Breaking the Limits

Posthumanism, Consumption, and the Future of the Human

Andrei Botez
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Abstract

In the last couple of decades, a certain vibe made itself felt in both academic and popular circles. The fields of marketing, cultural and interpretivist consumer research (and other related ones, such as e.g. Organization Studies) are no exception. Bearing different names, that breeze quickly became a wind, today being mostly known as the Posthumanist, or the Transhumanist movement. The main aim of my PhD thesis is to introduce Christian theology as the main force that shapes and legitimizes the Posthumanist movement and to show the ways in which, in turn, this movement influences fields such as postmodern and critical marketing, cultural, and interpretive consumer research and, especially, the emerging field of Posthuman Consumer Research. Accordingly, my thesis contributes to the ongoing discussions within the field of Posthuman Consumer Research regarding the rise of the so-called "cyborgian consumer". By taking on the proposed approach, this research explores issues pertaining to the future of (biological and technological) identity, the commodity, markets, and consumption at large. Adding to the ongoing discussion, and despite recent research, my thesis does not approach technology and various contemporary philosophical paradigms (e.g. non-representationalism, post-structuralism, speculative realism) as the great disruptors and actors behind the inception of Posthumanism and the cyborg, but rather theology. Therefore, this research identifies and addresses an important oversight in the Posthuman Consumer Culture, i.e. the virtually complete absence of theological analyses. This creates an additional angle of research for the culturally-oriented consumer researchers interested in the subject, but not only.

Keywords Posthumanism, transhumanism, consumer culture, theology
Writing and completing this doctoral dissertation has nothing to do with an institutional decision. More than anything it defines a very personal journey of discovery and learning. As a theologian, I believe that everything we do has an impact on our world, on our society, on our institutions and people. Accordingly, we are who we are because of the people we met, the things we touched, the ways we walked, and the spaces we saw. This dissertation contains all that. The pen I used and the keys I pressed were never used or pressed by a single person, but by many, many others beings, human and non-human, simultaneously. Some have names that can be written down, others do not.

I would like to start by thanking Henrikki Tikkanen for believing in me since the very beginning. Together with Metropolitan Ambrosius of Helsinki and Joel Hietanen, they formed the original ‘gang’ that welcomed me in Finland, helped and assisted me throughout the long and, more often than not, painful process of completing this text and everything related to it. A big thank you to my colleagues to the Department of Marketing of Aalto University. You received me, the weird theologian with a strong eastern European accent, with open arms. Your encouragements, feedbacks and advices have been invaluable to me. Thanks to Hedon Blakaj, Antti Sihvonen, Ilona Mikkonen, Terhi Väistö (my very first guide through the bureaucratic maze at Aalto), and Jack Tillotson. With the risk of running into overtly emotional territories, I would like to mention Anastasia Seregina and Eevi Huhtamaa for their everything.

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A. Introduction

The aim of the following text is to introduce Christian theology as the main force that shapes and legitimizes the Poshumanist movement and to show the ways in which, in turn, this movement influences fields such as postmodern and critical marketing, cultural, and interpretive consumer research and, especially, the emerging field of Posthuman Consumer Research. Accordingly, this study contributes to the ongoing discussions within the field of Posthuman Consumer Research regarding the rise of the so-called “cyborgian consumer”. By taking on the proposed approach, this research explores issues pertaining to the future of identity, the commodity, markets, and consumption at large.
i. Setting the stage

“You don’t take over the world with gaudy displays of violence. Real control is surgical. Invisible.”

- John Greer

“[P]ower lies on the border.”

- Gilles Deleuze

“Transhumanism is the belief in science over superstition.”

- A Transhumanist Manifesto

In the last couple of decades, a certain vibe has made itself felt in both academic and popular circles. The fields of marketing, cultural and interpretivist consumer research are no exception. Bearing different names, that breeze quickly became a wind, today being mostly known as the Posthumanist, or the Transhumanist movement. As the jury is still out on a precise conceptualization of either, in the following, for reasons I hope will become clear as I proceed, I am going to use (when possible) the ‘Posthumanist’ label.

As it appears, the Egyptian literary theorist Ihab Hassan was one of the first to use the term Posthumanism in a scholarly fashion. In a 1977 piece entitled Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture, Hassan wrote that his paper,

“attempts to place the subject of postmodern performance in a wide and speculative context [...] Call it posthumanist culture – or call it nothing at all. It

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1 Person Of Interest Season 4, episode 22: YHWH.
2 Deleuze 1995: 45.
3 Young 2006: 103.
4 “The extent to which posthuman might be synonymous with transhumanism is not clear” (McNamee and Edwards 2006: 514).
5 Thomsen 2013; Herbrechter 2013: 34.
remains the matrix of all our performances. And it remains (blessings on great Tom Eliot) undefined.\textsuperscript{6}

What strikes the most about Hassan’s definition resides in what it does not say. Such a way of defining something is called \textit{apophatic}. The marketing scholar Stephen Brown is arguably the one that introduced the term \textit{apophasis} in marketing and interpretive consumer research. In a piece published almost two decades ago, he wrote that

\textit{“[a]s everyone knows, apophasis is a theological term which refers to knowing God in terms of what (s)he is not.”}\textsuperscript{7}

Today, as I will try to show throughout the following text, the number of those embracing apophatic views within interpretive and cultural consumer research, even though without actually using the rather exotic name, is much, much higher. This is because, as Brown already makes very clear in the title of his paper – “Devaluing value: the apophatic ethic and the spirit of postmodern consumption” – there is a strong link between the apophatic epistemology and the postmodern one. And then there are other revelations that Brown’s definition unveils, especially when placed next to Hassan’s definition of the Posthumanist culture. One of these surprises is the perhaps unexpected relationship between Posthumanism, theology and, of course, postmodernity: “postmodernism isn’t!”, Brown tells us elsewhere\textsuperscript{8}. As God itself, the posthuman seems to be defined by a lack of a definition.

The ‘opposite’ of the apophatic discourse, or the one which complements it, is the so-called \textit{cataphatic} discourse, i.e. the one that describes through the use of affirmations. It can be said that the apophatic way is usually used when describing something (God or the posthuman) for what it \textit{is} (defining Being), whereas the cataphatic one is used for describing what something \textit{does} (defining action)\textsuperscript{10}. Given that Hassan chose a specific theological device in order to define the posthuman shows not only the link between the two, but also the profound incapacity of language to penetrate into the very essence of things, in other words, to fully express Being: we might know what the Posthuman does (performs), but we cannot ever know what the Posthuman in itself is, i.e. where are its limits. Following Baudrillard, the Posthuman can indeed be defined as something that “is produced and written into successive systems”: there is no original

\textsuperscript{6} Hassan 1977: 831. My emph.
\textsuperscript{7} From the ancient Greek \textit{apophasis} (ἀπόφασις): to deny, to negate, or \textit{apophemi} (ἀποφημί): to say no, to deny.
\textsuperscript{8} Brown 1999: 164. My emph.
\textsuperscript{9} Brown 1995.
\textsuperscript{10} Louth 1996: 52; Plested 2012: 41.
model, no ideal type, no end to these successions. To paraphrase, the Posthuman is always what it no longer is anymore; an endless series in which the previous element has already been denied. The Posthuman is always a step ahead of itself, unable to stop and be.

Three decades after Hassan gave us the canonical definition of the Posthuman, the leading thinkers of the Movement - which was formally established in California in the early 1980s - are following the same approach, while expanding it. According to Nick Bostrom, a central figure within the Movement, Posthumanism holds strong to the belief that human nature is an improvable structure. As such, through the use of ‘applied science’ and other ‘rational methods’, Posthumanism seeks to increase human health-span, extend our intellectual and physical capacities, and give increased control over our natural environments. For James Hughes, a sociologist and bioethicist, and the co-founder with Bostrom of the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies, Posthumanism is the proposition that human beings should use technology to transcend the limitations of the body and mind. As it appears, the main reason behind this urge to transcend the cognitive and physical limitations is, as Koen De Paus noted, “to create a better world.” But it is not just human nature that can be seen as an improvable structure. Indeed, as Stelarc, a key practitioner in Posthumanist art, declared (in capital letters) “THE BODY IS OBSOLETE” too. For Muckelbauer and Hawhee, Posthumanism might be defined as an attempt to approach humans as distributed processes rather than as isolated entities, the isolation being created by specifically defined natures or sharp body edges. It is thus not much of a surprise that the Posthuman starts to define

“not an inherent or essential attribute, but a negotiated position within a system” with no concrete boundaries.

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11 Baudrillard 1993: 114.
14 Jotterand 2010: 49.
15 Hughes 2011.
16 De Paus 2013.
17 Farnell 1999; O’Donnell 2011.
18 http://stelarc.org/?catID=20317
19 Muckelbauer and Hawhee 2000: 768.
ii. Posthumanism and the emerging field of ‘Posthuman Consumer Culture’

Recently, by adopting conceptual resources from the Posthumanist literature, a small but determined constellation of culturally oriented consumer research scholars\(^{21}\) have begun to scrutinize the ways such ideas might change the way we think about consumption, commodity, markets, and what it means to be human.\(^{22}\) Already branded as “posthuman consumer culture”\(^{23}\), the majority of researchers involved in this area are following both the apophatic tradition and the views described above.

There are at least three areas in which the Posthumanist discourse becomes visible within the Posthuman Consumer Culture and the related fields, i.e. postmodern and critical marketing, cultural and interpretive consumer research:

- in relation to the image of cyborg,
- in relation to the critique it addresses to the established humanistic disciplines,
- in the way in which it challenges the notion of limit.

ii. a Who are thou, cyborg?

In the contemporary technological age, we are told, humanity is sometimes viewed as a “failed project”, one that desperately needs to be improved upon\(^{24}\). However, the possibility of improvement becomes feasible only after some radical changes are put in place. One of these changes implies a serious reconsideration of our current understandings of what it means to be human. As such, the notion of Posthumanism

“implies a radical breaking off from, and reconceptualisation of, the (traditional accounts of the) state of being human.”\(^{25}\)

\(^{21}\) Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010; Campbell 2013; Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2006; Giesler and Venkatesh 2005; Venkatesh and Meamber 2006.


\(^{23}\) Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz 2016: 276.

\(^{24}\) Kroker and Kroker 1996.

What are the traditional accounts of the state of being human? According to the posthuman consumer research literature, those accounts are those based on certain knowledge, truth claims, representationalist worldviews, and Cartesian models\(^{26}\). Within such views, the “consumers are theorized as information processors”\(^{27}\), or disembodied consciousnesses\(^{28}\). Accordingly, a fixed external social reality is recognized, one that can be “recorded” by an objective, rational, scientific mind\(^{29}\). Such a mind occupies a privileged place, one external to the reality it observes and records. However, recent work in the emerging paradigm of posthuman consumer research shifts the focus from the isolated individual subject to wider socio-cultural and technological contexts\(^{30}\). Instead of being approached as disembodied consciousnesses who observe from outside a reality recordable and expressible through mathematical laws, the consumers are immersed or embedded into an ever-changing environment from which the strict, formal hierarchies of being, ontological categories, and teleological or causal tensions tend to be gradually eliminated. Within this posthuman, always socially constructed “hybrid marketplace matrix […] that embeds a plethora of social, economic and technological systems of control established through consumption”\(^{31}\), the limits between (and within) its occupants are becoming porous or pierced\(^{32}\). Nothing is stable, neither in terms of the occupier, nor of the occupied environment. It gets increasingly difficult to draw a clear, continuous line between the human, the non-human animal and the machine, the rational consumer being replaced by a bio-technological symbiont\(^{33}\). As the philosopher Jean-Loup Thébaud noted during his conversations with the noted critical theorist François Lyotard, within such arrangements “none is privileged, none is dropped either”\(^{34}\).

In virtually all the texts dealing with the subject at hand within the posthuman consumer culture field, the symbiont is closely linked with the image of cyborg. Indeed, the cyborg seems to be the most popular manifestation of the posthuman: it is the prototypical

\(^{26}\) Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 666, 663.
\(^{27}\) Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 661.
\(^{28}\) Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 639.
\(^{30}\) Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 639.
\(^{31}\) Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 661, 666.
\(^{32}\) Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 646.
\(^{33}\) A term used by one of the most preeminent names in the field of Posthumanism, Donna Haraway (Haraway 1995). The association between Haraway and Posthumanism must be approached carefully. Although the influence of Haraway in the development of the Posthumanist thinking is beyond doubt, lately she has started to distance herself from the Posthumanist discourse - or at least some forms of it (Gane 2006).
\(^{34}\) Lyotard and Thébaud 1985: 58, 60.
posthumanist consumer, a post-Cartesian being. It has also been defined as a mythic “Frankensteinian icon inviting both sympathy and revulsion,” one that is simultaneously liberatory and oppressive. More often than not, the cyborg is usually associated with Terminator or Matrix-like imagery and scenarios, a technologized body inducing anxiety and danger. At the societal and political level, many fear that the rise of the bio-machine will create powerful hierarchical, caste systems, with the lower ones being used for the exclusive benefit of the higher ones. From a more psychological and physiological perspective, the cyborg “reflects the transformative union between economic priority and insatiable desire.”

I believe, however, that the cyborg cannot and should not be reduced to a human-machine dichotomy, or to a representational image. Indeed, as several cultural and posthuman consumer culture researchers are noticing, the figure of the cyborg underlines and celebrates the contingency, the partiality, and the incoherence. Following the philosopher Richard Kearney, I define the cyborg as an actant with no fixed limits, a non-essential, unbounded system for which terms are porous and endlessly intersecting. A cyborg is primarily a non-essential structure, a process rather than a product, a verb rather than a noun. The cyborg cannot exist in separation from “a plethora of social, economic and technological systems.” Importantly, these systems are, or they should be, cyborgian in nature as well, as they are constantly changing, responding to feedback, piercing and getting pierced, merging or disjoining themselves with other systems which, in turn, are doing the same. There is nothing pure about the cyborg, everything is relational, contaminated and mixed; it has lost its representation and any possible essential individuality and has become subsumed into the process itself. Given its incompleteness, the cyborg always needs the other, an other equally defined through its incomplete nature. As such, the cyborg cannot and should never stop offering itself, gifting itself away, thus denying its most treasured possession: its being, its nature.

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35 Giesler and Venkatesh 2005.
36 Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 636.
37 Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2006.
38 Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2006; Lunceford 2012.
39 Campbell and Saren 2010; Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz 2011; Lai 2012.
40 Lai 2012.
41 Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 661.
42 Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz 2011: 288.
44 Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 666.
45 Mirowski 2002.
ii.b Reading differently: Posthumanism as post-humanities

When considering the established humanistic disciplines, Posthumanism can and should be read not only as an inquiry into what comes after the human, i.e. after biology (thus as Posthuman-ism), but also as “a critique of the discourse and epistemologies of humanism”46 and modernism47 – hence as Post-humanism. In other words, as something that shows that “the centrality of the traditional humanistic disciplines [...] is no longer assured”48. It has been noted that the University is “the most humanist of institutions”49. Lyotard, in his seminal text The Postmodern Condition (1979), linked the crisis of metaphysical philosophy with the current crisis of the University institution, which relied on it50. Given this, the rise of the Posthumanist movement puts the current institutions associated with the production of knowledge under a critical light, the main question addressed here being: can posthumanist views be accommodated within contemporary academia?

ii. c Posthumanism and the issue of the ‘limit’

In reference to the notion of the limit, the Posthuman seems to have a tendency to supersede boundaries. As Hassan noted in his paper,

“The figure of Vitruvian Man [...] defining the measure of things [...] has broken through its enclosing circle and square, and spread across the cosmos.”51

My usage of the term ‘limit’ follows somehow closely the one suggested by Hassan above. As with Leonardo da Vinci’s circle and square, the limits do not have an actual existence, but should be approached mainly as symbolic expressions. However, this ‘breaking of the limits’ the posthuman performs on itself and its environments does not remain a purely conceptual act. It has indeed powerful translations into the pragmatic world, a vast majority of them being visible in highly commoditized environments, such

46 Campbell 2013: 41.
47 Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz 2016.
48 As quoted in Herbrechter 2013: 138.
49 Herbrechter 2013: 14.
50 Lyotard 1984: xxiv.
as the ones operated by advertising or other marketing-driven industries and services. Nike’s widely popular slogans, such as the 1991’s “There is no finish line”, or the “Accept no limits” might be seen as real-life translations of such abstract issues.

Associating Posthumanism with the issue of limit-breaking did not end with Hassan’s seminal article. As Stefan Herbrechter, a cultural theorist and editor for the Critical Posthumanisms series, argues, what is at stake in the recent theoretical reflection on the Posthuman,

“is the transgression of boundaries.”

For the philosopher of technology Francesca Ferrando, Posthumanism invites to think inclusively [...] and relationally, radically stretching the boundaries of human.

The cyborg itself is “a symbol for breakdown”, an extended being in which the nature of the limit between structures – previously perceived as separated, sharp-edged or unbridgeable – is deeply challenged.

ii. d The notion of limit within marketing and consumer research

The concept of limit enters the fields of marketing and consumer research in many forms. There is an ongoing discussion on the 'discursive limits', where so-called radical changes are anticipated to take place within a field, changes usually facilitated by the adoption of new conceptual discourses, which will break off the old models into new paradigms. Examples of these, of course, were the early contestations between what was called the ‘positivist and interpretivist’ (i.e. quantitative and qualitative) approaches.

52 The use of Nike brand to exemplify the issue of limit is not casual. As Alan France noted in his paper Historicizing the Posthuman (2001), Nike is not really a manufacturer of athletic shoes so much as a symbolic discourse. It is indeed a research and design studio with a sophisticated marketing formula and a distribution mechanism built in large measure on the posthuman values (France 2001).
53 https://poshmark.com/listing/Nike-Accept-No-Limits-T-5612b781feba1f1b4301ac84
54 http://www.brill.com/products/series/critical-posthumanisms
55 Herbrechter 2013: 86.
58 E.g., Levy 2006; Hudson and Ozanne 1988.
These were followed by the introduction of the postmodern challenge, later resulting in the advent of the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) paradigm, which continually imagines new shifts and ruptures in both marketing and consumer research disciplines. One example of such breaks might be seen in the fact that, as of late, the postmodern, but still too-human(istic) consciousness-centered ‘linguistic turn’ has begun to be addressed critically by the proponents of the “materialist turn”. Some researchers feel that language has been granted too much power by the postmodern thinkers: every ‘thing’ – even materiality itself – is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation. The materialist turn is thus used to address the problems and limitations associated with the linguistic one, placing the more-than-human features of the senses, and the objects in their concrete materiality, at the center of attention. The splits and ruptures within marketing and consumer research disciplines are also made visible in what has been coined ‘critical marketing’, a field of which one aim is to address the marketing ideologies and consumption practices from a more political, socially-engaged and environmental angle. As Tadajewski and Brownlie made abundantly clear, Critical Marketing represents indeed “A Limit Attitude”. Additionally, critical marketing, as Bradshaw and Furat noted, “implies that the institution of marketing itself is to be critiqued, most likely through the tools provided by critical theory.” As such, the “ideologies and assumptions underlying the production and consumption of knowledge” are identified and questioned, the goal being to create alternative approaches and shifts in respect to the status quo ones – i.e. those represented by humanistic perspectives.

The problems and potentials within these emerging fields have received recent attention as well. For example, Askegaard and Linnett have noted the dearth of seeing beyond formal, essential limits. Accordingly, Bradshaw and Furat’s piece in itself is subject to a critique of the critical marketing field, whereby no paradigm is to become the definitive approach to something: i.e. critical marketing should never be considered a foundational structure, or truth-telling paradigm. Indeed, as the authors themselves recognize:

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60 Arnould and Thompson 2005.
61 E.g. Kavanagh 1994; Cova, Maclaran, and Bradshaw 2013; Bode and Østergaard 2013.
63 Cartwright 2015: 256.
64 E.g. Hastings and Saren 2003; Bradshaw and Firat 2007.
65 Tadajewski and Brownlie 2008: 1.
66 Bradshaw and Firat 2007: 30; Arnould and Thompson 2005.
68 Askegaard and Linnett 2011.
“Incorporating Critical Theory into the critical marketing mix need not result in the cessation of the process of questioning received foundations, methods, principles, conventions.”

**ii. e The perceived architects of the Posthumanist matrix**

It has been said that

“in order to appreciate the concept of the posthuman, we need to first understand some things about technology.”

Technology: the great disruptor of limits, the “disintegrator.” Whereas before it was perceived as virtually absent, “an abstract ‘nothing’,” technology has increasingly become an integral component in the consumer culture domain. Such an absence was motivated mostly by the fact that consciousness-free structures were not the object of interest for the researchers working in the fields of marketing or consumer culture. However, lately, technological gadgetry has experienced an interesting jump, starting to be considered, following Latour and others, as an actant endowed with agency, in no way different from other non-intentional actants, such as humans, animals, or other non-humans. Indeed, the sociologist of technology Sherry Turkle speaks about objects, all kinds of objects, as having “degrees of aliveness,” while Campbell and Saren invite us “to consider technology as life.” As such, technology transitioned from an external tool, one “extrinsic to human identity,” to an intrinsic part of human subjectivity. Even so, the issue of intentional consciousness – even when extended far beyond the humans – remains an increasingly contested presence, especially because of its associations with humanism and other similar models.

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69 Bradshaw and Firat 2007: 40.
70 Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2010: 95.
73 Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2010.
74 As quoted in Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2010: 93.
75 Campbell and Saren 2010: 167.
76 Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz 2011: 287.
77 Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 645.
Now, following Hassan\textsuperscript{79}, technology is approached by virtually all the posthuman consumer researchers as one of the main actors behind the creation of the Posthuman cyborg / culture. Indeed, technological advancements threaten to defile the purity of mankind, disrupt the lineage of nature and potentially compromise the integrity of the species\textsuperscript{80}. Accordingly, it disrupts the normative, metaphysical, humanist and other kinds of similar paradigm in their entirety\textsuperscript{81}. The location of the self and identity is also radically challenged by the contemporary, truly poststructural forces\textsuperscript{82} of the digital technologies: “Where is the self to be located when a user logs on”, ask Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder\textsuperscript{83}. As such, it is not only the question of “what are we” that has to be reexamined in the light of the Posthumanist provocations, but “Where are we” as well\textsuperscript{84}. In other words, what kind of new territories is technology creating? As we are told, we are witnessing the creation of “zones of liminality”, or the rise of deeply unsettling “thirdspaces”\textsuperscript{85}.

