Comparing Martin Heidegger's and Jalal Āl-e-Ahmad's Views on Technology

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	The present study aimed to compare Heidegger's and Āl-e-Ahmad's views on technology; first, the close relationship between subjectivism and modern technology was analyzed based on Heidegger, and subsequently, it was pointed out that Heidegger's approach towards technology is a critical confrontation based on engagement/disengagement dialectics. Then Jalal Āl-e-Ahmad's view on technology was analyzed, emphasizing that, unlike Heidegger, with a philosophical, ontological, and anticipatory approach to modern technology, Āl-e-Ahmad took a selective and voluntarist approach towards modern technology by adopting a political and social stance. Āl-e-Ahmad, like Promethean and leading intellectuals and reformers, believed that a Westoxificated society is a society that has not yet achieved technology and is technologically dependent on the West. Therefore, to deal with Westoxification, it should become a technological power by adopting a will-based approach-- a machine must be built and owned; however, at the same time, one should not be got caught by the machine because it is a means and not a goal. Unlike Āl-e-Ahmad, Heidegger considered technology not a mere tool but a kind of ontology and way of thinking that affects all humans' areas and affairs, so it is not easy to escape modern technology's grip.

Introduction

As a Western radical thinker, Martin Heidegger criticizes the 2500-year history of the West as a manifestation and breeding ground of subjectivism and metaphysical rationality. He believes that without a deep understanding of subjectivism and humanism, one can never have a comprehensive and complete knowledge of technology and the technological rationality of the modern world. In other words, according to Heidegger, it is with the dominance of the Cartesian thinker and the paradigm of modern knowledge that technology in the modern sense of the word is born. In the modern world, with the domination of technical, reflective, and conceptual thinking, a logic of measurement, calculation, and accounting has been established, which is used in all matters and situations.

Technological thinking, the birth of modern rationality, has no limits and can expand without limitations until there is no room for other ways of thinking. The main feature of the technical and calculating thinking ruling the modern world is the desire to control everything and everyone. In this situation, in the ontological and poetic thinking that Heidegger is the preacher and promoter of, a person finds a kind of openness towards himself, the world, and others instead of thinking about dominating nature and other human beings. In line with facing modern technology, Heidegger raises the point that technology is a consistent and inseparable part of people's daily life, and we cannot escape from it. But at the same time, he believes that by adopting a discontinuity-connection approach to modern technology, we can hope to create another thinking defined and formulated in a break from subjectivism. At this time, instead of adopting a philosophical, judgmental, and ontological approach to modern technology, Āl-e-Ahmad adopts voluntarism to modern technology. More directly and accurately, although Āl-e-Ahmad is highly indebted to people like Farid in processing and polishing the concept of Westoxification; however, unlike Farid, who had a thoughtful and profound view towards technology, he adopted a political and social position and approach towards technology. Āl-e-Ahmad considers the reason for the Iranians' Westoxification to be related to not making cars and not knowing and not having modern technology, and he thinks that it is possible to achieve independent and native technology by simply having the will to make cars and technology. The findings and results of this research indicate that Heidegger's encounter with modern technology takes place from a philosophical, judgmental, ontological, and anticipatory point of view, and he believes in engagement/disengagement dialectics in dealing with modern technology. Āl-e-Ahmad, an intellectual and a social reformer who calls for profound and fundamental changes in the political and social sphere, believes that to deal with Westoxification, one should achieve indigenous independent technology by adopting a voluntarist solution.

1. Heidegger's Epistemological Approach to Modern Technology

Radical thinker and critic Martin Heidegger criticizes the 2500-year history of the West as a manifestation of subjectivism and metaphysical rationality and puts the image of his thought in line with the break from subjectivism (Abdolkarimi, 2008, 173). Heidegger believes that with the beginning of modern philosophizing, and specifically with Descartes, we witness the emergence of a gap between the knowing subject and the object of identification. The subject controls the Cartesian world-- the subject acquires and gives meaning to this acquisition. This sensemaking represents what is always present in the subject; the world is the product of the subject's representation, and the subject creates the world (Jabbari, 2011, 22).

