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*The Aesthetic Object and the Technical Object**

TECHNICAL ACTIVITY AND AESTHETIC ACTIVITY constitute two fundamental modes of the praxis. Discernible, yet not always distinct, and often interdependent: does not neolithic pottery disclose in its own manner, even before any theories of the beautiful or of the useful are elaborated, the problems of the industrial aesthetic? In his own manner, does the potter conceive his vase in the same sense as the engineer determines a bridge or an automobile? Does he conceive it even as today's museum visitor might? Is this vase bound up with the intention that presided during its production? Thus, two paths are open for consideration: on the one hand, we can examine either the activities themselves or their result. On the other hand, in order to study the interrelationship of these terms, we can elaborate either a genetic analysis or a phenomenological analysis. These choices are not, however, mutually exclusive: one can hardly study an activity without examining that which it produces any more than, as Husserl would say, a noetic analysis of intentions can dispense with a noematic analysis of the object. Similarly, whether phenomenology is genetic or not, a genesis always implies a phenomenology, and all the more in the case of an aesthetic object which, when presenting itself to perception, is a phenomenon *par excellence.*

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It is necessary, nevertheless, to choose a line of thought; it is that of a phenomenology of objects which I shall pursue thus, for a too-brief span. But I should like first to say a few words regarding a remarkable work from which I often drew my inspiration. G. Simondon, in his book *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques,* selected instead the genetic approach: after having studied "the genesis and evolution of technical objects," he arrives, in a section on the essence of technical objects, at the "genesis of technical objects." Now this genetic not only brings into question very profound phenomenological analyses of objects but it presupposes also a theme which is at the very heart of phenomenology and in particular of the works of Merleau-Ponty—that is, that the fundamental is the harmony of man and the world. "The general hypotheses that we are making regarding the becoming of the relationship of man to the world consists in considering as a system the unity formed by man and the universe" (p. 159). Little does it matter that the idea is expressed here in the language of natural philosophy, because it is the lived experience which is called upon to bear witness to this unity of man and the universe and of its development.

The first phase, in fact, of this becoming, which would correspond to what is perception for Merleau-Ponty, is for Simondon "the magic phase," a primitive form of being-in-the-world which "defines a both subjective and objective universe, preceding

any distinction between the subject and the object." But already from this first lack of distinction emerges the object "by means of the isolation and fragmentation of the mediation between man and the universe" (p. 164): the first structure is a network of privileged points—keypoints, sacred places such as the depths of the waters, the mountain peaks, the heart of the forest—through which are effected the exchanges between man and the universe; the first objects are therefore singular figures which still adhere to the background against which they stand out and from which they drain all their force, as "the peak is the lord of the mountain." This reticular structure dephases itself, and, while man distinguishes himself from the world, the separation of the figure and the background gives birth to the duality of technicality and religion. "The mediation objectivizes itself in technicality and subjectivizes itself in religion, causing the first object to appear as the technical object and the first subject to appear as divinity, whereas before there was only a unity of the living and its environment." The keypoints have become the technical objects, fragments detached from the universe, abstract and amenable and always effective: the technique shows a first objectivization of the world, which science will take up for its own account or, more precisely, since the world remains a unity, it marks the emergence of objects in the world, as intermediaries between the universe and the subject. As for aesthetic activity, it goes back on the dissociation and recalls the "lost unity"—unity of the world, unity of man and the world. "The aesthetic character of an act or of an object is its function of totality, its existence both subjective and objective as a remarkable point" (p. 181). Of course a work of art does not actually recreate the magical primitive universe, but it maintains and preserves the ability to experience an aesthetic impression.

