

Against Unattainable Models. Perfection, Technology and Society

Contra los modelos inalcanzables. Perfección, tecnología y sociedad

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Abstract: The present article deals with the subject of the contemporary concern towards recent technological developments, starting with the current discussion about the topic of perfection. Precisely, one of the hypotheses regarding the causes of this concern is the model of perfection that the society of the technological civilization is promoting: an unattainable model. Once we have clarified the fact that the idea of perfection, which inspires contemporaneity, is an "intramundane metaphysical perfection" that seeks to eliminate certain undesired corporeal aspects, we can argue that the current social and cultural models cannot be attained for four main reasons: they are extrinsic, globalized, unreal, and dependent on the logic of technology. In this context, and based on these models, the main ethical objective of human beings becomes impossible: to be oneself.

Palabras clave: Perfection; Biotechnology; Society; Human Enhancement

Resumen: El presente artículo aborda el tema de la preocupación contemporánea por los desarrollos tecnológicos recientes, comenzando por la discusión actual sobre el tema de la perfección. Precisamente, una de las hipótesis con respecto a las causas de esta preocupación es el modelo de perfección que promueve la sociedad de la civilización tecnológica: un modelo inalcanzable. Una vez que hemos aclarado el hecho de que la idea de perfección, que inspira la contemporaneidad, es una "perfección metafísica intramundana" que busca eliminar ciertos aspectos corporales no deseados, podemos argumentar que los modelos sociales y culturales actuales no pueden alcanzarse por cuatro razones principales: son extrínsecos, globalizados, irreales y dependen de la lógica de la tecnología. En este contexto, y en base a estos modelos, el principal objetivo ético del ser humano se vuelve imposible: ser uno mismo.

Key Words: Perfección, biotecnología, sociedad, mejora humana.

1. A “COLLECTIVE” CONCERN

In one of the books that have most helped Michael Sandel reach a general audience, *The Case Against Perfection. Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering*, he writes: “Breakthroughs in genetics present us with a promise and a predicament. The promise is that we may soon be able to treat and prevent a host of debilitating diseases. The predicament is that our newfound genetic knowledge may also enable us to manipulate our own nature – to enhance our muscles, memories, and moods; to choose the sex, height, and other genetic traits of our children; to improve our physical and cognitive capacities; to make ourselves ‘better than well’. Most people find at least some forms of genetic engineering disquieting. But it is not easy to articulate the source of our unease. The familiar terms of moral and political discourse make it difficult to say what is wrong with reengineering our nature” (Sandel, 2007, pp. 5-6). If nowadays the difficulty of expressing our concern seems more than evident, on the other hand it seems sensible to do something about it. For that matter, the right question to ask is: Why do we have this concern in light of recent technological developments?

A very fast but historically-substantiated answer would be that new technologies, because of their newness, naturally trigger concern in common people (and not only that). As Caroline Marvin brilliantly explains in her book *When Old Technologies Were New. Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*, the history of technology has always gone hand in hand with concern, resistance, apocalyptic prophesies, catastrophes, and a perception of elements of something magical (Onetti Muda & Borghi, 2016, pp. 33). In relation to electricity (that nowadays we consider as something normal and part of our everyday life), she states: “At the same time that electrical professionals were confidently and proudly prophesying Utopian accomplishments through the proper exercise of electrical knowledge, especially at the most abstract levels of discussion about the future of civilization they were also conducting an anxious, less publicized discussion about the possible social catastrophes of electrical metamorphosis” (Marvin, 1988, p. 64). And continues: “Discomfort with the menace of electrical technology was elsewhere manifested in apocalyptic theories of disaster. One of the most popular was that excess charge accumulating in the world posed a growing danger to man and nature” (Marvin, 1988, p. 119). This concern cannot be by itself reason enough to deny the development of any technology, because it is based on perceptions that may be too emotional or not very rational. The idea that progress is in itself bad (or good, on the other hand) is not based on reason, because progress corresponds to an “is” and we cannot attach any adjective to it. It is clear that the progress of medicine can be good, but not the progress of stupidity (Valera & Marcos, p. 2014). On the other hand, it cannot be

coherently assumed that anything new must be better than the old version, or that what is known is better than what is unknown, or vice versa. This idea about oldness and newness, although not something theoretically innovative (of course!), nevertheless is useful to clarify a subject that many times is dealt with in the wrong way and with vague terminology.

