

Jacques Ellul and Arnold Gehlen on the Anthropology of the Natural and Artificial in Technological (Re)Imaging of the Human Being

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Abstract

The Technological Society (TS) of Jacques Ellul offers an insightful contribution to the debate on Transhumanism and Artificial Intelligence. One of these contributions is the role of technology in artificializing the natural and shaping the human condition to prevent humans from the burdens of the realm of necessity. While not anti-technological, Jacques Ellul in *TS* thinks “technique is opposed to nature”. This Ellulian perspective is also present in the techno-anthropology of another philosopher-sociologist, Arnold Gehlen, but with a contrasting nuance. Gehlen is a contemporary of Ellul, and some of their perspectives intersect in technology. It is essential to examine an often-neglected debate between the two thinkers on technology’s role in the artificialization of the natural (Ellul) and the naturalization of the artificial (Gehlen). This debate is current today amidst the morphological and ontological challenges arising from the technological (re)imagining of human nature and the prospects of a ‘new human being’ in an era of digital technology.

Introduction

The convergence of nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science (NBIC) is poised to transcend the limitations of human nature and conditions. These technologies envision the emergence of a ‘super-human’ endowed with artificial nature and capable of overcoming biological hindrances and achieving digital immortality. As these innovations loom, many scholars argue that natural evolution is yielding to the artificial. The core projection of the converging technologies revolves around using techniques to artificialize the natural and naturalize the artificial. Arnold Gehlen (1904-1976) and Jacques Ellul (1912-1994), two erudite scholars of the last century, anticipated this technological audacity. Seven decades after documenting their impressions about the technological phenomenon, the opinions of these two scholars have become “prophetic” and meaningful codes for confronting recent technological innovations. This paper delves into how the duo interpreted technique as pro-artificial and anti-natural.

1. Kindred Spirits? Jacques Ellul – Arnold Gehlen

Gehlen and Ellul are among the philosophers of the last century who gave actuality to the present technological moment, even though it is difficult to establish whether there was personal communication between them from literary sources. Why think, then, that these two authors, when read together, can offer an intertextual dimension to understanding the imposing posture of the technological phenomenon of this century? I can affirm that there is something of a kindred spirit between the two. This claim can be validated by two indications, historically and ideologically. Firstly, the evolution of their contribution was midwifed by the experience of the two World Wars when human ingenuity became monstrous by “the most strident, dramatic, overwhelming techniques” used on humans in the concentration camps.¹ One can establish a historical and cultural connection between both European scholars. Hence, the years following the horrors of the war fought with technical ammunitions offered the platform for their philosophical ‘prophecy’ about the omnipresence of the technological phenomenon in transforming the social order and remaking the human condition. The French thinker was nicknamed “The Philosopher

¹ Cf. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (Vantage Books: Toronto 1964), p. 388.

of the Technological Society” by John Wilkinson.² This title also fits Gehlen because both authors showed that their thoughts on technology originated from the experiences of their growing years when they witnessed its authoritarian and gloomy impact. As philosophers of this society, they saw their vocation as a critical engagement of the phenomenon that seeks to establish a monolithic cultural outlook that edges out all known traditional human values. Both Gehlen (1949/ *Sozialpsychologische Probleme in der industriellen Gesellschaft*: 1957 Revised edition/ *Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter*) and Ellul (1954/ *La Technique ou l'enjeu du siècle*) analyzed the predicament of the human condition before the emerging techniques.

