

Necromancy as the Threat to Civilisation Development

OKSANA CHURSINOVA

Department of Philosophy, Lviv Polytechnic National University, 5 Mytropolyt Andrei Street, 79013 Lviv, Ukraine
Email: churss@ukr.net

SVITLANA POVTOREVA

Department of Social and Humanitarian Disciplines and Fundamental Training, Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, 21 Ivasyuka Street, 82200 Truskavets, Ukraine
Email: vedmedja@ukr.net

This article views ‘necromancy’ as the phenomenon that gradually deprives people of their evolutionarily acquired qualities, i.e. sensuality, will, emotions and reason. Using the method of historical retrospective analysis for the technical activities of previous eras, the authors state that mechanisation, dating back to the Renaissance, leads to the transformation of the human into a creature dependent on machines. Pursuant to the method of interpreting a number of notions and concepts of the philosophy of technology and social philosophy (‘necromancer’, ‘simulacrum’, etc.), it is shown that in modern society necromancy leads to the imposition of technical thinking on the rest of humanity, the transformation of states into automated weapons factories, and the total spread of death. Based on the application of the development and interconnection principles, it was proven that the necromatic tendencies of technology are significantly strengthened as the might and the centralisation of power grow. This connection is most evident in modern wars, where technology plays a crucial role. People need to recognise the now greatly exaggerated place of technology in the structure of social activities. The preservation of human freedom and dignity, the achievements of civilisation on the basis of establishing ‘eternal peace’ (Immanuel Kant) depends on the level of responsibility of scientists, politicians and ordinary people for their future.

Keywords: war, necromancy, necromancer, technology, machine, simulacrum

INTRODUCTION

Today, many scientists, thinkers, politicians and ordinary people realise that together with many achievements and conveniences technology as well brings unprecedented threats. These are global deadly threats. Technocrats of all kinds and the fans of technological progress avoid talking about this. However, more and more voices are calling for restrictions in the area of the development of scientific and technical research, the control over it, and the introduction of rigid moral requirements into the structure of this activity. In order to outline not just

some future abstract dangers from the mechanisation of society and the dense interference of technology in the lives of individual people, but the deadly threats to the very existence of humanity, we use in our article the terms 'necromancy' and 'necromancer'. Applying the method of interpreting these terms in their historical retrospective, the authors demonstrate the appropriateness of their application in the context of the philosophy of technology and social philosophy. The necromancer is not a creature from the realm of the dead or the spirit of the deceased, it has no anthropological dimension, it is a mechanical creature that, having escaped from the control of the creator, turns its actions against the creator. This is the embodiment of invincible forces of the incredible destructive power which no human skill can withstand. This meaning of the now popular terms 'necromancer' and 'necromancy' spread in the intellectual environment of as far as the Renaissance, in particular in the works of Leonardo da Vinci (Leonardo da Vinci 1923: 68–69). In addition, necromancy can be understood as the slaughter of living people and as the actions of this monster, in the mouth of which humanity perishes. The most dangerous are technical inventions and creations involved in the military affairs. The threatening consequences of mechanisation have worried philosophers and sociologists from different countries (Baudrillard 1996; Mumford 1962–1967; Jünger 1956; Haraway 2015; Mokyr et al. 2015; Frey, Osborne 2017; Casas-Roma 2022; Chursinova 2022; Molella 2022; Mardosas 2023; Rimkus 2024; Chursinova 2024; Hossin et al. 2025). Martin Heidegger pointed out the dangers of technology in a number of his works. He emphasised that 'technology is not just a means, but a framework in which existence is revealed, and in this revelation lies the danger of reducing a human to a stock of resources' (Heidegger 1953). People tend to turn themselves into a means for the development of technology, and technology into the main means of revealing existence.

The trends in modern technological progress are analysed by Donna Haraway in the context of her concept of the Anthropocene. This is an era that contains enormous internal risks generated by biotechnology, accompanied by growing anxiety in human communities. 'The boundary that is the Anthropocene/Capitalocene pinpoints the researcher, means many things, including that immense irreversible destruction is really in train, not only for the 11 billion or so people who will be on earth near the end of the 21st century, but for myriads of other critters too' (Haraway 2015: 161).

