Apropos Technophany

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§1. The Concept of Technophany

The term "technophany" was coined by Gilbert Simondon to describe a form of mediation which allows technology to be re-integrated into culture.[1] What does it mean, however, to re-integrate technology into culture? Is not culture itself partially constituted by ever-evolving technology? We will have to answer why such an integration is needed before we can understand what this form of mediation is and what its limits might be today. For Simondon, there are conflicts between technology and culture that arise for various reasons. First of all, there is, in general, a type of xenophobia present in what is understood as culture where technical objects are prejudicially seen as alien to it; this forces technology to become ostracised, which is to say, excluded from culture.[2] As we can already read in the "Introduction" to *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (1958), technical objects have been undermined and undervalued compared to aesthetic objects. Aesthetic objects are identified with culture, while technical objects are reduced to utilities and, therefore, considered secondary beings whose value of being is no other than utilitarian.[3]

Besides this stereotype, which is deeply grounded in modern culture, there is a more fundamental conflict that arises out of a process of polarisation, where there is the constant becoming obsoleteness of culture, on the one hand, and the constant evolution of technology on the other. Even though both culture and technology evolve over time, the evolution of technology occurs at a much faster pace and constantly intensifies such a polarisation. Institutions and their related infrastructures struggle

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1   The first time Simondon uses the word is unknown. From the existing publication, the term was frequently discussed in a course he gave in Lyon between 1960 and 1961 with the title "Psychosociology of Technicity," the term was occasionally used in some other texts, which we will also mention in this article.

2   Simondon compared this ostracism with the discrimination of the black population of the United States, See "Psychosociologie de la technicité," in Gilbert Simondon, *Sur la technique* (Paris: PUF, 2016), 37.

3   Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (Paris: Aubiers, 2012).

to maintain an "organic" unity with the advancements of new technologies,[4] and when they look to use those old technologies, which no longer exist, a lack which contains the seeds of discontent is produced. The accelerating evolution of technical objects results in an antagonism between culture and technology, or more generally, as it was known during the time of his writings, an antagonism between culture and civilisation.

This disjunction between culture and technology has produced such a discontent, one which has resulted in the accusation and demonisation of technology. Following the rapid industrialisation on the 19th century, when the awareness of the alienation of workers by capital and machines started growing, technologies became condemned as the source of this alienation and as a violation of mother nature. However, this opposition between culture and technology is problematic in itself because culture here, meaning outmoded institutions and values, is far too narrow to grasp true "Culture," which should be understood as the unity of both culture and technics, as Simondon contested:

> In reality, culture and civilisation are reciprocal and complementary symbols, the sole combination of which should be considered as culture in the broader sense of the term— meaning in the sense of anthropologists, ethnologists, and ethnographers. In the broader sense, culture encompasses, understands, and brings together civilisation and culture in the narrower sense of the term.[5]

A veritable culture reconciles the antagonism between a culture that looks backwards and technology that moves forward. To reconcile this antagonism, it is necessary, as we are often reminded, to develop a "technical culture."[6] In his 1960–1961 course, Simondon distinguishes two kinds of technology: phaneotechnics and cryptotechnics. The former refers to technologies directly exposed to the users' perception; the latter are parts that are hidden in their internal design because they are not necessarily to be shown therefore "susceptible of being introduced in the citadel of culture."[7] Phaneotechnics is the source of technophany since the latter is necessarily an exposure. It carries a halo which is expected

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4   Simondon's use of the term organic is intriguing and inconsistent. In his writings around 1950s and 1960s, he occasionally used terms such as holistic and organic, for example, in "Cybernetique et philosophie" (1953) he used the term "holique," and in "Technical Mentality" (1961), he spelt it as "holistique." Here we can understand it in terms of reciprocal relations between parts, and between parts and the whole. The whole is important since the concept of sacrality which we will discuss extensively in this text is closely related to the concept of totality.

