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MARK COECKELBERGH
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, TEMPORALITY, AND THE POLITICS OF CO-EXISTENCE

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BOOK REVIEW

Mark Coeckelbergh is a distinguished Belgian philosopher, currently holding the position of Professor of Philosophy of Media and Technology at the Philosophy Department of the University of Vienna. Additionally, he serves as the ERA Chair at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague and as a Guest Professor at WASP-HS and the University of Uppsala. Engaged in various international bodies focusing on robotics and artificial intelligence, Coeckelbergh's scholarly contributions are highly regarded both within academic circles and among the wider public because he covers recent topics that resonate in contemporary society. Particularly notable is his innovative methodological approach to the philosophy of technology, as clarified in his excellent book *Moved by Machines* (2020). *His other notable publications include Robot Ethics* (2022), *AI Ethics* (2020), *Introduction to Philosophy of Technology* (2019), and *New Romantic Cyborgs: Romanticism, Information Technology, and the End of the Machine* (2017), all of which offer valuable insights for further exploration in the field.

The book *Digital Technologies, Temporality, and the Politics of Co-Existence* amalgamates the concept of technoperformances with narrative theory and process philosophy to scrutinize the influence of digital technologies on our temporal experiences and existence. It extends the discourse to contemplate the implications of contemporary challenges such as climate change, environmental issues and advanced technologies like AI. Structured into three chapters, the first provides an introductory overview of fundamental principles, the second opens the themes of process, narrative, and performance for later discussion and lays the groundwork for the final chapter, which delves into the quest for finding and clarifying a shared temporal framework within what is termed the Anthropocene.

The first chapter, *Introduction: Time, Existence, and Technology*, serves as an introduction to the book's overarching theme and outlines its key contentions. It addresses the prevalent sense of time scarcity and acceleration in contemporary society alongside existential anxieties and the pervasive influence of digital technologies. By engaging with existing literature on digital temporalities and the politics of time, the chapter seeks to deepen understanding. Through the well-known concepts of process philosophy, narrative theory, and the newly developed concept of *technoperformances*,

it introduces an original framework to conceptualize our temporal existence and agents that participate in shaping human time.

One of these agents is digital technologies, which tie us to living in the present, but this present is not present enough, and it is more or less an illusion of true present time. The chapter also outlines the ethical and political dimensions of digital existence, questioning power dynamics and opening issues about synchronicity and co-existence in the so called Anthropochrone. In addition, it explores the potential for cross-cultural insights to broaden our understanding and response to these temporal challenges. But the main purpose of this chapter is to open themes and discussion for the later sections, that more precisely present key concepts and their application.

The second chapter, *Process, Narrative, and Performance: Conceptualizing How Digital Technologies Shape Temporality and Existence as Technoperformances of Time*, is influenced by process philosophy, narrative theory and the concept of performance. Process philosophy, which is developed by authors like H. Bergson or A. N. Whitehead, challenges the perception of the world as static objects and instead advocates a view of things as dynamic processes and becoming.

Coeckelbergh explores the impact of digital technologies on our existence through the lens of process philosophy, wherein subjects and objects emerge from continuous processes. Emphasizing our participation in this ontogenesis, the narrative structure of these processes is highlighted. Building on Ricoeur's ideas, the chapter contends that digital technologies are involved or even act as co-authors in shaping meaningful narratives. To complete the theoretical framework, the concept of technoperformance is derived from the art theory of performance. This conceptual framework is used to develop a distinctive view of our existence, which is happening in the so-called multitemporal world. This means that there are different perceptions of time during various activities experienced by different humans, which are further proliferated by digital technologies. The power (biopower) is exercised through them over subjects, which is an actualised concept borrowed from Michel Foucault.

The third chapter, *In Search of Common Time in the Anthropochrone: Good Times, Contemporalization, and the Politics of Global Co-existence in Times of Climate Change,* delves into the ethics and politics of technoperformances of time, exploring the nature of good processes, narratives, and co-existence. Departing from individualistic virtue ethics, the author advocates for disciplined, non-romantic ethics of technoperformances inspired by Borgmann's concept of focal occasions, which is, according to him, related to the ancient Greek concept of *kairos* (the auspicious moments). In the contemporary context, the need for new technoperformances is emphasized, providing opportunities for finding a *good time*, which contributes to good co-existence.

Later, the chapter shifts to the politics of time and contends that time-making is inherently political. It questions anthropochronic thinking, urging consideration of non-humans and cross-cultural insights. Drawing from natural sciences like geology, it encourages a holistic understanding of time. Inspired by Arendt, the author concludes with a call for new beginnings, invoking the role of anthropological work and technology in navigating the challenges of finding and shaping good times and common times amidst the Anthropochrone.

The reviewed book deserves commendation as a highly accessible introduction to a distinctive perspective through which is viewed on some contemporary issues addressed in a wider discussion of the philosophy of technology. These issues intersect with questions that modern society is

concerned with. Moreover, the book subtly elucidates Coeckelbergh's personal contributions to the discourse of the philosophy of technology, thus serving as an excellent entry point into the author's philosophical framework of digital technologies.