CONTEMPORARY MAN IN THE FACE OF TECHNOLOGY: FROM NONSENSE TO FINDING HIMSELF

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Abstract
The human experience is a complex tapestry that oscillates amid a great paradox: only when everything seems to lose meaning does the need to find it emerge. With the rise of new technologies, humankind brings to light countless possibilities for being in the world, which in turn represent a plexus of opportunities that lead to an ontological-existential shift: from meaninglessness to finding oneself. This article explores the concept of "finding oneself" as a process that reveals the meaninglessness in which technified humankind resides and the states through which they transit to encounter their being. This discussion raises the question of how the instrumentalization of technology instrumentalizes oneself, and how this leads humankind into a state of meaninglessness. However, a double ontological shift is posed in which meaninglessness is precisely the state in which humanity questions its being. Thus, this condition, although it may seem hidden, also uncovers and reveals the path to finding oneself.

Keywords: *Befindlichkeit, new technologies, angst, nothingness, sense, nonsense, Dasein, instrumentalization, Heidegger.*

Introduction

Contemporary man is immersed in new technologies. Wherever you look at it, technological devices and devices, specifically intelligent systems based on AI, permeate all areas of daily life, turning man into a being-in-technology. Heidegger affirms: "Everywhere we remain prisoners, chained to technology, even if we passionately affirm or deny it" (Heidegger, 1953/2017, p. 71). Today, man lives surrounded by constant technological stimuli and needs that did not exist before. The dominance of technology in society has not only transformed the way people interact with the world, but it has also modified their perception of themselves, leading them to question their identity and purpose.

Undoubtedly, computers, networks, algorithms, and smart devices not only make life more efficient, but also change how people act and interpret the world. In this sense, technology is the filter to understand the current reality. For this reason, it is critical to analyze how technology has changed self-perception, daily life, and social interaction. It is imperative to determine whether this transformation of the paradigm of contemporary man leads to a loss of meaning and what its causes are. Thus the central question arises: What signs indicate a loss of meaning in human life and what role do new technologies play in this?

This analysis proposes to consider nonsense as a possibility of existential openness to meaning. Nonsense should not be understood as something negative or hopeless, but as an opportunity for self-discovery through the confrontation with nothingness and the experience of anguish. Nothingness and anguish are fundamental elements for understanding being-there in the process of self-knowledge. This process manifests itself when Dasein, immersed in the technified routine, recognizes the forgetfulness of being and distances itself from its essential questions. This situation generates feelings of emptiness, from which anguish arises. From an existential perspective, anguish confronts the individual with nothingness and uncertainty, provoking a discomfort that fragments the being, but also drives him to explore new forms of his being-there. Facing nothingness makes it possible to open up to new ways of life and knowledge.

The concept of *Befindlichkeit*, from the perspective of Heidegger's thought, refers to an "existential". This represents the "open state" of Dasein, by means of which the "being there" is placed before its being as "there" (Heidegger, 1927/1951, p. 151). In more accessible terms, finding oneself implies an inner disposition in which the person becomes aware of his or her own existence. This existential openness arises from the experience of anguish and the feeling of emptiness. However, in the contemporary context dominated by technology, new emotional complexities emerge. Smart devices promise immediate feelings of connection, belonging, and fulfillment. For example, the constant interaction on social networks and the instant gratification offered by certain applications can generate the illusion of closeness with others and even personal purpose. However, these emotional promises are inauthentic and superficial. After the apparent connection, many people experience a deep sense of isolation, feeling disconnected from both others and themselves. In this sense, technology acts as a filter that hides the existential emptiness that Heidegger describes as anguish. This emptiness is concealed under the uninterrupted succession of stimuli, but it does not disappear; on the contrary, it is intensified by the contrast between the promised connection and the persistent sense of rootlessness. Thus, it is relevant to analyze the role of new technologies in the emergence of these human experiences. The aim of this reflection is to examine the meaning of the perception of meaninglessness in life and the possibility of finding oneself in the context of contemporary human beings.

