Offline, Unplugged, Disconnected…
A postphenomenological inquiry into absence-relations to technologies

How do we relate to technologies when absent, turned off, not in use? How to think of mediation of disconnection? Apps that are designed to keep us away from apps such as Freedom (2008), AppDetox (2013) or Digitox (2019) promise to provide more "off time" they also mark a paradigm shift within public attitudes towards technologies. Even when dystopian panic and utopian hysteria are put aside, nostalgia towards the analogue can be observed. Conditions of "offline, unplugged, disconnected…" have become an almost trendy desire of a temporary Internet - free being. The quantitative qualities of being with the virtual OR the natural body can be felt but not separated within self-identity constructions. We have come to understand our technological gadgets as more than just objects of utility or objects to be studied separated from us. Rather, we acknowledge their relational character. Well-known American philosopher of technology Don Ihde's concept of Postphenomenology grew out of Experimental Phenomenology (Ihde, 1986) and offers a systematic approach to decode human-technology-world relations. He rejects the search for essence while emphasizing the plurality of technologies and technics as well as their non-neutral nature. Functionalities are multi-stable and cannot be fully anticipated within the design process. Ihde's formulas open up methods especially useful for designers and increasingly fruitful amongst artists. His work is known but not yet broadly represented in the German language nor European design schools. How can the phenomenon - the experience of the absent technology be conceptualized within Postphenomenology and can it be put under the lens of historical variations? Consciousness of a technology is enough to alter the lifeworld - that is not whole - until disconnection becomes part of it. Through a speculative artistic methodology I aim to coin down the term "absence-relations" to describe phenomena of unintended or purposeful disconnection of the self from the technics of a network.

Keywords: Apps against Apps, Disconnection, Postphenomenology