



THE VALUE OF MOBILE PHONE USAGE PHENOMENON FOR HUMAN EXISTENCE IN THE INFORMATION ERA: A REFLECTION ON HUMAN PHILOSOPHY AND HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY

Fadhilah

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Abstract

This article is a philosophical reflection on the essence and significance of technology, based on "Being and Time" by Martin Heidegger. In addition to being a theoretical critical analysis, this paper is also the author's response to the impact of scientific and technological developments, which have had positive and negative effects on both human existence and human nature. Humans, as subjects of technology in the phenomenon of mobile phone usage, have recently become objects of exploitation in the marketing of mobile phone products. The mobile phone used to be merely a product of technology which originally served as a communication medium. Nowadays, it has become a reflection of people's lifestyles and a manifestation of their way of life. In this case, the nature and meaning of mobile phones have shifted according to the role of humans as the subject of technology and the surroundings. In relation to the structure of science and technology, which positions humans as both subjects and objects, awareness of the human position as a subject of technology is crucial. When humans are the subject of technology, humans should be able to control the movement and direction of technological development so that it does not result in negative consequences. Similarly, when humans are objects of technology, they must be able to safeguard themselves so that they are not exploited and used to market technological products.

Keywords: Value Phenomenon, Mobile Phone, Human Existence, Human Essence, Essence of Technology, Subject of Knowledge, Object of Knowledge.

Universitas Islam '45 Bekasi, Indonesia

Email: fadhilah.mb@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

In this so-called information era, where the development of telecommunications continues to accelerate, nearly everyone has become familiar with these fast, simple, and functional means of communication. They were once considered luxurious. No longer exclusive to the upper middle class, nowadays these devices are no longer considered luxury commodities. In recent years, they have been manufactured in a wide variety of types and designs, ranging in quality and price from under Rp 1,000,000 to over Rp 5,000,000. Similarly, the marketing system has enabled everyone who requires these items to obtain them. With a system of cash and credit sales, as well as the availability of second-hand products, the objects, known as mobile/cell phones, are now readily accessible to nearly all demographics and have become nearly indispensable to modern communication.

The convenience of having a mobile phone, which was once a luxury item that not everyone could afford, has changed, and added the functions of mobile phone itself with various additional meanings and values. Mobile phones in modern society are no longer merely communication tools to meet the needs of social beings to communicate with others. As a means of communication in various sectors of life, this can be considered the primary function of mobile phones in the information era. In recent years, however, such a function has shifted, and mobile phones have become an integral part of people's lifestyle, which has multiple dimensions. These include cultural, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions, as well as children's and adults' media for entertainment. Consequently, the mobile phone as a technology product in the field of telecommunications has had both positive and negative effects on modern society. The issue that arises from the phenomenon of mobile phone usage is how to anticipate the negative effects of such usage which erode the moral values of the younger generation, regardless of its function as an effective medium for communication. This is the context for the paper's topic and discussion. The purposes of this paper are both theoretical/philosophical and practical. The theoretical/philosophical objective is the author's philosophical reflection on the phenomenon of mobile phone usage within the framework of Martin Heidegger's (1889-1967) technological philosophy, particularly in his work "Being and Time". The practical purpose of this paper is to inspire people to be more critical, selective, and preventative in the presence of mobile phones in their life. To restore the position of humans as subjects of science and technology, so that they become objects of knowledge as well,

it is essential to have a critical attitude towards the positive and negative effects of science and technology (Van Melsen, 1992, "Science and Our Responsibility"). As a subject of science and technology, humans should not be at the mercy of science and technology products (such as mobile phones). Rather, they should be able to control their presence and function for the benefit of human life. As an object of science and technology, humans must position themselves with their common sense as living objects, not as inanimate objects that science and technology products can manipulate. Reflection on the presence of mobile phones in the information era is crucial since mobile phones have affected numerous positive and negative value systems in human life.

1. The Fundamental Concept of Human Nature According to Heidegger (1889-1967) and Its Relevance to the Development of Modern Technology.

S. Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the primary source of Heidegger's existentialist philosophical thoughts, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a phenomenologist, and Henry Bergson, a modern metaphysician, all influenced Heidegger's thinking. However, Heidegger's way of thinking is distinctive in addition to sharing the characteristics of existentialism. The concept of existence in existentialism is not limited to being in space and time, as is the case with the concept of existence in ordinary life. **Existence is how individuals exist in this world and it is different from the presence of inanimate objects.** The existence of humans gives significance to the presence of objects. Existence is derived from the Latin "ex" (out) and "istere" (to stand). Thus, the term existence is defined: human beings stand as themselves out of themselves. Humans are aware that they exist. They use 'I' to refer to themselves. Everything is connected to them—my desk, my chair, my friend, and my mobile phone. Humans are preoccupied with what is external to themselves and make use of surrounding objects. In this context, humans are occupied with the world around them using communication tools, such as mobile phones, to meet their basic needs.

At least four notions qualify as existentialism, including those of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Jaspers, and Gabriel Marcel. Following are some characteristics of existentialist philosophy:

1. The **main motive** is what is known as existence, or **the way humans exist**. Only humans exist. Existence is the unique aspect of being human. This emphasis is placed on humankind. Therefore, it is humanistic.
2. **Existence** must be **dynamically interpreted**. To exist is to actively create oneself; **to exist is**

to act, be, and plan. Every time, humans become either more or less than their surroundings.

3. In existentialist philosophy, humans are viewed as open. **Humans are incomplete, yet-to-be-formed realities.** In essence, humans are bound to their surroundings and particularly to other humans.

4. **Existentialist philosophy emphasizes concrete experience,** existential experience. Only the significance of this experience differs. Heidegger focuses on mortality, which darkens everything, Marcel on religious experience, and Jaspers on a variety of life experiences, including death, suffering, struggle, and human error (Harun Hadiwijono, 1995, "*Sari sejarah Filsafat Barat 2*"). The main motive of Heidegger's existentialism suggests that human existence is distinct from the world itself. Human existence precedes its essence. In other words, the essence and meaning of human existence can be defined by the way humans exist in the world, namely their interactions with other individuals and the environment. Existentialism serves as the foundation for Heidegger's assessment of the impact of modern technology on the existence and essence of humans as social beings, i.e., how humans relate to one another and the world. The presence of mobile phones with its various applications is a medium for how humans exist, namely, to communicate with other people, both in relationships with family and friends, as well as in business communication, politics, education, and so on. In family life, mobile phone communication is important for fostering close relationships among family members, regardless of whether they live in the same house or not, whenever, and wherever needed, as long as the mobile phone signal is available. For parents with a full schedule outside the home, the capacity of mobile phones to facilitate effective family communication can be crucial.

The WhatsApp and WhatsApp Group (WAG) applications, for instance, were developed in response to this need. Based on the *Business of Apps* report, the total number of active WhatsApp users worldwide reached 2.41 billion in the third quarter of 2022. Compared to the previous decade, this number has increased dramatically. It is anticipated that the skyrocketing number of WA users will surpass 8 billion people. This implies that roughly one-third of the world's population uses WhatsApp.

(<http://www.cnbcindonesia.com/research/20221209122706-128-395324/3>). In 2022, according to data from the Central Statistics Agency at Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Information, 67.88% of the population over the age of five in Indonesia are already in possession of a mobile phone. This percentage has increased compared to 2021, when

it was 65.87%, and is the highest in the last decade. China had the greatest number of smartphone consumers in 2020, according to the Newzoo report. With a minimum usage frequency of once per month, the number of users reached 953.55 million. 66% of the population in this country owned a smartphone. India ranked second with 492,78 million smartphone users after China. In this country, only 35.4% of the total population owned a smartphone. The United States ranked third with 273,76 million smartphone users. In the United States, 82.2% of the population had access to a smartphone. With 170,4 million smartphone consumers, Indonesia occupied the fourth position. The country's smartphone penetration has reached 61.7% of the total population.

