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RESUMEN

El individualismo excesivo y el neoliberalismo que lo impulsó en las últimas cuatro décadas avivó hasta hace poco la convicción de que la hiper tecnología era el ápice de las opciones a elegir para el ser humano y su existencia futura. Este breve análisis es un ejercicio de reflexión filosófica sobre el ser del hombre de nuestros días que busca cuestionar esa infalibilidad. Un planteamiento construido sobre los cimientos de las matrices culturales de los pueblos originarios o autóctonos de Mesoamérica, en el marco del planteamiento de Soren Kierkegaard (siglo XIX), precursor del existencialismo, y el escenario tecnológico vaticinado por el filósofo europeo Günther Anders (1902-1992). De esta manera, aspiramos a columbrar un modesto cuerpo de ideas que contribuya al debate acerca del futuro del hombre hiper-tecnologizado emprendido por pensadores e investigadores de diversas disciplinas (entre otros, etnólogos, historiadores, sociólogos y psicólogos). Un esfuerzo encaminado a dilucidar sobre la trayectoria cada vez más ciega del quehacer reciente del hombre moderno y la apremiante necesidad de reintegrarlo a su verdadera escala natural.

Palabras clave: neoliberalismo, hiper tecnología, decadencia, reintegración, escala natural.

ABSTRACT

Unbridled individualism and the neoliberalism that has been its biggest booster in the last four decades has propagated the conviction, only recently challenged, that hypertechnology is the pinnacle of humankind's aspirations and represents its future. This brief talk is a philosophical reflection about what it means to be human today, in an attempt to question the supposed infallibility of the technological project. The reflection draws on the cultural matrices of the original or autochthonous peoples of Mesoamerica, within the framework of the 19th-century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard's thinking, which prefigured existentialism, and the technological scenario envisioned by the European philosopher Günther Anders (1902-1992). With these pieces we attempt to cobble together a modest body of ideas to contribute to the debate among thinkers and researchers from a wide range of disciplines (including ethnologists, historians, sociologists and psychologists) about the hypertechnological future of humanity. Our reflection aims to shed light on modern society's blind, headlong rush into the technological project and the pressing need to recalibrate human existence at more natural scale.

Keywords: neo-liberalism, hypertechnology, decadence, reintegration, natural scale.

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INTRODUCTION

All of the human race's endeavors follow an archetypical evolutionary structure that keeps human beings from detaching themselves voluntarily from their mythical or magical state (Carl G. Jung, 1984). For this reason, the sphere of needs that drives them to act or to move forward necessarily expresses a kind of religiosity, which leads them inexorably to come up with God (Mircea Eliade, 1986), regardless of whether that god has today been replaced in the minds of many by dreams of greatness, lust for power, the desire to accumulate wealth, etc. (Julian Jaynes, 1987).

As we can see, over the curve of life people fill in the gaps left by that divine nostalgia. How do they understand their time, how do they integrate it, how do they use it? That is the least of their concerns. People, in each moment of their existence, try to fill their inexplicable emptiness with surrogates (Joseph Campbell, 1980). If they find themselves deprived of their fundamental motivations, whether it be youth, power, sex, work, money, status, children, etc., they break down one way or another (P.D. Ouspensky, s/f). Some even die, when that axis around which their life revolves comes to an end. They have nothing left to do, according to their model for understanding the world (Kierkegaard, 1975: 1981; 2013a; 2013b).

In this respect, Günther Anders, the philosopher and intellectual born in Breslavia in 1902 (by then, part of the German Empire) and who died in Vienna, Austria in 1992, asserted the following:

Like most of our contemporaries, including statesmen who live in industrialized countries, we have given up (or we have unthinkingly followed others in doing so) seeing ourselves as the subjects of history... In our place we have exalted other subjects of history or, to be more precise, a single subject: technology, whose history is not, like that of art or music, one of many other "histories," but History. At least it has become History in the course of recent history, which has been confirmed in the most terrible way by the fact that humankind's being or not being depends on the development and use of technology (2011a: 279).

Following this unyielding logic, human beings realize that they are fragile, natural beings, that by being part of the Whole they are also part of Nature (Roger Walsh, 1984). People can know that nothing is foreign to them, or they can be oblivious to it, but that does not matter. Everything they can know or be aware of regarding the particular turns out to be irrelevant, because the inexorability of the link is radical. This initial reasoning is so broad that it might serve as a doorway leading to the key reflections that I wish to share with you as a way of pondering some of the warnings left to us by Günther Anders (1902-1992).