Consequently, and here I freely interpret Simondon, a dialectic appears between technicity and aesthetics. One understands that aesthetic experience is at the same time very antiquated and very modern. The nostalgia for lost unity appeared very early, arousing in man the aesthetic experience and spurring technical and religious thought to renounce their abstraction and to express themselves in the language of beauty: thus the useful attains spontaneously the form of beauty. But the consciousness of beauty as separate, exclusive, and jealous appeared only later. Aberrant hypertelia, suggests Simondon, since what was called to be concrete returns by that to the abstract, but justified, nevertheless, because it is the moment when technicality, becoming exasperated, wreaks violence upon the natural world, when work, having become inhuman, produces ugliness: technicality, in affirming itself, fulfills itself in terror. Then art, which had already presented itself to Pascalian religion as a diversion, becomes evasion. But that is not all: when becoming conscious of itself, art realizes that it renounces itself in accomplishing itself; it reveals a world, and this world is an expression of the world insofar as the artist cannot help being in the world: in the natural world as Merleau-Ponty reminds him when criticizing Malraux, in the social world as Sartre reminds him. So art today has recovered its mediatory function between man and the universe. At the same time, technicity humanizes itself, both in working conditions and in the form of its products: the two go together, as Olivetti's experiment proves. The research for an industrial aesthetics has considerable meaning: in learning to live up to technical progress, man can dominate the world without breaking with it, he can still live in it as his fatherland, he can remain in the fundamentals while still creating his history.

In order to understand better the sense of such a reconciliation between technicity and aesthetics, it will be necessary at first, leaving the genetic perspective, to stress their opposition. Let us first introduce some distinctions. The technical object is not easily defined; there is a great difference between a digging stick and a plough, between a saw or a hammer and an assembly line. The same technical essence—the assymetrical conduction which defines the diode, or the steam engine—in addition to the fact that it does not rise from nothing, re-

leases when it is invented a history during which, before becoming properly concrete, it actualizes itself in manifold objects. Simondon distinguishes also different forms of the object: the element (the valve), the individual (the motor), the ensemble (the industrial complex), to which one may add the whole technical environment. But one can propose still another distinction between the technical object and the consumer's goods. On one hand the tool, the machine, the factory, and on the other, the dress, the piece of furniture, the house. These two sorts of objects have in common their being manufactured, their attesting to technicity, and their serving as means to an end.[1] What differentiates them is that, whereas the latter already constitute products which find their immediate end in consumption and enjoyment, the former are dedicated to the process of production and perform a work which aims at other ends; that is why they require both the knowledge and the complicity of man, who must serve them as they serve him: the worker must be able to regulate and maintain his machine, as the equestrian curries and saddles his horse before mounting it; this does not mean that he must become its slave: this inhuman relationship, that authentic technicity denies and that has been made possible by a certain stage of technical development, has been imposed upon the worker only by the social system, by capitalistic violence.[1] On the other hand, the technical object can become consumer's goods: a boat or a car, each a technical object not only for the designers but also for the sailor or the mechanic, that is for the man who knows and uses it, can become exclusively a useful object for the indifferent or lazy consumer who does not know its make-up and relies upon automation, even more so for those who care only for ostentatious consumption. One can guess that it is the consumer's good which may seek most easily to please, joining the useful to the agreeable, and perhaps to the beautiful, while the technical object, more rigorously serving functional requirements in its production and its use, can be beautiful only as an addition, though not without some premeditation.

It is still necessary to distinguish the aesthetic object from the beautiful one. The aesthetic object is the work of art which claims beauty exclusively and which provokes an aesthetic perception where this beauty will be fulfilled and consecrated. The beautiful object can be beautiful without wishing to be so, that is, without seeking its aestheticization, and without losing its other virtues—its pleasantness, its functionality, its intelligibility—when it is aestheticized, since it then expresses them in sensible form. I may find beautiful a bird's song which pleases my ear and tells me of animal spontaneity; it is not beautiful in the same way as is a composition of Messiaen: the music is not harmonized with the blue of the sky or the perfumes of the earth as is the song of the lark; it is the principle of a world which it keeps entirely in reserve, and it refuses all association, be it in idea, with other sensible forms; it does not wish to have any meaning save from itself. One realizes also that the technical object can be beautiful without identifying itself with an aesthetic object.

