

MARCUSE'S TECHNOLOGY: TOWARDS A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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*I*n 2004, one thinker persistently asked what orientation Filipinos have regarding technology. Tracing the various theoretical sides, he claimed Filipinos relate to technology with ambivalence and relate among themselves with equal ambivalence in the face of technology.¹

Does this observation hold true today? An example can serve as an initial answer to the question. Months after stakeholders in a school in North California rejected testing RFID security system to its students and the US State Department shelved the plan to include the same technology in passports, a school here in the Philippines audaciously heralded the technology's introduction as the "latest in RFID technology."² The technology ensures supposedly the school's security; in reality, hardly does the technology address this concern since it still has to deal with its own vulnerability issues.

The contention, in other words, still holds true. However, this is not a case of proving the contention; this is a case of discovering steps—even recovering ones—to have a heightened grasp of the technological phenomenon. Against the background of questioning technology, the ultimate aim is to find our right relation it.

In this attempt, I try to examine the thoughts of one critical theorist, Herbert Marcuse, who intensively reflected on the technological phenomenon. I hope to use his insights (on technology) as a starting point for critical analysis in the Philippine technological environ amidst our current ambivalence.



Marcuse is a philosopher-member of the Frankfurt School who did extensive critical researches on the effects of advanced capitalism and totalitarianism.³ Since the society is characterized by the progressive deployment of tools and machineries, deemed as the only vehicles of development, his critique touches essentially on technology. Thus, he ineluctably develops his view on technology.

Marcuse critically examines the society and provides his critical theory of technology. Hence, in the following section Marcuse's critical theory will be presented.

The Meaning of Technology

Marcuse's initial view on technology may be discerned in his early essay.⁴ Following Lewis Mumford, he views technology in many senses. On the surface, technology includes the technics, that is, various contrivances, devices, and artifacts. Here, technics are instruments used, means to achieve certain ends. On a deep level, Marcuse sees technology as a social process; it is an essential component of the social organization and development. As it develops in society, technology has historical rootedness; and thus, it cannot be removed from the society. On a deeper level, technology is, more importantly, a social process which includes the employment of tools, devices and contrivances and seeks to perpetuate the prevailing interests of a dominating class. The additional element is significant. It stresses the important role of technology: class interests may take place in and through technology.⁵

Thus, Marcuse writes,

Technology is taken as a social process in which technics proper (that is, the technical apparatus of industry, transportation, communication) is but a partial factor.... Technology, as a mode of production, as the totality of instruments, devices and contrivances which characterize the machine age is thus at the same time a mode of organizing and perpetuating (or changing) social relationships, a manifestation of prevalent thought and behavior patterns, an instrument for control and domination.⁶

Initially, then, technology as an ensemble of machines and devices is just a means to an end. As a vehicle towards a goal, it may be construed as neutral.⁷ This means that the same technology can deliver various ends. A car, for example, can be liberating in transporting people but can be financially constraining, too. It offers convenient transport but it shows futile in a traffic jam situation.

Marcuse moves further than the neutrality thesis of technology. Apparently, technology is neutral with regard its instrumentality; its instrumental character can be thought apart from the ends it serves. In the end, such conception turns out to be a "special kind of ideological illusion."⁸ Technology, as an integral component of the social process, does not merely serve some ends. When instruments and devices enter the realm of reality, they are hardly divorced from the contingencies of socio-historical situations. Thus, "Who uses the apparatuses?" "What kind of society employs the devices?" "Who designs them?" "What values shall they serve?" "And who determine these ends?" are some important questions that necessarily accompany technology in the social process.

Such case presents several possibilities. Foremost, the neutrality of technology is no longer a tenable position.⁹ Too, a perspective on technology should not preclude its socio-historical setting and thus must study the society in its development.