5   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 33, "En fait, culture et civilisation sont des symboles réciproques et complémentaires dont la réunion seule doit être considérée comme la culture au sens majeur du terme, c'est-à-dire au sens des anthropologues, des ethnologues, des ethnographes. La Culture, au sens majeur, compte, comprend, et réunit la civilisation et la culture, au sens mineur du terme."

6   Simondon, *Du mode*, 102.

7   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 38.

to resolve the tension between culture and technology and, therefore, to reintegrate technical objects into Culture:

> Such technophanies, acknowledged and culturalized, are the path through which the technical object regains a place in a culture that ostracises it: the object re-enters the fortress of culture through a ritualisation, rich in images and symbols, much like the aspects of sexuality, ostracised and veiled by clothing, reappear in the culturalized ritual of elegant grooming.[8]

As technophany suggests, it is the manifestation of technicity (in analogy to hierophany, the manifestation of sacrality), which is consecrated in symbols and images. These symbols and images are recognised by culture and can penetrate and aestheticise the citizens' everyday lives. A popular science fiction book and film carry these symbols and images; they reintroduce technologies and machines by elevating them to the rank of culture. We might be able to define these technophanies as the product of industrial aesthetics, which re-aestheticise technologies in the form of art or aesthetic objects, for example, photography and cinematography—two technophanic examples that Simondon gave along with science fiction.[9] Simondon also recognises the constant successions of technophanies from the 17th century to the 20th century. He made a comparison between the technologies of the 1930s and those of the late 1950s and early 1960s, noting how, following the launch of Sputnik, space technology began to supplant Hertzian innovations like radio and television:

> From 1935 to 1944, the most powerful and prestigious technophany was radio broadcasting. Germany and England waged part of the war using radio transmitters, with jamming and counter-transmissions. Hitler, in particular, had understood the technophanic significance of Hertzian diffusion. However, in contemporary times, the power of radio waves no longer holds the same prestige, and technophanic power has shifted towards rockets and artificial satellites … [10]

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8   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 39, "De telles technophanies, reconnues et cultura-lisées, sont la voie par laquelle l'objet technique reconquiert une place dans une culture qui l'ostracise : l'objet rentre à nouveau dans la citadelle de la culture par le biais d'une ritualisation, riche en images et en symboles, tout comme les caractères de la sexualité, ostracisés, voilés par le vêtement, se manifestent à nouveau dans la ritualisation culturalisée de la toilette élégante."

9   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 40–41.

10   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 117, "De 1935 à 1944, la technophanie la plus puis-sante et prestigieuse était celle de l'émission hertzienne. L'Allemagne et l'Angleterre ont fait une partie de la guerre au moyen des émetteurs hertziens, avec brouillages et contre émissions. Hitler, tout particu-lièrement, avait compris le sens technophanique de la diffusion hertzienne… Or, de nos jours, la puis-sance des émissions hertziennes n'a plus autant de prestige, et le pouvoir technophanique s'est déplacé vers les fusées et les satellites artificiels…"

In 1958, Hannah Arendt opened *The Human Condition* by writing that the launch of Sputnik was the most significant scientific event in the century.[11] Both Arendt and Simondon would be shocked by the development of computational technology that followed. Even though Simondon provided us with a philosophical treatise on transistors (i.e., in METO), he wrote very little about modern computers. Since the 1950s, not only have technological developments in computing brought us a seemingly inexhaustible list of innovations, but likewise the merger of art, design, and technology has entered a new stage. While Simondon often referred to the creation of automobiles, which pioneered integrating engineering and industrial design in the first half of the 20th century, it is now up to us to imagine what Simondon would have said about the Macintosh and Tesla. Today, the automobile industry is only one of the countless industries that effectively integrate art, design and technology into their products. The technological convergence (of the automobile, space technology, artificial intelligence, etc.) has produced even more spectacular technophanies, in which Elon Musk's launch of a red Tesla into orbit between Mars and Jupiter stands out as a representative. There are far too many technophanies to count if we try to extend Simondon's examples. Furthermore, it is perhaps necessary to ask if Simondon's observations made more than 60 years ago are still valid today? While Simondon's observation and analysis remain undoubtedly important for us, and its originality and profoundness are still plausible, does the hiatus between culture and technology still pose a problem? And is technophany, illustrated by the above examples, still an effective means to resolve such a problem?