Together with the technology, the other main actor behind the inception of the posthumanist culture and the cyborg is represented by a set of contemporary philosophical articulations that range from postmodernism and non-representationalism, to post-structuralism and (post-)Marxism, and conclude with existentialism, neo-materialism and speculative realism\textsuperscript{86}. These paradigms have been adopted within the disciplines of marketing and consumer research, giving rise to fields such as postmodern and critical marketing, cultural and interpretivist consumer research and, of course, to the emergent posthuman consumer culture. Postmodernity\textsuperscript{87}, non-representationalism\textsuperscript{88}, post-structuralism\textsuperscript{89}, or post-marxism\textsuperscript{90} are embraced, pushing the researchers to question received wisdom on issues such as consumption practices, markets, identity and more. After “finally being touched by the crisis of representation movement”\textsuperscript{91}, nothing in these fields will ever look the same again.

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\textsuperscript{79} “[T]echnology may be transforming human consciousness itself” (Hassan 1977: 841).

\textsuperscript{80} Lai 2012: 387.

\textsuperscript{81} Campbell and Saren 2010: 164.

\textsuperscript{82} Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2006: 350.

\textsuperscript{83} Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 646.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{85} Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2010: 349; Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 647.

\textsuperscript{86} Bennett 2010; Braidotti 2013; Herbrechter 2013; Braidotti and Vermeulen 2014; Steinhoff 2014.

\textsuperscript{87} Hudson and Ozanne 1988; Brown 1995; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Askegaard and Linnet 2011.

\textsuperscript{88} Sherry 2000; Giesler and Venkatesh 2005.

\textsuperscript{89} Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2006.

\textsuperscript{90} Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2010.

\textsuperscript{91} Sherry 2000: 277.
iii. Contribution: introducing theology as the main disruptor of limits

Adding to the ongoing discussion, and despite recent research, this text does not approach technology and the aforementioned philosophical paradigms as the great disruptors of limits and as the main actors behind the inception of Posthumanism and the cyborg, but rather theology. Therefore, this research identifies and addresses an important oversight in the Posthuman Consumer Culture, i.e. the virtually complete absence of theological analyses. The study also contributes to the ongoing discussions on the ‘cyborgian consumer’ by introducing Christian theology as a primary force that shapes and legitimizes its existence. This creates an additional tool for culturally-oriented consumer researchers interested in the subject. Therefore, by taking on the proposed approach, future research can further explore issues pertaining to the future of identity, the commodity, markets, and consumption at large.

iv. Why theology?

Two questions are considered: what is theology, and how might a theological perspective contribute to the study of Posthumanism?

The most authoritative dictionaries of the English language tend to split the meaning of the term theology in two. On one hand, theology is “the study of religion and religious belief”; on the other hand, it is “a set of beliefs about a particular religion”92. Being an object of study, a methodological structure, but also a set of practices, theology seems to encompass a lot. A lot but, according to Deleuze and Guattari, among others, not philosophy and science too93. Yet, this is where my views diverge from theirs.

As I will try to show, Christian dogmatic theology – which I perceive as being something different than Christianity’s popular expressions (e.g. going to Church, attending the Communion, making the sign of the Cross) – is an all-encompassing structure that infuses all levels of understanding and practice. It operates through

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93 Deleuze and Guattari 1994.
statements called dogmas. It is much more than a discourse, being able to influence everything from various physiological functions of perception (e.g. sight, touch) to the way technological gadgetry functions. Some of these dogmas – the ones I am going to call ‘first-degree truths’ – require absolute obedience. In relation to those who do not abide to them, they are pitiless and deadly, unleashing on them the full fury of a true gigantomachy\textsuperscript{94}. Simultaneously, Christian dogmatic theology seems to deny all the above issues by proposing \textit{unlimited} freedom, by encouraging \textit{unbounded} creativity (both artistic and intellectual) and by being firmly grounded on the two pillars (usually associated with the Enlightenment) of \textit{tolerance} and \textit{acceptance}.

Now, how might a theological perspective enrich the study of posthumanism, especially when it comes to the presence of the latter within the posthuman consumer culture and other related fields?

\textbf{v. Identifying the dogmatic present absences within the Posthumanist discourse}

While predominantly claiming a strong connection to secularism (via science)\textsuperscript{95}, the infusion of theological elements within the Posthumanist movement cannot be denied. Many authors have indeed noted the (sometimes perfect) superposition between such ideas and Posthumanism. In his analysis, Herbrechter addresses some of these themes and tendencies. As he notes, the Posthumanist fascination with technology represents an expression of spirituality\textsuperscript{96}, something already obvious in the titles of some of the foundational texts of the Movement, e.g. Ray Kurzweil’ \textit{The Age of Spiritual Machines} (1999). Figures like Hans Moravec\textsuperscript{97}, a leading Posthumanist and a central figure in fields such as robotics and AI, are seen as employing pseudo-religious discourses instead of scientific ones. As Herbrechter continues, “ideas of techno-transcendence and digital cities of god in cyberspace, of the overcoming of the flesh” abound within the Posthumanist scene, which consists

\textit{“of a mixture of [...] spiritually inclined scientists and technoprophets.”}\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{94} The word comes from the Ancient Greek \textit{gigantomachia} (γιγαντομαχία). It defines the battle between the Olimpian Gods and the Titans.
\textsuperscript{95} Tirosh-Samuelson 2012; Braidotti 2013; Mali, Coenen, and Weinhardt 2013.
\textsuperscript{96} Herbrechter 2013: 103.
\textsuperscript{97} Hayles 2003: 136; Campbell 2013: 39-41.
\textsuperscript{98} Herbrechter 2013: 104.
Singularity, i.e. the moment when artificial intelligence supersedes human cognitive capacities\textsuperscript{99}, has been defined as a mystical ascension to a unfathomable future\textsuperscript{100}, when everything will transcend into a Cosmic intelligent superorganism. Indeed, according to Morvec, as he put it in his book *Robot: Mere Machine to Transcendent Mind*, “[t]he WWW is on the way to absorbing everything and everybody”\textsuperscript{101}, all this leading to a moment that the Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin called the “Omega Point”: the divine unification when everything becomes sentient\textsuperscript{102}.

In 1995, Erik Davis, the author of the highly influential book *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (1998), published an article in *Wired* magazine entitled *Technopagans*. Here, the author shows that far from being associated with a specific spirituality or theology, the Posthumanist religious ideals characterize us as humans. Humanity, Davis tells us,

“has always lived within imaginative interfaces – at least from the moment the first Paleolithic grunt looked at a mountain or a beast and saw a god.”\textsuperscript{103}

And what can better exemplify the commonality of the Posthumanist ideals of today than all-encompassing cyberspace itself? The openings and the bringing together it offers are overwhelming. Everybody participates, from all over the globe: from goddess-worshippers to ceremonial magicians, from witches to Radical Fairies, and from alchemists, to healers, and astrological astronomers, all seem to live in the WWW as in a rainbow-colored paradise\textsuperscript{104}.

Be this as it may, my intent here is not to compile an exhaustive list of seemingly theological or spiritual references and allusions that can be identified within the Posthumanist literature. Therefore, I am making a distinction between two elements: the present absences and the present presences. It might be said that if the present absences are the presences that escape an immediate identification, the present presences are those who are prone to identification and thus cataloging and classification. In the present context, if the Christian dogmas associated with the ‘first-degree truths’ are an example of present absences, the present presences are made by elements as the ones introduced above, e.g. the technomystical visions. Thus, my quest in this work is to identify some of these present absences

\textsuperscript{99} Campbell 2013.
\textsuperscript{100} Kurzweil 1999; Zimmerman 2008; Davis 1998.
\textsuperscript{101} Moravec 1999: 138.
\textsuperscript{102} Kreisberg 1995; Bathurst 2015.
\textsuperscript{103} Davis 1995. My emph.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
that inform the Posthumanist movement and, by extension, the emerging field of Posthuman Consumer Culture. In other words, what I am trying to show is that the Posthumanist movement does not need the *present presences* in order to be considered a theologically influenced paradigm, but quite the opposite: the less present, or obvious these presences are, the stronger the Christian dogmatic grip on the posthuman paradigm is.

**vi. What theology has to do with the concept of commodity, the practice of consumption, and the markets?**

One more question remains: how is a theological approach going to change our current and future understanding of the commodity, markets, and consumption? In order to answer this question, we have to unpack a complex intertwining between:

- the Christian dogmatic theology, as defined by the *present absences*,
- technology, as defined by its contemporary – mostly digital, but not only – expressions,
- various contemporary social theories, e.g. those that can be packed under the umbrella term of process-oriented paradigms,
- the previously mentioned business-oriented fields, e.g. postmodern marketing, cultural and posthuman consumer research.

Of course, following the gradual adoption of the Posthumanist views within marketing and consumer research, and the subsequent rise of the posthuman consumer culture research field, some of these changes are already discussed and embraced: the shifting of focus from the isolated individual subject to the wider socio-cultural and technological contexts, the questioning and the subsequent reform (or abandonment) of the received foundations, methods, principles, conventions are only a few of these revolutionary changes. However, following the discussion above, the point I am trying to make is that the changes in our understanding of the consumer, markets, commodity, and society (those already mentioned and many others) did not happen primarily because of the adoption by the business-oriented fields of the two actors – contemporary technology and the aforementioned process-oriented paradigms – but because of the pressure exercised by Christian theological
dogmas on our understanding itself and on our understanding and perception of the commodity, the practice of consumption and the markets.

Let me try to unfold this viewpoint.

Christian dogmatic views led to (at least) two simultaneous revolutions: one in anthropology, the other in technology. These transformations had several consequences. First, in regard to technology, these changes might be defined by the creation and the implementation in various areas of the so-called ‘linear perspective’. Second, in regard to the changes in anthropology, Christian theology developed a specific model of what it means to be a human. Also, it determined what kind of reality this human interacts with and inhabits. A direct consequence of this Christian anthropological model is precisely the cyborg: a creature with no fixed limits, a non-essential, unbounded system for which terms are porous and endlessly intersecting. In time, the first-degree truths on which these changes in anthropology and technology were predicated faded into background, becoming present absences.

However, the linear perspective started to define a growing number of technological objects, i.e. gadgets. Gradually, this characterization led to the inception of the so-called ‘converging technologies’, thus to the so-called ‘Nano-Bio-Info-Cogno Unification’, i.e. the unification that is rapidly taking place today among Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Information technology, and Cognitive science. In turn, various fields occupying the radical and critical end of the humanities spectrum adopted anthropological, sociological, and environmental views based on the dogmatic first-degree truths. This gave rise to a series of methodological paradigms, such as the qualitative, the process-oriented, or the non-linear paradigms. These are methods that favor phenomenological impurity and porosity over ontological purity, having the concepts of network, assemblage, or fractal center at their core.

In addition to the adoption of the anthropological, sociological, and environmental paradigms defined by the Christian first-degree truths, the radical fields from within the larger discipline of social sciences became doorways for the nano-bio-info-cogno revolution as well. It is important to note here that one direct consequence of these adoptions by the anthropological or sociological disciplines was their rapid fragmentation into highly inter- and intra-disciplinary areas, segments which call themselves ‘Studies’. Today we talk a lot about them: ‘Gender Studies’, ‘Communication Studies’, ‘Political Studies’, or ‘Cultural Studies’. Closer to our subject, there are ‘Science and Technology Studies’, ‘Cyber Studies’, ‘Critical Code Studies’, ‘Critical Software Studies’, ‘New Media Studies’, ‘Digital Studies’ and so on and so forth.

105 Bainbridge and Roco 2006.
In turn, a number of these Studies began to be adopted by various business-oriented disciplines, i.e. marketing and consumer research. A separate, more recent focus from the business-oriented fields on the nano-bio-info-cogno convergence should be added. Following these changes, the creation of sub-disciplines like postmodern and critical marketing, or interpretive and cultural consumer research, as well as the posthuman consumer culture research paradigm resulted. Within these fields (which can be seen as being equivalent to the Studies), names like Foucault, Butler, Deleuze and DeLanda are becoming more popular than the ones from the disciplines of marketing or consumer research themselves.

Let us now go back to the argument I made earlier, i.e. that the changes in our understanding of the consumer, markets, commodity, and society did not happen because the business-oriented fields started to finally focus on (previously neglected) contemporary technology, or because it started adopting various process-oriented approaches, but because of the pressure exercised by the Christian theological dogmas on our understanding itself and on our understanding and perception of the commodity, the practice of consumption and the markets. Consequently, both technology and the noted methodological paradigms are central too, but only inasmuch as they act as normalized “channels of distribution”, or “enablers” of these dogmatic present absences across the globe.

vii. Implications

What does all this mean? In other words: so what if lurking ‘behind’ these seemingly contemporary dynamics there is a theology, one defined by a number of indisputable dogmas? Below, a few consequences (among many others):

- first, because they are primarily based on dogmas (thus primarily not on technological developments, or socially constructed philosophical paradigms), it means that the space within which our understanding and our understanding of certain issues - e.g. consumption, markets, commodity etc. – might change is quite narrow. In other words, the theoretical explanations regarding various issues cannot move against or outside that space. No matter how radically the perceived main actors are held responsible for the creation of the Posthumanist culture, the ‘matrix of all our performances’, might change in the future, they cannot do so outside the unbreakable cloister defined by the dogmas, i.e. by these present absences, or the first-degree truths.
Accordingly, no matter how much we tune our understanding of the consumer, consumption, and markets in order to meet the challenges brought about by the two actors, this tuning always happens in accordance with the first-degree truths,

- second, Posthumanist views, being based on dogmatic foundation, have to be normalized and then implemented, or imposed, universally. Which is to say, the formal hierarchies of being, ontological categories, and teleological or causal tensions (among other things) are required to be eliminated not only from one worldview (i.e. the Western one), but from all other cultures that recognize such presences. Following Lyotard\textsuperscript{106}, the war against totality has to be waged against all totalities, all metanarratives,

- third, the opening of the previously dominant onto-epistemological space towards difference, plurality, and all that is foreign and strange represents neither a real opening, nor a sign of departure from certain discourses such as humanism, Cartesianism and others. Indeed, as we shall see, what tends to be understood as abandonment in fact represents an embrace,

- forth, as has often been mentioned, technological development and legislative or ethical development (not to mention theology) function at two very different speeds, the former being a great deal faster than the latter ones\textsuperscript{107}. A synchronicity between technological and legislative or ethical advancements – let alone the theological ones – is thus missing. This means that by the time of its publishing, it is very possible that an analysis of the contemporary technological developments and the challenges they pose might already be outdated. However, I argue that the speed of development and the sheer diversification of technology are only apparent. Given that technological gadgetry is based on a specific foundation, one informed by various dogmatic percepts, the changes through which it continuously passes – from a hardware / software point of view – do not, and cannot affect that foundation.

\textbf{viii. Are you in the audience?}

I am, by training, a theologian whose main interest is arguably one of the least exciting fields in this discipline, i.e. Systematic theology\textsuperscript{108}. However, this is a text that has been written not in a theological, but in a business school, within the marketing department more specifically. Now, does this means that my main audience is made up of

\textsuperscript{106} Lyotard 1984.
\textsuperscript{107} Marshall 1999; Wadhwa 2014.
\textsuperscript{108} Roughly put it, Systematic theology is a field of Christian theology that occupies itself with the foundational building blocks of the Christian faith, i.e. the dogmas.
people hanging around those departments? Yes, and no. As I noted, as of late, the business-oriented fields are experiencing something of a revolution – one which, like all revolutions that matter, is one that unfolds quite slowly and not without powerful resistance\textsuperscript{109}. Marketing is not what it used to be a decade or two ago. Names like Deleuze, Foucault and Butler, methodological approaches such as process-oriented, qualitative, and non-representational ones are becoming increasingly popular, already creating important and irreversible displacements in the not-so venerable field of marketing. Sub-fields, the equivalent of the Studies in other areas, such as critical and postmodern marketing, cultural, interpretivist, and posthuman consumer research are already a reality. Within them, theological terminology is not that much of a stranger anymore. Concepts such as ‘apophatism’, ‘eschatology’, or ‘messianism’, among others, are used in order to explain various emergent paradigms – Posthumanism being one of them\textsuperscript{110}. Therefore, the following text mainly addresses the researchers working in those areas, but not exclusively. Theologians and researchers working on fields where process-oriented methodologies are central might also find something that can be of use. Given that I based some of my analyses on first-hand patristic literature, the theologians might use them in order to approach the issues at hand from new angles. Those working in various areas in which deconstruction, or non-representational methodologies (among others) are employed as tools for decolonization, empowerment and social activism might find a rather unusual take on these paradigms in the following pages.

\section*{ix. General structure of the work}

Let me now conclude this general Introduction by offering a short overview of the main structure of the following text.

The work is split into a methodology section, two main parts, conclusions, and finishes with a limitations and future research section.

Within the methodology section, a ‘hacked’ version of the Foucauldian genealogical method will be introduced. The text continues into the first part where I address some key issues related to Hellenistic philosophy, among them being the issue of matter and materiality, sense perception, intentionality, the apparent dualism between

\textsuperscript{109} I can mention here the adoption of Christianity by the Roman Emperors and its subsequent recognition as the only official religion within the Roman empire, or the abandonment of the Ptolemaic model of the planetary movements in favor of the Copernican one.

\textsuperscript{110} Brown 1997; Fisk 1997; Murray and O’Driscoll 1997; Woodruffe 1997.
Formal and phenomenal spheres and others. The issue of technology and of the technological object will also be addressed from an optical perspective – an angle that has, up until now, escaped systematic conceptualization.

The second part takes into account the rise of what I am going to call the Christian School and its theology. Additionally, I am going to address the way in which Christianity influences some of the current dominant views on matter, sense perception, self, and contemporary technological gadgetry.

The text will conclude by summarizing the main contributions of this work and with potential avenues for future research and developments.
B. Methodology

The methodology I am going to employ in the following might loosely be defined as a ‘hacked’ version of the Foucauldian genealogy. Usually, genealogical approaches are not to be seen as involving any kind of search for origins or essences – concepts that find constant support in metaphysical or religious illusions. In addition to this, any

“notion of a transcendental or unified self, or any other synthesizing concepts which might serve to ground historical change, thus submitting that change under some universal framework of intelligibility, is equally rejected.”

Genealogy as a method is thus not only radically anti-foundational, but also shows that everything is non-foundational. Additionally, as long as metaphysical formal claims can still be identified within certain streams of natural science and academic social disciplines, it is also anti-scientific and anti-humanistic.

There are two elements that have to be taken into consideration in relation to the Foucauldian genealogical method: the dispositif (a concept usually translated into English as apparatus), and the regime of veridiction. Foucault defined the dispositif as

“a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The
apparatus itself [...] is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.” 113

He then defined the regime of veridiction as,

“the set of rules enabling one to establish which statements in a given discourse can be described as true or false.” 114

The next step is

“to determine the regime of veridiction established at a given moment that is precisely the one on the basis of which you can now recognize, for example, that doctors in the nineteenth century said so many stupid things about sex. What is important is the determination of the regime of veridiction that enabled them to say and assert a number of things as truths.” 115

The ‘given moment’ appears in the definition of the dispositif as well:

“a kind of a formation, so to speak, that at a given historical moment has as its major function the response to an urgency.” 116

In my opinion, the dispositif and the regime of veridiction are always to be considered as aspects relative to each other. Whereas the dispositif forms the environment within which the phenomenon of interest is constructed and experienced, the regime of veridiction makes the claims within that specific phenomenon describable as true or false. In other words, the ‘problems’ are not e.g. rationality, self or any other “magnificent feature” of Modernity – as Latour calls them 117 – per se, but these generative structures 118. The idea is thus not to challenge only these features (rationality, human nature, normativity etc.), but also the generative mechanisms that make them (in a given period and within a certain environment) either true or false. Such challenging happens through the genealogical method which, again, should show that there is no substance behind such truth-claims (including here those of falsity) whatsoever.

113 Foucault 1980: 194, 196.
114 Foucault 2008: 35.
118 Foucault described his ‘archeology of knowledge’ as precisely not being about the almost endless possibilities of diverse descriptions to which scientific discourse can give rise (Foucault 1998: 331).
And here is where my methodological ‘hacking’ comes in. It becomes visible in two instances:

1. The instance of replacement:

Although it starts to represent the dominant approach in the humanities and the social sciences scholarship, I understand the genealogical method as being itself the creation of a specific worldview. This means that applying it to whatever issue, no matter how old or exotic, presupposes looking at that particular subject through the lenses of the dispositif within which that method is recognized as a valid approach. As such, it does not matter what the members of a culture that is built on a radically different worldview might think about their own culture: the genealogical method will expose their views as being unsubstantiated\(^\text{119}\), socially and historically constructed etc. And so, while using the method, I will also try to expose it for what it actually is: an instrument created by a certain ideology, or theology. Although positioning itself against any notion of origins or essences (be them transcendental, or purely material), the genealogical method still allows Truth-telling, but only apophatically: that there is no Truth. All other understandings of Truth are thus to be eliminated, and replaced.

2. The instance of naturalization:

One of the problems with the tripartite Foucauldian structure (dispositif, regime, genealogy) is that it creates, in its turn, a ‘universal framework of intelligibility’ – exactly like the ones it is trying to eliminate. The main question here is: can this double-headed configuration not only be challenged, but also completely undermined? Foucault seems to be skeptical about this\(^\text{120}\). And so is Giorgio Agamben. As the contemporary Italian thinker shows, for Foucault, the dispositif – but here goes the regime as well,

“comes to occupy the place of one of those terms that he defines, critically, as ‘the universals’ (les universaux). Foucault, as you know, always refused to deal with the general categories or mental constructs that he calls ‘the universals,’ such as the State, Sovereignty, Law, and Power. But this is not to say that there are no operative concepts with a general character in his thought. Apparatuses are, in point of fact, what take the place of the universals in the Foucauldian strategy.”\(^\text{121}\)

\(^{119}\) The term can be approached also from an Aristotelian / Hellenistic perspective, thus as ‘with no Form-al ground’.

\(^{120}\) Foucault 1984: 343, 347.

\(^{121}\) Agamben 2009: 6-7.
Identifying these apparatuses with universals makes the step of naturalizing them a straightforward one. Agamben continues:

“It is clear that ever since Homo sapiens first appeared, there have been apparatuses [...] (they) are rooted in the very process of ‘humanization’ that made ‘humans’ out of the animals we classify under the rubric Homo sapiens.”

