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## DESTINY OF HUMANITY TODAY BETWEEN *TECHNE* AND *SOPHIA*

1. In the very beginning I would like to warn you that somebody in the audience may find my presentation to be very general. This particularly applies to the researchers in the fields of special areas of philosophy of technology and philosophy of engineering. Still, my intention is to point out to the need of a wider approach to the problems that treats modern philosophy of technology.

For the requirements of this wide, I would say pure philosophical approach, we should remind ourselves about some generally known attitudes regarding the meaning of technology and technological development in the modern world.

The most common term that is related to the technology is its development or technological progress. Today we are ordinary talking about technological progress identifying it with the progress of humanity in general. We use the terms “developed and undeveloped” countries or nations and primarily we refer to technology and not to cultural or moral development.

Nevertheless, when we talk about the technological development in the world, the main issue occurs in many questions: what comprises such a development, what is its ultimate goal and what are its practical results?

There are two very clearly defined opposite points of view. According to the first one, the goal is better life of the people and the wellbeing of humanity in general. This positive approach was established by Francis Bacon who promoted the motto that the future of humanity is in the technological development which in the modern time gained strong philosophical support, for example, by John Dewey.

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Today, the emphasis is on the goals such as: provision of more food for the population in the world, improvement of general health, improvement of communication between people, richer individuals and communities etc.

But, there is a general question emerging from this optimistic approach: are people who live in the most advanced technology countries happier by default? Are people living, for example in Nordic countries, happier (as statistics show) than the people living in isolated Amazon tribes? We do not know the percentage of suicides in these tribes that live in a technologically primitive society, but we know that the most developed Nordic countries have the highest percentage of alcohol abuse and suicide.

In the background of these dilemmas there is an emergence of a pessimistic attitude towards technological development, primarily promoted by the modern philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, etc. That pessimism was intensified particularly after the World War II as a result of the destructions of what was created throughout the centuries by European civilization. As never before, the War gave striking evidence of the devastating power of modern technology which ruthlessly abolished and decomposed all the previous civilizational material and spiritual achievements.

The doubts and questions about the future of the humanity are intensifying. There is an increasing emergence of speeches and articles about the dangers of genetic experiments, laboratory viruses, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology and so on. Recently, the public attention was drawn by the experiment in Switzerland with the so-called 'God particle'. Many distinguished intellectuals have publicly wondered whether this experiment with the 'God particle' is actually a dance with the devil. Is the endless scientific curiosity in the service of insatiable thirst for profit, instead of taking us to heaven, is pushing us in the opposite direction? When we think that just one press of a button is all that it takes to burn the world to ashes we cannot escape the thought that never in the history of mankind have we been closer to hell.

But some wise men pose a sober question — is modern technology the main culprit for all that?

In the spirit of ancient stoicism, it can be concluded that the technology itself is something neutral, neither bad nor good *per se*. Yet, good or bad can be our attitude towards it and how that technology is used and utilized.

Very important in this context is the stance presented by Plato long time ago, stating that the man with his craft (*techne*) only imitate Demiurge i. e. God. In a way, with his technology, man creates an individual, recently virtual world which starts to function in parallel with the real world that has been given to us by God, i. e. by nature. Nonetheless, there is a significant

difference between the creation and the approach to that creation of Demiurge and the approach towards the creation of man. In his perfection, God equally possesses both, craft (*techne*) and wisdom (*sophia*), and use it to direct and govern appropriately. The question is: has the man with his approach towards the technology so far, apart from the craft (*techne*), shown enough of the divine wisdom (*sophia*) ?

2. Starting from the 19 century and intensifying in the 20 century, the interest about the phenomenon of technology is ever increasing. In the early days, the technology, its nature and its influence were usually debated by the philosophers. They looked at technology as one among the many products of culture. The most prominent philosophers in this contexts are Oswald Spengler, Ernst Cassirer, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Ortega y Gasset. They think about the consequences of technology for human life, identifying, as the main issue, the question of our attitude towards the technology: do we really control the technology or maybe we live under technology's control? Representatives of the so-called Frankfurt school (H. Marcuse, W. Adorno, J. Habermas and others) particularly noted the issue of significant influence of technology to the social life.

At the same time, and particularly in the last decades of the previous century, there was an emergence and development of a special philosophical discipline called philosophy of technology. The phrase "philosophy of technology" was first used by Ernst Kapp, followed by Andrew Feenberg, Jacques Ellul and Albert Borgman. Carl Mitcham called them representatives of "humanities philosophy of technology", and they elaborate on the influence of technology from the aspect of social sciences, law, political science, ethics, and so on.

Some kind of a diagnosis for our technological society was provided by Albert Borgman who claims that at the centre of contemporary culture is consumption, arguing that "we are drawn to consumption because it promises uniquely pure enjoyment, pleasure unmixed with labour and unconstrained by challenges" (Borgman, 22).

Martin Heidegger in his later works explains that under the impact of the modern technology all our thinking is oriented to instrumentality of the nature (Dusek, 136). We are turning our natural habitat of living into an object of exploitation. Today we talk about the nature as a resource, and even we are defining ourselves in that way when we talk ourselves as a human resources.

In short, with the help of modern technology and its incredible power we gradually enter in the sphere of uncertain and unpredictable future with numerous dangers looming. Stunningly rapid progress of technology which

is becoming even more rapid and the thought that maybe in a not-so-distant day we will lose control evokes fear in us. Actually, the thought that we are putting ourselves to the limit of our survival brings horror to our hearts.

Not so long time ago, one distinguished statesman said that if the third world war breaks out, there will certainly not be a fourth. Someone will say that due to that fear this world lives in relative peace from the World War II onwards. But is the fear something that should guide our actions?

One modern scholar (Sarewitz, 303), speaking about the advancement of humanity identifies three areas: advancement in scientific knowledge, in technology and in moral. One must wonder whether the advancement in the area of moral is equal to the advancement in the area of technology.

3. Regarding the moral in the context of technology, many have been speaking about public awareness, responsibility, good will and all that accompanied by many self-sacrifices. All that can be put under the joint imperative — wisdom (*sophia*) is necessary.

As a reflection of that necessity, so-called risk philosophy has emerged lately, which is defined by its representatives as anticipation of catastrophes, anticipation of disasters (Beck, 495). But, the definition of risk philosophy itself clearly denotes that in the foundation of this venture lies the fear, fear of misfortune.

This fear is may be a good starting point, but the correct attitude towards the modern technology is the awareness, i. e. the wisdom that is expressed in a wider perspective, wisdom that unites all individual efforts and gives meaning to the progress in the modern world.

That is the direction of my presentation, and I believe that is one of the goals of this scientific conference.

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