The Problem of Instrumentalization and Nonsense.

Heidegger, in his text *The Question of Technique* (1953), insists that the danger of technology does not lie in its destructive power, but in its capacity to conceal being by reducing everything to what is available (Bestand). Delving into this concept, Heidegger interprets *Bestand*'s notion as an instrumental relationship of man with the world and nature, in which, for example, nature is reduced to a mere "energy resource" available to be exploited. It is a way of manipulating and disposing of what is at hand as a utility. This reductionism endangers *Dasein*, since it hides the very nature of being-there, objectifying the world, losing the sense of being.

Today's man is immersed in a technified world that has permeated all areas of his habitat and his existence. Man lives in a constant eagerness to conquer what was previously unattainable and to bring it under his dominion. In his eagerness for the mass production of artifacts and stimuli, man himself has not been able to cope with his own generality. From this framework of excess positivity and productivity, man uses and interacts with artifacts for his comfort and entertainment, but at what cost? A clear contemporary example of this logic of self-exploitation can be seen in the use of technologies such as smart watches and productivity applications, which even turn rest and the body into sources of data and personal optimization. Through these devices, people monitor their own levels of activity, sleep or concentration through algorithms that promote constant optimization, and that lead the subject to self-impose increasingly demanding goals and standards. It is not just a loss of individual meaning; The ethical costs of this instrumental logic are reflected in broader social problems: the precariousness of human work in the face of automation, the erosion of privacy in the face of omnipresent digital surveillance, or the environmental impact derived from the indiscriminate consumption of natural resources. Thus, technology, by extending its domain, poses urgent challenges not only for individual existence, but also for public policies and collective life.

The problem of the instrumentalization of technology lies not only in the subjection and domination of artifacts and devices, but also in the oblivion of being itself in the instrumentalization of the self. This attitude of submission to the given and self-exploitation have made man an instrumentalizer-instrumentalized, a victim of himself. Of course, it cannot be omitted that there are positive perspectives on technology: many argue that technology has expanded human capabilities, promoted individual autonomy, and facilitated new forms of communication and creativity. There are even those who claim that, thanks to technological advances, human beings have been able to emancipate themselves from certain natural limitations and open themselves to greater possibilities of self-realization. However, recognizing these benefits does not cancel out the risk pointed out by Heidegger, since the same tool that empowers can become a veil that obscures the essential sense of being, sinking us even further into a logic of instrumentalization where even the self becomes an available resource. This is the world in which we exist, a world that we think we know, master and make more comfortable; it is, in turn, an ontologically alien world that has snatched from us the question of the meaning of being. Heidegger already said: "what is ontically closest and known is what is ontologically more distant, unknown and unseen" (1927/1951, p. 55). If we see the technical only as a tool, we will never know what being is. Perhaps the disturbing question that remains is: how much of our daily life is already locked in the same "framing" that Heidegger denounces? In closing this reflection, perhaps it is worth asking ourselves: what possibilities open up if, even for an instant, we manage to look beyond utility and make ourselves truly present to the being we inhabit?

Starting from the problem of instrumentalization, it is inevitable to ask why this instrumentalization is a loss of meaning and how this loss of meaning is a danger to man. Think, for example, of the everyday act of checking the mobile phone automatically, using technology simply as a means to pass the time, without attention or reflection on the experience. This type of use reduces objects and practices to simple tools, emptying them of meaning beyond their immediate usefulness. The problem of instrumentalization reveals a distortion of the relationship between man and world and the relationship between man and self. Martin Heidegger, at the beginning of the third chapter of his work *Being and Time* (1927), exposes how the concept of "world" has not been taken as an existential "*worldliness*" but as an object. As a result, the understanding of "world" continues to correspond to the entity and both man and the world continue to be under the perspective of beings "before the eyes".