Obviously, if the dispositifs and the regimes define our ways of knowing and doing as a species, then so does the genealogical method too. This means that everything that whichever culture that ever existed believed as being objectively true or false, every metanarrative it followed or it follows, are (in the grand scheme of things) nothing but illusions. In addition, the seeds of approaching such beliefs as socially constructed inventions are also there. The fact that the genealogical method was developed (at least in the field of epistemology) by Nietzsche and Foucault is only a sign of pure contingency: it could have happened anywhere (within the Zulu culture), and at any time (Second Dynasty of Egypt).

According to Foucault,

“it wasn’t as a matter of course that mad people came to be regarded as mentally ill; it wasn’t self-evident that the only thing to be done with a criminal was to lock him up [...] and so on”.

Now, to paraphrase Foucault, it was not as a matter of course that social constructivism came to be regarded as the way of understanding reality, or that ‘at a given moment’ the transcendental or the grand narrative (as ways of understanding / approaching the world / context) became a problem. It was not / it is not natural or self-evident for native peoples that most of their practices or rituals were actually abuses, forms of violence, empty superstitions and discriminations towards certain categories of people. As it was not self-evident that their myths, all myths, were nothing but made-up, fictive stories which were then used by the elites to manipulate the thoughts, loyalties, and practices of the simpletons while helping those in power positions. And even when these practices are not considered as being the product of a primitive, simple minded culture, but as very complex, intricate stories full of amazing plots and character development, they are still just that: made-up stories, told by skilled storytellers.

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122 Agamben 2009: 7, 16.
124 Foucault 2010: 226.
As I am going to show at the beginning of the second section, in response to the Foucauldian tripartite structure I will introduce a similar one, also defined by three elements:

- emphasis,
- suppression,
- inversion.

Given that this methodological construct is going to characterize the second part of the work, I am not going to address it here.

Going further, the subject at hand will be approached from two different perspectives:

- the School's perspective,
- the chronological perspective.

The ‘School’s perspective’ might be explained quite well by Lyotard’s description of Modernity:

“anytime we lack criteria, we are in modernity, wherever we may be, whether it be at the time of Augustine, Aristotle, or Pascal. The date does not matter.”¹²⁵

In other words, there are certain assumptions that cannot be made, certain views on issues (human beings, Nature etc.) that cannot be taken, but only when occupying a space within a specific ideological environment. I call that ‘specific ideological environment’, a School. The Academy (the Platonists), the Peripatetic School (the Aristotelians), The Stoa (the Stoics), The Walled Garden (the Epicureans) might be seen as concrete examples of such Schools. Which means that it does not matter over what period of time, or space a specific School stretches: it can be 10 years, 100, or two millennia. Accordingly, those who follow the percepts of that School can be somewhere in Africa, or Australasia. What matters is the allegiance the followers of a certain School pledge to its dogmas and views. Additionally, I believe that there is no such thing as a transitory period between Schools, although this is a very popular argument within various fields, including theology – indeed, we are speaking about early Christian Platonists, early Christian Aristotelians etc. Following Kuhn, the Christian School did not come into being one step at a time, but all

at once, though not necessarily in an instant.\textsuperscript{126} Which means that its unfolding still very much happening today, even though the ‘all at once’ occurred already long ago.

The ‘chronological perspective’ however, focuses on the timeframe: when did someone live, within which specific socio-economic, religious and political contexts and so on. These two approaches will be fundamental in showing how otherwise certain abstract concepts, ideas, and theories were implemented within the pragmatic sphere and with what results.

Although the teachings of the mentioned Schools were substantially different one from each other\textsuperscript{127}, and the relationships between them were by no means friendly\textsuperscript{128}. A couple of common elements might be identified:

- all of them were aiming to create a comprehensive, all encompassing world-view which, in its turn, was based on a metanarrative\textsuperscript{129}. Because of this, their members covered subjects in their writings as diverse as music and law, biology and politics, medicine and astronomy, geography and ethics,

- they were built on very strict, ontological and epistemological foundations which, in their fundamental expression, were not subject to discussions or debates.

As the French clergymn, philosopher and historian of philosophy Pierre Hadot\textsuperscript{130} pointed out, it is because of this that the core of the fundamental dogmas and rules of the Academy or the Peripatetic School remained virtually unchanged throughout their entire existence. Even those whom we today call, inappropriately, Ancient Greek scientists or engineers, become non-philosophers. Therefore, those such as e.g. Archimedes,

\begin{quote}
"always were affiliated with a philosophical school: the development of their mathematical and astronomical theorems changed nothing of the fundamental principles of the school to which they claimed fidelity."\textsuperscript{131}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{126} Kuhn 2012: 149.
\textsuperscript{127} Hadot, Davidson, and Wissing 1990.
\textsuperscript{128} Diogenes was against Plato and vice versa, Aristotle was against both, the Cynics were against the Peripatetic School, Plato against Democritus, Neo-Platonists and Stoics against the Peripatetics and so on (Swift 2005; Bar-Kochva 2010; Faubion 2013). Internal rivalries within the same School were very present as well (Hadot 1998: 87).
\textsuperscript{129} Which was / is expressed apophatically and / or cataphatically.
\textsuperscript{130} He was the first to introduce Wittgenstein’s philosophy into France (Hadot 2004), and an inspiration for Foucault himself (Miller 2000).
\textsuperscript{131} Hadot 1995: 60-61. Hadot adds nonetheless that this “does not mean that theoretical reflection and elaboration were absent from the philosophical life. However, this activity never extended to the dogmas themselves or the methodological principles but rather to the ways of demonstrating and systematizing these dogmas and to secondary, doctrinal points issuing from them” (ibid.). My emph. See Lloyd 2004.
\end{flushleft}
The very same, of course, applies to the Christian School as well, as we shall see.

The relationship between the Schools, and especially between the Christian and the Hellenistic, can be described by using Kuhn’s concept of *incommensurability*, as he introduced it in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). This proves especially helpful when it comes to the conceptual vocabulary. As Kuhn put it, within whatever new paradigm, or School, “old terms, concepts, and experiments fall into new relationships one with the other”\textsuperscript{132}. Accordingly, “the inevitable result is what we must call, though the term is not quite right, a misunderstanding” between the Schools\textsuperscript{133}. According to Kuhn, the “most fundamental aspect of incommensurability” is that the proponents of competing paradigms practice their trades in different worlds\textsuperscript{134}. Kuhn recognized that this happens in a sense that he is “unable to explicate further”\textsuperscript{135}. In my opinion, theology might be the best suited approach with which to explain such a paradoxical situation.

\textsuperscript{132} Kuhn 2012: 148.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{134} Kuhn 2012: 149. Communication between the School was nonetheless possible, hence the conversions, the apostasies etc (Kuhn 2012: 197, 198). The concept came under criticism, been deemed as “irrational”, “a matter for mob psychology” (Lakatos 1970: 178).

\textsuperscript{135} Kuhn 2012: 149.
1. Part. I: Under the heathen sky

1.1 Introduction

Quoting the new media theorist Sven Schmalfuß, the main question under which the first part falls is: “do cyborgs dream of ancient Greece?”\(^{136}\)

One of the Christian thinkers’ main tasks was to challenge the Hellenistic philosophical Schools of Antiquity on issues they perceived as incompatible with the dogmatic scaffolding of Christianity. Some of these Hellenistic Schools are well known to the general public: Aristotle’s, Plato’s, Epicurus’, or the Stoics. Although it might seem an unnecessary stretch, critically addressing some of the key features of these Schools in a text about Posthumanism is essential, and for a number of reasons. Let me offer two.

The first is that leading Posthumanist thinkers themselves root the Movement and its aspirations in the views shared by both some Hellenistic philosophers (e.g. Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus), and with what the Posthumanists seem to consider as engineers, designers and scientists (e.g. Archimedes, Ptolemy, Archytas of Tarentum). It seems, one motivation behind such a tendency is creating a powerful sense of continuity and naturalization of a certain set of ideas.

By continuity I mean to express the fact that, according to the Posthumanist thinkers, elements central to the narrative (technological progress, one’s desire to surpass one’s own physical and cognitive limits etc.) can be identified at various stages during the progressive development of the philosophical and scientific canon (Western, or not). Starting more or less with Thales of Miletus (7\(^{th}\) century BC), science became the

\(^{136}\) Schmalfuß 2010: 217.
foundation and the main enabler of progress. This progressive path is usually introduced as one that moves away from metaphysically informed worldviews and towards science-based ones. Accordingly, starting from deep Antiquity, our tools became more and more sophisticated, powerful, efficient and intelligent. Similarly, once cleaned of its metaphysical elements, our understanding of the world became more objective and accurate.

In reference to the *naturalization* issue, the Posthumanist ideas and ideals tend to be introduced as natural tendencies, i.e. as defining us as species: surpassing its own limits has been a main characteristic of being a human.

The second reason for introducing, however briefly, the Hellenistic takes on various issues is that it will help us understand against what kind of views the Christian School stands. Without such clarifications, some claims or positions that exclusively characterize the Christian worldview will escape us. An immediate result of this is that instead of being approached as products of the Christian School itself, they are understood as either views that go against it, or as real alternatives to the status quo. As it happens, one of these alternatives is a call for a return to Hellenistic philosophical views.

Today, Plato is believed to be able to speak to environmentalists and ecologists who want to protect and save the planet; to those who want to ‘think globally, act locally’ – a bumper sticker Plato would apparently love. On the other hand, Plato’s brilliant student, Aristotle, is introduced as the godfather of the Internet, entrepreneurial startups, and e-commerce.137 A techno-guru like Jaron Lanier (a pioneer in the field of Virtual Reality) starts his book *Who Owns the Future?* (2013) by recognizing an “Ancient Anticipation of the Singularity”, and showing that Aristotle addressed directly “the role of the people in a hypothetical high-tech world”.138 The Posthumanist movement enthusiast John Messerly entitles his review on Lanier’s book nothing more than *Aristotle, Robots, and a New Economic System* (2014). According to Lanier, Aristotle foresaw the technological endgame of today and the situation the 19th century factory workers, known as luddites, would face: their replacement by the machines.139 But Lanier is far from being the only techno-guru, (skeptical) Posthumanist enthusiast turned alarmist, with a thing for Aristotle and all things Greek. Ray Kurzweil treads the same boards too, in most of his bestselling titles: *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* (1999), *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (2005), and *Transcend: Nine

137 Herman 2013.

138 Lanier 2013: 22. But not before bashing the Posthumanist movement, noting that a “self-proclaimed materialist movement that attempts to base itself on science starts to look like a religion rather quickly” (Lanier 2013: 18). The religion is, of course, the Christian one, with its eschatology and revelations (ibid.).

139 Lanier 2013.
Steps to Living Well Forever (2009). Aristotle inhabits Cary Wolfe’s What is Posthumanism? (2010), while other Greek thinkers such as Heraclitus join the party in Robert Peppercell’s The Posthuman Condition (2003). Igor Alexander, one of the leading experts in the field of Artificial Intelligence [AI henceforth] and neural networks, in his books How to build a mind: Toward machines with imagination (2001) dedicates an entire chapter to Ancient Greece’s Miletus: the place “Where the Dreaming Begins”\(^\text{140}\). Another chapter is kindly offered to “The Ghost of Aristotle”.\(^\text{141}\) The Feminist theorist and philosopher Donna Haraway, in her seminal essay A Cyborg Manifesto (1985), does not escape from Aristotle’s ghost or the mythological Hellenistic creatures (Centaurs and Amazons) either. The gang gets a mention in Fuller and Lipińska’s book on Transhumanism\(^\text{142}\). Although the list can go on and on, let us stop here for a moment and review some of the elements that define the history of science – one of the key elements of the Posthumanist movement – as it is told to us by both popular and academic voices.

Science, and its larger social adjacent expression, Modernity\(^\text{143}\), is said to have its origins in Mediterranean Antiquity when the Hellenistic philosophers first broke away from the then dominant superstitious worldviews and sought to elucidate natural phenomena thorough reason and materialist explanations. In this version of events, the honor of having founded science or natural philosophy is usually conferred upon Thales of Miletus\(^\text{144}\), although the leading Posthumanist Ray Kurzweil considers that the very

“basis for Western rationalistic philosophy is formed by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle”\(^\text{145}\).

Eudemus of Rhodes\(^\text{146}\), one of Aristotle’s students, authored several texts such as History of Geometry and History of Astrology – of which only very few fragments survived. Regardless of this, the historian of science Leonid Zhmud seems very determined to believe that in Eudemus’s writings no superstitious or metaphysical legends can be found. His texts show no

\(^{140}\) Aleksander 2001: 15 et pass.
\(^{141}\) Aleksander 2001: 43 et pass.
\(^{142}\) Fuller and Lipińska 2014.
\(^{143}\) Kramer 1997.
\(^{144}\) c. 624 - c. 546 BC. Erickson 2010; Yamauchi 1989. According to the English philosopher, logician, mathematician, and Nobel Prize winner Bertrand Russell (1872 - 1970), not just science, but the entire Western “philosophy begins with Thales.” Tales speculations, including here Anaximander’s (c. 610 - c. 546 BC) and Anaximenes of Miletus’ (c. 585 - c. 528 BC) ones, “are to be regarded as scientific hypotheses”, because they rarely show any “intrusion of anthropomorphic desires and moral ideas” (Russell 1947: 21, 47).
\(^{145}\) Kurzweil 1999: 262.
\(^{146}\) C. 370 - c. 300 BC.
“particular interest in ... philosophy and theology [...] or any inclination to the number mysticism characteristic of the Platonists\textsuperscript{147} [...] They are concerned exclusively with scientific discoveries.”\textsuperscript{148}

According to the bestselling historian Arthur Herman, another Aristotelian scholar, Strato of Lampsacus\textsuperscript{149}, known to us only from few fragmentary reports preserved by later writers, made some decisions crucial to the future of Western thought. One of these decisions was to insist that scientific research had to be free from any restraint by theology (he himself seems to have been a \textit{materialist} and a \textit{atheist}), philosophy, or metaphysics, including ethics. Instead, he devoted himself entirely to the investigation of nature. It is under him that the Peripatetic School took its first steps toward the idea of pure, unconstrained science\textsuperscript{150}. As we can see, theology was quite a toxic presence for these rational and atheistic thinkers, and as a result they tried so distance themselves from it as much as they could.

However, all this scientific fervor suffered a significant setback when Christianity got in the way, going into a significant decline during the period we call Middle Ages\textsuperscript{151}. A superstitious understanding of the Universe, deeply informed by religious and theological phantasmagorias, replaced the rationalistic and materialistic models that were developed by the aforementioned Hellenistic authors, driving the world back into irrationality and delusions. The leading intellectuals of the period (most of them monks / bishops) directed their mental energies toward contemplative practices, allowing little time, if any, for the systematic study of nature. During these traumatic times, to question was tantamount to blasphemy. According to Lanier, the Middle Ages were a period of terror, characterized by

\textsuperscript{147} Kurzweil would gladly disagree. According to him, the platonic Academy was founded by Plato “for the pursuit of science,” and it provided “a fertile environment for the development of mathematical theory” (Kurzweil 1999: 262).

\textsuperscript{148} Zhmud 2006: 16.

\textsuperscript{149} C. 335 - c. 269.

\textsuperscript{150} Herman 2013.

\textsuperscript{151} The historian of science Robert Krebs understands it as describing a period “of stagnation in science, creative thinking, and civilization in general” that interposed itself between Antiquity and the Renaissance. As such, “more knowledge was gained and progress was made in [science] during the thousand years from 500 BCE [thus around Thales’ period] to about 500 CE than in all of the Dark Ages of the Medieval Period (from 500 CE to about 1200 or 1300 CE).” During the Dark Ages western Europe experienced a “theological dictatorship that obstructed all types of learning except within the Church” (Krebs 2004: xxi, 34, 55). According to the historian of neuroscience Stanley Finger, during the Dark Ages little was added to knowledge: this “was a time when classical doctrines were not challenged” and when teaching was based on the religious theories of the Church Fathers rather than on hard clinical facts (Finger 2001: 372). See Kurzweil 1999: 318.
“weak states, and bad popes. Access to afterlife, and indeed to papacy, was bought and sold, and all manner of hypocritical and criminal scheming overwhelmed any charitable or spiritual mission.”\textsuperscript{152}

In his own timeline of scientific development, which begins with the very birth of the Universe, Kurzweil skips the Middle Ages altogether, long-jumping elegantly from 725 to 1494.\textsuperscript{153} In her piece on the Posthuman Multiverse, Francesca Ferrando never mentions anything related to Christianity or the Middle Ages. Yet, Heraclitus, Zeno of Citium\textsuperscript{154}, the founder of the Stoic philosophical School, and the entire Pythagorean tradition features in the story\textsuperscript{155}. The next step after the Antiquity for Ferrando? Nietzsche, Quantum Physics and String Theory. In the MacKenzie and Giavedoni’s \textit{Yet Another Post-Human Manifesto} (2014), Heraclitus appears as a “post-humanist from history” \textsuperscript{156}, with Nietzsche being the next in line. The Middle Ages or Christianity? No. How can that be, when at the very beginning of their Manifesto the authors are quick in mentioning, “we’re rationalists”?\textsuperscript{157} For Pepperell, the pre-Christian, pagan society was one of

“great sophistication and technical prowess, with theories on astronomy and medicine that proved superior in explanatory power to those offered by subsequent Christian dogma. Greco-Roman ideas were gradually taken up with enthusiasm during the Italian Renaissance, and greatly influenced the neoclassical culture that arose in parallel with mechanisation in the eighteenth century. By this time an enlightened faith in progress, meaning human progress, was challenging the blind faith in God.”\textsuperscript{158}

In harsh contradiction to the evident superiority of pre-Christian Antiquity, much

“of the recorded intellectual debate in medieval times was concerned with theology and interpretation of scriptures.”\textsuperscript{159}

In these kinds of narratives, starting with the Renaissance, the West emerged from the trauma of the Middle Ages, and with the rational and materialistic ideals of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[152] Lanier 2013: 190.  
\item[153] Kurzweil 1999.  
\item[154] c. 334 - c. 262 BC  
\item[155] Ferrando 2013.  
\item[156] MacKenzie and Giavedoni 2014.  
\item[157] Ibid.  
\item[158] Pepperell 2003: 159. My emph. “Pagan” is used in quotation marks in the orig.  
\item[159] Pepperell 2003: 156.  
\end{footnotes}
Hellenistic tradition, scientists managed again to break free from the theological constraints. As Stephen Greenblatt put it,

“[i]n one moment, 1417, the Western world gets back a robust theory that the universe consists of atoms and emptiness and nothing else - no intelligent design, no divinity pulling the strings [...] – effectively the whole tool kit of modernity.”  

But it was not until the late 17th century that the discoveries of Galileo, Newton, and Descartes finally restored the Western world’s ability to think for itself161 – although the scientific discoveries of these scientific figures were different (in the same way that a mature person is different from a child) from everything that was before. However, these men were regarded as investigating nature with the same spirit that had motivated the endeavors of their Greek ancestors. They laid a new foundation of the sciences and on these foundations rest remarkable accomplishments of the subsequent generations of researchers such as Darwin, Einstein, Watson and Crick, Hawking and many others.

As we remember, the initial question was ‘do cyborgs dream of ancient Greece?’ Following the above, the apparent answer cannot be other than: a lot! Nonetheless, regardless of the amazing and probably unexpected presence of the Hellenistic philosophers within the Poshumanist literature, I would still like to play devil’s advocate here and say: maybe things are not what they seem to be. In the following I am going to present a different picture of ancient Greek philosophy, one that will resonate differently with the above arguments. Although the following presentations are tentative, leaving much to be desired, by relying almost exclusively on first hand sources (many of my own translation), I hope to be able to provide some perspectives that challenge most of the existing literature and scholarship on the issues at hand.

160 As quoted in Williams 2008.
161 Ball 2002.
1.2 ‘Allotted by the Great Chain’: the concepts of the Great Chain of Being and Fate

According to the celebrated ‘father of Science’, Thales of Miletus\textsuperscript{162} and others, all things are animated: the animals, the plants, the metals, and even the stones. The element responsible for this animation was called pneuma (πνεῦμα). Following Aristotle and the Stoic theories, pneuma had the following characteristics: it is

- eternal,
- indestructible,
- omnipresent,
- rational,
- divine in-itself.

According to the Stoics, pneuma pervades the whole Cosmos, being called by other names too, e.g. aether or air. Because of this, the Cosmos, the stars, and the Earth were considered to be divine\textsuperscript{163}. The existence of pneuma was recognized by Epicurus too. As he shows in his Letter to Herodatus,

“keeping in view our sense perceptions and affections – for so shall we have the firmest grounds for proof\textsuperscript{164} – we must recognize that the soul [is] related in its nature to pneuma.”\textsuperscript{165}

According to the same thinker, the pneuma was present in other spheres as well:

“[t]he sun and moon [...] they at once began to take form and grow (and so too did earth and sea) by the accretions and whirling motions of certain fine particles – which are of the nature either of pneuma or fire, or of both. This is what sense perception itself suggests.”\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{162} Durant 1939.
\textsuperscript{163} Jedan 2009: 14; Plutarch 1870.
\textsuperscript{164} Πίστις (πίστις): fate, but also proof.
\textsuperscript{165} Modified translation from Laertius 1925: 592, 593; Epicurus 2005: 16-17.
\textsuperscript{166} Modified translation from Laertius 1925: 618, 619; Epicurus 2005: 32.
This all-encompassing, all-infusing, divine and reasoning element helped in the creation of a complex edifice which came to be known as the Great Chain of Being: an intertwined, hierarchical structure built on the premise that there is an ontological identity between everything in the Cosmos, one that unites the highest, purest spheres of reality to the lowest ones. Aristotle describes it in his text *Parts of Animals:*

"Nature passes uninterrupted from things without psyche to animals."\(^{168}\)

As Plato noted in his text *Timaeus,* this uninterrupted continuity was fashioned in a hierarchical manner, everything in it having its due place, according to the nature of each. The Stoics had their own theories about the supra- and sublunar hierarchies, whereas Plutarch’s writings are pervaded by hierarchical thinking, both in politics and religion (e.g. in relation to the practice of the Sacrifices)\(^{169}\). As Maximus of Tyre put it, through this Chain of Being we

"witness a hierarchy / succession and order of principles [ἀρχῆς]\(^{170}\) descending from God to the earth."\(^{171}\)

Given that everything had its due place *by nature,* it was, as Seneca put it,

"natural for the lesser to submit to the better."\(^{172}\)

It is then quite easy to hold the Great Chain of Being as being responsible for creating a highly deterministic, rigidly hierarchical society in which the borders of *what is possible* were firmly planted\(^{173}\). Indeed, according to Chrysippus, everything that happens does so in accordance with *fate* (ἐξουσίας): as it is fated.