Günther Anders thought that there was not only that distance between being and nature, but that the technologization of being was feasible at the most intimate scale of the options that we have before us to choose from, as part of our free will. It would seem that "we are condemned to settle for phantoms of the world instead of experiencing the world" (Anders, 2011b). Thus, we tend to be easily used in actions whose effects lie beyond the horizon of our sight and the sphere of our decisions, as if we were cogs in a machine (pfr. Anders, 2011b). In this sense, one may ask, How to begin reconciling ourselves with ourselves, with the world of objects, and with Nature?

Quando comienza el párrafo luego de un intertítulo se escribe siguiendo las reglas generales para los párrafos. Las citas dentro del cuerpo se escriben con el apellido del autor/as/es con las reglas del castellano solo con la inicial en mayúscula y el resto del apellido en minúscula (Apellido: año, p.xx).

Quando agregue citas textuales que sobrepasen las tres líneas deberá hacerlo en párrafo aparte, sin sangría y con margen izquierdo comenzando en el número 1 tal como está este ejemplo. El margen derecho sigue la línea de los demás párrafos. Al terminar se colocará la cita antes del punto final de la siguiente forma (Apellido: año, p.xx).

DEVELOPMENT

Re-ligare Natura

If we look closely, we will see that human beings are not aware of our natural separation, or of our own conditioning. We see how people can understand, or else refuse to understand; to understand how things work, refuse to interpret them. Anders explained the conditionings as follows,

Human beings are trained in passivity. Since we are accustomed to seeing images, but not to being seen by them; to hearing people, but not to being heard by them, we are becoming accustomed to an existence in which we are deprived of half of our existence as persons. (...) We are even dispossessed of the freedom to be aware of our lack of freedom. For "slavery" is shipped to us at home and served to us as a commodity of entertainment and comfort (Anders, 2011b).

For example, what do city-dwellers do? Lose awareness of themselves, of their natural function, and of the fact that the very construction of cities is driven by the outside world (G.I. Gurdjieff., 1977). They forget that everything that happens or that happens to them is decided and driven by Nature.

No one today can overlook the fact that this poses a great threat for humanity: the destruction of the environment, the possibility of creating artificial intelligence that will put an end to human beings, the problems that genetically-modified organisms could bring about, the question of nuclear energy... All of these threats are the result of enormous technological capabilities. The fact that we have trouble imagining the consequences of our technology and that we are hard pressed to produce a proportionate moral response points to the inferior development of our representational and moral powers (Virginia Ballesteros, 2016: 32).

Let us consider an example. City dwellers might have noticed that ants exist, that they dig holes in the ground and that they tend to do this in certain spaces. However, it is not easy for city dwellers to link the purpose of this action to their surroundings, to realize that digging holes just might serve the purpose of helping rainwater to infiltrate downward and replenish our aquifers. Of course, they will never understand why a field where the ants have been exterminated produces poor harvests (Campbell, 1989). In other words, it will be very hard for them to understand how the ecological chain really works.

The water hyacinth in Lake Chapala is another example. We all see it as a problem, a stubborn invasive species, when one of its functions is to filter heavy metals (manganese, aluminum, copper) out of the water. Many of the solutions being debated revolve around removing it from the lake, eradicating it. That, however, is the wrong approach. The problem will not be solved by getting rid of the water hyacinth, but by getting rid of the heavy metals.

There is a beautiful story about heather, a hardy bush that grows on inhospitable land. It is apparently tasteless. Sheep do not eat it, but they let their droppings fall on it, inadvertently fertilizing the ground. Heather also produces shade in very hot environments. Over time, heathlands improve and become productive land because they attract clouds and rain. The land improves due to an outside force that works on it. This cycle is interrupted when people decide to simply exterminate the heather, considering it an annoyance (Heinz R. Pagels, 1991).

Technology-body-cities

Whatever human beings make falls under the heading of technology. "Anders' major work, *The Obsolescence of Humankind*, (published in two volumes, the first in 1956 and the second in 1980), primarily discusses the transformations that the human condition has undergone in the post-war age of industrial and technological revolution, i.e., in the light of the technologies of the electronic age (television, radio-communications, cybernetics)" (Guillermo Rodríguez Alonso, 2017: 83).

