The Reticular Religion Or The Religion Of The Network

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Abstract:
Religion should not be confused or mistaken for theism, pantheism, or other forms of what is called religious faith, such as the belief in gods or God, etc. This phenomenon is rooted in human nature and the need for meaning. According to Jacques Ellul, religion is of a pragmatic nature, being the way through which mankind orients itself in existence. Religion offers a comprehensive interpretation of reality, a map, whose function is not properly intellectual but existential, providing means of orientation in existence. That is why science cannot replace it. It allows man to find himself and to act in the world. It helps to build a community between mankind and the world around it, making it possible for mankind to understand itself and the world. It makes it possible for humanity to better cope with its existential condition. It does have some irrational elements to it, and it might be based on unverifiable beliefs. But here lies one of its functions, namely, to offer certitudes that help man orient himself in the real. Thus, it does offer a view and an explanation of the world. There is no religion without such an explanation (Ellul: 2003: 199). In this paper, I shall describe what might be called the religion of the network.

Keywords:*: religion; network; technocracy; globalism; managerial society*

1. Introduction

Religion does not equal theism or Christianity. It must not be confused with a particular form of religion or spirituality. Religion, according to Jacques Ellul, can be seen as something which fulfill a pragmatic function. God or the gods are not the central defining elements of it. Religions now and then meet the same function, even when their object has changed. Religions accomplish the role of a guide. They offer orientation and guidance. They have an existential role to play. A lot of things can occupy the central place in what is common called a religion. Even mundane objects or facts can do that. The central religious object of modernity is now different from the central values of ancient and traditional religions. The technical object (and the technique) has now become the receiver of the religious sentiment (Ellul, 2003: 226), and in the same process politics and the state have become also sacralized. And even things and processes used to attack a former religion become religious in themselves, offering new types of religion, political religions that is. The greatest anti-religious actions, despite themselves, lead to new forms of religiosity (Ellul, 2003: 206). And these new religions are most of the time the expression of a technicized society. Dionysian celebration is exactly this. Just as much the show society – *la société du spectacle* – is. The religious feeling infests other objects, and one of those objects is the network.

Religion can take different forms, and one form modern religion has taken is the religion of the network. This is another manifestation of what Henri de Saint Simon called the "industrial religion", a spiritual configuration centered around the

concept of network. That is why it is called the religion of the network. A new religion was born, the religion of engineers. Nevertheless, this religion has deep roots in the Middle Ages, in the monasteries, which with their workshops and division of labor set up the basis for the modern industrial religion. The network metaphor is not new, but it was revived in modernity. It got a new life that has led to a new conceptualization of reality and society as a network of networks. This religion of networks lies at core of the modern technocratic transformation of man and society. This should not be seen as a surprise, though. The notion of network had connotations that brought it in relation with the original religious meaning of communication/community in a kind of religious meaning, as the way to achieve communion. The present-day form of the reticular utopia is embodied by the internet and the cyberspace. The era of the "industrial religion" has been called by the Russian thinker N.Berdiaev as the era of organization long before Jacques Ellul or Simon Charbonneau began to see in the technical development of modernity the foremost problem of contemporary life.

Berdiaev once remarked that the only true faith modern and contemporary man maintained was the faith in technique, its power, and its endless progress. And this is not a faith without basis. Everything in the world conspires to make this faith and belief system true. The wonders of the technique do not cease to amaze us and take place permanently, now even more so. The technique has acquired a significance that the Christian consciousness did not seem to understand then and does not understand it even now (Berdiaeff, 1933 :10). The attitudes Christians espouse toward technique are two. Like many others, they can consider it to be neutral and think it belongs to the domain of engineers, or they can see it in an apocalyptic manner, as the triumph of the Antichrist. Christianity, but not only, is faced with the reality of modern technique, a new type of reality or of Being, produced by humanity. It is a reality that must be acknowledged as such since it has serious consequences for the world and the very existence of humanity. It ushers in a new relationship mankind with the universe, with nature, and with itself. It gives rise to a new global anxiety. This era gives instrumental reason and its instruments a kind of eschatological power, providing mankind with a technique whose mission seems to be the redemption of mankind by gaining complete domination of the world and nature (Berdiaeff ,1933: 22), including human nature – transhumanism and post-humanism are not far behind.

