

Review of: "Possibilism in Technology: A Spanish-Speaking Response to Technological Determinism"

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‘Possibilism’ as a Structuring Concept in the Debate about Man and Technology

In the reviewed article, Alvaro Monterroza-Ríos positions himself within a balanced academic perspective between optimistic and pessimistic views on our technological future. These extreme ends of the discursive landscape in the debate about technology and its impact on society are understandable as they express legitimate concerns about the role of technology in individual and social life. With the exception of some undercurrents within this set of arguments that may lobby for certain technologies in the sense of an unavoidable digital transformation of society, as well as some critical approaches to technology that are rooted in parochial distrust of all innovation, I perceive even the extremes in the argumentation as helpful in our attempts to understand advanced technologies. Meanwhile, the extreme positions in the debate mark only the most critical points; they do not allow any further steps towards understanding the usage of advanced technology. Therefore, more than marking extreme argumentative positions in the debate is needed. It seems to me that the reviewed article aptly bridges the gap between theory and practice by providing the needed methodology.

Within the debate about technology and man, the author takes, as said, a conciliatory position, referring to ‘possibilism,’ which is a distinct current of thought in contemporary Spanish-language research. Possibilism stresses the role of human action in inventing and using technology and the responsibility of users for their actions. It may therefore be perceived as an answer to views that limit their argumentative input to assertions about unlimited risks or unlimited blessings of technological developments. Within the possibilist framework of reference, the author stresses the work of Spanish-language scholars, mainly F. Broncano, whose works provide a philosophically founded view of technology and man. Alvaro Monterroza-Ríos goes far back in his search for the roots of contemporary discussion, and he refers to José Ortega y Gasset (1914) for fundamental insights into the development and use of technology that were expanded later by other researchers. I found this moment particularly interesting as it shows the productive interconnectedness of ideas. In this perspective, the discussion about advanced technology of today finds its intellectual roots in philosophical reflection that developed in times when these technologies were absent. This point is important as many publications dealing with the impact of modern technologies underestimate the intellectual background of the debate, which also has a historical dimension. Furthermore, possibilism, as a current in modern thought, displays a strong anthropological commitment. Therefore, it can be used as a matrix in which modern technological developments can be productively discussed in all sciences that take human involvement seriously. By so doing, it sets straight some confusing ideas in the debate about man and technology.

This article aptly introduces possibilism in the Spanish-language research, and I read it with interest. Meanwhile, it ends abruptly, and I would therefore suggest that a paragraph with general conclusions be added to it.

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