as the conception of a human life. Any use whatsoever of technology at the service of human life should be respected and if, moreover, it dignifies personal freedom, so much the better. If that implies certain social changes, on with the changes.

We have defined the technological mentality as that which exploits short cuts, jumping over the limitations imposed as much by nature as by social customs. Humanism was born by the hand of new technologies (such as printing) and consecrated the power of humankind, seeking legitimacy in texts like the treatise concerning human dignity. With the passing of centuries, others along the same lines were published as when Kant said that anyone could confine religion to the limitations of pure reason, or that humankind had reached adulthood when it had dared to think for itself, that is, when it stopped looking for inspiration and a base in the revealed texts of the old Christian religion. Sacredness now was founded on humankind to whom was owed absolute respect.

The dogma of progress would not be long in coming, the most revolutionary idea invented by humanistic religion. As the fruit, in part, derived from Christianity, the idea of progress supposed the building of a paradise on earth through the efforts of humankind, the most sacred beings in the universe. Thus, there was a convergence produced that was unique in history and in the world: the union of the technological mentality (previously marginal) with the new religious idea of the exceptionality of humankind and its sacredness. If man is the only thing that

is sacred, why shouldn't he exploit the overcoming of the limitations imposed by nature? Why not give maximum power to technology? Why respect the old static patterns of a traditional society? Why maintain the old regime? Progress should not be only technological; it has to involve social progress.

The Sects of Humanistic Religion

The new religion was divided into different sects.⁸ The liberals, partisans of technological progress, conceived of the earthly paradise as a democratic society, one of equal rights, in which individual freedom and social mobility would be maximized. The socialists, for their part, believed in a paradise in which everyone might be able to have what they needed to live, thanks to the industrial progress arising out of industrialization. They didn't believe very much in democracy nor in the maximization of individual freedom which tended to empower inequality to the detriment of solidarity among human beings. Or the Nazis, who also believed in technological and economic progress based on industrialization and who also did not believe very much in democracy (to put it mildly). Their originality was based on defending what still seems shocking to us: they didn't believe that all of humankind was equal or that they had the same rights. There were superior and inferior human beings. The former were sacred (Nazism was a form of Humanism); the others were destined to serve them or to disappear. They followed a scientific paradigm of the era which no one discussed: racism, combined with

recent theories about the laws of evolution. Their paradise was that of technological development combined with a hierarchical and static society, like that of traditional societies. This hierarchy consecrated human sacredness. From that came the racial laws.

Among the three groups (liberals, socialists and National Socialists) was unleashed the worst war known to humanity. It was indescribable savagery, facilitated by the best technologies applied to the art of killing. As is well known, religious wars are usually the worst and this one, among the different sects of Humanism, was exactly that. We now know the rest of the story. The liberals, more advanced in technology than their rivals, exploded a couple of atomic bombs and put an end to the war and they forced the whole world to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which had a decidedly liberal tone. Their socialist allies declined to sign it and, finally, the Nazis were simply erased from the map and even today are still persecuted (and may it be so for many years).

On the other hand, here what is of interest to us to repeat is that what the three factions had in common was that they believed in the sacredness and autonomy of human beings. But the most important thing is that they believed in technology and progress as the best way to empower and do homage to that sacredness. Humanity is sacred and has all the rights (the declaration was about human rights, not about the rights of lower animals, or of plants, or of rivers or of stones), and technology, created to give power to humans, has become converted into a sacrament. Nothing describes better human sa-

credness than the technology which gives humans their power.

Christian Reaction to Humanism

When faced with this scenario, what did Christians do? They reacted. From the first moment when humanism appeared, Christianity became a reactionary movement. As has been seen above, they fought against Humanism the best that they could. They condemned Pico della Mirandola, one of the pioneers, they condemned Galileo, the paladin of the new science, they condemned the Protestants during the Council of Trent for being indirect defenders of individual freedom and the sacredness of conscience, they fought against usury until capitalism, the modern new economic regime, had gathered too much strength,⁹ they fought political liberalism from the French Revolution until they could not do anything more, they dissented from socialism and they objected to Nazism. And we could go on.

Nevertheless, in the end, during the Sixties of the last century, they surrendered. The Second Vatican Council blessed in some way the most basic theses of liberal Humanism and Christians came to defend that version of what had now become the common religion (the Christian version of the common religion is called *Integral Humanism*). They also Christianized the humanistic notion of progress (if you doubt that, read for yourselves the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*). This is to say, during the era of Humanism, for the last five centuries, Christianity has lost all initiative and has limited it-

self to reacting, at times angrily, sometimes condescendingly and finally with admiration and envy.

The end result of all this is that Humanism has ended up being converted into the common religion and technology into its sacrament. In fact, even Christians consider the many technological sacraments to be more powerful than their own. Today, there hardly exists a Christian who has more confidence in holy water than in the effectiveness of the operating room.

The Internal Crisis of Humanism

Despite all else, with the passing of the years, technology began to create problems for Humanism itself, which today finds itself in a complete process of transformation. Technology now allowed for miracles such as assisted reproduction, opening up the broad debate about the status of the human embryo. Was it necessary to extend the rule of sacredness also to the excess embryos of the process of assisted reproduction? Was an embryo a human being? Was it licit to destroy them or to do research with them (and destroy them)? Now that embryos can be implanted in any uterus, was surrogate motherhood licit? In the case of the embryo's having been effectively produced, who had more rights, the person who gave birth or the mother who did not want the pregnancy? Now that technology had allowed very sick people to have their lives maintained, was it legitimate for these people to request a sterile, technological death? What would have more weight in that case, the liberal humanistic value of individ-

ual freedom or the liberal humanistic value of the sacredness of human life?

And even greater is the most interesting humanistic dilemma: if, just as it augurs, technology can allow for modifications in the human genome in order to make improved human beings, should these lines of research be continued?