Technique – but not only technique – has a religious and sacral dimension. Earth becomes a planet/a purely material object, the mystery is gone, a resource and a material to be modeled and worked with. It also gave rise to the philosophy of history, positing man as the primary agent of history, a self-creating being in the process of progress. The relation and the perception of time and space change, and the feeling of power fueled by the technical progress gives man the sentiment of becoming the master of time and space. It creates in mankind the sense of expansion. The new order of organization comes into being, replacing the old order, which still had roots in nature. To understand the predicament in which mankind is caught, the modern technique has to be understood. To understand it, one must examine the relationships it entertains with current society and not its inner features that might be identical to technique even in the older civilizations (Ellul, 2008: 59). The context in which technique operates is important. The modern society and the life of the

individuals are not possible without technique; personal comfort is impossible without it. In older and ancient civilizations, technique did not enjoy this all-encompassing position, even if it was present under the guise of magic. Technique was used in some limited circumstances. The ancient techniques were bound and embedded in a civilization, they were local and not driven by abstraction, taken out of their civilizational context, and universalized to all other societies.

The technique means art and being industrious – *techne*. Or it used to mean. Its meaning is not confined to the material reals as when one speaks of industry or engineering, observes the Russian theologian. The concept of technique applies to a variety of activities and proceedings. There is industrial, military, economic, and so on. There are techniques pertaining to the comfort of life, to communication, dance, sports, spiritual activities – yoga or shamanic techniques of ecstasy, prayer methodologies, ingesting different drugs to attaining mystical experiences, and so on. According to him, a technique is a way to attain something with the minimum of effort (Berdiaeff 1930: 11). Albeit technique and science might be conceived as a fight (against nature and for emancipation), thus, as a goal to be pursued, they pertain to the reals of means, not of ends. Ends and goals belong to the realm of the spirit. Despite this being the case, the means have replaced the ends. Elevating them to this status of ends leads to the falsification of the meaning of life. For some people, technique and science might become the content and meaning of life, becoming, thus, something spiritual. Such a transformations of the means into ends can signal the diminishing of the spirit or even its extinction, a process already taking place on Earth at this hour. The technical instrument is, by its nature, foreign to humanity, to spirit, and meaning. Defining the human being as *homo faber* is a manifestation of this replacement of the ends and goals of life by the means and instruments that should be serving them. This substitution has been later highlighted by J. Ellul in his works on technique and on technical system. The French thinker shows how modern technique neutralizes and replaces values and ends with means. Technical activities are done to achieve things subordinate to the goals set by life; they should be subservient to life, not the other way around. Subjecting life to means and transforming the means into goals is a dangerous falsification, almost a Satanic inversion of things. Even if one agrees with Karl Marx that economy and economic activities are fundamental for society, it does not follow that the life of the community should be reduced to executing those activities. Human existence and culture depend on the technical element, but in the moment this element takes over, as it happened in modernity, society as a whole, the lives of the individuals, and the ways of thinking and doing things change, the culture and the spiritual being brought to the edge of disappearance. The victory of the technical element over the organic one leads human existence in that direction. There are some reactions to it, such as Romanticism. Modernity is the dominion of fabrication/production – to bring forth*, her-stellen* – as opposed to action, which is the domain of the free use of human capacities. Mankind becomes an instrument of production, being the prisoner of the ideology of work, according to Jacques Ellul.

