

THE RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF MODERNITY

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Abstract : *The modern world understands itself as being something entirely new in the history of mankind. Modernity describes itself as the age in which mankind reaches adulthood and in which man becomes free and emancipates itself from external constraints and determination. The present-day world was born due to a new understanding of man, world, society, and due to the development of technology and afterward sciences. This development is presented as a continuous march toward inescapable progress, and as a steady increase in rationality which will lead to the complete and total emancipation of man. But modernity is not the product of only reason and technical and supposed moral progress. The tools to understand the real forces behind this development that created modern world can be found in the works of Pierre-Andre Taguieff and in the sociology of Jacques Ellul. The first offers a deep analysis of a concept that undergirds modernity, the concept of emancipations, and the other author describes the development of modernity as amounting to the total subversion of reality through the technological system. The forces fueling this state of affairs are greed and lust for power. The wish of total emancipation can be seen as another expression of what psychoanalysis called the infantile wish to omnipotence.*

Keywords: *modernity; emancipation; freedom; totalitarianism.*

1. Introduction

One of the defining features of our present-day world is the thought of being an emancipated world, a world in which history goes in one direction, in the direction of ever-increasing freedom and of technical mastery of reality, in the direction of betterment; changing is always better, being mobile too (*bougisme*, in French). This all-permeating ideology is still at work, even though the catastrophes of the twentieth century, caused by ideologies that purported to create heaven on earth or to offer freedom should have proven otherwise. There was no de-Marxisation of thought as it was de-Nazification, though both Nazism and Marxism are tied to each other in more than one way (Taguieff, 2019: 167-249); it is not about the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, but

about more intimate connections. The specter of Anarho-Marxist notion of emancipation is again active in the world (Taguieff, 2019: 97), doing mischief and possessing minds. People went to the moon, so if that was possible, why shouldn't be possible the increase of freedom and *Wohlstand* (Welfare) here on Earth, to emancipate man of his chaise, of his unchosen constraints, be it biological, ethical, etc. After all science and technology are steadily progressing and improving. Along with this development, the state apparatus grew larger and larger especially in its administrative branch, and also by making more and more laws, and also interdictions. The administrative branch is the most important, being in itself an expression of what Jacques Ellul called the technological system and administrative personal being experts, technicians, building a part of the technocracy that runs the world now. Political decisions are now more or less administrative and technical questions, the political man and the policy-making being reduced to technical problems which depend on the administrative system. Both the notion of emancipation and the technological system is trans-ideological and both permeate modernity, being part of its core.

2. Two philosophical explanatory approaches on modernity

Modernity, the forces that propel it, can be found or described using two concepts that at first sight are not connected. One is the concept of emancipation and another one is, if we believe Jacques Ellul, the concept of modern technics or technology, though the concept of technology denotes the discourse about technics. Between these two concepts exist a strong connection, the progress of technics being understood as the means that makes the emancipation of mankind possible and also that makes possible an increase of the scope of the aforesaid action of emancipation/liberation from constraints. The concept of emancipation is essential for modernity. It is not marginal by any means (Taguieff, 2019: 39). The whole bundles of unclear ideas, wishes, and feelings that are bonded in the category of emancipation can be considered as modernity's opium (Taguieff, 2019: 333), or even worse as the methamphetamine of modernity. It is a concept that does not explain anything and it promises to provide a solution that he doesn't provide. It is a messianic concept, which has strong religious implications. It is the expression of a secular religion, which makes the very essence of modernity. The origins of the word emancipation lie in classical *lati* wherein it fulfilled a judicial meaning. Emancipation meant the legal liberation from *patria potestas*, from the authority of the father of the family, the one who exercises the property rights upon a person. One can recognize the metaphorical beginnings of the verb *manicipium*, which contains *manus* – hand, and *capere* – to catch. The antonyms of this were dependence and infancy. (Taguieff, 2019: 109).

