The Myth of Technology and The Risks of Desecration in Digital Media Communication

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Abstract: To what extent is the contemporary world still aware of the risks of excessive technologicalization? Does the warning of the ancient Greeks who announced, through the Promethean and age myth, the danger of detachment from sacredness and the fatality of man's damnation to his own annihilation under the mirage of unbridled exploitation of nature still reach us? Is it still possible to re-evaluate the progress of modern man, in his negative, destructive aspects? Are not we currently witnessing, in the age of digital communication, the distancing of the human being from his own existential-spiritual foundations by assuming a model of machinal Super-man, technical in the operations of the mind but also of affectivity? Perhaps a reconsideration of the ontological and gnoseological position of modern man, anchored in the age of high-tech constructions and digital communications, could be inaugurated starting from the reinterpretation of the mythical-symbolic warnings of ancient meditation.

Keywords: *Technique; digital communication; myth; modernity; progress; involution; sacred spirit; profane.*

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1. Introduction

Regarding the failure of utopian-idealistic visions of the nineteenth century and the impact of new technological perspectives on the human being, despite the various modern progressive opinions that claim that the age of myths and legends has passed, analysts of the religious phenomenon but also of the mobilities of the human unconscious such as Eliade (2000) or Jung (2011) claim that the very dynamics of the myth is the phenomenon that marks the evolution of the last centuries. Frunză (2019) says that “Storytelling is en vogue nowadays because digital societies rediscover myths with their role of telling about significant things for human life, they bring to our eyes the real, values and meaning, and invite us to participate in them with the enthusiasm of our own life. It is true that a storyteller no longer has the role of an officiant because current stories have greatly lost the extraordinary initiating force that myths had once.” (Frunză, 2019, p. 165) Eliade (2000) and Jung (2011) recalled, in support of this thesis, the tragedies caused by totalitarian ideologies but also the incredible technological boom of the contemporary man. According to this perspective, both Nazism and communism were based on the fundamental myths of the man-god, but also the evolution of science has a large part of its founding motivation in the spiritual resources of these myths. It is interesting to note how the belief in success, especially in the field of human science, has seen a gradual shift from a resigned skepticism to an open conflict with religious dogma and then to an optimistic ecstasy that seemed unstoppable.

With the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, the duality between religious dogma and the scientific norm was imposed, a duality arbitrarily maintained by the interests of acquiring social supremacy on the part of both belligerent camps. The nineteenth century brought to the fore the progressive-reactionary tone of Nietzsche (1999) who prophesied the triumph of the Super-man over Christian superstition and the final victory of the will to power and of the technological progress on religious experience and love for one's kin. Next to him but on other conceptual and ideological positions, Marx (1966) or Engels (1964) supported the thesis of class struggle and the creation of a new society based on atheism, dialectical materialism and the belief in the edification of the Reformed man who relies only on technology and his own resources. This triumphalist optimism would be refuted, unfortunately, by immeasurably global dramas in the twentieth century, a century in which the use of chemical compounds or atomic reactions for destructive purposes represents the proof that technology has not determined a moral evolution of the human being, but

on the contrary, a terrible regress. After these catastrophes knowingly orchestrated by people against their own fellows, a return and a new re-evaluation of the old religious, moral and ethical traditions and visions was imposed.

The Christian message of love for one's kin, but also the myths of Ancient Greece came back, from another perspective, to the attention of philosophical thinking but also of applied ethics. Thus, a myth such as the invention of the craft has become worthy of attention and insofar as it is linked to the skepticism of the ancient Greeks regarding the fate of man abandoned by the gods. Looking at the attempt of the human being of the twentieth century to change into his own divinity, the mythological image of the man abandoned by the gods returns to the forefront with a new intensity. At the same time, fragility and damnation to endless suffering reappears as a constant unwavering reality, a truth that cannot be changed by a resurrection of man that would surpass itself, changing into Super-man, as Nietzsche (1999) thought. This situation, this fallen stage of human existence is due, according to Greek mythology, to a disobedience or an act of wrong choice in relation to the will of the gods. For the ancient Greeks, the beginnings of human destiny, with its tragedies and failures, are directly related to the issue of technology that can get out of control, that can be used excessively and carelessly. Making a leap over the millennia and looking at the atomic bombings we will notice that the mythical warning of the ancient Greeks is extremely real.