2. The Era of Organization

According to Berdiaev, there are three ages of humanity: the organic, the cultural, and the techno-mechanic – the organizational one (or the age of industrialism according to B.Russell). They are ways of being-in-the-world, not chronological eras. What defines them is the spiritual attitude by which mankind considers the world and itself. In the first ages, mankind lived mostly in what God or nature created. In the third age, not so much. She was still tethered to nature, to natural beings, to gardens, etc. The culture was still bound to nature, still full of symbols expressing it, etc. The technique is quite different. It does not symbolize anything, maybe itself and its quest for efficiency. The application of technique creates another reality, parallel and imposed upon nature and culture. Berdiaev describes the new reality of technique by pointing out the difference between an organism and an organization. The organism is something belonging to the natural and cosmic order; it is birthed by it and gives birth, too. The organizational being points to artificiality. An organization is something created or produced by the activity of man. Organization and the actor process of organization are produced by an organizer, who establishes the goals and ends thereof, from outside it. The goal is extrinsic, while the goal present in an organism comes from within it, from its very structure. It is an entelechy, according to the Russian author. A mechanism possesses, therefore, a goal that is not inherent to it. It is a task imposed from outside. Mechanism can model human behavior. It can steer it. A mechanical clock is used to measure time and to determine human behavior. In the moment when human communities began to use mechanical clocks, which possess themselves their own energy source, human behavior was subordinated to the machine. A mechanism possesses a force that can subdue the one who organized and created it. For the most of history, human society saw itself as modeled after the model of natural bodies and according to a transcendent norm, such as the natural law. There is, after all, a tradition of metaphors like the one of the political bodies, which model society and the state according to this image. The ordering of society was supposed to reflect an eternal order. This state of things changed in the 18/19th centuries. Society ceased to see itself as embodying an eternal order of things but as something that can be molded according to man's will. Even the idea of this eternal order begun to go away.

Just as the social order was no longer immutable, so was the case for the natural order. The new order of things, revealed both in nature and in society, is the passage from organic life to constructive/constructed life (Berdiaev, 1930: 17). This new age of organization brings to light an inner rupture in life, between concrete existence and abstraction, between spirit and bodily existence. Organization/organizing is, as Jacques Ellul remarks, technique applied to society, to social, administrative, and economic life (Ellul, 2008: 9). In the terms of James Burnham organization is managerial action meaning the process thereby groups and individuals are assigned tasks that they have to accomplish in effectively and economically, by coordination and combining of all their activities with objective determinable ends. It implies standardization, a way to resolve a priori something in a certain way, brushing aside the search for a new solution and making the whole process impersonal. Standardization is, thus, a kind of acquired conditional reflex. When the situation appears – the stimulus-, a certain kind of answer will be produced. It is a kind of programming.

The managerial and organizational science represents an extension of technique to the whole of society, a mechanization thereof. Modern technique represents a departure from the ancient one. The ancient technique was based on tradition, on models that were transmitted, on accumulated experience. The older techniques evolved according to circumstances, they were handed down, they changed very hard and during a long time, they created behaviors that became automatic and were integrated progressively in each new form of technique. Modern technique implies and subordinates science and reflection to its main thrust: increase of power and efficiency. At the same time, it revolutionizes the manners in which things are done. Modern technique has become a self-contained, autonomous reality, which devours everything, which obeys only its own laws, denying in this process tradition altogether. It forms an environment and a dynamic reality grounded on the combination of already existing techniques and it proceeds so rapidly and revolutionarily, making it impossible to integrate older technical traditions. Permanent innovation causes permanent upheaval in the realm of habits (of behavior, thought, etc.). It is a reality that has overcome experience and has subordinated experiment and reason. Science is a force that is subordinated to the technical endeavors of mankind. Modern and contemporary civilization is, according to Ellul, a civilization of means – a state of fact acknowledged by Berdiaev before him, a civilization wherein the means are more important than the goals and the ends they were supposed to help achieve.

