



The Role of Intimacy in the Evolution of Technology

Alessandro Tomasi

Journal of Evolution and Technology - Vol. 17 Issue 1 – January 2008 - pgs 1-12
<http://jetpress.org/v17/tomasi.html>

Abstract

In this article, Georges Bataille's notion of intimacy will be re-interpreted to show that it has a role to play in the evolution of technology. The specifically human form of intimacy can be experienced through the successful adoption of technological devices that have the qualities necessary to fit in and work out in our life context. If they manage to become part of our life, then we experience them as projections of our psychophysical personality, and, as such, they escape our positing, objectifying consciousness. Intimacy can be seen as the organizing principle that shapes the evolution of technology towards an ideal end that promises at least an approximation to the absolute intimacy that is unique to the gods.

Introduction

It will surprise most of Georges Bataille's commentators to find in this article an attempt to use his notion of intimacy as a criterion for determining possible trends in the evolution of technology. After all, intimacy was lost with the development of the first tool. According to Bataille, technology embodies the first act of a consciousness that split the world into subjects and objects (Bataille 1992, 27). In this fragmented world, things are valuable only as means to ends, but these ends are never achieved, never enjoyed in the moment and for their own sake. Excellence is measured by how well they perform their function, and what they help produce is also arête in the same instrumental sense. Technology is an instrumental complex and only its destruction, only the negation of its usefulness, Bataille argues, can open up the possibility of an experience of intimacy. Still, there is an aspect of technology that lends itself to an appreciation of the role of intimacy in the successful use of devices embedded in our everyday life.

In order to appreciate the role of intimacy in the evolution of technology, we need, first, to understand the nature of intimacy, since in its common usage it recalls the closeness of mother and child or that between lovers more than a more general negation of a subject/object relation. This paper offers distinctions among three types of intimacy. We will see that it requires a form of non-positional consciousness. This type of consciousness manifests itself in the action performed without thinking about it, such as driving a car while day-dreaming. While non-positionally driving, consciousness does not differentiate between the wheel and the gear or between the user and the tool. Once this is accomplished, it will be necessary to leave Bataille behind. In order to establish a connection between intimacy and technology, we will need to revive the old theory of technology as organ-projection, but informed by the notion of intimacy. In this regard, I offer the concept of the mine-body as a conceptual tool to come to terms with the reality of a non-positional relation between the human psychophysical personality and technology.

Finally, this conceptual framework will allow us to extend the range of our vision to an unknown future. The reader will not find here any attempt to predict the future, however. The reader will find, though, an understanding of how the future of technology may shape itself depending on whether future innovations and inventions succeed or fail to establish a relation of intimacy with their users. In this regard, I will ask the teleological question about the goal of technology, understood as a driving principle that embodies the promise of an approximation to the ideal of absolute intimacy. This point, where the lines of technological development and human evolution meet, is the android. In the android, we find the only conceivable goal of a technological drive that seeks to move humanity towards a state of intimacy that is farther from the relative intimacy of the animal and closer to an ideal state of absolute intimacy.

Three Levels of Intimacy

In the evolutionary framework conceived by Bataille, the first developed tool marks the birth of humanity. Human beings transcended their animal nature by an act of consciousness that posited an object, for the first time, as something with qualities and attributes. These qualities, for example, the flexibility and hardness of a piece of wood, are measurable only by setting up a divide between the object and the rest of the universe. Now, this piece of wood is objectively different from that other piece of wood, from that rock, and from me. In the “exteriority” so created, humans gave birth to the “nascent form of the non-I” (Bataille 1992, 27), and therefore to the self. We lost, at that moment, the intimacy that we enjoyed as animals, and that animals still enjoy as they live immanently “like water in water” (Bataille 1992, 19). What is, however, and more exactly, this intimacy that we, as human beings, have lost but wish to experience again (Bataille 1992, 57)?

