

**TOWARDS AN ONTO-ANTHROPOTECHNIC OF THE HUMAN SPHERE.
THE QUESTION OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL BAN THROUGH A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH OF TRANSHUMANISM.**

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LA QUESTION DE L'INTERDIT TECHNOLOGIQUE AU PRISME D'UNE LECTURE
PHÉNOMÉNOLOGIQUE DU TRANSHUMANISME.**

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The discussion about the extent to which technology structures the human sphere is nowadays severely hampered by the popularization of mythological (Promethean threat, etc.) or narrative analogies (threat of AI, cyborg, etc.). Many authors who have questioned the essence of technology in detail have come to divide it into two categories, roughly summarized as (post)modern technology and ancient technology, thus evacuating the formal quality of technology. The feeling of anxiety that our societies experience in front of the autonomy and empowerment of technology would be explained by the ontological discontinuity of the human-technology relations. Isn't transhumanism, incidentally, the concrete embodiment of this rupture? Our thesis postulates that in order to correctly interpret the emergence of phenomena such as transhumanism, we need a philosophical reading of the phenomenon of technique. Now, a philosophical reading of the technique is only possible by questioning the anthropological and ontological roots of technology itself.

To this end, our methodological background is firmly rooted in the tradition of thought of Western, and more precisely European, philosophy of technology and anthropology. We consider this tradition of thought, beyond the numerous theoretical tools it provides, as a true metaphysical commitment. Indeed, it has been rightly pointed out that postphenomenology and the empirical turn of analytic philosophy focus on the technical object, making it clear that it has been largely neglected by most European scholars and replaced by the question of technology itself. But as a result, this turn towards object-oriented philosophy sometimes overlooks the anthropological dimension of the technical fact.

The biographical and empirical methods, even if they significantly contribute to the questions of design and ethics in technical objects, is not, according to us, sufficient to reintroduce anthropology, precisely because it focuses on the object itself and disengages the more structural question of the human, in its relation to technology and the world. Yet we cannot think the philosophy of technology out of the human phenomenon. The need to recover the anthropological question in our philosophical work also explains the methodological choice to address the question of transhumanism – and not of any technical object that I would have taken as an example. Indeed, it is not from the technical object itself but from human phenomena such as transhumanism that is unveiled the necessity of the anthropological question in the philosophy of technology. Transhumanism intertwines like rarely before the question of technology with the onto-anthropological question of the human being and becoming. In this respect, my work takes a distance from the empirical turn of the analytical philosophy of technology, without dismissing its relevancy.

Within this philosophical approach, phenomenology provides the main framework of our method. Indeed, phenomenology requires an eidetic reduction that aims at abstracting the accidental or secondary qualities of entities, in order to highlight their substance by reaching an intuition of the eidos of the thing. More so, to bring back the anthropological issue in the question of technology is the reason why, in my opinion, and paradoxically given that he is considered as a pupil who drifted away from the master Husserl, there can be no phenomenology without Heidegger, i.e. without this phenomenological statement that the human is both the gaze and the phenomenon. The anthropological aspect is expressed by Heidegger through the notion of *Dasein*, at least when we examine the importance of the regional question of the human phenomenon in Heidegger's work. Here we assume the criticism of the third paragraph of *Being and Time*, in which Heidegger condemns the

“regional” approach of the being, which is split into several realms of reality, for example history, nature, space or, of course, technology. However, in our attempt to overcome the anthropological ban of phenomenology, we also meet the intuition and the approach of other major scholars, such as Blumenberg or Jaspers. And by this movement, we admit a kind of freedom towards the methodological lens on which is based our research.

Our intention to use philosophy as the method to tackle this complex and highly mediatized issue of transhumanism leads us to reinvest pre-existing and absolutely fundamental metaphysical questions regarding the relationship between technology and human beings. We have chosen to take a phenomenological approach to better understand transhumanism, in order to outline the metaphysical issues at stake in our technical imaginary, as well as to serve as a new entry point to the question of technology itself. The eidetic reduction allows us to identify the internal divergences of transhumanism in order to express a minimal discourse, the desire to improve the human being through technology. This dialogue can from then on be assumed by the philosophy of technology and serve as a revealing phenomenon, while taking part in a major discussion that is still ongoing.

The main stakes of our thesis have been the subject of several highlights and of a specific organization. Our first part introduces the conceptual framework of the understanding of the technical object, as an object embedded in human mediations. We question this object from familiar landmarks, between mechanism and finalism, gesture and mediation, organ and tool. This allows us to determine some phenomenological aspects regarding body unity and the relation between "paraphernalia" and technical object. These defining elements are embodied in the analysis of contemporary techno-scientific objects, which determines the convergences and divergences between the mode of existence of technical objects and the one of emerging objects, in order to induce the possibility of a formal continuity in the ontology of the technical object. It is then necessary to question the relationship of the human being to his materiality, and thus his relationship to his milieu and temporality.

