



# Entwined Dangers: Pandemic and Modern Technology

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## *Abstract*

The COVID-19 pandemic constitutes a crisis situation in which the dangers posed by modern technology have never been more pronounced. As the devastation of the coronavirus epidemic continues, epidemic control around the world is focused on the introduction of new legal and regulatory measures against the virus. In this paper, I analyze Heidegger's and Foucault's critical theory of modern technology to show that the threat is not only biological, but also ontological: the threat of modern technology to our existential state of being, which cannot be ignored. The existential dangers posed by modern technology to the social control of human rights are far more subtle and have as long-reaching effects as the biological dangers of COVID-19.

*Keywords:* coronavirus, modern technology, biopower, Heidegger, Foucault.

## 1. Introduction

People worldwide have adopted daily actions to keep their immune systems safe, including handwashing, remote working and learning, and mask use. Thanks to scientific advances, a vaccine is under development, and we can image a future where this technology can defeat any ailment – but what about the existent and potential danger of this technology?

We must consider how the pandemic and modern technology have changed our lives, as well as what danger they present. The representative critics regarding these concepts are Foucault and Heidegger. The former shows how power controls people through an examination of epidemics, while the latter represents a critique of both aspects of technology-power from an ontological perspective on the essence of modern technology. Foucault has also acknowledged on several occasions that he was profoundly influenced by Heidegger. In his final interview, just before his death in 1984, Foucault revealed that

[f]or me Heidegger has always been the essential philosopher. ...I had tried to read Nietzsche in the fifties, but Nietzsche alone did not appeal to me – whereas Nietzsche and Heidegger: that was a philosophical shock! But I have never written anything on Heidegger, and I wrote only a very small article on Nietzsche; these are nevertheless the two authors I have read the most. (Foucault, 1990: 250)

Much of the philosophical examination of COVID-19 to date has focused on the sociological implications of the epidemic, such as the ethical justifiability of the limitation of freedom of movement (Camporesi, 2020), or the failure of the government to exercise their powers competently, thus allowing the virus to spread (Rhiannon Frowde, 2020). But little attention has been paid to the impact of modern technology, our main weapon against COVID-19. As we use this

technology to fight COVID-19, we should also be aware of the dangers to which we expose ourselves.

The themes that define the argument of this work come from Heidegger's and Foucault's respective interpretations of the modern relationship between technology and power. Both Heidegger and Foucault argue that in modern society, the human being is seen as a manipulable resource. Both suggest that liberation from this state requires a thorough examination of the essence of the human being, as currently understood. When facing the COVID-19 crisis, as both have pointed out, what we are experiencing, such as lock downs and medical policies, exacerbates and conceals the danger that biopower and modern technology have already brought us. Furthermore, with the spread and development of this COVID-19, the biopower enacted by the government and modern technology are even more dangerous to us on an ontological level, as Foucault and Heidegger point out, and the control of human being as a resource in contemporary society is even more serious than COVID-19. With the help of these two critiques of biopower and technology, with Heidegger's releasement (*Gelassenheit*) thought, I propose an approach to these issues, not only those which COVID-19 has brought to our attention, but also latent issues of human control.

In the following chapters, I identify Heidegger's concept of technology in Chapter 1 and clarify Foucault's understanding of power in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 contrasts the two concepts, the differences in the relationship between technology and power, and analyzes the additional technological and governmental dangers concealed by COVID-19.

## 2. Metaphysics and Enframing

### 2.1 *The essence of modern technology*

Firstly, I want to examine Heidegger's definition of modern technology. In his famous lecture "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger rejects the instrumental definition of technology because it fails to capture the "essence" of modern technology. For Heidegger, the definition of technology is an ontological description of "revealing," and technology is a context that belongs to modern society and shapes how we perceive beings (*Seiende*), which also makes it possible for us to understand and interact with things and beings. According to Hubert Dreyfus' definition, Heidegger thinks of technology as a "cultural paradigm" because technology in a context of practice cannot be fully expressed as a set of belief systems or a set of clear rules.<sup>1</sup> Heidegger asserts, "Technology is, therefore, no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing." (Heidegger, 1977: 12) It is a context of habits, customs, and skills within which the object that is under the context of modern technology appears usable. The exemplary manifestation of modern technology and being is the hydroelectric plant, and it is in this particular way of revealing modern technology that the river becomes a "water-power supplier."