For this reason, we approach technology as the extension of one or more of our senses, which, once developed, modify what human beings have before them: their world. Thus, what is presented to us as technology expresses another deified form of being (George Friedman, 1970; Marshall McLuhan, 1987).

Technology is currently bringing about changes that profoundly modify the conditions of human life. In addition to these transformations, "environmental stimuli and demands have taken on an unprecedented pace and acceleration; it is undeniable that humans' psyche, particularly their ways of feeling, perceiving, imagining and loving, have been overwhelmed by the rich, varied pressure of the transformed environment and by the unceasing need to react to this pressure" (Friedman: 43).

Unfortunately, the breakthrough of new technology is not without cost. Technological breakthroughs are coming faster and faster, sowing ever more chaos and disruption. "There are no filters to stop their emergence when they prove to be evidently harmful for people, because they are brought to the market by those who profit the most from their acceptance" (Mander: 188). Mander discusses both motivations and purposes:

The public is uninvolved; there are no forums for argument. No pros and cons. No referenda... By the time the alarm finally goes off, technologies have intertwined with one another to create yet another generation of machines, which makes unraveling them near to impossible, even if society had the will to do it.... We continue to view them as if they were separate, discrete systems, but they aren't. Computers are at the base of them all, and also plug them into one another and into central systems of management and institutional control, made larger than ever before possible. In fact, the whole complex web of systems ought properly to be thought of as one technology that effectively encircles the globe, and that can instantaneously communicate with all its parts. Rather than a biosphere, we have a Technosphere. Call it mega technology (Mander: 188-189) [...] As a society we have been slow learners, but there is an emerging awareness that we may have been led down the garden path by false advertising toward a fantasy world, created by romantics who had an economic stake in our accepting their dream (Mander: 190).

Fleeting learning

The phenomenon of communication falls outside the use of these laws. Why? Because social communication media offer us artificial stimuli and these artificial stimuli characterize the new simulation culture born of mass media (Jean Baudrillard, 1993). "Each culture creates its own sensory array in accordance with the demands of the medium" (J. Culkin, quoted by Gutiérrez, 1982: 108). Thus, the perceptual possibilities of each person in the West are being "conditioned by a culture that is being chiseled by mass media." However, "while each sensory experience may release a certain amount of sensory energy, the distribution of this energy among the five senses varies depending on the medium used" (Gutiérrez: 108).

Perhaps these developments could be summarized in an admittedly simplistic formula: the greater the volume and speed of data, the greater the ignorance and detachment from reality. For example, how much can people know about the road to Chapala if they travel it at high speed by car (in spite of making the trip three times a week for ten years), compared with the knowledge acquired by a person who has walked the route only once? This is the qualitative difference in the perception of images and knowledge when they are mediated by speed.

Communication media increase speed because they are extensions of the human person (McLuhan, 1987). If we ask, "How much is 23×72 ?" and we do the calculation, we will realize that, even though the procedure is slower, we are capable of employing the logarithms that lead to the result: 1456. In other words, we know with certainty the number, the logarithms and the result. That does not happen when we use a calculator, because it does not show the components of each operation, just the result.

The characteristic allure of images in today's world comes from their immediacy. The immediacy of images as a representation of the world and of beings clashes with the image consumer's affectivity and sensitivity. Images offer us concrete, polyform, experiential information. In the presence of images, perception,

intuition and affectivity come into play before the personality control mechanisms are ready to grasp the intended messages (Cohen-Seat and Fongeyrollas, 1967: 35). Images end up dominating people in their unconscious. Driven always and everywhere by the immediacy of images and sounds, people have become satisfied consumers of the allure of images.... (Gutiérrez, 1982: 23).

Virtual involution?

There are many models of perception; in the West, however, we have exalted a single one, which means that our interpretative scope and the meaning we draw from phenomena tend to be shallow. This becomes evident when one has freedom of perception or broadened perception (Naimy Mikhail, 1993).

If we understand perception to be the organism's immediate response to the energies that excite its sensory organs and thus that all perception is an organic response, then educating perception consists of making those immediate responses more and more objective, in the sense of relating them as closely as possible to the object of perception (Gutiérrez: 107).