The Classic Humanists

A large part of the classic humanists, those who feel a special affection for the defects of humans and of their existence, would resist its continuance. They feel that being a human being never has been a clean process, comfortable and efficient, and that the inefficiency, the impurity or the suffering that accompany being/living form part of the sacredness. They are realities connatural to humans and, even though they are annoying, they are worth preserving. They feel that getting sick, aging or dying have value because they form a part of the human experience. Well, then the most classic humanists are being left without an argument because for a humanist who believes in human sacredness, it is a bad thing that humans should suffer, and whatever justification there might be for this suffering ends up being difficult to propose.¹⁰ But at the same time, they intuit (and because of that complain) that, if all these imperfect realities were to be eliminated thanks to technology, the result would also be the elimination of human beings. They still want that old human being burdened with defects, but they don't know very much about defending it. In the end, human defects

never fit in with its sacred dignity. These humanists begin to question if declaring that humans were beings of sacred dignity, wasn't that in the end an exaggeration? But how difficult it is to revise the core of a fundamental dogma of any belief system!¹¹

The New Humanists

The new humanists can defend this line of investigation (that of human betterment) with greater coherence and spiritual tranquility. A human is an exceptional being, endowed with sacred dignity, and therefore has the obligation to better itself. There is no reason of any kind not to eliminate any suffering, including death, and all imperfections. If this should be done at the price of the disappearance of the old human being, there is no problem because the new human being, without defects, will yet be a better expression of the special dignity and sacredness of humankind. In the same way that the human beings of today look with a certain wonder and disgust at the first members of the family who remained evolutionarily behind (I am talking here of other primates, the non-humans), the human beings of the future will look with wonder and a little disgust at the humans of today. Those fans of human betterment can appeal to that old text from the Renaissance that said that human dignity comes out of their unique ability to choose their place within the great chain of being. The new humanists are much more accustomed to changes in social structure and customs than the others. Indeed, hadn't those changes in social structure and customs defended

Humanism right from the beginning? Why should they stop doing so now? Why not allow for these lines of investigation? And so, the new technological developments have led to a Humanism+, that has made classic Humanism enter into a crisis and has forced it to become reactionary.

The ecological problems have not done anything other than reinforce this internal crisis of Humanism and the differences between the classical humanists and the humanists+. The former ask for the revision of the second dogma of Humanism (the idea of progress) because they don't believe very much in the human capability of solving the problem of climate change through technology. It deals with a profound spiritual crisis. They now don't have as much faith in the human capability to create a paradise on earth (the dogma of progress) or in technology (the sacrament of Humanism). They have intuited that they well need to revise once again the notion of the human being as the locus and the source of sacredness, because these dogmas have transformed the environment to the point that it is hardly hospitable for human life.

Let Us Summarize

The humanistic religion, armed with the technological mentality, created the dogma of progress and legitimized all kinds of social changes in order to allow for a society that would be more

consistent with the proclaimed sacredness of mankind. Each new technological device, each new advance in technology, was celebrated as a new expression of the sacred dignity of the human being. But technological development has given way to a host of problems unforeseen by Humanism itself and now comes the moment to enumerate them.

So, before continuing, it is important to realize that the accusations that have been launched at technology for quite a while, and which are part of this epigraph, are not more than superficial criticisms. The true evil of technology came previous to technology and from the presupposition that it is legitimate for mankind to leap over the limits imposed by nature. This idea, promoted by Humanism, is what has uprooted mankind from the universe. This is the source or all of our spiritual problems. It is something that is more profound than the mere disenchantment with nature, deeper than merely ceasing to believe in the fairies of the forest, than abandoning the custom of asking permission of the tree before cutting it down, than believing in the spirit of the river, the manna of the great rocky formations, or the curative power of the relics of the saints.

In other words, that the exploitative modern technology makes life today very stressful is only a small sin compared with the more basic problem of uprootedness. And it is about this problem that we will speak in the next chapter.

THE PROBLEM OF UPROOTEDNESS: EXPELLED FROM OUR HOME

Old technology (the hoe, the hammer, the lever of Archimedes) already supposed a more stressful and uncomfortable life. Many authors have still pointed out that the life of hunter-gatherers was more serene than that of the men who invented agriculture and raising cows.

But the societies that farmed and raised livestock remained rooted in the universe. Their technology, was, above all, a social technology once agricultural states and empires had been created, and did not uproot them from nature. Their sense of dependence with respect to the universe increased and therefore also their sense of communion with the universe. The sense of communion with the universe is the feeling that mankind has always searched for by means of all religions, with the exception of Humanism, as we have seen.

Technology Is Never Neutral

Realizing the essential uprootedness that is provoked by exploitative tech-

nology is the key to understanding it. Modern technology expels mankind from its home, from the place that belongs to it within the universe. This is its essential evil. Modern technology is never neutral; it always uproots human; it always expels humankind from its home. With the dogma of the neutrality of technology, the uprootedness happens without being perceived. We have all applauded the reasoning that says: "Technology is neutral. According to how it is used, it can be good or evil." In fact, this is a reasoning that is internally contradictory. It is the opposite affirmation that results in a truly coherent statement. "Technology is never neutral. According to how it is used, it can be good or evil." Because if technology can be good or evil, then you can't really say of it that it is neutral.

To declare and repeat that technology is neutral (when it never is) predisposes one to accept without criticism anything technologically new. It invites one to create new technologies in order to decide later what use they might have. If technology is never neutral, then we have to move with great caution with technological novelties, and from the start have especial care not to create only a few, just in case. Beyond that, the thing is that modern technologies constantly reinforce the impression that humankind can cut the links with the limits imposed by the universe. And this is always bad and truly foolishness.

Critiques of Technology

In any case, the critiques and the accusations which have been accumulating against technology since the 20th century have failed to point out its principal evil. There were even some critiques made from the perspective of Humanism and which, in fact, barely scratched the surface of the problem. Here are some of them:

It Enslaves

“It is now in our time in which technology (mechanization) has finally triumphed that we realize, in fact, that the machine tends to make a full human life impossible.”¹² So said George Orwell in a book from 1937, which even today is cited among the books that sound the alarm about the proliferation of technologies in our daily lives.¹³ The book was called *The Road*

to Wigan Pier. Don’t miss it, especially chapter 12, given that it contains in a nutshell the principal critiques of technology that later authors have recycled. The first is that the machine does not liberate us. Rather, it enslaves us. This enslavement is double. On the one hand the machine produces dependence and, on the other hand, it is the machine that sets the tasks that have to be done. It creates the agenda for humans.