Let us first specify the differences. The technical object is at first sight anonymous and abstract—anonymous even if it bears an inventor's name, because it is not the same for Diesel to invent a new engine and for Van Gogh a new pictorial style. Even the coming of the object into history differs in both cases: the aesthetic object rises in an instant, in an unforeseeable manner; not outside all history, since it fixes the image of a people and of an era as it is experienced by the artist, who opens a future, itself unforeseeable and sinuous because it depends on the public's welcome and on the recapturing of the work in the singular consciousness of other artists. For the artist engages himself entirely in his work, and it is on this condition that the work has meaning and expresses a world which witnesses the world; the beautiful is without concept but proceeds from the sentiment of the entire person. The technical object, rather, proceeds from the concept since it is no longer the product of a spontaneous praxis; it does not call for anything but intelligence in the inventor; it does not engage the entire person. And that is why it registers it-

self in a logical history (and at the same time international rather than national). As Simondon profoundly puts it, it manifests within itself its own history: "the unity of the technical object, its individuality, its specific nature, are the characteristics of consistency and convergence of its genesis" (p. 20). To the contingency of a unique moment of history is opposed here the necessity of a logical becoming which technical culture must not ignore.

But isn't the technical object still abstract in two ways? First, as for the end which it serves, in that the norm which governs it is exterior to it: its sense is not necessary, not immanent to its form. The object of use can speak immediately to us—an easy chair inviting us to rest or a church to meditation—but a motor tells nothing to the ignorant; if it speaks to the mechanic, it is not with its very appearance but with its structure; it makes no sign; it is a system of signs of which one must first learn the meaning. Second, it is abstract in that it alienates itself from the world and, to master it, tends to do it violence; the axe tears apart wood, the car severs space, the railroad pierces the mountains. When it more directly serves knowledge, as a microscope or a Geiger counter, it is a knowledge that aims at giving us mastery of the world and that substitutes, for a *natura naturans* which inspires the seer or the poet, a *natura naturata* which the engineer organizes. And, throughout, the technique is violent: the railroad built in the Congo, as Gide reported it, had each tie paid for with a man's life.[2] Certainly, true violence, as ethics condemns it, spreads out in intersubjective relations, but perhaps matures in the relation of man with nature, when nature becomes *natura naturata*, conceptualized and elaborated matter, as this stranger which turns against man when man tries to impose upon it his seal and to find himself in it. In technical life, man enters a contention with the world—and with the technical object itself: this relation of association and almost of familiarity which Simondon advocates has rarely been established to the present time and can undoubtedly not arise except within new social and cultural structures, and always with the condition that man maintains the initiative and the control.

On the contrary, aesthetic life, as tragic as it may be for the creator, is for the consumer a happy life. The aesthetic object is concrete: it exists fully, definitely, according to an intrinsic necessity, in the glory of the sensible. Certainly the aesthetic object realizes itself only in aesthetic perception; is this not true, however, of all perceived things? This epiphany is accomplished all the more easily as it produces itself *en vase clos*. Is this to say that the aesthetic object is in this sense also abstract? Sartre, in different words, calls it an unreal, because it requires the neutralization of the real world; but perhaps Sartre is then more attentive to the subject of the work than to its substance: if Charles VIII is in fact unreal, his portrait is not. If the aesthetic object distinguishes itself from the world, it is in order to claim an exclusive attention and because it carries in itself a world which is a sense or a possibility of the real world. And it can quite readily come to exist in this world and be in accordance with it without doing violence to it: if it is better to listen to Mozart in the concert hall rather than when dining in a park as the Archbishop of Salzburg, it is better to see a statue in a park rather than in a museum,[3] and Merleau-Ponty is not wrong in denouncing, in the pensive atmosphere of the museum, "a calm of the city of the dead," and in the story which the museum presents solidified, "the somber pleasures of retrospection." It is perhaps when it can be situated in the world that the work of art attests best not only to the work which engendered it but also that it is a possible meaning of the world.

In any case, if the aesthetic object demands for its own realization that we associate with it, that we participate in the creator's action, and that we penetrate his world, it requires our feeling and not our acting: the good usage of art does not raise up a dialectic, even less an anti-dialectic, according to which we should be possessed by the result of our own acting. The relationship with the aesthetic object is a happy one because it is a luxury—like love, after all, when it does not limit itself to a

vital motion—but it engages us profoundly and maybe transforms us: this luxury is neither superfluous nor superficial. It is good that after being involved in the dialectics of man and world, aroused by technique, we return to that which is the basis of this dialectic, to this unity of man and world perhaps already lost forever as soon as man accedes to language, and form distinguishes itself from ground, but still close to the age of magic and made close to us by the magic of art.