It is worth asking ourselves whether a revision of this model is in order today, given the fact that its underlying foundations – the presumption of an unequivocal interpretation of phenomena and the effective control of nature – have been undermined by chaos theory and recent mathematical developments involving fractals:

We are just beginning to understand that chaos and unpredictability are more deeply embedded in nature than we ever imagined...Most of the natural world does not conform easily to linear equations. Nonlinear fractal forms are the rule rather than the exception (Oliver, 1992: 172).

Might it be feasible then to challenge Western premises on the basis of perceptual formulas that consider reconnection from a non-Western perspective? As Anders observes, “the subjects of freedom and non-freedom have changed places. Freedom belongs to things; what's non-free is man” (Anders, 2011a: electronic). All the more so when the Korean professor from the University of Berlin, Byung Chul Han, warns that “the tsunami of information leaves the cognitive system itself swamped in its wake. Data are no longer stable units. They lack the firmness of being” (Han, 2021; 14). Indeed, as he points out,

The Industrial Revolution reinforced and expanded the sphere of things. It effectively distanced us from nature and craftsmanship. Digitalization is doing away with the paradigm of things. It subordinates them to information. Hardware upholds software; it is secondary to information. Miniaturization shrinks it more and more. The internet of things turns it into no more than an information terminal (2021: 15).

Consequently, if we wish to challenge the Western model, we need to ask what this revision would look like. Might it turn out to be an involutive aberration? In this regard, Mander has the following to say:

There is no denying that all of this amounts to considerable adjustment, but it's not as if Western world were much choice. Truly, such change is inevitable if sanity and sustainability are to prevail. To call this adjustment 'going back' is to conceive of it in fearful, negative terms, when the changes are actually desirable and good. In fact, it is not really going back; it is merely getting back on track, as it were, after a short unhappy diversion into fantasy. It is going forward to a renewed relationship with timeless values and principles that have been kept alive for Western society by the very people we have tried to destroy (384).

And he proposes:

As for whether it is 'romantic' to make such a case, I can only say that the charge is putting the case backwards. What is romantic is to believe that technological evolution will ever live up to its own advertising, or that technology itself can liberate us from the problems it has created. So far, the only people who, as a group, are clear-minded on this point are the native peoples, simply because they have kept alive their roots in an older, alternative, nature-based philosophy that has proven effective for tens of thousands of years, and

that has nurtured dimensions of knowledge and perception that have become opaque to us. It is the native societies, not our own, that hold the key to future survival (Mander: 384).

Choices

It is important to proceed with a cool head. Now that we have more grounds to recognize why indigenous communities have been misunderstood, it is time to acknowledge with mature humility that, by any measure, many of them boast a civilizational foundation that is better integrated than our model.

On Utopia Inverted:

We are now smaller than ourselves and this is an underlying dilemma of our age. In other words, we are incapable of creating an image of something that we have made ourselves. We are, then, inverted utopian thinkers: just as utopian thinking was incapable of doing the things it imagined, we are incapable of imagining the things we do (Anders, quoted by Pedro Palá, 2021: 10).

In this way, the struggle to defend otherness could be followed by viable cultural attempts to preserve knowledge of ancient models, by teasing out the most effective and transferrable perceptual capacities and qualitative traits of those models for our social context today.

Today, the solutions applied by many peoples and communities to everyday human problems show marked advantages over our world in a wide range of contexts (political economic, social, psychosocial, moral, etc.). For example, for many semi-nomadic peoples, small children call out the greatest maturity in people, and the most solid community values: all children are protected by all adults. All adult men are called papa, and all women, mama; all dispense teaching and care. Violence is inconceivable, and as a result, there is no crime.

We are obviously dealing with very different approaches to reality, to social interaction, to the transfer of information and to the conservation of the species and resources. Applying such an approach in a complex, diffuse culture such as the Western world's would require not just genuine recognition but also a very high capacity for assimilation and for individual and collective transformation. As Anders says:

We find ourselves in the paradoxical situation of having to tame our own products, as we have always, up to now, had to do with the forces of nature. Current efforts to produce so-called "clean weapons" are endeavors unlike any other, because what humanity is trying to do now is to enhance its products by making them less potent, by watering down their effects (Anders, 2019: 8).

Along these same lines, Gilbert Cohen-Seat and Pierre Fongeyrollas add:

Humanity owes its peculiar situation today to the fact that the most powerful and refined information technologies are emerging alongside a resurgence of fundamental intuitive faculties that civilization has seen fit to keep in check and disguise for thousands of years. It would seem that man, as he approaches the pinnacle of his power, finds himself forced to reconcile with himself and recover the original unity of his intelligence and his instinct (1967: 119).