Both of these theses are easy to explain by the use of examples, examples that have become so ordinary that one does not know if it is worth very much to insist on them: the dependence on mobile phones and scientific research. For the first example, I invite you to come into any of my classrooms and see the enormous difficulty that it supposes for my students to be forty-five minutes without touching the mobile phone or the computer. With regard to scientific research, I recommend to you a video¹⁴ in which it is explained how the engineers of a certain division of IBM received an email with the supposed question, “What is the next challenge?” It was only shortly before that that the IBM machines had succeeded in winning the gameshow *Jeopardy!* on television in the United States (without doubt, a great advance for humankind). It had already been some time since they had won at chess. An engineer suggested making a machine that would win debate contests. The most interesting thing about the report comes at the end when the interviewer asks the engineer about the usefulness of the machine. The response of the engineer, along the line of “helping people”, is not very convincing. It was very clear that the research was moti-

vated less for the purpose of helping people than for the simple reason of developing technology. There is research that is carried out because “it is the next logical step” and not because it arises out of some need. This leads us to suspect, really, that a large part of technology does not cover human necessities, but rather those of the technology itself, this being what sets the agenda for human activity.

This autonomy¹⁵ of technology is very difficult to resist because, in practice, any attempt to exercise any control on technological development is seen as an attack on knowledge and, therefore, as blasphemy in our humanistic context and in which the whole world has embraced the technological mentality.

It Makes Us Like Idiots

Orwell understood that the process and logic of technology went against human life also in the sense of diminishing the capacities of people. He said that machines evolve in order to make themselves more efficient, that is, more useful to idiots (in the sense that they can be used by anybody). So, the world is advancing toward a technology that “can be used by idiots”, that is, a technological world in which no special ability is required in order to live and survive in it. This did not necessarily mean, Orwell said, that the world of the future would be inhabited only by idiots, but the danger was there. We learn by this text that, long before Stephen Hawking or Elon Musk, H. G. Wells had thrown out the idea of going to colonize other planets as soon as we have succeeded in making our planet

foolproof. This is the fundamental fear that today is awakened in us by artificial intelligence on which, looking at the panorama, we will become dependent without our becoming more capable in any way. Will there be any human activity that will not be diminished by the influence of machines? Is there something that can be preserved?

It Standardizes

Another classic criticism: technology and the technological mentality produce a standardization of society. This was said by Huxley in *Brave New World* and we see it every day when we go to see the doctor or – God forbid – have to be admitted to a hospital. The organizations which are headed by the idea of efficiency need to reduce to numbers the people who come to see them. This allows them to attend to a multitude of people and, in the case of hospitals, to avoid many deaths. But the technological order of the organizations requires the suppression of individuality. Scientific medicine is based on statistics, on the reduction of a person to data, and it is tremendously effective. The price is that the doctor does not have the time to attend to anyone and he almost prefers to have the data in front of him than people, who are always a bother with their idiosyncrasies and their peculiarities. Medicine that is not scientific functions in exactly the opposite way. No one is cured, but it conserves the treatment of persons as if they were persons and, implicitly it believes that there is an order in nature in which humans have an assigned place. The success and proliferation of

alternative medicine are a deaf protest against technological society.

It Speeds Things Up

Another recent accusation is that technology produces acceleration. If you ask me, I would say that it is another criticism that is somewhat trivial. This acceleration produces alienation, the dispossession that one feels with respect to one's own life and activity. This is nothing that was not said already by Michel Ende in that mythical novel *Momo. The Extraordinary Story of the Time Robbers and of the Girl who Returned Time to Men*. The thesis of H. Rosa (the rediscoverer of the problem of acceleration) has been corrected by Hyung-Chul Han who affirmed that it was not that time had been accelerated through the fault of technology, but rather that it has been dispersed in a series of punctual presents without narrative or anchor. Said another way, time has been dispossessed of its duration.¹⁶ The effect was not as much the alienation of people with respect to their own lives, but rather the impossibility of rest and of building a life with meaning. For Han, in these temporal conditions it is impossible to grow and impossible to die. The final product was burn-out. More than an accelerated society, we have been living in a society of fatigue.

It Drains Us

It is certainly true. Technology pressures us to constantly surrender ourselves. We are converted into hamsters

on the wheel of technology.¹⁷ What happens to us is a little like that ordinary man that Jacques Ellul described who experienced feelings of helplessness, of low self-esteem, of anonymity and who was becoming a ghost.

Consider the common man when he returns home from his work. It is probable that he has spent the day in a completely hygienic environment and everything has been done to balance his working space and diminish his fatigue. Nevertheless, he has had to work without stopping, under constant pressure. Nervous fatigue has taken the place of muscle fatigue. When he stops working, his happiness at finishing his turn is mixed with the dissatisfaction with the work which is both unfruitful and incomprehensible, very far from being a really productive job. At home, he finds himself again. But what does he find? He finds a ghost.¹⁸

Attention. The work by Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, is old. It was published for the first time in 1954. Ellul could not foresee that his common man, untiring, unproductive (that which is truly productive is the technological system, not the individual), would be connected to the Internet (again) when he gets to his home, closing the technological loop. Today we get home and we start to work for those who analyze on line data. The situation is really desperate. There is no possible means of escape.

And, in spite of everything, let us repeat before continuing on, none of these diagnoses is all that profound. We are speaking only of the effects of technology. We keep on trying, but we

never finish pointing to the essential evil that technology produces in us. Rosa talks about “resonances”¹⁹ as the remedy for the ills of technology; Han about a “contemplative life”²⁰. It seems as if the effects of the technological development of today were comparable to the back pains of farm workers in pre-mechanized agriculture. The fact that someone has an aching back is not a sufficient reason to cancel the worldwide adoption of agriculture. Because of an aching back we don’t seriously propose the question of going back to the forests and savannahs. To prescribe resonances or to recover a contemplative vision is a means comparable to the plasters of traditional medicine to cure back aches. They are compensating formulas for a pain that goes way beyond that because whether the plaster works or not, the farmer has to return the next day to the fields of the landlord. And if we recover a contemplative vision or we learn to resonate, we will still have to connect to the Internet at one time or another.