One sees therefore the difference between technique and aesthetics: the technical object is at the same time, by rapport with the world, separated and separating and itself separated as well, whereas the aesthetic object is one, and invites us to a new unity with the world. However, this analysis is partial. And what invites us to correct it is at the same time the existence of these intermediate objects which are the usual objects or the consumer's goods, and the reconciliation which is today looked for between technique and art.

The objects of use are not technical objects, but their production brings into play techniques which are sometimes quite elaborate, such as the kiln, loom, or concrete. Now these objects may be spontaneously beautiful, as is a barn or a shield, or deliberately beautiful, as a velvet, an amphora, or a palace, so that we attribute them to minor arts or even, as with architecture, to major ones. In their production, which is the role of technique and which that of art? The same problem is posed by the so-called technical object. Its rapport with the aesthetic object may be conceived in two ways. First, the aesthetic object might tend to become a technical object. But this does not occur in so far as the technical object is strictly defined as a means of acting upon matter, inscribed in the production cycle. (Music may be used to get relaxation or painting to diagnose insanity, but these are marginal uses of works of art, and these pedagogical or psychiatric techniques do not belong to technicity as we now understand it.) The beautiful, as Kant says, is disinterested; aesthetic experience requires a neutralization of the real world and forbids any immediate understanding in this world by means of an aesthetic object. All that can be said—but this is essential—is that the aesthetic object, in its production, has recourse more and more to technical means. I will cite two examples, architecture and concrete music, without counting the techniques of reproduction or of recording which not only allow the diffusion of the works but also give them sometimes a new appearance, as Malraux has so well shown about the pictorial object in which the camera isolates and magnifies significant details, and as could be shown about poetry which is set down as words. Experimental music demands more from technicity: a new material, filtered noises converted into sounds, stockpiled; the musician works directly upon them instead of working on an instrument—which was already in itself a technical object—or even, if his auditory memory is sufficiently good, on a sheet of paper. Obviously, this extension of sonorous space may confer a new orientation to music; a new vocabulary asks for a new syntax and perhaps a new semantics. But the creative act is not radically altered: among the possibilities offered while the work is being composed, it is always taste which is infallibly choosing. As for architecture, it produces consumer's goods that sometimes aim at being aesthetic objects. It uses in this production more and more elaborate techniques which impose new forms and, when the awareness of these possibilities is sufficiently clear, suggests a new style, as the discovery of oil did for painting.

Such is everywhere the incidence of technicity: it furnishes new methods, but these methods in turn suggest ends, and aesthetic ends as well. Its development reveals new horizons to art not only for the artist who is given novel ways of expression but also for the observer whose sensitivity discovers new domains. The airplane or the bathysphere solicit an aesthetic experience; a city or a countryside which one flies over, the blue of the real sky above the clouds, can speak to us as well as the natural beauties seen on the ground. A diving suit makes us *bateau ivre*, able to see *ce que l'homme a cru voir*. Thus technicity opens to us new doors in the world: our will to

power can be satisfied, but our aesthetic sensitivity can also take advantage of it. For the will to power is never acting alone: what arouses technical effort is also this old feeling of closeness that we experienced originally with the world and which expresses itself more spontaneously in aesthetic contemplation than in scientific curiosity.

Thus, art often requires techniques, and the techniques spur new artistic research. The problem which must arrest our attention is that which is posed today with the coming of an industrial aesthetics, by the tendency of the technical object to appear as an aesthetic one. This tendency has always been manifested in consumer's goods, as architecture can confirm. So, on which very general conditions may any object whatsoever be beautiful? The very impossibility of formulating an absolute standard for the beautiful teaches us a primary condition: if the beautiful must be met and experienced outside of all norms in an always-unique encounter, it is because it imposes itself every time with a sort of necessity: the object is so, it cannot be otherwise, it is perfect. The beautiful is the accomplished. What convinces us of this achieved fullness is perception: necessity is felt because it rests in the sensible, in the realm of forms, of colors, of sounds. The slope of a roof, the height of a mast, the modulation of tonalities, the harmony of colors, the polish of cut glass, here it is, so simple, so evident: it just had to be made. But what then is this necessity? It is a necessity in the sensible; it is not a material necessity like that of a brute fact, of any inert or opaque presence, nor a logical necessity, such as that of reasoning, which abolishes the sensible.