(<https://dataindonesia.id/digital/detail/pengguna-smartphone-indonesia-terbesar-keempat-dunia-pada-2022> (Indonesian-smartphone-users-ranked-fourth-in-the-world-by-2022)) The data presented above shows that the presence of mobile phones has changed human existence and human nature. **Existence** must be **dynamically** interpreted. To exist is to actively create oneself; to exist is **to act, be, and plan**. Regarding the function of mobile phones as a way for people to exist, the evolution of mobile technology has additionally shown its dynamic nature. In their hectic lives, people use mobile phones as an efficient means of communication to facilitate their daily interactions with others. It will be easier to transmit and receive time-sensitive and urgent information via mobile phone, whether calling or text messaging. Similarly, work plans and agendas can be shared via mobile phones to the work team, clients, and other interested parties, whereas this was previously only possible via official correspondence. WAG, for example, has become a medium for distance learning in the field of education, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers who view it as more effective and conducive continue to use it as an alternative medium in the learning process.

In the perspective of Heidegger's philosophy of technology, the existence of mobile phones. The fact is that the presence of HP has thickened further the gap between technology and human makes human relations with technology not free (Drianus, Oktarizal, 2018). Based on **Heidegger's existentialism**, which views **humans as unfinished reality and emphasizes concrete experience**, mobile phones are a manifestation of human existence in various cultural, ethical, aesthetic, religious, and other dimensions. This topic will be discussed in greater detail in Heidegger's monumental work "**Being and Time**" below.

2. Heidegger's Perspective on Technology in "Being and Time" and Its Relevance to the

Phenomenon of Mobile Phones Usage in the Information Era in Relation to Human Existence

Heidegger never wrote a book specifically on the philosophy of technology, but his monumental work "Being and Time" (Sein und Zeit) and his 1954 lecture "The Question Concerning Technology" comprised his thoughts on the essence of technology in the Contemporary era (Heidegger, Martin.1978; Di Martino, Carmine.2021). Reflection on the phenomenon of mobile phones usage in the information era in relation to human existence can be based on his key concepts regarding the essence of technology.

Heidegger's philosophy of technology is inextricable from his understanding of poetry and art, as the term 'techne' relates to these concepts for him. 'Techne' is the name not only for activities and skill of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. 'Techne' belongs to bringing forth, to 'poiesis', it is something poetic (Heidegger,1954). Heidegger argued that all things have essence, but this essence is closed to humans. The duty of humans is to unlock what is closed to comprehend its essence. Only through creation can the closed ones be made open. Because humans create, such as an artist who creates sculptures, paintings, and the like, or a craftsman who creates instruments, technology and art are synonymous. Mobile phones have been viewed not only from their forms as objects, but also from various aspects of what lies beyond their forms, to convey their essence and meaning. In this case, humans give mobile phones meaning. The phenomenon of mobile phone usage has reflected various aspects of human existence based on its essence. As a technological product, a mobile phone has possessed artistic value that can be benefited by its user. From their inception to the most recent developments, a variety of mobile phone models and types have been created to satisfy human preferences and needs for aesthetic value. As a result, mobile phones have recently changed and added functions, not only as a communication tool, but also as a fashion accessory to meet the demands of users. The casing of mobile phones, for instance, is comparable to a cell phone outfit in that it can be replaced with a new one in a more appealing color when one becomes no longer suitable. It is customizable to match the color of the user's clothing, such as shirts, trousers, bags, shoes, and other accessories, for those who place a premium on their appearance. In addition to the casing, the design and model of a mobile phone can be built in a variety of types with unique features. Moreover, each mobile phone company has offered a variety of mobile phone types and models, allowing users to select a device that best suits their needs and tastes. Based on the

model and type of mobile phone developed by humans to satisfy their tastes and needs for aesthetic value, the function of mobile phones has expanded to include that of a fashion accessory. This cannot be separated from the personality of the mobile phone users in terms of fashion. For those who adhere to economic principles, the appearance of a mobile phone is not important so long as it remains functional. To avoid being labeled as out-of-date, however, those who are fashion-conscious consider the emergence of new mobile phone models undoubtedly important. Similarly, the numerous functional features of the mobile phone make it a tool for meeting the ever-growing needs of human life. In this case, the mobile phone has become an integral part of people's lifestyles, while also serving as a socioeconomic symbol for the user. When a mobile phone becomes a manifestation of a person's lifestyle, its meaning and function will adapt to the user's personality and lifestyle.