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\(^{167}\) Bos 2003. As the Emperor Marcus Aurelius wrote in his *Meditations,* “all that is in harmony with thee, O Universe, is in harmony with me” (modified translation from Marcus Aurelius 1916: 80, 81).


\(^{169}\) Nuffelen 2011.

\(^{170}\) This is a very difficult term to be translated in English, probably one of the reasons we are using it without translating it, such as in archaic, or archeology. See Benmakhlouf, Capeillères, Cassin, and Dönic 2014. For Plato, the *arché* (ἀρχη) was sacred in-itself. In the *Laws,* he writes: “the Beginning [ἀρχη] that sits enshrined as a Goddess among the humans is the Savior of all” (modified translation from Plato 1926: 470, 471).

\(^{171}\) As quoted in Nuffelen 2011: 127.

\(^{172}\) As quoted in Nuffelen 2011: 109-110.

\(^{173}\) Wilson 2008.
As Meyer shows, the canonical Stoic answer to the question *what is fate?* was that it is a *string* (εἰρήμος; Latin: *series*) of causes. As the Peripatetic philosopher Critolaus wrote,

“If fate is without beginning or end, stringing together unfailingly and seamlessly the [first] causes of each thing,”

For Cicero, as he noted in his text *On Fate*:

“One cause strung together with another, from eternity.”

In addition to this meaning (fate as a string), there was another one, equally important. The noun *heimarmene* (ἐιμαρμένη) comes from the verb *meíromai* (μεῖρομαι): to apportion, to allot. As the pneuma itself, fate was an all-encompassing force, touching everything, including the Gods. In striking contrast to the Hebraic and Christian Deity, the Hellenic Gods were not infinitely omnipotent. Whereas everything had its allotted place within the Great Chain, everything was simultaneously animated and rational. According to the Pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles of Agrigentum reason belonged not just to the humans, but virtually to all orders of things / beings: from animals to plants, from stones to stars. In his own words,

“everything possess *phronesis* ([φρόνησις]) and a specific measure of noetical intelligence.”

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175 As quoted Meyer 2009: 71.
176 ibid.
177 Meyer 2009: 72.
178 Aeschylus, in his tragedy *Prometheus Bound*, expresses this in very unequivocal terms:

“Chorus: Who then is the steersman of necessity? 
Prometheus: The three-formed Fates and the remembering Furies. 
Chorus: And is Zeus, then, weaker than these? 
Prometheus: Yes, for He too cannot escape what is fated.”

(as quoted in Chun 2010: 32).
179 c. 495 - 435 BC
180 Krell 2008. According to Aristotle, in a fragment preserved by the Arab historian and geographer Al-Masudi (c. 896 - 956), “the celestial spheres, the stars, the signs of the Zodiac and other constellations, are [...] fully reasonable beings” (as quoted in Maçoudi 1864: 26). My trans.
181 My trans. See Empedocles 1908.
There are two important terms in this phrase that are of interest to my subject: phronesis (φρόνησις) and aísa (αἶσα). Phronesis defines a purposeful, intentional type of knowledge or understanding and we shall return to it later on. Translated as fate, but also as proportion or measure, the Empedoclean aísa, as the Homeric moira (µοῖρα), add themselves to the long list of expressions defining regularity, harmony, measures and limits. The meaning of these terms goes beyond the issue of fate as a purely abstract concept. One of the most common usages includes the division of space, such as the land.

1.3 The sub- and the supra-lunary regions

In reference to the Stoics’ theories about the supra- and sublunary hierarchies, we should note that the Hellenistic cosmos was separable into ‘two’ main areas:

- the sense-perceptible, or the aesthetic sphere, i.e. the ‘sublunary’ region. This was the phenomenal world of appearances and matter. Here, everything was in a state of teleological becoming, thus ephemeral and ever fluctuating. It was also known as ‘pragma’ (πρᾶγμα), the place where the Gods dwelled in an ‘enmattered’ form.

- the intelligible, or the noetical sphere, i.e. the ‘supralunary’ region: the home of the Forms or the Ideas, the place of the Gods in their Form-al appearance.

What is important to note in here is the plural of the term Forms – a central issue within various Hellenistic philosophies. As Plato wrote in Republic,

“there is Beauty in-itself, and Good in-itself, and so concerning everything which we then classed as many, conversely we classed them in terms of a single Form of

http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=fro%2Fnhsin&la=greek&prior

Chun 2010.

As in Iliad (Chun 2010: 12).

Considered to be divine in-themselves (Vlastos 1991).

I am using this particular spelling in order to make it clear that I am referring here to are the Hellenistic Forms. As such, I am trying to keep the readers away from making associations with the English term ‘formal’.
each of them on the grounds of there being one real one in each case: ‘that which really is.”

According to the above model, it might be very tempting to see the contingent, ever-fluctuating matter as being ‘down’, whereas the eternal Forms would be ‘up’ – an arrangement suggested by the use of the terms ‘supralunar’ and ‘sublunar’ themselves. However, such an understanding would be very problematic – although this is exactly the way in which these two ‘locations’ are presented in most of the literature, i.e. dualistically, as separate, distinct entities. However, as we shall see, matter and Form were always to be considered as aspects only relative to each other, thus together. As Proclus showed in his text On the Hieratic art, the philosophers

“in heaven saw earthly things acting causally and heavenly, while on the earth they saw heavenly things (acting) in an earthly manner.”

In other words, the supra-existed within the sub- and vice versa, in exactly the same manner as the perfectly realized was already present within the becoming. In the same way we should read the following fragment from Empedocles:

“A twofold tale I shall tell: Love and Strife grow as one Form out from within the many [pragmatic contingencies]. At another point they germinate apart and are many again, out of belonging to the Form. Double is thus the becoming of the mortals, double is indeed their failing: for one is generated and destroyed by the coming together of all things, the other renews [into becoming] and flies apart as Love and Strife grow apart again. Love and Strife never cease from constantly alternating: at one point, all is coming together into One through Love, at another point each thing is carried apart by the hatred of Strife. In this way, Love and Strife have learned to be brought forth [into the pragma] as One through many, while they simultaneously become many when the One is becoming towards again. As such, Love and Strife come into being and have no stable life; but insofar as they never cease their continual substitution, thus far they exist eternally changeless according to the Cycle.”

What Empedocles is describing in this fragment is what could be called a changelessly changing structure, one in which dualism (understood in today’s sense) has no place. Love and Strife could not exist one without each other, they represent two sides of the same coin. The apparent dualism (Empedocles’ story is indeed twofold, as he himself

187 Modified translation from Plato 2013: 86, 87.
188 Bechler 1995.
189 Modified translation from Corrigan 2012: 32-33.
tells us) might be explained or solved by clarifying the angle we approach the issue from: either from pragma’s perspective (the sphere where Love and Strife ‘have no stable life’), or the Form-al’s one (the sphere where Love and Strife ‘exist eternally changeless’). And as the ‘two’ statements are not at all in contradiction to one another, they do not represent two claims either, but only one. In other words, Love and Strife were only separable, not factually separate. Additionally, the world as a whole would not have functioned without the ‘evil’ unfoldings of both Love and Conflict. As in Prolus’ On the Hieratic art..., the ‘two’ spheres were constantly and eternally alternating, making impossible to assign a certain territory to each (e.g. the heavens to the Forms). Moreover, the Forms are brought forth through the aid of the senses (as Plato and others will show), out from within the many pragmatic appearances.

Of course, Empedocles or Proclus were not the only ones sharing such views. As Plato wrote in the Symposium:

“If (Aphrodite) were one, then Eros would be one: but since there are two of Her, there must be two Eros too. How so, that she is double? There is the highest and older one, motherless, daughter of Heaven, whence we name her ‘Ourania’. Then, there is the younger, the daughter of Zeus and Dione, and we call Her ‘Pandemos’. It thus necessarily follows that there are two Eros: the one ought to be called Pandemos [...] and the other Heavenly.”

As Breitenberger shows in her book dedicated to Aphrodite and Eros, the distinction between the ‘two’ Aphrodites went way beyond the room of Plato’s banquet and thus the supposed tiny ‘elitist’ groups – of which contemporary Marxist scholars speak. Both embodiments of the Goddess had complex political and cultic / Sacrificial incarnations spread all over the Hellenistic world, with the cult of Aphrodite Ourania (i.e. Her Form-al side) being “by far her most widespread” one.

Other Schools’ Masters shared similar views. Cicero wrote about Epicurus:

“the Being / essence and the nature of the Gods are such that, in the primary sense, are separable / able to be distinguished [cernantur] not by the senses but by the

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194 Breitenberger 2007: 11.
195 From cerno, from which certus, thus certain is derived.
mind, and not materially [soliditate] or individually [ad numerum], like the solid objects – which Epicurus in virtue of their substantiality entitles steremnia (στερέννια) – but by our perceiving images owing to their similarity and succession, because an endless train of precisely similar images arises from the innumerable atoms and streams towards the Gods, our mind [...] fixes its gaze on these images, and so attains an understanding of the nature (essence) of a Form both blessed and eternal."

The relationship between the intelligible Forms and the sensible matter and the impossibility to completely abandon the matter (and hence the use of the senses) in favor of the Forms’ contemplation is expressed quite clearly in Plato’s oft-mentioned Allegory of the Cave. Here, Socrates insists that the enlightened ones, those who made it ‘out’ or ‘up’, into the noetical sphere, must always return to the material, sensual cave:

“therefore you must descend (back into the cave) [...] and accustom yourselves of gazing in the dark. For once accustomed, you will see infinitely better than the dwellers in there, and you will know what each of the idols are and of what (they are), because you have seen, unconcealedly, (the Forms of) the Beautiful [καλῶν], the Just [δικαίων] and the Good [ἀγαθῶν]. And so the city will be governed by us and by you in a state of waking and not [...] by those who fight one another over shadows.”

There is no excuse for the philosophers to be allowed to remain on the Islands of the Blessed; in other words, to completely abandon the phenomenal sphere.

Before going further, let us briefly focus on two terms used by Plato in his parable: anablepó (ἀναβλέπω) and idein (ἰδεῖν).

In his Allegory, Plato says of those able to free themselves (through acts of contemplation) from the illusions of the sub-lunary sphere, that they were suddenly able to stand or raise up and ‘lift up’ their eyes to the light, or ‘look up toward the light’. As such, the very common translation of Plato’s term anablepó as “looking up” implies a strong sense of externality, i.e. the Forms are up and outside (outside the cave). However, the primary sense of anablepó did not define an exterior, an outside, but a recuperative inside, i.e. to recover his / her own whatever, something that belongs to one by nature.

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196 A translation of the Greek kat’ arithmon (κατ’ ἀριθμὸν): according to the proportion (see Rist 1972: 172).
197 Modified translation from Cicero 1933: 50, 51.
198 Dikaios (δίκαιος) might be also translated as observant of custom, an well-ordered, well-balanced observant. Thus well-measured. Dikaios has jus as its Latin equivalent. In the Attic law, adikein (αδικεῖν) (to do injustice), i.e. to create imbalance, was the term used to express any breach of law (Artinopoulou and Gavrielides 2014).
199 Modified translation from Plato 1942: 142, 143.
Additionally, ἀνά-, when used as a prefix, denotes *back*, which means that a more correct translation of anablepó in this context would be ‘to look back within’. Therefore, everything that deals with directionality within a Hellenistic context has to be read backwards: whereas the act of *descending* was actually an ascent (from the Form-*al within to the material outside*), the act of *ascent* was actually a descent. In other words, the platonic prisoner *ascended inwardly, and descended outwardly*.

The second concept I want to address is related to vision. Following Heidegger, the noun *idea* (ἰδέα) (from *idein*, to see) = what is seen, what is perceived through seeing. What does ‘seeing’ mean here? It means perceiving the Form with the help of the senses, in this case sight. For example, we see a book. However, if we restrict ourselves at what we perceive with the senses *only*, then we reach the conclusion that what we see are some colors and a shape arranged in a specific way. If we stop at this level and say that those contingencies themselves represent something True, i.e. something that will never change, then we are no different from the chained prisoners that mistook the shadows for reality. But if we go further and recognize that despite what we see there is something else, something that in some way precedes the illusory contingencies, that is, it has been there before our gaze (or ‘intentional seeing’, as I will define it later) reached it, then we are referring to an element that is *not* perceivable through the sensory perception (yet reachable *only* through the sensory perception). This element becomes definitive for *idein* and *idea*: what is only contingently given offers me insight (in-sight) of a True presence. The Hellenistic philosophers called this presentness, this in-itselfness of a thing, *ousia* (οὐσία), i.e. Presence-as-essence. For them, this presentness was equivalent to *Being*.

In this context of seeing, the Idea is nothing other than Being qua Being, where Being offers itself both *as* — where *as* is what a thing looks like (blue, thick) — and, simultaneously, as Form, essence.201 Indeed, the Form was *always within* those appearances. When Plato describes, in his Cave story, those realizing that there is something more than those shadows, he uses the word *exaiphnés* (ἐξαίφνης), suggesting that the actual experience of Truth was a very unexpected one, a completely unannounced event, one that cannot be prepared in advance.202 Today, we call such an experience a ‘eureka moment’. Going back to those who experienced the Forms, i.e. the Truth of things, refusing to translate their *seeing* into *praxis*203 would certainly bring about failure, as they

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202 The same term was used in describing the experience Paul had on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:3), which lead to his conversion.
203 Plato 2013: 122, 123.
would be incapable to preside, as leaders, over others. In some way, those that remained chained to the pragmatic realities, incapable of diving within themselves, seems to have been regarded more positively than the ones that did see the Truth, but did not want to 'return' to the material / sensible cavern anymore.

No matter how despicable the initial setting (e.g. a cave), the mystical (or philosophical) experience always begins, for Plato and Aristotle, with wonder (θαυμά). Plato introduces wonder as the foundational philosophical emotion in his dialogue Theaetetus, and also in The Republic. Without acknowledging Plato’s use of concepts such as wonder (θαυμά) or wonder-working (θαυματοποιίς) in his Allegory, an important part of the story will escape us (i.e. the aesthetical, sensitive part) being thus left only with the ideal one – as it usually happens. The problem is that at first sight, which is usually the encounter with the translated text, there is nothing in the Allegory that might hint at the clear link between the awfully chained prisoners and the wonders of philosophy. In describing the dreadful situation within the cave, Plato tells that between

“the fire and the prisoners and above them a road along which a low wall has been built, as the exhibitors of puppet-shows [θαυματοποιίς] have partitions before the human beings themselves, above which they show the puppets [θαύματα].”

I left Shorey’s translation unmodified in order to exemplify my above point. He is far from being the only one to render thauma (θαύμα) as puppet. As it appears, many other scholars follow the same path. However, such a translation choice (while correct!) tends to obscure one of the most important points of the story – one made by authors as late as Hannah Arendt.

While it is true that thauma means puppetshow or toy theatre, its primary sense is wonder or marvel. As the prisoners are sitting there, continuously experiencing the affections of the wonders / play on them, some are realizing, suddenly, that this is not the entire story. The Cave served indeed as a launching pad towards ‘higher’ spheres: those within. It was because of the Cave that experiencing and knowing Being became possible. In his dialogue Theaetetus, Plato explains that,

204 Indeed, as Aristotle will note in his Metaphysics, if a doctor knows the Form, but fails to acknowledge its accident, he will often fail in his treatment; for it is the particular that needs help (Aristotle 1933: 4, 5).
205 Plato 1942: 120, 121.
206 “marionette players” and “puppets” (Plato 1908: 514); “puppet-shows” and “puppets” (Plato 1942: 120, 121); “puppet-handlers”, and “puppets” (Plato 1991: 193).
207 Arendt’s version: “for wonder is what the philosopher endures most; for there is no other beginning of philosophy than this” (as quoted in Arendt 2005: 32; Arendt 2013: 302).
208 http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dqau%3Dma
“this affection of wonder [θαυμάζειν] shows that you are a philosopher, since wonder is the beginning / the foundation [ἀρχὴ] of philosophy.”

Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, seems to agree with his teacher:

“It is through wonder [θαυμάζειν] that the human beings begin [...] to philosophize.”

The materiality of the aesthetic experience becomes the very foundation of philosophy. Unfortunately, in Aristotle’s case the link gets obscured, again, at the level of translation. As he explains, wondering about

“the affections of the moon and of the sun and of the stars and about the becoming in general”

leads the philosophers into a perplexed state. In order to illustrate this particularly strong experience, Aristotle uses the word *diaporeó* (διαπορέω), which defines a state of one being not only greatly perplexed, but also of one witnessing the impossible.

1.4 Notes on matter, materiality and sense-perception in the Hellenistic philosophy

As I mentioned, a popular opinion between the historians of science / Posthumanist scholars is that the Hellenistic philosophers were among the first of those trying to explain natural phenomena through reason and materialist explanations – very much as we do today. However, while it is true that these thinkers debated extensively on the issue of matter and materiality, their understanding of these issues appears to have been quite different from ours. Let us briefly see how.

209 Modified translation from *Plato* 1921: 54, 55. Importantly, the word *beginning* is not to be understood in terms of progressive development. The term *endures* is also important in that it shows that the ‘original’ experience of wonder or beauty was not necessarily a pleasant one, but implied violence and possession.

210 Modified translation from Aristotle 1933: 12, 13.

211 Ibid.

I have already offered a few remarks on the centrality of matter and sense-perception or aesthetic experience in relation to wonder and philosophical apprenticeship. As I also pointed out, the Cosmos, or reality as a whole, was ‘split’ in ‘two’: the sense-perceptible, or aesthetic part and the intelligible part. In the following I want to focus on these issues more in detail.

In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle defines matter as follows:

"By mater (ὕλη) I mean that which in-itself is neither something determinate, nor a quantity, nor determined by anything that define Being [τὸ ὄν]."

For Plotinus, matter in-itself

"is not soul [ψυχὴ], or intellect, or life [ζωὴ] or Form [εἴδος] or logos or limit [περίτερος] – for it is unlimitedness [...] it could not properly receive the title of Being [ὑπὸ ὄντος] but would appropriately be called non-Being [μὴ ὄν] [...] It is an idol [εἴδωλον] and phantasm [φάντασμα] [...], (having) a tendency [a craving] towards substantial existence [the Form]; it is static without being stable."

Matter is also eternal, and it is impossible to destroy (or create) it. As we can see, some of the characteristics of matter are shared in common with the aforementioned pneuma: eternal, indestructible, omnipresent.

There are two important elements in these discussions: one was hylemorphism, the other was the issue of ‘evilness’ of matter (τὸ κακὸν).

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213 Hulé also stands for something that burns, fuel. As Heidegger shows, hulé always needs to be opened up by way of eidos, thus ousia (Heidegger 2009: 153). Aristotle establishes a powerful link between essence [οὐσία] and matter [ὕλη]; ousia is hulé [the enmatttered Form] and potentiality, not actuality (Aristotle 1933: 462, 463). At the same time, ousia is the Forms [εἴδη] too – thus actuality.


215 Plotinus introduces the psyche [ψυχὴ] as a Form (Plotinus 1969: 96).

216 Aristotle defines the limit as “a thing which contains” (Aristotle 1922: 284a, Aristotle 1939: 132). Which is interesting when thinking that the Form was within – the interior contained the exterior, so to speak: the limited contained the unlimited.


1.4.1 Hylomorphism: matter, techne, and the ‘why’ question

As Aristotle puts it in his *Metaphysics*, matter

“is never to be addressed in-itself.”

This applies, of course, to the ‘split’ model of the Cosmos: neither side should ever be addressed in-itself.\(^2\) Now, Aristotle came to be known for his theory of ‘hylomorphism’, a composed term from *matter* (ὕλη) + *Form* (μορφή). In the same manuscript, he notes that whenever we gaze at something that offers itself as (a house, a human being, or a book),

“the essence (of that thing) is present […] Therefore what we seek is the cause, (the Form), by reason of which matter is a definite thing; and this is the essence [οὐσία] of a thing.”

As he continues,

“although some things (i.e. what exists in the pragma as becoming [τῶν πραγμάτων]) are not Forms / essences [οὐκ οὐσίαι]\(^1\), all Forms are in accordance with and by nature. As such, the Form / essence [οὐσία] […] is not an element [something contingent, or constructed], but a principle [ἀρχή].”

Indeed, the Form is what Aristotle will famously name a ‘primary cause’ [ἀρχής αἰτίων]. A Formal cause is the primary cause and knowledge of this cause amounts to knowledge of the ‘why’ of something. As such, in order to have certain knowledge about anything, “we must obtain knowledge of the primary causes”.\(^3\) It is thus crucial to realize that it is only in virtue of the existence of these primary causes that the question ‘why’ can be asked:

\(^1\) Aristotle 1933: 354. My emph.

\(^2\) For the Hellenistic thinkers, the ‘split’ is both foundational and apparent.

\(^3\) Modified translation from Aristotle 1933: 398, 399.
“the “reason why” of a thing ultimately leads up to its essence [λόγος], and the ultimate “reason why” is a cause and a principle.”\footnote{225 Modified translation from Aristotle 1933: 17.}

Accordingly, ontology goes hand in hand with epistemology.

This model had a powerful impact on what we might call today the arts and crafts and how are they different from nature when it comes to producing things. Unlike natural structures (a tree, a lightning), an artificial structure cannot be found in nature as such. Additionally, things made do not generate, by themselves, similar things, as natural things do, e.g. an oak make acorns, acorns generate oaks, oaks make acorns. As Aristotle wrote in the \textit{Physics},

“human beings begot human beings, but beds do not grow beds. Because of this, the natural Form of a bed is not in its shape, but in the wood - and that is so because wood and not beds would come up if the bed would somehow germinate.”\footnote{226 Modified translation from Aristotle 1957: 114, 115.}

The concept of \textit{techne} (τέχνη), as the Classical scholar Sean Gurd shows, was stabilized by Aristotle and then became mainstream in Hellenistic philosophical and technical literature. For a contemporary reader, techne is maybe the most recognizable in the word \textit{technology}. However, as Heidegger argued in his text \textit{The Origin of the Work of Art}, techne meant, in its original context, neither \textit{craft}, nor \textit{art}:

“for τέχνη means neither craft nor art, and absolutely not the technical in the modern sense [...]. Rather, τέχνη designates a way of knowing.”