„La modernité comme telle -avec ses promesses reconnues – apparaissait des lors comme étant de nature messianique : illustrant la rupture entre un «avant

«néгатif» et «un après positive», entre une époque révolue et un époque prometteuse, elle impliquait à la fois la sortie de l'âge des ténèbres et l'entrée dans une nouvelle âge de l'humanité.» (Taguieff, 2019: 336)

This religious concept of emancipation is based upon a view of things which sees history as the place wherein humanity fulfills itself through linear infinite progress whereby the change is automatically good. Communism, socialism, liberalism, *alter-mondialism*, etc. are all based upon their faith in progress and upon the conviction of the goodness of change. The future is necessarily better than the past, and the past is necessarily bad. Man has to abolish the past, has to abolish his culture, ethnicity, national belonging, etc. Every kind of relationship has to be destroyed as any kind of particularity. Destruction of identity is a necessity and only through this process can man become human, and master of himself and nature. The notion of humanity and progress that modernity favors and that makes the tenor thereof is a kind of overman or Man-God (as opposed to God-man, the unification of God and man in the second person of the Trinity). Despite what many people think eugenics and epuration of mankind of unwanted elements are not a trademark of Nazism, which in itself is also an expression of modernity, but also of socialism and communism. Every emancipatory doctrine is dualistic and is based upon an opposition between good and bad, between the elected and the evil people who oppose the emancipatory efforts. The millions and millions of slaughtered people in the name of emancipatory action of communism express the fanatical and blind irrationality that underlies the basic assumptions of modernity, which is Cartesian methodology applied to the whole of human existence: *tabula rasa* and remaking from ground zero of human existence and society.

This concept, just as modern ideology, is founded on the *Vorrang* of economics, being individualistic and egalitarian. The idea of emancipation is associated with the idea of mankind becoming reaching adulthood, becoming able to think with its head free from masters and other dependencies. Thinking with one's head act by one's self, and not according to an exterior thought, influence or command. In one variant, the Kantian one, emancipation is defined as implying acting by one's self according to the moral law that was interiorized by the respective person. This is based on rationality or practical rationality in the Kantian view. Freedom is defined as the capacity to cause without being determined by something else. This freedom belongs to the noumenal realm and it is common to man and God. This way of defining freedom is the product of the voluntarist and nominalist theology of the late Middle Ages that have laid down the basis of modernity; the concept of will and self-determination of will is essential to this tradition of thought. This emancipated being is, of course, a rational one. It implies that one uses his power of thought, that it learns to use it critically, that one liberates one's self from fake representations, illusion, etc. Emancipation, in each of its particular occurrences, implies fight and breaking from some constraints. The conceptual core of emancipation contains the following: the refusal of the reality, of a

certain state of affairs which is thought to be unacceptable; the idea of an effort or a movement in which and through which a collective subject comes to being, creates itself; applying to certain categories of people that are deemed to be excluded or to be victims an equality status; the expectancy of change and transformation of human relationships in a certain progressive direction through slow change or violence; but if the process is eternal, and starts always anew, the fulfilling of the expectation might never be achieved.

Most of the time, the political or intellectual circles consider that the age of reason and emancipation is the product of a certain social order. This social order is considered to be capitalism and liberal democracy. Due to the transformations brought about by the market and economic and development, social and political development had become possible, and in the end, all these developments have produced the modern liberal democracy and the capitalist system. Somehow, due partly to circumstances, the elite of the western world had given up the pursuit of contemplation, redemption or wisdom, and took a keen interest in practical affairs. The world and nature have come to be seen as an object to master and conquer so that the need and wishes of man could be achieved. Politics and policy-making changed, and so did education. The political man or the prince does not seek virtue, they seek to obtain and preserve power. The interest and the pursuit of one's advantage become the definitory feature of man (Rohou, 2002). Humankind begins to liberate itself from the domination of nature and hence, the relationship with nature and the environment changes. Political and legal philosophy starts to change, and new anthropology comes to the fore. The state and human communities are from now on considered to be the product of man's will. They are not organic, and political power is something that comes from the people. The sovereignty of the ruler is not from God but originates in a contract that is now forgotten; it can be said that the sovereignty of the people had become alienated during history. The new political and social outlook in which merit was supposed to be the key to gaining power and freedom is a stage in emancipation. The people begin to take back the alienated sovereignty. This schema is also the schema of the ideology of emancipation. The emancipatory action is understood as a process of gradual or violent liberation from domination, from political or natural forces and circumstances that diminish man, that enslave humanity, etc; through this inescapable process of history, mankind reaches adulthood whereby it unshackles itself from the state of infancy in which it was kept for most of the known history. At least, it seems that a kind of emancipation, namely the political one has been reached in democracies that value individualism. Most of the time capitalism is seen as being the social order that made it possible (Taguieff, 2019: 50). Nowadays capitalism and liberal democracy seem to be the support of the unending progress and to the unavoidable happy future that awaits all of mankind. The capitalist order is the one social order that promotes a steady revolution. This was strongly contested by communism and still is by different thought directions that try to revive the communist idea and its concept of emancipation.

