

EPISTEMOLOGY FROM EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX TO NEIL POSTMAN AND ITS LEVERAGE ON CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT. As in today's society, the value of experience at different levels seems to be the starting point of any literary endeavor. With the new trends in communication, linguistics, and critical theory, the way in which we attempt to know something becomes the key to decipher the very nature of that thing, and knowledge only begins when we turn away from things past. In nowadays philosophy, theology and humanities, the thin red line between what we think is the real meaning of something and its apriorical basis can only be accounted for by our own conscience, which Schillebeeckx, for instance, defines as experience. Because Schillebeeckx allows experience to model the traditional dogma of the church and thus to function as proper revelation in the history of man, a major shift occurs from Christian revelation to religious revelation, which is subjected to particular experiences. Neil Postman, on the other hand, tries to take us back, that is, before this shift, by telling the story of consequences, though in the same secular realm as his contemporary theologian. Living in the *technopolis* generation, he warns, man can grasp the literary sense of experience as a consumerist only, since the true nature of reality is disclosed in language and literature by technological inputs, whereas conscience ceased struggling with the essential questions of life. This study is a survey of the inner fluctuations of experience from simple to complex in areas like theology, philosophy of language, and postmodernism, with an account of the influence of Schillebeeckx and Postman on the literature in their respective fields.

KEY WORDS: experience, technology, *humanum*, literature, postmodern

Introduction

The Meaning of Experience

Whenever we talk about experience we undoubtedly think of it as being related to our own history in its *modus operandi*, to philosophy in our *modus cogitandi*, but also to linguistics considering the kind of suggestibility contained by the words we use about to further enhance our knowledge of experience. The starting point used by the Flemish theologian and

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philosopher Edward Schillebeeckx in defining the meaning of experience is surprisingly well sketched. In the first half of the 1930s, when he first wrote on these issues, he was infatuated with a fashionable theory in the then phenomenology, namely De Petter's thought on infinity and, as such, the right amount of abstract and reality that makes human knowledge what it is. In short, at this time Schillebeeckx concludes that it is our non-conceptual state which somehow validates our conceptual knowledge, so that "a concept is a limited expression of an awareness of reality that is in itself unexpressed, implicit, and preconceptual" (De Petter in Schreiter 1984: 39). Needless to say, the non-conceptual is not clearly delineated at this point in Schillebeeckx's account on this matter, but it can be easily traced as perhaps a second way of knowing the world along reason. What is conceptual is widely explained in other philosophical works and it clears the mind, because, "having a propositional attitude, [it] involves standing in a certain relation to a content (*a thought* or a *proposition*). The content is what it is that is believed, desired, hoped for, etc." (see McDowell 1994, Noë 1999, Peacocke 1983, in Bermúdez and Cahen 2015). Thus the non-conceptual always involves a contrastive standing and a constraint, something conditional upon the subject/the perceiver.

However, precisely because there is a non-conceptual reality, Schillebeeckx maintains that the only way we can adequately express it is through our non-conceptual conscience – a view which is both neo-Thomist and Aristotelian since for Schillebeeckx the non-conceptual is a functional universal norm. In other words, any attempt to understand a theological discourse must keep within the boundaries of all that is not common reasoning, as it preserves all the abstract concepts there are. At this point we can easily see just how smoothly Schillebeeckx brings the methods of modern linguistics into his argument, firstly because of his very personal manner of talking about the content of human language, and secondly because he cannot precisely define (in a non-conceptual tone) what the rational basis of abstract concepts is (a more lively such pursuit would be glossematics' differentiation between language, with its collective and abstract features, and *parole*, which is supposedly individual and concrete).

Consequently, a term that Schillebeeckx employs when trying to explain the need to go abstract with our assertions about objective reality is experience. However, along the way the theologian clearly underlines what this means: it is not a taxonomic experience, because we cannot simply employ a certain type of knowledge and avoid entering a given dialectics or interpretive frame. The experience Schillebeeckx proposes is rather open to criticism, so that the already existing experiences may be exposed to new connections. Nonetheless, the questions remains as to what can we gather from such cumulative experience? Schillebeeckx answers that this tradition

of experience may integrate the individual experience into the collective experience, and this follow-up somehow completes the image of this “new theology”, from below, in which the part is usually seen in the light of the whole. In giving a proper answer to the question, Schillebeeckx refers to Wolfhart Pannenberg’s *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* (1976: 203f):

The significance of the past for any new present is shown in the process of tradition. Whether the past becomes relevant for the present depends on our answer to the question to what extent the history of the past contains a future which we have not yet taken into account; in other words, how far it can illuminate the experience of a later present in its relationship to the future. (Schillebeeckx 1980: 72)

The discussion, however, does not end with the issue of the relevance of experience in the context of various traditions of knowledge. At Schillebeeckx it seems to go further to the problem of authority, since all particular experiences have ascendancy on the whole of human history.