The Society, Technology and Way of Life

Marcuse analyzes technology from the perspective of the historical society. He focuses on advanced industrial society (or would be) that relies on technology for growth and development. As a philosopher with Marxist leaning, he centers his critical analysis on progressive capitalist state which trusts the unlimited enterprising potentials of technology and includes, in his critique, communist society insofar as it blindly believes in technology as the deliverer of progress and development.¹⁰

The characteristic feature of society Marcuse criticizes creates the impression that he has a strong aversion to technological development. An advanced industrial society certainly reflects some elements of social progress and growth. What is so difficult to accept in such society? In Marcuse's view, the mechanized industry

characterizes advanced industrial society and procures commodities in greater quantity; machineries that produce large scale pervade the economic, commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors. On the human level, human beings organize themselves around the technological arrangements of the society. Automobiles, home entertainment sets, kitchen equipments, and commercial centers mostly constitute these arrangements.¹¹ Thus, this ensemble of devices exerts influence to a greater extent both social and individual level.

However, this is not a harmless ensemble of means—although not necessarily harmful. Technology alters the character of social life. In advanced industrial society, it transforms totally the way of life.

What way of life does flourish in the technological society? It might be well to reminisce and compare with little romanticism the pre-technological world. To be sure, this world is “permeated with misery, toil and filth” but its culture grows in the rich backdrop of nature.¹² Old civilization contiguously exists with reality; and thus, no clear divide exists between the natural world and the pre-technological world. In the technological society, a sharp delineation emerges. The society sets aside nature and patterns its activity around the technological environment: artifacts, machines, devices and all other instrumentalities occupy the center stage of the social life. Productive machineries are the fountains of commodities that imbibe life to the society. Commercial apparatuses are the cathedrals which introduce an entirely different culture of consumption.¹³ Business organizations manage work efficiently. And, entertainment systems offer distractions from boredom.¹⁴ Thus, all throughout, technology is largely responsible for the radical transformation to the industrial setting.

The dominance of technology. To recall, Marcuse abandons the view of technology as neutral. Far from mere convenience as justification, he claims that the neutrality of technology is not tenable when related to the social sphere. In the social setting, technology embodies the inclinations of the society; it is the medium of the dominant interests of the particular ruling class.

The technology in the social milieu depicts a different portrait. With its existence as the sole basis of social organization, it dominates the society. Its special role is to be a vehicle. But the ends it serves are present in it. In this sense, it is a technology of domination.

In what sense is technology a form of domination? Marcuse writes,

The way in which the society organizes the life of its members involves an initial *choice* between historical alternatives which are determined by the inherited level of the material and intellectual culture. The choice itself results from the play of dominant interests. It *anticipates* specific modes of transforming and utilizing man and nature and rejects other modes.¹⁵

Here, as the society patterns itself to technology, technology embodies a choice for a specific form of life and such choice excludes other forms. The point is not that there is only one choice; rather, from its inception, the choice has already been decided by the dominant class. Thus, the technology merely perpetuates the form of domination.

Moreover, "technology serves to institute new, more effective, and more pleasant forms of social control and social cohesion."¹⁶ Of course, a question can be raised here: How can technology do so when it depends mostly on human beings for its operation? But Marcuse responds to such question by pointing to the technological thinking. For him, technology embodies a specific form of thinking and entirely advocates the wishes of the dominant social class.¹⁷ Hence, technological rationality.

Technological rationality. Technological thinking prevails in the advanced industrial society. What comprises this technological reasoning? This reasoning solely fosters "efficiency, expediency and coherence."¹⁸ Technology seeks to provide instruments that deliver desired ends efficiently and expeditiously. In such instance, the critical character of reason must give way to the technological demands. Further, since it admits no other factors that would derail

the process, technological reasoning requires everything to cohere upon its system and thus authoritatively compels autonomous reason (or those which tend to be autonomous) to submit to the former's "laws and mechanisms."¹⁹

Marcuse illustrates this point in an industrial setting. "Technical rationality is embodied, in spite of its irrational use, in the productive apparatus," he writes.²⁰ One may take note how the productive process operates. In a production plant, for example, machines are organized in a manner that tasks are clearly segmented into various processes. A laborer, being dependent on the machine process, may spend his day's work by merely soldering the wire in an electronic gadget. Here, the apparatus has a special character. Since human beings were made as mere adjacent to the machine, their own individual thinking is dissolved with the device. As a consequence, technological reasoning prevails. The prevailing rationality "makes [them] ready to accept and even introcept the dictates of the apparatus."²¹ Hence, production itself, which is not necessarily labor intensive, does not encourage the uplift of human condition through thinking; the thinking that takes place submits itself to technology. All these for the sake of "efficiency, expediency and coherence."