4. The paradigmatic concept of emancipation: the communist idea thereof

The communist idea of emancipation, as set out by Karl Marx is the quintessence of modernity. As already seen, modernity in itself is defined by a religious view of history and man, based upon the idea that the past, the tradition, the particulars belongings of man are bad and must be overcome. This concept of emancipation seeks to transform humanity (Taguieff, 2019: 92). The political emancipation, that is centered upon individual rights, is supposed to take man as it is. Though this position seems to me not to be true. The conception of man that undergirds the individualist political emancipation is as voluntarist as the totalitarian emancipation project and is centered around the individual and man as the center of existence. It is the expression of a *Weltanschauung* of an abstract man – just as the Marxist concept of man is – which exists in itself, it is self-sustained, and decides what is right and wrong. It exists before any kind of human commonwealth or community, as a kind of ahistorical being, etc. Also, it must be added that the liberal view of man, as the liberal state are not neutral. They are built upon a certain conception of man, of man's relationship to the world and God that is modern, that is they try to make man the ontological center of existence. The political emancipation which is contrasted by Taguieff with the Marxist one is also a radical emancipatory move, that has the same religious and radical connotation as the Marxist one. Its radicality is not so easily seen, and neither are its totalitarian implications. The peak of the Marxist concept of emancipation is that it tries to free man from its finitude (Taguieff, 2019: 201). It means reaching the total and universal man, a new man, really a Man-god. The abolishment of alienation means that there is no more contradiction between man's empirical existence and his essence, which all the powers that oppressed him and appeared to him as external to himself are now in him, at his disposition. The beginning of the emancipation is the critique of religion and in recognizing the fact that the supreme being for man is man itself. This commands that all the condition or processes that enslave man, that diminish him, that infantilize him are to be reversed (Taguieff, 2009: 199). This is the expression of the desire to substitute God with man, of an unobstructed will to power, to obtain omnipotence. The ideologues of emancipation and the concept itself bring to light the incapacity of man to accept that he is not God. It could be said that it is a typical fantasy of omnipotence, of infantility that lies at the core of modernity. All of this can be achieved by voluntary intervention upon society, man, and nature. Humanity must be destroyed and re-created in a perfect, divine form. *Apotheosis* – which denotes the pagan notion of becoming god through one's action or merits – as opposed to *theosis* is the target of all ideologies of emancipation. *Theosis* is the target of the Christian life, becoming Godlike through God's gift and grace. Not to be achieved through social engineering and dictatorship, though.

The progressist and neo-progressist ideologies offer hence the image of a space filled by confused notions, by ill-defined projects, by constructs that lack any kind of empirical or even metaphysical reality, by aspirations and moral convictions organized around the idea of total deliverance or emancipation of humanity (Taguieff, 2009: 75). Sometimes capitalism is the evil that must be thought and anti-capitalism becomes the new gnosis, a new political religion. There are some strong convictions and aspirations that back all this. The main conviction is that the human beings are living in slave-like conditions, that they are oppressed, that the living conditions destroy human dignity, and that, of course, everyone needs and wants emancipation. The idea that such a thing that sometimes there is voluntary subservience does not seem to cross the mind of the emancipatory crowd. There is an ideal that is opposed to a reality that is considered to be most unsatisfactory. The people who have reached this conclusion are emancipated, are the elected that have the mission to impose emancipation all over the earth. They are free spirits. This ideal, the emancipatory effort – being only loosely bond with the empirical realm - drifts in the direction of total autonomy. This is expressed in the wish of becoming self-creating, *causa sui*, an attribute that is usually God's. Even thinkers with a strong theological background as Jacques Ellul concludes that man is self-creating, that man has no inner nature that prescribes him limits and duties (Ellul, 2014), whereby he dismisses the Genesis narrative as creation narrative of man. Emancipation means self-creation and self-emancipation; workers or oppressed people will self-emancipate. They just need to will it. And it has to be universal. The Marxist conception postulates that the emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of the entire humanity; this claim misapplied to all the particular emancipation ideologies, but the actor of this mythical-universal drama changes. Emancipation of the Palestinian people is the universal emancipation of mankind, the emancipation of women, of homosexuals, of animals, etc. This process is a quest to provide equal liberty for all, an unending process term, which opens the gates to a process of revindications without end (Taguieff, 2019: 85). In the beginning, this notion of emancipation promises the abolition of power relations, of domination, of dependency towards someone else, of subservience, the abolition of being a minority, and the end of alienation. But it won't stop here:

„L'envers de la promesse est qu'elle ouvre la porte au rêve d'une abolition des limites (contraires à l'esprit prométhéen), d'une suppression des liens (trop contraignants), d'un rejet des héritages (trop lourds), d'une totale rupture avec le passé (musée des horreurs, des archaïsmes et des préjuges). L'Indépendance attrayante se transforme en désappartenance déprimante. La libération prend le visage d'une déshumanisation” (Taguieff, 2019: 86).

Abolition of the relationship of domination, of enslavement, of dependency on someone's will, is not all that emancipation intends to abolish. To achieve emancipation is tantamount to the eradication of every personal or ethnic feature, abandoning one's culture, modes of thought and feeling that are

deemed to be reactionary and deemed to be the causes for the dependence of man. Emancipation is equivalent to getting rid of one's humanity, as Taguieff argues. The emancipation of man produces dehumanization, though it is intended to be also the creation of a new man (Taguieff, 2019: 91). One of the faces the return of this utopian thinking is the altermondialism – *l'altermondialisme* -, which makes it much more difficult to detect the communist ideology breathing through it. The process of emancipation is supposed to apply to the whole of humanity and the individual. Communism and libertarianism, neoliberalism, liberalism are all seduced by this notion and by the expected end of history and transfiguration of humanity. The idea of emancipation is a trans-ideological force, is grafted upon the most powerful passions or pulsion of the modern world. It transforms the wish for emancipation into a promise of universal liberation. This is a doctrine of salvation, of universal and collective salvation. One of the main peculiarities of this trans-ideological force is that is not detectable; it lacks an -ism. It is not presentable under the form of identifiable socialism, liberalism, etc. It is a secular – and demonic religion. Religion, as Jacques Ellul put it, delivers a comprehensive interpretation of the world, it brings order in it (for Ellul true Christianity is not a religion; it is the denial of religion even). It furnishes order, coherence, hope, even certitudes. It is existential and pragmatic and leads to certain attitudes. Irrationality belongs to it, too. Religion answers the anxiety and the loneliness that man (even modern enlightened man) feels in the present society (Ellul, 2003: 200-202). Anxiety, fear, desperation, hopelessness, dominance, etc still subsist today even in a so-called enlightened world, showing that the emancipatory promises of technic and science are a fraud. Jacques Ellul describes in his *Work* the state of the fact of a world which is under the dominance of the technological system, that grows without stopping, a system that expresses a peculiar being in-the-world-of-man, a system that seeks only efficiency and more efficiency, that is more powerful. It is a more profound description of modernity that the critique of instrumental reason supplied by the **Frankfurter Schule**. In the twentieth century, there is a revival of secular religions, thanks to the lack of a real interhuman relationship, and of course, thanks to the denial of God. Religion has always performed an essential function for human existence (Ellul, 2003: 205). The root thereof reaches in the deepest parts of the human being, a root that can not be stamped out. This is a finding attested by the result of the attempts to destroy religion and to desacralize human existence, attempts that were followed by a resacralization, and the birth of a new religious attitude. This new religious attitude springs always from the very attempt that sought to abolish the religion and the sacred. The instrument of desacralization becomes sacred. The religious attitude is to be found in all the ideologies of the emancipation of humanity, religions that do not accomplish what they seek. They put forward the human being as the redemptory force. The simplest formula of this whole complex of feelings and ideas is: „Ni Dieu, ni Maître.” No God, no Master. Total emancipation, searching for authenticity is tantamount to an absolute denial of

any kind of authority, divine or human. No bonds whatsoever, and now dependency relationship to nothing and nobody, no vertical relationships either. It is a messianic promise, the promise of a state of a paradisiac existence devoid of God's authority.