The second connecting thread is both authors' positions in examining the technological character. In the years when contributions to the philosophy of technology were either pessimistic (dystopic) or optimistic (utopic), Ellul and Gehlen distanced themselves from that polarity. They claimed to analyze both the good, the bad, and the ugly of the technological factor. Ellul claimed that he was neither a fatalist nor a pessimist but one interested in interrogating the facts of technological civilization. The analysis in *The Technological Society* is the history of his epoch given by one who was involved. This involvement is couched in an allegory: “I may be compared rather with a physician or physicist who is describing a group situation in which he is himself involved.”³ Samuel Matlack claims that if doomsday and fatalistic claims about technology are allegedly present in Ellul, they can be excused because the opinion was formed at the beginning of much fearful research on nuclear and atomic weapons, manipulation of human genomes and space explorations.⁴ On the other hand, in the introductory pages of *Die Seele*, Gehlen walks through the optimistic and pessimistic tensions surrounding the technological phenomenon. In trying to offer a synthesis between the polarizing positions, he asserts that technology is an anthropological and biological necessity because it helps the organically deficient human being achieve self-understanding and survival. The use of technology belongs to the “higher function” that aids human survival. As acting beings, the recourse to technology is a compensatory strategy that relieves the overwhelming burdens of instincts and impulses. Technology can also reveal humans' capacity to degenerate when the human subject is not guided through education, discipline and ascetic distancing.

Summing up this argument, I claim that both thinkers' ideologies lurk together in some notable areas and can both pose as realists. Ellul claims that he works “with realities and not with abstractions.”⁵ Ellul and Gehlen present the dialectics between nature and artificiality⁶ that passes through technique. When Ellul argues that by conquering nature through technique, humanity begins to live the *first level of the artificial*, he agrees with Gehlen's claim that what is natural to humans is the artificial – “Technique constitutes, as does man himself, “*nature artificielle*”.⁷ The first level of the artificial is the technical environment, the ‘universe and reign of the artificial’, which has become natural for humans. Artificiality defines humanity: humans live by subduing the fatal constraints in nature, fabricating tools, and imposing normative obligations.

2. Artificialization of the Natural (Ellul)

Ellulian anthropological arguments on the nature-artificiality link are very revealing. He believes that human beings, from the beginning, have been creative artificers who superimposed their power over nature. In the second chapter of *TS*, titled “Characterology of Technique”, Ellul lists artificiality alongside rationality as one of the known features of the technical phenomenon. This theme was not

² John Wilkinson made this affirmation in his “Translator's Introduction” of the 1964 edition of *The Technological Society*.

³ Jacques Ellul, “Author's Forward to the Revised American Edition”, in ID., *The Technological Society*, tr. John Wilkinson (Vantage Books: Toronto 1964), p. xxvii. My emphasis.

⁴ Samuel Matlack, “Confronting the Technological Society”, *The New Atlantis*, 43 (Summer/Fall 2014), pp. 45-64. Here, p. 46.

⁵ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 414.

⁶ Cf. Jacques Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, *Research in Philosophy and Technology*, vol.3, 1980, pp.263-283.

⁷ Arnold Gehlen, *Man in the Age of Technology*, tr. Patricia Lipscomb (Columbia University Press: New York 1980), p.5.

exhaustively discussed, but the brief elucidation communicates fundamental points that can be understood through the optics of another article by Ellul titled “Nature, Technique and Artificiality” (1980). In both articulations, he establishes the opposition between technique and nature: “The world that is being created by the accumulation of technical means is an artificial world and, hence, radically different from the natural world. It [technique] *destroys, eliminates, or subordinates* the natural world and does not allow this world to *restore itself* or even to *enter into a symbiotic relationship* with it”.⁸ From his perspective, there is an increasing possibility of total erasure of nature because of the deterministic style and monolithic methodology of technique development: “We are rapidly approaching the time when there will be no longer any natural environment at all. When we succeed in producing artificial *aurorae boreales*, the night will disappear, and the perpetual day will reign over the planet”.⁹ Technique is poised to modify the milieu of space and time. The architectonic structure of Ellul’s thesis on *nature-artificiality* follows three lines of arguments.