By establishing the "I think, therefore I am" (Latin: "cogito, ergo sum") dictum, Descartes considered the only real subject or the only specific being to be the "human ego" because it thinks - all beings are products or representations of this thinking ego. If, in Aristotle's thought, truth refers to the correspondence of the mind with the object, then in the paradigm of knowledge of the modern foundation, truth is translated as the correspondence of the object with the mind. As the agent of knowledge and agent of history, Man in the modern world can identify and analyze everything and, accordingly, interfere and occupy everything, including nature. In the shadow of subjectivism's conquest of the modern world, a concrete wall is drawn between the subject and the object, and the modern conquering and dominating intellect rise in pursuit of objectifying the world (Jabari, 2014, 47). Heidegger believes that:

Measurability refers to the openness available to computation. This approach to nature allows us to know what natural processes we can recognize and should predict, and predicting is desirable if the goal is to dominate natural processes. But the dominance or availability of nature is a form of possession. In the final part of Descartes' *Discourse on the Method,* we find the goal of science as "mastery over nature (Heidegger, 1962,135)

Heidegger believes that the logical and immediate result of the rise of subjectivism in the modern world is the transformation of the world into picture. According to this German thinker, no one saw the world as a picture in the Middle Ages. In those centuries, people quickly recognized their place in the order created by God. In the same way, there was no image of the world in ancient Greece because in Greece, Man had a closer relationship with the universe. No system of thought and belief wanted to reduce the world to an image and replace any other system of thought (Heidegger, 1977,141). Man in the ancient world was not a subject in the Middle Ages. But with the domination of the knowledge paradigm of the modern foundation, humanism, the peak of the worldview, dominates the world as an image. As soon as the world is established and known as an image, man has a new worldview and a position that can determine a status (Ahmadi, 2017, 1293). Heidegger writes about the transformation of the world into picture in the modern age that the world picture, when fundamentally understood, does not mean a world picture, but the world that is imagined and understood as a picture (Heidegger, 1977,129).

Heidegger claims that the emergence of new knowledge and technology has been parallel to the objectivity of the human mind and the emergence of subjectivity, and scientific and technological thinking in the scope of modernity was developed based on the fact that the essence of man is translated into a subject (Zeymaran, 2010, 106). Heidegger explicitly emphasizes that the essence of technology should not be considered technological, but the essence of technology lies in *Ge-Stell*. In German, the word *Ge-Stell* in its simple meaning, means "enframing," or frames such as bookshelves, and sometimes it also refers to the body and skeleton. Heidegger uses the term *Ge-Stell* to mean gathering people and focusing and emphasizing the order and organization of what is placed in front of them in the form of raw material for consumption. Due to this credit, in the new historical position, man considers all the phenomena of nature as raw materials and ready for consumption. In this framework, nature is considered a material to be transformed into a resource used by technology (Zeymaran, 2010, 221).

Ge-Stell order should not be considered a purely material order, but it should be seen as the orientation of thinking in the direction of knowledge manipulation. *Ge-Stell* transforms every reality into something that is put back and saved. Objects, as raw materials, are used for the movement of technology. Therefore, all the phenomena of the world become a set of consumable objects (Heidegger, 1977,28). Heidegger claims that modernity should be counted as the promise of *Ge-Stell* because the widespread and comprehensive mentality gives way to the ability to consume deposits and natural and social engineering of all creatures and even humans as the subject and property of their possession-- humans also become the raw material of technology. For example, medical science turns human life into a critical object in the laboratory (Manouchehri, 2008, 64).

According to Heidegger, questioning the nature of technology does not mean the negation of technology, but an attempt to understand its nature, criticize its limitations and the pathology of human existence in the age of technological dominance. Heidegger wants us not to understand technology simply as a set of devices and tools and to have a cognitive understanding of it. Based on his ontological and phenomenological approach, Heidegger wants us to practice *Gelassenheit* (releasement) concerning being concerned with technology. *Gelassenheit* (releasement) means saying yes and no to things: we let technology into our everyday world while keeping it out. This matter means that by saying yes to technology, we accept it as a necessary and consistent element of our current life, but by saying no, we always remember that scientific and technological thinking is not the only possible way of thinking; it cannot respond to all areas of human existence and his most original needs (Abdolkarimi, 2013, 340).