The Authority of Experience

As a consequence of the historical evolution of human experience, our knowledge carries the peculiarities of all ages of knowledge. Schillebeeckx points to the fact that the significance of all these ages must be sought in the significance of individual ages of experience, the only holders of the true meaning of each conceptual model. That being said, the experiences of meaning reveal the meaning. Again, in the spirit of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, Schillebeeckx thinks that within these particular ages, experience and revelation are analogous. His conclusion is that revelation is already at hand, hence all there is to do is that we place it within proper conceptual realms, according to our psychological, social or economical values. Nevertheless, in order for our experience to have authority as well, it must satisfy the following requirements: (1) how we get to the meaning of an experience must be deductive, not inductive (*i.e.*, there has to be a difference between the meaning created by human phantasy and the way the sense is being revealed):

It is often said that the element of revelation does not lie in experience but in its interpretation. In that case revelation is merely an *interpretative element*. It was said above that experience is a dialectical phenomenon, an essential interweaving of encounter with the world (above all in and through actual practice), of thought and language, in a historical “entanglement with history”. Human existence is this dialectical interweaving. The encounter of many generations with the man and the world makes the particular language game of a culture what it is... Religious language shares in this dialectical interweaving of encounter with the world, thought and language. In thought,

language and experience it is the expression of a *unique* encounter with the world. In that case, religion is a particular manner of human existence, a specific form of the dialectical unity of encounter with the world, thought and language... We cannot see “the religious” isolated in one of these three elements of one and the same experience... I prefer to say that for the believer this dialectical unity is itself religious... In this sense language, and here the language of faith, is really the weakest element in the totality of this dialectical unity. (Schillebeeckx 1980: 49)

At a first glance, this perspective on the revelation is as fragmentary as it gets. From the onset, Schillebeeckx’s arguments on conceptual language imply that there is no conceptual knowledge, to which it can be replied that even the experiences of meaning are themselves based on concepts. Thus, to the question “What is the base of conceptual knowledge?”, Schillebeeckx suggests as a core notion that it is “intuition” (which is instrumental in phenomenology): we simply put reality and language together by way of our intuition, which is based on an act of faith. When he first used the notion of intuition, De Petter managed to free himself from the rationalist barrier which vehemently opposed the neo-thomism of his time, however without giving way to abyss of voluntarism. It is evident that the nature of experience, and especially the thing that is being experienced, has a great bearing on Schillebeeckx’s idea of revelation. But his perspective on this relationship creates an existential void, since the second requirement for an experience to have authority is that (2) human conscience must be able to express whatever is being experienced. However, we would think that the expressions and shapes which provide the model for all faith experiences originate in the human deposit of images that constitute these experience, and this very ingredient depends on historical experiences.

A too harsh distinction between what is considered conceptual and what is non-conceptual makes Schillebeeckx’s position a very sensitive matter in the context of today’s Roman-Catholic theology. Supporting the flexibility of epistemology in favour of anthropology endangers the status of dogmas and faith, which thus become mere reproductions of these “immediate experiences”, that is, convenient products of human history. This history-dogma opposition stood, in fact, at the very heart of the accusations against Schillebeeckx made at the Second Vatican Council. Moreover, since isolated experiences are defined as relative to one’s inner life, Schillebeeckx maintains that “all psychic – and also religious – experiences emerge from a dark, for the most part, unconscious ground”, which is why there is no such thing as “purely religious experiences” (Schillebeeckx in Schreiter 1984: 43).

A concluding question here is how does such an experience (be it situational or historical) become ontologically relevant as a universal human

standard? Schillebeeckx's critical stand, we think, would be depleted without his perspective on the experience-revelation relationship, where he points to the practicalities of experience. In this scheme, the theologian is indeed safe from arguments otherwise difficult to contemplate.