The first viewpoint is evolutionary: “Man is essentially artificial and the producer of artifacts”– “Brought into existence by means of the artificial and himself the producer of this art, man is the artificer”.¹⁰ Human beings stand out in the animal world through three artificial constructs: toolmaking, language, and work. For some scholars, the *homo faber*, in tool making, shows creativity and artificiality as distinguishing markers. For others, the emergence of humanity from animality is signaled by the fashioning of language, which connects complex communication processes. Ellul unites these two opinions by arguing that language is an artificial creation of *homo loquens*: “Man is not endowed with language in itself. [...] The production of language is as artificial as the production of tools, and the two unite together”.¹¹ The next view holds that *homo laborens*, through work, achieve self-realization. By modifying the natural environment and subsequently creating disequilibrium through technique, humans go against the laws of nature and operate on desired laws and power instincts. According to Ellul, the fate of the environmental balance rests on three factors: “what man desires, what the natural environment gives, and the means man has available [...]. When a balance is re-established, it is no longer a fact of nature but of choice and artifice”.¹²

The second view of artificiality is drawn from the perspective of morality. Humanness is asserted through forming norms that supersede the spontaneity of instincts. Ellul bases this norm on the principle: *Thou shall not kill*. This principle has no foundation in nature. The making of this law is “a -natural intervention”. The normative obligations arising from these norms for the better organization of human activity are artificial and distinctively human because they go beyond some animal behaviors. Normativity is an artificial creation that makes humans truly unique. The artificial institutions founded on norms have emerged as safeguards for survival. Humans impose these norms for the purposes of regulation and safety. Ellul argues that “we are constantly led back to the decisive character of the artificial”¹³ because “the two worlds [natural and artificial] obey different imperatives, different directives, and different laws which have nothing in common. [...] The technical milieu absorbs the natural”.¹⁴ This line argument claims that there is no model in nature because these norms are artificial inventions.

The third affirmation of human artificiality can be gleaned from the Bible. Ellul argues that there is no place in the Holy Scriptures where human nature is affirmed as a ‘given.’ He supports this argument with the creation story of Genesis. Even though fashioned through the materials of nature, the giving of

⁸ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 79. My emphases.

⁹ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 268.

¹⁰ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 268.

¹¹ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 265.

¹² Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 265.

¹³ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 266.

¹⁴ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 79.

life through the Spirit of God is something artificial. The vocation to *till* and *keep* the earth is a call to artificial creativity: to modify the natural order and make it a home. In naming animals in the Garden of Eden, humans used words that were products of the artificial creation of language. Because human survival depended on the artificial, Ellul considered the human condition as characterized by *uncertainty*. I think that Ellul closely follows the Renaissance anthropology of human indeterminateness in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola that subsisted in Friedrich Nietzsche and Arnold Gehlen to claim that “[...] man is an ‘uncertain’ being who is not endowed with a fixed nature, (...); he is not a figure of repetition but of history. Even if it is said that man is made in the image of God, it is not made at all definite *in what this image of God* consists. It is a mistake to say that this image is *a nature for man*, for this would mean that God is a nature”.¹⁵ In this anthropology of indetermination, Ellul avers that the vocation of human beings lies in the ingenious use of the artificial as a sign of their creativity to master the hostile natural environment. The instrument of action to achieve this new artificial nature is technique.¹⁶ Thus, creating an artificial world through technology is essential to the human condition and should not be interpreted as a misnomer. An caveat from Ellul is that this condition cannot be tied to a survival strategy arising from necessity but from human freedom. At this point, he part ways with Gehlen, who thinks technique is a product of necessity. Ellul offers a bold declaration exonerating a moral condemnation of technique *per* technique as a product of human depravation: “[...] the problem raised by modern techniques is not at all their *artificiality* which would be judged by the standard of nature—*an artificial evil* in the face of a natural good”.¹⁷ The real problem lies in how an *artificialized human nature* can undo the artificial constraints of technology, that is, living in what he calls the “second level of the artificial”