This necessity requires—and this is the second condition of the beautiful—that a meaning appear in the sensible, totally immanent to it. What meaning? The very being of the object, its singular essence, insofar as it shows itself. In the aesthetic object, when there is no practical use involved, essence resides entirely in the message it delivers, less by its representing (in figurative art) than by its expressing: it expresses a world in which the artist in turn expresses himself. But the usual object or the technical object is assigned a certain function, and is not destined for contemplation. The meaning which appears in it must be this usage: the function must be manifested in the structure. Thus Valéry distinguishes, among buildings, those which say nothing, those which speak, and those which sing. But what does *sing* mean? The word suggests that all be said in half-words, in the gracious apotheosis of the sensible. The element of gratuitousness may be introduced by ornament, the element of grace by measure. Because necessity, which is the first condition of the beautiful, does not imply that the object be reduced to the necessary: one must do justice to the flamboyant and the baroque. But the proper measure is given by the perceptive man: aesthetically, at least, man is the measure of all things;[4] song is always for the ear, an intelligent ear which bars any proliferation of ornament.

The relationship of the object with the world imposes a third condition to beauty. When the beautiful object does not initiate this relationship and does not open a world proper to it, at least it must get along with the exterior world. Thus the slate roof agrees with the Loire Valley, Poseidon's temple with the Cape of Sounion, the arrow at Chartres with the plain of Beauce, as a crystal goblet with set table and finely-attired guests; the architectural object becomes again that magical place which organizes the pattern of pilgrimage routes, which at the same time joins in itself the force of the site and the soul of a culture, geographic location, and historical moment, the given world and the lived world. And it is this world which attests to the necessity of the object, as if it had itself aroused the object in order to define and perpetuate itself.

These three conditions—can they be satisfied by the technical object? Two preliminary remarks: first, the technical object cannot, without denying itself, identify itself with the aesthetic object, i.e., to an object intended solely for contemplation. It becomes an aesthetic object only when devitalized, useless, torn from its proper milieu, as when it is transferred to a mu-

seum for the sake of knowledge as well as of aesthetic pleasure. Nevertheless it may aspire to be beautiful according to its nature in its use.

But experiencing its beauty supposes, at least, that it be aestheticized by us. Now, can we be both agents for doing justice to its usefulness and spectators for doing justice to its aesthetic aspiration? Has the sail, blown by the wind, the same beauty for the sailor as for the landlubber? Is the machine which is beautiful for the engineer when he observes it also beautiful for the workman who uses it? Is it beautiful in the same way for the engineer who knows it and for the layman who merely admires its form? The same problem appears, moreover, for the consumer's good: is a palace in the same way beautiful for the prince who lives in it and for the tourist who visits it, the church for him who prays in it and for him who just walks in it? The same for the natural object: is the mountain equally beautiful for the climber and for the one who contemplates it? It is clear what provokes these questions: it is the idea that everywhere contemplation of a work of art furnishes the norm for aesthetic experience. I accept this idea.[5] But this does not exclude the actuality and the value of certain marginal experiences, more ambiguous, more uncertain, but perhaps richer—where beauty is revealed to us in a contact, sometimes more intellectual and sometimes more sensual, with the object. It is in such experiences that the technical object can be aestheticized by us: just as the Alpinist communicates best with the mountain when he both climbs it and observes it, so we can at times both use and observe the technical object, and at least we need to know how it works; technical culture is a necessary element in aesthetic experience, as is stressed by Simondon: "The discovery of the beauty of technical objects cannot be left to perception alone" (p. 186). This is true; but conversely, the mere knowledge of the function and the functioning does not suffice to awaken the feeling of beauty. As the natural object can elude real aesthetic experience by having solicited vivid sensations, pleasant or not—since the beautiful is not the agreeable—so can the technical object by dint of having solicited understanding—because the beautiful is not the intelligible. Beauty is never sensual, it is always sensitive, and the technical object must speak to the eye in order to be beautiful, just as it speaks to the hand in order to be useful, or to the mind in order to be understood.