Our second part aims at revitalizing the phenomenology of the dwelling through anthropology, in order to bring technology into play at the center of the human experience. We put our technical milieu back at the center of an epistemology that focuses on the notions of intention, invention and imagination, in order to reconstruct the relation of technology to human virtuality and to propose an analysis of the evolution of technology outside the ontic framework of human historicity. This apparent independence of technology requires us to question the reasons behind the feeling of threat that contemporary technology gives rise to.

Our third part reshapes the rational and irrational dangers of which technique is the scapegoat by placing them outside the essence of technology itself. We start from a metaphysics of the substance of worldly objects which locates these concrete perils within the framework of the anthropological evolution of production modes and technical progress. We present these elements as the symptom of the transition from a humanist imaginary to a form of technical imaginary. This transition participates in a redefinition of the humanism that is able to overcome the technological ban and to testify of the cultural reality of technology. The emblematic example of these new technical imaginaries is the emergence of transhumanism.

The fourth part thus extends these concrete questionings by focusing on the way in which transhumanism reclaims the metaphysical stakes of our materiality. It is based on the transhumanist conception of the human body through the difference therapy/enhancement, which reveals the invariant of the body phenomenon and revitalizes the truly disruptive

viewpoints of transhumanism on immortality. They contrast with the existential relation of the human to finitude, considered as a structuring horizon of time. The opening of finitude to new temporalities invites us to question the way in which transhumanism brings into play the thought of eschatology and transcendence as a measure of lived time.

Therefore, our fifth and last part questions the notion of transhumanist Grand Narrative in the light of emblematic technical myths, in order to unveil the metapoetics of imaginaries that support transhumanist and anti-transhumanist discourses. We locate the mythification of transhumanism in a more general eschatological and temporal process, taking into account the chosen recourse of transhumanist movements to technophilic optimism. These interrogations allow us to reinvest our analyses of the milieu and temporality to synthesize the continuistic evolutionism that makes transhumanism a consistent and metaphysical vector of the technical organization of the human sphere.

The argument of our thesis is not an attempt to explain the diversity of transhumanist movements by a sociological work. On the contrary, we tried to reduce transhumanism divergences to the expression of a minimal discourse (the will to improve the human through technology) in order to suggest a phenomenological analysis able to reintegrating the philosophical stakes of the question of technology itself. We have therefore chosen to consider transhumanism as a revealing phenomenon, which allows us to take part in a major discussion that has already begun. Indeed, the philosophical works of those last decades did not miss this essential evolution in the understanding of technology as a way to realize the human and its environment. However, our phenomenological approach of the transhumanist object played a major part. On the one hand, it enabled us to unveil the metaphysical stakes proper to our technical imaginary, in addition to serving on the other hand as a new entry to the question of technology itself. Consequently, we try to reinvest in a philosophical way the debate questioning the extent to which technology is a structural disposition of the human, and which is greatly limited today by the popularization of mythological analogies (Promethean threat...) or narratives (AI, cyborg...). Our choice to examine through philosophy this complex and highly mediatized object led us to reinvest pre-existing and absolutely fundamental metaphysical questionings in regard to the relations between technology and the human.

Although transhumanist optimism is highly criticized, notably from a point of view that shows it as an unrealistic posture, we have sought to present this fundamental element as a true commitment, from transhumanists, in a highly heterogeneous contemporary context. Far from being only a posture, this commitment has a metaphysical ground that conditions transhumanist understanding of technology, which can be named an evolutionary technophilia. Transhumanism tries to reveal the modalities of a relationship to our contemporaneity, which operates in a world where our temporal horizon cannot be anticipated nor slowed down, but depends on numerous modalities to exist. By considering technology as this medium anchored in a human time, always seen as opened to the potentiality and closed to any (pre)destination, transhumanism shows us neophobia and technophobia as an atemporal understanding of the becoming, which prevents the present to evolve by fear of future compossibilities. It reveals us here a process of continual evolution whose interest in the virtuality of reality is able to clarify the figure of Dasein as a being of potentia that is opened to the world.