In his Theory of Religion, Bataille distinguishes among three different types of intimate experiences. The first type is actually not truly a form of intimacy (and Bataille does not use this concept in reference to it, to be sure), but, as pure immanence, it possesses the essential quality of a continuity and flow from being to being, uninterrupted by a discriminating consciousness or even a sentiment of self. This type of intimacy is to be found only at the level of inorganic matter, where there is not even the need to establish relations of immanence through nutrition. In this sense, inorganic intimacy is absolute immanence.

An atom of nitrogen, of gold, or a molecule of water exist without needing anything from what surrounds them; they remain in a state of perfect immanence: there is never a

necessity, and more generally nothing ever matters in the immanent relation of one atom to another or to others. (Bataille 1992, 19)

There is no self-motivating movement in the mineral realm, no arche and no telos, no desire and, therefore, no object of desire, whose possession would bring satisfaction. Without desire, there is no need of a scheming mind devising tools to possess an object. Finally, atoms of oxygen do not perceive any anticipation for joining hydrogen to make water, and therefore they exist in the moment, not in sequential time. At this level, it is not even appropriate to talk of a relation among molecules, since the notion of a relation implies division. We are aware of such relation only from the outside, in the same way as the molecules of Mount Rushmore bearing the faces of some U.S. presidents are not in any relation to these presidents.

Differently from molecules and rocks, animals “must establish relations of immanence” with surrounding elements. They, after all, need nourishment to survive. The necessity of nutrition makes organic life incompletely autonomous. In the case of animals, such relation has to be established—for example, by choosing an appropriate feeding ground and developing the appropriate bodily features, such as particular teeth or a long beak or strong claws, to exploit it. Once the context is advantageous, then appetitive desires can be satisfied, sexuality can fulfill its reproductive ends, and death can make the harvest.

At this point, the totality of the real has not been lost in the experience of desires, but it certainly shows some fractures and flaws which are met through activities that satisfy those desires. Following Kojève’s account of the origin of the self, animals possess “sentiment of self,” not true self-consciousness (Kojève 1969, 3). They live through these activities without distancing themselves from the rest of creation, without anticipating the future or dreading their death. The animal world, in the end, can only be defined negatively as the “inability to transcend itself” (Bataille 1992, 23). Animality is immanence in so far as the animal is unable to distinguish between itself and the other. As suggested above, no such distinction is possible if the other is not posited as an object. This means that the observable animal ability to discern between poisonous and edible food or between good and bad strategies to attack the prey is not a sign of objectification of an external reality. It recalls the difference between action and reaction. We react to a bad smell before we objectify it as coming from a flower.

The third form of intimacy, the human form, presents a problem, since humanity is definable in terms of a lost intimacy. Humanity, as opposed to animality, is characterized by the ability to discriminate, to abstract, and to analyze. All these activities constitute the specifically human and determine its fall from the world of immanence in which there is no discontinuity between subject and object. To become distinct is to have made the leap from having relations of immanence to having relations of subordination between subjects and objects. This requires a positing consciousness, which the animal lacks, and which would interrupt the continuous flow of beings. It is at the moment of positing an object for the first time that the ordered cosmos of things is created, out of no-thing. The intimacy of the animal, lost in the world of immanent relations with its surroundings, is not, and cannot be, therefore, the same as the intimacy of a human being.

The question, then, is whether a form of intimacy is possible for the specifically human. Bataille’s “lost intimacy” is the intimacy of the animal, and he more than once warns us against the romantic idea of a return to animality (Bataille 1993, 23). In fact, our religious search for a lost intimacy, that is, the intimacy experienced by the animal, “comes down to the effort of clear consciousness which wants to be complete self-consciousness” (Bataille 1992, 57). Self-consciousness is defined as “the return of being to full and irreducible sovereignty... which is freedom in the moment, independent of a task needing to be carried out” (Bataille 1991, 189 and

197). The sovereign is able to enjoy the products of labor in the present time without anticipating, programming, and worrying about the future.

