Summary of On The Mode of Existence of Technical Objects (1958)
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This present work is concerned with the essence of technical objects and their relation to man. While the aesthetic object has been considered suitable material for philosophical reflection, the technical object, treated as an instrument, has only ever been directly studied across the multiple modalities of its relation to man as an economic reality, as an instrument of work, or, indeed, of consumption.

The nonessential character of knowledge of the technical object with respect to its different relations to man has contributed to masking a task incumbent upon philosophical thought: to rediscover, through a deepening of the relation which exists between nature, man, and technical reality, the burden of alienated human reality which is enclosed within the technical object. The technical object, taking the place of the slave and being treated as such across relations of property and custom, has only partially liberated man: the technical object possesses a power of alienation because it is itself in a state of alienation, one more essential than economic or social alienation.

The importance of technical objects in contemporary cultures requires philosophical thought to make the effort of reducing technological alienation by introducing into culture a representation and scale of values adequate to the essence of technical objects.

The discovery of this essence must be carried out through a study of the genesis of technical objects, achieving itself [s’accomplissant] through a process of concretization which is different from successive empirical corrections and from deduction from prior theoretical principles: there is a specific genesis of the technical object.

A historical study allows for the discovery of the regulative function of culture in the relation between man and the technical object, especially across the normative foundation of the successive manifestations of encyclopedic spirit, from the technicism of the Sophists up to cybernetic theory, passing through the open and the autonomous awareness of the work of Diderot and d’Alembert.

Finally, a study of the contemporary modalities of the relation between man and the technical object shows that the notion of information is the most suitable for accomplishing the integration of culture with a representative and axiological content adequate to technical reality envisaged in its essence, man becoming, after invention, the active center and actor who alone can bring into existence a coherent technological world.