"Run like Gest(H)ell":

Philosophy of Technology and the Case of Running

My paper aims to highlight the increasing epochal meaning of technology (the fact that it represents the current "subject of history"), by means of an unconventional theoretical tool: the running. That is, its newest evolution. Concretely, I will compare Albert Borgmann's 1984 prophecy on running with a recent event, which totally denies it.

In his best known book, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry* (1984), Borgmann – the father of "device paradigm", a leading figure of the "empirical turn" in philosophy of technology – argued that running is one of the few oasis of "wilderness" for human being before the advance of *Gestell* (Enframing). More precisely, he considered the long-distance running a "meta-technological antidote to the sway of the device paradigm on our lives". Long-distance running as a form of human resistance.

Vienna, October 12, 2019. Kenian Eliud Kipchoge – two times Olympic marathon champion – becomes the first human being to run the marathon under two hours. Beyond its mediatic appeal, in its essence this event represents a total denial of Borgmann's claim, namely the proof that *Gestell* has colonized also this enclave of wilderness by converting running from a practice of human resistance into an entirely rationalized activity. The under two hour result was in fact not only achieved, but rather totally planned and right its planification is the reason why it could not been homologated as world record.

Within such a totally planned/rationalized framework everything (i.e. the choice of place and time of year, the technological doping represented by a new generation of shoes, the use of human beings as "hares"...) has been thought for a unique end: the performance itself. The perfomance as imperative. As a consequence, the subjectity of this event is no longer human being (the runner), but an impersonal and indefinable entity. Here human being (even Kipchoge himself) represents a gear of the mechanism. Turned into human material, the runnes are here *Bestaende* which obey therefore the logic of *Herausforderung* (both according to Heidegger's sense of the words). On this basis, it is difficult to distinguish this kind of perfomance from that of an assembly line.

This means that what has been celebrated as a "human enterprise", looks like a radical experience of alienation. An unaware experiment of de-humanization – or post-humanization, if you prefer – in any case a further step towards the (self-)disenchantment of human being. Such an event proves once again the planetary extent of technology as epochal phenomenon, its capability to submit to its logic

– that of rationalization as will to power – every space of human life. Insofar as technology stands out as a total and potentially totalitarian force, it should be considered the *eidos* of current *Lebenswelt*. Differently from Borgmann, already in the mid-30s Walter Benjamin spoke about the technicization of sporting gesture and running in particular. He gave the example of Paavo Nurmi – Finnish legendary long distance runner – to show that "in the age of mechanical (technological) reproduction of work of art" running turned into a "test performance".