Entering the era of digital communication was conceived as an exceptional leap for the entire technological but especially social development of mankind. The reality of real-time communication over huge distances would have appeared a few centuries ago, as a mere fantasy or as a ploy of dangerous magic. For modern man this reality has become so used that it already passes as a daily, natural fact, necessary for worldly activities. Basically, the disappearance, the withdrawal of these technological facilities of digital communication appears to us as a global catastrophe, as a global event with devastating effects on all of humanity. Thus, the disappearance of mobile telephony or the Internet are terrifying scenarios for today's civilization that has already appropriated these scientific goods as daily tools as for ancestral people, the fire or the wheel were elements to support individual and social life. However, there is no new worrying phenomenon caused by the excessive use of digital communication, namely, the fact that people no longer communicate directly with each other without technological intermediaries? Do not we notice how this phenomenon is growing and the paradigms of meeting people have been replaced by

paradigms of the meeting between electronic entities behind which people hide, they hide as if they avoid live contact and information exchange based on direct physical and spiritual co-presence?

2. The topicality of the technology myth.

Contrary to the view of Christian theology, for the ancient Greeks, death is not a complete solution to human tragedy, a terminus of the evolution of the human being in which an eschatological line would be drawn of clear demarcation between good and evil. On the contrary, even for heroes like Achilles, a simple, glorious life is preferable to ruling a kingdom in Hades' empire (Eliade, 2000, p. 273). The spatial and temporal existence seems to be, in this context, the desirable option in front of the eternity of death. But this situation is the result of the reckless choices of man in relation to the Divinity and such an ontic positioning can only be corrected by a re-approach to the way man relates to gods and nature. The universal myth of saving human consciousness and opening it to an Edenic register (Afloroaei, 1994, p. 139) it is present not only in the thinking of the ancient Greeks and the biblical tradition but it also makes its presence felt in modern times in the formulas of the myth of technology that is to be understood as the supreme path to a perfect human civilization in which man has surpassed himself and tends to become his own god. Thus, the deliverance of the human being from the avatars of bodily dissolution, disease and even death could occur through advanced technologies man becoming like the gods he evoked in the past. But it is precisely the foundation of this belief in the absolute of science that is proving to be of a negative nature, with it being the same that was the basis for the collapse of the ancestral man in the Edenic areas of the vicinity of the gods. The Greeks recall the state of self-transcendence and attainment of excellence through the term *arete*. They claim that often, after reaching this higher state, follows, for the human conscience, the experience of *hybris*, a state of maximum insolence and self-fullness, in essence, a state of excessive pride and defiance of the gods. Cases of the rise and fall of mythological heroes such as Achilles or Odysseus are edifying for understanding the dynamics of the rapid and uncontrollable transition from *arete* to *hybris*. If they are not controlled and blurred, they can determine the accentuated phenomenon of desecration that Eliade (2000) mentions but also the stationing of the human being in the field of beings, in the environment of *Se*, as Heidegger (2003) recalls, without the ability to rise to the level of contemplation and action in Being. Thus the modern man, driven by technology and technological

communication, captive in the digital media space proves not only incapable of sacred living but also of direct informational reporting to the other. This other one becomes a virtual entity, a character connected to a communication program but he is no longer a living being, real in corporeality and active consciousness. As Heidegger (2003) says, the impersonal *Sei* dominates the man of digital communication and it behaves as all other people captive to modern technology do. Therefore, it not only desecrates itself but also depersonalizes, it becomes a uniformed anonymity, a component of a flattened whole that acts as a dehumanized collective mechanism (Heidegger, 2003, pp. 250-254). The flee from death and the anguish of non-being, which erupted with the renunciation of the belief in transcendence and sacredness, generates an anchoring of modern man in the soil of a superficial optimism who repeats that only through technology can man achieve his happiness. But, happiness behaves like the horizon line, it seems to show itself close to modern man and yet it remains untouchable. This constant effort of the desecrated human being sustains a perpetuation of the state of concern of which the Heideggerian (Heidegger, 2003) thought also mentioned, a state of preoccupation that always tries to find other means of technological progress that will open the era of a supposed and utopian collective happiness that is always postponing its appearance. Besides achieving happiness, another concern that worries mankind is that of gaining immortality. (Odorčák, 2020, pp. 53-68; Sandu, 2015, pp. 3-26)