The technological thinking compels. Marcuse claims, Rationality here calls for unconditional compliance and coordination, and consequently, the truth values related to this rationality imply the subordination of thought to pregiven external standards. We may call this set of truth values the technological truth, technological in the twofold sense that it is an instrument of expediency rather than an end in itself, and that it follows the pattern of technological behavior.²²

Here, thinking is not free in its own thought; it must conform to the standards to which it has no part in setting. This rationality, then, discourages creativity and autonomy.

This form of thinking also permeates the mode of organization in the society. Since organization is patterned according to the technical process, the form of management serves only to insure efficiency and productivity. Organizational activities transform

“external compulsion and authority into modes of self-discipline and self-control.”²³ Laborers who compose the organizational structure are deemed essential cogs who must function according to their roles. However, when an anomaly in the process arises, the establishment is beyond question, the laborers' personal discipline and control are the prime suspects.²⁴ In the long run, the organizational structure manages the transformation of the working condition and renders inutile the positions of laborers as catalysts. “Domination is transfigured into administration,” Marcuse claims.²⁵

This technological rationality pervades in the society and consequently impresses upon human beings an “objective and impersonal” character.²⁶ Having its expression in the machine process and enforcement in the organization, technological rationality attains its universal acceptability, though not necessarily its validity. In fact, the prevailing rationality discourages any opposition such that accepting this thinking makes it seemingly and universally valid. The result is like opening the floodgates.

False needs as created needs. The apparent validity of technological rationality effects further influence on the society in general and the lives of human beings in particular. The technological reasoning lessens the critical tendency of thought and paves the way for the emergence of false needs. These false needs are “those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice.”²⁷ From the start, the technological conditions are already chosen by the dominating class. The conditions are stretched to the society such that its products will find their consummation to every individual. True, productive machineries produce commodities, but they do not essentially address the needs, oftentimes only the created needs.

False needs are the ones which impress themselves as necessities; on the contrary, they are not even essential to better and qualitative living conditions. The need to relax and visit a spa to have a massage belongs to these false needs. Of course, it appears to be necessary in order to manage stress. However, critical thought will reveal that such stress is the result of a working condition that only

attends to efficiency. Marcuse attributes this emergence of needs to another technology: the media technology. Television technology shows advertisements that encourage unquenchable thirst for consumption.²⁸ They advertise products which "promote false consciousness" and "indoctrinate" a way of life.²⁹ Thus, one observes the eat-all-you-can food shops encouraging unlimited food consumption; several devices like elevators, pedicabs, and others preventing body fats to burn; and supplies of devices encouraging body figure maintenance and obesity avoidance. This whole phenomenon clearly shows that reasoning is confined only to the technological.

For Marcuse, the only true needs are essentially connected to life: "nourishment, clothing, lodging at the attainable level of culture."³⁰ These needs require prioritized fulfillment before all other needs are satisfied. However, despite all its promises, the technological society is irresolute to distribute the benefits of technology. Even with increased productivity, products for basic consumption do not sufficiently and efficiently reach the margins of the social class. Poverty, hunger, and poor housing conditions remain perennial, unresolved even with advanced industrial technology.³¹ Those who reap are members of the upper class whose interests are embedded in the technical arrangements of the society.

The phenomenon of false needs totally undermines the role of critical thought. With the satisfaction of created needs bringing in euphoria, a temporal vacuous feeling of fulfillment, resistance is almost helpless. Technological reasoning has successfully softened and consigned any critical stance to helpless resistance. Marcuse asserts that "the prevailing type of individual. . . has changed his function; from a unit of resistance and autonomy. . . to one of ductility and adjustment."³² The pervasive influence of technological thinking has rendered any criticism towards it as inimical to social progress and advancement of humanity as a whole.