Fitting examples of this would be driving a car just to enjoy the drive, or drinking a glass of wine just for the pleasure of savoring it. In driving a car for the pleasure of it, and not to reach our job location, we break the instrumental chain that anchors the car to its role in the productive system. We can relax and enjoy the sunny day without thinking about input and output, means and ends, earnings and costs. This is not the intimacy of the animal moving in the world “like water in water.” Still, it is an experience that is of the moment, lacking relations of subordination of means and ends, achieved by transcending that state of mind that subordinates the car to arriving on time at the office.

Human Intimacy as Ataraxia

Intimacy of the human kind, therefore, is caught in a sort of oscillation between its experience and its negation through acts of conscious transcendence. The first few pages of Kojeve’s Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, can help understand how this is so. In his fine-grained look at the origin of the world of objects, Kojeve explains that in order to achieve self-consciousness, and not just a “sentiment of self,” we need two ingredients: the self and consciousness. The original form of consciousness is the act of knowing, which simply “reveals the object, not the subject.” The revelation of the subject, as opposed to an object, requires desire. “The (conscious) desire of a being is what constitutes that being as I and reveals it as such...” (Kojeve 1969, 3).

This is not yet self-consciousness, but it gives the animal the preconditions to be transformed into a human being. Kojeve, following Hegel, will admit the need of another conscious desire in order to establish a relation based on recognition and, thus, self-consciousness. When we reach this point, though, the totality of the real has already been lost in the revelation of the object, even before the subject becomes self-conscious. This first object, in Bataille’s scheme, is the first developed tool whose nature is to be a useful means to achieve a desired end. Bataille suggests that, given this servility to useful means, human intimacy can be had on condition that the human being finds a way to negate the useful object. Any wasteful action will do, such as burning a pencil just to see it burn. The externality thus posited through the developed tool will collapse into the immediacy of an experience that does not allow intermediaries between the desire and the desideratum.

The object, on the other hand, is already the effect of a negating activity, an activity that negates the nature of the given by transforming it, for example, the artisan’s making a spoon out of a piece of wood. As Kojeve says, “This I will not, like the animal ‘I,’ be ‘identity’ or equality to itself, but ‘negating-negativity’” (Kojeve 1969, 5). In this sense, intimacy is reached only by negating the negation, by an act, that is, that returns the transformed to the natural sphere. In Bataille, this sort of negatio negationis, a strategy typical of the mystical tradition, takes many forms, depending on the historical period he is considering (from sacrificial bonfires in archaic cultures to the entertainment industry in modern consumerist societies). So, after a first negation of the given, entailing the positing of a useful object, a second negation follows that denies the usefulness of that object. Once the object goes to waste, the subject disappears, in the same way as reflections of one’s face disappear once the mirror gets covered.

The state of mind achieved by negating the useful object, when in fact the operative mind is shut off, is said to be “indifferent.” The erotic experience, for example, “brings profound indifference

into the present time; the ‘apathy’ of an ahistorical judgment, of a judgment tied to perspectives that are very different from those of men totally engaged in struggle” (Bataille 1993, 190). Reporting a definition by Blanchot, in his discussion of Sade, Bataille reminds us that “apathy is the spirit of negation attributed to the man who has chosen to be sovereign” (Bataille 1993, 179). At first, animal intimacy is also construed in terms of apathy: “The apathy that the gaze of the animal expresses after the combat is the sign of an existence that is essentially on a level with the world in which it moves like water in water” (Bataille 1992, 25). However, animal apathy is essentially different from the human form since it lacks the possibility of transcending its own immanence and of leaping forward in a series of activities negating the given. Ataraxia, the name Bataille uses to refer to the human form of intimacy, is basically a negation of difference, an indifference.ⁱⁱ It is the perspective of the person that, being too late for a meeting, says “what is the difference?” or “what is the use?” when having to decide between two or more alternative driving routes.ⁱⁱⁱ

Technology, therefore, seems to be incompatible with the human experience of intimacy. The wasteful misuse of things violates the being of any device whose existence is due to its ability to perform a useful task. There is, however, a form of consciousness that fulfills the conditions posed by Bataille for intimacy that is compatible with the experience of technology while in use. This is the non-positional consciousness of a person that engages the world without thinking about it. This is the sphere of the praxical (to use Don Ihde’s appellation), of the ready-to-hand (to use Heidegger’s), of the unknowing (as Bataille would say).