Today's high technology and digital communication appear to us as elements that come to support the progress and civilization of mankind towards a standard that, in the recent past, it could only be an ideality impossible to materialize in the reality of human society. Thus, the aviation or the nuclear energy, computerized telecommunications or medical technology, are realities of our contemporary world that go beyond the imagination of any writer in the past centuries. As Ninenko (2017) said, "Nowadays, almost any experience can be digitalised, copied and reproduced; it is nothing but data." We also recomand to read Odorčák (2019) "Exorganic Posthumanism and Brain-Computer Interface Technologies" and Sandu and Vlad (2018) "Beyond Technological Singularity-the Posthuman Condition."

The risk of the uncontrolled propagation of technology and digital communication that can machine the human being, that can turn it into a robotic mechanism has always been questioned, it is no coincidence that the debate about an artificial intelligence that would develop a destructive self-consciousness directed against man is ongoing. It was considered that the values of transcendence were replaced by those of immanence, and

timelessness, eternity was ignored in exchange for refocusing human attention on time and insertion into history, towards the possibilities and promises of the future.

The age of digital technology and communication seems to have moved away from these mythological scenarios, often considered detached from the reality of the modern man. But perhaps this very reality is nothing more than an extension, a continuation of what the ancient myth of technology indicates at the dawn of European civilization. Thus, it is possible that nowadays that horizontal projection of the human consciousness has reached a peak, the phenomenon of desacralization, secularization and globalization being indicative factors of this process. Forgetting the Divine and the sacred or, as Heidegger would say, the retreat of the gods (Heidegger, 1995, p. 237) is doubled, nowadays, by the general focus of mankind on the problems of unstoppable technological progress, this progress being further proposed as the key to solving the general problems of the whole world. The danger of dehumanization is present in this context, as is the desacralization and divine removal of the human being. Therefore, if the loss of communication with the sacred is followed by the extinction of the capacity to communicate with one's fellows, the separation from the relationship to spirituality can be followed, in the age of digital communication, by the alienation of man in relation to his own consciousness. (Frunză, 2019, pp.156-169)

Cioran (2002) described this process through a conceptual correspondence with his own destiny. In this sense, he considers himself a forerunner of mankind's ultimate experiences. For him, the encounter with the Edenic state was consumed with the personal paradigm of childhood. This was followed by a fall in time or involvement in history, amid political and social commitments to which he will renounce later, and the last individual ontological and gnoseological experience, namely the fall of time into a negative eternity, in an area of depression and constant psychic void. This journey is followed by all mankind and it will be traversed to the end (Cioran, 2002, pp. 165-168). Thus, mankind lost the area of Edenic childhood, symbolically identified by the ancient Greeks as the Golden Age, and fell into temporality, assuming technology and excessive work for collective progress, but it is pursued by the specter of the second collapse, a final slip in the sub-temporal, in an environment hostile to the spirit where man loses not only his sacredness but also the ability to live and die humanely. It is the age of the dark utopia in which the man-machine becomes the machine that vaguely reminds of what it means to be human. The danger of the technician floods the human destiny and the man knows

the final epoch of his extinction in his quality of spiritual being. The technologization, the digitization, the robotization can lead, as realities of our modern world, to this unfortunate outcome, foreseen and symbolically-mythologically rendered by the ancient Greeks but also exclaimed lyrically-contemplatively by Cioranian (Cioran, 2002) writings or described metaphysically in Heidegger's thought.

3.From the static universe to the indeterminate universe. Digital communication and ethics of the *infosphere*.