Our phenomenological study of human temporality, once confronted with the possibility of changing the ontological status of finitude, has been able to show that the transhumanist approach of biological immortality abandons its existential dimension in the human. The fact that transhumanism looks for ways to break the link between human beings and their time only reveals with conviction that the human temporal horizon is oriented and marked out by a conception of finitude that technology mediates. Transhumanism is representative of a perspective that aims at making the being enter an infinite time, and this perspective itself is part of the imaginary, of the mythology, but also of the theological, social and technical conceptions of the human. Perhaps it is as such that transhumanism is what we have called a *technical imaginary*. Transhumanism reappropriates the metaphysical thought of transcendence, of human enhancement and integrates the evolution of technological and scientific discoveries and the widening of our spatial and temporal horizons. Given the multiplicity of hermeneutical elements at stake, the links of transhumanism to mythology well says the fecundity and the importance of this new technical imaginary that participates closely to our contemporary societies. Transhumanism induces a renewed relation to the stakes of technology, anchored in a conceptualization that is able to assimilate the importance of our societies' techno-scientific evolutions, without denying the importance of the emotional scheme that optimism wants to recover. Transhumanism is then only the symptom of the articulation of our technical imaginary in a variety of modern narratives, whose stakes lead us to rethink numerous categories (nature, technology, evolution...) by admitting their phenomenological flexibility. These conceptual elements served as a starting point for the analysis of this thesis.

Consequently, by analyzing transhumanism as a transition of humanist imaginary to technical imaginary, we were able to show that transhumanism invites us to rethink our humanist conception of technology, by underlining its essentially cultural dimension. We have therefore gone beyond the basic issues of the relationship between humanism and transhumanism, generally only related to the links between transhumanism and the Enlightenment, in order to introduce a metaphysical approach of the *humanitas* itself. We have thus clarified the fact that a modern reading of humanism is fundamental for the philosophy of technology, and allows us to think about new movements that are built today beyond and towards humanism, such as post-, meta-, trans-humanism. The study of the fact that humanity is constantly evolving bears the mark of this evolution is the first fundamental element that limits the value of humanism and opens the human to new types of contemporary imaginaries. This way to think about the ontological flexibility of the human is linked to the possibility to deconstruct the notion of human nature. It was thus necessary for us to go from the humanist illusion of a human nature to a metaphysics of the human begins that comes to reveal the transhumanist approach of technology, which invites us to think authentically what we called the *technological ban*. This concept, about the fact of not recognizing that technology carries a cultural reality and weight, allows us to mobilize the dualism between culture and technology. We confronted our perspectives to the metaphysical views (religious or philosophical) that marginalize technology and its objects. To go beyond this technological ban invites us to reconsider technology as ontologically participating in the existential sphere of the human being and to allow it to be given a place. These elements serve the argument of an equivalence between sign and technology as structures that opens the human to the world.

The choice of a phenomenological approach allowed us to reveal in which way, under the transhumanist phenomenon, we find not the phenomenon of life, but the phenomenon of the

human itself, understood with its existential characteristics of Dasein. Our entry by transhumanism, as an epiphenomenon of a preponderant presence of technology in our contemporary imaginary, actualizes therefore a complex passage between the idea of the human to the idea of the transhuman, as a not less real notion of the contemporary humanity. The idea of transhuman synthesizes here the renewal of the metaphysical thought on the human being.

This redefinition of humanism through a more opened definition of the human introduces the even broader perspective of understanding how technology is to be remade in cultural reality, through persistent technical imaginaries such as transhumanism. But we discovered that these persistent imaginaries also bear the mark of an ontological threat which in turn gives rise to various fears and antagonistic perspectives.

Having chosen not to consider transhumanism as an artificial caesura, but as a phenomenon that shows the broadening of our technical imaginaries and an evolution of our ontological conception of the human, it has been necessary to discuss the antagonistic feeling that technology can give rise to in our contemporary societies. This tension has led us to show how and why various authors have to underline a distinction between an ancient and a modern technology. We have noted that these works testify to anthropological changes, such as changes in production modes. But our phenomenological approach of this question allowed us to conclude that this betrays in reality an evolution of the way in which we sketch our own ontology of the world, of the beings and of our temporality (exploitable and unlimited things, belief in progress, determinism...). We have thus discussed the perception of the danger that makes the question of technology and of transhumanism urgent, from the viewpoint of a metaphysical confusion between the Being and beings. The increase of the ways for the human to exploit the world reinforced his capacity to appropriate beings, and thus to conceive the Being of things as appropriable. It seems important to us not to accuse technology of this feeling of danger and urgency, of which it is only a symptom. Without denying the evolution of technical objects, this approach allows us to resolve the divergence between a modern and an artisanal technology, which comes first from the way in which technical objects are conceived and considered. We thus defended that this way of conceiving a Janusian technology testifies only to a new confusion between ontology and ontical beings, because it is less the essence of technology that changes than our conception of the Being of the world, of beings and of temporality.

Our analysis has established here a form of persistence in the quiddity of technology, whose very essence cannot be divided into two. It also reinforces the position that we have outlined in favor of an overcoming of the technological ban, which betrays a lack of thinking in technology and the necessity of the reinforcement of our technical imaginary, like with transhumanism. The prejudice that dispossesses today technology of its humanistic or cultural background results ultimately from an impoverishment in the understanding of the essence of technology itself, but also of the world's substance. By brushing up an analysis of the fundamental stakes of the philosophy of technology and its relation to the human, we tried to reappropriate a thought of technology as a way for the human to dwell.