The chosen way of life. The worst impact of technical arrangements is in the individual. Individual human beings are offered a way of life which they cannot refuse. The reason: technology has the effective means of incapacitating their way of

thinking in such a manner that they no longer choose in and out of technology, this one mode of life over another one; rather, they choose within what technology offers. Most often, they use products advertised by icons of consumptions like movie stars, sports heroes, fashion figures, socialites, rap artists, and celebrities.³³ They follow their (the icons') lifestyles. The result is the hapless mimicry of identities.

Technology claims the individual freedom, too.³⁴ Because of the tendency for mass culture, individuals are pressured to give up their choices in favor of the herd's choice. Oftentimes, the rabble's approval becomes the measure of acceptability. For example, reality shows making individuals appear stupid and clueless before a hidden camera—all "just for laughs"—gain audience acceptance despite the victims' being made as guinea pigs. The message is clear: individual consents and choices no longer matter; mass's approval makes an act acceptable.

However, if freedom is allowed, such is sexual freedom. Advanced industrial society propagates sexual freedom to achieve some economic ends. Marcuse observes that "advanced industrial civilization operates with a greater degree of sexual freedom—'operates' in the sense that the latter becomes a market value and a factor of social mores."³⁵ Today's society tolerates the same sexual freedom. Nowadays, hardly any advertisements—key media for communicating such rationality—are without sexual suggestions. Subliminal programming to slacken sexual conservatism are always in the offing. But of course, this attempt is deceptive.

Even relationships are affected. For Marcuse, relationships have been mediated by the technological apparatus. On the one hand, this means that they are formed through technological engagements alone without any personal contact. On the other hand, this also means that the machine absorbs the relationship. Marcuse holds the latter view. He writes:

The average man hardly cares for any living being with the intensity and persistence he shows for his automobile. The machine that is adored is no longer dead matter but becomes something like a human being. And it gives back to man what it

possesses: the life of the social apparatus to which it belongs. Human behavior is outfitted with the rationality of the machine process, and this rationality has a definite social content.³⁶

In other words, there is now the transference of relationships to machines. Thus, cars, motorcycles, laptops, computers, cellular phones, are no mere contrivances; they take on a persona.³⁷

The consequence of this whole phenomenon is the emergence of a society—one that develops, organizes, reasons and patterns the way of life according to technology. This is: the one-dimensional society.

Language, Science, and Philosophy

Still, what propels the one-dimensional society is the missing part of the conundrum. Indeed, why has technology gained the upper hand? Why has it spread entirely its boon or bane like a bush-fire? Indeed, Marcuse holds that the technological universe has also become the political universe.³⁸ Through the integration of the political power in the apparatus, technology outpours to every grain of social life.³⁹ Its widespread influence homogenizes the myriad dimensions of society. This political influence of technology pervades that even when the proletariat assumes the helm of governance in the communist society, it is hard-pressed to continue its reform because technological rationality persists in the technological base. For Marcuse, "neither by nationalization nor socialization alter *by themselves* this physical embodiment of technological rationality; . . ."⁴⁰ Thus, the result is the enervation of resistance to the overwhelming technological upsurge.

However, another phenomenon, the closing of the universe of discourse, adds to this weakening. How? Through language. Technology brings in a language that exactly promotes one-dimensionality. In employing a language of its own, it immunizes itself from any criticism through the ploy of promoting discourse while doing exactly the opposite, that is, it only sees technological discourse as the only form of discourse and thus ultimately rejects other forms which fall outside its domain.⁴¹ In this sense,

technological rationality is extended and effused in the language that suggests a "fixated structure of institutions, attitudes, aspirations..."⁴²

Prevalent language use illustrates the point. The society's propensity for abbreviations like NATO, UN, DPRK, SAM, and many others equally abridges the several thoughts which might be posed on them.⁴³ Thus, NATO avoids the question of being a treaty among North Atlantic nations; UN, the question of unity; DPRK, the question of democracy; and SAM, the question of its being a missile. "Friendly fire" takes away the unfriendliest element in it; "Enhanced radiation device" sophisticates the nuclear bomb; "collateral damage" represses the destruction; and "patriot missiles" appeals to one's love for country. These terms and others alter the questionable character in them. But once these terms are assimilated in the ordinary language, they become words of "unquestionable fact."⁴⁴