In fact, we are afraid of new technologies and perhaps a little bit of new techniques. This difference is not only terminological, but semantic: if technology has to do with the “products,” that is, the tools, technique has to do with an anthropological dimension, a possibility inherent to human nature. As Marcos (2010, p. 566) states: “From the anthropological point of view, *tékhne* is not a recent or new reality, but an anthropological constant. *Tékhne* and human being are mutually dependent”. While technique is an anthropological dimension, a human act, technology is something different, albeit related: “Talking about technique means invoking the skills each of us needs to accomplish something, and to give prominence to the practical knowledge that guides this. However, in relation to what occurred in the ancient world, this skill and capacity to use certain tools to create specific products has undergone a dramatic change. The reason for this is that the conditions and the means which allow technical activity nowadays have changed: that is, the field of technology has changed” (Fabris, 2012, p. 13). Therefore, both dimensions seem closely related, albeit different. Fabris continues clarifying (2012, p. 13): “In fact, nowadays [...] the notion of *technology* refers specifically to the set of tools used to achieve certain results, and to their working logic [...]. As a matter of fact, technological tools are considered an organized and interconnected whole in itself, with which we interact and to which we have to adapt to a large extent just to use them. In comparison to the term ‘technique’ [...], the word ‘technology’ therefore refers to the set of devices and their internal structure. *Logos*, concretely, refers to rationality and the complexity of the tool system to which technical action is related.” Thus, contemporary technological developments add complexity to the situation, at least in connection to the hermeneutics of those developments. Our concern is related precisely to this complexity: the develop of systems that we do not know how to handle or that we cannot control, because they have a certain independence from our management, generates a feeling of impotence and inadequacy surrounding current changes. The most adequate answer to that feeling – and perhaps the most sensible – would be the popular “heuristics of fear” (Franzini Tibaldeo, 2015) developed by Jonas (1984, pp. 26-28), which stresses that “emotions aid us in defining what we really care about, what is at stake, and what we really value. [...] Since it is easier for us to see the bad than to see that good, we must consult our fear(s) to understand what we really value” (Coeckelbergh, 2013, p. 103). Faced with the “new” that is moving forward, we cannot help but feel afraid because something is changing and, consequently, use the well-known “precaution principle” (Marcos, 2014).

If we are not satisfied by that first answer typology, perhaps we should look for another solution.

Another type of answer would be that new technologies generate concern because they are “trying” to change something that we consider to be “inherently ours,” thus imposing an external model on our nature. Clearly, this second answer does not totally change nor replace the first approach, but complements it. Just as the first one, this second answer typology recognizes, to a certain degree, the positive value of technology, its scope and its achievements, but it also reminds us of a danger to which it is related: the danger of a heteronomous regulation of our lives. Kass (2003, p. 9) clearly describes this double attitude towards technological developments: “We should be deeply grateful for the gifts of human ingenuity and cleverness, and for the devoted efforts of scientists, physicians, and entrepreneurs who have used these gifts to make those benefits possible. And, mindful that modern biology is just entering puberty, we suspect that the finest fruit is yet to come. Yet, notwithstanding these blessings, present and projected, we have also seen more than enough to make us anxious and concerned.” The idea that is heteronomously imposed on our identity is that there is a perfection we must reach or respect, and that the new technologies are taking care of this. The latest biotechnological developments, with their tendency to surpass any limit or obstacle, seem to compromise the possibility of a true human “authenticity,” which is threatened by social and cultural models related to the new technologies.

2. WHAT PERFECTION?

The perfection related to new technologies, has to do with our bodies, that is, with our most fragile and limited dimension. In this sense, theoretical reflection on the perfection of the new (bio)technologies has been consistently related to the idea of human enhancement, or with the human possibility of improvement (Cañon Loyes, 2015).

However, it is clear that the idea of perfection referred to in modern debates about new technologies is quite vague: “The complex and ambiguous concept of perfection has not yet received its due attention in the current debate. If the notion of perfection is used at all, its polemical use often tends to obscure the debate” (Roduit, *et al.*, 2013, p. 647).