3. Naturalization of the artificial (Gehlen)

Gehlen developed a philosophical-anthropological perspective on technology with a biological orientation: Technology is conceived as a “dimension of the natural artificiality of human life form”. The German thinker had argued insistently that using technology to create an artificial nature is a biological and anthropological necessity. Without this attempt, human beings cannot survive. Plato anticipated the biological deficiency of human beings, which provided the meeting ground for modern anthropology and technology long before it became a defining theme in Gehlen. Referring to the “technological man” as an “anticipatory Prometheus” shows that the German philosopher reconnects with the mythological thought about human origins in Plato’s *Protagoras* (320d-321b).

Gehlenian anthropobiology shows that humans are biologically constrained to create a special place (*Sonderstellung*) in the world through technical artefacts because of their organic deficiency and inadaptability to the natural environment. This postulation holds that “[...] man, lacking specialised organs and instincts, is not naturally adapted to a specific environment of his own, and is thereby thrown upon his natural ability to *transform intelligently any pre-constituted natural conditions*”¹⁸. The deficient being (*Mängelwesen*) who cannot survive without modifying the natural environment with inventive intelligence needs technological artifices because the inadequacy is constitutionally ontological: “poorly equipped as he is with sensory apparatus, naturally defenseless, naked, *constitutionally* embryonic through and through, possessing only inadequate instincts, man is a being whose existence necessarily depends upon action”.¹⁹ Ellul agrees with Gehlen that technique shows the human crave to survive. The French philosopher calls technique an intermediary agency that assures humans protection and defense because “man alone is too weak to defend himself. [...] He is able to manipulate his surroundings so

¹⁵ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 267. My emphases.

¹⁶ Cf. Jacques Ellul, “La Technique et les premiers chapitres de la Genèse”, *Foi et Vie* 59, no. 2 (1960): 97-113.

¹⁷ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 267.

¹⁸ Gehlen, *Man in the Age of Technology*, 3. My emphases.

¹⁹ Gehlen, *Man in the Age of Technology*, 3.

that they are no longer merely his surroundings but become a factor of equilibrium and of profit to him. Thus, as a result of technique, man transforms his adversaries into allies.”²⁰

Human beings are at risk and must strive to compensate for or overcome the lack thereof. The only way to survive is to create an artificial world through intelligent modification of the natural order. The modified cultural sphere is the human being's second nature (*secunda natura*). Thus, it can be argued in a Gehlenian style that a special place in the world has to be won through this prosthetic function of technology as the artificial limb for adaptation. Making the artificial condition natural through action is unique and characteristic to humans as opposed to non-human animals. The cultural sphere is a modified natural state. In this light, Gehlen asserts the indispensability of technical artefacts as a fundamental dimension of the human condition and, therefore, cannot be interpreted from only the lens of instrumentalism or utilitarianism. The use of technology to modify and make up unspecialized organs and instincts must be done intelligently, according to Gehlen. This emphasis on intelligent action connects to the practical wisdom humans received from generous Prometheus to aid in using fire 'technology'. Guided by ethics, the side effects of fire as the metaphor of technology can be mitigated.

4. Technological Re-imagining of the Human Condition: Indications from Ellul and Gehlen

Both scholars agree that technology has tremendously impacted human beings, with the possibility of creating both a new human environment and a new human essence. Gehlen argues that “the world of technique [...] embodies the features we associate with our images of a ‘great man’ [Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* comes to mind]. Like that man, it is inventive, resourceful, life-fostering, and at the same time life-destroying”.²¹ He highlights technique’s propensity to make or mar the human condition: the capacity for inventiveness and destruction lies in the womb of technology. On his part, Ellul imagines the arrival of *L’homme-machine* (man-machine) through the technification of nature and the human condition. *L’homme-machine* heralds the creation of the new human type as the ideal. The human being is not compelled to imitate this ‘new human’: “He can, if he will, despise it. But then he will always find himself in an inferior position, vis-à-vis the type, whenever the two come into competition”.²² He calls the man-machine complex, “the formula of the future” that will lead to the birth of a new entity conditioned and determined behaviorally by its coupling with techniques. This involves a complete assimilation and adaption of the human being to the machine. Human nature, according to him, has been modified. With a great sense of prevision, Ellul thinks that the advent of this technification is not far. He similarly alerts us of the emergence of a biologically and chemically conditioned superhuman that is imagined to solve all problems arising from technical action. This new creation puts some human conditions at stake, such as intellectual, psychic, and spiritual components.²³