Every quarter, if not more often, we see new applications, new gadgets with improved interactions, and new infrastructures with faster speeds and at larger scales; we are subject to the constant process of disruption. These new products and technologies produce shocks that cannot be easily absorbed. Two attitudes in the face of this new technophanic situation can be observed. Firstly, we hear more and more calls for the return to microorganisms, to plants, and animals. Such a "political naturalism" is a crucial move if we are to undermine humancentrism. However, it fails to confront the technological condition that Simondon described, one that becomes more sophisticated day by day. Secondly, a type of dogmatic materialism has been reborn that glorifies the transformations caused by digital technologies in every aspect of human life and sees it as the inevitable progress of the completion of the human (it constitutes what we can call "digital vitalism.") According to this transhumanist and posthumanist point of view, the ultimate technophany would be the realisation of technological singularity, the moment when *homo sapiens* are redeemed so as to become *homo deus*. With this awareness of the omnipresence and omnipotence of technology, could we conclude that we are now ready to realise veritable Culture, which has been until now only obscured by culture, its nostalgic psycho-social shadow?

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11   Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992 [1958]), 1.

§2. The Analogy between Technophany and Hierophany

It would be too hasty to already announce the completion of Simondon's project, especially since the term technophany has yet to be scrutinised. One might want to first ask why did Simondon want to coin a term that resonates so closely with Mircea Eliade's hierophany? While in *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (1958), the term technophany was not yet evoked and Mircea Eliade was not mentioned, in "Psychosociology of Technicity" (1960–1961), a course that Simondon gave in Lyon, and which could also be read as the continuation of MEOT, Simondon began and ended it by precisely entering into dialogue with Eliade's concept of hierophany. Retrospectively, one cannot help but recognise the influence of Eliade's thinking on Simondon's genesis of technicity[12] present in Part III of METO and identify Simondon's effort to respond to Eliade's proposition regarding the degradation of sacrality by conceiving technicity as both the rescue of sacrality and the base of culture.[13] In METO, after Simondon analyses the evolution of technical objects (Part I "Genesis and Evolution of Technical Objects") and the role of technology between humans and the world (Part II "Man and Technical Object"), Simondon confesses that a more profound analysis is still missing regarding the genesis of technicity.[14] Moreover, it seems to me that if this connection were not clarified, we would not be able to understand the philosophical proposal of Simondon, which was hinted at in an unsent letter he addressed to Jacques Derrida on the occasion of the establishment of the *Collège International de Philosophie* (CIPH) in 1982, concerning the aesthetics of technology.[15] This letter, published posthumously, could be easily misread as a unconvincing proposal about the marketing of technological products, or even industrial propaganda, which one could hardly relate it to the agenda of CIPH.

Hierophany, the manifestation of sacrality[*sacralité*], is a term that Eliade prefers to the more conventionally used theophany, the manifestation of God. Hierophany is a world-making process in that the world ceases to be a homogenous space but becomes a constellation of heterogenous places

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12   This is rather evident when we read "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 31, where Simondon made evident that his elaboration on technicité is methodologically mirroring Eliade's discourse on sacrality, "Au-delà de l'utilité qui ferait de ces objets des ustensiles (terme employé par Heidegger), au-delà d'un symbolisme facile et superficiel d'appartenance à une caste ou à une place, on doit s'efforcer de découvrir un sens de la technicité, comme Mircea Eliade s'efforce de découvrir, sous les images et les symboles, un sens de la sacralité."

13   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 31.