The premises of the eruption of modern science announced an excessive certainty in the predictions and data provided to all mankind. Optimism about the security of scientific data initially tended to give a greater degree of credibility not just to the predictions of Nietzsche, who was already announcing the age of the Super-man (Nietzsche, 1999, p. 5) from the positions of a thought that wanted to be faithful only to the earth, as interpreted by Nikolai Berdiaev, but also to the materialist-biological initiatives of evolutionism or nineteenth-century physics (Berdiaev, 1999, pp. 41-42). A stable universe, with laws that can be calculated and controlled by the human being in order to subordinate the whole nature of his will, seemed to open to the man of the twentieth century. And yet, the failure of this conception will be revealed not only in terms of man's inability to evolve morally with science, the tragedies of the two world conflagrations being a striking proof in this regard, but also in terms of stability of the research of the structure and dynamics of our universe, the micro- and macro-cosmos of which we are part.

Thus, what was believed to be fixed and postulated as an indisputable picture of our physical world proved, later, that it will involve new and multiple puzzles that required reformulations of some general physical laws and even the abandonment of others considered wrong. The scientific perspective on the world has therefore undergone a general reconfiguration, inaugurated at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the onset of atomic and quantum physics, as well as with the emergence of new theories, such as the theory of special and general relativity, theories considered, at the beginning of their presentation, impossible for the scientific community of the moment to accept.

The relativity of time and space at the speed of light, the orbital dynamics of the electron which can slow down with the change in its mass imposed by a displacement that can exceed the speed of light, the physics of probability that supports the impossibility of accurately predicting the

trajectory of the electron and implicitly the configurations of future events and energies are some of the elements that have changed the scientific perception of the world, determining a reorientation from the position of gnosological certainty to that of the multiple improbability of knowledge (Presură, 2019, pp. 113-116). From the perspective of psychoanalytic research, with the work and activity of Carl Gustav Jung, the same Socratic remark was emphasized, namely that we know that we know nothing about the processes of our psyche and its multiple connections, the area determined and subject to knowledge in this field representing an insignificant percentage in relation to the unknown dimension of our soul, the attitude of scientific self-sufficiency is not justified (Jung, 2011, pp. 508-512).

Moreover, on the background of this ignorance, our psyche can be drawn into the traps of major imbalances present in the digital age, online communication being able not only to help human consciousness but also to limit it, to imprison it in patterns that no longer allow its natural development and improvement. Thus the human spirit can be subjected to a process of drying up and flattening in which any creative initiative is repressed from its first impulses to independence and individualized elaboration.

4. Conclusions

What is strongly observed in the last decades of the development of digital communication and cyber progress is the phenomenon of their globalization. Basically, the entire electronic interrelationship system works like a huge network of multiple connections that are developed over huge stretches allowing the junction between areas and human communities extremely distant geographically but also from a cultural point of view (Blaj, 2016). What may seem like a general element of ethical closure and blockage in the sense of dehumanizing and desecrating modern man, may constitute, from certain interpretive perspectives, the foundation of a rebirth of the moral spirit right in the middle of the era of high technology and digital communication. According to these views, the very fact that people today can communicate very easily and can be informed extremely quickly and efficiently can prove to be the framework for a better mutual knowledge and understanding of all human communities.

If such positive communication is put into practice, then through tolerance and acceptance (Frunză, 2017, pp. 125-140), nations, cultures and even extremely different human individuals will no longer be able to fall

victims of the the destructive processes of political, social and economic manipulation. From here, it will be possible to generate an age of global responsibility, people becoming citizens of the whole earth and less of an isolated community. The infosphere is a concept proposed by the ethical concerns in the field of information technology and comes to indicate precisely this global environment of digital communication (Floridi, 2009, pp. 38-39). The awareness of the real, empirical existence of the infosphere can be a first step in finding solutions to stabilize moral rules for digital communication and the virtual environment. It is the attempt to resume or, more precisely, to apply the old ethical landmarks in the new framework of advanced technologies.

If this desideratum could be achieved, then man will avoid the danger of subordination to technology and the process of profound desecration and dehumanization. However, the effort to reunite science with morality proves to be an extremely complicated process, the temptation of technological advancement without reference to ethical values being permanently captivating even for the most ingenious spirits of modernity. In conclusion, it can be said that the myth of technology constantly warns of the danger of human action exploring and dominating nature's resources, in the absence of reference to the axiology of a universal ethic that puts, before the mirage of technological progress, the human being with his existential greatness and fragility.

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