

Uncovering Realities

Piotr Szeląg

Translated by: Paweł Pustelnik

A current outlook on the development of technology

Nowadays, many humanists, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers or theologians complain about the reality they encounter saying that the development of technology causes dehumanization of the relationships between the people. We tend to be further away from each other, we live in digital ghettos and many of the relationships we have are translated only into an apparent form of contact. Is that really true?

We have to see, that from the other point of view that new technologies enhance the process of building our relationships. The fact that we can communicate easily with each other makes us closer to each other. We know much more about the others and it is easier to make friends; but how does this affect the relation that a human being has with God? Being immersed in the blessings of civilization are we coming closer to God or conversely, are we becoming more distant?

Two simultaneous processes

From the very beginning, when we were created we encounter and are confronted with two points of reference. The first is the relation between us and God, whereas the second is based on our liaison with the world in which the Creator has placed us. As a result of this, we face two constant processes in which we shape our relationship with God and with the created world. The first one can be called "the life of faith", the second however is a realization of God's call to 'multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it' – in this we can include the creation and development of technology.

From one point of view, the human being is reference to the reality that goes beyond the tangible world, it is juxtaposed with God's reality, but on the other hand, people are bound to this reality as they create it by creating culture, among others, through the development of technology. Therefore, we can see that in the human experience there are two realities that meet each other. And in the way God's message and the Gospel teaches us how to shape the world we live in, how to 'subdue it'. Technological innovations can help us in discovering God and shape our relationship with God.

The task and the chance

Everything that God has created and redeemed is good. Only human being's acts and the way that creation is used gains moral significance. The acts can be both good and bad. It depends on us to which the manor the creation will go. This applies to the relationships with God and other people.

Every one of us decides if she or he uses technology according to what God says and if technology does not substitute God. It depends on me whether I use technology to get to know myself better, to better understand others and the world that exists thanks to God. This leads to the further puzzle: has technology

Mozaik 28, *Living in a World of Technology*, "Uncovering Realities" Peter Szelag, Fall 2011.

Subscribe to Mozaik by visiting www.wscf-europe.org/resources/mozaik/subscribe/

became an idol for us, which is the aim itself? It needs to be underlined that technology can enhance the process of approaching God, but it may cover God.

We can see people that have been experiencing dangers and difficulties related to the current development of technology. Some of them became its victims, some decided to withdraw and radically distance themselves from technology. Simultaneously, we can see those who in technology have a chance to develop in many dimensions of their lives, also in their spiritual life.

The multitude of the situations, personalities and experiences makes the answer to the posed question risky, as the picture of the reality may become blurred. Though, we need to look for the answer looking at each and every case individually. What is more the point of departure for this reflection should be each of us.

Practical solutions

While raising the issue of the technological development, I believe that it is worth looking at concrete conquests of science and analyze them separately to see what their influence could be on the relationship we have with Jesus.

It already began in the 1960s, when technological development was not as advanced as it is now, the Second Vatican Council has called to use media in evangelisation. Its participants understood the role of the media and perceived it as a tool and a chance to make God's Revelation closer. Nowadays, the main tool that can have certain significance in the relationship with God is the Internet.

This virtual space has become a modern Areopagus where people communicate with each other, exchanging information concerning all possible dimensions of our lives. Moreover, many people look for first-hand information on spirituality. The Internet gives huge possibilities, not only to educate but to share one's spiritual life and organize the activities of the religious communities.

One cannot forget about the dangers related to the Internet: online we encounter not only valuable information and initiatives but there is also a variety of absolutely insignificant, wrong or even perilous materials disseminated by various sects. The need for a considerate approach is essential.

We have to be aware of the fact that none of the technological blessings are able to substitute the participation in the traditional dimension of Church life: participation in liturgy exercising the sacraments, or experiencing the community.

The challenges and perspectives

We can see that as human beings we are not able to avoid challenges that we are faced with through the development of the technology in the same way that we cannot eliminate the spiritual dimension of our nature. Our task, therefore, is to constantly take the chance to saturate the cultural texture (and thus the development of technology) of society with the Christian spirit. Finally, we need to approach technology in a way that it can help us in uncovering the reality which goes beyond technology - the reality of God.

Mozaik 28, *Living in a World of Technology*, "Uncovering Realities" Peter Szelag, Fall 2011.

Subscribe to Mozaik by visiting www.wscf-europe.org/resources/mozaik/subscribe/

Piotr Szeląg is a Catholic priest, born in Poland and is currently based in Rome, where he is finishing his PhD dissertation in canonical law at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He's planning to come back to Poland and share his experiences with his students. Piotr is interested in theology of culture, modern art and intercultural dialogue. In his free time he cooks for friends and family.

Further readings:

Foley, John, "The Church and Internet", Pontifical Council for Social Communications, (Vatican City, February 2002),
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_church-internet_en.html.

Foley, John, "Ethics in Internet", Pontifical Council for Social Communications, (Vatican City, February 2002),
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_ethics-internet_en.html.

John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter: The Rapid Development of the Holy Father John Paul II to Those Responsible for Communications", Feast of Saint Francis de Sales, Patron Saint of Journalist, (Vatican City, January 2005), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20050124_il-rapido-sviluppo_en.html.