Similarly, Ellul and Gehlen agree that technique has the role of augmenting and enhancing human organs. With organs enhanced by techniques, human capacity is given accelerated possibilities of reaching new milieus. Gehlen assigns to techniques functions of organ strengthening, replacement and facilitation. This Gehlenian designation will interest researchers in transhumanism and artificial intelligence. The multiplications of the organic parts have positive connotations. Still, human beings are constantly estranged from reality and trapped in abstractness because they rely on sophisticated intermediaries provided by technology. There is an increasing loss of contact with reality because humans must constantly adapt to a new artificial world.²⁴ Humans have been condemned to continuous adaptation to their evolving artificial nature. This is the result of the technological re-imagining of the human essence.

²⁰ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 25

²¹ Gehlen, *Man in the Age of Technology*, p.5.

²² Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 395.

²³ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 338.

²⁴ Cf. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 325; Gehlen, *Man in the Age of Technology*, p.83.

Another corollary is that in Ellul and Gehlen, nature is perceived as not being a model. There is no law in nature commanding obedience from humans. Rather, humans impose “artificial obligations” on themselves, which are products of “human choice” according to Ellul. In their situatedness within nature, human beings are not trapped by conformism to natural order because other elemental categories from myths and religion also shape existence. They profit for their existence from the positive forces of nature but are also threatened by brutal elements of the same nature. In an artificially modified nature, equilibrium is disrupted. Ellul says, “[...] we do not have to look to what happens in nature to try to find a model of goodness and right behaviour” because referring to nature does not imply the presence of a model which can be seen as the yardstick for human behavior and judgement.²⁵ Nature is what it is essentially because of the inventive creativity of human beings to modify it artificially.

Similarly, nature does not constitute a limit to humans’ inventiveness. But to survive, there are limits in nature humans cannot exceed; otherwise, they will be extinguished. To avoid being burnt by exceeding limits, humans are to be guided by the “instincts of life and self-preservation”. Since human freedom over the natural realm has artificiality as its product, knowing where the limit lies guarantees authentic freedom and the use of reason. Ellul says “the artificial (and technique) are the expression of human freedom and the road to this freedom. Man is free only in his own invention. [...] The natural realm is the world of necessity; the artificial realm is the expression of his freedom”.²⁶ This sounds Gehlenian, too. Being relieved from natural encumbrances, humans gain freedom through artificial means and processes.

Lastly, humanity stands on the precipice because of excessive hubris in technique and freedom. The choices are those of life and death: survival or complete extinction. This is the price that is always paid when limits are exceeded. This consequence leads humanity to make a fundamental choice with its unlimited potential and power. The immoderation in techniques can make it impossible for humans to subdue the artificial as they did to the natural. The reign of the artificial poses some untold threats to the human condition. According to Ellul, the human desire to reduce everything in nature to artificial creates a situation that will not be habitable. Human beings enter a crisis in the struggle to eliminate and annihilate the natural. According to him, this plastic and synthetic condition offers man the “condition of astronauts”, a weightless condition. He makes a case for embodiment: “We forget that man still remains a creature of flesh and blood and also of passion and freedom and that it is not human to be reduced to the stage of a guinea pig living in a totally artificial world. The elimination of the natural does not coincide with what is still man”.²⁷ The attempt to eliminate the natural and enthrone the artificial is against the generational desire to have a point of reference called the “human model”.