3. Modern technique

Modern technique develops in another manner that traditional and ancient technique. It involves science and conscious reflections pertaining to the way to achieve something in the most efficient way. The intervention of consciousness and reason in the technical phenomenon means many things. It implies that an object is produced according to some features chosen consciously, that it has a purpose that has to be achieved efficiently, it means that possibilities not conducive to this goal would be eliminated, etc. It also means that new possibilities are going to be seen and experimented with in the design of a new material object or technique, the conviction is being born that new means and methods can be found, the pragmatic traditions are disturbed, the reason starts to experiment and examine new ways of doing things. The technical operations are diversified and extended, but the reason will start to examine the results and start ascertain everything based on efficiency. The means and methods invented are now scrutinized and selected or rejected based on this new criterion; they are part of a process of conscious reflection. Only the most efficient of them, the most adapted to the task are retained. Since man becomes fully cognizant of this way of achieving an end, this way of proceeding will be extended to all domains wherein the hazard and freedom are still reigning. Modern technique could be described as the concern of many people to search for the most efficient method of doing things (Ellul, 2008: 18-19). It is not the relatively best means that are sought but the absolute best. Most of the time this search is based upon calculus. Thus, the science of conceiving means, of finding the best means, of efficiency is born. The imperative of efficiency is the Alpha and Omega and it spills over in all areas of life. It becomes the highest norm.

The imperative of efficiency is now present on all domains of activity, irrespective of what are those about, for example, the assault in Normandy or committing genocide, sending people in concentration camps, reeducation, space flight, agriculture, industrial production, service industry, brainwashing, publicity, etc. During this development, a new technique emerges: the technique and science of organization, which will be applied also in various domains – corporation, states, groups of people, police, administrations, etc. Mankind itself becomes the object of technoscience. There are techniques applied to man himself – like medicine, psychotherapy, human relations etc., whereby the inner man becomes the domain of external intervention. The technique and science of organization (the management, coaching, etc.) is a technique applied to man. This development did not take place in a void. It is correlated with the apparition of the modern state, a truly self-aware organization, a structure that is a product of technique, too. This new structure is based on the activities of rationalization, of statistics, of building roads and communication ways, of devising new military strategies and techniques, on the birth of economy in the modern sense. It is a political structure grounded on a hierarchical, rational, and unified system undergirded by a communication network. The mechanization of political and social life began then. The unification of the territory of the state, the introduction of the same units of measure, and new rational ways to do the budget and new fiscal policies, the birth of statistics belong to this effort of rationalization. They are the signs that announce the birth of the age of efficiency. Everything here is technical work (Ellul, 2008: 40).

The state itself becomes a problem of technique and starts to take a technocratic approach to everything. And this new orientation of society, which took off in the eighteenth century, comes with other realities one has to contend with, like the breakup of the family, of large groups, with the atomization of society, which becomes more malleable. Without the process of disintegration of the old social order, of communities based on solidarity, there would have been no technical progress possible and no technocratic state. And the individual is now alone in the face of the state. The period between 1750-1880 is one in which the technical intention shines clearly through, being a time in which invention was a daily reality, so to speak. What undergirds this development of the technique (and of the state) is the interest, a notion that should not be take in an economic or capitalist sense. In the case of the state, to pursue its own interest means, for example, developing juridical, military, and police techniques to protect it from internal or external enemies. Science and arts are protected due to the e lust of power, “par instinct de puissance “(Ellul, 2008: 51).

Modern technique is not limited by anything as the ancient technique was. It encompasses all domains of life and all activities, be they social or individual. It has caused an endless multiplication and permanent refinement of means. It is an abstract affair, no longer bound to a certain group or localized area. It has known a geographical extension, a process of delocalization that was not accessible to the ancient technique and evolves very quickly. It has become an objective reality, and, irrespective of the environment or country, its spreading and adaptation by different groups leads to the unity of civilizations (Ellul, 2008: 73). It is a rational and artificial reality. It is an artificial environment that reduces, eliminates, and subordinates the natural one. When modern technique penetrates a new environment, it tends to

repeat what happened in Great Britain and France when the modern technical development began. It dislocates the existing social forms, existing norms, moral frameworks, and the social, moral, religious taboos. It desacralizes whatever it touches, and atomizes entire peoples and societies. It destroys human relations and communities, although eventually new communities arise (Ellul, 2008: 115). It changes all elements of civilization and man himself.