5. Sovereignty, progress and utopia

All the ideologies of emancipation share one thing in common, a certain understanding of history as an onwards change towards progress. All these ideologies postulate that history goes irreversibly into one direction, that it consists of betterment processes. The progress is inevitable, and this direction of history delivers the criteria of what is wrong and what is bad; whatever makes progress is good, even violence and terror, what is against is bad and must be destroyed if somehow persist against the march toward the marvelous emancipated future. This peculiar understanding of history is not an objective one; it is full of value judgments, and it represents a kind of teleological vision thereof. The notion of progress implies a final state of the course of history. And this vision, despite its modernity and claims to objectivity and of rupture with the past, represents another myth, the inversion of the myth of the golden age; it can be shown that is more a perversion of this myth than a true mythical attitude, because this new golden age that is to be realized by the effort of man based on a technical vision on man and his existence, on the idea that applying scientifically, mathematical methods the desired result will be brought about. Though utopia can be thought of as a kind of imaginary breach in an unpleasant reality, it should be considered the forerunner of totalitarianism (Wunenburger, 2001). And it is not the opposite of ideology, as some authors as Paul Ricoeur have affirmed. The ideology of progress, of total emancipation of mankind, hence the modern ideology as such is the product of a particular stance of human imagination that distorts myths like the myth of the golden age. It is embedded and at work in modern and contemporary thought, in politics, policymaking, etc. Trans and post-humanist ideologies are also off-shot thereof. Authors like Jean Jacques Wunenburger affirm that utopia should be seen as a kind of constant of human existence, as a peculiar type of imaginary. As such is an expression of human imagination, of the human spirit, but when expressed and applied produces the opposite of what it was intended to be. Utopian thought and thinking provide hope, but when enacted through totalitarian violent policies or gradual policies – still totalitarian - the effect will be the destruction of hope, oppression, uniformization of social reality but also thought and imagination in themselves (Wunenburger 2001: 7). The golden age narrative is a mythical one, but the utopian narrative building is not. It is infused by a kind of schematizing and mechanical thought deemed to be scientific, which mechanized reality. Utopias are always cities, which illustrate urbanism and a much wished sovereignty of man of nature, over the environment, etc. Man's activity and own self are over-evaluated, them being assigned supreme value. Nature, attachments to nature, to one's past, culture,

nation are strong devalued. Their value is being negated, nullified. From this ideal and geometrical constructions time is evacuated, everything inside the perfect cities seems to be caught in a kind of non-temporality (Ruyer, 1988: 43-46); this is the wish of stopping entropy, of abolishing it. All utopias have a non-organic character, and they seem to be in their structure and being akin to crystals, and people and their problems seem to be rather auxiliaries to them and not the purpose for which the utopian cities are designed and built. Utopia is anti-organic, it is anti-nature, anti-real existence. Utopias and the models of utopian man are *Ersatznatur* – they are an artificial substitute nature - , an artificial construct supposed to take the place of real existing people and nature. Utopian thought, modern thought want to outdo and replace God (Ruyer, 1988: 46-50). Even if it is not stated in those terms, this is the target of utopias:

„Aussi, les hommes, dans presque toutes les utopies, ont un pouvoir augmenté, au moins sur la matière. Leur zone de maîtrise sur la nature est étendue. [...] Dans les utopies plus subtiles, la puissance de l'homme s'étend au domaine biologique et psychologique: action sur l'hérédité, le sexe de l'enfant, eugénisme, conditionnement psychologique etc.” (Ruyer 1988: 50)

Lest we don't forget, from the sociological-theological perspective of Jacques Ellul (2003b) and Eugene Drewermann (1988), the city has a special meaning. This meaning expresses the situation of man after he falls from Eden and his contempt or adversity towards God. The building of the city represents the wish to replace God, and the idea that man can somehow fill the void that permeates his created and contingent being, not in the sense that it could have been otherwise, but in the sense that humankind could have not been brought into existence; human existence is not necessary, it is contingent. It is not self-sustaining. Human science and technology are also the expressions of the wish to make human inner being necessary, that is eternal. They are expressions of the will-to-power. Even normal cities, not only the cities designed by utopias, are an expression thereof. A quest for creating a self-sufficient existence that fills the void of human essence/being.