5. Intellectual Patrimony of Ellul/Gehlen

From the insights of both Ellul and Gehlen, abundant intellectual resources are available that can help recent interrogations and guidance of the emerging technologies that emphasize artificializing the natural and naturalizing the artificial. There is no doubt that technology modifies everything that encounters it. Like King Midas of Greek mythology, who turned everything he touched into gold, it can be said that technology has the *Midas touch* that tries to turn everything into artificial because it is in its nature to do so. Thus, the challenge becomes mastering the artificial with the artificial: how to normalize with what Ellul calls the “second level of the artificial” or what Gehlen calls “*nature artificielle*”. From both scholars, we can hazard some indications lacking in recent Artificial intelligence and Transhumanism breakthroughs. Ellul considers three ethical and anthropological orientations: Recognition, Limit, and Human factor.

²⁵ Cf. Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 269.

²⁶ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 274.

²⁷ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 277.

The first element is recognition, which consists of the awareness of the existence of multi-dimensional reality. Something elusive about the human subject makes it difficult to understand such qualifications attached to its condition: “inalienability, sacrality or supreme value”.²⁸ For this reason, none of the technical phenomena can claim sufficient knowledge of human reality. For this reason, Gehlen sees human beings as enigmas. The recognition of elusiveness extends to the existence of the Other and Nature. This orientation that requires a dose of epistemic humility in confronting the human enigma lacks in some of the bogus claims of modern technicians to create a post-human condition. According to Ellul, this urgent ethical orientation can be reached through the art of “contemplation, communion, respect, meditation [on creatureliness and vulnerability] and consideration”. This is not the abstract ethical theorization of the past, but one that takes as its point of departure the process of “discernment and reclassification of essentials”.²⁹ This ethics begins from the little and forgotten aspects of human existence. This recognition expresses appreciation for everything received from the Creator as a gift.

The second consideration is the necessity “to find and set voluntary limits on [human] action”. Ellul proposes limitations of *consumption and demography*. The acknowledgment of limit entails the moderation of power and unbridled curiosity. This can be achieved by rejecting the “temptation to unlimitedness and the identification of freedom with the disappearance of limits”.³⁰ The setting of limits and the acceptance of such is the true test of freedom. The artificial of the first level is fraught with problems. The second level, grounded in ethics, can help to supplement the lack of behavioral codes in the first artificial level, that is, in midwifing human self-rediscovery in the new environment characterized by a haze of technological artificiality. This entails returning to the guiding principle of *Thou shall not kill*, not as a way of taking a judgmental position against the natural order but as a way of being. This principle takes an ethical, ontological, and anthropological orientation that determines “not what conduct to follow [...] but the *being* to be assumed”.³¹ Ellul surmises that this ethical invention cannot be artificially constructed by one individual; it will be a product of an institution’s common effort that becomes the pattern of living, guaranteeing some level of acceptability and applicability.

The third element is the human factor. Ellul proposes the humanizing of techniques. This entails the complete involvement of the human being in the development of these technologies “not perhaps in a subordinate role, but irreversibly and indissolubly superordinated”.³² There is the risk that modern technologies emphasize machines and artefacts, not the human beings who use them. This danger will lead to what Ellul calls the “dictatorship of test tubes” or what I see as the *tyranny of laboratories*. This tyranny is further extended to the proposal of human adaptation to the machine condition, which he rejected as objectifying humans. This can be dangerous because there are conditions where humans cannot live without losing what is distinctively human (like the concentration camps). This is an obvious challenge of a technicized world with the proclivity of excluding many and creating inequality.³³ This is against the prospect of giving a central place to humans in innovations that emphasize human good and values. Humans are not to be objectified by technology. He advises that “the concrete details of man’s life with respect to technical apparatus must be taken into consideration on the human plane.”³⁴

This process of humanizing techniques involves an institutional framework. Here, Gehlen highlights the role of institutions in safeguarding human beings in their contact with evolving techniques, the products of their ingenuity. As an organically deficient being who must make up with technology, the existence of an institution is considered a compensatory strategy. So, they are to moderate and ensure

²⁸ Cf. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 392.