In the same way that it occurs to us when we face head-on the ecological problem, we are fully conscious that we are trapped by technology and that we are not capable of carrying out any significant change. To try to make individually any anti-technological change with the hope of provoking some global change is foolishness because changes are the prerogative of organized technological society.²¹ That is, changes come with the changes in technology themselves. While we make it grow, nothing will change because at this point what introduces the changes is the technological system and not people.

It Degrades Attention

The new calamity brought on by technology. Once again, the examples of this effect are legion and are found every day. What merits being pointed out with a little more depth is that the discovery that the interfaces of the computer can imitate slot machines and trap our attention without our being able to resist. This is undermining the religious belief of Humanism, the belief in the sacredness of personal autonomy, related to the sacredness of the individual person.

The idea of autonomy is found already in Kant, one of the fathers of humanism, and the preservation of personal autonomy when facing the social collective is equally consecrated in the “liturgical text” of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (Yes, liturgical text. It was already said by an author from the 18th century that the declaration of the *Droits de l’Homme* [Rights of Man] of 1789 was a *catechism*,²² and even more so its republication after the disaster of 1939-45). So then, there exists a whole science dedicated to undermining and, in the end (an end that is not explicitly proposed ever) to eliminating human autonomy. If there exists a mechanism that forces people to be permanently connected, it is necessary to investigate it and exploit it, because the permanent connection is translated into money (as does the business of casinos and slot machines) and because putting limits on techno-scientific knowledge is blasphemy.

Thus, the picture that I am painting in the following is not completely imaginary. Think about a business

school in which the Department of Ethics is solemnly dedicated to maintaining alive the common humanistic culture which considers individual freedom as sacred. Meanwhile the Department of Consumer Behavior (the study of how consumers behave) has created a laboratory in which it can research the reaction times to different stimuli on the part of a control group, hoping to find the button that allows for presenting information in such an irresistible way that a future buyer cannot defend himself and will buy based on impulse without any control by his reason.

The experiment works moderately well and they share their discoveries with other social scientists so that their science continues advancing. In other words, some people are making an effort to keep alive the belief in the sacredness of personal autonomy and others are in the practice of considering that personal autonomy is a fiction, at least if you know how to annul it. The former, those in the Department of Ethics, continue believing in human exceptionality and its sacredness; the latter group (even though they may not put it this way) consider the human being to be little less than an automatic mechanism, something akin to a collection of data that appears when it is presented with another set of data. It is a kind of algorithm which one needs to research in order to be able to bewitch it.

The most worrisome thing is that this is the department of the future, the figurehead of the school, because the science of consumer behavior is where our beloved economic system has placed its hopes for maintaining its growth. What this department discov-

ers will be the end to advertising as we know it. It will create advertising with such a great power that it will be transformed into something else. Goodbye to the sacredness of human autonomy, that dogma that the humanists considered sacred and which, thanks to the work of the technicians of attention, has been revealed as a superstition without basis.

Perhaps capitalism has gone mad and is cutting the branch from under the person sitting on it. In the end, free enterprise was the basis for the whole system. With new technological developments freedom is being eliminated. Or, perhaps, capitalism is applying its secular logic of exploitation of resources. People are a resource, and now that the work is being carried out by machines, it is the people who have to do the work of consuming. Before, the people were exploited so they would use the machines, and also now, when we buy without thinking, we are using machines. In order to exploit people it is necessary to research and exploit their attention. The goal is that the system not be stopped and that the technoscience of exploitation of attention serves the system more than it does people. Exploiting the will of the people, if you know how to do it, is more efficient than offering them a product and waiting for them to choose it.

It Defactualizes

There is a fact that brings us to another criticism of technology expounded by the authors who have dedicated themselves to that. In order to exploit the attention of people, it is necessary to

reduce them to numbers. Technology has produced a malicious phenomenon with different names according to the author whom one consults. The oldest one talked about the “disenchantment of the world” (Weber), another called it the “loss of aura” (my very dear and much-admired Benjamin), another referred to it as the “adoption of the cybernetic paradigm” (Rifkin, not long ago),²³ and Han calls it “defactualization”. They are different concepts, divergent but also convergent, different names, but a group of interdependent and assimilable phenomena. The cybernetic paradigm, for example, in order to be able to operate technologically, needs for us to reduce the physical world to a group of data. If this is achieved, machines can help mankind and its scientific research. The discovery of the double helix of DNA (“the secret of life”) was achieved thanks to this approach: make the world able to be assimilated by machines, that is, reduce things to data. Life is a long chain of data. A human being is not a creature worthy of respect, but rather a long chain of data.

The cybernetic paradigm produces defactualization – things lose their connection to reality, their solidity. Discussing the phenomenon of defactualization, a student of Bioengineering in one of the classes of bioethics commented to me that during his research for his final thesis he was working with human cells. When he had been going to the laboratory for several weeks, it came into his mind that those cells belonged to a person. The thought crossed his mind, it disconcerted him for a few minutes, but he then went back to work. The human being that

had made his work of research possible had disappeared. He could not be found physically in the laboratory except in samples. That person had been defactualized. He had gone from being a person to being some micrograms of biological material. My student had been aware of that for a few instants but the thought did not impress him much. The surprise (or scandal) when faced with defactualization is an impediment to techno-scientific work. It is not worth very much trouble to give one pause. What escapes the scientist is the following: defactualization undermined the humanistic dogma of human sacredness. For the bioengineer it is hard to maintain consciousness of the fact that his business is people when he does not work with individual persons, but instead with biological material. For the doctor it is hard to remember that he is working to benefit people when the raw material of his work is a set of data. Technoscience is not neutral. It configures our way of thinking in a predetermined way and, in this case, in a sense which is contrary to humanistic religion and which, paradoxically in the majority of cases, the scientist pretends to profess.

[When the next day I asked the students if technology was neutral, it was not very long before there was heard the old statement according to which “technology is neutral because according to the way that it is used it can be bad or good”. A greater effort at attention is required in order for us to realize that technology conditions our way of understanding the world and ourselves, that there exists a certain incompatibility between considering that mankind is sacred and reducing people

to biological material, that there exists quite a bit of inconsistency in desiring human rights and dedicating yourself to research in consumer behavior, and definitely in realizing that technology is not neutral and that it is always producing an effect and that ultimately it does not do more than defactualize people.]