It is important to note that, as a way of revealing, technology exploits and utilizes beings as computable, controllable objects. The beings that are exploited are not only the resources around us, but also humans. In other words, we ourselves are controlled by modern technology as a particular kind of resource, rather than being in control of exploiting technology, as is often thought – after all, it is humans who build hydroelectric power plants. Heidegger clearly states that:

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<sup>1</sup> "[T]he technological paradigm embodies and furthers our technological understanding of being according to which what does not fit in with our current paradigm – that is, that which is not yet at our disposal to use efficiently (e.g., the wilderness, friendship, and stars) – will finally be brought under our control, and turned into a resource" (Dreyfus, 2006: 358).

The human himself stands now within such a conscription. The human has offered himself for the carrying out of this conscripting. He stands in line to take over such requisitioning and to complete it. The human is thereby an employee of requisitioning. Humans are thus, individually and in masses, assigned into this. The human is now the one ordered in, by, and for the requisitioning. (Heidegger, 2012: 29)

Here, Heidegger asserts that the hallmark of modern technological domination is the rational ordering and control of being, and that this idea itself is not something that any human being or any society actively chooses to practice, but rather that this modern technological thinking has come to influence us as context at all times. The idea that resources are objects of human control and that technology is only a human tool are indeed practical examples of the dominant modern technological thinking in the ontic dimension surrounding our daily life, but this way of thinking is nothing but a result of modern technology and has itself been influenced by what Heidegger calls the thinking of modern technology as “Enframing” (Gestell). While it is true that we can decide how any particular technological thing is to be used, the very fact of which representations appear as candidates for truth or fallacy, and which existents are revealed as things to be used is not up to us to choose. The context in which the object appears is neither entirely graspable nor intentionally constituted. Rather, it is a forgotten horizon, practice, and context in the historical inheritance that we take for granted.

Heidegger points out that, unlike ancient technology, “The revealing that rules in modern technology is a “challenging” (Herausfordern), which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supplies energy that can be extracted and stored as such” (Heidegger, 1977: 14). He used the term “Enframing” (Gestell) to describe the essence of modern technology, which is “the way in which the real reveals itself as standing-reserve” (*Ibid.*: 23). This “Enframing” represents a structure of how the whole beings are revealed, as it pushes us in a certain direction. This modern technology can be considered as a tendency in the field of modern technological practice, which orders all beings to the principles of order and efficiency, and pursues reality down to the smallest detail. Thus, as long as the purpose of modern technology is to make beings orderly and computable, there are fewer and fewer possibilities for how beings be revealed and used by modern technology, leaving only the possibility of controlling and being controlled.

The real danger of modern technology, according to Heidegger, is that humans will continue to see technology as a mere tool and fail to inquire into its essence. He fears that all revelation will become computational, that all relations will become technical, that the unthought horizon of revelation, the “hidden” background practices that made technical thinking possible, will be forgotten. Thus, it is not technology, nor science, that poses the danger, but the essence of technology as a way of revealing; for the nature of technology is ontological, not technological. It is a question of how humans fundamentally view beings, and the source of this very view comes from metaphysics.

## *2.2 Modern technology and metaphysics*

Heidegger’s critique of modern technology stems from his examination of metaphysics. What is metaphysics? For Heidegger, metaphysics is a way of thinking that attempts to focus on the problem of the being (das Seiende) and its beingness (Seiendeheit) instead of Being (Sein) and the meaning of Being itself. In this way, metaphysical thought neglects the distinction between the Being and the beings. Heidegger considers modern technology to be “the completed metaphysics.”

In his note “Overcoming Metaphysics”, Heidegger believes that Nietzsche’s concept of Will reaches the end and completion of metaphysics, and that this metaphysical way of thinking

has also influenced modern technology.<sup>2</sup> The impact of modern technology on man is definitely not only a question of the relationship between technical tools and man, but also means and ends. Modern technology, as the result of metaphysics, controls all elements through calculating and planning of beings. In such a situation, “beings have entered the way of erring in which the vacuum expands which requires a single order and guarantee of beings” (Heidegger, 2003: 105).