If such praxical relation to technology is anywhere, it is certainly not in the processes of invention or innovation which require positing a material object apart from its surroundings, studying its qualities, comparing it with other objects, and so on. It is not in the technological knowledge of the components of the device, nor is it in the knowledge of the way the device works or gets repaired. It is not in technological volition, which marks the initial push towards the making of a device (Mitcham 1994, 160). These are all aspects of technology which require a movement of transcendence, away from a state of indifference and intimacy with one’s surroundings. There is, however, more to technology than meets the objectifying eye of consciousness. Positing consciousness is aborted when we reach such total familiarity with, and total control over, a device that is used without even thinking that we are using it. This is not the control of the expert maker, whose confidence is based on knowledge of the component parts and of the laws that make these parts work together, but that of the expert user whose ability depends on putting aside any theoretical knowledge of the component parts. In order to understand how this form of intimacy is achieved, however, we need to consider the most obvious and, because of this, the least noticeable example of intimacy that we experience everyday.

Intimacy and Technology

The closest example of an intimate relation is that which we have with our own body and mind (or body/mind complex, if you wish). In fact, my body offers itself as an object of consciousness, but its natural niche is that of the unknowing, in which I make use of it without thinking about it. Proof enough is the way I drive my car, involving a complex set of movements which do not require my attention. This is not just an example of autonomic nervous system at work, since it comprises gestures (changing gear) and organs (my arm) that can become the object of my consciousness at will. My hands are not, while driving the car, means to an end. I am not, strictly speaking, using my hands usefully. Animal intimacy allows us to point to the eagle’s wings as not being valued by the eagle as useful objects to capture the rabbit. Evolutionarily, wings are

projections for a body that did not have them. The slowness of this bodily change created the impression of naturalness and the experience of effortlessness. The difference between my eyes and my glasses cannot be posed, therefore, purely in terms of externality and foreignness.

The fact that I can objectify my glasses more easily than I can objectify my body only points to the level of intimacy by which I experience my body while in use. We can refer to this body while-in-use as the mine-body, a term I use to emphasize the idea that my sense of self is given by the practical experience of effortless control. Daniel Dennett used the example of posing in front of a mirror and recognizing the boundaries of one's body by moving its parts. I am, that is, what I can control (Dennett 1984, 82; 1991, 427). However, the level of control must be such that the organ responds immediately and effortlessly. No time gets between and no distance divides. A high level of immediacy returns the object that is not mine to the mine-body, making it an integral part of the whole. The smooth functioning of this organ pushes it into a state of ataraxia, of indifference, from the standpoint of consciousness.

Heidegger's notion of ready-to-hand captures this phenomenon, but Heidegger did not see that in order to become non-positionally and immediately available a device must possess certain characteristics. In practice, not all possible technologies can be candidates to become intimately connected with our psycho-physical personality, or what I have called the mine-body. Many are the factors affecting the adoption of a new device. Everett Rogers, for example, in his Diffusion of Innovations (1995), shows how the spreading a new technology follows an S-curve and is affected by the characteristics of those who adopt the device, whether they are venturesome and educated or skeptical and low-income. Fred Davis and Richard Bagozzi (1989) propose a Technology Acceptance Model (or TAM) based on perceived usefulness, the belief that the innovation will enhance performance, and ease-of-use, the belief that adopting the device will free us from effort. Andy Clark gives a list of qualities that have to be present both for accepting, such as transparency or invisibility-in-use (Clark 2003, 38), and for rejecting, such as uncontrollability and alienation (Clark 2003, 167), technological intimacy.