Experience and Revelation

Schillebeeckx asserts that human experience does not enter a contradictory relationship with divine revelation. Experience is but a vehicle that facilitates the conveyance of divine revelation. However, Schillebeeckx adds, experience contains more than human reason and language: it encompasses a whole area of human perceptions, activities, and events. All of revelation, Schillebeeckx says, is mediated by the channels of human experience, albeit that does not force revelation into one of the many categories of human experience. Schillebeeckx carefully notices that revelation imbues our experience with its critical stance and that it ends in a dialectic position towards it. As he discusses revelation in the context of human experience, Schillebeeckx understands that revelation means more than words and sentences, and it can also explain how certain events are able to be revelatory. All revelatory events, he points out, are mediated by language, but they are never entirely comprised in our concepts and language.

Here Schillebeeckx is again a modern theologian to the core, since he makes us draw an inescapable conclusion, *i.e.*, he expansively redefines classic theology. As for him the role of experience extends to the structures of human society out-and-out, Schillebeeckx moves easily from the so-called superficial structures – though human concepts and language that are universally available – to the deep structures, or to meaning. Because any experience is authoritative if it is meaningful (hence experience becomes normative in matters of theology and praxis), Schillebeeckx examines the doctrine of revelation from the standpoint of this communicative experience, therefore the ontological detail is masterfully detached from its place and reassigned as an appendix of anthropology, even though essentially it is not Schillebeeckx's intent to call or gain it anthropological. Under these auspices, the theologian shows that the most convenient way to reflect at the relationship between ontology and anthropology is by placing the discussion within the *humanum* as the realm of historical events with all their contrasts and growth.

Experience as *humanum*

Reasonably enough, in this realm of events a whole range of emotions unveil, thus all the way through his discussion on human experience Schillebeeckx approaches the problem of suffering as well. Interestingly enough, though, he does not think that suffering is a one way expression of

the human state of mind when confronted with a negative and unfavorable experience. On the contrary, Schillebeeckx reckons, precisely because there are two types of experience, there are also two types of suffering. (This, however, begs the question on more religious grounds as to the nature of the church, which could be therefore divided based on the nature of its sufferers, see Simuț C 2009: 27-29.) It is clear from the onset that his debate on suffering draws to existentialism. The first type of experience is specific in character and it is individually acquired, hence the suffering it produces is determinative and relational. That means, on that one hand, that this kind of suffering can help us think more maturely in the midst of unfortunate afflictions. On the other hand, it is the sort of suffering that opens us to those around us, which means that love and fondness are nothing else than shades of such suffering. However, the concept of suffering in this standing allows for a dialectics in the very nature of human personality if we agree with Schillebeeckx that suffering is a neverending feeling of burden among humans, thus human relationships are to be investigated at a psycho-somatic level rather than in terms of social networks.

That being said, the second type of experience is more general in character since it becomes manifest outside these specific experiences. It is shown as excessive suffering and evil within human history, examples of which would include mischievous interests in higher social strata, world wide wars, the Holocaust, etc. A most interesting fact about Schillebeeckx's understanding of this suffering is that he defines history based on what he thinks existentialism conveys, and in so doing he states that "this suffering (which serves others) is the beginning and the end of the entire human history" (Schillebeeckx in Schreier 1984: 52).

This type of experience cannot be approached by means of human concepts as it is already a mystery impossible to fathom by human reason. The suffering it produces is deeply embedded in memory, since it is "the memory of what happened in a specific suffering, in a particular historical context" (Schillebeeckx in Schreier 1984: 52).

Moreover, Schillebeeckx reminds us that among the rather various experiences a special place is granted to the so-called "contrast experiences", *i.e.*, those experiences which impede on the well-being of men and women in our history. This thwarting, on the other hand, point to a tension between the nature of the experience (human action) and the history of the experience (intransigence in the face of evil). The two can be called as well the nature of suffering and the history of suffering, since whatever they conceal goes from humanity towards mystery.