This order and guaranteed characteristic is reflected in two facets: the first is the complete planning mastery of beings (which is also an expression of Nietzsche’s superhuman will). “The fact that instinct is required for superhumanity as a characteristic means that, understood metaphysically, subhumanity belongs to superhumanity, but in such a way that precisely the animal element is thoroughly subjugated in each of its forms to calculation and planning (health plans, breeding)” (Heidegger, 2003: 106). And in order to achieve this aim of complete planning mastery, modern technology requires precise calculation and estimation “[C]alculation is above all the first calculative rule” (*Ibid.*).

From this perspective of calculation-planning control of beings, we can distinguish the difference between modern technology and ancient technology. When comparing a hydroelectric power plant or a waterwheel, there is no difference between the two simply from the perspective of their beingness, in which both are a way and a means of using waterpower for the benefit of humans. However, when we build a hydroelectric power plant, we analyze in advance, from a metaphysical point of view, what location will yield the most power, the local topography, the economy, the local impact, etc., therefore, only in a digitalized nature can abstract concepts such as interest and power be grasped and used. This consideration is thoroughly reflected in the fact that we have to build a hydroelectric power plant for the benefit of humankind. The consideration undertaken before and during construction reflects the complete planning of the being to reach the end. In this planning-goal process, the human will always be the highest priority. But building a waterwheel? Pre-modern humans may also have planned, but more often than not, in accordance with local life and the course of the river, and would not have gone so far as to change the natural conditions for the sake of their will (although there is of course the possibility of not being able to do so).<sup>3</sup>

Ultimately, the result of this metaphysical implementation of technology is the inclusion of all beings in computation-control, including, naturally, humans themselves. “Since man is the most important raw material, one can reckon with the fact that someday factories will be built for the artificial breeding of human material, based on present-day chemical research” (*Ibid.*).

In sum, the root of modern technology Enframing, according to Heidegger, lies in metaphysics, which plans and controls through metaphysical calculation, thus treating all beings (including human) as a kind of available and plannable object in which man loses the subjectivity of controlling technology and becomes an object controlled by technology; they become human resources, and thus can be applied in a medical context to patients for a clinic.<sup>4</sup> This control is not

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<sup>2</sup> “With Nietzsche’s metaphysics, philosophy is completed. That means: It has gone through the sphere of prefigured possibilities. Completed metaphysics, which is the ground for the planetary manner of thinking, gives the scaffolding for an order of the earth which will supposedly last for a long time.” Heidegger, “Overcoming Metaphysics”, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> The difference between ancient and modern technologies cannot be distinguished from the ontic point of view, i.e., how to use beings, but rather by thinking about the ontological difference. That is, the practice of modern technology is entirely an expression of human will, and this will belong to a way of revealing, and the properties of rivers are only reflected as power resources in this Enframing revealing (Dreyfus, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> “Only to the extent that man for his part is already challenged to exploit the energies of nature can this ordering revealing happen. If man is challenged, ordered, to do this, then does not man himself belong even more originally than nature within the standing-reserve? The current talk about human resources

entirely coercive, but also includes the act of the human being voluntarily becoming a resource and an object to be used by the technology.

However, having made it clear that it is not we who control modern technology, but we who are controlled by it, Heidegger suggests that the way to saving us from the dangers of modern technology lies, as Hölderlin puts it, in the fact that “but where danger is, grows / The saving power also” (Heidegger, 1977: 34). In Section 3, I will discuss how people are both coercively and voluntarily controlled by technology under the omnipresence of COVID-19.

### 3. Discipline and biopower

Let us now turn to Foucault. In this chapter, I would like to compare Foucault’s and Heidegger’s critique of Enframing through the approach of Foucault’s critique of biopower.

Foucault introduced the concept of biopolitics, which is a new technology of power in contemporary society in which political power actively guides and educates the social body of human beings in order to maintain appropriate actions of individuals within society. This form of power includes, on the one hand, the traditional political problem of governing the political activities of the state and, on the other hand, the body politics of governing the relationship between the individual’s own activities and society as a whole. In Foucault’s view, the politics of life is a new utilization of biopower, which is mainly found in two forms of power: the micro aspect of discipline and its control of the individual, and the macro aspect of biopower, which controls the total population.