So then, defactualization in the end would be able not to deal with such a superficial problem. Defactualization is not comparable to the back problems of the ancient farmer, in whom having dug in the ground the whole day and eaten porridge during the whole year health problems have been produced, because defactualization does not damage our bodies, but rather our soul. It contributes more than anything else to the expulsion from our home. It breaks our ties with the universe, it makes impossible the traditional task of religions which was, as we will recall, to create ties between mankind and the universe, to increase its sense of dependence, its sense of communion. The technology of today has filled our world with defactualized realities. Physical presence does not matter now. Everything is absent. Everything happens on the computer screen. The logic of defactualization forcefully pushes our civilization toward being a brain in a vat. Defactualization breaks the ties of a person with his or her body, with the place where they live, from the surrounding reality. The loss of their aura by physical realities makes the whole world into a no-place. In such conditions it is impossible to go home again. Defactualization uproots. It gives people a phantasmagoric existence. An authentic human

life, a livable life, requires interaction by means of the body with solid objects that are familiar and make us feel we are at home. It requires having a meaningful story, shared socially, in which to situate one's own personal history. The farmer who suffered back pains had all these things. Technology is questioning even the humanistic story that gave it meaning. It is taking too many things from us and the only thing that it is promising us is to annul even more.

And Confronting This? The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

The problems that are usually proposed today proper to ethics and applied to technology have two levels. Superficially they are a kind of game, mental training. At a deeper level, they reveal the old spiritual problems of humankind. Applied ethics is ethics at the service of Humanism and of technology. In this sense, it is a domestication of ethics which impedes philosophers from paying attention to what really is of importance and instead turn it into a kind of game, a kind of entertainment.

So, for example, the problems of the self-driving car. In the case of a loss of control, should it be programmed to run into a tree, killing the driver, or to run it into a family with the risk of killing a child? Or if a trolley is going at full speed toward crashing into a group of people in the street, should we push a fat man so that he would cushion the impending impact? (This is a new version of the old classic one called trolley dilemmas and, if you ask me, I think that we fat people have to help

each other. Let's save the fat man!) The fashionable problem, the algorithms of artificial intelligence which help humans to select personnel, to prevent criminal behavior and, in the future, to issue verdicts of the judicial branch are biased and the mechanisms on which these algorithms feed do not permit a solution of the problem.

The problem of the ethics of artificial intelligence reveals, therefore, the limits of confidence that can be placed in technology when we believe that technology is used for the betterment of human life, that the morality of technology is superior to that of humankind. We transfer to machines what is exclusively our responsibility. This is an old error. The technological dream consists not only in humans having more power; it also consists in creating a mechanism by which humans may now not have to take morally important decision. The dream is to let loose the pair good/evil, to do whatever is necessary so that acting with justice might not be the permanent obligation that it is. It is to pass the hot potato of moral obligations into the hands of another.

The humanist dogma of progress had this function: economic, technological and social progress was understood as a good thing. Everything that enlarged technological progress was good. It was the humanistic appropriation of the old Stoic ideal – which we Christians also appropriated – that the universe is provident and that everything that happens is good. For the humanists, technological progress, as was History for Hegel and Marx, was intrinsically good. If one allowed himself to be carried by the winds of

history, he was not capable of doing evil (even if he did evil). If one is dedicated to technoscience, he cannot do evil. And then suddenly machines do not know how to decide between good and evil. They are not any better than human beings. They do not know how to solve the problem of good and evil either.

The problem of good and evil cannot be delegated to anyone. This problem belongs to every human being over the age of seven who is not mentally impeded. The problem of good and evil cannot be delegated within the economic system. The problem of good and evil cannot be delegated in the political systems. The problem of good and evil cannot be delegated in the Catholic Church. The problem of good and evil cannot be delegated in technology. The problem of good and evil cannot even be delegated in the law.

If we do it, then it will not be long before we arrive at the following reasoning: given that I am acting according to the laws of the market, I am doing good. Given that I am acting according to the dictates of the party, I am doing good. Given that I am acting according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, I am doing good. Given that I am acting according to the law, I am doing good. Given that I am dedicated to solving the next technological challenge, I am doing good. Given that I am obeying an algorithm, I am doing good. This mode of thinking was criticized for the first time, as far as I know, by Plato in the 3rd century B.C. in the myth of the *Ring of Giges* where he explains by what processes we people allow ourselves certain license.²⁴ It consists of passing on to something

outside of oneself the problem of having to choose between good and evil. To have confidence that something external to a person can dictate what is good and discharge the person from all responsibility is what lies behind the technological utopia. To create a world without loose ends (Orwell), without questions that are awaiting solutions.

Let me be very clear about this. I am not saying that if we delegate to machines our obligation to decide between good and evil we will then be losing our sacred dignity. I am saying that to have to choose between good and evil makes the human race profoundly wretched because, very often, they lack the wisdom and will to do good. Because the good is not within their reach.

The good is not within the reach of mankind; they should search for the good inside of a dark cave. You have here another way of expressing the wretchedness of their condition.²⁵ The criticism of technology in this case is not that it robs us of our dignity, but rather that it hides our innately wretched condition. To know this condition, to place that knowledge at the center of our being, to place it at the center of our societies is completely unavoidable in order to have any possibility of acting with justice.

And Finally, More Critiques

There are still a handful of critiques aimed at the new technologies, revolving around the magnificent inconveniences they cause with respect to the promises that these technologies have left unfulfilled. Technology was

supposed to liberate us and it does the opposite. It is usual to invoke Orwell, not the one of *The Road to Wigan Pier* (the book that I have cited), but rather the Orwell of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in which technology allows for the constant vigilance of citizens. Eudald Espluga, in a magnificent book entitled *No seas tu mismo* (Don't Be Yourself), is the one who gives a good review of technology and of its traditional (Satanic) ally, capitalism. He sets out the following list of grievances against technologies:

“...They are always right. They spy on us. They traffic in our data. They manipulate public debate through algorithms. The platforms alter our epistemological relationship with reality. The sharing economy is transforming our cities. The facial recognition scanners have racial biases. There exist armies of political bots. The web is not neutral. Neither is the technology of devices. The monopolistic tendencies of the great companies of Silicon Valley put our democracy at risk. The digital revolution has certainly been an economic, social and cultural revolution that has affected whole categories of our daily life, like the division between what is private and what is public, the forms of social interaction or the limits of what we understand to be our ‘I.’”²⁶