In all these and similar studies, I find an attempt to explain a matter of fact, namely that certain technologies have certain qualities that allow them to disappear from consciousness through use, that is, by becoming transparent or intimately connected. This intimacy implies a user ignorant of the inner components and manufacturing process, but entirely familiar with use. With total familiarity, technological objects recede into the background of consciousness and become nothing, but extensions of our body. This form of communion with technology has two aspects. On one hand, the device has to fit in an already established context of relations. This is a sort of synchronic positioning of the technological contrivance in the flowing of our life activities. The wheel, for example, did not fit in a culture that inhabited a very rough terrain and was, as a result rejected (Basalla 1988, 7-11). On the other hand, this same device has to work out, maintaining its place and function within a web of interrelated activities. In other words, it should affect our world in time, diachronically. The hammer may have started its evolutionary line as a rock tied to a stick, but it worked out so well as to give rise to a great number of specialized versions of a hammer, becoming an indispensable household tool. If successful both synchronically and diachronically, the device would initiate its own evolutionary line of successive innovations and adaptations, and would feel as indispensable and natural to the common user as her own body.

Intimacy, I argue, is the organizing principle for this trend. In fact, we do find that new technologies take some time to be accepted, but once they do, they fall out of view. An unfamiliar object is immediately placed at a distance, within which consciousness can mediate, isolate, recognize, analyze and study. There is some resistance to using a new tool or new technology.

Computers, for example, are becoming ubiquitous, but not without a struggle, since they change our world in a way that, at first, feels forceful and unnatural. A history of such rejections can be typified by the history of writing. Socrates/Plato thought that writing was a dangerous activity. Today, nobody debates the use of copy machines, in the same way as nobody sees any moral danger in using nails. Computers are, today, perceived to fit in, and as they do more and more, we feel no effort in using them. The feeling that they are indispensable is a sign that such fitting is at an advanced stage: it is working out. Many rely on them being around and ready to be used in the same as we rely on our nose to breathe. Once they become part of a state of mind, of an age, then they disappear from view, no longer interesting enough to become the focus of our conscious concerns. Intimacy (a communion and indifference) is re-established. In this sense, within such intimacy, since valuation is an act of consciousness, their value is, properly speaking, not in their use. Only when we look at the world as a system of things, do we see useful and useless objects.

The Role of Intimacy in the Evolution of Technology

Therefore, a certain technological device may have characteristics that allow it to be intimately experienced as we intimately experience our bodies and minds. All this considered, it does not take much to see how the evolution of the body-mind complex may converge, to the point of identification, with the evolution of machines.^{iv} Intimacy can be seen as a condition for successful evolution, not in the sense that humanity will survive only as long as it accepts its artificial prostheses, but in the sense that new technologies will initiate an evolutionary line only as long as they manage to intimately connect with the existing body/mind/machine (both social and individual) complex. An evolutionarily successful device will fit in and work out, and thus will be intimately experienced in the mine-structure. If it fits in, the organ is accepted, and thus we can refer to it as a projection, just like a fitting prosthesis; if it does not fit in, then the prosthetic organ is rejected.

Lynn White Jr. and Lewis Mumford complained, as Mitcham reports (Mitcham 1994, 176-179), that the development of modern technology is characterized by the movement from the organic to the inorganic, but this movement is not smooth, at all. Technology does not simply project the body/mind organs, but replaces them, for example, by attempting to replace reciprocating motion, which comes natural to organic life, with rotary motion, very effective, but inconsistent with “the sole form of movement found in living things.” This is why “the hurdy-gurdy soon went out of use as an instrument for serious music, leaving the reciprocating fiddle-bow” (both quotes are from White, cited by Mitcham 1994, 177-178). Between a pre-modern technology, which places the tool in the human hand, and makes it dependent on the human element, and modern, machine-based technology, which “alienates us from the sensorimotor, mind/body complex,” Mitcham prefers the former, since it reunites “the mind and body” (Mitcham 1994, 178). Using a tool is better than being used by a machine. There is no mechanical alternative to the sensibility of the painter’s handling of a brush, and, even if possible, it would not be desirable, since this sensibility would be lost if we replaced it with machinery.

