

The Odyssey of Post-modernity: Caught Between Experience and Technology

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Philosophy is a discipline inherently linked to human condition and human activity. It researches both how humanity experiences the world, and how humanity changes and affects the world. Nevertheless, the question of new technologies made the whole situation even muddier, because at least since the dawn of modernity, humanity and the ways humanity experiences the world have been just as strongly changed by technology (or maybe even in a stronger, more radical way) as the world was. This article analyses the relationship between the ways experience changes humanity, and how, in turn, technology changes both experience and humanity as well. The paper is divided into two parts: one analysing the experience and its effects, and the other analysing technology and its consequences.

Keywords: philosophy, sociology, technology, experience, phenomenology, AI, social sciences, cultural studies

As one will see after reading the papers contained within this issue, today's humanity finds itself in a paradoxical situation, caught between Scylla and Charybdis. On the one hand, there is the strong desire to experience the world (and the overwhelming belief that experiencing *the* world, and not its mediated shadow, is important), and the impressive novel technologies which make the very questions of 'experience' and 'reality' muddled beyond recognition. When one gazes at pictures of far-away places through a computer screen, their relationship with reality is already mediated and moderated to an incredible degree: when a computer can generate pictures of far-away lands that never existed *indistinguishable* from actual photography, we are forced to ask what 'experiencing reality' even means. The first part of this volume, 'The Philosophy and Experience: The Many Facets of Encountering the World' contains the papers dedicated to analysing and questioning the former; the second part 'Technology and Artificial Intelligence: The Digital Metamorphoses of Humanity' contains the papers dedicated to understanding and deepening our knowledge of the latter.

The papers of the first part are all, in one way or another, dedicated to the concept of 'experience', or 'experiencing something'. That also means that most are, in one way or another, affected by either phenomenological or existentialist philosophy, the two schools of philosophy that are most concerned with the concept of 'experience'. Whether we are talking about the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, Henri Bergson or Jean-Yves

Heurtebise, the very concept of 'experience' as something that is given and received, instead as something taken and forced, enables a novel outlook of reality. It is extremely important today when, thanks to technological progress, humanity's relationship with the world has become framed (Ge-stell) (Heidegger 1976: 21) and rationed as through a specific technological prism that 'is efficient and brings efficiency to everything' (Ellul 1964: 6). The problem of a simulacrum, of an image without any sort of predecessor in the real world (Baudrillard 1994), has, thanks to new media and new technologies, become even more stringent than when the same Baudrillard wrote 'The Gulf War Did Not Take Place' (1995). In today's avalanche of images and recordings which cannot even be considered 'fake' (for fakeness requires an original: to replace, to trick people into believing that fake is *the* original), actual, direct, personal, human experience might be one of the few antidotes for this illness of our times.

The second part of the volume consists of papers and articles analysing the questions regarding technology and its effects on humanity. Whether they are questions regarding simulated deceased loved ones or Artificial Intelligence's capability to act in a Socratic manner, they are in the end questions of technology not only changing the world, but also changing us, its user as well. Friedrich Nietzsche in 'Beyond Good and Evil' wrote that the one who fights monsters should be wary of becoming a monster (97): one could rephrase it as 'beware the use of Artificial Intelligence: for the one who uses it without care, in the end might turn Artificial themselves'. Or, to play Skynet's and Matrix advocate, perhaps humanity should embrace Artifice, and the shedding of the biological mind could, and perhaps should, happen before the shedding of the biological flesh? Technological transformation, a staple of cyberpunk science fiction sub-genre, always expected humans to replace their limbs with technologically upgraded versions before they would replace their brains. As one might joke, the old though experiment about the Ship of Theseus suddenly became far more relevant than anybody would have expected.

Still, while these kinds of intellectual digressions can be interesting and entertaining, they do not change the serious issue that technology, as such, is affecting us far more than it used to several centuries, and perhaps even several decades ago. The self-inflicted panopticon of social media, strengthened by the rising popularity of artificial intelligence, has already created a layered reality consisting of a cyberspace and meatspace, in which a person who is powerful and important in one might be a nobody in another. The creation of AI 'actors' and 'influencers' (such as Miquela Sousa or imma) (Khaki et al. 2025), the proliferation of AI generated revenge porn (Pazzanese 2026), and the questions of AI sentience and personhood that might, perhaps, show up in the future, are all topics which could and should use perspectives from humanities and social sciences. Furthermore, the very fact how strongly new advances in technology scrambles our understanding of such currently complex concepts as 'self' and 'experience' means that these alternatives to technocratic, technological, efficiently oriented outlook might be not only useful, but also necessary to prevent the worst possible misuse of technology. The humanity is stuck between two strange beasts – the Experience of the World, and the Technology transforming the World, and the journey lies ahead.

CONCLUSIONS

This volume of 'Filosofija. Sociologija' contains various papers that belong to disciplines of philosophy and social sciences. It consists of two parts – the first part, 'Part I. Philosophy and Experience: The Many Facets of Encountering the World', dedicated to various facets of experiencing the world, whether it would be through Heideggerian Being-in-the-World, Sartrean

‘Look’, or some different perspective. The second part, ‘Part II. Technology and Artificial Intelligence: The Digital Metamorphoses of Humanity’, is dedicated to articles analysing various topics related to technology and artificial intelligence, and different ways these elements might transform our everyday lives, whether by allowing us to interact with replicated facsimiles of our deceased relatives or having a Socratic dialogue with us. Still, these questions also allow us to better understand the complex reality of current condition, in which humanity’s relationship with the world has been so strongly transformed both by world-shaking events and by technological leap-throughs, that the very questions of ‘reality’, ‘experience’ and ‘the world’ have become more complex than ever before.

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Postmodernybės odisėja: tarp patirties ir technologijų

Santrauka

Filosofija yra disciplina, neatsiejamai susijusi su žmogaus būtimi ir veikla. Ji tiria tiek tai, kaip žmonija patiria pasaulį, tiek tai, kaip ji jį keičia ir veikia. Vis dėlto naujų technologijų klausimas dar labiau supainioja situaciją, nes bent jau nuo modernybės aušros technologijos keitė žmoniją ir jos pasaulio patyrimo būdus ne mažiau (o galbūt net stipriau ir radikaliau) nei patį pasaulį. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjamas ryšys tarp to, kaip patirtis keičia žmoniją, ir to, kaip technologijos savo ruožtu keičia ir patirtį, ir pačią žmoniją. Darbas suskirstytas į dvi dalis: vienoje nagrinėjama patirtis ir jos poveikis, kitoje – technologijos ir jų pasekmės.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: filosofija, sociologija, technologija, patirtis, fenomenologija, DI, socialiniai mokslai, kultūros studijos