So, the aestheticization of this object, if it requires of us a certain attitude perhaps difficult to maintain, requires of it that it conform to the conditions we have set. And primordially that it have that unimpeachable, triumphant presence of an achieved being, that it affirm itself in the sensible. In this respect, the livelier colors, gay or restful, with which machines and industrial buildings are painted today, are not without interest, even if their main function is encouraging work and avoiding accidents; in fact, humanization and aestheticization go hand in hand. But it is most important that the object assert itself according to its essence. First, that it have no shame: that it not hide itself under ornamentation as certain cars do with their chrome or certain water towers with a gothic camouflage. Ornament can be justified, for example, in architecture, not so much because it attests to virtuosity but because it shows, contrary to mechanical laws to which matter is subject, a human order which commands nature when obeying it. But it is not justified if it is but adjunctive, arbitrary, and ostentatious. And Vienot could justly say: "We do not like the Bank of France notes, we don't like the zinc monument to the dead, the Louis XV stove, the 'my dream' villa, mass-produced cubism." As in architecture, it is matter which must impose the form and which, as an aesthetician said, "permits one to feel the style." [6]

The technical object must still manifest its purpose. It is at man's service and ought to make this very evident. If it must be directly handled, let it be made to the user's specifications, let it offer itself to him: thus the Flaminaire lighter fits into the palm of one's hand and is within reach of the fingers that use it. In the study of a useful machine the aesthetician is primarily concerned with the ergohomy: "The position of man or of men who will have to work, the height of

the commands, the visibility of dials or of implements." [7] Including the writing of signs or inscriptions on machines, there is no insignificant detail. Just as for the conditioning of consumer goods, the beautiful is first of all the readable. Naturally, industrial plants are no longer tailored to man: rather than the feeling of the beautiful, it is that of the sublime they may awaken. But on the condition that there be still something human seen in them, not only in those elements to which the individual remains associated but also in the logic presiding over the plant's ensemble which may also be apparent. Function appears eloquently in the simplest objects, those most easily beautiful—a jar, a scythe, an axe; it again appears in objects whose secular usage reserves them to second place technicity, such as the D.S. automobile or the Caravelle; but it no longer appears in machines reserved for technicians' usage. It is here that a certain technical culture is required for appreciating the object; but if the only matter is to estimate its efficiency or its precision, is the object still justifiable to the judgment of taste? The concept must also be embodied in the sensible, the form must speak to the eye without being a vain cover-up, as speaks a Roman vault or a flying buttress. Thus speed is shown by an aerodynamic line as an emotion is written on a face; what is shown is what can be immediately expressed: not the method of using an object, which must be known, but the result of the use, that can be directly experienced. What can the aesthetician do here? If he refuses to decorate an object after it has been manufactured, he is at least willing to build a body for objects whose usage requires it. But he does not wish to impose arbitrary norms upon the engineer. "In his first steps he tries not to over-crystallize the forms, but rather to put order in the organs." [8] His role is basically that of leading the object to express itself. And we must add that the object does it spontaneously when it achieves a certain degree of maturity. As Simondon has so profoundly pointed out, this object, at first artificial, which was just "the physical translation of an intellectual system," tends to become organized, to close itself, to impose itself upon its environment, which is to say to manifest in itself the sovereign necessity of nature. Besides its function, it shows its own history and thus attests to its intrinsic necessity; it is no longer abstract: "The concrete technical object, that is the evolved one, approaches the means of existence of natural objects, it tends toward interior coherence, towards closure of the system of cause and effects which takes place within its interior boundaries, and in addition, it incorporates a part of the natural world that intervenes as a condition of its functioning and so becomes a part of the system of cause and effect" (p. 46). At the end of its genesis, for perception itself, if only this perception is enlightened by knowledge, the technical object experiences its technicity.

And at the same time it may vindicate the aesthetic object's virtue in its relationship to the world. It already, as expressive, carries within itself a world to be revealed, not the world of Mozart or Matisse, subject to certain affective *a priori*, but the world of technicity, correlated to a certain human openness, which is no less true for being suggested through praxis rather than through feeling; so the Caravelle announces haughtily the space it conquers, as the viaduct announces the valley it spans. But above all, the technical object can be inscribed in the world and does not tend to stay at a distance as do some aesthetic objects. It harmonizes with its environment; first, with the technical surroundings, as Simondon again observes: "The concrete object liberates itself from the original associated laboratory, and incorporates it dynamically to itself in the play of its functions; it is its relation to other objects, technical or natural, which becomes regulative and permits the self-maintenance of its functioning conditions" (p. 47). Second, with the natural world: "The techniques, after having mobilized and separated from the actual world the schematic figures of a magical world, return toward the actual world to unite with it through the coincidence of cement and rock, of the cable and the valley, of the pole and the hill; a new reticulation is brought into being, which

privileges certain places of the world in a synergical alliance of technical schemes and natural powers" (p. 181).