Despite the significant number of works examining the negative consequences of the mechanisation of society, there is practically no research focused on the rapid intensification of necromatic trends in the development of technology, especially in the context of modern wars. Based on the application of the principles of development and interconnection, the article proves that the necromatic tendencies of technology have significantly intensified as the might has become centralised and its power has grown. This connection is the closest in modern wars, in which technology plays a decisive role.

PREDICTIONS CONSIDERING THE DANGERS OF MECHANISATION

Leonardo da Vinci was one of the first to warn about the uncontrolled development of technology. Five centuries before today, he intuitively foresaw the means by which all the living could be destroyed. The thinker admonished humanity about the terrible threats posed by the development of technology, which could fall into the hands of irresponsible rulers who are unable to foresee the consequences of their actions. One could clearly trace the contradictions in his technical works and his own assessments of these works. On the one hand, we observe his fascination with the power of machines, his desire to improve them, on the other – we

can sense his moral reflections on the dangers that these technical products bring to people (Leonardo da Vinci 1923).

The term 'necromancer' is found in the reasoning of the Italian scientist and philosopher. He did not believe in the real existence of otherworldly beings, as they were called in his contemporary environment. At the same time, he does not remain indifferent to the fears of his contemporaries, frightened by the possible terrible consequences of the actions of necromancers. He contemplated about the impossibility of resisting such an inhuman, a perfect mechanic, an enemy of the human race, capable of controlling the winds, causing storms at sea, destroying ships, and moving through the air in any direction. Leonardo da Vinci's dreams of technical progress, to which he personally contributed, were overshadowed by the predictions of the terrible cruelty of people capable of committing mass crimes with the help of military inventions created by themselves, himself including. Like other engineers of the time, da Vinci was willing to sell his inventions to the rulers for the military use. However, he was morally sensitive, humanistically oriented, and responsible for his actions, thus he did not make some of his military inventions public. He predicted that people would feel terrified when they heard mechanical beings speaking human language (Leonardo da Vinci 1923: 68–69).

Many modern thinkers and science fiction writers (Bradbury, Sheckley, King, etc.) present no less terrifying pictures of the future, in which technology defeats or completely destroys people. In this way, the concerned contemporaries warn about the dangers of the mechanisation of society and the lives of individuals. In particular, Friedrich Jünger notes: '... that among the resources consumed by technical progress are the human resources. They fail to consider the limits of technological expansion, limits which are set by destructive forces, which rise against man and his works in the same degree as these elemental forces get harnessed in our engines' (Jünger 1956: 187).

THE GROWTH OF ANTI-HUMAN ASPECTS OF TECHNOLOGY AND THE THREATS TO THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS

Lewis Mumford noted that technology in its sources corresponded to human nature, was oriented towards life, and was not hostile to its creators (Mumford 1962–1967). Later, a certain estrangement of the human from technology arises. Modern technology is taking on new features, including necromantic trends. They relate to the biological and cognitive properties of a person. Regarding the new technologies, the latest machines, interactive screens, etc., most contemporaries do not feel hostility, or even the slightest doubts about the appropriateness of their use. Video, television and computers are perceived positively; they already constitute the whole with the person and with their body. Jean Baudrillard compares our bodily unity with technical devices with transparent prostheses, contact lenses, with which we have grown together, perceiving them as something necessary and natural (Baudrillard 1996). However, few people realise that technology is making us disabled. A monster, a necromancer, has crept inside our bodies, it has overcome natural healthy resistance, and is leading us towards even greater artificiality. Friedrich Jünger states that 'death is inseparable from life, each meaningless without the other. Wherever technology imposes its order on nature, it simultaneously stirs a resistance that strikes a man with the precise balance of a pendulum in the machinery of time' (Jünger 1956: 178–179).