The list could go on. It is good to pay attention, for example, to the other criticisms of technology that have been developed by Byung-Chul Han. His idea that technology has suppressed rituals is very interesting.²⁷ The process is very simple to explain. Technology follows only the logic of

efficiency. Rituals are the opposite of efficiency. The technological environment tends to suppress rituals. Have you noticed how difficult it has become to get the family together for a meal? Sitting down to eat is a ritual (after all, in order to eat you don't have to get together with anyone...). Is it difficult for you to find time to cook? Cooking is a ritual that is being suppressed by our day to day work (and, in the end, prepared food and stored food is much cheaper and more efficient). Have you noticed how difficult it is for children to be in class? The classroom is a ritual (after all, the information is already on the Internet...). Have you noticed that no one writes letters? Writing a letter was, above all, a ritual (but, in the end, there are more efficient ways of having information arrive). To seduce (and be seduced) and to accomplish love making with the desired person used to be subjected to a very complicated ritual (and for many people it was quite discouraging), but, in the end, it was not very efficient. *Tinder* suppresses the ritual. During most of the history of mankind war was also subjected to complicated rituals. Ever since the First World War – not to mention the

Second – the noble art of killing each other has abandoned all the rituals, thanks to the ever-efficient technology. Going to the movies was a ritual; today no one goes to the movies. That is not as efficient when compared to the platforms. Getting pregnant, conceiving a child, used to be subjected to complicated and inefficient rituals, now eliminated by the Danish sperm bank.

The thing is that rituals had and have a unique function, to make apparent some limits, to lament some limits, to celebrate some limits. A celebration of the impotence of human beings in relation to the good. We have already commented on the metaphysical incompatibility between an exploitative technology and limits. The suppression of ritual has revealed the deepest truth of ritual: a meal, knowledge of each other, the news of our most dearly beloved ones, sex, conception, the enemy, the beauty of art were sacred realities. They are realities that contain a good. Ritual reminds us that the good is not usually within our reach and that the true good is absolutely not within our reach ever because prior to the era of Humanism, it belonged to a higher order than humankind.

THE OLD RELIGION AS REFUGE

The authentic religion of the West some time ago stopped being Christianity. In Europe, more than just a process of secularization, there has developed the process of substituting one religion for another. What is the role of Christianity in a context like this one?

The Religions Existing Prior To Humanism Have Died

No European citizen, for as much as he or she might try, can consider him or herself to be a pure Christian (and, put that way, nor can anyone be considered a Muslim or a practitioner of any of the traditional religions). All of our daily activities are marked by the use of exploitative technology and our minds are configured to adapt themselves to the presence of those technologies. Technology is our environment, and there has never existed in the past, nor does there exist in the present, nor will there ever exist a living being, from the simplest organism to the most complex, that is not configured by its

environment and that does not survive thanks to that adaptation to its environment.

For example, Simone Weil pointed to the Medieval civilization which gave birth to the first Romanesque art as that in which Christianity was the environment. Since then, it has rained a lot, and now it has been a thousand years since Romanesque churches have been built. The current environment is technology and, both Muslim adherents as well as Catholic adherents, all use the Internet to spread their messages; it is by means of the Internet that they present themselves as authentic Muslims or authentic Christians. It is on the Internet that they boast about the purity of their doctrine. *Cristianisme i Justicia* also is

excited to be on the Internet; it has its website, it is on all the social networks, it has its blog and it shares its courses on line. We all share the same fiction: that the Internet is only a tool and that you can go on being either Christian or Muslim using technologies. This would be true if the technological environment did not reconfigure our mind, if technology were neutral. But, as we have repeatedly seen in this Booklet, this neutrality does not exist.

To use technology implies, in practice, accepting the doctrinal presuppositions of the humanistic religion, that there is nothing more sacred than humankind, and that in virtue of this sacredness it is necessary to develop technology as a tool which gives power to humankind, like the sacrament that expresses better than any other our human exceptionality and sacredness, the unique sacredness of humankind. In order to worship God in the ancient religions it was not necessary to have the Internet or the internal combustion engine. The Christian and Muslim civilizations did not invent either the Internet or the combustion engine. They did not need them. To turn on the computer, to look at the mobile phone is the sacrament that is rooted in us, whether we want it or not, in the technological environment created by the humanistic religion. Could anyone profess not to be a Christian if he lived in a world in which it would be necessary to receive Communion every day at Mass in order to be able to carry out any task? With difficulty. Then how can anyone profess to be uncontaminated by Humanism if every day he has to turn on the computer in order to carry out the slightest activity or has to take his car

or public transportation to accomplish it? The religions that existed in Europe prior to Humanism are dead. What we see are fossils, relics, or, paraphrasing a biting expression of Orwell, they are the detritus of a party of which we only have the vaguest of memories.

Attempts at Resistance to the Dominant Religion

Examples of Christian Integralism

Integralist Christians, despite everything, continue making an effort to attack Humanism, above all in its modern incarnations. They are usually against abortion (a safe procedure thanks to the technology developed by Humanism and culturally consecrated as an expression of individual freedom), they are usually against homosexuality (consecrated by Humanism as a respectable option, as an expression of individual freedom), they criticize euthanasia (defended by humanists under the sacred banner of human dignity and individual freedom, or as a way to avoid pain, which is another humanist commandment) and they try to extend and conserve as much as possible premodern magical thinking with their belief in the existence of angels, miracles, heaven and hell, purgatory (they try to keep alive, despite everything, the doctrine of indulgences). They also foster among their followers a profoundly providentialist vision of existence itself. Paradoxically, many of these Christians buy into one of the better and most successful products of Humanism, the capitalist

economic system. They do not show a great enthusiasm for technological development, but, although they differ with its historical roots, they enjoy its fruits like the best humanists.

Progressive Christians

Progressive Christians, like those who are in some way represented by *Cristianisme i Justicia*, feel a curious sympathy for another humanist product of lesser success – socialism, which they think is reflected in the texts of the Gospel. They tend more to criticize the emphasis on production in the present society, but more because of a romantic ideal than because they have an alternative program to technology. In fact, no one has.

