The Role of Technology in Thana–Capitalism

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INTRODUCTION

We live in digital times, where events are covered and disseminated and consumed by a wider audience in seconds. This instantaneity paved the ways to the rise of a new digital culture where we can travel without even moving. The virtual reality has situated as the hallmark of a new 4.0 society (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). To put the same in other terms, technology not only changed our current means of production but also the lifestyles as well as our habits, behaviours and social interaction with others (Gold 2012). The introduction of robots and virtual reality may very well erode the social ties since lay-citizens are certainly pressed to interact with an artificial "Other". Doubtless, this is the end of hospitality as we know it (Korstanje 2017). In a seminal text, Jacques Ellul exerts a radical critique on "the technological society" shedding light on the negative effects of autocracy which are imposed by the logic of instrumentalism proper of the capitalist system. The legitimacy of the ruling elite is enhanced while the workforce passively accept the notion of efficacy as a form of genuine development. This creates a climate of extreme competence where only there is one winner and the winner of course takes it all. Ellul alerts that someday, humankind will be strictly controlled by Machines which move per their own ends. These automat robots are the direct result of an excess of rationality. He even toys with the belief that technology was conducive to the culture of capitalism in which case the logic of instrumentality mediates between citizens and their respective institutions (Ellul, 1964). Scholars are divided respecting to the role played by digital technology in the liberal world of consumers. Notably influenced by the legacy of Max Weber, Ellul was a pioneer in warning the grim future of humanity which may be subordinated to the exploitation of the liberal market. However, other voices like Guy Sorman (2008) claim that the forces of progress activate conservative counter-reactions that are oriented to prevent a more egalitarian society. Detractors of technology and its progress only are limited to tell part of the truth, which means the aftermaths of new techniques in the fields of the economy but ignoring those achievements promoted by technology as the expansion of life expective or the improvements in healthcare overt recent years. As Korstanje and Skoll put it, neither good nor bad technology depends on the use people did. Concerned by the paradoxes of Chernobyl, modernity showed that technology enrooted in a world of complexities and uncertainness would be as "a runaway train" very hard to control. The paradox was that the same instrument will make of our life a safer place to dwell become in a global threat that very well jeopardizes our existence on this planet (Korstanje & Skoll 2014). Here some questions arise: what is the role of Technology in our modern World, is technology a mechanism of control or censorship in democratic societies? in what way?

Although technology facilitated plenty of liberties and rights for humankind over the recent centuries, which is protected by the contours of democratic institutions, no less true is that democracies still exert censorship over those voices which may place the system in jeopardy. In Medieval Times, writers or

thinkers whose texts were critical to the established status quo –i.e the King or the Catholic Church- were jailed, tortured and condemned to death. The violence was culturally and legally legitimated not only by the law but also by the power emanating from the divinity of the King. This seems to be the figure of Leviathan brilliantly described by Hobbes in his texts. The publication and resulting dissemination of books was limited to those voices strictly conducive to the interest of the King. Likewise, the idea of power associated to the capacity of the Monarch to instil terror in the community. Rather, in postmodern times, censorship is preferably achieved by the editorial over-production without limits and no matter whom or under what theme the writer focuses on. While we typeset –in Google- the name Karl Marx or Max Weber, thousands of entries appear. From the right to the left-wing, much has been written about classic authors. Since our mind is limited in the understanding, we would read only a small portion of all deployed works and publications. While in the medieval times the books are destroyed and thrown to the fire, in the postmodern days, books are systematically over-printed. In the capitalist ethos where liberty plays a vital role, consumers re-channel their whims and desires into standardized forms of behaviour. The overproduction leads to people not to understand the real causes of the events. For those lay-readers who are not familiar with the fields of sociology, it is very hard –if not impossible- to understand the rise and evolution of modernity. In fact, some may launch to read ten or twenty books but they will not understand what they read. In the post-modern days, hence, censorship is strictly entwined to the material forces of production, as well as affordable technology which is used to stimulate the consumerist culture. Based on the notion of liberty (or democracy) as the mainstream cultural value, capitalism overproduces information as an efficient instrument towards misunderstanding. Conducive to mass-consumption, freedom and democracy delineate the contours of societal order making the produced commodities affordable to consumers, but in so doing opens the doors for an atmosphere of conflict and discontent as never before. It is important not to lose the sight of the fact that this moot-point was brilliantly remarked by Ulrich Beck in his book *Risk Society towards a new modernity.* Beck critically debates to what an extent the process of flexibility has recreated a new condition for postmodernity. The problem lies in the fact that the society Beck observed, just after the 9/11 as well as stock market crisis in 2008 does not exist anymore. We coin the term "Thana-capitalism" to describe this new emerging society, where the Other´s suffering (not risk) became the main commodity.

Although this point will be detailed in the next sections, let´s explain readers that the term Thana-Capitalism denotes a new stage of the capitalist system where death is the main commodity to be exchanged. Not only the modern tourists consume death visiting spaces of mass death or cities which were whipped by natural disasters, but also we consume death through videogames, media and movies (to name only a few) (Korstanje 2016). The society of risk, as it was imagined by U. Beck, sets the pace to Thana-capitalism. In this emergent facet, not only technology played a vital role in subordinating social practice to gazing but also paved the ways for the needs of captivating the suffering of others. In times of Thana-capitalism, risk sets the pace to death as a mediator between citizens and their institutions. We mean to Thana, as a derived term from Thanatos (Greek) from Death. In the days of Thana Capitalism, global audiences gaze spectacles which are based on news, the content of disasters, mass-death or trauma. Citizens who are prone to gaze others´ death enthral their own status as a part of privileged-class.

Theoretical Background

Over the decades, common questions asked on the evolution of science in Occident. Three different academic waves explored the interconnection of technology in the maturation of science. Econometrics, which initiate the first family of studies, signalled to mathematical algorithms to produce top-down

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