Contemporary philosophers and bioethics specialists have frequently reflected on the subject, and the popular debate between bioconservatives and bioliberals was the result of this idea (Roache & Clarke, 2009). In fact, bioconservatives maintain that the idea of perfection is another way of translating the contemporary Promethean “*hybris*,” while the bioliberals believe this notion to be simply irrelevant, yet they do not know how to justify the possibility of improvement without that concept: “For a comprehensive moral evaluation of

enhancements, an outspoken debate about human perfection, about essential elements of a good human life, seems to be urgently need” (Roduit, *et al.*, 2013, p. 650).

In this sense, the reflection revolves around a concept (i.e., perfection) that has not been defined clearly and descriptively, and that, on the other hand, is used with strong connotative and evocative emphasis (positively and negatively). As can be seen in the article by Roduit *et al.* (2013, p. 648), every attempt to systematize the concept fails immediately: “The concept of perfection is the idea of a sufficiently determinate set of ideal human properties that influences the way a person sees herself and the way she tries to improve. Particular conceptions of perfection are whatever this ideal is about: for some it will be to have a certain appearance, for others it might be to have certain virtues or to act in a certain way. Conceptions of perfection may differ substantially, but function similarly insofar as they inform judgments and choices.”

For this reason, we believe we must first of all clarify the meaning of the term “perfection” in order to understand what elements are at stake in this debate. In this sense, can be useful the ideas of Australian philosopher John Passmore (2000), who in his book *The Perfectibility of Man*, delves into the subject of perfection from a critical-historical perspective. This book sums up the four most important meanings of the term “perfection”: 1. “technical perfection;” 2. “obedientary perfection;” 3. “teleological perfection;” 4. “metaphysical perfection.” And describe them in this way:

1. “The capacity of each man to perfect himself in some particular task” (Passmore, 2000, p. 2).
2. The “absolute obedience to the will of God” (Passmore, 2000, p. 7).
3. “This is the perfection which consists in a thing’s reaching its ‘natural end’” (Passmore, 2000, p. 8); and: “the realization of potentialities” (Passmore, 2000, p. 13).
4. “The perfect [...] is best defined [...] as ‘that which has no flaw in it, that which is complete, that which is consistent, that which is sound’” (Passmore, 2000, p. 16).

He even provides a clearer summary when he writes that when we state that a human being is perfect, at the same time we are stating that one of the following criteria is being fulfilled (Passmore, 2000, p. 27):

1. “There is some task in which each and every man can perfect himself technically;
2. he is capable of wholly subordinating himself to God’s will;
3. he can attain to his natural end;
4. he can be entirely free of any moral defect;

5. he can make of himself a being who is metaphysically perfect;
6. he can make of himself a being who is harmonious and orderly;
7. he can live in the manner of an ideally perfect human being;
8. he can become godlike.”

Coming back to modern times, it is evident that the idea of perfection most closely related to contemporary technologies after Nietzsche’s pronouncement of the death of God, and with it the death of the metaphysical and teleological idea of nature, is technical capacity and the idea of an “intramundane metaphysical” perfection. In a “postmetaphysical” age, according to Habermas (2002, pp. 1-5), we have nothing else than the perfection of our current or future bodily states. In fact, it is useless in modern times to propose the issue of perfection from the idea of obedience to God’s will, or from the development of some capacities founded in our nature (although many thinkers keep doing this): it would mean facing issues and arguments that most people do not accept nor understand. Therefore, the two remaining points seem to offer several elements to resume a serious reflection on the idea of perfection in modern times, greatly conditioned and driven by recent (bio)technological developments.

3. BEING FREE FROM FLAWS

The contemporary idea of perfection is completely linked to our body and, thus, to our functions. However, when it does not refer to our bodies but instead focuses on extra-corporeal elements (immortality, happiness, etc.), it ends up reducing all reflection to narratives about our corporeality.