The power of discipline, which is closely related to the individual, is a number of physical training activities for the purpose of improving certain abilities of the human body, and through these activities the human being is taught obedience. Disciplinary technology does not have the absolute center of power of the monarch as the traditional ruling power, nor does it highlight the law’s compulsory role in regulating activities, but takes control over individual bodies with working flesh by a whole system of surveillance, hierarchies, inspections, bookkeeping, and reports. In sum, “discipline tries to rule a multiplicity of men to the extent that their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and, if need be, punished.” (Foucault, 2003: 242)

This power of discipline, established in the 18th century (starting from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century) became prominent in social institutions such as schools, factories, hospitals, the military, and prisons, in which people were taught through surveillance, exercise, and training, and a system of standardized rewards and punishments was established to promote positive activities by individuals that were conducive to group building.

Thus, the power of discipline achieved through the discipline of the flesh is a micro form of control over human action. In contrast, the macro form of control is biopower, which emerged at the end of the 18th century, a biopolitics that focuses on population and life in the sense of the quality of the population as the basis for the reproduction of the species. It is important to note here that, first, biopower does not exclude disciplinary power, but rather embraces the original techniques of disciplinary power, which are in different hierarchical levels. In a certain sense, they overlap. Secondly, unlike the object of the disciplinary power, the biopower technique is applied to the whole of human life, no longer just “to man as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being” (*Ibid.*). Foucault points out that:

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(Menschenmaterial), about the supply of patients for a clinic (Krankenmaterial einer Klinik), gives evidence of this.” Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology”, p. 18.

(biopower) is being established is addressed to a multiplicity of men, not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individual bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on. So, after a first seizure of power over the body in an individualizing mode, we have a second seizure of power that is not individualizing but, if you like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species. (*Ibid.*)

Foucault introduces the term “Population” to illustrate how biopower is no longer concerned with the body of individual human beings, but with the quality of life of the population as a whole. The population here is not an individual with the status of a legal subject, nor is it a social aggregate with the rights of a subject, but a biological group that contains the concept of a human species in an abstract sense. Therefore, instead of focusing on individual activities, biopower places all individuals in a group of “human beings” to investigate the overall quality of life from the point of view of statistics such as birth rate, death rate, overall health level and life expectancy. Information technology is used to safely regulate the overall population balance and overall security. Of course, the concept of population here is not a simple quantitative category as in traditional sociology or economics, but a new political concept that has been restructured in a new context, i.e., the object of political governance in the sense of the existence of human life as a whole. Foucault argues that biopower is “a matter of taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species and of ensuring that they are not disciplined, but regularized” (Foucault, 2003: 246).

Thus, the power of discipline as individual body and biopower as the regulation of population constitute two series: “the body-organism-discipline-institutions series, and the population-biological processes-regulatory mechanisms-State” (*Ibid.*: 250). These two forms of power came together in the 19th century to form a biopower that was both anatomo-politic and bio-politic; both individualized and holistic, both micro and macro, thus making it so that biopolitical power has “taken control of life in general – with the body as one pole and the population as the other” (*Ibid.*: 253), and completely possesses dominion over human life itself. When such biopower is given the possibility to thrive, it expands exponentially, both technically and politically, and the danger of this expansion is illustrated in the potential for destruction, such as “when it becomes technologically and politically possible for man not only to manage life but to make it proliferate, to create living matter, to build the monster, and, ultimately, to build viruses that cannot be controlled and that are universally destructive” (*Ibid.*: 254).

Thus, it seems that the two mechanisms of biopower, physical discipline and population regulation, realize the control of life from the beginning to the end in both macro and micro aspects. Through microscopic physical discipline and macroscopic demographic adjustment, the power of life rules deeply into all aspects of life, and carries out a comprehensive implicit rule over the subjective life of human beings.

#### 4. Pandemic between biopower and Enframing

In this chapter, first I would like to compare Foucault’s and Heidegger’s respective critiques of contemporary society. Since the objectives of the two thinkers are different, the former is concerned with how power comes to control man in the society, meanwhile the latter criticizes and reveals the dangers posed by modern technology, it seems dangerous to compare the two; but through analysis we can at least see how their perspectives may overlap or complement each other. Second, I would like to turn to reality and examine how, in the particular status quo of the Coronavirus, the dangers that both Foucault and Heidegger speak of are reproduced.

On one hand, Hubert Dreyfus points out that “Foucault’s notion of power denotes the social aspect of...the [Heideggerian] clearing”, therefore Heidegger and Foucault share “a common

critique of techno-/bio-power.” In Dreyfus’s interpretation, the difference between these lines of critique is simply a matter of perspective.