Science and philosophy. Amidst all these linguistic sophistications, science provides the driving power to technology. Through its methodology, science views nature according to its (nature's) quantifiable features. As a result, it extracts natural things from their "inherent" ends and simply accords them with the "objective" status, i.e., as mere specimen for validating and applying physical, chemical, and biological laws and theories.⁴⁵ Also, science regards nature as instrumentality and further removes its teleological, ethical and metaphysical connections.⁴⁶ The result evinces nature's lost characteristics as mere subjective and ideal; and thus, they "count less in the real business of life."⁴⁷

Of course, it may be argued that with its rigorous method, science is essentially neutral. It need not share the ends of technology and identify with technological rationality. Marcuse, however, claims the contrary. He holds that despite its apparent neutrality, science still serves the technological apparatus. He argues:

The scientific concept of a universally controllable nature projected nature as endless matter-in-function, the mere stuff of theory and practice. In this form, the object-world entered the construction of a technological universe—a universe of mental and physical instrumentalities,

means in themselves. Thus, it is a truly "hypothetical" system, depending on a validating and verifying subject. . . . The hypothetical system of forms and functions becomes dependent on another system—a pre-established universe of ends in which and *for* which it develops. . . . In the construction of the technological reality, there is no such thing as a purely rational scientific order; .

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Obviously, this has basis. Scientific researches, for example, have long discovered various sources of renewable energy. However, for equivalent years also, these researches have not been given attention compared to the undivided support of various financial institutions for researches promoting fossil fuel. Undeniably, science takes on various social influence. Hence, science renders service, inevitably, to the dominance of technological reasoning

Moreover, Marcuse suspects a philosophy that encourages the spread of technology and its corresponding rationality. He accuses analytic philosophy of adding injury to the closure of ordinary discourse universe. For him, analytic philosophy demystifies language and strips away metaphor, personification and other linguistic forms in order to have clear and precise language.⁴⁹ Linguistic analysts dissect language, like a toad, in order to demystify it with all its meaning. A poem is even stripped down to its molecular statements. Such linguistic attempt closes the mind of a human being from all ambiguities and dulls it with bland clarities and precisions and no room for contradiction. But, the universe of discourse evolves continuously in the manifold meanings and oppositions of human language.⁵⁰ What happens to such realm? Marcuse asserts that in aiming for clarity and precision in meaning, linguistic analysis "sterilizes" and "anesthetizes" language. The result is: "multi-dimensional language is made into one-dimensional language, in which different and conflicting meanings no longer interpenetrate but are kept apart; the explosive historical dimension of meaning is silenced."⁵¹

In addition, linguistic analysis directs its efforts to the elimination of metaphysical concepts; it tries to remove

contradictions and oppositions.⁵² By doing so, "thinking (or at least its expression) is not only pressed into the straightjacket of common usage, but also enjoined not to ask and seek solution beyond those that are already here," Marcuse admits.⁵³ Hence, linguistic positivism restricts thinking and thought and deprives them of qualitatively different universe. And this is what Marcuse calls the "mutilated reality of thought and speech."⁵⁴

To be sure, linguistic analysis poses an attitude of tolerance. For example, it desires to understand the language of metaphor, the language of poem. In such wish, it tries to bring down a poem into the universe of ordinary language, where it can be subjected to the rigors of its method. It then becomes apparent that its tolerance is duplicitous.⁵⁵ Thus, it misses the point that "the real universe of ordinary language is that of the struggle for existence."⁵⁶ Antoine de Saint Exupery eloquently expresses this point:

The man who can see the miraculous in a poem, who can take pure joy from music, who can break his bread with comrades, opens his window off the sea. He too learns a language of men.⁵⁷

Hence, while science propels the technological world, philosophy (positive) perpetuates the technological thinking. There is not just one-dimensional society; one-dimensional thought, too.

The transcendental project. With all the theoretical criticisms, with the rejection of technological rationality, what optimism can one offer to the phenomenon of technological dominance? How can such domination be tempered with critical thought? Surely, there exists a way out of this mire. What does Marcuse propose then?