This idea of an opposition between organic and inorganic is countered by Ray Kurzweil who approaches technology as a sort of “evolution by other [that is, inorganic] means” (Kurzweil 1999, 14). He predicts an accelerated trend towards a merging of machine and humans. It is worthwhile to quote sketchily from his time line, to give a sense of the relevant events ahead of us bringing about this merging. By the year 2009, computers will be small enough to be “embedded in clothing and jewelry up to the size of a thin book” (Kurzweil 1999, 277). We will, in other words, interact with inanimate objects, which will respond to us in a manner that we will

see as fulfilling the deep need to make our environment more like us (that is, intimately lived). The computerization of our environment will affect the lives of handicapped people as well as musicians, and such fields as education and economics. Ten years later, a rather cheap computer will be as powerful as a human brain. The trend towards computerizing our environment will have grown as far as to “have relationships with automated personalities and use them as companions, teachers, caretakers, and lovers” (Kurtzweil 1999, 279).

Ten more years and computers will have superseded the human brain in computing capacity. The body will undergo great changes with implants increasing its various capacities and senses, from cochlear implants to brain neural pathways. All previously accepted distinctions, legal and psychological, between humans and machines, will be largely disregarded. “Machines claim to be conscious” (Kurtzweil 1999, 280). By the year 2099,

there is no longer any clear distinction between humans and computers. Most conscious entities do not have a permanent physical presence. Machine-based intelligences derived from extended models of human intelligence claim to be human, although their brains are not based on carbon-based cellular processes, but rather electronic and photonic equivalents.... Even among those human intelligences still using carbon-based neurons, there is ubiquitous use of neural-implant technology, which provides enormous augmentation of human perceptual and cognitive abilities. Humans who do not utilize such implants are unable to meaningfully participate in dialogues with those who do.... Life expectancy is no longer a viable term in relation to intelligent beings. (Kurtzweil 1999, 280)

Intimacy as the organizing principle of a trend so aptly described by Kurzweil does not seem to be ethical in nature. After all, one popular criticism of modern technology is that technologies get uncritically accepted, whether good or bad for us. We are like technological somnambulists (Winner 1986, 5), moved by a sort of natural, built-in technological drive that makes us unable even to consider the ethical consequences of the devices we let in our everyday life. So, it goes that just like nobody would argue for or against the use of one's kidneys, we live with what we have, and if we have claws, then we are that organism that must claw. In the same way, the mere existence of any tool, and in fact even the mere possibility of making anything, as an atomic bomb or human cloning, becomes de facto part of our identity as a particular type of organism. Forcing a choice on these matters may be experienced as a violation of one's nature. The somnambulists say, “if we can, we will,” and live by it. The provision of a theoretical framework that places technology within our most personal sphere does not seem to awaken us to any ethical consideration, and may, in fact, be used to justify and accept uncritically all sorts of technological practices and devices that may prove to be highly deleterious.

This criticism, though, does not hold in practice. Far from trying to construct an ethics in a few lines, based on the notion of intimacy, I offer the following observation. If one of your arms starts attacking you, or embarrassing you, like Dr. Strangelove's right mechanical arm, you would become conscious of it as out-of-control. It would be no longer intimately experienced. It is conceivable that, although individual human beings may misuse their tools in ethically troublesome ways, societies will use their political consciousness to objectify, and thus, possibly reject any technology that endangers the possibility of experiencing intimacy. A dangerous technology will fall out of intimacy and will be objectified and, possibly, rejected. The arising of a technology to the level of an ethical consciousness makes that technology unable to uphold its place in intimacy. It fails to fit in and work out. As any other organ, in the evolution of our

biological organism, it can be rejected. This observation only points to the possibility of an ethics based on the notion of intimacy and capable of regulating technological trends.

The End of Technology

In the evolutionary literature, there is no particular attachment to the idea of a telos, or goal, and of a progression towards it. Adaptation, in evolutionary terms, frees nature from any preconceived telos (that is, organisms adapt depending on existing, though changing conditions). It is possible to analyze current trends and show that they do point to a future with certain characteristics. This is a reasonable approach to technology, I suppose, but I wish to pose the question of an end of technology differently, that is, by considering intimacy as a criterion for the success or failure of a newly adopted device. Paraphrasing Bataille, technology can be viewed as a search for a lost intimacy. As the inventor invents a new device, or when an old device is significantly modified, the process is put in motion that has as its only goal that of returning the device to the sphere of non-objectifying consciousness, and this can be done only if all the conditions are there to make this object entirely familiar and indispensable.