4. The network religion

Humanity is confronted with this new reality, produced by mankind during the process of technical evolution. This is a new reality without precedents in nature and history. Art itself creates a new spiritual reality. Art creates many symbolic realities. The new reality produced by the process of technical progress is not symbolic at all. This is a super-physical reality, which changes the way mankind experiences and conceives reality. The cinematography is an example given by Berdiaev. Today, we can speak of the Internet and cyberspace. Technique is more than a tool. Technique creates a kind of cosmos, of universe. It is *cosmo-urgos*. It is a realm of organized bodies, not of organic bodies. It is a new category of Being. Through mankind's action a new kind of Being becomes manifest. This organizational order affects negatively the psycho-spiritual constitution of mankind, making it to lose its soul. It seems to dismantle the heart, to disintegrate it in a pure sensual and pure spiritual one. The age of technique is an age of the spirit, too. This is attested by the religious sense it has acquired. This new age of technique gives the human predicament a spiritual connotation since it requires a strong spirituality and, maybe, it opens the way to a new spiritualization (Berdiaeff, 1933: 28). In a perverse sense, the human spirit can show its supremacy by becoming *cosmo-urgos*. „La technique fait de l'homme un cosmiurge" (Berdiaeff, 1933: 28). Modern technique creates such great power that it can lead to human and life annihilation. Thus, the situation of mankind acquires a spiritual dimension since man's existence, and that of nature as such, depends on the spiritual and moral inner state of mankind. This is clearly a spiritual and religious problem. This places humanity in a situation demanding a new kind of heroism, a heroism needed to take control of technical development and man's urges. And all of this is because man wants to control things through reason (Ellul, 2008: 40).

Technique, among other things, like the State, has become sacred. And the form that this sacred has today is one relating to network structures. The force of the network is a reality. As Pierre Musso found, each industrial revolution in the Western world was accompanied and depended on the building up of large technical networks occupying a vast territory (Musso, 2016: 19). The railways accompanied the first revolution, the electrical grid came about with the second, and with the third, the internet and cyberspace. This third revolution was born from the intersection of communication and information technology and the birth of cybernetics. Major technical complexes were born by combining technical networks with power structures. This third revolution has led to a computerization of society, which represents a further step toward the technical/technological society and economy that is beset with interconnected command, information, and communication networks. Around this complex reality, there are gathered a lot of images, myths, metaphors, fictions, imaginaries. A new kind of divinity has emerged. This divinity is

the network, the cyberspace and internet being its epiphanies. A ubiquitous divinity. Everything is a network or should be made into one. Everyday life consists in the usage of networks. It supposedly gives meaning and direction; identities are built around social networks. Technique, through the network, has reenchanted the world. The Smart City – a prison- can be seen as another epiphany of this divinity. It has become a cult and defines the way power works, too. The network is now omnipresent in every discipline from biology, mathematics, sociology, political, and organizational science.

The internet and its double, the cyberspace, are instantiations of the network. Both are the image of a universal network that connects everyone and everything on Earth. For some people, the internet and cyberspace are the infrastructure of a planetary brain, which would produce a „collective intelligence" (Musso, 2000: 31). A new form of the sacred is, thus, present in the network. As Ellul once observed, mankind cannot accept the technical objects only in their aspect of efficacy. They are invested with religious meaning. The network is the center of a new re-enchantment of the world. Cyberspace and the internet (created as a counterinsurgency tool) lie at the center of it. This is the expression of a great utopian project grounded on technique, in which the network is central. The network can be defined by its function of linking things together and by meta-linking. It is a link of links (earlier forms of the network were the railways, the roads, the telegraph – all epiphanies of this new sacred). The network links two poles that were opposites to each other before they were linked. In its expression as cyberspace, three things are supposed: the network as a generalized interconnection, interlinking different but nevertheless alike places and things – brains and computers. This view surrounding this mythical figure of networking accepts and promotes the of a future hybridization of man and machine, and the assimilation between brain-network-computer. The ideology of the network, of cyberspace, is of the religious kind, a religion of immanence grounded on the internet. Some internet users reported a kind of religious experience the coming into contact with the internet (Musso, 2000: 32).