The rapid progress of technology contains necromantic tendencies regarding the future of humanity and the continuation of the species. The uncertainty of the person's identity caused

by the improvement of networks is compared by Baudrillard to the uncertainty about one's own gender (Baudrillard 1996). Developed in modern feminism, there is rather powerful tendency in the West that gender is not a natural determination of a person, it is more like socially constructed. One cannot fail to notice that modern technology is significantly involved here. Computers, being those a person spends a lot of time with, are single, celibate, and do not need a partner of the opposite sex. The unity and communication with the machine essentially replaces a marriage partner, which in many cases leads to a person's celibacy. In such contact the person's goal is not their interlocutor, with whom they are supposedly communicating, but the otherworldly realm of the machine. We communicate with a necromancer who takes away our time, energy, and the opportunity to continue our lineage. The interactive screen transforms the process of communication into the equivalent process of communication. Baudrillard compares such communication to the loop, a mathematical sign of infinity, a Möbius strip. Our computer screen and the screen of our own brain are on the same surface, the object and the subject, the inner and the outer, the closeness and the distance are interwoven (Baudrillard 1996). Technical devices immerse us in an inhuman dimension. It is no coincidence that the topic of artificial emotional intelligence in technical devices has become popular (Chursinova 2021). However, the critical assessment of these studies is rather common as well. It is emphasised that the rapid progress in the field of emotion modelling is superficial and only simulates a person's true abilities and their capability for personal communication. It is emphasised that the differences between computer structures and the inner world of people are so fundamental that the emotional intelligence of machines is only a simulacrum. Perhaps a necromancer who claims to possess emotions threatens to deprive a person of their sensuality by replacing them with simulacra (Baudrillard 1996).

The danger from technical devices concerns not only our physicality and emotionality, but also our mind. Baudrillard explains the success of artificial intelligence by the fact that it frees us from natural intelligence. In artificial intelligence, the priority belongs to the operational component of thinking. By facilitating some mental operations, technical devices simplify thinking, take away the mystery of thought, its duality, its real completeness, and the complexity of its connection with the world. By trusting a machine, a person loses a significant part of his or her freedom, which they achieved in the process of historical development.

In a virtual machine environment, human thought is in the state of constant tense anticipation, since computer operations are associated with operating on knowledge for a very short time. Thinking, as it has developed over time, is not limited to a specific period of time, it requires peace for reflection. The machine deprives humans from the essential property of their thinking, i.e. the unlimitedness of time.

Baudrillard believes that modern machines, although being able to work, perform calculations and permutations, and move in space better than humans, are still devoid of the ability to think. After all, artificial intelligence is actually not that ingenious to create suchlike devices. What the machines offer is a manifestation of thought, and the people who control them become like them, surrendering themselves more and more to this manifestation and actually losing the ability to think (Baudrillard 1996). The necromancy of machines is gradually taking over human mental abilities, which is the most serious threat to humanity. A machine is not endowed with mental life, it is a dead automaton, relentlessly carrying out the same monotonous work process. 'It is as rational as a mechanism can be, and the mechanical precision with which it works presupposes a mind working with mechanical exactness' (Jünger 1956: 182).

WAR MACHINE NECROMANCY

The most outstanding necromantic trends in the development of technology appear in military activities. Certain thinkers associate the emergence of military equipment designed for mass killing of people not with the improvement of tools, but with the times when mass human sacrifices began (Jünger 1956; Mumford 1962–1967). This is largely due to the increasing centralisation and concentration of power in the hands of a few (or one) rulers. Thus, Lewis Mumford considers one of the causes of wars to be the moral corruption of the rulers, fed up with idleness and enormous material wealth. These leaders began to consider war as the foremost state affair, a spectacle, a high-risk game that strengthened the power of their governing. The rulers lost their sense of reality, became cruel in humans, and easily sent their subjects to their deaths. In their enthusiasm, the leaders crossed all limits of reason, resembling, according to Mumford's comparison, the king of ancient Sumer, who became so carried away by the war that upon returning to his own capital, he discovered that it belonged to the enemy. Gradually, war became a sign of power and health of the state, the fastest and cheapest way to the success of government, and it produced tangible results that destroyed the work of many generations (Mumford 1962–1967).