It is this insertion into the world that definitely aestheticizes the technical object: it is beautiful when it has met a background which fits it, when it completes and expresses the world. That is why it is beautiful in action, when the wind fills the sail, when the forge crackles, when the highway climbs the hill. The silent operation of technicity embodies an aspect of the world which could not without it have been expressed. The sole difference between the aesthetic and the technical object is that the aesthetic object exercises a sovereign imperialism: it neutralizes its environment in order to aestheticize it; the park becomes a decor for the statue, as a wall is a background for a fresco. Whereas the technical object receives its aesthetic value from the world, when it becomes integrated with it: it completes the process of becoming natural again in, and by means of, nature; whereas the aesthetic object, in manifesting the glorious necessity of the perceptible, is immediately nature and more than nature: thus it attracts nature to itself and makes it unreal while expressing it. But it remains that in certain respects it is the technical object which reanimates in us the feeling of nature.

Thus the relationship between the technical object and the aesthetic object is not reciprocal: it is the technical object which tends to become an aesthetic one. This does not in any way imply that there exists between the two a difference of dignity and that technicity is less noble than art. One must, on the contrary, note that beauty cannot be added to efficiency, as to youth its flower, save on the condition that the technical object affirm itself without shame, according to the logic proper to its development: it does not become aestheticized in denying itself but rather in accomplishing itself.

One should say the same of technicity both as an attitude and as an institution. And it would then be interesting to contrast Simondon's observation with Heidegger's. Both search for the essence, both go beyond the idea that technicity is at man's service. Simondon could agree at first sight with this formula of Heidegger: "As long as we conceive of technicity as an instrument, we remain occupied with the attempt to master it. We miss the essence." [9] But it is in explaining this formula that we would see mystic thought opposed to serious thought. For Heidegger the essence of technicity is ambiguous: instrumentality, thinking to unveil, actually veils, by limiting the revelation to an agreement with the world of things; but it cannot do so except by its very unveiling: in this way, technicity is saved but on the condition that it renounce itself; it is true in so far as it is not itself. "The essence of technicity is nothing technical," [10] and Heidegger suggests that it must be sought in art (on the condition, maybe, that art also renounce itself). Finally, the elucidation of the essence of technicity, and because this essence is sought in the past and not in the future, serves to denounce the actual technique: forgetting existence, technicity devotes itself to being and suspends it in a vacuum, it is the "organization of penury." [11] On the contrary, for Simondon, if the essence of technicity is not actually demiurgy but rather the establishment of a new intimacy between man and the world, it is not in renouncing itself for the benefit of meditation that technicity realizes its essence, but instead in fulfilling itself; and the philosopher's task consists in understanding it and not judging it from a distance in the name of an ontological presupposition.

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[1] Intermediary between these two objects would be the status of what the French language calls *ouvrages d'art*, as a road or a jetty which itself offers an active enjoyment and not a passive one.

[2] The Château of Versailles also cost dearly in human lives, as did the Pyramids. It is because the architectural work is also an object of use, whose erection calls a technique into action.

[3] The canvases that I see at the museum, I should willingly see on my walls! Those which I have there are appreciated by me and, for me, they fulfill their purpose in my home as well as in the museum.

[4] It happens that before an aesthetic object the observer feels almost crushed: he experiences then the sublime, and perhaps there is sublime in all great art. But the sublime which gives scope to the possibilities of man is still in that respect measured; otherwise it is inhuman.

[5] Simondon challenges this: "Established art, artificial art, is only a preparation and a language for the discovery of the true aesthetic impression" (p. 196).

[6] D. Huisman and G. Patrix, *L'Esthétique industrielle* (P.U.F., 1960), p. 97.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[9] *Essais et conférences*, p. 44.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 111.