For Heidegger (1927), the essence of *Dasein* consists in "being in" the world: it is absorbing itself in its "there" as an ontological-existential unity. So there is no man-world dualism, but a being-in-the-world duality, which means that that which "is part" of this world is, in turn, an essential constituent of *Dasein*. "There is nothing like a 'contiguity' from an entity called 'being there' to another entity called 'world'" (Heidegger, 1927/1951, p. 67). Failure to understand this radical unity leads to a loss of the experience of the world as a space of meaning.

Understanding the unity of man and the world makes it possible to give meaning to the relationship of *Dasein* in the "healing of" what "is around". By being part of this unity with the world, *Dasein* becomes responsible for what happens "there", endows itself with meaning and gives meaning to what is part of its "healing from", so that it takes possession of the openness of and for itself. For example, man has the freedom to take two paths: on the one hand, a responsible relationship with artificial intelligence, in which man is actively involved and reflects on the impact of its use; on the other, a carefree and automatic relationship, where technology is used without attention or awareness, which increases the danger of loss of meaning. Thus, the ethical urgency of "healing oneself" becomes evident, since it implies choosing between giving meaning and dignity to our experience or resigning ourselves to indifference and emptiness. But is modern man being "cured of" technology?

Dasein, in its possibility of choosing itself, can lead itself along the paths of the "proper" or the "improper". The ontological sense of man's being determines the authenticity of *Dasein* from what it is by itself and from what it is for

itself; that is, from the understanding of what it really is. This "understanding oneself" *is* called "one's own". Distinctly, the "improper" denotes the "not being cured" of understanding oneself; it is a "closed state" in which "being-there" is confronted with a nonsense in the facticity of the ontic.

The interaction we have with technology is improper and inauthentic. In Heideggerian terms, when we relate utilitarianly to technique, we are closed to our being there, since it does not allow us to find ourselves. The way in which *Dasein* passes from the "closed state" to the "open state" is the way in which the "being-there" is placed in front of its own "there". This "open being" does not mean a position in which the "Da" is seen as an "before the eyes" as an entity, but on the contrary, it is the phenomenon where being opens and the finding takes place" is an existential determination of that being that is in the mode of "being" in the "world" (Heidegger, 1927/1951, p. 152). It is important to clarify that this "open state" in Heidegger should not be confused with simple psychological states of attention or reflection, nor with contemporary practices such as mindfulness. While these notions refer to being mentally present in the here and now, the opening of Dasein is ontological in nature, since it implies the fundamental possibility of experiencing the sense of being and the world in its totality, not just a modification of the mental state.

The Loss of the Meaning of Existence

Contemporary human beings face a multiplicity of stimuli that condition and restrict their autonomy. An everyday example illustrates this situation: a person starts their day startled by the alarm on their mobile phone, checks notifications before getting up, hastily eats breakfast while answering messages and heads to public transport absorbed in the quick reading of emails. During the journey, he switches between applications in search of news, checks the bank balance and attends to work alerts, ignoring those around him and barely perceiving the physical environment. The constant search for instant gratification, excess productivity, and a distorted sense of responsibility have transformed the human essence. The contemporary individual rarely remains in the present; it concentrates on a single activity or cultivates its contemplative dimension. Although he recognizes or intuits this situation inside, he tends to normalize and internalize it. Thus, he chooses to continue his life assuming the weight of acting against his nature and resigns himself to an identity adapted to technological demands. This identity, although functional in the context of technological devices, submerges it in a constant contradiction that annuls it and turns it into a kind of autoimmune disease. The ego comes into conflict with itself; the individual experiences existential discomfort, becomes ill and loses consciousness.

Alain Ehrenberg, in his work *The Fatigue of Being Oneself: Depression and Society (1998),* argues that the contemporary individual has failed in his attempt to achieve an authentic relationship with himself, which contributes to his depressive state. This failure is attributed, in part, to disconnection from the environment, loss of meaning and excess of responsibility characteristic of the performance-oriented subject. This breakup generates a persistent feeling of inadequacy, since one never manages to live up to or reach the condition of "oneself". The term "coming to" implies a never-ending race to an ideal state in which the self is finally realized. The question then arises as to what it means to be oneself and how it relates to the problem exposed here. Although this question requires a deep philosophical analysis, it is possible to affirm that the encounter with oneself implies facing one's own vulnerability. It is precisely in this state of vulnerability that the ego questions itself about the meaning of its existence.