According to Heidegger, technology provides a possibility that we cannot guess at all. This possibility is "the possibility of a saving power" (Heidegger, 1977, 26). Heidegger states that: "the nature of technology can be both a danger and at the same time an evangelist and a harbinger of a saving power" (Heidegger, 1977, 26). Therefore, according to Heidegger, the negation of

technology and the acceptance of its closeness are both the same thing. According to Heidegger, technology *Ge-Stell* is a part of our historical destiny in the current historical period. But by belonging to this destiny, man is neither forced to surrender to technology nor is he forced to revolt against technology (Abdolkarimi, 2016, 95).

2. Āl-E-Ahmad's Voluntarist Encounter with Technology

Jalal Āl-e-Ahmad is one of the famous Iranian contemporary writers who has written numerous works on various cultural, political, social, and economic subjects. One of the critical concepts in Āl-e-Ahmad's intellectual system is his view on technology and how to face it. To explain and refine the concept of technology, Āl-e-Ahmad mentions another concept, "Westoxification". Āl-e-Ahmad was inspired by Ahmed Fardid in expanding the concept "Westoxification". Fardid was a thinker who introduced Westoxification into Iranian academic and intellectual literature by adopting a philosophical approach. Fardid believed that technology and the rationality that follows from it are events and the historical transition of our world. Therefore, it is not easy to be freed from the grip of technology. Although Fardid was strongly opposed to the modern world and the technological rationality that follows it, he considered dominating the technical world as an arduous and challenging task. Meanwhile, Āl-e-Ahmad, who was heavily influenced by Farid's concept of Westoxification, unlike Farid, saw the path of liberation from the modern world and the technological world paved (Abdolkarimi, 2016, 93).

As Āl-e-Ahmad puts it, the most essential and fundamental meaning of Westoxification is dependence on machines or technology:

> As long as we are machine buyers, the seller does not want to lose us" (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 108-102).

He also believes that "As long as we are only consumers - until we do not build a machine - we are Westoxificated" (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 25). Accordingly, according to Āl-e-Ahmad:

> Westoxification is a characteristic of an era in our history when we have not yet reached the machine and do not know the secret of its organization and construction. Westoxification is characteristic of an era in our history when we are not familiar with the basics of the machine, i.e. with new science and technology. Westoxification is a characteristic of a period in our history when we are forced to buy and use cars due to the economic market and the movement of oil (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001,31).

According to Āl-e-Ahmad, "a Westoxificated person" is someone dependent on machines or technology. Therefore, the most fundamental characteristic of a Westoxificated society is technological dependence on the West, and it is this technological dependence that causes the

second characteristic of a Westernized society, that is, the political and economic following of Western political and economic powers (Abdolkarimi, 2016, 61). Āl-e-Ahmad believes that:

> This is the meaning of what we call Imitation [of the West] in politics and economics. Imitating the West, their oil companies and governments, this is the highest level of Westoxification in our time" (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 76).

In Āl-e-Ahmad's view, Westoxification is a characteristic of a pre-industrial society whose people do not know anything about new knowledge and technology and whose economy is dependent on oil. Such a society imports and consumes the products of the western industrialized countries (Mahmoudi, 2019, 31).

Āl-e-Ahmad believes that in facing the modern technological world, we have no more than three ways:

> 1. Negating the modern world and sinking into oneself;
> 2. Surrender to technology and consumption (Westoxification); and
> 3. The third way that he suggests (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 101).

He writes about this third way:

> But the third way, from which there is no alternative, is to put the life of this machine in glass; it is to take it under your control. It is like pulling a load from it. Naturally, the machine is a springboard for us to stand on and jump as far as possible with its spring power. A machine should be built and owned, but one should not be tied to it-- he should not be caught in it because the machine is a means and not a goal. The goal is to eliminate poverty and keep material and spiritual well-being within the reach of all people... Is a machine nothing but a horse trained by humanity and to serve it? ... to master the machine, one must build it (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 102-104).