Fashion in the cultural dimension is a valuable commodity from both an aesthetic and economic perspective. Similarly, there have been numerous mobile phones tailored to the preferences of mobile phone users. In terms of color, accessories, and types as well as various specifications and features of mobile phones, all of them are part of the cultural element which is reflected in the form of mobile phone as a high-tech product. The technological sophistication of mobile phones necessitates a higher level of human cultural values.

In addition to being a part of fashion and lifestyle, the recent phenomenon of mobile phone usage suggests that some individuals have exploited mobile phones. From Heidegger's perspective, we can see that the essence of technology is not merely an instrument for human activity. It also functions as a 'ge-stell' (enframing/set) that forces humans to reveal and see the world as a 'bestand' (standing reserve). It is a reserve source or 'standby' stock. In other terms, the technology is ready for exploitation. The numerous features available on certain types of mobile phones reveal the mobile phone industry's exploitation. Various features of mobile phones include cameras, video players, music players, game consoles, calculators, and even Internet media. Thus, Heidegger's assertions are accurate, that *"the essence of modern technology shows itself in what we call enframing. It is the way in which the real reveals itself as standing reserve"*. So, the essence of technology is not technological because it refers to "a certain way reveal reality" whose other name is Gestell (enframing or positionality). The essence of technology is "putting everything in certain frame", point of view sees everything as a resource

for exploited (Christopher Merwin, Aaron James Wendland, and Christos Hadjioannou, 2019.p.5)

There are two ways for people to relate to the world, which Heidegger described in "*Being and Time*" as 'presence at hand' and 'ready to hand'. The world appears 'just the way it is' to those who exist in it. The entirety of the world, including its properties and conditions, constitutes a single entity. To speak of the world as 'theoretically determined' is to speak of a theoretical reality. 'Presence at hand' continues by introducing theoretical world knowledge. 'Ready to hand' is more realistic because it emphasizes usefulness. There is a sense that everything in the world is 'ready to hand' and just waiting for humans to use it.

Regarding the relevance of Heidegger's perspective to the phenomenon of mobile phone usage, it is evident that technology has transformed mobile phones into objects with productive functions. The productive significance of mobile phones for humans is contingent upon how humans (in this instance, mobile phone users) employ them. Mobile phones can have productive applications, such as when used for business communication or as an asset and source of capital for mobile phone dealers. Mobile phones and their accessories have become products that are in high demand (<https://www.ainumedia.or.id/dampak-handphone-di-bidang-ekonomi>). This phenomenon can be observed almost everywhere along the city streets, where there are many mobile phone stands and counters, not only in shopping centers, but also among street vendors.

Heidegger also stated that no entity (instrument/equipment) exists without a context. Entities appear in contexts that they themselves incorporate. The pencil is used for writing and drawing, and it is associated with the desk or paper. All entities have a 'in order to' structure, i.e., everything is in order 'to' something. The presence of a mobile phone in this context is the presence of an object with a background. The primary reason for the presence of mobile phones is to meet the communication needs of social beings. In the most recent developments, the presence of mobile phones of various types and models serves a purpose other than communication. This situation indicates that humans possess personality values that are reflected in their choices and demands for aesthetic values and other practical values from mobile phones. The secondary function of a mobile phone is to serve as a calculator, camera, entertainment media (music and games), and a device for internet connection. Mobile phone usage, both in terms of their primary purpose as a means of communication and their subsidiary functions, suggests that the essence of mobile phone technology is a 'ready-to-hand'

relationship that views the world as 'in order to'. Since 'ready to hand' provides a practical means of discovering the world, the environment is conceptualized as a 'world' for the purposes of exploration. Heidegger argues that the 'presence at hand' theoretical relationship model is unable to probe the world. Adding a predicate or property to an object does not create a functional relationship. The purpose of entities is not merely to be endowed with theoretically derived qualities or benefits; rather, they are put to actual use. Not that Heidegger denies the existence of the relationship between 'presence at hand' and 'ready to hand', but rather that he emphasizes the importance of the latter. Something concerning, stemming from the negative effects of mobile phone use, must be of worry regarding the phenomenon of mobile phone usage stated above. From a technological perspective, humans are stocks that perpetually 'stand by in order to' because of their place in the world. This is why Heidegger is concerned about the consequences of progress in technology. In relation to technology, nowadays humans are no longer existing subjects but rather inanimate objects. According to Van Melsen's ideas in his book titled "*Science and Our Responsibility*", this is inevitable because of the human position as both a subject and object of science and technology. From this axiological vantage point, we can see how the evolution of mobile phone technology has brought both positive and negative values to people's lives. Human responsibilities, and notably those of mobile phone users, need to be more selective and critical considering the harm caused by the widespread use of these mobile devices.