Ultimately, what we are looking for through modern biotechnologies is to solve some of the problems related to our corporeal reality, to improve our lives (or our quality of life, because this is more easily quantified). As Nick Bostrom (2005, p. 1), one of the most popular philosophers of transhumanism, states: “The human desire to acquire new capacities is as ancient as our species itself. We have always sought to expand the boundaries of human existence, be it socially, geographically, or mentally. There is a tendency in at least some individuals always to search for a way around every obstacle and limitation to human life and happiness.” Therefore, the issue is that new (bio)technologies have the possibility to answer the call from the human desire to improve, to surpass its limits, because, due to its very essence, it seeks potentially infinite development (and improvement). Pessina writes (2000, p. 57): “The technosciences interpret each limit as an obstacle, that is, as something that *must be* overcome. However, in the moral view of reality, there are *obstacles* [...] that are recognized as *limits*. Yet, to think about the existence of *limits* means introducing the concepts of *finitude* and *resignation*: due to its method, research is

described as *infinite* and knows nothing about resignation. But it is a *negative infinite*, because it simply coincides with the progress of certain finite stages.”

Therefore, the need to eliminate certain undesired aspects of our human nature uncovers the possibility of actually erasing these elements step by step using (bio)technological tools. Technology has this possibility written in its DNA, because its logic is that of “be able to do/must do.” Each possibility of action is ultimately transformed into a moral duty from the point of view of technology. In this sense, the reductive power of technology (and along with it, of technoscience) is infinite: “Technoscience involves being (energy, matter, living beings, thought) only as plasticity, reactivity, manipulability. It involves these things, one could say, only as sources of potentiality, of possibility, of power. At the limit, technoscience presupposes nothing; it carries out operations and, creating the results of its own operations, takes them as a springboard for new operations. It is in this essential absence of presuppositions – and thus of consideration for being, for the given, for the past – that technoscience blocks in a fundamental way any philosophical advance” (Hottois, 1987, p. 73).

At this time, it is useless to critically address the issues raised by transhumanist or posthumanist thinkers (Valera, 2014) in order to understand the dynamics and possibilities of the new technologies. The problems so radically unleashed by these new tendencies are already regularly used in some technological media, precisely because the logic of technology remains the same for both simple and the most complex contexts.

The logic that governs technology, as we have already mentioned, is known for being reductive, transformational and progressive. It does not recognize links or obstacles, because its objective is to surpass every limit. When this logic is applied to human beings, we are faced immediately by some problems: Can we allow the new (bio)technologies to be freely introduced into the dynamics that control our bodies in order to transform them? Suggested as such, the issue seems to find the answer it needs in the well-known dichotomy between the normativity of human nature and the need to respect the desires of different people (whatever they happen to be), yet there are multiple solutions to this debate. It is not only a debate between bioconservatives and bioliberals, but rather on what the human ideal is, that is, how the “humanity of each human being” must develop.

Therefore, we go back to the subject of perfection. If the idea of perfection we are analyzing corresponds to a “metaphysical” perfection, but is bereft of all transcendence, a corporeal perfection, then we could use Newmann’s definition (Passmore, 2000, p. 16): perfection is “that which has no flaw in it, that which is complete, that which is consistent, that which is sound.” In this sense, we would have the possibility to step away from any idea of *telos* or human potential, and, at the same time, leave aside such “dense” concepts such as nature and God.

If this is the sense of perfection that we want to use, can there be a human reality that can be defined as “perfect?” Descartes (2006, p. 139) had already

suggested this problem with great clarity: “If you speak of a ‘most perfect corporeal being,’ if you take ‘most perfect’ in an absolute sense (the sense in which a corporeal thing is a being in which all perfections are to be found), then you are uttering a contradiction, because the very nature of a body entails many imperfections, such as that a body is divisible into parts, that each of its parts is not another part, and the like, for it is self-evident that it is a greater perfection not to be divided than to be divided, and so on.” Is not our corporeality in itself the proof we need of our imperfections? It seems clear that our corporeal conscience needs to take this vulnerability into account, so that it does not create a feeling of chronic inadequacy: “As bodies are the clearest expression of human mortality, imperfection, and weakness [...], so body consciousness, for most of us, primarily means feelings of inadequacy, or falling far short of the reigning ideals of beauty, health and performance – a point that also indicates that body consciousness is always more than consciousness of one’s own body alone” (Shusterman, 2008, p. xi). Regarding the second subject (the body as a social/relational element), we will come back to it later because it involves other reflections. In relation to the first point, it seems quite clear: our body is the measure of our imperfection, because its matter has the possibility of changing.