14   Simondon, *Du mode*, 213.

15   Gilbert Simondon, "On Techno-Aesthetics," *Parrhesia* No.14 (2012), 1–8, without understanding the concept of technophany, it seems to me that it is difficult to understand Simondon's intention of writing this letter to Derrida related to the establishment of the CIPH, but also other essays, for example, "L'effet de halo en matière technique : vers une stratégie de la publicité (1960)," reprinted in Simondon, *Sur la technique*, 279–293.

where the sacred manifests itself. These places could be as diverse as the top of a mountain, a gigantic tree, the source of a stream, etc. They are where the shaman would go to communicate with the heavenly gods directly.[16] In the METO, Simondon calls these places key points [*points clés*], which indicates the place of sacrality and supernatural power. The key points are not isolated, instead they form a network of power. These singular points reveal a new reality which is distinguished from its surroundings. Retrospectively, Simondon could have directly cited Eliade in METO:

> When the sacred manifests itself in any hierophany, there is not only a break in the homogeneity of space there is also revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the nonreality of the vast surrounding expanse. The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world.[17]

Eliade, as a historian of religion, wants to return to hierophany because what he saw in modern society was the degradation of sacrality. The distinction between the *non*-modern and the modern is described as *pre*-modern and modern; with sacrality becoming depreciated as superstition having already been overcome by the modern. This depreciation of sacrality is fundamentally a mistake for Eliade; instead, he believes that rediscovering the archetype of hierophany may allow the moderns to renew their relations with the sacred. Simondon saw an isomorphism between technicity and sacrality. Like sacrality, technicity is maintained by a network or what he calls a reticular structure, indicated by the key points or the places of hierophany; true technicity, as Simondon claims, is a character of the network of objects and not a single object.[18] In METO, Simondon saw an even more profound relationship between the two. The genesis of technicity started with a magic unity, where the world is indicated by key points or places of hierophany. The oversaturation of the magic unity led to its bifurcation into technics and religion; each of them later bifurcated into theoretical and practical parts. This bifurcation process is accompanied by a desire to return to the unity *analogical* to the magic unity. I emphasise analogical because Simondon did not mean to suggest that one should return to the actual magic unity, but rather a unity analogous to it, like the reciprocal and communal relation between figure and ground we find in Gestalt theory. One of the aims of the study of the genesis of technicity is to renew the relation between technicity and sacrality, especially in the modern conception; science and technology mean profanity, and they are often opposed to religious sacrality, but more fundamentally (as a methodology), technological thought must be resituated within a genesis together with religious, aesthetic and philosophical thought, without which, we will easily fall prey to technological determinism.

16   Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, trans. Philip Mairet (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 167.
17   Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Rites, Symbols. A Eliade Reader Vol. 1* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 144.
18   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 83.

In "Psychosociology of Technicity," the intimacy between technicity and sacrality is not presented in the same way as in METO. However, Simondon constantly indicated the isomorphism and intimacy between technicity and sacrality. How could we understand this nuance? Considering that the term technophany did not appear even once in METO, could we understand "Psychosociology of Technicity" to be placing more of an emphasis on this new concept? If so, given the consistency of Simondon's work, where could we place technophany back in METO, or more specifically, in Simondon's speculation on the genesis of technicity? Technophany, for Simondon, like hierophany, is not only any kind of revelation but a movement which transcends images and symbolism towards the interiority of the real, namely an extraordinary reality distinguished from everyday reality:

> The *technophanic initiation* is not merely an unveiling, but rather, in the etymological sense, a movement towards the interior of the real, seen increasingly closely and understood more essentially in its structural and functional intimacy. However, what remains constant during this journey into the interior of the real is the style of majesty and majority of the technical object.[italics are mine][19]

What is manifested in technophany is not merely a beautiful design but rather something more profound and difficult (if not impossible) to fully grasp. However, even though technophany is isomorphic to hierophany, its mode of revelation is necessarily technical. Access to the interiority of the real cannot be achieved via means other than through technical objects. Technicity and sacrality are put into a subtle competition, to the extent that technophany becomes a replacement for hierophany. The hiatus between technicity and sacrality enlarges over time. In "Psychosociology of Technicity," Simondon historically moves from the 17th-century artisanal culture to 19th-century positivism via the 18th-century encyclopaedia to show how such a hiatus was produced and compensated and how the overcoming of this hiatus should be regarded as a significant philosophical task. In the 17th century, sacrality was superior to technicity because technical objects of that epoch were only simple tools subordinated to artisans; therefore, we saw the domination of sacrality. In the 18th century, the hiatus was enlarged due to the improvement of technologies and the emergence of larger-scale ateliers; consequently, encyclopedism appears as a technophany to mediate the two. As Simondon pointed out, encyclopedism added nothing more to Descartes' mechanism but only prolonged and multiplied it by endowing it with an "aesthetic turn."[20] In other words, the *Encyclopaedia* of d'Alembert and Diderot constituted technophanies, which, according to Simondon, are "partially hierophanies," though "the

