

Why must we combine analytical psychology and technocriticism



The 19th and 20th centuries marked a great anthropological change: all kinds of techniques constitute our environment, just as trees, mountains and rivers have been for our ancestors since the dawn of humanity.

Sadly, the suddenness of this mutation is stirring up a lot of emotions: the *technophiles* see it as a sign of “progress”, the *technophobes*, interpret it as a source of nuisances. But few manage to go beyond the emotional stage and draw out an argued analysis and lessons from the the situation: these are the *technocritics*.

[READ > Technocritic](#)

As early as the last century, technocritical thinkers anticipated the situations that affect us today and warned their contemporaries: if «technical progress» should continue without being counterbalanced by «ethical progress», they said, he would be left to himself, as in the fable of the *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, and become a real danger for humanity. In France, the sociologist Jacques Ellul was one of them: he devoted numerous books and articles to the subject for five decades.



In 1973, Ellul argued in *Les nouveaux Possédés* (*The New Demons*, 1975), that human beings may claim to be free, emancipated, but that in reality they are alienated by a thousand things that they constantly manufacture and perfect in order to limit the constraints of their existence and achieve ever greater well-being. Ellul's main targets were the state and technique.¹

According to Ellul, humans hoped that technique would not only solve material needs, but also satisfy intellectual curiosity (like today's search engines) and anxieties (such as having a child when you don't want to). Ellul noted that people expected technology to bring them happiness on earth, just as the Church was once expected to ensure the salvation of souls in the afterlife.

[READ > Technosolutionism](#)

¹ Careful attention must be paid to the use of the word *technique*. According to Ellul, *technique* includes not only *technology* (machines, computers, networks, etc.), but also all *non-material techniques*, such as work organization techniques or advertising and propaganda techniques.

Les Nouveaux Possédés concluded with these words: "It is not technique that enslaves us, but the sacredness transferred onto it, which prevents us from activating our critical function. » To Ellul, "sacralizing" meant *unconsciously and collectively conferring inordinate importance on something, to the point of alienating oneself from it and not being able to do without it*. Nowhere, however, was the notion of *transference* explained. We know today that this notion is central to psychoanalysis, yet Ellul gave no credence to psychoanalysis: he said that most of his contemporaries behaved *unconsciously*, but to him the adjective "unconscious" meant simply *inattentive* or *negligence*.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Ellul's books have remained misunderstood by the wider public, or that himself is often equated with being a technophobe, something he vigorously defended. But despite his impasse on the unconscious, he made two fundamental points:

- 1) Sacralizing anything leads to *an alteration of both critical thinking and the sense of values*;
 - 2) Technique develops *autonomously*, with no one able to regulate its development.
- As Gabor's law states, "what is technically conceivable will necessarily be realized later".

READ > **Gabor's Law**

Alas, given Ellul's rejection of psychoanalysis, he knew nothing of Carl Gustav Jung's theory of the *autonomy of the unconscious*. Anyone who makes the effort to match these two theories can - without too much difficulty - work out a stereoscopic vision not only of the contemporary human soul, but of all the nuisances caused by man's state of generalized unconsciousness and irresponsibility. Simply said, **technique develops autonomously because it is the object of a projection of an unconscious that is itself autonomous but not recognized as such**.

So, although humans are perfectly *knowing* of the negative consequences of "technical progress", they are totally incapable of *becoming aware* of its causes² and thus of remedying them. We can only "become aware" of anything by identifying the unconscious as a psychic entity in its own right.³

An invitation to dialectize

Since we have integrated the fact that the autonomy of technology stems from the autonomy of the unconscious, almost all the disasters that affect us can be explained: military conflicts, climate change, racial and marital violences, disappearance of values, starting with the notion of truth... And in general, unleashing of the will for power.⁴

The theories of Jung and Ellul are complementary for another important reason: each theory points to what the other lacks. In the same way that Jung makes explicit the notion of transference left in abeyance by Ellul, Ellul indicates that it is illusory to expect human beings

² The French language emphasizes this distinction: "to know" can be translated as *prendre connaissance* and "becoming aware" as *prendre conscience*. - Translator's note.

³ This is not to dismiss the question: if Jacques Ellul gave no credence to the question of the unconscious, how could he claim to be "aware" of anything? We'll answer for him: biblical exegesis, particularly the study of texts denouncing idols, served as his theoretical foundation. In his view, the sacralization of the state and of technique are manifestations of generalized idolatry. Whatever the case, and as François Rabelais, a famous 16th-century French writer, put it so well: "science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul" ("science" and "knowledge" are synonymous here).

⁴ Of course, the will to power is nothing new: we already find criticism of it in several ancient myths, such as that of Prometheus. But the phenomenal computing power of algorithms is such that the will to power can no longer be illustrated by a myth alone: it has become *an unchallenged collective reality*: not only do the majority of our contemporaries live with it, but, *volens volens*, they reinforce it: by establishing more and more contact with chatbots, they are unwittingly contributing to a disembodiment of humanity. And the more they congratulate chatbots for "reasoning" like them, the more in reality their own hyper-conformist ways of thinking are modelled on those of chatbots.

to be interested in the Self and symbolic life. This is particularly the case if people evolve in a society based entirely on ego inflation and whose main characteristic is to elevate instrumental reason to the apex, thus emptying the very notion of symbol of all meaning.