For this reason Schillebeeckx vigorously disagreed with the German Lutheran theologian Jürgen Moltmann, whom he accused of "sadistic

mysticism” because Moltmann supposedly tried to force divinity into the same interpretive frame of humanity. Schillebeeckx points that Moltmann’s solution to the problem of human suffering, which suggests that as God is eternal so is suffering, is far from conferring suffering any splendour. Schillebeeckx also rejects Moltmann’s view on Jesus whom, the latter said, was always prone to identify himself with the outcast of society, hence God has somehow denied himself in order to sacrifice himself for the sin of man. Evidently, Schillebeeckx leaves the event of Jesus’ death outside divine history when saying that Moltmann mistakingly attributed God what in fact was done to Jesus through the history of human injustice. Therefore, to Schillebeeckx Jesus’ suffering is a moment in the history of salvation (soteriology) that could reflect badly on God were we to identify this type of suffering with the whole of divinity, when in fact this is but a fallacious process, even though Moltmann correctly noticed that God is indeed the one who suffers, in the sense that he is truly immersed in human history (see Schillebeeckx in Schreier 1984: 53. To this we add that we are indeed aware of the intricate position Moltmann takes vis-à-vis patrispassism accusations such as in Althouse 2009: 3 fwd.; Michael 2015; Moltmann 1993b: 1, 16, 42 ff., etc.).

One might say to this, however, that Schillebeeckx is wrong in more than one way when compared with what the Bible actually teaches. On the one hand, and this is in clear contrast with Moltmann¹, Schillebeeckx approaches the problem of suffering as analogous to the concept of revelation, in saying that revelation is communicated through human experience, therefore it is shaped by it. In so doing, Schillebeeckx arrives at quite the opposite a destination than planned, in that he cannot keep revelation in its sort of deductive frame when he maintains that it is related to experience, since experience, no matter what type we talk, can only come to us instinctually as it is participative in itself. On the contrary, to Moltmann revelation is extra-human as it belongs to the God who comes, therefore it is apocalyptic, and not epistemological in itself. Indeed, there is no biblical foundation which would encourage us to think of revelation as epistemological.

1 Whenever Moltmann wrote about suffering, he did not associate it with an incomplete concept of revelation, but instead integrated it into the divine promise, hence soteriology is anchored in God through Jesus, especially, as Moltmann points it out, “every theology of the cross must end in a theology of resurrection” (see <http://moltmanniac.com/how-does-the-suffering-god-give-us-hope/>, also, Moltmann differentiates between Christian identity and Christian relevance as involving a double crisis, that is from the point of view of both politics and the Christian dogma, see Moltmann 1993a: 7).

On the other hand, Schillebeeckx seems to think that there is a difference in degree between the event of Jesus' sacrificial death and the rest of God's work for the salvation of humanity. To Schillebeeckx, Jesus on the cross was the perfect human case, the embodiment of what contemplating God's love means. As the Bible teaches, the love of God is the sign of his presence into the world, although Schillebeeckx does not insist on how do we come to be aware of this love. Thus, classically to him, Jesus is not a person of the trinity, hence the impossibility of talking nowadays about trinity in its classical acception (although it would make more sense, as in Cornelius Plantinga Jr., to think more highly of the kind of political impact that a sound doctrine of the Trinity could have in today's society, see Simuț C 2011: 29 ff.). De Petter's phenomenology only allows for a diluted concept of this trinity as infinity, or the power of love for more ethical interests. Little by little, divinity is finally how it should be, its suffering is bound by God's love for humanity, revelation in its classical sense is not divine, but Christian, and Christian revelation is but an intuition of God's love, which is how metaphysics becomes secular. In this context, the main purpose of Christian revelation is to help human standards onto perfection and attain human integrity. In the same context, God becomes a universal subject in human history, an entity that meets every standard of human logic and whose interest is not the rehabilitation of fallen men, but in bestowing humanity its rights. The purpose of the divine work within history does not envisage the present, as it does not seek to intervene in history relationally (see René Girard's debate on the restoration of peace through sacrifice, in McGrath 2011, part 13; also, Girard 1986: 112-123). At Schillebeeckx, divinity only retains its eschatological right of restoring peace and both individual and collective well-being within human history.

Experience as Literalization

In quite a different setting, Neil Postman discusses, perforce of social circumstances, the problem of human experience outside mere philosophical analogy and abstract concepts. As a sociologist in the midst of postmodernism, Postman (1931-2003) is faced with the disappearance of role models, which he reckons is part of some sort of strategy to abolish concepts and unwillingly transition from discourse towards what is not a discourse and from the propositional towards the presentational (Postman 1994: 73). Postman finds his observations and emphasis on society's need to revert to literalization, to education-based teaching, on a double-edge logic. According to it, there is a first type of culture which he considers traditional, literate, and valid, as opposed to a second type of culture, which is more recent, based on mass-media, and while it is active, Postman considers it invalid because it creates a particular noxious sort of memory.