This new mythology is not so new. It represents the renewal of the network mythology set up in the 19th century by Saint-Simon and his followers, whereby the enchantment of the world shifted from Christianity to industry and technical networks. The cyberspace can be defined as a network of reticular structures which are interlinked among themselves – the so-called planetary brain, collective intelligence, the place for an electronic citizenship, a reality that has been described as a kind of jungle, or even a territory. Even a new kind of public space. It gives rise to a new universal through contact (Musso, 2008: 34). Cyberspace is reducible to the interconnected networks – a space of communication by the interlinking of computers and brains – giving birth to a sensation of encompassing space (Pierre Levy quoted Musso, 2000: 34). This leads to a return to the etymological meaning of „communion" – sharing and pooling (*partager et mis-en-commun*), which is religious. Society even will become or has already become a society of networks. Cyberspace is a territory without history, made out of interlinkages without end. The claimed virtue of cyberspace is the abolition of whatever seems to resist or to encumber, even the territory, albeit a technical network is defined by its relation to the physical territory.

The same structure that underlies the internet and cyberspace can be found in cybernetics. This structure comes from a theory that tries to account for the way

machines and organisms work in a unitary way, based on the idea of a network. This theory proceeds analytically. According to it, everything can be broken down into small parts/pieces that are afterwards interconnected; what interconnects them and make the things works is the network. When those parts are linked, they give birth to a totality that can be expanded. By repeatedly interconnecting things, the structure of the planetary brain is constructed. The basis metaphor or model underlying all this view is that the brain works as a computer and that the computer works and functions as a brain. A tautological point of view. Both the brain and the computer are organized on networks. Thus, brains and computers can be interconnected through a planetary network to form collective intelligence. The network representation is older than its modern usages since the human body and the network have been associated from the begin of medicine. The body was seen as a network, as a connection of flux and tissues. Even Galen spoke of the brain as a net (Musso, 2000: 37).

Though the idea of network was rooted in nature, in the human body, it gradually loses its naturalness. The nervous system and the brain are parts of the body and can be found in nature. Around 1800, when the medical clinic was born, something shifted in the understanding of what a network is. A network is no longer seen as something given in nature. The network becomes a construct, an artefact. It becomes an autonomous technique, independent of the body. From a natural reality, it becomes a constructed one, from a tool it becomes a machine. The engineers take over from the doctors. From there on the network will be constructed and used by engineers.

The network as a construct can be found in the work of Claude de Saint Simon and his followers. According to him, societies can be described as a military-feudal system or as an industrial system. The first type of society is one identified with a network of surveillance, the second one with a network that allows circulation and communication. There are three types of networks. The type of network that allows the free flow of the flux is an organized network, making the existence of organized bodies possible. It is modelled after hydraulic circulation. The other type of body and network, Saint-Simon calls brute body and networks that retains solids. These two types of networks build a contradiction and could be find in any body. It suffices for a body that an element changes or is misplaced and the flow is blocked causing it to wither and die (Musso, 2000: 47). A crystal is a type of network, but so is an organism. There are also hybrids. The network is very malleable, shows plasticity and can take many forms; a state, the opposing state, and a hybrid thereof. This logic of the network is the basis of Saint-Simon's new industrial religion, which is applied to society. Money becomes here the blood of it, and the circulation of money is equated with the circulation of blood. The continued existence of society depends, thus, on the circulation of this blood. To establish and unmediated circulation of money means to transform society into something like a human body. The free circulation is the basis of the health of a human body and /or society/state (Musso, 2000: 48). Just as a mere change in a body can transform it into a fluid structure, a mere change in the state can modify everything. How? By favorizing the circulation of money in society! The state might become an "industrial system" instead of staying a feudal one. To establish the industrial system becomes a kind of religious work – the task of the "New Christianity". Though the network acquires such an emancipatory,