There exists a natural alliance between progressive Christianity and classic Humanism. According to historians, J. Maritain, the creator of Christian Humanism, was a key figure in the editing of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1948.²⁸ The declaration *Dignitatis humanae* – there could not be a more significant title – is from the year 1965. This declaration of the Second Vatican Council proclaimed the existence of religious liberty and freedom of thought, ideas that were held already by the anti-Catholic humanists of two centuries before, and condemned by the Catholics themselves on numerous occasions, such as in 1864 in the *Syllabus* of Pope Pius IX. Christianity arrived late to humanism but adopted it with the vigor of converts.

Christian Humanism understands Christianity as a reaffirmation and dignification of the human being. For pro-

gressive Christians, God is definitely on the side of people and faith takes humankind to its fullness.²⁹ The redemption ordained by the Trinity did not consist in preventing souls from going to Hell, but rather in restoring the universal dignity of human beings. Therefore, today, when the humanists+ apply the logic of progress to its ultimate consequences, they empty the old Humanism of any content and they make the alarms of the Christian Humanists go off. For the humanists+, it will not be God but rather technology that will carry humankind to its fullness.³⁰

Ecologism

A new religion is attempting to gain ground: ecologism. This new religion wants to bring into doubt the idea of the exceptionality and the supreme sacredness of mankind that is proper to Humanism. And although it is having a strong global influence – to the point where progressive Catholics are trying to transform the Christian religion into an ecological religion (just see *Laudato si'*) – it is doubtful that it will become very rooted.

The technological sacraments of the humanist religion continue being too powerful, they have generated a dependency and they have ended up being unavoidable. The dominant religion of the present time, Humanism, is not a dogmatic religion, and it adopts and recycles for its ends the expressions and the program of ecological religion. Until now, the latter has not known how to develop its own sacraments. For whatever the reason may be, the idea of sauntering through the

woods (usually dressed with the newest fashions for the Decathlon) and starting to hug trees does not end up being all that attractive.

The Sacraments As Refuge

Christians (as well as ecologists) go to their religion as a refuge. The Christian sacraments like the Eucharist are still, if they are practiced well, a kind of daily fortress against Humanism and technology. The Mass, strictly speaking, does not need technology in order to be celebrated. Rather, technological doodads are a disturbance for it. It has the great properties of fostering silence and attention (just what is prejudiced by technology). At Mass, texts are recalled that are from a time long before Humanism. Texts are recited and creeds repeated that have neither head nor feet in the technological era. To read and listen to these texts is an act of resistance. To love them and conserve them as treasures of a past prior to the Humanist revolution has the result of finding a refuge for the soul which has been annihilated by the daily pressures of technology. Thanks to these rituals, one can have the hope that Christianity will not completely disappear because it allows for the provision of that which neither Humanism nor technology have figured out how to equal: the conviction and ritual dramatization that mankind has a place in the universe. There is no other refuge from technology than the relics of a pre-technological past, than the power of a civilization that did not know about aspirin, computers, powered flight and assisted reproduction.

We are not dealing with nostalgia for an unknown past. We are dealing with celebrating that God decided to share the wretched condition of humankind. This ends up being equally relevant whether you lived before or after the moment in which, as is proclaimed by Christians, God was incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth. All of this power is concentrated in texts like the hymn in Philippians that affirms that being a man is a degradation with respect to the divine condition. The ritual of the Eucharist, which celebrates the voluntary self-degradation of the divinity coming down to the stature of humankind, contributes to locating mankind in its limited place within the universe. It doesn't make mankind any better, and of course does not convert it into a divine being. It simply helps it to recover its home. It helps to celebrate its home.

So then, going to Mass is a way to resist. It is not necessary to waste it. But there exist different ethics of resistance according to whether or not one believes in individual salvation. I, in particular, absolutely do not believe in it.³¹ Individual salvation does not exist. The fact that I might wish to conserve some rituals which, subjectively, I feel allow me to resist, does not mean that I am outside of the system, or that I am less manipulated than others, or that I like less ham-flavored *Ruffles*.³² No compensatory ritual places someone outside of the humanist religion or of the technological environment that it has created. No one, not even a community of supposed resisters, can be outside of the system. The technological environment has colonized and conditioned the whole planet and all minds. There

is no Noah's Ark that allows us to free ourselves from the flood.

And there is no alternative to the technological environment. Of course, technology is metaphysically incapable of offering an alternative to the technological environment in which we live. But Christianity, for its part, is today absolutely incapable of proposing a general alternative to the technological environment in which we live. It is sad, but true. One cannot un-invent the integrated circuit, powdered milk, the internal combustion engine or ham-flavored potato chips. The academic journals dedicated to the study of the future talk openly about "our future as hunter-gatherers"³³. The apocalyptic vein has reached more than just Xavier Melloni. But it is a dream. They dream about the traumatic elimination of machines. Once again, it is an escapist process based on fantasy, like that of searching for a past in which, supposedly, we lived in an idyllic relationship with nature and with Our Lord. Additionally, behind the dream of the traumatic elimination of machines, there resides a spiritually dangerous idea to which we have already referred: the idea of irresponsibility. Not only does it allow for fantastical

self-justification, saying, "I already warned you about this," but also the idea that the end of the world can give way to certain license. From right now.

We don't approach the Eucharist in order to become less technological; being technological is today the mode of survival. Of course, with regard to our attitude toward the technology which we are obliged by the environment to use, there is a lot to say. Like drugs, technology is useful, addictive and dangerous to one's health. We can believe in it or regard it with regret. Confronting the irresistible force of the technological mentality, which we are forced to adopt, what we Christians need today is, first of all, to go to Mass. It is an interesting anti-technological process which has been within our reach for centuries. Secondly, be more grandiose in our proclamations.³⁴ Each one of us should do what he or she can within their small area of action, but publicly we ought to be prophetic and make our position very clear: technology takes away from us many more things than it gives. We cannot leave in the hands of technology the responsibility of moving the world in a determined direction. If we do, we will be living further and further from home.