According to Viktor Frankl (1946/1996), the meaning of life is not an external agent that is given as a gift, but must be discovered through suffering and the tension between what one is and what one can become. "If there is meaning in life, there must be meaning in suffering" (Frankl, 1946/1996, p. 47). In this way, suffering becomes a necessary element to give meaning to existence and to make it possible to find meaning. In this state of uncertainty, the individual travels along paths of anguish and "loses himself" in the painful search for himself, although this loss does not imply a definitive loss, but the possibility of finally reaching meaning.

Heidegger (1929) develops a similar idea when referring to the state of "suspense". For this author, anguish represents a condition of suspension and loss of control over the entity; It is a contemplative state in which the entity vanishes and forces introspection. Anguish confronts the individual with the uncertainty of nothingness, and it is at that moment when, not being able to cling to anything, he surrenders to the experience of himself. A contemporary example of how technology fosters this experience of emptiness can be seen in the use of applications with infinite scrolling, such as social networks. By swiping indefinitely, the user enters an almost automatic state, devoid of purpose and end, in which the content becomes indistinguishable and the feeling of suspension intensifies. This dynamic reinforces the loss of control and plunges the individual into an information maelstrom that, paradoxically, distances him from both the present and himself. In this way, technology not only conditions experience, but also generates scenarios in which the "nothingness" and anguish described by Heidegger are integrated into everyday life.

The individual, immersed in their daily lives, interacts with technological devices in various ways: they use them to communicate, work, increase their productivity and entertain themselves, although sometimes they do not know the reason for their use. While technology is intended to facilitate and bring convenience to daily life, its use has become questionable and, in many cases, counterproductive. For example, social networks have altered the sense of identity and have distanced the individual from face-to-face and interpersonal contact. The contemporary subject spends hours on his mobile phone without a defined purpose, conditioned by algorithms that influence his thinking and emotions. This dynamic generates an addiction to dopamine that makes it difficult to pause, functioning as a mask against boredom and fear of inactivity. Instinctively, the individual perceives that the cause of their dissatisfaction does not lie in the activity itself, but in a feeling of persistent emptiness, despite always having the device at hand. In this context, questions arise about the meaning and purpose of his actions, although he persists in his routine. Stopping is perceived as a waste of

time and indulging in inactivity is unacceptable. According to Heidegger, reflection on being is the starting point, but this question is not enough to recover the meaning of existence. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate what conditions allow the re-establishment of the sense of being and promote the reunion with oneself.

Alienation, Performance and Subjectivity

The South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2015) describes the contemporary subject as a "subject of performance", self-exploited and tired, unable to stop. In human-technology interaction, technology is the preferred tool that the "subject of performance" uses for his self-exploitation. Immersed in a race of constant updates, a continuous replacement of devices, an incessant struggle to be at the forefront, man submits to a path against the clock and against himself. This struggle leaves man in a state of absolute vulnerability and inadequacy, alienates him to a career that is difficult to win and, on the contrary, condemns him to fit into a society of performance and fatigue. It absorbs him in a lack of time, in the fear of becoming unproductive, it turns him into an overstimulated being who has no room for himself and much less to question essential questions. "With the loss of relaxation we are also left without the gift of attentive listening" (Han, 2015, p. 38)

This disconnection from himself leads him to nonsense. It is the image of an individual in front of the screen, aimlessly sliding through endless feeds, feeling the weight of each empty notification; an instant in which the hours pass and, suddenly, all meaning seems to have dissipated. The subject, trapped in this incessant flow, finds himself unable to remember what he has just seen, lost in the monotony of the content, experiencing nothingness under the appearance of being permanently connected.