As he develops further, techne

“is a bringing forth of beings in that it brings forth what is [already] present [...] out of concealment, specifically into the unconcealment of their appearance. τέχνη never designates the activity of making.”\footnote{227 Heidegger 2002: 35.}

Going back to Aristotle, as he noted in the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, techne is

“the same thing as the habit [ἕξις] to produce, while being always in the presence of a True account.”\footnote{228 Modified translation from Aristotle 1926: 334, 335.}
The difference between sensible experience and art is that the former deals only with accidents, while the latter is concerned with universals\textsuperscript{229}. The role of the artisan was thus very similar to the role of the philosopher. As Aristotle says, the artisans (τεχνίται) are considered wiser than those relying only on experience not because they are able to make things, as Heidegger noted, but because they know the final causes of things:

\textit{“those who know only by experience know only the happening, but not its ‘why’; but the artists know the ‘why’ because they know the [final] cause.”}\textsuperscript{230}

In the technical genesis, the Form was within the artisan’s soul\textsuperscript{231}. As Aristotle noted, in nature, the seed contained the Form of the naturally generated thing in the same way that the soul of the artisan contained the Form of the artificially generated one\textsuperscript{232}. The process of reaching this Form within the soul was called ‘intellection’ (νόησις) and it was only after this noetical process took place that actual production began\textsuperscript{233}. The \textit{Metaphysics} makes it clear that the contemplative process of intellecction was far more important than production itself. As Aristotle claimed, an art represents the enmatterment of the Form the intellect contemplates within\textsuperscript{234}. Given all this, no wonder then that neither Plato, nor Aristotle felt drawn to join the two words logos and techne into technology. What can be grasped or known by techne through the process of ‘intellection’ was the Form, or the Final causes\textsuperscript{235} – something that none of those seeing the roots of technology in Antiquity will ever recognize.

Before concluding this section, two more issues need developing.

The first is that although Aristotle is explicitly stating that matter should never be approached in itself, but always together with the Form-al causes (and vice versa), some scholars introduce the hylemorphic model as an example of a dualistic worldview\textsuperscript{236}. The second point has to do with the sacred. As the sociologist Friedrich Lange noted, given that the divine Forms permeated everything, the hylemorphic model was regarded as being both pantheistic and polytheistic\textsuperscript{237}.

\textsuperscript{229} Aristotle 1933: 4, 5.
\textsuperscript{230} Modified translation from Aristotle 1933: 6, 7.
\textsuperscript{231} Aristotle 1933: 338, 339. As in nature the Form of an accident is within that accident and thus, from a pragmatic perspective, exists potentially (i.e. the acorn is potentially an oak), so the Form was in the soul of the artisan.
\textsuperscript{232} Aristotle 1933: 350, 351.
\textsuperscript{233} Aristotle 1933: 340, 341.
\textsuperscript{234} Aristotle 1933: 350, 351; Gurd 2012: 18, 19.
\textsuperscript{235} Mitcham and Schatzberg 2009: 34.
\textsuperscript{236} Oderberg 2005.
\textsuperscript{237} Lange 1877.
1.4.2 Sensing the History: materiality and fate within the Hellenistic historical narrative

When Posthumanist researchers and popularizers are tracing the roots of the Movement back to the Hellenistic period, they are creating a historical narrative that follows a linear, progressive path. By doing this, they naturalize the Movement's discourse, trying to show that – as in the case of science – the Ancient Greeks’ interests in inquiring about the nature of the world was very similar to our own. In this section I address the issue of the Hellenistic historical narrative. How did it relate to matter, memory and the separable Formal sphere?

As it appears, throughout the Hellenistic period 'historical' explorations seem to have been investigations of particulars always in relation to the Forms. The term 'history' was used in a variety of contexts. Aristotle used it in his History of Animals, as Pliny did in his Natural History. Marcus Aurelius would define history as “inquiring for the Truth”\(^{239}\). The Presocratic philosophers were confident that they could uncover the essences of things, the Form-al order of the Cosmos through investigation, i.e. historia (ἱστορία)\(^{240}\). In medicine, Hippocrates used historia with the sense of proof\(^{241}\), a fact which shows that the final results of those investigations ought to represent certain knowledge. Hence Cicero’s statement, similar to that of Marcus Aurelius, that the first rule of history was the pursuit of Truth\(^{242}\).

The relationship between the aesthetic sensible and the noetic intelligible is evident in the very name of the discipline. Etymologically, historia goes back to idein: to see, to perceive, and oida (οἶδα): to know, to remember and to discern. The obligatory intertwining of (aesthetically) seeing and (noetically) knowing is thus laid down: to sense is to know the Truth (ἀλήθεια). The histor (ἱστορ) knows and remembers because he / she has seen, sensed. Odysseus, in Homer’s Odyssey, addressed the histor Demoducus by saying that,

"Demodocus, truly above all mortal men do I praise you, whether it was the Muse, daughter of Zeus, that taught you, or Apollo; for greatly do you sing of the fate of

\(^{238}\) West 2007: 201.

\(^{239}\) Marcus Aurelius 1916: 80, 81.

\(^{240}\) Galsworthy 2010: 17.

\(^{241}\) Hartog and Werner 2014: 441.

\(^{242}\) West 2007: 201.
the Achaean
s, all that they did and suffered, as if you were there
yourself."  

After this praise, Odysseus asks the bard to sing the story of the sacking of Troy – which
was, from our understanding, a chronologically past event at the moment of the request.
And so, as Hartog and Werner put it, Demodocus is indeed “the first historian and his
narrative, the birth of history”\(^\text{244}\). This might be true, yet not quite. For two main reasons:

- Demodocus was blind, as Homer himself was,
- he was not even there, at Troy, when everything happened.

Demodocus’ ‘lack’ of vision\(^\text{245}\) becomes the benchmark of divine vision, which means
that the histor is not to be understood as an equivalent for today’s eyewitness. For someone
like Homer or Herodotus, for whom the mechanisms of knowledge worked completely
differently than ours, the witness (although still in his / her becoming) was a seer\(^\text{246}\), one
inspired by the Muses, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (the Goddess of memory), and
an enthusiast, basing his or her knowledge on their omniscience: they were always there
and they see everything\(^\text{247}\).

This is, very roughly put, the configuration that history occupied, one which
Herodotus would call \textit{historie} (\textit{ἱστορίη}), making the keyword the name for both his work
[\textit{Ἱστορίαι}] and method [\textit{ἱστορία}]:

\textit{"What Herodotus the Halicarnassian inquired into (ἱστορίης) is demonstrated
here."}\(^\text{248}\)

Given this, it should come of no surprise that, according to Lucian, Herodotus' work was
recited as poetry during the Olympic Games\(^\text{249}\). Herodotus himself recited his entire
\textit{Histories}, in the temple in a single sitting.

\(^{243}\) Modified translation from Homer 1945: 292-293. My emph.
\(^{244}\) Hartog and Werner 2014: 440.
\(^{245}\) ‘Lack’ because for the ancient authors, vision was not exclusively a function of the eye.
\(^{246}\) Not in the sense that he / she was able to see into a future that was about to happen at the end of
a timeline, but because was able to see the end of the teleological becoming - an end that was
already there.
\(^{247}\) “You are Goddesses, you are present, you know everything” (Homer 1924: 86, 87). Accordingly,
no matter how far back an event had occurred, by using his or her senses an historian was always
able to tell the Truth. It is in this way, I believe, that Epicurus’ statement from Laerlius 1925: 618, 619
has to be understood: we are able to offer certain knowledge about the phenomenal becoming of the
Sun, the Moon or the Earth because we can fully sense the enmattered Form.
\(^{248}\) Modified translation from Herodotus 1920: 2-3. Note the link between \textit{inquiry} and \textit{proof} (\textit{ἀπόδειξις}).
\(^{249}\) Lucian 1959: 144-145.

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Before moving on, let me focus once more on the relationship between matter and sense perception. As I noted, the Hellenistic historian knew with certainty because he / she has sensed. What do I mean by that?

According to Plato, as he noted in his text *Theaetetus*,

“knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) is nothing else than sense perception (αἴσθησις). [Indeed.] perception is knowledge.”

According to Aristotle, as he put it *On the Soul*,

“thinking, both theoretical and practical, is regarded as a form of sense perception; for in both cases the soul [νοῦς] judges and has cognizance of something which truly is [τῶν ἀληθῶν]. Indeed, as the ancient ones assert, thinking and perceiving are identical.”

Unsurprisingly then, sense perception played a decisive role in Aristotle’s definition of ‘science’. As the historian Stefania Tutino noted, for Aristotle science was about ‘the certain and evident apprehension of the Truth’.

Indeed, the Master of the Peripatetic School wrote in his *Posterior Analytics*:

“We consider that we have certain knowledge of whatever [...] when we think that we know (through sense perception) (i) the (final) cause for which the accident [τὸ ἐφεξῆς] is what it is, that it is the cause of the object of our study, and (ii) that that predicate cannot be otherwise.”

What is important to recognize in these lines is the fact that there is certain knowledge only where it is possible to identify the conditions under which a particular object of research is exactly what it is, and it cannot be otherwise. Science thus was never about knowing what can be contingently otherwise, but it is always recognizable as such for its interest in the Form-al, final causes. Indeed, as Aristotle wrote in *Metaphysics*, “it is obvious that there can be no science of the accidental”, or the contingent / the becoming.

Going further, in order to end up with the definition of their criterion of Truth, thus certain knowledge, the Stoics believed one must begin by speaking of fantasy and

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250 Modified translation from Plato 1921: 38, 39, 40, 41. My emph.
252 Tutino 2014: 16.
254 Modified translation from Aristotle 1933: 304, 305.
sense perception. Later on, chronologically speaking, Plotinus would reinforce this view, claiming that

“sensation [αἴσθησις] is the reception of a Form.”

Now, *Theaetetus* is not the only place where Plato leans heavily on the issue of matter. At the very end of his *Republic* there is a very interesting phrase. “Haven’t you observed,” translates Emlyn-Jones and Preddy,

“that our soul is immortal and never perishes?”

What I find very problematic about this rendering is that in the majority of cases, the construction οὐκ ἔχωσθαι is translated as “not learned…” or “not know…” Such choices obscure an extremely important element in the process of abstract reasoning, i.e. the Forms’ noetical separability: the issue of sensual perception, or the aesthetic one. The actual meaning of the phrase becomes much clearer when the construction is rendered as in the following:

“Have you not perceived through the senses that our soul [ψυχή] is immortal and it is never destroyed?”

Translating ἔχωσθαι as “learning” or “knowing” – thus through words that suggest a purely intellectual engagement with the issue at hand – tends to get only halfway into the story. Aristotle, in his *On the Heavens*, almost repeats his teacher’s statement, making the aesthetic experience the very foundation for certain knowledge, the knowledge of the highest sphere that there is, the Divine, the Form-al:

“All men have a conception of Gods […] [The fact that something Divine (θεῖον) indeed exists] results through the senses [αἴσθησις], which are really sufficient to warrant the assent of human faith.”

257 Plato 2013: 442, 443.
261 Modified translation from Aristotle 1939: 24, 25.
As Claudia Baracchi, a Classicist and Professor of Moral Philosophy, rightfully notes, hardly “metaphysical,” such inquiries would not so much entail a redirection of the gaze “beyond the ‘physical,’”\(^\text{262}\) as the story is usually told, but precisely the other way around: deep \textit{within} the physical.

Going back to Herodotus, where does the issue of \textit{fate} come into all this? As we have seen, together with the Great Chain of Being, fate too was perceived as a string encompassing everything, unfailingly and seamlessly, including the Gods. The reality of the unshakable, immutable and sacred First causes played, as Critolaus noted, a decisive role in this model. The main question here is then: can someone be other than him / herself? Is it possible that someone can be whatever he / she wants? According to the Hellenistic thinkers (the ones loved so much by the Posthumanists), not at all.

Thucydides\(^\text{263}\), the younger contemporary and great admirer of Herodotus, was in the audience at Olympia when Herodotus recited his work. Teleology might have been (from our perspective) a ‘freedom constraining’ element, and so was \textit{fate}. The notion of ‘individual freedom’ relied heavily on these two – and many other concepts as well, such as \textit{chance}\(^\text{264}\). Did Thucydides himself become a historian by \textit{chance} or by \textit{fate}?

Charles Smith, in the \textit{Introduction} to his edition of Thucydides’s work, mentions an interesting anecdote. There is, he says,

\begin{quote}
\textit{“a pretty and oft-repeated story that Thucydides, as a boy, heard Herodotus recite a portion of his History at Olympia and was moved thereby to tears, whereupon Herodotus said, ‘Olorus, your son’s spirit is aflame with a passion for learning.’”}\(^\text{265}\)
\end{quote}

Smith’s presentation is quite neutral in style – as it should be for a contemporary reader. But if we go on and search for the original sources of the anecdote however, the tone of the story changes, dramatically. One of these sources is the Byzantine Suda dictionary, compiled in the latter part of the 10\(^{th}\) century AD. Here, the story is told as so: the young Thucydides attended the Olympic Games with his father, Olorus. Here, they happened to hear Herodotus reciting his \textit{Histories}. While listening, Thucydides was moved to such a degree that he burst into tears, becoming completely

\begin{footnotes}
\item[262] Baracchi 2008: 50.
\item[263] He was in the audience at Olympia when Herodotus recited his work (Thucydides 1919: xi).
\item[264] It has been said that translating Thucydides is notoriously difficult (Carroll 1999), and not only because of the elevated language he uses, but also because of the abundance of technical terms. The Classical scholar Lorna Hardwick discusses Virginia Hunter’s 1976’s piece \textit{Thucydides: The Artful Reporter} in which she indexed seventy-one Greek technical terms used by the historian. Among these, a number of were closely linked to the issue of teleology: cause, Form-al Truth, or necessity (Hardwick 2015: 502).
\item[265] Smith 1919: xi.
\end{footnotes}
Herodotus noticed the young Thucydides’ essential nature and, after the performance, he approached his father praising him and saying that he was blessed with a son that has a mind / soul [ψυχή] that burns\textsuperscript{266}.

Although very short, this is a difficult, challenging text. The meeting between the two historians happened by pure chance [τύχη]. By stopping at this level, someone might easily come to the conclusion that teleology or fate did not play any role whatsoever. Ending the story here is all well and good, but this was not where the Hellenistic philosophers got off the philosophical train. For them, this represented only ‘half’ of the entire journey. Tyche [Τύχη] – with Fortuna as her Latin counterpart – was one of the many embodiments of chance, contingency, but also providence, necessity, and fate. The Goddess had also a distinctive urban, or civic character as She was widely worshipped as the guardian spirit of a city’s good fortune\textsuperscript{267}. According to Aeschylus, Tyche is the sovereign of all the Gods, for she alone disposes of all things at will\textsuperscript{268}. Aeschines calls Her: “the lady of all things”\textsuperscript{269}. Plato mentions her in his Laws, saying that we ought to approach her through prayers\textsuperscript{270}. According to Nonnos, Tyche plays like a child / dances [παίζουσα]\textsuperscript{271}.

With a rudder as one of her iconographic attributes, Tyche was conceived as the divinity steering and guiding the affairs of the world, and in this respect she was regarded sometimes as one of the Moirai\textsuperscript{272}. Moreover, she was also depicted with a ball, suggesting the unsteadiness of fortune when linked to the phenomenal sphere. In both cases though, it was the very same Goddess: with the ball, she embodied the ephemerality of existence-as-becoming, one completely subjected to chance. With the rudder, thus approached from the Form-al perspective, She announced that everything that occurs always does so accordingly or fittingly with the essential nature of each. Attentiveness to the language of strangeness and unnaturalness (that which is atopos\textsuperscript{273}) and wonderment completes Aristotle’s own considerations of Tyche.\textsuperscript{274} Indeed, as Shew points out, the first thing to note in Aristotle’s Physics in regards to Tyche is the very powerful language that the philosopher uses to describe it. He indeed wonders philosophically at Her

\textsuperscript{266} Thucydides 1788: XXXII-XXXIII.
\textsuperscript{267} From Tyche of Antioch to Tyche of Constantinople, the Deity was sometimes represented as wearing a crown of towers representing the city walls, thus limits.
\textsuperscript{268} Aeschylus 1926: 513.
\textsuperscript{269} Modified translation from Versnel 2011: 278.
\textsuperscript{270} Plato\textsuperscript{a} 1926: 415.
\textsuperscript{271} Nonnos 1940: 18.
\textsuperscript{272} In his Description of Greece, Pausanias says that he agrees with Pindar in making Fortune one of the Fates [Μοιρῶν]. In fact, Tyche is the most powerful one (Pausanias 1933: 332).
\textsuperscript{273} atopos (ἄτοπος): out of place, unusual, unnatural (http://biblehub.com/greek/824.htm).
\textsuperscript{274} Shew 2008: iv.
strangeness, while Socrates emphasizes, in e.g. Plato’s *Apology* or *Phaedrus*, the utter importance of the phenomenal unnatural (ἄτοπος) if one wishes to speak the Truth.275

A few years ago, David Welch wrote an article entitled *Why International Relations Theorists Should Stop Reading Thucydides* (2003). While that might seem like an immediately discouraging title, the paper raised some important questions about how scholars from different fields use Thucydides – or any other Hellenistic author for that matter. According to Welch, we should stop trying

“to bend him to our will by making him speak to debates about which he would understand little and care even less. We should stop treating him as a mirror for our own assumptions, convictions, and biases. We should stop competing for his imprimatur. And, perhaps most importantly of all, we should stop trying to reduce his subtle and sophisticated work to a series of simplistic banalities.”276

I cannot agree, and disagree, more. Although it is pointless making the Hellenistic thinkers speak to issues – e.g. Posthumanism – to which they have nothing to offer, doing so would expose Posthumanism for what it actually is: the product of a very specific School. In other words, the dogmatic demand for naturalization – the Posthumanist ideas and ideals being introduced as natural tendencies, i.e. as defining us as a species – would not function.

1.4.3 Is matter ‘evil’?

According to Plotinus,

“the principle of becoming is the nature of matter, which is [...] evil.”277

As such, whatever

“participates in matter, will be evil.”278

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275 Shew 2008: 42, 70.
278 Ibid.
There is an enormous body of literature dedicated to the issue of matter, thus the principle of becoming, being seen as evil / bad (kakós / κακός)\(^{279}\) in Ancient Greek philosophy in general, and Neoplatonism\(^{280}\) in particular.\(^{281}\) Without going into details for the time being, I would remark that such approaches are very misleading. They create the understanding that matter has to be left behind, completely. However, as Aristotle noted, matter should never be addressed in-itself. In other words, the Form – which, as Being, represents the ‘opposite’ side of becoming, thus the Good (agathos / ἀγαθός) – has always to be taken into consideration as the Real towards which matter becomes. In other words, the Form is the necessary telos of matter. Iamblichus, one of the most preeminent Neoplatonist philosophers, warned repeatedly against the idea that matter is evil or ugly, i.e. devoid of the Form of Beauty:

“It is not appropriate to contend that [matter] is evil (κακόν) or ugly.”

And again:

“It would be far from true to suggest that the material principle is evil (κακόν).”\(^{282}\)

Given that, as said, the necessary telos of matter is the Form (i.e. ‘matter has a tendency towards substantial existence’), and that it is precisely the becoming, the continuous movement of matter that is associated with kakón, I think that rendering (at least in this particular context) the term as ‘craving’ will shed a different light upon the issue, revealing a different point of view. The Plotinian statement that matter is “essentially evil”\(^{283}\) can thus be read as matter is ‘essentially craving’. This craving is an erotic and a compulsive one, akin to the thirsty man’s craving for water, like a beast (θηρίον).\(^{284}\)

Building on Baracchi’s views on Eros, the Hellenistic philosopher / leader (the Philosopher king) was asked, when confronting the phenomenal ravages of kakón, to not turn away from it, let alone deny it or annihilate it. Indeed, one should find a way to stay with it, with this craving, even deepening an (erotic) intimacy with it, accompanying its surprising, contingent unfoldings\(^{285}\). There were two main reasons for this:

\(^{279}\) These two being the most popular translations of kakós [κακός].
\(^{280}\) The term ‘neoplatonism’ is an invention of early 19\(^{th}\) century (Gerson 2012).
\(^{281}\) Rist 1961; Nikulin 2012.
\(^{282}\) As quoted in Shaw 1995: 33.
\(^{283}\) Plotinus 1969: 288, 289.
\(^{284}\) Plato 1937: 395; Waithe 1987: 90.
\(^{285}\) Baracchi 2014.
1. without *kakó*²⁸⁶, the Form of Good²⁸⁷ could not be addressed at all. As such, the task was to *work with*, not *against*, the “craving”, As Plotinus wrote in his treatise *On What are Evils,*

“if anyone says that there is no evil at all within the essence of Being, by necessity Good will be abolished as well.”²⁸⁸

2. the ‘craving’ cannot be dispensed with: it exists with necessity and it is eternal – while also having a concrete end, i.e. when meeting the Form. As Plato noted in his dialogue *Theaetetus,* and Plotinus in his *Enneads,*

“the evils [*tà kàkà*] can never be done away with, but exist of necessity. They have no place among the Gods [in their Form-al glory], but haunt our mortal nature²⁸⁹ and this [phenomenal] region forever.”²⁹⁰

This casts an interesting light on Plotinus’ assertion that matter has absolutely no share in Good²⁹¹. Although seemingly radically contradictory, these claims are not at all inconsistent with one another, inasmuch as everything depends upon the angle from which we approach this *symbolon.* If we look at it from the pragma’s perspective²⁹², then given the fact that matter is eternal, as the Forms are, then there is no way the latter could be approached by bypassing the sensible, i.e. the aesthetical. Doing that would lead us nowhere. However, if we look at the issue from the Form’s perspective²⁹³, then of course there was no mixture whatsoever, only the separable, perfectly realized Forms.

The *kakó* had powerful implications for the conceptualization of various issues, such as *justice* or *economy.* When it comes to justice, the function of a ruler [*āρχων*] was, according to Aristotle,

*“to be the guardian, the protector of justice [...] thus of the balance”*²⁹⁴

²⁸⁶ Which was not a Form (Plotinus 1969: 288, 289).
²⁸⁹ That is, ourselves in our becoming.
²⁹² i.e. Plotinus 1969: 314, 315.
²⁹³ i.e. Plotinus 1969: 288, 289.
that is, of the equal share between Good and ‘evil’, i.e. of Form-al Being and pragmatic non-being. As such, for Aristotle, justice has its goal not in the legal (as it does today) – thus protection from deviancy – but in keeping the balance [τὸ ἴσον] between Good and ‘craving’. Indeed, as he noted,

“If the unjust is the unbalance-between, the just is the balance-between’ [τὸ ἴσον] (Good and ‘evil’).”