Initially, the cause of wars was not the improvement of tools, later war became the main impetus for the development of technology. Mumford notes that mechanical inventions up to the 12th century owed much more to military affairs than to peaceful activities (Mumford 1962–1967). According to the philosopher, 'From Greek fire to atomic bombs and from ballistics to missiles, military affairs remained the main source of those mechanical inventions that required metallurgical or chemical knowledge' (Mumford 1970).

Besides, a number of authors associate the beginnings of wars involving human sacrifice with the peculiarities of human psychology (Jünger 1956; Mumford 1962–1967). The psyche of people is an important factor in human history and social activity. In the conditions and under the influence of technology, various emotions arise that can push the leaders and large masses of people to irrational actions that generate necromantic tendencies. Psychologists and psychiatrists are recording an increase in the number of mentally unhealthy individuals, including those who are addicted to alcohol and drugs. Mentally healthy people are generally not capable of fantasising about the absolute power, nor do they seek to die prematurely or become crippled. The philosopher concludes that the necromantic tendencies of our time are rooted in the nature of Western civilisation, which, from the very beginning of its existence, does not produce mentally healthy people (Mumford 1970). The following comparison can be made: gunpowder, invented within another civilisation, in China, was intended for fireworks and festive spectacles. Borrowed from there by the West, it became the stuffing of weapons aimed at killing people.

Fears, both real and imagined, are common in the psyches of the individuals and communities in the Western world. The transmission of horrors into the psyche of people has been supported by the authorities. The people's dissatisfaction with the standard of living, the hatred of their own rulers were redirected towards the external enemies, the foreigners, who could and should be killed, maimed, and their cities and villages destroyed under the slogans of patriotism and defense of their country (Mumford 1970). Instead of fighting against their internal enemies and oppressors, people, being under pressure and deception from the authorities, directed their aggression outward. 'The stronger the social tension and the everyday oppression of civilization,' noted Lewis Mumford, 'the more useful war became as a kind of safety valve... It justified itself, displacing vague nervous anxiety with rational fear in the face

of real danger. When the war began, real grounds appeared for gloomy forebodings, horror and compensatory manifestations of courage' (Mumford 1970).

The same methods are used today. However, in our time, necromantic tendencies contain unprecedented dangers for humanity. By inciting war, the representatives of the authorities of modern Western countries additionally seek to distract the people's attention from their own miscalculations and unworthy methods of governance. Fascinated by technical progress, in particular the creation of atomic weapons, the leaders and scientists do not focus on the possible apocalypse. At the same time, the necromantic dangers are associated, not least, with psychological factors, namely, with the fantasies of the representatives of the authorities and military command, the irresponsibility of weapons developers who, guided by the desire for material enrichment and ambition, do not think about the consequences of their own activities. It is difficult to find people like Leonardo da Vinci, those who would feel horror and pangs of conscience, afraid of being involved in mass murders and deaths. Having high-tech military equipment at their disposal, modern rulers have remained the same, or perhaps even become morally worse than the leaders of the ancient times.

The changes in the psychology of people involved in war have occurred over the past hundred years or so. According to Friedrich Georg Jünger, these changes are most closely related to the transition to technical weapons. The modern soldier is different from the warrior of the past. He is not dealing with a human, an enemy from another country, he is fighting against machines. Actually, war is the result of willful efforts aimed at the development of technology (Jünger 1956).

The necromantic aspects of war have grown incredibly. A human is the main and primary target on whose elimination all forces of destruction are aimed at (Jünger 1956). Death loses the attractive tinge of solemnity that accompanied military battles of the past, i.e. with the display of flags, military music, etc. War comes in the form of technology that makes battlefields look like the ruins of cities, filled with the bodies of the killed soldiers and civilians. The necromancer mechanic brings death, turning people into dust, tearing them to pieces, burying them alive under the ruins. Around the battle area there is a destroyed, bare land where a person cannot find any protection. The human situation is absolutely unbearable, it is inhuman. In these conditions, technology can exist and operate, but not people (Jünger 1956).