The main objective of this site is to help raise awareness of the fact that the technique's utopia is *polluting* the entire psyche much more than CO2 is affecting the ozone layer. And to acknowledge that because the climate crisis is the direct consequence of a generalized will of power that is unrecognized as such - and as a corollary - cannot be recognized until that utopia is identified.

To break this vicious circle, it is important to approach things *dialectically* and simultaneously from both the *psychological* angle (that of the subject) and from the *sociological* angle (that of the object). Jung and Ellul themselves invite us to do this, all the more so because they share a way of thinking that is open to the subject-object tension.

[READ >](#) **Jung and Ellul, dialecticians**

An example perfectly shows how the ideology of technical progress destroys critical thinking and traditional values and replaces them with the search for maximum efficiency in all things: the Trump phenomenon

If a man has been elected and re-elected President of the United States without being particularly renowned for his critical thinking, the subtlety of his language or the coherence of his words, it's because he has been infinitely more effective in his propaganda than all his competitors and challengers. And if he has been so effective, it's above all because respect for nature, respect for otherness and concern for the truth are not among his priorities.

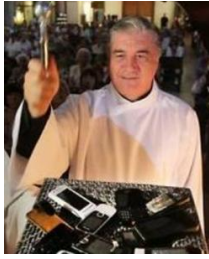
Alas, if so many people are flabbergasted by the fact that this man - who expresses himself no better than a ten-year-old child - occupies the highest position in the world's leading power, it's because, like technophiles and technophobes, they are unable to go beyond the stage of emotion, and because they lack the tools offered by analytical psychology and the technocritical approach.

Origin and philosophy of this site



My name is Joël Decarsin, I am 70 years old and live in France, I am a Christian, a Catholic by baptism and by choice (because Catholicism is still attached to the rite and the symbol), but unfortunately without much conviction because I really think that the Church betrays the Gospel every day, systematically alling itself with the State and bogging down in *existential* issues (such as the marriage of priests, opening up the priesthood to women, the end of life...) but moving away from an *essential* issue: the denunciation of new idols : State and technique.

C.G. Jung taught me how vital it is for a human being to articulate rational thought and religious feeling. But at the same time, he never shied away from openly criticizing the Catholic institution, for no longer promulgating dogmas (thus gradually closing itself off from symbolic life) and also for watering down the question of evil (doctrine of *privatio boni*).



At the same time Jacques Ellul taught me that the absence of any critical approach to technique is the main cause of Christianity's decline.⁵ So, for example, when in 2014 Pope Francis considered the Internet 'a gift from God', he implicitly meant that the Church had to conform to the Century... contrary to Paul's recommendation (Epistle to the Romans, 12:2)!

> Picture : A priest blessing cell phones in a church in Nice, southern France, in 2011.

In recent years, I have been attempting to make technocritical thinking better known in my own country. I did this work through specific associations. First, in the *Association Internationale Jacques Ellul*, of which I was editor from 2009 to 2012, and then as coordinator-initiator of the *Technologos / Penser la technique aujourd'hui* association, from 2012 to 2015. Ultimately, my assessment was rather limited, essentially for two reasons. I didn't include my psychoanalytic background in my technocritical stance because I thought it was a private matter. Rereading Jung's book *Gegenwart und Zukunft*, I convinced me that this was a big mistake. Furthermore, as the association is "open to all winds", the exchanges are very random and insufficiently framed.

I now try another way: no longer an *association* (structure more or less important by its size and governed by predefined statutes), but a small *community*, based on conviviality and structured by a rule that can evolve over time.

Three conditions seem essential:

- Work in a spirit of non-power: Ellul reminds us that if impotence is "want to do, but not be able," non-potency is "can do, but not necessarily want," with self-limitation and without any obligation to achieve results: moved only by a sense of moral responsibility and brotherhood.
- Work only in small groups: a maximum of ten people, men and women from different backgrounds, but with sufficient knowledge of analytical psychology and the history of techno-critical thinking and "organized internally as a mass", to use Jung's words, that is, whose ego is based on an authority that transcends it (the Neighbor, the Self, God...)⁶
- Balance between real and virtual exchanges: believing that we can create links with the community and take the debate forward using screenshots (with zoom sessions, for example) is once again yielding to the ideology of the technique.

I do not know what concrete goals this community would establish for itself, because only it would have the power to do so. Now, applications are open.

Joël Decarsin,
Aix en Provence (France)
May 30, 2025
(Transl. Jeff Jenson, Boulder, CO)

⁵ Jacques Ellul, *La Subversion du christianisme*, 1984. Transl. *The Subversion Of Christianity*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986 ; Wipf and Stock, 2011 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Subversion_of_Christianity

⁶ If the human sciences are unable to identify the problem, it is precisely because they are only sciences and do not mobilize the totality of the person: the conscious and the unconscious. And that is why « science without consciousness » leads us nowhere.