redemptive value, I can convey other meanings like that of surveillance and control, even if it symbolizes continuity and circulation; as such it can symbolize its contrary (Musso, 2000: 48). For Saint-Simon the enterprise and the workshop are the source of a new morality and of the principle that should organize society. The communion of all the people is no longer realized in the divine liturgy but in all the associated workers in the world who try to impose a huge communication network on the whole planet to make it fruitful. Earth can be remolded through work in a giant ideal organism/organization made of artificial networks that transform it. The network unifies three elements proper to the Saint-Simonian religion: association, communication, and communion. The network becomes the symbol of universal association. Saint-Simon and his followers birthed the cult of the network, which is now taken over by the cultist of the internet, cyberspace, or the supporters of the network society/collective intelligence. By the means of the network, a particular society first and then the world should become an association of brothers. The first place where this utopia should have taken place was around the Mediterranean Sea. Through the development of different means of communication – transport or otherwise – the difference between the West and the East could be abolished (Musso, 2000:49). Networks unite spirits and flesh, man and woman, the West and the Est. The network is the place of transmutations between spirits and flesh. It is a religion of networks, be they material as means of communication or spiritual, credit baking networks. The network is both a technique and a political-operator, an instrument of promoting transition and transformation. It produces social change by itself, at least, according to Michel Chevalier. By itself, the network makes possible communication, communion, and democratization through the act of free travel of people. It allows the creation of means of transportation – like the railway – which democratizes travelling. By its existence, by making people belonging to different social classes to travel in common, the railway networks would lead to the abolition of the difference between different classes of people. The railway network reduces social distance, too. The network embodies a policy of general exchange, too, that, due, to its internal architecture facilitates social changes (Musso, 2016b: 37). It became both a technology of the mind and techno-messianism.

The network is not just a concept but a symbol that is surrounded by a certain imaginary. There are three types of networks that structure the imaginary surrounding the idea of communication: the radio diffusion network, the telephone, and the information network. The model of network based on the informatics and the telephone is considered to have an egalitarian outlook, an interactive one opposed to a hierarchical one (which the radio or TV exemplify). All three types embed and express a certain view on society (Musso, 2000: 40). The internet is a model of the free and egalitarian connection. Cyberspace leads to the concrete realization of equality of all participants by getting rid of the pyramidal and hierarchical structures. The cyberspace apparently dissolves the bindings to a territory or to the body, one's memory and the state, and, hence, some forms of identity. Even politics will disappear, and society will consist of networks, which will build meta-networks. Society will become a flux. During this process, the national, and sovereign state will disappear. Pushing society in this direction is, therefore, leading it to a place where identity, history and culture no longer count and would be annihilated. The normal social and political structures would be replaced with a technocracy whose role

would be to allow the flux to flow without hindrance. According to this view, the network is by its very essence anti-hierarchical, being considered synonymous with self-organization and equality. It is supposed to be the concrete incarnation of the utopia of "liberty, fraternity, equality." One could say the cyberspace is the incarnation of ideals that structure modernity. Networks mediate between present and future (Musso, 2000: 43-44).