To explain and refine his meaning of Westoxification, Āl-e-Ahmad mentions that the relationship between the countries that produce and consume industry and technology is a relationship based on master and slave, which is referred to as neo-colonialism. He calls the complications of this special relationship "Westoxification". The consequences of such a relationship, from Āl-e-Ahmad's point of view, were the wars and conflicts that took place in Vietnam, Algeria, and Congo without anyone thinking about finding the underlying causes. Despite Āl-e-Ahmad's sharp criticisms of modern technology, he emphasizes that "Westoxification" never means opposition to the West and resistance to technology because if industry and technology are not the optional destiny of humankind, at least His fate is forced (Āl-e-Ahmad, 1979,118). Therefore, Āl-e-Ahmad adopts a selective approach to facing modern technology and writes in this regard:

> We need to get some things from the West, but not everything. In the West or the West, we are looking for technology: we enter this [western object] and learn their science, but not their humanities; that is, their literature to history, economics, and law. I have and know these myself. You can learn the scientific method from someone who knows, but I have the subject of human sciences myself (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2017, 201-201).

Āl-e-Ahmad values new science and technology and hopes that gradually and as a result of using western technology, Iranians will slowly reach a stage where they own technology. In other words, according to Āl-e-Ahmad, the machine (provided that we are its builders) can be a tool to eliminate Westoxification. Āl-e-Ahmad does not deny the machine and technology because he considers it inevitable. But he does not consider its existence proof of his truthfulness and wants to control it as much as possible (Mahmoudi, 2019, 314). To manage and contain the monster of machine and technology, he points out that "It is not a question of negating the machine... never... the machine becoming stuck in the world is historical determinism. The discussion is about how to deal with machines and technology" (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 27).

Āl-e-Ahmad, who relates the problem of Westoxification and backwardness to the lack of technology in Iran, wants to provide a practical solution in using modern technology correctly and rationally. In this regard, he writes:

> For a period of, say, twenty years, we should send students only to India or Japan and not anywhere else in the West or USA. If I only mention these two countries, it is for the reason that we know how they finally got along with the Āl-e-Ahmadand how they got the technology (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 192-193).

Āl-e-Ahmad's discussion about technology is structured around the effort to achieve technology. He considers the cause of the underdevelopment of third-world countries to be the interference of foreigners to protect their economic interests, and he writes about this:

> From the point of view of the economic interests of machine manufacturers - from the point of view of the international economy - the later we get the machine and technique, the better... All our breakdowns and disturbances originate from this one point (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 126).

Āl-e-Ahmad indeed emphasizes the necessity of obtaining indigenous technology and selective use of modern technology; the fact is that Āl-e-Ahmad felt himself facing a conflict or paradox. On the one hand, he believed that we need technology and machine production to overcome our Westoxification and dependence on the West. On the other hand, he thought that the achievement of technology and the power of machine production would expose us to the danger of technology loss and mechanism. Abdolkarimi, 2016, 70). It is because of the existence of this conflict and

paradox that Āl-e-Ahmad states in his discussion of how to get out of Westoxification: "Would we be hit by a machine when we just built it? Just like the West, which cries out for technology and cars" (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 25).

3. Evaluating the Relevance of Heidegger's and Āl-E-Ahmad's Views on Technology

Heidegger is among the prominent thinkers who want to break away from subjectivism and calculative thinking associated with the modern world and turn to poetic and reflective thinking. He believes that before the emergence of the paradigm of modern foundational knowledge, in the pre-Socratic period, people had a poetic and contemplative encounter with phenomena and that man had a character and an open horizon towards himself, the world, and others. In the pre-Socratic era, subjectivism had not yet cast a shadow on the world, and man was the shepherd of existence. However, with the removal of the theoretical rationality of Socrates and the rise of humanism in the modern world, a concrete wall was drawn between the subject and the object. The desire to control and dominate the world replaced the desire for truth and poetic inhabitation in the world (Asadi, 2008, 175).