Consequently, while participating in a question which considers that transhumanism testifies to the continuity of this relation between human and technology, instead of denying it, we envisioned to study the way in which technology fits in the main relation of the human to his environment (dwelling) and in his temporality (potentiality). Far from thinking of

technology as a means to an end for human evolution, we have shown how it is absolutely fundamental to always consider technology as a constant creation of our existential space. Only this approach can guarantee to overcome the fear of a technological danger, by showing that we have indeed our responsibility in the technology we bring to the world.

Our contribution to this question through phenomenology is not insignificant, because it allowed us to address the way in which the human engages in temporality through his commitment in materiality. We have been able to put forward that reality is this hybrid place, a potential state where things can be actualized. In that way, we can say that the human is spatially and temporally a world-maker, but also that he requires technology to realize his Being. Such an approach incited us to develop a continuist evolutionary theory. The work of a metaphysical analysis of this theory remains to be done in future works taking into account the irreducibility of the ontological link between the essence of technology and the human existence. But we can say that technology is for the human a real “symbol”, in the etymological meaning of *symbolon*, i.e. of what is a sign of recognition. We have then established that it is in this technological specificity, an ontological disposition, that the human recognizes and identifies himself. Our metaphysical perspective, as opposed to ethical or socio-political studies, questions technology on an existential level.

We consider this metaphysical plan as a real block or philosophical engagement. As we can see, our approach through philosophy of technology allows us to elucidate multiple stakes of transhumanism. In return, this object throws light on the metaphysical problems of the question of technology, by showing our existential dwelling as the Hölderlinian poet. These contributions are led to by a philosophical rereading of transhumanism as a support of an authentic understanding, by our modern societies, of the metaphysical status of technology. The transhumanist technical imaginary induces that technology is today able, more than ever, to be thought as a substance in itself. Perhaps we should not speak of a philosophy of technology, but of philosophy in technology.

Our dissertation thus studies technology as an ontological disposition of the human being in the world, so that nothing technological is fundamentally alien to him, and that all that occurs to technology impacts henceforth the understanding of the human by himself. It follows that transhumanism, however disturbing, fascinating or provocative it may seem, is actually a phenomenon that has a continuity in the evolution of technology. Our thesis thus participates to develop a better understanding of the contemporary object that is transhumanism in order to testify of its importance in how it unveils the question of technology.

Consequently, technology is both operativity and sign which unveils not only technology, but more broadly the human himself in all his complexity. It could be said that the transhumanist disorientation, which opens the human dwelling to a vast set of technical and conceptual compossibilities, shows us distinctly what makes the human. The transhumanism is considered as a starting point to the question of technology, which allows to reinstate the human-technology relations in the temporality of a continuous evolution, and induces a renewed and plastic adaptation of the human being to his environment. If transhumanism is sometimes considered as opposed to a common history of humanity, since it disturbs our identity basis, we consider on the contrary that transhumanism is precisely a way to build this onto-anthropological history, through the reinforcement of a modern imaginary that is able to embrace the evolving dimension of technology. By raising its own stakes, transhumanism makes the human renew with the ontology of technology, as it generates a relational and

existential situation that is authentically human, and that cannot be only banished in fear, danger and doubt.

As a consequence, in spite of the cultural and anthropological evolution of technology and its objects, we defended the hypothesis that there is no rupture between a modern technology and an ancient one, and that the emergence or the solidification of forms of contemporary technical imaginaries contributes to the ontological sphere of human existence. We aimed to return to the questions that technology raises towards the being of the human, instead of staying at the human that raises questions about the impact of science and technology.

But if there are still many issues to be dug from our reflection, what seems to be a major one, if not the main one, must be summarized in a simple question. In which way should we understand the advance of progress? Future works will have to question the importance of the imaginary of progress, which has something of the belief in an unlimited power of technological evolution. Doesn't the development of our technical imaginary lead to an expectation in an always evanescent progress, for example in the framework of molecular biology, genomics and biochemistry, or of cognitive sciences, computational neurobiology and mathematical logic? These fields and the technical objects that have emerged from them (bio-objects, AI...) certainly have repercussions on the political way in which the social body and the individual act, but they also show new networks that includes deep changes on the way in which metaphysics, phenomenology and the philosophy of technology will be able to question the relation of human existence to time. How can we conceptualize our ontological disposition to variation in societies where the notion of progress impact us from all sides? How can we think, through the philosophical notions of time and evolution, about these developments that extend the field of possibilities for the selection of human characteristics, via new tools and new practices regarding genetic traits or diseases? We will have to understand what is the role of incompleteness in the thought of progress, which seems to always expect from the human being a unifying action, which would be a completion of the world as well as of the human himself, and in which lies all the power that our technical imaginaries bring upon our societies.