Timothy Rayner, on the other hand, disagrees, and points out that there is nothing in Foucault’s work “to suggest that he seeks to recover the ‘fire from the heavens’ that Heidegger believes illuminated the world of ancient Greece.” Furthermore, the reason Foucault recapitulates Heidegger’s critique is nothing more than a way of thinking as an ‘instrument of thought’. “Displacing this instrument from the world of Heideggerian concerns, and reinserting it within a Nietzschean realm of practices and struggles, Foucault turns Heidegger’s way of thinking to a different end.” At the same time, the aims of Foucault and Heidegger are not identical. “Whereas Heidegger’s critique of technology seeks to recover the experience of what is always already forgotten in Enframing, Foucault’s critique of biopower pursues an experience in which the biopolitical subject itself is forgotten: the moment of desubjectivation” (Rayner, May 2001).

But Rayner here, I think, misunderstands Foucault’s point of view. It is true that for Foucault, his starting point is not Being, nor is he concerned with the relationship between Being and beings. But this does not mean that the object of Foucault’s critique is not metaphysical. It is admittedly true that Foucault’s starting position is not to examine power in terms of the Ontology-Metaphysics opposition, but the conclusions he draws confirm Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics, both that metaphysics/biopower in contemporary society threatens this situation of human nature through the planning and controlling of human beings.

Moreover, in order to completely escape from the constraints of the modern Western thought model and its social system, and to constantly satisfy his own pleasure of unlimited aesthetic transcendence, Foucault creatively designed the Aesthetics of Existence lifestyle according to the conditions of modern life, which he takes from the ancient Greco-Romans. This active way of life is to transform the individual into a subject by means of “technology of the self,”

which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault, 1997: 225)

Thus, I think that where the two-part ways, as Rayner points out, are precisely where their concerns overlap, i.e., through the critique of the status quo of modern bio-/techno-power metaphysics, from the aim of returning to the way of thinking/life of the Greco-Roman period. But the difference in their views leads to different conclusions, as Dreyfus says (but he is not entirely correct); Heidegger’s fundamental position starts from ontological differences, while the forgetfulness of Being in contemporary society is the absence of human subjectivity, which raises the danger of technology. Foucault, in contrast, is concerned (in Heidegger’s terms) with the ontic, practical human way of being, the question of the power between this individual way of being and the human being as a community. This power is controlled and exploited in what Heidegger points out is the absence of modern subjectivity in society, as an individual human being, by means of Enframing, schools, and government agencies. Thus, where the two diverge is a difference of ontological difference.

#### *4.1 Pandemic, biopower and releasement*

Now let’s get back to reality. The most pressing current situation is the threat COVID-19 poses to our biological existence; simultaneously, however, in order to protect us as individuals, governments have imposed lockdown efforts and are blocking our sociological meaning. And more importantly, we may, at some point in the future, become accustomed to this government-imposed planning and regulation of us.

Already in Europe people have had to go out less due to lockdown, and nightlife venues have been closed by governments who have found it beneficial to control the pandemic as long as they do not harm small businesses and tourism.

The emergency measures it imposes on us seem to universalize the current “state of exception” inherited from 20th century political theology, confirming Foucault’s thesis that modern sovereign power is biopolitical (a power expressed in the production, management and administration of “life”). Moreover, (un)fortunately, both serving and as a result of the rapid development of contemporary medicine, people voluntarily become clinical cases, looking forward to the advances of contemporary technology, hoping to rely on it to resist COVID-19. Last but not least, viruses mark the eternal condition of our species. In case we forget that we are mortal, finite, contingent, lacking, ontologically deprived, etc., the virus is here to remind us, to force us to contemplate, to make us face our meaning of being.

The people’s demands regarding resistance to COVID-19 shows a dichotomous character. On the one hand, the government is called to account for inaction and lack of regulation, which has led to the loss of hundreds of thousands of families and loved ones. At the same time, it demands that the government abandon its infringement on individual freedom.<sup>5</sup>

Here, in reality, there are two special government-controlled situations, so let’s turn to these two. One is where the government tracks and controls the daily actions of each individual, introducing strict legal regulations and using discipline to control epidemics. In this case the trajectory of each of us is completely controlled by the government through the support of modern technology, such as health codes or surveillance cameras (which are absolutely invented by human’s will and only have limited way to be revealed). In the other case, on the contrary, the government does not introduce obvious coercive measures and regulations, and in this case the epidemic is rampant and human health is completely dependent on medical institutions. But can we say that the former is a manifestation of biopower and the latter is not? No, the better interpretation of this situation is that the government is the embodiment of biopower in either case, because whether or not the government enforces control, the ultimate goal is for people to return to work and production and to ensure the stable development of the country and the government. Although the policies are different, the ultimate goal is the same. Through a metaphysical thinking, that is, only to achieve the ultimate purpose and ignore the specific ontic life of each person, to ensure the stable development and progress of society.