Critical analysis reveals that linguistic attempts, the "exorcisms" of the mythical, metaphysical, and other dimensions, do not really eliminate totally these elements. Positive thinking cannot efface all these "negative elements" which contrast the prevailing philosophy of dominance. It merely sets them aside by repressing them. For Marcuse, these negative elements exist in the political universe in their subdued form.⁵⁸ Words like "nation," "corporation," "congress" and others are universals that are not avoided in the political universe. They exist. They are inevitable. These universals,

which embody various forms of reification, are present since the existing tension between private needs and social needs does not have its adequate expression.⁵⁹ For instance, "Congress" enacts laws, The "Board of Trustees" sets the directions and policies of the company. In this sense, universals exist as entities, as embodiments. Nevertheless, their presence still admits the universals as not being totally eradicated. Thus, they still consist elements of negativity.

In addition, despite its possible existence in domination, art still portrays negative elements in the society. To be sure, art may be deemed as serving the prominent thinking, the dominant ideology of the ruling class. It may appear to exalt, "glorify" and apologize for the ruling class. However, "art stands under the law of the given, while transgressing this law."⁶⁰ This means that art is not marked entirely by the character of domination; for it to be art, it must retain its creative character.⁶¹ What art depicts shows its genuine character. Marcuse describes,

The world intended in art is never and nowhere merely the given world of everyday reality, but neither is it a world of mere fantasy, illusion, and so on. It contains nothing that does not also exist in the given reality, the actions, thoughts, feelings, and dreams of men and women, their potentialities and those of nature. Nevertheless the world of a work of art is "unreal" in the ordinary sense of this word: it is a fictitious reality. But it is "unreal" not because it is less, but because it is more as well as qualitatively "other" than the established reality. As fictitious world, as illusion (*Schein*), it contains more truth than does everyday reality.⁶²

Here, art possesses a critical element. It contains a form of historicized interpretation of reality which poses opposition to the standing reality, if not contradiction; it challenges the current rationality of time.⁶³

Of course, art's negativity does not automatically change the whole configuration of the technological society. Even if it is a powerful element of critical rediscovery, art needs support from all other sectors. Political reform is essential in carrying out changes in

the technological society. A change in the whole political universe can oust the whole ideological organ that perpetuates technology. But, technological reasoning is also political reasoning; technological universe is also political universe. Hence, as long as the technological base remains, technological thinking still holds influence in the society. This implies that the assumption of political power is not enough to effect radical reforms in the technological society. To ensure qualitative change, political reforms must be implemented in a manner that will change the technological base of the society.⁶⁴

How shall the changes be carried out? These changes can be carried out by radically reconstructing technology to imbue it with the goals of liberation. In other words, the dominant interests of the prevailing class must be erased and replaced with the ends of the new political power. But these goals must not be embodied only in the machinery and technics. They must be infused in the construction process as well.⁶⁵

Questions then arise: Does this mean that technology follows the same pitfalls found in the previous society? What difference is there than the previous form of technological environment? Indeed, it appears that the attempt is merely repeating what it replaces. However, the German philosopher Nietzsche cautions: "Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster."⁶⁶ Similarly, it is surely unwise to commit the same mistakes.

To avoid these perils, a different form of thinking is necessary, a thinking that goes beyond the technological rationality: the transcendent rationality. This transcendent rationality propels its project of "improving the productive achievements of the civilization."⁶⁷ And, it promotes the development of the culture, both material and intellectual, at the highest attainable level.⁶⁸ In short, the transcendent rationality, the liberated rationality, guides the path of the society through technology.