If this is the case, it seems there are not many possibilities for humans to alleviate the feeling of chronic inadequacy, because reality gives them a body that is constantly failing and showing all its vulnerabilities. Passmore writes once more (2000, pp. 18-19): “The ideal of perfection, thus understood – metaphysical perfection [...] – removes it, we should at first be inclined to conclude, far beyond human reach. For how can a man set out to become less finite than he is, or more of a first cause, or less of a temporal being? What hope has he of becoming ‘a being to whom nothing is lacking?’ But human ambition is boundless.” Therefore, the “intramundane metaphysical perfection” loses all its relevance in the face of a reflection that is elemental as well as evident: we are bodies. So, we cannot but unconditionally accept our defects.

However, as we said previously, one of the objectives of the new (bio)technologies is precisely that of surpassing all the limits that are presented as obstacles, even corporeal ones. “Human ambition is boundless,” Passmore stated (2000, p. 19). Russo confirms this (2004, 19): “If the body remains hopelessly defective, resisting all control,” then the only option is “the project of reinventing the body. We want to have a certain power of self-management, even of our life cycles, on behalf of eternal youth or of physical benefits that can always satisfy our desires. [...] The body is no longer a given, but a task to be accomplished,” an object “to be adapted, a *construct*, or even a *deconstruct*.”

Once the body has been interpreted only as an *object*, it is ultimately not difficult to turn it into a *project*, that is, to turn it into the infinite field for activities aimed at improving ourselves.

4. SOCIETY AND PERFECTION SATISFYING THE DESIRE TO REACH CULTURAL MODELS

Every *enhancement* can be defined as an improvement, because there is a starting point (what do we want to improve?) and an objective/an end (what model do we want to pursue?). If we have already defined our starting point (corporeal imperfection, because if we were perfect, we would have no reason for enhancement); on the other hand, it is necessary to explore the topic of the goal “The problem, then, is to determine what constitutes this ideal of perfect humanity” (Passmore, 2000, p. 19).

The idea of perfection (and, with it, of perfectibility), ultimately depends on the model that we are considering as “perfect in itself.” We have said “of perfectibility” because the farther away the reality is to be enhanced, the harder it is to reach the model. In both cases, as Passmore stresses once again (2000, p. 26), the idea of perfection depends on the idea of the model, that is, of something fixed that serves as a reference for our improvement: “Perfection may be defined in terms of conformity to a model, whether a model person (exemplary perfection), an ideal of moral perfection, or God (deiform perfection).” One of the most important and frequent models in the history of humanity has clearly been divinity: human beings have usually envisioned themselves as a being that seeks to become a god. If this is true, we must also point out, as Passmore appropriately did (2000, p. 31), that such identification with divinity can be a risky business, as during the Greek age of Homer: “Nor, equally, was it at all obvious to the Homeric Greeks that men ought to imitate the gods, even in so far as the gods did approach perfection. Quite the contrary. To set out to imitate the gods was to exhibit hubris, to be arrogant, to get above oneself. ‘Do not try to become Zeus,’ the poet Pindar exhorted his readers. For, he continues, ‘mortal things suit mortals best’. In so far as men should guide their actions by models, it is the heroes, not the gods, on whom they should model themselves. If the heroes are perfect, however, it is only as exemplars of how to confront a particular situation” (Passmore, 2000, p. 31).

It is precisely from the perception that “mortal things suit mortals best,” that human beings have usually renounced adaptation to an unattainable model, such as that of divinity. However, on the other hand, we would have to ask ourselves if actual models have a greater chance of being reached by human beings, and the answer we offer will probably be the basis for the answer to the initial concern surrounding new technologies.

Clearly, our answer will be negative: contemporary models, although bereft of any metaphysical or theological reference, and with an evidently “social” character, are not attainable for contemporary man (just as in any other age) for four main reasons that we will develop in this article: 1. current models are characterized as extrinsic models; 2. current models are globalized models; 3. current models are

unreal models; 4. current models depend on the logic of technology. Therefore, let us try to develop and delve a bit into these four points.