5. Conclusion

The redemptive force of the network was already present by Saint Simon and his followers, as already seen. The network has become the symbol of universal association and communion, of egality and fraternity. By its nature, it produces democracy, wealth, and freedom. By expanding the network on the whole Earth – first around the Mediterranean Sea – by means of the telegraph, banking, and railways, this dream of unity and fraternity would come true. By implementing and expanding the technical networks (telegraph, railways, etc.) the whole Earth can be interlocked. It is a kind of divine work. Promoting the networking of the world, means promoting a divine work. The further development of these structures is a true act of love for Earth (Musso 2000: 50). The meta-network of the internet takes over the same connotations of equality, fraternity, well-being, democracy, free circulation. The network fulfills the role of Christ being at the same time a symbol for flow, transition, change, being a fetishization of those; the real existing internet and its infrastructure embed all these meanings. It is a temple of the communicational religion, being a reality that points toward an immanent future. It mediates the entrance in the Paradise of the information and industrial society. The truth behind the present-day world is the network, the web of webs and the flow. Social change takes place at every moment. Everyone becomes a transience by being plugged into the network. The technical utopia accomplishes social change by itself.

The network is, hence, a fetishized concept, conceived to think about social change in a certain manner. A result of this fetishization is that it has made it impossible to think about social change since it is believed that the society of networks produces as such social change, without a conscious intervention. It is a concept that carries a techno-messianic baggage. As a concept, the network functions as a "technology of the mind", which means a kind of canonical thought process by which engineers and industrialists "theorize their design, construction and regulation practices in relation to territorial technical macro-networks" (Musso, 2016b: 38). It induces the same way of seeing things in the people who adopt it. This thought and reasoning pattern carries all techno-messianic signification of the network, which is bound to its theoretical voidness and loss of any kind of symbolic references despite its roots in the imagery of the body. This network ideology when applied and leads to a way of molding it after another structure of networks of networks – the organization as a type of cybernetic machine based on efficiency. The employment of the concept is justified by using organic images of it, artificial networks being compared or identified with the body. It is used as a lever and justification for social and political transformations. The managerial science uses it, since organizations are seen as networks, offering approaches supposed to make them evolve or to become more efficient. Every time when a new type of overreaching network is established – telegraph, telephone and now the internet and cyberspace – the discourse that

accompanies it presents the respective network as a mean to renew society, to produces wealth, equality, etc. It is a messianic discourse, which states that it is necessary to remodel and reorder it according to the network that is taken as supreme criteria.

By linking the network to body image and the brain, the technique becomes naturalized; its artificial character fades away from consciousness. Thus, claims can be made that consider communication networks to be intelligent, or that they constitute an organism, and that by interconnecting them, a kind of collective intelligence would be brought about. Every time a new network comes into being, it will be celebrated as being "alive" and "revolutionary". Besides, the network has the capacity to be formalized, opening the way toward the mathematization of society. In practice, when a society is configured according to the network ideology, it will undergo, at first, a process of fragmentation. In the new society everything would become interconnected. It changes the relation with the territory, with time, too. The distances become shorter, sometime abolishes it, reduced time, communication, and the flux tends to become instantaneous. The network becomes a tool of planning and developing territory. It makes possible to redefine the way of doing politics by shifting its object from the proper political plane to the technical one. Policy making is no longer politics proper but a technocratic decision. According to Marshall Mc Luhan electrical network constitutes the nerve system of a society, hence, one could affirm that the extension of the technical network and of the biological one would merge both (Musso, 2016b: 45). Technical networks are the nervous system of a society. This relates to a cybernetic interpretation of life, of identifying organisms and machines as structure defined by feedback loop. The network is essential to this interpretation of society and the world. In the concept of network lies the idea of mediation, in this case between technique and society- be it only because its connection with the body and the old metaphor of the body politic. The network is a technical network, an organizational one, and the lane of transition between those. Society would be transformed as a whole, losing its hierarchical structure, becoming like any organization within a network of networks – resembling the structure of the brain. Just as the companies would be run by a reticular management, so would be the state or whatever it becomes. Societies and the still existing states would be governed by reticular management, which theoretically is opposed to a hierarchical structure. But this new way of governing society presupposes first the dissolution and fragmentation of it in "clouds of sociality" and afterward the reconstruction in "intersections", wherein "each of us lives," in the words of J.F. Lyotard (quoted in Musso, 2016b: 52).

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