

Technology and the Theory of Apocalypse

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INTRODUCTION

The television series *The Walking Dead* has reached more than seven million “likes” on Facebook and more than 300.000 in Twitter through March of 2012 (March, 2012), which lead very well scholars to think that the popular culture has widely adopted the figure of Zombie as a new genre of entertainment. The idea of the “Undead” not only coincides with the contemporary needs of morbid consumption (gaze) but also with the rise of new capitalism that commoditizes “the other’s death as a vehicle towards the individual emancipation (Korstanje 2012). The undead, broadly speaking, inhabit and proliferate in this earth while they are undesired by the human civilization. They were like us, but today they are death!. The Walking dead appeals to a climate of total destruction which often does not resonate with a form of public consciousness, but in the collective unconsciousness. The undead represents a postmodern sensibility. This sensibility reeks of decay.

“[It is a] ‘degraded’ landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and Readers’ Digest culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called para literature with its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance, the popular biography, the murder mystery and science-fiction or fantasy novel: materials they no longer simply ‘quote’, as a Joyce or a Mahler might have done, but incorporate into their very substance”. (Jameson 1991:55)

As the previous backdrop, Jameson argues that the postmodern culture rests on representations revolving around the “unconscious”, in which case, it articulates a specific discourse that interrogates in the political sphere. In a similar vein, the arts have represented, in what might be considered prescient ways, what has already begun in the economic, political, and social structures, but has not yet appeared in explicit terms. Somewhat arbitrarily stated, modernism began in the mid-nineteenth century. Charles Baudelaire called it *modernité*.

As Ulrich Beck puts it, the obsession of modern man to control the nature opened the doors to the idea that the same technology used by making of this world a better and safer place, can usher mankind into a nuclear apocalypse. One of the paradoxes of modernity began but it was not limited to the Chernobyl Accident. Technology played a leading role in the configuration of a Cold War, where the US and the Soviet Union devoted their resources to an incredible arms race. Beck acknowledges that at the time some risks are successfully mitigated by the action of technology and rational technique, new ones emerge. What is more important, the state of disaster results from the excess of modernity (Beck 1992). Jacques Ellul interrogated philosophically on the negative effects of technology in modern society, not only undermining critical thinking but also controlling -if not commoditizing- other lay-citizens (Ellul 1962; 1992). Andrew Feenberg calls the attention on technology, a-la-Marcuse, as a form of new rationalization, which means control over the rank-and-file worker. Technology disposes not only from bodies

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to enhance the means of production but tries to domesticate nature through the capitalist wage system. While machine operates to make our lives safer, the western rationality imposes over other voices and cosmologies (Feenberg, 1995).

In the present chapter, we interrogate not only on the nature of technology but its connection with the bottom days theory and the Zombie world. After reviewing plots as *The Matrix*, *Noah and the night of the Living Dead* (among others), we hold the thesis that technology gives humans the opportunity to emancipate themselves from their limited condition, but at the same time, it may be very well a potential oppressor when ethics is derided. The chapter is not intended originally to managers and policymakers, simply because I am a social scientist. However, top-managers can enrich their diagnosis of organizational issues after reading it. Another limitation of the work consists in its lack of empirical evidence. Whatever the case may be, it provides fresh anthropological insight about the role of technology in the social imagination, to be more exact in the archetype of the bottom days. From the immemorial times, technology prompted the rise of empires and great civilizations while the precondition for a climate of extreme violence or war that accelerated the decline of society. The question whether the sin, greed, and omnipotence ushered mankind into the ruin was widely discussed within historians. This chapter explores the theory of apocalypse as a precondition where humans are not destroyed but purged towards a new *rebirth*.

Background Section

Every culture has tales about an exemplary center, an immemorial life where human beings and god coexisted in harmony. This paradise, a term coined by Eastern religions, has prevented access by humans the founding parents committed a crime, sin or other norm violation. From that day on, civilizations try to regain the primitive state of nature where suffering did not take place (Cohn 1996; McGinn 1996; Kumar 1996). One of the intriguing aspects that characterize the end of the World associates to what Eric Ranking dubbed as “the introduction of dark technology”. To put this in other terms, he holds the thesis that the world, no matter the tale, will never be destroyed but it is only reconstructed by the articulation of a purge. Humans not only offended the Gods following their greed but also are a real threat to the natural order. Gods conduct a purge to correct this “original sin” while the earth is redeemed into a new sanitized facet of existence. In these terms, as Rabkin explains, the exile represents the human impossibility to return to the exemplary center, but what is more important, it reminds the world may be destroyed because of human greed (Rabkin 1986). When the world is destroyed, what humans do not disappear, but they are forced to live in a new condition. In consonance with Rabkin, Gary Wolfe uses the term *Zero Moment* to refer the return to a primitive state where humans struggled for surviving. Once the world is destroyed, simply the hierarchal authorities are withered away, as well as all constitutional rights. While a new aristocracy arises, the state of prosperity or well-being earlier the moment of Armageddon never comes back. Technology paves the ways for the emergence of self-contained empires, while gradually when it is instrumentalized to protect the interests of a ruling elite, corruption marks the beginning of the end of the human race. The term, *remaking zero* crystalizes the efforts of humans to understand their being in this world. The civilization is born and dies thanks to technology, reminding that.

“The promise inherent in the idea of remaking zero is certainly one of the reasons this genre has survived as long as it has, and in so many guises. On the simple level of narrative action, the prospect of a depopulated world in which humanity is reduced to a more elemental struggle with nature provides a

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