Due to the influence of various advertisements and promotions that infiltrate through various applications available on mobile phones, the convenience of owning a cell phone will make it possible for people to become trapped in a consumerist culture. Mobile phone users frequently change their mobile phone cases, exchange their old phones for new ones even though the old one is still fully functional, or purchase a new phone model for the sake of prestige. Even more harmful is the fact that mobile phones are frequently used to access pornographic websites that are frequently beyond the control of both telecommunication service providers and the government. When underaged minors can receive or download pornographic content from the internet on their mobile phones, parents and the community should be concerned. This phenomenon is very worrying for parents of children with internet-connected mobile phones in large cities. In addition, children who play mobile games excessively tend to disregard their surroundings and this frequently results in less study time, thereby diminishing their

academic performance. This phenomenon must be of concern to both parents and teachers.

In addition, excessive cell phone use is harmful to adolescent health because it can cause damage to the eyes, such as myopia or nearsightedness due to dry eyes, damage to the spine due to lack of movement and sitting more, disruption of adolescent development, hearing loss caused by headsets, sleep disturbances due to staying up late, and many other health problems. (<https://www.sman1ciawigebang.sch.id/read/28/pengaruh-handphone-bagi-hidup-remaja-oleh-amelia-kartika-sari-klas-xi-ips->) Furthermore, the social and emotional development of children can be adversely affected by mobile phone usage. The negative effects of gadget use on children include children developing closed personalities, sleep disturbances, violent behavior, a decline in creativity, and being the targets of cyberbullying (<https://dppkbpppa.pontianak.go.id/formasi/berita/dampak-pengguna-gadget-to-the-social-development-of-children>). Realizing the negative consequences of science, so that people don't fall deeper, Janicaud agreed that humans should wait and think differently. Heidegger, suggested humans to think in another way, namely by meditating in front of natural revelation events or physis (Ada, Seyn, Being) (Janicaud, Dominique.2006:9)

The phenomena above are reasons for the academic community to restore the function of science and technology for the benefit of human existence by placing humans as subjects of science and technology who are capable of actively managing their lives. Humans are dynamic subjects, whereas science and technology products are passive objects. Humans must exert control over it.

2. Conclusion

Humans exist in space and time. Existing indicates being perceptible. Existence is defined by being in space and time. The presence of technology is an indicator of human existence. Technology is human innovation. The phenomenon of mobile phone usage in the information era reveals something that lies beyond mobile phones, namely the existence of mobile phone users with diverse lifestyles. The essence and significance of mobile phones are contingent on the individuals who use them. Humans use technology as an instrument or tool. The essence of technology is that it is a product of humanity. Mobile phone technology is not only a means of communication, but also a method to make something previously invisible visible or mind opening. As such, this gives mobile phones a new meaning. In addition to being a means of communication, the nature and significance of mobile phones have evolved to reflect people's way of life and manifest their lifestyle.

Due to their needs as social beings who must interact with others, the mobile phone is viewed as a way of life in its function as a tool for human communication. As a way of life, mobile phones can satisfy users' desires for economic values, aesthetic values, arts, culture, and entertainment, among others. With mobile phones, humans can now determine their location. The function of the compass as an indicator of where a person is positioned geographically can be replaced by a mobile phone, allowing the human mind to become awake and aware of what must be done. Thus, the mobile phone is now viewed not only as a means of communication, but also as a tool with which humans can construct new meanings and functions. Human innovation and creativity have given new significance to mobile phones. In Heidegger's view, this meaning is one of the functions of science and technology for the way of human existence, which demonstrates the multidimensions of human nature.

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