The emancipatory ideal is a religious one. It is not clearly thought and defined and it is much less to achieve. It contains at least two contradictory ideals. There is an emancipation of the individual, of a group or another, the emancipation of work, the emancipation of a particular people, etc. These two are different, not homogenous emancipatory actions. A political emancipation or the emancipation from foreign domination are local, conditioned, particular endeavours, etc. They are not perfect or complete in the sense of a total emancipation of humankind. Nothing, in reality, seems to affirm that all these types of emancipatory action or practices are compatible with each other and that they could be added into a whole named total emancipation of humanity (Taguieff 2019: 56). An action that is thought to be a kind of an universal emancipatory act, an act that should help individuals to free themselves from

an idignified condition, the need to earn one's existence through work, is the establishing of the so-called universal income, a sum of money that the state is supposed to pay to every member of a particular society. Work and other activities that constrain man just have to die out. They have to be helped to die out through science, policy-making, remodeling of society and man, through strenuous effort then. But there are serious obstacles that must be overcome. There is no clear definition of what emancipation is. Is it an end unto itself, or a means to accomplish something? Also, no one has established that the abolition of all external, biological, spatial determination is good. It is not established if it is even possible. The emancipatory mindset takes for granted that everyone wants the total emancipation. This mindset refuses to confront another serious problem, namely the one of voluntary servitude (Taguieff, 2019: 58-59). Another feature of emancipation is the need of a permanent revolution. Whatever status one accedes to, must be left behind. In case of individuals, this attitude will lead to competition and conflict: everyone against everyone. (Taguieff 2019: 61-62). This ideology values change and mobility. A fixed place to live is a determination, a limitation that has to be overcome. Every kind of attachment, be it places, people, cultural heritage, etc is a limit that has to be overthrown. The ideal man of this trans-ideological ideology is the an abstraction, a disembodied human being. It is a man deprived of every concrete feature that makes it humanity, deprived of memory, collective history, belonging, racial and ethnic features, etc. All of these impede the much-vaunted mobility and capacity of change that emancipation (globalization is just another appearance of it) so much needs and promotes. Everything must be movement; everything must be mobile (Taguieff 2019: 64). Such an emancipatory project needs and asks for an open-door policy, asks for openness. This kind of policy promotes the destruction of differences and uniformization of behaviors, etc. The emancipated human being must be a nomad, and, to attain this supreme state of being everything that blocks the revolutionary and liberation efforts have to be obliterated.

This feature of modernity has another face, a hidden face that seems to be contradictory to the quest for emancipation and freedom. A certain determinism is at work in modern societies. At least, at first glance. Everything becomes politicized, but also everything becomes de-politicized. Everything becomes politicized thanks to the growth of the state and its central role; the state has become the agent of change in the modern world. It is the main actor or operator of emancipation. This is tied to the technological system, to the development of a mode of existence dependent upon technology and the quest for efficiency. A true political decision or policy-making becomes more and more improbable because modern politics is by its structure emancipatory and Machiavellian; the quest and search for power define it. Efficiency is not a value one can choose or deny. It defines the modern way of doing politics. There is no room for debating about which values have to be accepted and promoted. The *raison d'état* has become embedded in every corner of modern politics and social life. That is, the state or even the individual has to use immoral means to

achieve ends seen as necessary, or to ensure the public good. Therefore, for Ellul, violence is a legitimate means for the modern state; as already seen violence is also a means for attaining emancipation. Possible and impossible are the only criteria for modern politics, and the society works in the direction of extending the realm of possibility. The need for efficiency, the domination of so-called necessity, and the ephemeral make real political thought and decision impossible. Decisions, if not made by the quest for efficiency, are being made on the immediate needs, on the base of superficial information, lack of solid reflection, and without the presence of a real conception of the future society. A true political decision would be the interdiction of using smartphones and computers for children and students in school and making classical learning mandatory. Handwriting has a beneficial effect on children's developing mind, it makes new connections. Jacques Ellul describes the way society and man have come to this stage of existence. The technological system and its increasing control over human life, control that makes real politics impossible. It reduces the capacity of politicians to make real decisions or even to conceive of real decisions, different from the ones implied or generated by the dominance of the technological system. What Ellul's whole work highlights is the fact of an increasing loss of freedom while most of the governments and other people proclaim that freedom increases steadily. The lack of real freedom of deciding stems from the dominance of a so-called necessity that science and technology bring about, a necessity that is derived from the need for efficiency and from the need of the technological system to extend itself indefinitely. *Le système technicien* or *la technique* is more than making use of some technics or tools; it represents the transformation and possession of human existence by the systematical use of techniques, which do not subsist in isolation but forms a system in which they interact. The technological system is a kind of independent or autonomous reality that now has replaced the natural and social environment of man. A tool or a machine are not instantiations of this system. The system lies beyond the use of tools, and adapt man to machine, it integrates both and determines the way human think and feel (Chastenet, 2019: 22-23). Using a car or flying a plane change a human being, so the systematical use of interconnected technologies gives a new form of human existence. Not only that, but the technological system tolerates no critical evaluation; it succeeds in converting over points of view to his standpoint. It increases in geometrical progression and builds a homogenous whole. There is no way to decide what are the good techniques and what are the bad one. Values cease to be when touched by it. The whole thing is driven by the need for increasing efficiency; also, everything that is encompassed by the system is transformed into a technical problem that has to be solved through technical means. In the case of society, politics becomes more applied technologies, and the political way of doing things, of debating problems, of choosing between real alternative disappears. The solutions that a politician or a government applies are derived or achieved with help from experts. Without experts, without *le techniciens* nothing is to be realized. Freedom of choice becomes

