TECHNOLOGICAL DISRUPTION AND A SURGE IN SENSIBILITY[1]

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12 March 2020

The triumph of technology has not been limited to a revolution of our working tools; it has taken possession of our minds through a permanent state of connection. In the space of just a few years, technological disruption has snuffed out quiet contemplation and the pure creation that is inherent to poetry. So much so that being disconnected brings us back to the memory of a long-lost world in which boredom gave rise to action. However, the human psyche cannot be so easily disjointed and thus the distillation of the world into a series of processes has exacerbated our sensibility, albeit with a brief delay. The history of society's elites is marked by cycles in which whimsical ideals have been dulled down by automation. This cycle is reflected in historian Hippolyte Taine's writings on the French revolution, who asserts that the starting point is an 18th century characterised by extreme sensibility:

> "All of these people are *too sensitive.* That is to say, French society of the 18th century, raised in the most exquisite state of decorum, accustomed to social niceties, constant courtesy and civility, with a sense of 'savoir-vivre' that is so ingrained that their conversation seems almost vapid to outsiders." [2]

But their sensibility was to be their downfall. They were succeeded by men with a premeditated lack of sensibility and a mechanical stiffness. It was they who automated the education of high society by *cramming their minds* with the learnings of the Empire. Alphonse de Lamartine recalls this period:

> "All these geometric men, who alone had the power to speak and who crushed us young men under the insolent tyranny of their triumph, believed that they had forever desiccated in us what they had managed to wither and kill in themselves: the entire moral, divine and melodious part of human thought. It is impossible to paint a picture of the proud sterility of that era for those who didn't experience it for themselves(...) it was a universal league of mathematical studies stacked against thought and poetry. Only figures were permitted, respected, protected and paid."[3]

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[1] Thomas Flichy de La Neuville, Chair of Geopolitics at Rennes School of Business.
[2] Hippolyte Taine, *Les origines de la France contemporaine, La Révolution I* (Paris: Hachette, 1879), p. 148.
[3] Alphonse de Lamartine, *Des destinées de la poésie* (Paris: Librairie de Furne, 1834), p. 7.

However, the excessive mechanisation of minds and the reduction of France to a war machine with no purpose other than a senseless flight towards the illusion of glory, led to its collapse. For there is no relationship between technological progress and the vital growth of a civilization, as the military history of ancient Greece teaches us. Collapses, meanwhile, usually signal a return to the starting point of the cycle. As Lamartine states:

> "Poetry returned to France with freedom, with thought and with the morality that goes hand-in-hand with restoration. It seems that the return of the Bourbons and of freedom in France fostered new inspiration, giving renewed soul to the oppressed or dormant literature of the time."[4]

What conclusions can we draw from this? Perhaps two things: firstly, that the managerial idolisation of processes – still advocated in companies clinging to the old hierarchical pyramids of the past – risks engendering the dominance of unbridled and irrational sensibility. And secondly, that the contraction of space-time inherent to modernity has condensed the rotation between the alternating trends previously evoked. The coronavirus epidemic is a striking example of this, as medical efforts have been accompanied by a wave of irrational anxiety in a bid to ward off the obsessive fear of *an unavoidable death.*

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[4]Lamartine, p. 17.