Opposing trends in the human psyche are increasingly apparent. During the wars of the 20th century, something unnatural appeared in the thoughts and desires, it had not previously existed in the civilisations of the ancient world, known for their great cultural achievements. An ugly demon-necromancer was born in the human mind; it uses a human face to acquire his own. People aim their activities in opposite directions. They long for a serene life and peace between nations, though at the same time they ruthlessly ravage the world, destroying all life (Jünger 1956).

The demon of war is taking on inhuman features. Leading positions in armies are increasingly occupied by technicians, they control communications, aviation and missiles, and the invented technical devices perform control operations. Due to the replacement of people by technology, wars and their consequences resemble an apocalypse. They are increasingly devoid of rationality.

Studying the features of the First and Second World Wars, Jünger emphasises the obvious connection between the war and the development of technology. In the process of this comparative analysis, he expresses the opinion about the existence of internal laws of modern warfare and tries to identify them. His contemplations are not organised in the form of clear

statements. We believe that these are rather certain trends. We shall note the most significant ones, those that, in our opinion, are of a necromantic nature: a) globalisation of the war, i.e. the spread of automated technology throughout the world, which turns the war of armies into the war of all people; b) the states of the world are turning into huge automated weapons factories; c) new technical methods increase misfortune enormously (evacuation, mobilisation, destruction of families, migration of people, their journeys into the unknown, etc.); d) war puts an end to human freedom, the principle of voluntariness, military personnel and workers of military and other factories, and civilians become dependent on technical equipment and become objects of manipulation by technology; e) technology forces people to break ties with the past, the monuments are ruthlessly destroyed, becoming inaccessible to future generations, and people cannot protect them, just like they cannot take care of themselves; f) war brings destruction everywhere, what has been created by the labour of the centuries is instantly turned into nothing, the necromancer sows fields and cities with corpses; g) people are governed by mechanical laws, they cannot cope with these laws and are forced to obey them (Jünger 1956).

Jünger pinpoints the terrifyingly accurate correspondence between the scale of the war's destruction and the existing level of technological development. 'Mechanics is leading us towards the dead world,' he notes, 'and the faster the automates that ensure progress work, the quicker the death spreads in this world' (Jünger 1956).

The war, combined with new technology, renders futile any attempts by even the most brilliant people to stop necromancy. Modern warfare is the domain of technical specialists; it is a conveyor belt that moves evenly or jerkily in the dead time. This is truly the relentless march of the necromancer. Jünger believes that technology has completely conquered the war. According to the philosopher's figurative expression, Ares was entangled in the nets of Hephaestus (Jünger 1956). Technological progress eats itself up again and again. It continuously destroys its own organisations and devices. The necromancer has outgrown the scale of the planet, and in order to grow further, he is forced to feed on his own waste.

Finally, the aging of military equipment is giving rise to a growing variety of the new, terrifying technical inventions. The necromancer is becoming more and more alarming. It is time we changed the traditional European notion of death as a woman with a scythe to the image of a technological monster with an inhuman face.

CONCLUSIONS

Since technology grants people unprecedented power, it is necessary to seriously consider the limits of technological progress so as not to destroy ourselves in this uncontrolled activity. A particular danger is posed by the advancement of technology and equipment in military affairs, that is, the necromancy of war. Since the time when technology became the main tool for centralising power, the mortal danger to all of humanity has increased significantly due to the invention of weapons capable of stopping the progress of civilisation and destroying people and the higher forms of life on the planet. Unfortunately, war in the process of society's development has become the main impetus for the development of technology, therefore the struggle for peace and reducing the role of wars in the activities of government will allow us to determine the proper place of technology in human life and in the disclosure of its existence.