More generally, we have all come to realize that there is no risk of infection without any social activity. We will thus have to address a fundamental question: How much are we willing to risk going out for dinner, having coffee with friend, or saying hello to our neighbor? Where do we place our standards when we decide that our social well-being takes precedence over securing our health? Is political survival more important than biological survival? Or is it neither? What really determines our own existence?

But hold on. Let us first recall the Žižek joke from the film “Ninotchka”: the hero visits a cafeteria and orders coffee without cream; the waiter replies: “Sorry, but we have run out of cream. Can I bring you coffee without milk?” Žižek implies that in this joke “what we encounter here is the logic of differentiability, where the lack itself functions as a positive feature.” (Žižek, 2013: 47)

Wasn’t it the same when the communist regimes in Eastern Europe collapsed in 1990? The people who took to the streets demanding freedom and democracy free of corruption and exploitation ended up with freedom and democracy without solidarity and justice. Isn’t that

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. [Marchforthe.org](https://marchforthe.org) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protests\\_over\\_responses\\_to\\_the\\_COVID-19\\_pandemic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protests_over_responses_to_the_COVID-19_pandemic).



exactly what we are watching today, when we see resistance to government mandates regarding COVID-19, a resistance whose target is actually biopower and modern technology? When we ask only for our human rights, we get a cup of human rights without health. The absence of the essence of human beings is ignored by most people in contemporary times.

Foucault's solution is not good for the problem at hand. Foucault's practical return to the Greco-Roman way of life is valid only when it is not an emergency situation, and the conflict today is not only in the dichotomy between humankind and biopower, but also in the relationship between and resistance against modern technology and COVID-19. This relationship cannot be accomplished by using Foucault's theory of care of the self alone.

Let us turn to Heidegger, who suggests that where there is danger, there is hope. He proposes, again, a solution to the treatment of modern technology which is the positive contrast to the world of Gestell, namely the idea of "releasement" (Gelassenheit). It constitutes a "comportment toward technology which expresses yes' and at the same time 'no'": "we let technological devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute" (Heidegger, 1966: 54). This attitude is not one of letting it go, of allowing COVID-19 to rage, but rather of looking at our existence and meaning controlled by modern technology, at the absence of Being.

Genuine letting, accomplished through thinking in releasement begins with the insight that the very structure of a claim about all there is, is itself imposing on rather than genuinely enabling, the manifestation of particular entities. On pain of being incapable of giving an account of itself, thinking cannot presuppose or aim to arrive at a specific ontology but must remain ontologically non-committal (Keiling, 2016: 106).

Therefore, I think that the direction proposed by Heidegger is more universal. It is the current crisis that makes us perceive the danger of modern technology-biopower, and it is for this reason that we resort to measures such as lockdown; this in turn forces us to reflect on biopower, on the meaning of existence, and in the midst of the danger, use the attitude of Releasement to save the individual self that is lost within contemporary society.

What is the danger today? The real danger is that we forget that we are already in danger and enjoy the good life brought by modern technology/biopower. We have good reasons to believe that we are the masters of this world, and thanks to technological advancement, we can enjoy the subway, air conditioning, food and other commodities or conveniences anytime and anywhere. But we forget the value of our own existence, the meaning of existence.

And it is precisely now, at this particular time, during this particular pandemic, that the government, in combination with contemporary technology, have shattered our peaceful lives and forced us to re-examine the meaning of our lives, the meaning of our existence. (Un?)fortunately, when facing lockdown, while our social existence is limited, can we not also perceive from this reduced existence that our life is not as good as we think, that the meaning of people's existence has long been fixed by modern technology/biopower, that our own meaning has been denied by the meaning of society as a whole? Heidegger pointed this out long ago, "but where danger is, grows / The saving power also". It is precisely this danger that gives us the opportunity to reflect on our own values and meanings.

*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way — in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. Charles Dickens*

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