1. Author's preliminary note: This Booklet does not contain a single original idea. It is written based on numerous things I have read. The most basic ideas are taken from Simone Weil, George Orwell, Josep M. Esquirol, Noah Yuval Harari, among others. I have tried to indicate the provenance of the ideas as much as is possible, according to the sacred academic convention, but there remain some ideas whose source I have not been able to locate. I beg the pardon of the corresponding authors.
2. For the technological mentality as a short cut, see MARTÍNEZ, Layla (2019). *La gestacion subrogada. Capitalismo, patricarcado y poder* (The Hidden Agenda. Capitalism, Patriarchy and Power). Logroño: Pepitas, 11-14.
3. See ESQUIROL, Josep M. (2011). *Los filósofos contemporáneos y la técnica* (Contemporary Philosophers and Technology). Barcelona: Gedisa, 52-55.
4. See ELLUL, Jacques (1964). *The Technological Society*. Nueva York: Vintage Books, 64-79.
5. See WEIL, Simone (2005). *La Fuente griega* (The Greek Fountain). Madrid: Trotta, 50.
6. From its initials in Dutch: Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie = VOC). Cf. HARARI, Yuval Noah (2011), *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*. London: Vintage, 352-360.
7. So says my ex-colleague at the IQS School of Management, NIÑO-BECERRA, Santiago (2020). *Capitalismo (1679-2065): Una aproximación al sistema económico que ha producido más prosperidad y desigualdad en el mundo*. (Capitalism (1679-2065): A Consideration of the Economic System that has Produced the most Prosperity and Inequality in the World) Barcelona: Ariel.
8. Cf. HARARI, Yuval Noah (2016). *Homo Deus: Breve Historia del Manana* (God Man: A Brief History of Tomorrow). Debate (Barcelona, 2016), 276-287.
9. At a certain point, the Church itself discovered that, for financing its business, issuing stock was far more profitable than issuing indulgences.
10. It should be pointed out that for Christians this is easier. Above all for traditionist Christians. For them the world was and is a valley of tears, suffering purifies the soul, etc.
11. Cf. ESQUIROL, Josep M. (2021). *Humano mas humano: una antropología de la herida infinita* (Human more Human: An Anthropology of the Infinite Wound). Barcelona: Acantilado, 57. Here the human being is not defined by its dignity, but rather thus: "Thinness, weakness and tenderness: in all that is rooted the excellence of humans." In general, I believe that the entire book could be understood as a revision of the fundamental beliefs of Humanism.
12. CWGO 5, 178. The citations to Orwell are from DAVISON, Peter (ed.) (1998), *The Complete Works of George Orwell*. London: Secker and Warburg. The acronym CWGO is that used among the Orwellian scholars to refer to this monumental work of 20 volumes. The number that comes immediately afterwards indicates the volume in which the reference is found, and the number after the comma, the page number in the volume. So, you can find this quotation on page 178 of the fifth volume, that is, in *The Road to Wigan Pier*.
13. Cf. HIDALGO, Diego (2021). *Anestizados: La humanidad bajo el imperio de la tecnología* (Anesthetized: Humanity under the Dominance of Technology). Madrid: Catarata, 13.

14. *What happens when AI stops playing games?* YouTube (Paid content for IBM. Consultation, December, 2021).
15. For the autonomy of technology, see ELLUL, Jacques (1964). *Op. cit.*, 79-147.
16. HAN, Byung-Chul (2009). *Duft der Zeit: Ein philosophischer Essay zur Kunst des Vervetlens*. (Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Vervetien). Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 40.
17. QUINTANA, Oriol (2019). *L'era de l'homo hamster*. Available on the Internet.
18. ELLUL, Jacques (1964). *Op. cit.*, 376.
19. ROSA, Hartmut (2019). *Resonancia: una sociología de la relación con el mundo* (Resonance: A Sociology of the relationship with the world). Madrid: Katz.
20. HAN, Byung-Chul (2009). *Op. cit.*, 87 et seq.
21. ELLUL, Jacques (1964). *Op. cit.*, 376.
22. GONZÁLEZ-CARVAJAL, Luis (1998). *Entre la utopía y la realidad. Curso de Moral Social*. Santander: Sal Terrae, 39.
23. See RIFKIN, Jeremy (1999). *El siglo de la biotecnología* (The Century of Biotechnology). Barcelona: Crítica/Marcombo, 187-203.
24. Cf. WEIL, Simone (1994). *La gravedad y la gracia* (Gravity and grace). Madrid: Trotta, 171 et seq.
25. We differ here from ESQUIROL, Josep M. (2018), *La penultima bondad. Ensayo sobre la vida humana* (The Penultimate Goodness. An Essay about Human Life). Barcelona: Acantilado, 10 et seq.
26. ESPLUGA, Eudald (2021). *No seas tu mismo* (Don't Be Yourself). Barcelona: Paidós, 132-133.
27. HAN, Byung-Chul (2020). *La desaparición de los rituales* (The Disappearance of Rituals). Barcelona: Herder.
28. See, for example, SOLÍS, Lucía (2017), “Jacques Maritain en la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos” (Jacques Maritain in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). *Criterio Digital*.
29. See, if not, the proposal made by González Faus in his Christology that bears the meaningful title of *La humanidad nueva* (The New Humanity), Sal Terrae (Santander, 10th ed. 2016).
30. For the accusation of technoscience as an idolatrous cult, see the article of FLORENSA, Albert (2004). “El idolo de la tecnociencia” (The Idol of Technoscience) in *VV. AA, Idolatrias de Occidente*, Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justicia.
31. After reading *La resistencia intima*, [ESQUIROL, Josep M. (2015), *La resistencia intima: ensayo de una filosofía de la proximidad* (Intimate Resistance: Essay on a Philosophy of Proximity). Barcelona: Acantilado], I would say that Josep. Esquirol does believe in individual salvation. The author considers himself to be a political author (according to his comments to us and those attending the Seminar on Technoethics of the Chair of Ethics at IQS, June 30, 2022). In fact, anyone can verify an amplification of the political perspective in his book *La penultima bondad*.
32. Along with the *Pink Panther* pastries, that I personally believe are one of the technological peaks of humankind.
33. See GOWDY, John (2020). “Our hunter-gatherer future: climate change, agriculture and civilization” in *Futures*. Vol. 115. doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2019.102488.
34. Cf. ESPLUGA, Eudald (2021). *No seas tu mismo* (Don't Be Yourself). Barcelona: Paidós, 123.

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