Techne had a different meaning than its modern meaning in the pre-Socratic era. According to pre-Socratic rule, the board is meant to provide and produce. The critical point in Techne was not the use of tools or construction but the revelation, and Techne was considered to mean discovering the truth (Ahmadi, 1994, 108). Accordingly, it is clear that truth is connected with the meaning of unconcealment and uncovering the veil; in it, unconcealment is revealed, and the truth is realized. Therefore,

> If we consider the truth as unconcealment and disclosure- the unconcealment and disclosure making an object appear and allowing that object to appear and be present- we see that what appears in every moment, in fact, somehow presence comes, whether it is the matter of making a new tool, building a wall, preparing a place to live, cultivating a new species of a plant, or making and processing an artwork (Heidegger, 1987, 135).

In the pre-Socratic period, art and works of art were also called art, and all arts were called invention or self-manifestation because they allowed the emergence of truth, i.e., unhiddenness and emergence of objects. Heidegger writes: "Because art brings the most immediate possible form of existence, i.e., the phenomenon and the unhidden that has emerged in itself, to a time and establishes it in something present, i.e., in the artwork. An artwork is not an artwork simply because it has been worked on and made, but it is simply an artwork that realizes existence in an object (being)" (Heidegger, 1987,156). Therefore, the pre-Socratics also knows art "Techne" because art, which is the manifestation of existence, realizes the truth in the meaning of the appearance and uncovering of the veil in work. An artwork is one such work, and the artist with his artwork strives to realize the truth and establish it in the work. For this purpose, he dwells in the realm of truth,

that is, in the conquest of existence and its manifestation, and when he comes across that manifestation, he preserves and preserves it and leaves it in work. Dwelling in the conquest of existence and being prepared and opening the arms of the soul in search of that manifestation is his knowledge and wisdom (Rikhtegaran, 2010, 25).

The central signifier of Heidegger's thought about technology is defined and formulated around this main claim: by removing modern subjectivism and the domination of modernist controlling thinking, we move away from the pre-Socratic perception of technology. In other words, in the modern world where technology is reduced to technology, everything is placed in the direction of man's domination over nature and expansion of his domination over the world and man, and in the realm of technology and under the new relevance that man has made with objects in the world of technology. Man tries more to continue the process of production for consumption and consumption for production, and thus, living on the soil, oneness with nature, including forgetfulness and negligence (Rikhtegaran, 2010, 36).

Unlike Heidegger, who takes a philosophical, judgmental, and ontological position about technology and tries to establish a relationship between subjectivism and modern technology, Āl-e-Ahmad adopts a non-philosophical approach to technology. Unlike Heidegger, who considers technology not just a tool but a way of thinking and ontology, he has a pragmatic, instrumentalist, and voluntarist approach to technology and thinks it is possible to make a machine and technology was achieved. It no longer followed Western politics and economy (Mahmoudi, 2019, 315). By adopting a selective approach towards technology, Āl-e-Ahmad believed that the indigenous culture can be preserved from the damage of Western thinking by adopting western technology and incorporating western culture and philosophy. He looked at technology as a neutral thing, based on the same instrumental view that makes us utterly blind to the nature of technology (Abdolkarimi, 2016, 86).

Āl-e-Ahmad was unaware that in modern times, this technique turns things around and arranges everything in a system of circulation of things. Man of the modern era is dependent on technological tools, and unknowingly and unconsciously, he has attached himself to these technical tools so much that he has become a slave to them. On the other hand, technology forcibly and inevitably brings modern culture and thinking with it (Ghaninejad, 1998, 55).

Āl-e-Ahmad's selective encounter with modern technology, which involves taking modern technology and tools and incorporating intellectual and cultural elements of modern thinking, faces many difficulties in practice because modern technology is not a technical matter but a metaphysical matter. Without considering the philosophical roots and foundations of modern technology, which is rooted in humanism and modern subjectivism, it is never possible to have a correct and realistic encounter with modern technology (Golestani, 2015, 10). Āl-e-Ahmad was not interested in the fact that technology brought its historical universality. Therefore, based on the current facilities and historical frameworks of the present time, it can never be separated from this

historical world, that is, from the metaphysical tradition that arose from it and the theoretical and cultural foundations and the value system resulting from this tradition (Abdolkarimi, 2016, 86).