Justice thus is a ‘proportion’ [ἀνάλογος], where proportion is defined as “equality of ratios”. When it comes to such views, the problem becomes, as Foucault himself put it, “not one of deviancy but of excess”, that is, of disproportion. This means that the ruler trying to dispense with the kakós as much as possible, and seek only the ‘generally good’, would have been an unjust one, one prone to various Divinities of the Limit’s anger, e.g. Nemesis. Indeed, as Aristotle noted in his Nicomachean Ethics, it would be unjust

“To allot to oneself more Good and less evil.”

Speaking about Nemesis, the word economy (οἰκονομία) comes from οἶκος (house) + νέμω (to allot, distribute, rule). Then, the word nemesis (νέμεσις) derives from the verb νέμω: the house, as the state, is supposed to be ruled according to certain limits. Indeed, Nemesis (alongside the Moirai, Tyche and many others) was one of the main Hellenistic Deities associated both with necessity and limits. Nemesis was charged with exacting divine punishment upon those not respecting the limits imposed on them according to their own nature. As Laura Liva shows, everybody from Hesiod and Homer to Herodotus, from Aeschylus and Sophocles to Euripides knew this frightful figure. As she notes,

“[Nemesis] charge is to protect the order and the balance of the universe, assigning to every man his fate [...] according to justice and merit, while restoring the natural order whenever it has been violated.”

295 As in the case with the Form-al, I am using this particular spelling in order to make it clear that what I am referring here to is the sub-lunary sphere of pragma, i.e. the world of phenomena. As such, I am trying to keep the readers away from making associations with the English term ‘pragmatic’.


297 Aristotle 1926: 268, 269

298 Foucault 1984: 349.

299 Modified translation from Aristotle 1926: 292, 293.

300 Liva 2015: 156.
There is one name however, that does not appear in Live’s list, and that is Aristotle’s. In fact, Aristotle discusses Nemesis in various places in his work. Introduced as an affection (πάθη) that defines a good or just character, Nemesis affects equally the human beings, and the Gods.\(^{301}\) Nothing can escape Her grip. The Goddess (defined as such by Aristotle in his *Eudemian Ethics*) rises when something goes beyond a certain natural limit.\(^ {302}\) As such, those who are possessed by Nemesis, experience an amount of indignation proportioned to the strength of the trespassing of the threshold / limit by the offender.

The verb *nomos* [νόµος] – law, custom – derives from νέµω as well. An interesting related meaning of νέµω is “to be present constantly and permanently in one’s home”. A clear sense of interiority, of within is thus evident. A sense of essential fixity is also present, as νέµω means also to remain as one, not to become another or different.

To sum up, matter was conceptualized as being eternal, uncreated, dynamic, i.e. in constant becoming, and craving for the Form that was always within. Accordingly, it was indispensable in the unveiling of certain knowledge.

### 1.5 Falsehood and Truth: the issue of language

If someone would ask me to define the immense diversity of Hellenistic worldviews in one word, I would say: equilibrium. The notion of equilibrium, expressed in various ways (as e.g. balance, proportion, harmony, measure, or symmetry) infused many aspects of life: from justice, virtue and ethics to architecture, from the way in which the Cosmos was perceived (sub- and supra-lunary), to the compound of becoming and Being, matter and Form, the Gods etc. In the following, I am going to briefly address this issue of ‘dualism’ in relation to language.

As Derrida shows, for an Ancient Greek, *pseudos* can mean everything from lie to cunningness, deception, and fraud.\(^ {303}\) In a word, pseudo- seems to be linked to everything that is opposite to certainty and certain knowledge, therefore to everything linked to the sub-lunar sphere, i.e. the pragma: the ever-fluctuating sphere of phenomena.

The complex relationship between falsehood and Truth (which replicates the relationship between matter (non-Being) and Form (Being), the sub- and supra-lunary

\(^{301}\) Aristotle 1926: 230, 231.
\(^{302}\) Aristotle 1935: 350, 351.
\(^{303}\) Derrida 2002: 30.
spheres, and the Form-al and pragma-tic embodiments of the Gods\textsuperscript{304} is a crucial one. At the level of language, aside from being true, a sentence is also false, in that it cannot utter the Form-al without the phenomenal, thus outside of pragma. Indeed, according to Plato,

\begin{center}
\textit{“dianoetic or discursive knowledge [...] and fantasy, all arise in our minds as simultaneously false and True.”}\textsuperscript{305}
\end{center}

However, the phenomenal contingencies (the \textit{what seems to be}) should not be mistaken for what \textit{truly is}.

Plato’s philosophy of language was dominated by the view that there is a one-to-one relationship between words and what they designate or signify: the essence (\textit{οὐσία}) of things, the thing in-itself. In the \textit{Theaetetus}, Socrates had defined the essence (\textit{οὐσία}) of logos, of a sentence, as “a weaving-together of names”\textsuperscript{306} — that is, of nouns and verbs, making thus a real, factual separation between the state of Being (the Form / universal) and the accident of Being (becoming / accident) impossible. In \textit{Cratylus}, Plato states that a noun is

\begin{center}
\textit{“an instrument of teaching and of separating the essence [οὐσία] (from the becoming), as a shuttle separates the web.”}\textsuperscript{307}
\end{center}

Aristotle himself would start his book \textit{On Interpretation} by introducing the Platonic division of the sentence (\textit{λόγος}) into the \textit{noun} (\textit{ὄνομα}) and the \textit{verb} (\textit{ῥῆμα})\textsuperscript{308}. As we remember, Plato did not believe in the complete, factual separation of the Forms, but only in their separability through acts of contemplation and always through the mediation of senses. The metaphor of ‘interweaving’ was used in order to characterize not only the relationship between body and soul and matter and Form\textsuperscript{309}, but also between the noun and the verb\textsuperscript{310}. A complete separation of the two would have been impossible. In the same \textit{Sophist}, and in relation to language, Plato notes that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[305] Modified translation from Plato 1921: 440, 441. My emph.
\item[306] Modified translation from Plato\textsuperscript{a} 1921: 224, 225.
\item[307] Modified translation from Plato 1926: 22, 23.
\item[308] “Let us, first of all, define the noun and the verb” (modified translation from Aristotle 1938: 114, 115). According to Kahn, Plato assigns to \textit{rhēma} (\textit{ῥῆμα}) the sense of ‘verb’, in contrast to \textit{onoma} (\textit{ὄνομα}), the ‘noun’: a conclusion is to be reached by combining verbs with nouns (Plato 1921: 436, 437). Plato’s terminology will be taken up by Aristotle and transferred into Latin as \textit{nomen} and \textit{verbum} – becoming thus the standard expression for the noun-verb distinction in the Western tradition (Kahn 2013: 124-125).
\item[309] Plotinus 1969: 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103.
\item[310] Plato\textsuperscript{a} 1921: 224, 225.
\end{footnotes}
“the complete unweaving of each thing from all is the utterly final nullification of all discourse [λόγων].”\(^{311}\)

In return, such nullification would bring about the impossibility of philosophy. And, to be deprived of philosophy

“would be the greatest calamity.”\(^{312}\)

As Eco and all explain further, in order for such a thing to be possible, there should

“be a relation of an iconic nature between the phonological structure of the signans and the ontological structure of the signatum.”\(^{313}\)

In other words, epistemology mirrors ontology and vice versa. As Plato noted in \textit{Cratylus}, those

“who gave names must have known the Form [εἶναι εἰδότα] of the things they named.”\(^{314}\)

As such,

“all the names make visible the Being [τῶν ὄντων] of the things named.”\(^{315}\)

For Plato, the ones capable of offering a linguistic account of the Forms were the dialecticians. In \textit{Phaedrus}, Socrates defines the dialecticians as being those

“powerful enough to dissect \(^{316}\) (something) in accordance with its Forms [εἴδη], (and doing so) according to the natural joints (of that thing / being) and not in any way laying hands on it to hack it apart, wounding it in the manner of an incompetent butcher.”\(^{317}\)

\(^{311}\) Modified translation from Plato 1921: 424, 425.
\(^{312}\) Modified translation from Plato 1921: 426, 427.
\(^{313}\) Eco, Lambertini, Marmo, and Tabaroni 1989: 12. My emph. Where signans = the sensible, signatum = the intelligible (Daylight 2011).
\(^{314}\) Modified translation from Plato 1926: 182, 183.
\(^{315}\) Modified translation from Plato 1926: 130, 131, 132, 133.
\(^{316}\) From \textit{tĕmno} (τέμνω), the term has a very organic charge, meaning \textit{cut} (the type a surgeon performs), or \textit{wound}, but also to separate noetically.
Dialectics seeks to see the things themselves in an act of ‘pure seeing’, i.e. unmixed: the Greek technical term for this action is noein (νοεῖν). And so, as Heidegger put it, dialectics “possesses imminently a tendency toward νοεῖν, seeing”318.

But the dialecticians were not the only ones capable of offering a linguistic account of the Forms. The direct relationship between rhetoric and the issue of sacrifices – one already hinted at by Plato in Phaedrus – was made very clear by one of the most preeminent rhetors of his time: Libanius. In his Oration 62, he laments the destruction of the pagan temples by Constantine I and his son Constantius II as in the following:

“Constantine [...] has stripped the gods of their riches, [his son Constantius] tore down the temples, and wiping our every sacred law, he gave himself to whom we know [sc. the Christians] putting to the full stretch the dishonor (ἀτιµίαν) which from the sacrifices went to the speeches. Naturally. For these both, I think, are of the same kind and akin: sacrifices and speeches (ἱερὰκαὶλόγοι).”319

1.6 The mechanism of ‘common sense’ and the contemplative practice of ‘saving the appearances’

When it comes to Hellenistic views on the complex mechanism of sense perception, a central element was the common sense – a construction that should not be understood in the way that it is used in contemporary vernacular. As the philosopher and classical scholar Pavel Gregorić explains,

“[i]magine what it would be like if your five senses - sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch - were completely independent from one another. You would not be a creature that wakes or sleeps, because your senses would not all be operating in the state of waking and all be resting in the state of sleep. Rather, each sense would operate for some time and then take a snooze, so that you would spend a greater part of your life in an erratic state, neither fully awake nor entirely asleep.

9) The dialectician was “the name-user par excellence” (Sedley 2003: 5). Plato sometimes equates the dialectician with the philosopher (Ryle 2009).


319 As quoted in Spira 1989: 144.
Moreover, you would not be able to tell that a piece of Camembert cheese is white and smelly, because you would have no means of relating what you see to what you smell. Each sense would create a phenomenal world of its own, and there would be nothing to mesh these worlds. Should your perceptual abilities be accompanied by other capacities, such as imagination and memory, these capacities would be bereft of their unity. The visual you might find a piece of Camembert cheese pleasant and tell your body to take it, while the olfactory you would find it unpleasant and tell your body to shun it. Thus action would be seriously impeded, in some cases impossible.  

In order to solve this issue, Aristotle postulates a perceptual power over and above the five senses that monitors their states and co-ordinates their reports. This perceptual power was known as the ‘common sense’ (gr.: κοινὴ αἴσθησις, lat.: sensus communis).  

The ‘common sense’ was located in different parts of the body, depending on which philosophical School we are talking about:  
- the Peripatetic and the Sicilian School of medicine located it in the heart,  
- Galen, Hippocrates and the Cos’ School of medicine located it in the brain.  

But the common sense did not only bring together the five senses in a unitary structure, but also the phenomenal and the Formal spheres, acting as a catalyst between the ‘two’ realms. Some philosophers believed that all things possessed the inherent capacity to communicate their essential features, their presence-as-essence (οὐσία), to the surrounding medium. They did so by constantly emitting what might be called streams of raw data, or idols (εἴδωλα). In his description of these idols, Epicurus says that:  

“their speed is unsurpassable, while their generation happens as quick as a thought. For they are constantly streaming off from the surface of bodies, [with] other (idols) filling up the corresponding place.”

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321 Gregoric 2007: 2. The Aristotelian expression koiné aisthesis (κοινὴ αἴσθησις) is translated, quite literally, as sensus communis in Latin, and as ‘common sense’ in English. Here the Latin sensus and the English ‘sense’ are used in their primary connotation of a perceptual ability strictly speaking (Gregoric 2007: vii). However, as Gregoric also notes, “the Greek expression koiné aisthesis never refers to the same thing to which the corresponding English expression refers nowadays” (Gregoric 2007: vii).  
322 Empedocles was one of its leaders.  
323 Founded by Berossus (active 3rd century BC), a Babylonian priest and astronomer (Smoller 2000).  
324 Couliano 1987.
Roughly speaking, the main role of the common sense was to organize this brute sensory information collected by the 5 senses, and to build from it a representational device called phantasm (φαντασμα)\textsuperscript{326}, or an idol (εἰδωλον)\textsuperscript{327}. In its turn, the human cognitive apparatus was composed of several elements; each of them being assigned specific responsibilities. However, the end task of this process was to ‘abstract’ (to separate noetically) from such a phantasm the essential feature [ousia] of whatever nature.

Why was the phantasm not the final stepping stone of this process, but something else, i.e. the ‘abstraction’ of the essence, of the thing in-itself? This was for several reasons, one being that the phantasms themselves were inextricably linked to the things / beings in their state of becoming. Everything was fluctuating and ephemeral, and thus no certain knowledge could ever be obtained. Indeed, Aristotle described the phantasm as “an image trembling in the water at the slightest breath”\textsuperscript{328}. As Socrates put it in Cratylus,

“it is likely to say that, if all things change and nothing remains (the same), that there is no [certain] knowledge [...] [I]f the Form [εἴδος] of knowledge changes, [...] there would be no knowledge, and if [the Form] is eternally changing, there will be no [certain] knowledge in the whole eternity. Following this, there will be neither a knower, nor anything to be known.”\textsuperscript{329}

As such, the only way to acquire certain knowledge about whatever was to ‘save’ the appearances, or the phenomena. In other words, to be able to identify through the senses and within the deceiving, endless stream of phenomenal becoming perfectly realized essences, i.e. those elements that never change. The phantasms constructed by the mind were necessary as they contained the perfectly realized Forms, the essences of things / beings. According to the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius:

“the images [simulacra] which are carried from the [Gods] holy bodies\textsuperscript{330} to the human’s minds [mentes] make known Their divine Forms.”\textsuperscript{331}

\textsuperscript{325} Modified translation from Laertius 1925: 576, 577.
\textsuperscript{326} A noun derived from the verb phainesthai (φαίνεσθαι): to shine, to show, to appear. From here the word phantazein (φανταζειν), to fantasize: to bring before the mind what was before in the senses.
\textsuperscript{327} Maher 1902; Spruit 1994; Simon 2014: 245.
\textsuperscript{328} As quoted in Simon 2014: 246.
\textsuperscript{329} Modified translation from Plato 1926: 188, 189.
\textsuperscript{330} Which could have been the Gods’ statues.
\textsuperscript{331} Modified translation from Lucretius 1924: 498, 499.
Or, as Aristotle himself expressed it,

“the soul [ψυχή] never thinks without a phantasm.”

Let us linger a bit more on the issue of saving the phenomena or the appearances. It is important to note that the English word ‘appearances’ translates the Greek term φαινόµενα. As we saw in the discussion about Plato’s use of the term ἰδεῖν in his Allegory of the Cave, a phenomena describes a contingency, an accident. Although existing by necessity, such a contingency is, as matter itself, never to be approached in-itself. Simplicius explains the technique of ‘saving the phenomena’ within an astronomical context. In his commentary on Aristotle’s On the Heavens, he noted:

“Plato admits unequivocally that the heavenly bodies move circularly, uniformly and regularly. This gives to the mathematicians the following problem: by hypothesizing what uniform, circular, and regular motions are, it is possible to save the phenomena relating to planetary motions.”

Simplicius makes clear the fact that the disordered movements of the planets, or anything else for that matter, are so only in appearance, that is, only from a phenomenal point of view. From a Form-al angle though, things are completely different:

“In the True account, the planets do not stop or retrogress nor is there any increase or decrease of the numbers in their motions - even if they appear to move in such ways [...] The motions of the heavenly bodies are shown to be simple, circular, uniform and regular from the evidence of their own essences [οὐσίας αὐτῶν].”

In other words, the immediate given is not the real, is not how things really are, but only a deception. What impeded these philosophers in putting equivalence between what appears and what really is (although such an equivalence was also simultaneously made in that ‘what really is’ was always within ‘what appears to be’) came from the fact that

333 c. 490 - c. 560.
334 The issue was far from concerning Plato or Aristotle only, but many others philosophers as well, e.g. Eudoxus of Cnidus (408 - 355 BC) or Sosigenes of Alexandria (1st century BC) (Bowen 2013: 136).
336 As Bowen shows in his edition, “the allusion is to tabular numerical data recording the positions of the planets and the times when they occupy those positions” (Bowen 2013: 135).
Truth, hence certain knowledge, can be established / reached only on the basis of essences. As such, the object of one’s study always remains the same, regardless of its apparent situation. The process of ‘saving the appearances’ however, was not everybody’s cup of tea. Most people were stopping at the phantasmatic level, mistaking the middle level (developing the phantasms) for the final one (accessing the Forms). As the same Lucretius put it,

“according to Epicurus, people derived the notion of God from the appearances received in sleep [...] For, he says, when great eidola in human form impressed them in their sleep, they supposed that such Gods in human form to be True.”

Socrates and Plato agreed, speaking with evident disapproval about those thinking that

“a likeness is not a likeness, but rather is the thing in-itself.”

Virtually all the Hellenistic philosophical Schools warned against focusing exclusively on the appearances. As such, when Epicurus and the Atomists were saying that the world is nothing but random movements of infinite atoms they said, at least on this level, nothing different form Aristotle, Plato, or others. As it happens, by ignoring these details it is then very easy to make assertions such as the following one:

“In contrast to Plato, who mistrusted the evidence of the senses, and Aristotle, who [...] denied the ability of the senses to provide genuine knowledge, Epicurus places

338 Pseudo-Plato defines theoretical or contemplative knowledge as “non-hypothetical knowledge; knowledge of what always exists” (as quoted in Feke 2012: 12).
339 The first level being the purely sensorial one: the initial contact.
340 Lucretius is still regarded by many as one of the founding Fathers of Modernity – a Modernity, of course, brutally interrupted by the medieval Christianity (Bryant 2011; Greenblatt 2012) – making the subject of dedicated colloquiums: http://complit.as.nyu.edu/object/complit.events.lucretius-and-modernity. Robertson, in his Manifesto of Medieval Materialism makes it clear that Lucretius “writes to free us from the tyranny of religion” (Robertson 2010: 104).
341 Modified translation from Sextus Empiricus 1936: 12, 13, 14, 15. My emph. Lucretius is far from taking an atheistic stance here, i.e. that the Gods do not actually exist, is as usually assumed (Whitmarsh 2015). What he and Epicurus mean, is that common people are prone to mistake the non-being of the becoming for the Being qua Forms. In other words, they mistake the phenomena for the Truth.
343 Lüthy, Murdoch, and Newman 2001. Things are getting much more sophisticated when realizing that atomists like Democritus were recognizing the omnipresence and even sacredness of pneuma, which circulates vertically, uniting the world of Gods to ours (Herrenschmidt 2000; Ford 2002).
perception [...] right at the center of his scientific method and is very cautious about forming beliefs that go beyond what is given in perception.”

Aristotle denied the ability of the senses to provide certain knowledge (if sensing would have stopped at the level of appearances), but the production of that knowledge would not have been possible without the mediation of the senses. The very same thing applied to Plato as well. In addition, because of these unbreakable connections between sense perception and thought, there was no certain knowledge outside of what was given in perception.

Going back to the ‘common sense’ issue, as Aristotle shows in his work On the Generation of Animals, it was permeated by an element analogous to an element that belonged to the stars: the so-called fifth element. In his text On the Heavens, he defined it as “the primary body”, or “the first of the elements”. Between its natural characteristics is the fact that it is more divine than all the other four elements (earth, air, water, fire). Some other thinkers gave this element the name aither.

The fifth element was recognized by Cicero too, as it was by Ptolemy. The famed astronomer authored a short treatise entitled On the Criterion and the Governing Faculty. In his analysis of this text, the Classical scholar and historian of mathematical sciences Alexander Jones mentions the passage from Aristotle’s On the Generation..., showing that for Ptolemy, as for Aristotle, the ether is

“the most characteristic and governing element in our souls, so there is not an absolute divide between the sublunary cosmos [...] and the heavens.”

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345 Aristotle 1942: 170.
346 Aristotle 1939: 14, 15; 24, 25; 178, 179; 258; Aristotle 1942: 170.
1.7 The Formal Science of the Hellenistic Schools

“There will be Forms of all things of which there are sciences.”

- Aristotle

1.7.1 The Scientific investigation as a spiritual pursuit

If the Hellenistic philosophers were not the rational and materialist predecessors of modern and contemporary scientists, what were they doing if not science? How did they themselves or their contemporaries understand their activities?

Proclus considered both Homer and Plato as being theologians. When he talked about the founder of the Peripatetic School, he referred to him as the “divine Aristotle” – an expression that should not be taken as a metaphor.

The tradition of seeing Thucydides as a seer is quite venerable, and it has made its way into the Christian School. He has been depicted in various churches holding a scroll with texts announcing the Incarnation of Christ. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1st century BC) approached both Herodotus and Thucydides as poets, no different than the theologian Homer himself.

Interestingly, Justin Martyr (a 2nd century Christian Saint) introduces the pagan philosophers under the name of ‘teachers of religion’, stating that Plato and Aristotle were approached by their followers as teachers of “the perfect and true piety”. Following this, I think that approaching the Schools (be they Hellenistic or otherwise) as religions in and of themselves would not be too much of a stretch.

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348 Aristotle 1933: 62, 63.
349 Proclus 2011.
351 Alongside many other Hellenistic ‘scientists’, such as Aristotle, Plato, Hippocrates and Galen, or Thales of Miletus.
352 Theosophorum 1995: 111; Ciobanu 2005: 143. Quite a distance between this Thucydides and the one that apparently, already in the fifth century BC, “has grasped and applied the principles of scientific method” (Morley 2014: 43).
It might be said that the above few examples could be seen as describing the work the philosophers or the poets were doing. As such, it is to be somewhat expected to have them introduced in such a way, i.e. as bohemian characters humorously known as ‘theologians’. This is not the case. When it comes to the Hellenistic Antiquity’s “hard core” engineers or mathematicians, things were not different. Two examples can readily be drawn here. The fist came from Plutarch and refers to Archimedes. As he wrote in his Life of Marcellus,

“we should not doubt the stories told about (Archimedes) about how, under the eternal spell of a familiar and domestic Siren, he forgot to eat, abandoning the care of his person. He was often dragged by an unopposable force to the baths. Here, after anointing his body, he would enter in the sacrificial place of the shrine, tracing geometrical figures and draw lines with his finger in the oil with which his body was anointed, being [...], in very truth, possessed and inspired by the Muses.”