1. *Current models are characterized as extrinsic models*

In comparison to ancient models – see Pindar, for instance, with his famous saying “*γένοι' οἷός ἐσσι μαθών*: become such as you are, having learned what that is” – new models do not assume a knowledge of our nature or of our *telos*, because, as we have said before, our age is defined as “postmetaphysical.” In this sense, these models that cannot be called teleological because they do not refer to a nature that can be enhanced, cannot be defined as autonomous – in a Kantian sense. In the following sentence, the complexity of characterizing such models is summed up, although clearly in a different context: “The rational principle of perfection as an end to be attained by us is the best of the proposed heteronomous principle of morality since it at least appeals to a reason for a decision. So far, however, as it merely bids us aim at the maximum reality appropriate to us, it is utterly vague; and if it includes moral perfection, it is obviously circular. Kant himself holds that the moral law bids us cultivate our natural perfection (the exercise of our talents) and our moral perfection (the doing of duty for duty’s sake)” (Paton, 2005, p. 35). The models that inspire men nowadays do not refer to the use of our talents (intrinsic model), nor to the respect of the moral law (independent models). Neither can they be characterized as heteronomous, because, in most cases, they do not need the use of reason¹ as a tool to embrace a specific ideal of perfection. In this sense, we can affirm that the models are extrinsic, that is, they need to be adapted to ideals that are not highly related to human nature and that we assume implicitly as a free choice. Maybe these are models that society is imposing on us, where it can be seen how intersubjectivity or the societal agreement have occupied the place of “ancient metaphysics.”

2. *Current models are globalized models*

A logical consequence of the first point is that we cannot aspire to universal models of perfection. This statement clearly assumes that universality is different from globality², or from intersubjectivity, and that it is not characterized only as the sum of all particular options. Without this assertion of universality – that is related to the search for characters that are beyond the options of each individual – there is

¹ By the way, they always need reason because it is we ourselves, human beings, who are acting according to a model. On the other hand, we want to highlight that they do not need an appropriate use of reason, because the models impose themselves on our selection.

² We cannot develop the argument too much in this area, because it is broad and complex. For a first introduction to the topic of universalizability (in the field of moral prescriptions), see Rabinowicz (1979).

no other option but to try to gather different preferences under one unique general criterion, and to give it the widest scope possible, specifically globalized³. It is because they are global models – and not universal – that they are linked to individual requirements/preferences, or, in some cases, to the desires of those with authority (and who has defined the models). On the other hand, such models are not universal, nor “democratic” (at least in some phases): technology acts as a means that creates disparities, because it depends on economic interests and it is not always available to everyone. In fact, in order to reach the models proposed by the technological civilization, we need highly developed technological means, and this means strong financial support. For instance, although maybe too hypothetical: one of the objectives of transhumanism is “mind-uploading” (Hauskeller, 2012), as it is explained in the following part: “While some transhumanists want to cryopreserve their dead bodies in the hope of being reanimated by future humans, there are other transhumanists who envisage human minds transferred to new bodies or to computers and to cyber space” (Sutton, 2015, p. 122). Not all people who want to embrace that proposal – and accept the cultural model of humanity related to it – will have the chance to pay for the cost of “mind-uploading,” just as not many people can pay for cryopreservation of the body. In this sense, technological models are, at the same time, globalized models and elite models. On the other hand, as we have already highlighted with Shusterman’s quote (2008, p. xi), our body is something more than our body, just as “body consciousness is always more than consciousness of one’s own body alone.” In fact, we are always beings in relationships, and our body exists only within these relationships, in which it can develop and grow. In the age of biomedicine and of *Big Science*, recognizing this also means that every change in my body is also important for the rest of the people, because it is a possible change in their bodies. Our body, social and socialized, can never be a private body, because each choice has to do, in a certain sense, with all society (let us think, for example, of many “complex” and public cases in the field of medical ethics, such as euthanasia or in vitro fertilization).