Furthermore, science, being influenced by the socio-political sphere, serves the "transcendental project" of rationality. Its method and projects, freed from elements of domination, make possible the attainment of liberating scientific achievements, without posturing itself to be the master of nature. In this sense, science would be free

from “trans-utilitarian ends” and would imbibe projects that would attain better human condition.⁶⁹

In the end, what will emerge is a new form of thinking, the transcendent rationality, which will lead the way to the attainment of goals of the new technological society. “The historical achievement of science and technology has rendered possible the *translation of values into technical tasks*—the materialization of values.”⁷⁰ Hence, the new technological direction would materialize the ends of the transcendent project: the final cause is the “pacification of existence.”⁷¹ For Marcuse, the pacification of existence entails the reduction of power which will enhance “productivity under self-determined incentives” and the liberating mastery of nature.⁷² This implies that the effort of the transcendental project is not mere assumption of power; it aims the liberation towards self-determination, towards the “satisfaction of human needs and the evolution of human faculties.”⁷³ And thus, what the transcendental project ultimately aims is the integration of aesthetic, scientific, and technological elements in it, in attaining pacified existence.

Areas for an Analysis of Technology in the Philippines

In our Philippine setting, several technologies cause concern for analysis. Recently, a television company just ended a show. The show itself—imported from Netherlands—used a surveillance technology. Employing cameras in all angles, having a “panoptical” view of every event, the show portrayed the quotidian life of a person like that of a celebrity. All these for leisure, for infotainment.

On the surface, the show had no flaws. It even had a significant audience following. Also, the television technology has integrated the SMS (Short Messaging Service) technology into its system such that the audience interacts with the station and has an apparent influence in the show. But a startling phenomenon is not examined: the surveillance technology. The show employs the technology giving the audience a panoptical vista of events. Of course using Marcuse’s line of thought, questions can be raised. What values are introduced in such technology? Whose ends will the technology serve? How does it alter the reasoning process of the audience in particular and the society in general?

Moreover, the online media have spread exponentially in the Philippines at the turn of the millennium. Internet cafés and dial-up cards from various ISPs (Internet Service Providers) often ensure 24-hour connectivity. Alongside this, the ICT industries (Information and Communication Technology) mature as investments, triggering various sectors to follow suit and cope with the demands of the digital age. These ICT infrastructures appear to provide a powerful media for keeping abreast with the digital and information age.

Seemingly, the information communication technology has provided the edge for dealing with the information age. But here Marcuse's concerns can still be validly raised. What benefits have we Filipinos reaped from the abundance of information? What are the effects of these ICT facilities with regard to the quality of our lives? Have they given us beneficent information to enhance our being as an informed person and member of a social community?

Moreover, together with increased connectivity, we had the unquenchable yen for leisure. With the Internet, online games are there to stay! Are games banes or boons? Have they offered leisure that insures well-being? What effects do online games have? What values and perspectives do they introduce?⁷⁴

Also, the availability of online communities, interactive and interest groups like Friendster, Multiply and others, and chat rooms hints a promise for a closer community or social life and a potential transformation for a responsive political life. In the Philippine setting, have these online communities crossed the barrier of regionalism, or perhaps impartial groupings? Do they encourage increased intelligent participation in the lifeworld?⁷⁵

Although the list is not extensive, the technologies mentioned will surely continue to figure in our day-to-day lives. They will exert influence; and so, our task is to assess them in the light of our life projects, our true goals.

Conclusion

In discussing Marcuse's notion of technology, I have shown technology creeping into the smallest veins of cultural life. Gradually, the technological environment transforms our way of life by influencing our choices, our thoughts, our language, and, by

extension, our whole national life. However, amid this technological intrusion, reevaluating our orientation has emerged more as a need. In our life in the technological age, have we ever considered our goal of "pacified existence"? Must we stop pursuing our existence at the highest attainable level of culture?

At the outset, it appears the points raised portray a gloomy picture of technology and a pessimist perspective is likely to come out of a critical analysis. This is not the real story. Technology exists for a purpose but it is not a panacea we have to shove to ourselves. In reality, technology is a form of discourse where we are its participants—we take part in the discourse by appropriating technology with all its concomitant elements. For this reason, our future critical analysis is not necessarily pessimistic; it is our finding the right relation to technology.

ENDNOTES

¹ Orlando Ali M. Mandane Jr., "Towards a Filipino Orientation in Technology," *Ad Veritatem* 3 (March 2004): 427-444.