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19   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 101, "L'initiation technophanique n'est pas seulement un dévoilement, mais bien, au sens étymologique, un mouvement vers l'intérieur du réel vu de plus en plus près et compris de plus en plus essentiellement en son intimité structurale et fonctionnelle. Mais ce qui reste constant au cours de cette marche vers l'intérieur du réel, c'est le style de majesté et de majorité de l'objet technique. "

20   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 104.

hierophanic element being aestheticised, became implicit."[21] 19th-century positivism was accompanied by the rise of gigantic automatic machines, to which the workers had to subordinate their bodies. The technophany of encyclopedism ceased to be effective. The hiatus between sacrality and technicity was enlarged so that an antagonism appeared irreconcilable.

§3. The No Man's Land Between Sacrality and Technicity

Simondon pointed out several times in "Psychosociology of Technicity" that there is a no man's land between sacrality and technicity. How should we understand this no man's land? Is it a vacuum produced by the hiatus between sacrality and technicity, one still waiting to be filled? Simondon mentions that leisure is the no man's land between sacrality and technicity; however, it does not provide anything common between them, therefore it also fails to be a veritable candidate.[22] Nevertheless, he gave a criterion to the occupier of this no man's land:

> There exists a no man's land between sacredness and technicity. In this no man's land, a normativity must emerge as the foundation for a cultural unity suitable for the current psychosocial conditions of life for most human groups. Indeed, it is in this no man's land that the most polarising and remarkable actions are instituted, and they are instituted *without positive norms*.[italics are mine][23]

In *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, we are told that aesthetics appeared to be the mediative power of convergence after the bifurcation from the magic unity to religion and technics. However, aesthetics failed to maintain its converging power when further bifurcation continued in the genesis because aesthetic thinking is still situational, meaning its role is to serve as "the paradigm for orienting and supporting the effort of philosophical thinking,"[24] implying that philosophical thinking will have

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21   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 105.

22   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 99, "Le loisir est un *no man's land* entre sacralité et technicité, mais non point un terrain commun offrant une perspective commune. Il n'existe pas de forme unique de loisir, mais deux formes peu compatibles : *le loisir de sacralité*, halo négatif prohibant la tech-nicité et la repoussant hors des limites du temps sacré comme on repousse les réalités profanes hors des zones voisines du temple, et *le loisir de technicité*, conçu comme une des fonctions de l'activité complète de l'homme au travail."

23   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 124, "Il existe un *no man's land* entre la sacralité et la technicté, et c'est dans ce no man's land qu'une normativité doit se faire jour comme fondement d'une unité culturelle adéquate aux actuelles conditions psychosociales de vie de la plupart des groupes humains. C'est, en effet, dans ce *no man's land* que s'instituent les actions les plus polarisantes, les plus remarquables, et elles s'instituent sans normes positives."

24   Simondon, *Du mode*, 276.

to intervene to bring about a higher order of convergence. In "Psychosociology of Technicity," such an opposition between aesthetic thinking and philosophical thinking was not emphasised; instead, Simondon suggested again that aesthetics could resume this function; however, one will need to redefine what aesthetic here means and distinguish from aesthetics thus conventionally understood:

> However, the aesthetic category that converges technicity and sacrality is not the usual aesthetic category, detachable from the world. It is a concern for totality and the organisation of existing reality according to its lines and powers, to add, in accordance with the *uniqueness of this singular world*, an overdetermination brought about by the creativity of techniques: in this aesthetics of totality, there is a perception of sacredness, that is, the uniqueness of the given world, prior to technicity, the basis of constructiveness, an open system of the complete nature.[Italics are original][25]