Interestingly, the story never made it into the volume dedicated to Archimedes’ 23 Centuries of Influence on Mathematics, Science and Engineering (2010) – as anything having to do with Muses, Sirens, possession, or Sacrifice did not make it either.

The second example is about Ptolemy, the famed astronomer and mathematician. As the historian of mathematics Morris Kline tells us, Ptolemy’s Almagest,

“must be ranked among the most influential books in the history of science”

However, at a closer look, Ptolemy’s masterpiece seems to be of a completely different nature than a rational (in a modernist sense) scientific treatise.

At the beginning of his book, the Hellenistic astronomer inserted an epigram of his own composition:

“I know I am, from the becoming perspective, mortal and ephemeral,
But whenever I look noetically for the recurrent circular motion of the stars
My feet no longer rest within the becoming sphere
But, rushing to Zeus himself, I nourish myself full with the divine ambrosia.”

The importance of this epigram cannot be overestimated. One of the most recent accounts regarding its significance can be found in the following statement made by the classical scholar Juan Luis García Alonso:

355 Modified translation from Plutarch 1917: 480, 481.
357 My own translation from Ptolemy 1912; The Greek Anthology 1925: 320, 321.
“I have been working on different aspects of Ptolemy’s works for a good number of years. However, it was only recently that I understood all the implications a brief poem like this […] may have in relation to a suitable recognition and comprehension of what ancient science was, of what it meant, of what assumptions it was built on, of the consequences this new understanding may have.”

The original aim and purpose of the *Almagest* can already be identified in the strophe: after ‘saving of the appearances’, the study of the stars from an essential, Form-al perspective brings the astronomer into an ecstasy that makes him realize his immortality, the very same kind the Olympian Gods are sharing. In the *Introduction* he wrote for the *Almagest*, Ptolemy champions the ultimate telos of mathematical astronomy: becoming Godlike. He writes:

“With regard to virtuous conduct in behavior and character, [astronomy] above all, could make men see clearly\(^\text{359}\); for the likeness, good order, symmetry and calm which are contemplated in the divine, makes [the astronomers] lovers of the divine beauty, accustoming them and reforming their natures to a similar spiritual state [with the divine]. It is this erotic desire for the contemplation [θεωρία] of the eternal and unchangeable that we constantly strive to increase.”

The overall goal of mathematical astronomy, as Ptolemy understood it, was moral and spiritual formation through the acquisition of certain knowledge. This particular understanding persisted for a very long period and it can be attributed to many other ancient Greek ‘scientists’ well before Ptolemy. As Porphyry noted in his *Life of Pythagoras*, the reason why the noted the Presocratic philosopher\(^\text{361}\) made use of mathematics is that this discipline introduces the student to the contemplation (θεωρία) of things that really exist (ὄντως ὄντων), i.e. the Forms. Accordingly, for Pythagoras, the main aim of the mathematical sciences was perfect happiness\(^\text{362}\). According to Iamblichus, the Pythagorean study of numbers was God-inspired, anagogic, and cathartic.\(^\text{363}\) Equally, the rules of logic were revealed to Parmenides\(^\text{364}\) by a Goddess.

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359 The possibility of certain knowledge.
360 Modified translation from Moss 1993: 30; Feke 2012: 19. For the last phrase (the Greek text), Ptolemy 1898: 7.
361 c. 570 – c. 495 BC.
362 Porphyry 1920: 47.
363 Shaw 2012: 121.
364 5th century BC.
As I noted, the Christian Middle Ages have been criticised for a heavy reliance on theology, when superstitious understanding of the Universe, deeply informed by religious and theological phantasmagorias, replaced the scientific and rationalistic approaches of the Hellenistic thinkers. Well, with the exception of Homer and Plato, the theologians. And also Archimedes, the one possessed by the Muses. And, again, the shaman Parmenides, the one dreaming about Goddesses bestowing upon him the rules of Logic. But apparently not for the atheist and materialist Aristotelian thinkers Eudemus of Rhodes or Strato of Lampsacus: they would have known nothing of such baloney. It is easy indeed to make such assumptions when only a few lines of Eudemus or Strato’s original work have survived. But let us see what Aristotle himself – their Master, of whose work Eudemus was the first editor – had to say about the issue. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle proposed the following division of knowledge:

> “there are three contemplative philosophies: mathematics, physics, and theology. It is certain that if the divine is present / exists anywhere, it does so, by nature, within all these three. [...] And as the contemplative is preferable to other fields of knowledge, so theology is preferable to the other contemplative (philosophies), i.e. physics and mathematics.”

Interesting that an atheist like Eudemus would let such a fragment remain untouched. Today, when we look at these classifications, we tend to understand them along the lines of different scientific disciplines. For Aristotle however, *physics, mathematics* and *theology* represented something completely different: they were approached as stages through which an apprentice should pass in his way towards attaining his perfectly realized self. The journey would begin with the study of *physics*, ascend to the study of *mathematical* structures and it would end with the study of *theology*.

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365 Harrison 2011. The division was recognized by Ptolemy too: Aristotle divides, in a harmonious / melodic way, the contemplative [sciences] into three primary ones: physics, mathematics and theology (modified translation from Ptolemy 1898: 5; Ptolemy 1998: 35). Iamblichus also regarded the theological sphere as the highest one (Van Liefferinge 1999).

366 Modified translation from Aristotle 1933: 294, 295, 296, 297. Given the interest of these ‘sciences’ in certain knowledge, and so in the Form-al sphere, considering theology the only one dealing with the Sacred would be erroneous. As Aristotle himself put it, a form of knowledge (episteme) is divine “if it is concerned with the divine” (Aristotle 1933: 14, 15).

367 Ptolemy defined theology as being an all-complete, ineffable, and faultless science. On the other hand, arithmetic and geometry are the most equipped to make account of the divine and the heavenly. These two, he says, above all other techniques, hold in themselves the potential to take their practitioner and lead him forward towards the acquisition of contemplation, and thus to the knowledge of the Forms (αἴσθησις) (Ptolemy 1898: 6).

368 According to some scholars, Plato coined the term *theology* in *The Republic* (Harrison 2015: 208). However, at the level of translation, the term is absent – at least from the most popular editions (Plato 1937: 182, 183; Plato 2013: 200, 201). It was Aristotle, his student, that placed it at the apex of his classification (Harrison 2011).
It might be maybe a good idea to conclude this very rough presentation of the role of science and scientists in the Hellenistic Antiquity with the words of Gregory Shaw:

“[Today] we are... radically egalitarian and secular materialists. [T]he idea that Platonists (and other philosophers) made deification the goal of their tradition is unthinkable to us. And if we are forced by the evidence to admit that they spoke in this way, we tone it down; we make it a purely conceptual process portrayed in mythical terms. In short, they didn’t really become divine. It was simply their rhetoric, and this is easier for us to accept.”

1.7.2 Separating the separable

I have already mentioned several times the term ‘separable’: that the Hellenistic cosmos was separable into ‘two’ main areas, that in Empedocles’ example Love and Strife were only separable, not factually separate, and so on. What exactly do I mean by this distinction between separate and separable and why is it important?

When it comes to the ‘split’ between the sense-perceptible sphere (the sub-lunar) and the intelligible one (the supra-lunar), or between the matter and the Form, between the inside and the outside of the Platonic Cave, or between the Form-al and the enmattered appearance of the Gods, there is a term that proves to be crucial if we are to understand some of the subtle mechanisms that will play a major role in regards to the Christian School’s understanding of various issues. That term is χώριστος (choristos). Aristotle uses it several times in his partitioning of ‘sciences’ in mathematics, physics, and theology. As he notes, the objects of interest of these three branches “are immutable and separable from matter.”

Chôristos can be translated in two ways, both correct:

- as ‘separate’, that is, actually or factually separated. When referring to the Forms, it introduces them as having a ‘separate’ ontological status, allowing them to exist in some sort of ‘beyond’, completely on their own behalf without any necessity for a

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369 Shaw 2012: 124.
subordinating substance (matter / accident or particular). Hence, true dualism\(^{371}\). Vlastos 1991 seems to prefer this version – at least in relation to Socrates\(^{372}\);

- as “separable”\(^{373}\). Again, when referring to the Forms, it sees them as being separate only “cognitively” or noetically, and never “in fact”\(^{374}\). Aristotle’s apparent predilection for this version prompts a large number of scholars\(^{375}\) to see him in harsh opposition to Plato’s theory of Forms – regarded as existing completely separate from their instances. I consider this view however as being highly problematic, for two particular reasons:

a). it tends to obscure the centrality of matter and sense perception in Plato’s thought as the very basis of philosophy\(^{376}\), and

b). it is used in order to introduce Aristotle as a materialist (in our sense of the word) - thus in opposition to his idealist (in our sense of the word) teacher.

When it comes to the issue of the Forms, Plato is usually regarded as Aristotle’s great opponent: while Aristotle was a materialist, Plato was an idealist. In *Phaedo*, Plato makes a series of claims that show how crucial is the issue of separate / separable. Here is one of these claims, in my own rendering:

> “If we are ever to have unmixed / pure\(^{377}\) knowledge, we must escape from the body (senses) and contemplate the pragmatic sphere with the psyche [...] For, if unmixed knowledge is impossible from the body-in-the-pragma’s perspective, one of two things must follow: either (certain knowledge) cannot be acquired at all, or it can, but only from the perfectly realized end’s perspective. For then the psyche will be in itself by itself, separable from the body.”\(^{378}\)

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\(^{371}\) Latour (2004) himself, as many other contemporary scholars, would approach *chôristos* as ‘separate’.

\(^{372}\) Vlastos 1991: 48, 82, 102.

\(^{373}\) Tredennick and Ross render it as such in their editions (Aristotle 1908: 1025b; Aristotle 1933: 295).

\(^{374}\) See Aytemiz 2011: 188. As Aristotle put it in his *Physics*, nature [*φύσις*] “is the Form [*μορφή*] and Idea [*εἶδος*] of the things that possess within themselves [*ἐν αὐτοῖς*] a principle of motion, (the Form) not being separated [*οὐ χωριστὸν*] (from the things themselves), save conceptually [*κατὰ λόγον*]” (modified translation from Aristotle\(^{8}\) 1957: 114, 155). My emph. Wicksteed rendered *chôriston* as *separable*.

\(^{375}\) See e.g. Witt 1989: 78.

\(^{376}\) As expressed in e.g. Plato 1925: 206, 207, Plato\(^{a}\) 2013: 442, 443, Bychkov 2010: 164.

\(^{377}\) In the sense of certain knowledge.

\(^{378}\) Modified translation from Plato\(^{a}\) 1914: 230, 231. My emph. For comparison, here is Fowler’s version: “if we are ever to know anything absolutely, we must be free from the body and must behold the actual realities with the eye of the soul alone. And then, as our argument shows, when we are dead we are likely to possess the wisdom which we desire and claim to be enamoured of, but not while we live. For, if pure knowledge is impossible while the body is with us, one of two things must
In his very popular edition of the text, Fowler translates *telentao* (τελευτάω) as ‘dead’, which although correct, it is very misleading – at least in this context. The meaning of Plato’s text would be understood better if we approach *telentao* as ‘to completion’, ‘to became perfect’. The verb is used by Parmenides in his poem *On Nature* in describing the perfection, the fulfillment or progress of Nature-in-its-becoming towards its own perfectly realized self. Importantly, as Plato himself notes, what we are contemplating by ‘escaping’ the body, i.e. the senses, is the pragmatic sphere – albeit from a noetical perspective. Forms are to be contemplated only within the pragma: achieving certain knowledge cannot happen without the accidents and the streams of idols. The ‘escape’ from the body / senses is a noetical, contemplative act, not a factual one.

Translating *telentao* as ‘dead’, brings to the whole fragment a definite Christian touch, by giving the ‘afterlife’ a much superior role than the current one. It will be in this alleged ‘afterlife’ – i.e. when we will finally completely separate ourselves from our bodies, from matter, and from life, and enter ‘the actual realities’ – that we are going to finally experience certain knowledge. It is only then that the soul will finally be by itself, separated from the body, able to contemplate the separated Forms. As we have seen, Plato mentions the ontic sphere nowhere in the fragment, but precisely the pragmatic one. Fowler translates the ‘τὰ πρᾶγματα’ as ‘the actual realities’, in other words the ontological realities – which is completely erroneous.

In approaching the issue, the classical scholar Gregory Vlastos offers an interesting overview. The (non-)existence of contingent accidents does not affect the Forms own true Existence in the slightest: when the accidents (but not matter itself, which is as eternal, as the Forms are) ‘arise and pass away’ the Form is neither enhanced, nor diminished. If every accident in this world were to perish in a cosmic holocaust at once (and not just a bunch at a time), the Form of Beauty (or any other one) would remain what it always was and will always be – “as itself by itself with itself”379 – Cosmos or no Cosmos. If this is what the ‘καθ᾿ αὑτὸ’ (by itself) existence of Forms means for Plato380,

follow, either it cannot be acquired at all or only when we are dead; for then the soul will be by itself apart from the body, but not before” (Plato 1914: 231).

379 At the peak of someone’s ascent (descent) within him / her self, the Form will irrupt all of a sudden [ἐξαίφνης] within the soul. As Diotima puts it, Beauty manifests in this burst “as itself by itself with itself, an eternal Being perceived at once” (Plato 1925: 204, 205).

380 Plato never writes that Forms are ‘separate’. He says, in the *Sophist*, that the Forms “exists separately” [διαὶ γορίς] – but, as it appears, this is an expression he puts in the mouths of his opponents (Plato 1921: 396, 397; Krämer 2012).
we have good reason to believe that it is meant to express what Aristotle was to call the “separation”\textsuperscript{381} of the Forms.

Another way to understand this ‘unseparated [in fact] separability [in thought]’ is to reconsider O’Meara’s very valuable insight in that Aristotle and Plato’s Cosmos is not one where \textit{immanence excludes transcendence}\textsuperscript{382} – no matter how radically either term is to be conceived. These philosophers would not accept a view that would force us to choose between a Form that is an integral part of the immanent, and a Form that is absolutely separated from it. For them, the Form is both, simultaneously.

The implications of either rendering (\textit{separate or separable}) are immense, touching on a lot of issues. One of them regards the relationship between mind and body: are these two truly separated, or only sepa\textsuperscript{383}rable? In his first \textit{Ennead}, Plotinus says that,

“\textit{anyone who states that the soul [ψυχή] wounds (the body), as the one who gives, separates [χωρίζει] (the two). But what was [the mind-body] relationship before the separation of the soul through philosophy? There was a mixture, a sort of intermingling, i.e. the soul was in some way ‘woven through’ the body. It was like a Form not separated (from the matter), or a Form handling the matter as the steersman steers the ship.}”\textsuperscript{383}

Accordingly, Priscian of Lydia\textsuperscript{384}, in his \textit{Commentary} on Theophrastus\textsuperscript{385} \textit{On Sense-Perception}, has a chapter entitled \textit{Forms with and without matter}. Here, he touches both the issue of how the intellect is able to approach the Forms separately and, consequently, of how certain knowledge is possible. Regarding the first question, he says that when the intellect

“\textit{uses only reason, thus being not stretched off by the means of sense perception and imagination to the things outside, in contemplating the Forms and the matterless logoi within (things) […] it (the intellect) contemplates both the matterless and the enmattered.}”\textsuperscript{386}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{381} The Form [εἶδος] of each particular has an individual and separable existence (Aristotle 1933: 240, 241). See Aristotle\textsuperscript{a} 1957: 114, 155. Tredennick translates \textit{chôristos} by \textit{separate}.
\item \textsuperscript{382} O’Meara 1995: 46.
\item \textsuperscript{383} Modified translation from Plotinus 1969: 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103.
\item \textsuperscript{384} Active 6\textsuperscript{th} century AD.
\item \textsuperscript{385} C. 371 – c. 287 BC. Theophrastus was the successor to Aristotle in the Peripatetic school.
\item \textsuperscript{386} Priscian 2014: 42-43. Modified.
\end{itemize}
Is there an end to knowledge?

We know that certain knowledge can be acquired, as long as the focus of our contemplation is on the Form-al sphere. But if acquiring certain knowledge about something is a possibility, does this mean that there is also an end to knowledge? In his *Symposium*, Plato reproduces a discussion that took place between the priestess Diotima of Mantinea and Socrates, her student. It is in this debate that Diotima offered what came to be known as the platonic ‘Ladder of Love’. As the priestess noted,

"beginning from the (phenomenal, contingent) beauties one must, for the sake of (the Form of) Beauty, be ascending – as on the rungs of a ladder – to the eternal, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies; from bodily beauty one proceeds to beautiful customs, from customs / habits of mind to beautiful studies, and, finally, from these studies [pl.] to that concerning the study [sg.] of (the Form of) Beauty and nothing else. As such, the end / the completion (of knowledge) is when one comes to know (the Form of) Beauty in-itself."

As the classicist Robert Hahn rightly points out, Plato’s *Symposium* seeks to show us the direction of the movement, i.e. the ascension-by-descending:

"we are cut-off, not from some external events, but as odd as it may seem, from something deep within ourselves."

From an ethical perspective, the state of coming to know the Beauty in-itself was known as *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία). The Stoic Zeno approached the Deity as

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387 I chose to render the line this way while being completely aware of the fact that most of the scholars – such as Bychkov’s “to ascend continually” (Bychkov 2010: 164), or Sebastián’s “ascendiendo continuamente” (Sebastián 2013: 64) – are, in fact, following the popular Lamb translation “be ever climbing aloft” (Plato 1925: 207). Lamb’s choice however gives the impression that the ascent is indeed eternal, and thus the process of completion would never take place.

388 The ascent is pervaded by a *telos*, having to be done in proper order [*ἐφεξῆς*] and right [*ὀρθῶς*] – yet, its result is always spontaneous (Diotima uses the term *exaiphnés* [Plato 1925: 204]).

389 The text might seem awfully abstract for a contemporary reader. Given Plato’s infamous reputation for being the ultimate mystic, dualist, and idealist such impressions cannot help but get even stronger. However, as Kurihara points out, *gnō* [*γνῶ*] is the only instance of a cognitive verb in this passage, despite numerous appearances of sensory verbs, such as seeing and touching (Kurihara 2013: 15). According to Bychkov, it “is remarkable that the original aesthetic (that is, sensible, physical) element always remains present throughout [Diotima’s] discourse” (Bychkov 2010: 164).

390 Modified translation from Plato 1925: 206, 207.


392 From εὖ (good) + δαίμον (daimon).
"a living immortal, rationing, perfect in-itself, intelligent and inherently good (blissful)."\(^{393}\)

The term the Stoic philosopher uses for defining the Deity’s inner-blissfulness or goodness is *eudaimonia*. Eudaimonia can be considered the highest Good. It is complete in-itself and desired for its own sake: no added good can make it any better. According to Aristotle, as he put it in *Magna Moralia*\(^{394}\), eudaimonia is the ultimate Good to be reached:

> “if we attain eudaimonia, there is nothing left to be needed. As such, eudaimonia is the best that can be sought. It is a complete end; and the complete end is both good, and the end of all good.”\(^{395}\)

If *wonder* was the beginning, *eudaimonia* was the end of knowledge: two powerful emotions. According to Aristotle, eudaimonia can exist only in association with the contemplative life\(^{396}\). Indeed, for Aristotle, the contemplative life was possible only insofar as something divine was present within something\(^{397}\). The pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus\(^{398}\) considered eudaimonia not as being something external, but deriving from an interior disposition, a character trait (hence its presence in ethical treatises). As Lucia Carbone has shown, the Atomist thinker considered the psyche as being the house of the *daimon* (δαίμον), which means that *eudaimonia*,

> “instead of deriving from some force or divine entity external to human soul - depends on the individual soul [...] This has a direct parallel in the Heraclitean statement that claims that the δαίμον should be identified with ἦθος, our personality.”\(^{399}\)

In other words, eudaimonia is not a derivative structure, something that is gifted to us, but it comes from within ourselves. Which is to say, reaching it was not the result of a gift, but the result of a move towards the essential self. As *anablepó* did not define an exterior, an outside, but a recuperative inside, i.e. to recover something that is

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\(^{393}\) Modified translation from Laertius 1925: 250, 251.

\(^{394}\) Aristotle discusses issue in other places too. Both his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics* begin with a discussion of eudaimonia.

\(^{395}\) Modified translation from Aristotle\(^{a}\) 1935: 462, 463.

\(^{396}\) Bos 1989: 156.

\(^{397}\) Harrison 2011.

\(^{398}\) Considered by some scholars to be “the father of modern science” (Allen 2014: 39).

\(^{399}\) Carbone 2014: 8. My emph.
rightfully, by nature ours, in the same way endaimonia represented the result of an inward move.

1.7.4 The question of intentionality

“All things crave to contemplation, and direct their gaze to this end.”

- Plotinus

In a text called Epitome of the Opinions of the Philosophers, the following description has been preserved:

“Chrysippus says that we see via the synentasis (συνέντασις) of the air between (us and the object of gaze); which air is being impinged upon by the pneumatic charge of the sight which extends from the hegemonikon up to the pupil (and then out). The surrounding air then stretches like a cone in accordance with the assault on it (by the pneuma), whenever the air should be homogenous. The fiery rays pour forth through the organ of sight, not black and cloudy.

Additionally, in his Lives of Eminent Philosophers, Diogenes Laertius wrote:

“Seeing happens when the light between the gazer and the object of vision stretches in the shape of a cone, as Chrysippus says in the second book of his Physics [...] The apex of the cone in the air is at the eye, whereas its base is at the object seen. Thus the thing seen is reported to us by the medium of the air / pneuma stretching out towards (the object), as if by a walking-stick.”