In this regard, it is important to underscore the deterministic transcendence of the opposite tendency, aggravated by the acceleration of change in the technological domain of today's world. As Anders observes,

Human beings now look like miserable raw material, suffering from an inferiority complex, trying to conform to machines. Each machine demands something different from people, requires us to become something different, to model ourselves depending on the particular case in a way that is expected to surpass the false modeling. Our defect in this process is our acquiescence to corruption due to our ephemeral mortal nature (Rasini quoted by Palá, 2021: 7) [...] Human beings are reduced to a means, to a commodity with a quantifiable exchange value. People accept their reduction to a thing; in fact, they long for it as a way to achieve a level of perfection that they could not attain otherwise (Gehlen quoted by Palá, 2021: 6).

We wonder whether it could be Nature itself that is speeding up the pace of things. And if so, what would be the impact for a man who finds himself completely cornered, who no longer has the freedom to choose what he does (Soren Kierkegaard, 1987; Francisc Torralba, 1988). Are we not justified in looking for other ways out, aside from the one sketched here, for the purpose of redressing this blackest of scenarios?

Mircea Eliade pointed out, almost 60 years ago,

The different types of civilization are organically united to certain religious forms, but that in no way rules out spontaneity and, in the final analysis, the anti-historical condition of religious life. Because all history is, in a certain sense, a fall from the sacred: a limitation and a diminishment. But the sacred does not stop manifesting itself, and in each new manifestation it reassumes its initial tendency to reveal itself totally, in all its fullness... This is the same as saying that for some religious mindsets in crisis, a historical leap is always possible, allowing them to reach positions that would otherwise be inaccessible (1976: 16).

CONCLUSIONS

What has happened to people's senses as a result of today's technology? It is evident that they have been trained to perceive objects faster, although not fast enough to consider them ready to make a leap from one perceptual dimension to another. "Even when we have precise control over an iterative process, we cannot predict its effects at any specific place or time" (Oliver, 1992: 184)

Nevertheless, the idea is promising. Nicolis and Prigogine already stated three decades ago:

Now, at the end of this century, more and more scientists have come to think, as we do, that many fundamental processes shaping nature are irreversible and stochastic; that the deterministic and reversible laws describing the elementary interactions may not be telling the whole story. This leads to a new vision of matter, one no longer passive, as described in the mechanical world view, but associated with spontaneous activity. This change is so deep that we believe we can truly speak of a new dialogue of man with nature. (Gregoire Nicolis & Ilya Prigogine, *Exploring Complexity*, (W.H.Freeman, New York), 1989, quoted by Dick Oliver, 1992: 190).

Provided a time limit is reached, it might be feasible to start apprehending two dimensions at once: one, the dimension of the isolated phenomenon; the other, the dimension of its value in the overall meaning. In other words, if the speed does not pass that threshold, it will not be possible to move from one skill to the next. Unless... everything remains at the level of good offices:

When you begin to think fractal, the world is a very different place indeed. Each part of that world is defined not by its division from others, but by its resonance with a greater whole. Separation becomes a ridiculous idea when one's identity is gained by a unique transformation, rather than a greedy withdrawal. Just as every part of the body synchronizes with and permeates all others, my individuality is strengthened rather than threatened through giving and cooperation (Oliver: 220).

Are we then in some kind of transition, in the midst of a transformation that is so profound and fast that our senses have been forced to cede their place to technological stimuli? As in the case of computers, where it is noteworthy that people stop investing time in making better use of them. Following this line of thinking, we should then interpret those human beings – who find themselves immersed in a process of accelerated change – turn off part of their awareness in order to catch their breath and deal with the ever greater increments of speed that everyday life imposes on them.

This would be another aspect, barely suggested here, that we think should move us to deeper reflection. Although it could be argued that its effects contradict or extrapolate some of the arguments of the thesis presented throughout this paper, from our viewpoint, they actually support it. In the final analysis, all the possible responses that can be derived from the two channels or paths – aimed at alleviating existential anguish, the loss of meaning and the values of humanity today – point to a trajectory of change that will end

up closing the two sides of the pincers as they pursue the same end. The process is already here, it has not stopped, and everything indicates that it will only grow faster and faster.

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