The problem is that as a new level of intimacy is achieved, new inventions and innovations are made to upset it. An old technology, with which we successfully established a relation of intimacy, is transcended by a new generation of devices we have to become totally familiar with. Why does humanity need to lose what it seeks as soon as it finds it? One obvious answer is that the old devices did not do their job in the best possible way. We can do better, and the criterion for this evaluative judgment is given by the experience of intimacy. I can do better than carrying around a 100 pound watch, regardless of how precisely it tells the time. Such a watch is too visible and massive, too present, to fit in and work out in my world. A better watch would be a smaller one, small enough to disappear as an object of consciousness. How small does it need to be? So small as to be insubstantial, is the answer that the experience of intimacy suggests. I want to know the time immediately as soon as the will to know arises.

This trend is an indication that technology has a direction, a goal that is purely technological (even though practically limited by economic and ethical factors, to mention only the most important types of limitation). Where are we going with this? Is there an end to the technological drive in such a way that this drive ends moving us? We can, at this point, return to Bataille and recall his distinction between relative and absolute intimacy. The absolute intimacy enjoyed, so-to-speak, by inorganic matter is such that it does not depend, it does not seek, it does not desire. We know that all organisms do depend on something other than themselves, for example, organisms need to eat for their survival. Inorganic material, on the other hand, does not subsist in the same relation of dependence with other inorganic elements (a rock does not need to stand on top of a mountain to enjoy the view). Technology's goal may be found in the autonomy of the technological body from its dependence on the relative intimacy afforded by the human organism.

In the philosophical-anthropological perspective offered by Arnold Gehlen the same point is made that the trend of technological activities is towards the replacement of the organic with the inorganic (Gehlen 1980, 213), and in this development we can appreciate the movement from the animal to the human, from the human to the cyborg, and finally from the cyborg to the android. The android is more than "an ironic political myth," as Haraway says of cyborgs (Scharff and Dusek 2003, 429). It is the functional ideal that fuels technology. The android is the point where the machine merges with the human in a synthesis of elements that are no longer ascribable to one or the other. It is not just an exercise in imagination, but, rephrasing Haraway's cyborg

analysis to fit this sort of androidism, “a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as [human] experience” (Scharff and Dusek 2003, 429).

Projecting the body may certainly be interpreted as the attempt to control and subdue nature, of course, but this attitude betrays the supposition that technology is the response to “man’s organic shortcomings” (Scharff and Dusek 2003, 213). The autonomy that technology seeks cannot be thought in opposition to the human element, but as its completion and overcoming. In accepting the view that technological contrivances are only organ projections and ways to extend the body (the mine-body, that is), we hold the view that technology is a form of reaching out, not of controlling. It is a way of embracing, as Bataille would say: “in the embrace the object of desire is always the totality of being.... in the form of she who in the embrace is its mirror, where we ourselves are reflected” (Bataille 1993, 116). This erotic union captures the core meaning of a sovereign technology, that is, of a technology compatible with the idea that “the sovereign (or the sovereign life) begins when, with the necessities ensured, the possibility of life opens up without limit” (Bataille 1993, 198). This embrace represents the reunification, thus the disappearance, of subject and object. It is in this sense that this tendency towards androidism is not an anti-humanism, if we define humanism, with Andy Clark, in terms of the view that humans “are naturally designed” to incorporate “nonbiological stuff and structure deep into our physical and cognitive routines” (Clark 2003, 142).