Received 28 December 2024

Accepted 27 March 2025

References

1. Baudrillard, J. 1996. *System of Objects*. New York: Verso.
2. Casas-Roma, J. 2022. 'Ethical Idealism, Technology and Practice: A Manifesto', *Philosophy & Technology* 35(86). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-022-00575-7> 09 (accessed 09.09.2022).
3. Chursinova, O.; Sinelnikova, M. 2022. 'Technoscience and the Artificial Evil: Ethical Aspect', *Filosofija. Sociologija* 33(3): 277–284.
4. Chursinova, O.; Sinelnikova, M. 2024. 'Post-Human and Trans-Human in the Future Perspective of the Humanity', *Filosofija. Sociologija* 33(3): 23–30.
5. Chursinova, O.; Stebelska, O. 2021. 'Is the Realization of the Emotional Artificial Intelligence Possible? Philosophical and Methodological Analysis', *Filosofija. Sociologija* 32(1): 76–83.
6. Frey, C. B.; Osborne, M. A. 2017. 'The Future of Employment: How Susceptible are Jobs to Computerisation?', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 114: 254–280.
7. Haraway, D. 2015. 'Antropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chuthulucene', *Environmental Humanities* 6(1): 159–165.
8. Heidegger, M. 1953. *Die Frage nach der Technik*. Göttingen, Germany: Hubert & Co.
9. Hossin, M. A.; Yin, S.; Dan, R.; Chen, L. 2025. 'Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Unmanned Vehicles: Navigating Uncertainties, Risks, and the Path Forward for the Fourth Industrial Revolution', *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12(1). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04554-z>
10. Jünger, F. 1956. *The Failure of Technology*. New York: Gateway.
11. Leonardo da Vinci. 1923. *The Notebooks*. New York: Empire State Book Company.
12. Mardosas, E. 2023. 'Technology, Virtue and the Good Life: Between Production and Consumption', *Filosofija. Sociologija* 34(1): 6–13.
13. Mokyr, J.; Vickers, C.; Ziebarth, N. L. 2015. 'The History of Technological Anxiety and the Future of Economic Growth: Is This Time Different?', *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 29(3): 31–50.
14. Molella, A. 2022. 'The Soul of Technology', *Technology and Culture* 63(2): 494–506.
15. Mumford, L. 1962–1967. *The Myth of the Machine. Technics and Human Development*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
16. Mumford, L. 1970. *The Myth of the Machine*. Available at: https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.214098/2015.214098.The-Myth_djvu.txt (accessed 01.01.2021).
17. Rimkus, E. 2024. 'Cultural and Value Differences in the Conditions of Technological Globalisation', *Filosofija. Sociologija* 35(1): 1–4.

OKSANA CHURSINOVA, SVITLANA POVTOREVA

Nekromantija kaip grėsmė civilizacijos raidai

Santrauka

Straipsnyje „nekromantija“ vertinama kaip reiškiny, kuris palaipsniui atima iš žmonių evoliuciniu būdu įgytas savybes, t. y. jausmingumą, valią, emocijas ir protą. Naudodami istorinės retrospektyvinės analizės metodą ankstesnių epochų techninei veiklai, autoriai teigia, kad mechanizacija, kilusi Renesanso laikais, veda į žmogaus pavertimą būtybe, priklausoma nuo mašinų. Interpretuojant technologijų ir socialinių filosofijų sąvokas („nekromantas“, „simuliakras“ ir kt.), parodoma, kad šiuolaikinėje visuomenėje nekromantija lemia techninio mąstymo primetimą likusiai žmonijos daliai, valstybių pavertimą automatizuotomis ginklų gamyklomis ir mirties plitimą. Taikant kūrimo ir sujungimo principus parodoma, kad augant galiai ir galios centralizacijai ypač sustiprėja technologijų nekromantinės tendencijos. Šis ryšys išryškėja šiuolaikiniuose karuose, kur technologijos vaidina itin svarbų vaidmenį. Teigiama, kad technologijų vieta socialinės veiklos struktūroje perdėta. Laisvės ir orumo išsaugojimas, civilizacijos pasiekimai „amžinosios taikos“ požiūriu (Immanuelis Kantas) priklauso nuo mokslininkų, politikų ir paprastų žmonių atsakomybės už savo ateitį lygio.

Raktažodžiai: karas, nekromantija, nekromantas, technologija, mašina, simuliakras