New technologies have contributed to this subjugation and self-exploitation. Let's say it: technological advances and the transfiguration of man as a subject of performance have grown at the same time, complement and codepend. To make this process clear, it can be seen as a three-step sequence: first, the increasing dependence on technology, which leads the individual to rely on it to organize and sustain their life; second, the internalization of technology, which causes its tools and logics to be inserted into subjectivity and become an integral part of the subject's body and mind; and finally, the distortion of reality, where this internalization transforms the perception of the world and of oneself. This is how technology, more than an external threat, has become the fundamental condition that creates and perpetuates this human paradigm. Dependence on technology has substantially changed the essence of man, by taking away from him what he is by nature: a contemplative being. Technology has been internalized to such an extent that it has become another extension of the body, distorting reality. This coincides with the thesis of Álvarez (2008): today's man is so imbricated in the technical fabric that he can no longer distinguish between the real and its representation. For example, the total "transparency", or rather the permeability, of the networks erases all intimacy and turns existence into a visualizable commodity.

Anguish and Nothingness: Conditions of Encounter

One of the characteristics of the man of science and technology is determinism. Scientific research seeks to explain phenomena from what they are and not from what they are not, that is, it is about being before the expectation of the being and nothing more than the being. Fear is something typical of anxiety in the traditional sense, since it is conceived as a threat in the face of a possible danger; In other words, what is normally understood by anguish is a fear or fear in the face of a patent threat. For example, fear arises when an alarm is urgently sounded announcing an expiring deadline, prompting an immediate response to a particular danger. Anguish, on the other hand, arises in a diffuse and inexplicable way, like a feeling of existential emptiness in the middle of the night, with no apparent cause, only the oppression of the undefined. However, Heidegger manages to see beyond this paradigm. For Heidegger, anguish is the radical experience of nothingness. "Anguish reveals nothingness. Nothingness is the possibility of the revelation of being as such for the human being" (Heidegger, 1929/1970, p. 47). In this sense, fear, seen as a threat to what appears, is not part of the temporal-existential constitution of its structure; in fact, it is improper. The characteristic of fear is "being in expectation" and one can only be in expectation when it is not determinable or has not yet appeared, which generates such a state. Thus, in anguish, man is immersed in an "open state" that opens up to nothingness, that is, to the indeterminate, the unknowable, the uncontrollable, the alien to the world of the instrumentable and the technical.

Anguish opens up to nothingness from meaninglessness. Nothingness is not a simple negation of being, but an ontological opening. In anguish, all habitual meaning dissolves and *Dasein* confronts itself as a possibility. This destructuring of everyday meaning is meaninglessness and also the condition for the possibility of an authentic existence. Nothingness is the way in which the self reveals itself. In the indeterminacy of nothingness, man manages to experience his being there in its purest form; he opens up to his own being. (Heidegger, 1929/1970, p. 10).

Dialectic of nonsense: Search for Encounter.

The dynamic between meaning, meaninglessness and encountering constitutes an existential dialectic that originates in anguish, nothingness and serenity. Man approaches technology in search of a meaning for his existence. In this experience, man is confronted with an experience in which he can evidence a proper or improper sense of being, depending on the type of relationship he has established with it, namely, instrumental or non-instrumental. As has already been discussed, the instrumental relationship with technology leads to a meaninglessness that forces man to confront himself with nothingness and surrender to anguish; In this experience, man can question himself about his being and it is there that his own being is observed as being there, thrown, vulnerable, that is, a "finding himself". This

"meeting" is not reduced to rediscovering a pre-existing essence, but to creating meaning in the midst of uncertainty; it is an encounter with the meaningful meaning of the other through the understanding of oneself.