The android, to be sure, does not represent the ideal of an absolute intimacy, as this can be experienced only non-humanly as the end of the oscillation between transcending acts and returns to immanence. The android, after all, may still be engaged, conceivably, in the technological oscillation between the transcending moment of invention and innovation and the immanent moment of intimacy. Nonetheless, the android is a stage of being we are not yet and which promises, at least, an approximation to absolute intimacy by progressively replacing and expanding its organic counterpart. Intimacy, therefore, guides the evolution of technology from start to finish, from the first tool, because of which we lost our animal innocence, to the last transcending leap towards a condition that approximates that of the gods, as it is humanly possible.

References

- Bataille, G. 1993. *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, Vol.2: The History of Erosion, Vol.3: Sovereignty*. New York: Zone Books.
- Bataille, G. 1992. *Theory of Religion*. New York: Zone Books.
- Bataille, G. 1991. *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, Vol.1: Consumption*. New York: Zone Books.
- Bataille, G. 1986. *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- Basalla, G. 1988. *The Evolution of Technology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boyer, P. (March 1984) From Activism to Apathy: The American People and Nuclear Weapons, 1963-1980. *Journal of American History*, vol.70, no.4: 821-844.

- Clark, A. 2003. *Natural-Born Cyborgs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, F. D. 1989. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3): 319-340.
- Davis, F. D., R. P. Bagozzi and P. R. Warshaw. 1989. User acceptance of computer technology: A comparison of two theoretical models. *Management Science*, 35: 982-1003.
- Dennett, D. 1991. *Consciousness Explained*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Dennett, D. 1984. *Elbow Room*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gehlen, A. 1980. *Man in the Age of Technology*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kojeve, A. 1969. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. Allan Bloom, ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kranzberg, M. and W. Davenport, eds. 1972. *Technology and Culture: An Anthology*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Kurzweil, R. 1999. *The Age of Spiritual Machines*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Meister Eckart. 1986. *Teacher and Preacher*. B. McGinn, ed. Paulist Press.
- Mitcham, C. 1994. *Thinking Through Technology: The Path between Engineering and Philosophy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mitcham, C., and R. Mackey, eds. 1972. *Philosophy and Technology: Readings in the Philosophical Problems of Technology*. New York: the Free Press.
- Rogers, E. 1995. *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: The Free Press.
- Rovin, P., and A. Fallon. 1987. A perspective on disgust. *Psychological Review*, 94: 23-47.
- Scharff, R., and V. Dusek, eds. 2003. *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Stoekl, A., ed. 1990. *Yale French Studies, On Bataille*. Number 78. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Winner, L., 1986. *The Whale and the Reactor*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

ⁱ Meister Eckart tells us that each individual has a built-in negation in that it negates of being that which this being is not. In this way, it isolates itself from the whole. Negating this negation reconstitutes the whole (Meister Eckart 1986, 167-8 and 185).

ⁱⁱ The human experience of intimacy is apathetic not in the sense that it is detached from emotions and passions. On the contrary, it is through strong emotions that we can shut off mental operations that make us serve future ends (Bataille 1993, 203).

iii We find the best examples of this indifference analyzed in current studies of political apathy in many Western democracies. In his article analyzing political activism in relation to the proliferation of atomic weapons during the span between 1963 and 1980, Paul Boyer notices that the tendency from the early 60s to late 70s was from activism to apathy, and then activism starts increasing again towards the end of that decade. Boyer does not explain why this is so, but it is important to notice that apathy goes hand in hand with a fast growing economy, providing an optimistic outlook on the future and plenty of leisure time, while activism seems to surge in critical economic periods of uncertainty and restrictions. Still, even in times of seemingly wide political activity, the majority of people seem uninterested in the process of political decision-making (Boyer 1984).

iv Bruce Mazlish referred to this as the “fourth discontinuity,” namely, that between man and machine, that needs to be eliminated. The first continuity, of man and the physical world, was established by the Greek philosophers of the sixth century; the second by Darwin who showed the continuity between man and animals; and the third continuity, actually several continuities, between the various stages of man’s mental development and between mental health and illness. These three “ego-smashing” events should be followed by a forth one where we come “to realize that man and the machines he creates are continuous” (Kranzberg 1972, 218).