"TECHNOLOGY AND LIFE"

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NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY

TAIPEI, TAIWAN

Call for Paper

As a supplement to human beings as "animal manqué," technology has to be understood paradoxically as an ability developed due to the lack of appropriate innate bio-power. Ironically, human beings came to dominate the world precisely because he had this originary default. But technology in turn has proven to be a pharmakon which both improves human living and endangers the world. The extreme form of this pharmacological conundrum no doubt has been articulated by Heidegger and later taken up and modified by Bernard Stiegler.

What do Gilles Deleuze and Pierre-Félix Guattari have to say on technology, especially in view of the fact that AI, as an unforeseen game changer, seems to have forced our world into a phase where the above-mentioned pharmacological status of technology is tilting toward one end of the opposition? Taking into consideration recent posthumanist accounts of objects (often ramifications and further developments of Deleuze and Guattari's as well as Alfred Whitehead's thoughts) as having forces, autopoietic cybernetic traits, and even the ability to "prehend," it may be surmised that the potential of technological objects, especially of AI, is yet to be fully fathomed. One testimony to this potential is the development of AI applications like ChatGPT and Sora. Furthermore, while the Anthropocene has seen the world turned upside down by humans mainly by means of technology, we may be entering a new phase aptly termed the "Technocene" where technology is not only multiplying its impact on the world but also is becoming autonomous of human control. And it seems less and less merely a SF fantasy that the moment of Singularity might materialize in an imaginable future.

Hence, we urgently need to treat technology both as subject-like objects and as machines. As objects, technological products have its bodily existence in both visible and invisible forms; as machines, they are embedded in the social networks. Both approaches have been proposed by Deleuze and Guattari and it remains for us to

integrate them into a new and timely redefinition of technology.

And yet, a genuine integration of these two approaches is predicated on the Deleuzian concept of life. Timely acts of counter-actualization are required so that re-connections with the outside, and ultimately with the plane of immanence, the realm of differentiation or the virtual, is possible. It is thus only by making machines break down that we can be enabled to, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, adopt a kind of existence "closer to animals and rocks." Only such an existence allows us to participate in what Deleuze and Guattari call "aparallel evolution" by becoming.

How then does technology bear on life? Are we able to forge a desirable block of becoming with technology? The principal question would be: would technology stifle the possibility of becoming, of counter-actualizing, or facilitate it? In other words, would it aggravate stratification or open up lines of flight? Most urgently, if the moment of Singularity is imminent, do we still have a window for thinking this "or"? Therefore, now is the critical moment for reflecting on the meaning of technology. How to make technology a partner of humanity without obscuring or even cutting off the pulse of life is the greatest challenge for humanity at the present moment.

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