As part of the existentialist constitution of "there", Heidegger introduces the concept of *Befindlichkeit* in his work *Being and Time* (1993), translated as "state of mind", "affective disposition" or "finding oneself". It is necessary to start from the assumption that, for Heidegger, *Dasein* is always a state of mind, and it is precisely the state of mind that places being in its "there". "We say that *Dasein* is always found in some way. This expression means, in principle, that in his being he is always already given over to a state of mind" (Heidegger, 1927/2014, p. 133). In this sense, *Dasein* is always affectively open to the world. This opening of being is not of a rational nature or a simple psychological state, but a fundamental ontological structure of *Dasein* (being-there), through which the world opens up and allows us to understand our being from feeling. "Finding oneself not only discovers Dasein in its 'as it is', but also opens up being-in-the-world in its totality" (Heidegger, 1927/1951, p. 134). One of Heidegger's fundamental contributions is to show that understanding is not exclusively rational. Before we think, we are already there; Before judging, we are already affected. This means that affective states have a cognitive function: they are modes of openness that allow entities to reveal themselves to us as significant.

Serenity (Gelassenheit): Finding Oneself in the Technological World.

After the experience of anguish, man can surrender to the experience of encountering, as a "reencounter", the world as a meaningful space. In his writing Gelassenheit (1955/1989), Heidegger proposes *serenity* as a necessary attitude in the face of the mastery of modern technology. *Gelassenheit* consists of a letting be, in the ability to inhabit the world without trying to control it. This concept acquires a particular force when contrasted with today's "always connected" culture, where daily life takes place under the constant pressure of notifications, pop-up messages and the need to respond immediately to multiple simultaneous stimuli. While information overload and technological multitasking push the individual to exhaustion and dispersion, Heideggerian serenity radically challenges this state by proposing an attitude of pause and openness, capable of restoring a more authentic and free relationship with the world.

Heidegger invites us to relate to technology in a way that is both near and distant at the same time: that is, to "use" technological objects "as they must be accepted", but, at the same time, to let these objects "rest in themselves, as something that does not concern us in the most intimate and proper part of ourselves" (1989, p. 8). In short, it is legitimate and even necessary for man to interact with technology, but he must be cautious when doing so, guarding against the danger that technology, in Heidegger's words, "devastates our essence" (1989, p. 8). "But we can also do something else. We can use technical objects, make use of them appropriately, but at the same time keep ourselves so free from them that we can get rid of them at all times" (Heidegger, 1989, p. 8).

Now, how can the individual decide when to adopt a close attitude and when to distance himself from technology? A practical way to follow Heidegger's advice is to ask yourself a guiding question before each use: "Does this device serve my meaningful end, or does it only satisfy a superficial demand for immediacy?" If the answer leads to the perception that the use of the technological object contributes to an essential or significant purpose for one's own being, then it is legitimate to integrate it into one's own work. If, on the contrary, technology only promotes distraction, accelerates or empties the sense of experience, then it is time to let it "rest" and turn our gaze to what really enriches existence.

Thus, serenity is presented as the fruit of an ontological journey: after the experience of anguish and the confrontation with nothingness, the human being can learn to poetically find himself in the world, including technology. In this journey, openness to mystery requires accepting our own condition as daring and vulnerable in the face of a reality that never fully reveals itself. Likewise, Heidegger (1989) points out that openness to mystery is required, that is, to the attitude by which we remain open to the hidden meaning of the technical world, which allows us to interact with the technological world, but, at the same time, to be on the margins of its threat. Ultimately, only those who embrace their vulnerability can authentically inhabit a technical world in which meaning is never fully assured, but always remains in the tension between control and wonder at the unknown.

Conclusions

In a world dominated by technology, man has lost the authentic relationship with his being. This loss manifests itself as meaninglessness, automatism and alienation. However, existential philosophy proposes a way out: anguish, as an experience of openness, and encounter, as a way of resisting the reduction of the world to what is available. Through these paths, man can recover a poetic relationship with technology and, therefore, with himself and with others.

So it is worth asking the following questions: How can new technologies be a threat to man's loss of meaning? What makes what is shown of man's being in technological networks be interpreted as nonsense, and how is it that what is shown is precisely what it entails when it meets? In short, how does he apply what Hölderlin says: "But where is the danger, does what saves also grow"? (Heidegger, 1953, p.98).

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