For instance, the experience we gather through literature and discourse-based concepts is logically functional and bings back memories as far as early childhood, while mass-media based experience is non-discursive and passive, it lacks communication, it individualizes, it is violent and often anti-social, keeping us as far off as possible from childhood-like relationships (Postman 1994: 114). To him it is ever so sorrowfull to notice that the postmodern discourse on problems like suffering or infinity, as they where previously defined, lack the tiniest sign of acumen and finesse even when they hide behind concepts like peace and well-being (*humanum*). Moreover, the multitude of information mediated by TV or radio is not likely to insure that the importance of the news is necessarily the premise of its seriousness.² For both Postman and Schillebeeckx, the interpretive language has a particular power to overthrow both prejudice and injustice, that is, they change mentalities. This hypothesis, they hold, is valid in all spheres affected by human experience, thus it is also true for politics, which accounts for all prerogatives of contemporary communities, be they mystical or ethical (see Schillebeeckx 1987, 2012: 72). According to Postman, experience coordinates human attitudes and hopes in the community (in his case, the Jewish community), and given its discursive function it renders one conscient of the “power and grace of language” (in the case of his community, the language that Roosevelt used supposedly saved America from anti-semitism, see the group of interviews taken by Myrna Katz Frommer and Harvey Frommer 1995: esp. 111). In both cases, discourse has force not because of political impetus, but due to the social direction by which it is being defined and surrounded. Therefore experience, as key element in this discourse, is not abstract, but concrete, and it transcends all those particular and subjective histories comprised in the *humanum*.

2 A similar impression on the lapidary and un-critical nature of nowadays information brought by mass-media can be found in the literature of Mario Vargas Llossa. It refers to youth social integration and their revolt thereof, see Llossa’s fictional as well as non-fictional works such as *La ciudad y los peros* (1963), *La Casa Verde* (1966), *Pantaléon y las visitadoras* (1973), *Cartas a un joven novelista* (1997) or the stories from *Los Jefes* (1959). For details on his kind of rendering reality in modern day Peru, see Booker 1994: 41 ff.; R. Simuț, in Chirimbu, Simuț, Alexe, Barbu 2012: 150-156. In Llossa, as in Schillebeeckx, there is a change in accent from the burdensome feeling of reality, which comes across everyday existence and retaliation, to the more optimistic thought that culture would in the end begin to make more sense to social and political strata (see Schillebeeckx 1987, 2012). If at Schillebeeckx this change is seen as revelation, explained and experienced by the *humanum* as the new peace of the enlightened humanity, Llossa holds that the interpretive force of language is revelatory within politics and society, thus it must be the focus of the future youth generations.

Nevertheless, Postmann warns, a possible consequence of losing or alienating this community language is a constant fear that, in the end, culture will be replaced with technology, *i.e.*, the bonding force of language will be replaced with the force of a machine. In 1992, Postman wrote his famous *Technopoly*, that is, before the Internet even surfaced and long before the technological boom called dot.com bubble, which for a while shattered businesses' confidence in the future potential of viral investments (see Lowenstein 2004, where the author inspects the real cause behind the online stock market collapse, noticing that, though promising, it was unstable; however, with the dot.com came world wide web, which relaunched these businesses and opened education and experience toward the media as well). In his study, Postman reckons that, if up to his times technocracy had been the social and political force to support universities into producing bright minds for practically all types of industry, including the book industry that reflected objectively the then state of affairs, when technopolis took its toll in a technology worshipping society, its culture came to be deeply imbued in this technology that in turn offered its authorization, satisfaction, and orders (Postman 1992: 71). Thus, in Postman's view, culture becomes void of morality, because technology is also generally void of spirituality and yields stereotypes.