3. *Current models are unreal models*

Due to everything that has previously been mentioned, the extrinsic and globalized models of perfection must also be unreal. Most of the time, the models proposed to the general public are not true and real models, because they show (and, at the same time, hide) only certain aspects of the universe. Russo, commenting upon the power of media in that direction, writes: “The body models promoted by the media are, in fact, unattainable, simply because they are not real: small modifications, make-up, photomontage, etc., hide and disguise the inevitable

³ Regarding this topic, Uchang (2016) has an interesting contribution where he tries to demonstrate, albeit in a very different context, that there is an important conceptual distinction between both terms.

imperfections of a real body. Thus, we have the paradox of investing a great deal of energy to adapt what is real to what is virtual, and the result is constant disappointment in the face of the uselessness of work” (Russo, 2004, p. 18). In this sense, the current models of perfection, which are completely unreal, are very similar to idols (Valera, 2014a; Petrosino & Valera, 2014), because, as they are “the work of men’s hands,” “they have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there [any] breath in their mouths” (Psalm 135, pp. 15-17). Given that they are unreal, that is, they are not part of reality, in fact they transform all who want to adapt to that model, as it is explained once again in the Psalm: “They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them” (Psalm 135, p. 18).

4. *Current models depend of the logic of technology*

Thus, we come to the final point. We have said that the current models are strongly influenced by the latest technological developments, and that they also depend on global/globalized changes. In this regard, we could affirm that, as a consequence of the two aspects we just highlighted, the models of perfection of the technological civilization are highly mutable. The first reason is that the preferences/demands of the globalized society necessarily depend on social and cultural contexts, leaving no room for universal or “natural” things. In this sense, we could refer to part of the well-known chapter in the *Zarathustra* from Nietzsche (2005, pp. 51-52), *On the Thousand Goals and One*: “Many lands has Zarathustra seen, and many peoples: thus he discovered the good and evil of many peoples. [...] Much that this people deemed good was for antoher a source of scorn and shmae: thus have I found it. Many things I found called evil here, and there adorned with purple honours. Never did one neighbour understand the other: ever was his soul amazed at his neighbour’s delusion and wickedness. A tablet of things held to be good hangs over every people. [...] A thousand goals have there been so far, for there have been a thousand peoples. Only the shackles for the thousand necks is still lacking; there is lacking the one goal. Humanity still has no goal.” Many peoples, many cultures, many morals. In this context of interculturality and dissolution of the idea of universal ethics (or morality), it is clearly difficult to think of stable and permanent models that go beyond cultural choices. Besides, if we consider that technology, with its fast changes and developments, continues creating new and unknown context, the situation becomes even more complex. As we have said before, the very logic of technology consists of the dissolution of any limit, in a constant change of conditions and situations. Therefore, because of its essence, (bio)technology must surpass every obstacle, making the very obstacle it has surpassed “obsolete.” In this never-ending progress, moral philosophy – essentially reflexive, that is, it needs time – will always seem to be something “not current,” or unfit for the times. This constant change – a perpetual evolution – needs models that

are always new and updated: for this reason, the models cannot be attained, because they are always subject to the process of change. Depending on the logic of the technology, the model will ultimately maintain the same dynamic of constant change.

5. CONCLUSION. UNREST, PERFECTION AND THE “BEING-ABLE-TO-BE-ONESELF”

Then, where does this unrest in light of new technologies and models of perfection dependent on them come from? They come from the fact that the models proposed by contemporary civilization are unattainable. The ideal of perfection proposed by the new globalized and technocratic societies is not a model that can be reached by modern human beings for the reasons we explained before. Therefore, the criticism of that model can be justified not from the bioconservative model of conception, or that it is founded in the idea of human *hybris* in the face of something “given,” of a gift (Sandel, 2007), but from the very idea of perfection as it is proposed in the contemporary age. This idea openly refutes the “being-able-to-be-oneself” that Habermas (2003, 5), in his popular book, *The Future of Human Nature*, picked up from Kierkegaard and conceives as a condition for the possibility of a “good life.” The possibility to be oneself in modern times is being threatened by unattainable cultural models proposed by recent (bio)technological developments, based on a “non-justified abstention” from all of us.

In other words, nowadays “being-able-to-be-oneself” means “to be other selves,” and in this constant mismatch of each of us with ourselves lies perhaps our strongest concern.

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