² See "I-Card Invades USC," [news-online]; available from <http://www.usc.edu.ph/news.php?id=0000000617>; 7 July 2005; See also "State Department Backs Off RFID Passport" and "California School Drops RFID Tracking Program" in "Radio Frequency Identification Systems," [database online]; available from <http://www.epic.org/privacy/rfid>; 7 July 2005.

³ For further readings on Marcuse and the Frankfurt School see Douglas Kellner, "Herbert Marcuse," in *Illuminations* [article online]; available from <http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell12.htm>; 13 October 2005.

⁴ Marcuse first published the article, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology" in *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9 (1941): 414-439. The same article is included in the collected papers of Herbert Marcuse. See Douglas Kellner, ed., *Technology, War and Fascism* by Herbert Marcuse (London: Routledge, 1998), 41-65.

⁵ Herbert Marcuse, "Some Implications of Modern Technology" in Herbert Marcuse, *Technology, War and Fascism* Volume 1 Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, edited by Douglas Kellner (London: Routledge, 1998), 40.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸ Andrew Feenberg, "Marcuse or Habermas: Two Critiques of Technology" *Inquiry* 39 (no date): 51.

⁹ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), xvi.

¹⁰ Ibid., xiii.

¹¹ Ibid., 9.

¹² Ibid., 73 & 59.

¹³ William Kuhns compares the role of the cathedral in the Middle Ages and the influence of shopping centers in the contemporary period. See *Environmental Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 95-103.

¹⁴ Erich Fromm, another member of the Frankfurt School, questions the seeming tendency of advanced industrial society to have a higher number of cases of suicide, one of the pathological ways of dealing with boredom. See *The Sane Society* (New York: Fawcett Premier Book, 1955), 19.

¹⁵ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, xvi.

¹⁶ Ibid., xv.

¹⁷ Ibid., 10.

¹⁸ Marcuse, "Social Implications," 49.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 23.

²¹ Marcuse, "Social Implications," 44.

²² Ibid., 50.

²³ Ibid., 51.

²⁴ Alan Watts observes that in a society like this the individual "feels paralyzed." See *Nature, Man and Woman* (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), 61.

²⁵ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 32.

²⁶ Marcuse, "Social Implications," 57.

²⁷ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 5.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 12.

³⁰ Ibid., 5.

³¹ Erich Fromm sees that industrial production is driven more by profit. It implies that as long as technology remains as a medium of domination true needs would remain to be satisfied. See Erich Fromm, *Sane Society*, 85.

³² Marcuse, *Social Implications*, 55.

³³ Marcuse remarks that this perpetuates the patent way of life in the advanced industrial society. He claims,

Here, the so-called equalization of class distinctions reveals its ideological function. If the worker and his boss enjoy the same television program and visit the same resort places, if the typist is as attractively made up as the daughter of her employer, if the Negro owns a Cadillac, if they all read the same newspaper, then this assimilation indicates not the disappearance of classes, but the extent to which the needs and satisfactions that serve the preservation of the Establishment are shared by the underlying population.

See *One-Dimensional*, 8.

- ³⁴ Ibid., 10.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 74.
- ³⁶ Marcuse, *Social Implications*, 47.
- ³⁷ Kuhns holds similar view. See *Environmental Man*, 59.
- ³⁸ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, xvi.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 3.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 22.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 90-91.
- ⁴² Ibid., 91.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 94.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 94.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 146-147.
- ⁴⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas articulates these aspects in his famous *quinque viae*.
See *Summa Theologica*, Question 2 Article 3.
- ⁴⁷ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 147.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 168.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 177.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 198.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² A. J. Ayer ambitiously titles his book *Elimination of Metaphysics*.
- ⁵³ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 177-178.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 203.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 184.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 199.
- ⁵⁷ Antoine de Saint Exupery, *Wind, Sand and Stars* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), 239.
- ⁵⁸ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 205.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 206.
- ⁶⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977),
11.
- ⁶¹ Marcuse claims that to be "anti-art is self-defeating." For the discussion,
see Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, 49-51.
- ⁶² Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, 54.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 55.
- ⁶⁴ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 231.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 231-232.
- ⁶⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Vintage Books,
1966), IV 146, 89.
- ⁶⁷ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 220.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., 231.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., 231-232.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., 235.