Postman is a sociologist and humanist brought up around sound philosophers and men of culture, such as literatus and cultural reformist Alan Shapiro, Austrian Roman-Catholic priest Ivan Illich, educator Herbert R. Kohl, and philosopher and professor Allan Bloom. The latter's work, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (1987) he seems to be keeping in high regards, since Postman shares many of Bloom's ideas in his own work *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (1985). Both Postman and Bloom consider the possibility that in some near future the literary and cultural formation of Western society be dominated not by books but mass-media, hence the apparent rhetorical question on who or what would monopolize culture in the age to come (a seemingly worried Orwell and Huxley thought that, sooner rather than later, the book as a cultural norm will be either forbidden or forgotten). There is, in this line, a short-lived stretch between a captivating culture and a trivial entertainment (see Postman interviewed by MacNeil/Lehrer 1995).

On literary grounds, Postman's feeling of this break with culture or the trivialization of experience and communication is difficult to conceive as being a consequence of the aesthetic progress only. This is because the perception on experience in itself is shortcircuited and its complexity measured differently from modernism to postmodernism. There is, for instance, a difference of opinion between Postman and Foucault with regard

to experience as illumination, in that for Postman it is *stricto sensu* humanistic, while in Foucault one has to verify the pre- and post-humanistic presuppositions related to illumination. They are both, however, of the opinion that experience is not as wide as to embrace epistemology and technology altogether (see Kloock and Spahr 2007:167; Fitzpatrick 2006: 65). Even at first glance, the stylistic means employed in the novels of, for instance, James Joyce, Thomas Mann and Marcel Proust show clearly that their social and cultural contexts have long left behind the former passion for invention and technology in order to expose the text to improvisation, a realm where the individual may find and reinvent himself/herself. Such texts make use of technical means like music media, wave communication or, for the intimate confort, the invention of padded walls. The new relationship that their novels propose goes from individual (a part that does not belong to a group) to particular (a small part belonging to a group), hence one's surprise of having either to adapt or run from the new day in one's life. On the other hand, even if approached in doubt, technology only satisfies as long as it creates novelty. Thus, as opposed to previous literatures, which proposed that the experience of literature be based on senses, modernism suggests that one assimilates the technological means that represent reality (for an analysis of modern aesthetics from Proust to Joyce, see Danius 2002: 23 fwd.). The epistemological weight is thus paramount in modern aesthetics and literature, while nowadays it loses its ability to select values due to technology. Also, because today it is unilateral, the use of technology is also apathic to the critical evaluation that was still present in modern aesthetics (see explanations in Selden, Widdowson and Brooker 2005: 83 fwd.). In the end, Postman's attempt at literalizing today's society is deeply related to a kind of discerning the true reality that, he thinks, should be "subversive" to the outpouring of unselective realities which the media convincingly spreads everyday upon individuals and groups altogether (see Postman and Weingartner 1969: 3 ff.).

Conclusions

Edward Schillebeeckx and Neil Postman investigate the subject of experience as a literary, philosophical, and social source of knowledge, albeit on different grounds, in the same period of time and reaching different conclusions. For Schillebeeckx, epistemology in the realm of his *humanum* is revelatory and essential for relationships at a given time in history. To him, the tradition of suffering throughout history is meaningful for the present only if it is also relevant for the future, that is, if it is viable and aggregate in character. Schillebeeckx proposes that we conceptualize what we know to be philosophical and theological abstract ideas by using an accessible language for today's people, which, in his view, are unable to

fathom a traditional and precise terminology about God, the cross, church and justice – for which we today have the all-encompassing word infinity. Experience nowadays works as a critical vector that also communicates the amplitude of revelation, which is rather human than divine. In other words, Schillebeeckx allots cultural authority to whatever nowadays men and women view as normative, thus if this normative element is technology, which supposedly brings knowledge, the theologian suggests that there are no better ways to perfect it than by use of technical means.

Postman, on the other way, is an educator and sociologist who verifies the implications of today's literature concerning the so-called technopolis, the modern city conquered and governed by technology. In Postman's view, people's fascination with this kind of epistemology comes from its observable nature, as today's men and women are simple spectators of never-ending commercials whose power resides in their unidirectional character. The loss of critical selectiveness in nowadays society confronted with technology is a new aspect which Schillebeeckx failed to foresee, if we take into account his definition of human experience, and this is perhaps because he had not questioned the morality and sufficiency of this experience. Experience as a means of knowledge, Postman reckons, builds upon technological evolution even in literature, where it loses its communitary and communicative capacities, and instead is communicated, while linguistically it is difficult to tell apart from its consumerist undertones. Experience is therefore objectivated, as social individuals receive and taste the promise of comfort and well-being.

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