more and more restrained. The quest for building more powerful and efficient tools becomes, that is means needed to perform a task becomes an end in itself. The present-day society is dominated by the perversion of the relationship between means and ends, purposes. The means have become the ends. Money, which is a means of exchange, becomes an end in itself, and like power and the technological system, it demands more and more. It is like the bad infinity of emancipation. True freedom entails a correct relationship between means and ends. The quest for efficiency – which was and is seen as the way to achieve emancipation, to become free of constraints and external determinations – becomes an end in itself. It is the same relationship that the Frankfurter Schule has established about Enlightenment. What was once a way of achieving emancipation has become a source of oppression. True politics and policy-making demand freedom which is defined by a correct relationship between means and ends. Means do not become ends. And even politics that can be seen as a means to achieve something becomes an end in itself, which is a quest for power and apparent freedom.

Conclusions

Taguieff description and presentation of the emancipatory ideology and Ellul's insights on modernity, lead to the conclusion that the paradigmatic and normative human existence in modernity is to be understood as a quest for total emancipation, for abolishing determination, particularities, and everything that in the eyes of the emancipatory crowd is a limit to human dignity, self-expression, and happiness. Modern human existence is an elaborate expression of an unrestrained will-to-power, the expression of an attempt to reach omnipotence. This power should have an ontological reach equal to the power of the biblical God and should be able to make man the center of all existence. Emancipation ideology and the development of the technological system belong together, and they both are chained to the development and aggrandizement of the State. It doesn't matter if this state calls itself liberal or democratic, or otherwise, and formally and materially function as such. The imperative of efficacy is the only criterion of legitimacy and justification. The only criterion of choice is the one between possible and impossible. Despite the apparent mastery over the external world and society, the technological system leads to loss of freedom and remodeling of human existence. Whatever blocks the way of its development must be abolished. If something can be done, it shall be done because there are the ingredients and the necessary technology. Morals, tradition, cultural heritage, determinations, empirical or otherwise, sexual morality has to go. They are barriers that impede a full growth of the state, of the technological system and of emancipation. The loss of freedom in present-day liberal democracies is plain to see. Experts decide, experts tell children that if they feel so-and-so, they are not boys or girls, but the opposite, or that there are several genders. Every

opposition to this tyrannical and undemocratic policies is crushed through legal means by a judiciary that is no more judiciary at all, but a collective of militants that partake in the great undertaking of enlightening and liberating humanity. The notion of changing one's gender wouldn't be possible without the dominance of the technological system in society and the ideology of emancipation. Democracy and universal vote are an illusion for Jacques Ellul. The voters can't control governments. The state becomes more and more centralized and more and more people appeal to the state. The states bail out banks when there is trouble and the citizens have to pay for it. The state dictates now that there is no biological gender or that people can change gender fluidly. Denying and abolishing all determination, even empirical ones is one of the main features of the emancipatory ideology, which fuels the quest for technical efficiency, the quest for power. This vision of emancipation has been masterfully illustrated by the genius of Stanley Kubrick, who saw himself as a Marxist, in his *2001. A Space Odyssey*. Dave Bowman's transforming into the Starchild is the Man-God (the absolute emancipation of mankind so dear to modernity) achieved through technological means. That one of the music pieces used in the movie is *Also sprach Zarathustra* is also a strong hint in this direction.

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