The fact is that instead of dealing with the intellectual foundations of modern technology and consequently adopting a deep and cautious approach to the type of encounter with modern technology, Āl-e-Ahmad adopts a simplistic and selective approach to modern technology. Following his selective approach against modern technology while giving authenticity to the category of technology and the need for Iran to become a technological power, he wants to resist Western thought and culture. In Āl-e-Ahmad's anthropology, a person has authority and freedom; therefore, he can take everything he wants from the West and throw away everything he does not wish to (Bahrami Komeil, 2014, 63).

Although Āl-e-Ahmad is interested in building a machine and has a selective and arbitrary encounter with modern technology by adopting an active and selective approach, Heidegger has an entirely different approach to technology. Heidegger believes that the superiority of technology and the technological rationality resulting from the modern world was beyond the will and choice of people. Simply put, technology is our historical destiny, but it should not be considered destiny and inevitable. For him, technology is not inevitable and is our eternal fate. This issue means we should not unthinkingly accept the framework technology determines. However, this statement also means that our technology experience may present us with another option other than a helpless and helpless rebellion that only curses technology and considers it the devil's work. We must respond to the voice of technology within the context of technology experience. Answering from within the context of technology experience is our contemporary destiny (Johnson, 2008, 172-172).

Heidegger wants to remind us that we are in a correct relationship and encounter with technology when we say no to the western direction of our existence, including technology, and leave technology from the heart so that our hearts are freed from its dominion. It is not leaving, erasing, or neglecting technology but abandoning it. Not having it is no problem, but not being attached is the problem. As soon as one abandons technology, the power and domination that is its inherent requirement will end, and he will be in the right relationship with it. But this change in his relationship with technology, implying some symptoms and disregard for it, is not sudden but rather a gradual thing; it is only in the position of *Gelassenheit* (releasement) from technology that he is no longer bound by technology-- it is the technology that is attached to him (Rikhtegaran, 2003, 189).

Therefore, it can be concluded that if Heidegger wants an ontological confrontation with modern technology and knows the way to get rid of it is to turn to a kind of symptomatic thinking and break with modern subjectivism. Āl-e-Ahmad has a voluntarist and selective approach toward technology. He imagines that technology is a mere tool and never cares about technology's developmental and ontological nature. Therefore, contrary to Heidegger, he thinks that by simply

having a political determination to build a machine and selectively use modern technology, one can overcome Westoxification due to the lack of technology (Nasri, 2011, 48).

Conclusion

Martin Heidegger is among the radical thinkers who, by adopting a contemplative and ontological approach, establish a close relationship between subjectivism and modern technology. He believes that without understanding and deeply rooting the metaphysical rationality and subjectivism associated with the modern world, achieving a thorough and insightful understanding of modern technology is impossible. Technology and its consequent rationality are part of the fate of the history of the world and existence; therefore, it is impossible to go to the technology war by adopting an active and voluntarist approach. Technology is a part of the reality, historical context, and historical aspect of modern times, which cannot be denied. However, Heidegger's words do not mean that in the face of technology, we will become captives of technology and its domineering and controlling logic, but what Heidegger proposes as a solution to face technology - a saying yes and no simultaneously to technology. It means that we use the tools and instruments of modern technology, and in this way, we say yes to them, but we only consider them as tools that cannot determine the essence and truth of our inner and original existence and have an effect on it; so, we say no to them.

As Heidegger, Āl-e-Ahmad criticizes technology and mechanism and calls for a critical encounter with technology. However, unlike Heidegger, Āl-e-Ahmad adopts a selective and voluntarist approach toward technology. Āl-e-Ahmad seeks to take western technology on the one hand and impose western culture, thought, and philosophy on the other hand, and he ultimately adheres to this belief - the only solution to face westernization is to achieve technological power. It seems that Āl-e-Ahmad has a subjective view of modern technology and thinks it is possible to perform this task by having the will to accomplish the machine and technology. It is when Heidegger emphasizes the developmental and ontological character of technology and raises the point that the domination of technological rationality in the modern world was a matter independent of human will; thus, it is not possible to go to the technology war voluntaristly or to take advantage of selecting modern technology because, as Heidegger believes, technology is a way of thinking and is not just a mere tool that can benefit from its technical and functionalist merits, according to Āl-e-Ahmad. However, it creates culture and thought arising from modern technology.

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