Does this suggest that Simondon abandoned the categorisation of aesthetic and philosophical thinking present in METO? In METO, we recall that Simondon, by referring to Bergson, juxtaposed philosophical intuition from the concept and idea, deduction and induction, and indicated that the former is a veritable philosophical method to grasp the genesis of technicity. Simondon distinguishes three kinds of intuition, namely magical, aesthetic, and philosophical, which also correspond to three successive stages of convergence in the genesis of technicity. The distinction between aesthetic intuition and philosophical intuition is clearly stated as follows:

> Aesthetic intuition is contemporary with the bifurcation of magical thinking into technics and religion, and *it does not truly synthesise the two opposed phases of thought*; it merely indicates the necessity of a relationship and accomplishes it allusively in a limited domain. Philosophical thinking, on the contrary, *must genuinely accomplish the synthesis*, and it must construct culture, coextensive with the culmination of all technical thought and all religious thought.[italics are mine][26]

It is not possible to conclude from Simondon's existing publications if there is a significant change in the

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25   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 120, "Mais la catégorie esthétique faisant converger technicité et sacralité n'est pas la catégorie esthétique habituelle, détachable du monde. Elle est une préoccupation de totalité et d'organisation du réel existant selon ses lignes et ses pouvoirs, pour ajouter conformément à *l'unicité de ce monde unique* une surdétermination apportée par la créativité des techniques : dans cette esthétique de la totalité, il y a perception de la sacralité, c'est-à-dire de l'unicité du monde donné, antérieur à la tech nicité, base de la constructivité, système ouvert de la nature complète."
26   Simondon, *Du mode*, 324–325, "L'intuition esthétique est contemporaine du dédoublement de la pensée magique en techniques et religion, et elle n'effectue pas une synthèse vséritable des deux phases opposées de la pensée ; elle indique seulement la nécessité d'une relation, et l'accomplit allusivement dans un domaine limité. La pensée philosophique au contraire doit accomplir réellement la synthèse, et elle doit construire la culture, coextensive à l'aboutissement de toute la pensée technique et de toute la pensée religieuse."

philosopher's thinking concerning the role of aesthetics. The lack of references in his writings and the limited published work make such research unproductive. Moreover, intuition, be that philosophical or magical, cannot be isolated from the very concept of aesthetics if, by aesthetics, we mean, as the Greeks understood, the study of the sensible.[27] However, in his 1960-1961 course on the psychosociology of technicity, we could at least say that he reaffirmed the importance of aesthetics as having the capacity to grasp "totality" and perceive "sacrality." It seems that the redefined concept of aesthetics is able to take up the task of philosophical thinking and occupy the no man's land between technicity and sacrality; as Simondon said, "if this discovery is possible, it will provide the basis of a culture that would give again to aesthetic category the central place which it did among the Greeks."[28] If we follow this line of thought, then the concept of technophany is the key to conceiving the power of aesthetics and the possibilities of convergence in the future. It is that which withholds at the same time a pair of polarising forces: schematisation of technics and intuition of the sacred.[29] The example that Simondon gave to explain this polarisation is nonetheless rather astonishing: Le Corbusier's Couvent Sainte-Marie de La Tourette. With this example, his definition of aesthetics acquires a more concrete meaning.

Figure 1. Couvent Sainte-Marie de La Tourette (1960), Source: Wikimedia

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27   As we know that only in the 18th century, a rather narrow concept of aesthetics was established by Alexander Baumgarten, who understands aesthetics as the study of the lower faculty of cognition, in contradistinction to logic, which belongs to the higher faculty of cognition.
28   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 121.
29   Simondon, "Psychosociologie de la technicité," 122.

