

of whether or not to have an abortion and of how fast to drive would not exist in the same way without the technologies involved in these practices, such dilemma's are rather *shaped* by these technologies. Technologies cannot be defined away from our daily lives. The concept of freedom presupposes a form of sovereignty with respect to technology that human beings simply no longer possess.

This conclusion can be read in two distinct ways. The first is that mediation has nothing to do with morality whatsoever. If moral agency requires freedom and technological mediation limits or even annihilates human freedom, only non-technologically mediated situations leave room for morality. Technological artifacts are unable to make moral decisions, and technology-induced human behavior has a non-moral character. A good example of this criticism are the commonly heard negative reactions to explicit behavior-steering technologies like speed limiters in cars. Usually, the resistance against such technologies is supported by two kinds of arguments. One, there is the fear that human freedom is threatened and that democracy is exchanged for technocracy. Should all human actions be guided by technology, the criticism goes, the outcome would be a technocratic society in which moral problems are solved by machines instead of people. Two, there is the charge of immorality or, at best, amorality. Actions not the product of our own free will but induced by technology can not be described as 'moral'; and, what is worse, behavior-steering technologies might create a form of moral laziness that is fatal to the moral abilities of citizens.

These criticisms are deeply problematic. The analyses of technological mediation given above show that human actions are *always* mediated. To phrase it in Latour's words: "Without technological detours, the properly human cannot exist. (...) Morality is no more human than technology, in the sense that it would originate from an already constituted human who would be master of itself as well as of the universe. Let us say that it traverses the world and, like technology, that it engenders in its wake forms of humanity, choices of subjectivity, modes of objectification, various types of attachment." (Latour, 2002). This is precisely what opponents of speed limitation forget. Also without speed limiters, the actions of drivers are continually mediated: indeed, cars can easily exceed speed limits and because our roads are so wide and the bends so gentle that we can drive too fast, we are constantly invited to explore the space between the accelerator and the floor. Therefore, giving the inevitable technological mediations a desirable form rather than rejecting outright the idea of a 'moralized technology' in fact attests to a sense of responsibility.

The conclusion that mediation and morality are at odds with each other, therefore, is not satisfying. It is virtually impossible to think of any morally relevant situation in which technology does not play a role. And it would be throwing out the baby with the bathwater to conclude that there is no room for morality and moral judgments in all situations in which technologies play a role. Therefore, an alternative solution is needed of the apparent tension between technological mediation and ethics. Rather than taking absolute freedom as a prerequisite for moral agency, we need to reinterpret freedom as an agent's ability to relate to what determines him or her. Human actions always take place in a stubborn reality, and for this

reason, absolute freedom can only be attained by ignoring reality, and therefore by giving up the possibility to act at all. Freedom is not a lack of forces and constraints; it rather is the existential space human beings have within which to realize their existence. Humans have a relation to their own existence and to the ways in which this is co-shaped by the material culture in which it takes place. The material situatedness of human existence *creates* specific forms of freedom, rather than impedes them. Freedom exists in the possibilities that are opened up for human beings to have a relationship with the environment in which they live and to which they are bound.

This redefinition of freedom, to be sure, still leaves no room to actually attribute freedom to technological artifacts. But it does take artifacts back into the realm of freedom, rather than excluding them from it altogether. On the one hand, after all, they help to *constitute* freedom, by providing the material environment in which human existence takes place and takes its form. And on the other hand, artifacts can enter associations with human beings, while these associations, consisting partly of material artifacts, are the places where freedom is to be located. For even though freedom is never absolute but always gets shaped by technological and contextual mediations, these very mediations also create the space for moral decision-making. Just like intentionality, freedom also appears to be a hybrid affair, most often located in associations of humans and artifacts.

2.3 *Conclusion: Materiality and Moral Agency*

This expansion of the concepts of intentionality and freedom might raise the question if we really need to fiddle with such fundamental ethical concepts to understand the moral relevance of technological artifacts. In order to show that the answer to this question is yes, we can connect to an example elaborated by Latour: the debate between the National Rifle Association in the USA and its opponents. In this debate, those opposing the virtually unlimited availability of guns in the USA use the slogan “Guns Kill People”, while the NRA replies with the slogan “Guns don’t kill people; people kill people” (Latour, 1999, 176).

The NRA position seems to be most in line with mainstream thinking about ethics. If someone is shot, nobody would ever think about keeping the gun responsible for this. Yet, the anti-gun position evidently also has a point here: in a society without guns, fewer fights would result in murder. A gun is not a mere instrument, a medium for the free will of human beings; it helps to define situations and agents by offering specific possibilities for action. A gun constitutes the person holding the gun as a potential gunman and his or her adversary as a potential lethal victim. Without denying the importance of human responsibility in any way, this example illustrates that when a person is shot, agency should not be located exclusively in either the gun or the person shooting, but in the assembly of both.

The example, therefore, illustrates that we need to develop a new perspective of both concepts. It does not imply that artifacts can ‘have’ intentionality and