²⁹ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 281.

³⁰ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 282.

³¹ Ellul, “Nature, Technique and Artificiality”, p. 281.

³² Cf. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 396.

³³ Cf. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 398.

³⁴ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 337.

normative frameworks that prevent humans from degenerating in their use of artefacts. Gehlenian insights on the role of institutions in preserving the human species offer foundational resources that can guide current discussions on the importance of governance and regulation in the conception, invention, use and application of converging technologies. Gehlen recommends education, formation and discipline in cultivating a mind that maintains the desired equilibrium in the human-technique relationship. Gehlen and Ellul agree on a critical attitude and aptitude for distancing and freeing oneself from technological conditioning. Gehlen calls this an ascetic attitude toward technology.

Conclusive Remarks: Critical Concerns

Both authors established the dialectics between nature and artificiality as fundamental to human-technique discourse. Showing no signs of Luddism, Ellul and Gehlen gave earlier indications of the possibility of synthetic and integrationist anthropology in the future debates on the human-machine relationship. However, how much these anthropological perspectives have informed the search for ethical guidelines for converging technology remains a great concern in current research. To summarize this paper, I wish to raise two critical concerns about Ellul's contributions. I have purposefully left out Gehlen because my research on his thoughts is still ongoing (doctoral dissertation). Ellul creates a discontinuous relationship between ancient and modern techniques and claims that nothing is common to them, especially regarding the radicality of their outlook. He compares this with the alleged discontinuity between modern and feudal society and between the thoughts of ancient philosophers and us. This Ellulian supposition creates some difficulties in his literature. In *TS*, he connects technique to magic as a sign of the human penchant for automation and efficiency. At various points, he highlights the awe that the 'primitive man' showed before some of 'his' technical artefacts and the modern man's wonders before the atomic and nuclear bombs. Ellul argues: "Our modern worship of technique derives from man's ancestral worship of the mysterious and marvelous character of his own handiwork."³⁵ I argue, against the supposition of Ellul, that modern technological apparatus has always shown a constant link with its ancestors, especially in the project of artificialization. The process of creating artificial nature has been fundamental to technique from antiquity. It is an anthropological constant. The degree and sophistication can always vary as technology progresses. Missing this point can be worrisome, just as the claim that "the ideas of ancient philosophers are of no use for us". This can be a harsh conclusion from Ellul, whose ideas, seven decades later, have influenced an army of scholars. Implanting discontinuity in the tree of intellectual history has never been favorable to the body of knowledge. Inadequacies in preceding studies and the possibility of refining intellectual patrimony can always be admitted. It again becomes important to consider whether Ellul improved his thoughts in his article cited in this work, where he submitted to the role of technique in creating the first level of artificial for the survival of 'primitive man'.

Similarly, I find it difficult to take Ellul's position in *TS* that the right attitude is to refrain from proffering solutions to evolving situations created by the technical phenomenon because tomorrow cannot be judged before its arrival. He justifies this claim by arguing that the complete picture of the problem posed by the technology cannot be hazarded. This is a true position. However, I think that not having a complete picture of a worrisome situation like the complete artificialization of nature provides the platform to make contributions that can mitigate the rising problem. The patrimony of philosophical concepts that offer clarity and illumine contemporary questions was given without having a fuller picture of the events of the next two thousand years. Today, philosophical research makes recourse to the classics and their conceptual frameworks to make a case for the ethical orientation and humanized approach to technique. Contrary to his position, Ellul argues for the human factor and the humanizing of techniques. This inconsistency deserves some critical attention in classifying Ellul's positions.

³⁵ Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 24.