The building of Le Corbusier, according to Simondon, possesses such polarising categories. On the one hand, there is a *negative aesthetic*, which presents itself as monstrosity; on the other hand, it also contains a positive category, namely, *functional optimisation*. The negative aesthetic intuits and withholds the totality; the functional optimisation analyses and segments, according to functionalities. It is interesting to notice that the totality is associated with negativity because only the negativity withholds the whole without determining it, such as Kant's negative affirmation of the beautiful expressed in the two moments, purposiveness *without* purpose and pleasure *without* interest. Simondon's task to reconcile sacrality and technicity could also appear analogous to Kant's ambition to unify nature and freedom. This containment of the two polarising forces constitutes a new normativity; this normativity is necessarily *teratological*. It is a constructiveness [*constructivité*], simultaneously auto-normative and auto-constructive. The example of the monastery of Sainte-Marie was mentioned again in another text titled "Technical Mentality," thought to be written during the same period as his course on psychosociology of technicity (i.e., 1961); the article was primarily a discussion on the rise of cybernetics as a new epistemology and the design of open machines. Towards the end of the article, Simondon evokes Le Corbusier's Sainte-Marie as an archetype of the open system. It resonates with the impression that is left to us in the course, and the term technophany also appears for the first time in this article:

> And this is possible not only because of the architectural conception of the whole, but also because of the spirit of pairing down that manifests itself in the choice of forms and the use of materials: it will be possible, without any break between the old and the new, to still use concrete, shuttering, iron, cables, and the tubulature of long corridors. The non-dissimulation of means, this politeness of architecture towards its materials which translates itself by a *constant technophany*, amounts to a refusal of obsolescence and to the productive discovery amongst sensible species of the permanent availability of the industrial material as the foundation for the continuity of the work.[italics are mine][30]

Once an example is given to demonstrate such a philosophical task, controversies arise, like opening a Pandora's box. What are the other examples which demonstrate Simondon's vision of technophany? Would Le Corbusier have become the saviour of culture? One could undoubtedly examine other examples teratological architecture made since the 20th century by world famous architects, assessing if they succeeded, in reconciling technicity and sacrality as Le Corbusier's Sainte-Marie did according to Simondon. However, such a demonstration would be almost arbitrary, and such research might well be futile. Sacredness is not an object or a thing; it is the unthinged [*unbedingt*]. As Simondon claims, sacredness is maintained by a reticular structure, isomorphic to technology; it is also something that

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30   Gilbert Simondon, "Technical Mentality," *Parrhesia* 14, (2012): 25.

cannot be reduced to science or even religion. Simondon's concept of technophany didn't resolve the problems of our time, rather he handed down to us a specific inquiry into the future of technology, design, and art.

Today, it is already in everyone's consciousness that we have entered into a technological era no matter whether one likes it or not; the importance of technology in the process of hominisation, as well as in the constant reconstruction of the world view, is recognised even in mass media. However, the concept of technophany, which Simondon envisioned to converge the technical and the sacred, has yet to be fully reflected upon. The task of convergence between sacrality and technicity remains a major challenge in contemporary thought,[31] and it is handed to us as an essential resource for a critique of technological determinism and political naturalism.[32] This task will demand a persistent questioning and reconceptualisation of technology, with and beyond Simondon: with Simondon, because his original thought on technology allows a new dialogue between technology and philosophy; beyond Simondon, since his thought will have to be verified, modified, prolonged and enriched under the new technological and planetary condition.

31   See Jacques Garelli, "Être-au-monde et être cosmique," *Psychiatr Sci Hum Neurosci* 1, (2003): 41–49.
32   I developed the concept of cosmotechnics as a response to it, for a shorter introduction, see Yuk Hui, "On Cosmotechnics: For a Renewed Relation between Technology and Nature in the Anthropocene," *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology* 21, no. 2–3 (2017): 1–23; for more elaborated concept of cosmotechnics, see Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China. An Essay in Cosmotechnics* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2016) and Yuk Hui, *Art and Cosmotechnics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press/E-Flux, 2021). Readers might equally want to consult the work of the late Jacques Garreli, who picked up Simondon's allagmatic method to reconcile physics and phenomenology, see Jacques Garreli, *Rythmes et Mondes : au revers de l'identité et de l'altérité* (Grenoble: Jerôme Millon, 1991).

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