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401 Attributed to Aetius (Ἀετίος), a philosopher from late 2nd century BC or Plutarch.
402 From sun (σῶν) + tasis (τάσις): stretching together.
403 nungentos (νυγέντος) stab, pierce with a sharp point. See Epicurus on the wounds inflicted by the eidola.
404 And as there was a pneumatic charge of the sight, there was an ‘auditory pneuma’ as well. We have a passage in Laertius about hearing, and this is a passage that comes immediately after the one about seeing: We hear when the air between the sonant body and the organ of hearing suffers concussion, a vibration which spreads spherically and then forms waves and strikes upon the ears, just as the water in a reservoir forms wavy circles when a stone is thrown into it (Laertius 1925: 260, 261).
405 Laertius 1925: 160.
What interests us in these fragments are two concepts: *hegemonikon* (ἡγεμονικόν)\(^{408}\) and *teínō* (τείνω). As Christopher Gill and others have noted, the psyche functions at times as a virtual synonym for the *hegemonikon.*\(^{409}\) This is already evident in the Diogenes Laertius’ account where it is said that

"the *hegemonikon* is truly the soul / mind [ψυχῆς]."\(^{410}\)

Interestingly enough, the *hegemonikon* was located, according to the Stoics, not in the eyes (as probably expected), but in the heart\(^{411}\). The *pneuma* stemmed from the *hegemonikon*, travelled out through the eyes, encountered the object, collected its *eidola* (which contained the essence [οὐσία] of whatever thing the gaze stumbled upon), and then returned, through the eyes, back into the heart. Here, the phenomena or the appearances were ‘saved’ in order to arrive at the Truth. The Stoics were indeed ‘seeing’ with their senses and with their hearts. This ‘intentional seeing’ was, as Heidegger put it, an ontic type of seeing\(^{412}\): * noein* (νοεῖν).

But the ‘ruling principle’ is not something that only the humans possess. In his piece *On the Nature of the Gods*, Cicero addressed the issue:

“*There is an element [natura] that bounds the whole world together [contineo\(^{413}\)] and preserves\(^{414}\) it. It possesses sensation and reason. Every nature that is not a homogeneous and simple one, but complex and composite [i.e. in its becoming], must contain within it some ruling principle: in the human, that (element) is the mind / soul [mentem], in the beasts is something resembling intelligence, which is the source of appetition. With trees and plants the ruling principle is believed to be located in the roots. I use the term ‘ruling principle’ as the equivalent of the Greek *hegemonikon*, meaning that part of anything which must and ought to have*

\(^{408}\) The much-hated term ‘hegemony’ derives from it. The *hegemonikon* is mentioned in Laertius too: the aether is the *hegemonikon* of the Cosmos. Chrysippus in the first book of his work *On Providence* and Posidonius in his book *On the Gods* say that the heaven, but Cleanthes that the sun, is the ruling power of the world (Laertius 1925: 242, 243).


\(^{410}\) Modified translation from Laertius 1925: 262, 263.

\(^{411}\) The *hegemonikon* has its seat in the heart (modified translation from Laertius 1925: 262, 263).

\(^{412}\) In a vestigial form, the issue survived until today in popular expressions such as ‘look with your heart, not with your eyes’ (the eyes are seeing only the phenomena). This also means that, as mentioned, as long as the *pneuma* was able to get out / back in through the ocular channel, seeing with the actual eyes was only secondary. This is why for the great blind Masters of Antiquity, like e.g. Homer, *to sense was to know,* the actual eyes becoming something of a secondary importance. The historian knew because he / she has seen, i.e. sensed. In other words, through sensing they received the (burning) essence of things inside their hearts (or brains, depending on the School).

\(^{413}\) *Contineo* can also be translated as *limit.*

\(^{414}\) Tueatur, from tueor – which also means ‘to gaze upon’.
supremacy in a (becoming) nature. Thus it follows that the element which contains the ruling principle of the whole of nature must also be the most excellent of all things and the most worthy of authority and sovereignty / mastery over all natures. Now, we perceive (through the senses) / see that the parts of the world (and nothing exists in the whole world which is not a part of the cosmos [universi]) possess sensation and reason [...] Hence it follows that the world is, by necessity, sapiential, and that the element which holds all things in its embrace is pre-eminently and perfectly rational. Therefore, the world is God [...] Moreover, that heat of the world (by which the things we know are preserved and flourish) is far purer and more brighter and far more mobile, and therefore more stimulating to the senses, than this warmth of ours [...] Human beings and the beasts are bounded by this heat, owing to it their motion and sensation [...] This world-heat does not derive its motions from an external kick, but is self-moved."

Given that the hegemonikon was the ruling principle, containing only the purest Form, it was “not disturbed or upset by worldly happenings” the contingent happenings of the ever-fluctuating pragma, the sphere of becoming. On the other hand, the idola were indispensable to the process. Indeed, as Laertius shows, within the hegemonikon,

“phantasms and impulses arise, from which the logos is then extracted.”

Given the necessary presence of the eidola, the involvement of the sensual, or the material was central to the experience. In his lectures on Spinoza, Deleuze noted that the sight of the soul, is “not purely optical. It is optical-tactile” The Hellenes were literally touching the surrounding world with their sight. The Form was within the eidola it emitted, which meant that it was related “however indirectly it may be, to the tactile outline” Then, as Deleuze shows, the

“ἰδος, the pure idea, is obviously graspable only by the pure soul [...] Nothing corporeal. It’s a purely intellectual or spiritual grasp.”

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415 Pneuma limits.
416 A tautological situation (tautology comes from ταυτός, a contraction of τὸ αὐτό): through the senses and reason we know about the divine, but we have senses and reason because of the divine, the divine having sensation and reason before us – although we are co-eternal with it.
417 Modified translation from Cicero 1933: 150, 151, 152, 153.
419 Modified translation from Laertius 1925: 262, 263.
420 Deleuze 1981.
421 Ibid.
422 Ibid.
The Idea was indeed grasped by the nous (νοῦς) only, but that would have never happened without the necessary mediation of matter. As it appears, the relationship between the possessor of the ‘ruling principle’ and the ‘ruling principle’ itself was a circular one, describing thus an inward move. As Chrysippus himself notes, even though the hegemonikon was divine in itself, the Divinity did not represent a separate God: the Divinity was the hegemonikon’s possessor himself, in their perfectly realized state. According to Chrysippus (as quoted by Galen):

“people are sinking within themselves and collect themselves towards the hegemonikon.”

And then, there is τεῖνω. The word Chrysippus uses for this dynamic extension of the pneuma – from the hegemonikon to the subject / object of the gaze – is the verb enteinein (ἐντείνειν), which has intendo, intendio as its Latin cognate, hence intentionality as its closest English translation. What is crucial here is that this term describes a tense situation, like the bending of a bow, the creation of an arch that takes place between the two most divine, stable and pure elements: the ousia / hegemonikon of the gazer and the ousia / hegemonikon of the ‘nature’ gazed upon. Simultaneously, with the creation of this arch, the chaotic forces of the pragmatic sphere impose a (counter-natural) pressure on it, trying to break it. The diabolon (διάβολον) and the symbolon (σύµβολον) act simultaneously. The way in which the philosopher managed to ‘save the phenomena’ and to access the ontic essence, the logos, unveiled the sage: undisturbed by the passing vicissitudes of life, sickness or health, riches or poverty. However, because the intentio was always taking place within the pragma, achieving ataraxia (ἀταραξία), the state of tranquility or calmness, did not transform the sage into some sort of a changeless mummy: his becoming features were always subject to change. In Virgil’s words, the Stoic sage is the one for which the mind remains unmoved, while the tears continue to flow.

Before moving forward, one more thing. By dealing directly with the logos, the ‘ruling principle’ was subject to the rigid determinism of the Great Chain of Being.

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423 According to some philosophers, the highest dimension of the psyche (Dunn 1998).
426 Caston 2007.
427 Lit. freedom from anxiety or instability, ataraxia was a central concept in the Epicurean School too. The issue of calmness is present in another atomist, Democritus – expressed as euthymia (εὐθυμία). He dedicated an entire work to it (Περὶ εὐθυμίας), of which only a sentence or two has survived. However, as later authors pointed out, euthymia was for Democritus the highest good and the goal of life (Striker 1990).
428 As quoted in Irwin 1998: 238.
tautological situation between our senses + reason and the Cosmos’ senses + reason reveals that between the becoming and the Form-al sphere there was a relationship based on symmetry (σύν + μέτρον), continuity, harmony and affinity. Plato and Aristotle expressed this in terms of the attraction between like and like\(^{430}\), whereas the Stoics expressed it through the use of the term heimarmene (εἱμαρμένη): fate, destiny, and allotment. Where there is logos, there is always the Form-al, thus restriction.

As a conclusion, it can be said that intentionality is thus only possible within a living, rational and divine Cosmos, one that recognizes the full access to the essences of things through the organs of senses.

1.7.5 The issue of ‘perspectiva naturalis’

The theories of (inner) light, (intentional) vision and optical perspective are inseparable from each other. As such, tidily connected with the issue of intentionality is the one of the so-called ‘reverse perspective’, or ‘perspectiva naturalis’.

As we have seen in the discussion about intentionality, according to Chrysippus seeing happens when the light between the gazer and the object of vision stretches into the shape of a cone. The apex of the cone is at the eye, whereas its base is at the object seen. This construction was derived, as the historian of science A. C. Crombie noted, from a theorem from Euclid’s *Optics*:

"the shape inscribed by the visual rays is a cone that has its vertex at the eye and its base at the limits of the things being seen."\(^{431}\)

To this, another of Euclid’s theorems was added:

"the apparent sizes of [...] magnitudes at unequal distances from the eye are not seen proportional to those distances."\(^{432}\)

The type of perspective proposed by Euclid came to be known as the *perspectiva naturalis*.

\(^{430}\) Plato 1929: 100, 101; Aristotle 1926: 28, 29. “Things of the same kind get to know each other best” is a maxim used also by Democritos in his theory of vision (as quoted in Sambursky 1987: 28).

\(^{431}\) Euclid 1895: 2.

\(^{432}\) Euclid 1895: 14.
In his commentary on Euclid’s *First Book of Elements*, Proclus noted that Chrysippus likened these perspectival theorems to the Forms\(^{433}\). This being the case, the question is: what type of representations was the intentional seeing creating when expressed through these perspectival theorems? In other words, how is it that the world seen through such eyes came to be represented?

As the art historian and architectural theoretician Rocco Sinisgalli shows, beginning with Euclid

“any painter, educated in the science of vision and of representation, would have been able to apply the principles present in the geometric, mathematical, and pictorial catoptrics by the great geometrician.”\(^{434}\)

However, everyone who ever had the opportunity to see an Egyptian or Roman fresco or some examples of Hellenistic red-figure pottery might have noticed a few strange elements in relation to these representations. A close scrutiny will indicate that the principle that parallel lines should converge to a vanishing point does seem, oddly, to be missing. In the splendid wall paintings from Boscoreale, there is *more than one* eye level at work here. As the drama professor, stage designer and painter William Pinnell explains, the

“*wall painting resembles a series of individual studies that appear strangely disjointed and clearly lack evidence of a cultivated knowledge of vanishing-point principles. Extending the lines on any given structure will approximate a convergence, but will not occur at one vanishing point. Also, several of the individual buildings are seen from different observation points and eye levels, as if the observer were moving from one side to another and climbing a ladder [...] What is thus completely lacking is a cohesiveness, a unity of configuration.*”\(^{435}\)

After offering other examples, Pinnell concludes by noting that,

“*is safe to say that practitioners in antiquity possessed no knowledge of linear-perspective formulae [...] Both awareness of, and theory behind, the vanishing-point principle were virtually unknown.*”\(^{436}\)

In one of the very few treatises that have been, until now, dedicated exclusively to the topic, the Christian Orthodox theologian Pavel Florensky shows that instead of

\(^{433}\) Boys-Stones 2012: 234.

\(^{434}\) Sinisgalli 2012: 4.


\(^{436}\) Pinnell 1996: 1-2; 15.
one, the art of Antiquity displayed multiple vanishing points, a situation which he defines as *polycentrism*. Because of this, the representations suffered ‘odd’ distortions. For instance, in the Egyptian reliefs and wall paintings, the face and feet are in profile, with the shoulders and chest turned frontally. It is thus of little surprise that the pictorial representations of Antiquity were considered as being examples of crudely primitive, illiterate drawing, displaying a complete misunderstanding of space, and a “retreat from reality”.

Was then Euclid wrong in his theories? And if so, why did nobody think of correcting him until the 13th century AD? Obviously, Euclid was neither wrong, nor retarded. What the artist depicted through the use of his theorems were not the objects as ‘still life’, i.e. devoid of Form. The artists were not interested in reproducing exclusively their skin or surface. Because of the optical-tactile intentional seeing, the artist was able to see, in an act of pure seeing, the things in-themselves. Indeed, the artist moved slowly around the scene, while the objects be depicted were also in motion. As a result, we have e.g. depictions of “houses with three or four facades, heads with extra surfaces” etc. In a single act of contemplation, the artist was able to grasp, simultaneously, all the sides of his object of contemplation – all at once. It is thus a great prejudice to think that contemplation presupposed a state of immobility, completely abstracted from the world of senses – while the objects being contemplated were also motionless. That, for someone like Plato, Aristotle or Chrysippus would have been complete and utter nonsense. Together with the artist, the viewer was also invited to identify, in an act of sensual contemplation, the Form-al presence within this becoming, thus not to stay at that level – a temptation that made Plato skeptical about the power of painting. It was like in the Myth of the Cave: the viewer was, indeed, facing that wall. Taking the illusory shadows of matter for reality was condemnable, but achieving the knowledge of the Truth, of the divine Forms, without them would have been impossible. As we remember, the immutable Forms were always enmattered. Thus, as Priscian of Lydia noted,

437 Florensky 2002: 207.
438 Florensky 2002: 207-208. As the historian of mathematics Moritz Cantor (1829 – 1920) pointed out, “in Egyptian painting there is not a trace of [linear perspective]” (as quoted in Florensky 2002: 208).
440 Florensky 2002: 258.
442 Ibid.
443 Ibid.
444 See Pappas 2015.

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contemplating the matterless and the enmattered Forms occurred simultaneously\footnote{Priscian 2014: 42-43.} because they were the same ones.

In a ‘reverse perspective’ setting, nothing that exists can be seen as indifferent and passive matter\footnote{Florensky 2002: 218.}. Pinnell already mentioned the fact that the impression we get when looking at these depictions is as if the painter were continuously moving through his own illustration. Long before him, Florensky noted the same thing. As he wrote, in those representations the

“objects change, move, turn their various sides towards the viewer, grow and shrink. The world is life, not frozen stasis [...] The artist depicts not an object, but the life of the object, according to the impression he receives of it.”\footnote{Florensky 2002: 269.}

To paraphrase the art historian Edgard De Bruyne, the material work does not necessarily and faithfully copy the visible environment, but it expresses the representation of what the artist conceives within (as a Form, within his hegemonikon), and through his soul (his ‘intentional seeing’). It is that Form-al infused model that the work imitates above all else\footnote{Lichtenstein and Decultot 2014: 663.}. That was a world that was alive in-itself, not only derivatively – as the Christian one is, as we shall see. Indeed, it did not derive its motions from an external force, as Cicero showed, but it was self-moved. It was also perfectly rational: indeed, that world was God. After telling us that everything that was in its becoming contained a ‘ruling principle’ (from humans to beasts, from trees to plants), Cicero also noted that

“the air [pneuma] itself sees with us, hears with us and utter with us.”\footnote{Cicero 1933: 202, 203.}

That was indeed a polycentric reality, where everything was becoming itself according to the nature of each. In other words, the artist’ point of view was not the only point of view: everything contemplated itself\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 212; Plotinus 1967: 360 et pass.} and anything else.

It is crucial to understand that these were not some beautiful (but otherwise empty) metaphors used only in order to impress an audience, or the mumblings of some bored ex-politician (Cicero). These were powerful dogmas that were stated, accepted and followed, unquestionably. If intentionality is possible only within a living, rational and divine Cosmos, one that recognizes the full access to the essences of things through the
organs of senses, so is the natural perspective. It represents the most true-to-life perception of reality: as one goes, teleologically, along\textsuperscript{451}.

To sum up, as Florensky shows, these types of representations were not the result of uneducated guesses, which will be rectified as soon as mathematics and the science of perspective would evolve enough to be able to develop an accurate depiction of reality\textsuperscript{452}. They were indeed very precise expressions of dogmatic impositions, which signaled a very different understanding of the world. If that understanding will change radically with the rise of the Christian School, the role that dogma (whichever that one might be) plays in dictating the ways of representation will not.

\textsuperscript{451} Florensky 2002: 269.
\textsuperscript{452} Florensky 2002: 206.
1.7.6 The technological object (the gadget) within the Hellenistic Antiquity

According to Porphyry, as he put it in his work *On abstinence from animal food*, the Egyptian priests were able to *telein* (τελεῖν) the statues of the Gods, or set their entire temples in motion.\(^{453}\) By translating telein with *animated\(^{454}\) (the most popular choice), creates the impression that what we are dealing here with is an example of mechanical engineering having as its end product the famous *automaton\(^{455}\), the contemporary *cyborg*, or *the smart home*. Given that Proclus uses in his works an expression that can be easily translated as “technologies of animations” (τελεστικὴ τέχνη)\(^{456}\), then in this sense the Egyptian priests can be seen as the first engineers.

On one hand, the quantity of materials (both on print and online) popularizing the opinion that the technological object, i.e. the gadget, was born in Ancient Greece or Egypt, it is absolutely perplexing\(^{457}\). On the other, the materials focusing on the actual texts are extremely scarce. One of these rare instances is Sylvia Berryman’s book *The Mechanical Hypothesis in Ancient Greek Natural Philosophy* (2014). In it, the author shows that at closer inspection there is an important discrepancy between the amazing complexity of the mechanical devices that the ancient Greeks apparently invented (walking statues, moving temples, and even computers) and the tools they actually used. Following the actual textual evidence and the archaeological findings from Homer’s time there is not much besides a few tools common to a blacksmith workshop, such as hammers, anvils, and bellows\(^{458}\). Such tools do not offer much to inspire the idea of building self-propelling and self-piloting ships – as the ones described in Homer’s *Odyssey*. The same applies to Archytas of Tarentum, a friend of Plato, introduced as the founding father of robotics, mechanical engineering, and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (drones)\(^{459}\). According to the leading Posthumanist author Ray Kurzweil, Archytas constructed “a wooden

\(^{453}\) Manolea 2013.

\(^{454}\) As in: were able to animate the statues and the temples.

\(^{455}\) From *automatos* (ἀυτόματος); acting by its inherent will / desire.

\(^{456}\) Viltanioti 2011: 27.

\(^{457}\) An illustrative example of the mystifying quantity of individual studies on the topic is maybe the collection *History of Mechanism and Machine Science* published by Springer since 2007. With more than 30 volumes published to date, virtually each of them is, in turn, a collection of individual papers.

\(^{458}\) Berryman 2009: 25.

pigeon whose movements were controlled by a jet of steam or compressed air.460 However, if the archeological evidence is not supportive of such claims, the very same applies to the textual ones. There are only two texts that might be used to sustain such statements: one comes from Aulus Gellius, who lived five centuries after Archytas, while the other from Diogenes Laertius, 3rd century AD. Not only does the dove mentioned by Gellius appear solely in an unfinished phrase,461 but there is no description of any kind of mechanism whatsoever. As Huffman shows in what is perhaps the most authoritative work on Archytas to date, there is nothing that might constitute evidence

“that Archytas was the founder of the discipline of mechanics or even that he thought there was such a discipline. It is difficult, moreover, to see any connections between the dove and Archytas’ work in mathematics that is relevant to mechanics.”462

The mechanization of the Ancient text, and the subsequent ‘engineerization’ of its characters does not end with Archytas. Introducing the God Hephaestus as an “engineer-designer in the modern sense of the word”463, Paipetis, a professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Aeronautics at the University of Patras, tries to show that there is indeed a lot of technological stuff going on in Homer’s work, including AI, robotics and drone technology. Of course, a short look at the texts themselves will show that the actual amount of technological descriptions present equals zero.464 Given that Paipetis is himself a scientist, thus someone who should be obsessed with factual evidence, this is indeed a surprising approach, to say the least.

Forcing such interpretations into the original texts has to do, primarily, with two issues that are regarded as very problematic within the Christian School: the divinity of matter and teleology. Replacing the teleological moves or the matter’s cravings for the perfect Forms, with mechanical mechanisms is a very late dogmatic imposition that cannot be identified within the original texts on which these works rely. Additionally, there is also the almost always-present issue of naturalization. As Paipetis himself put it, such accounts “expresses admirably an inherent desire of humans from time immemorial.”465

461 Gellius 1927: 244.
462 Huffman 2005: 83.
464 E.g. Homer 1925: 318, 319; 320, 321; Homer 1945: 298, 299. Plato is also mentioning that Daedalus made his works move (Plato 1914: 42, 43; Plato 1924: 360, 361, 362, 363). Again, there are no technological explanations presented in there.
465 Paipetis 2010: 111.
1.7.7 The measure of (all) things

The pre-Socratic philosopher Protagoras is probably remembered today for his statement that, “The human being is the measure of all things”466. As it appears, the great Renaissance humanist Pico della Mirandola would base his Oration on the Dignity of Man (1486) upon the aforementioned saying of Protagoras467, something already visible in a line from the Oration itself468.

According to the Oration, the human being is the only one which does not have a nature of its own. As Pico wrote, God addresses Adam as in the following:

“We have given to thee, Adam, no fixed seat, no form of thy very own, no gift peculiarly thine, that thou mayest feel as thine own, have as thine own, possess as thine own the seat, the form, the gifts which thou thyself shalt desire.”469

Unlike the other creatures, which are confined by the particular nature that has been given to them, being unable to go beyond what that given nature allows them to be, the human is being confined by no bounds. Additionally, it is the human himself who would fix his own limits. As God puts it,

“thou wilt fix limits of nature for thyself [...] Thou [...] art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer”470.

As stated by Hassan, the identity of the created human is (and should be) defined apophatically. Indeed, as the Michael Hauskeller noted in his book on the Posthuman enhancement project, what becomes clear in Pico’s Oration is that “our nature

466 Plato 1921: 40, 41; Plato 1926: 14, 15.
467 Tasso 2000.
468 “of all nature [...] man’s nature is the medium and, as it were, the union” (Pico della Mirandola 1998: 14, 15).
469 Pico della Mirandola 1998: 4. What is also important to understand here is that God gave this gift to humanity prior to the Fall. This puts an additional, interesting spin on Peter Harrison’s thesis that the subsequent developments of scientific method and technology were motivated by the Fall - developments which could be regarded as being illustrative of a redemptive process. While this is true, Mirandola’s text points towards the ideas that the breaking off of the limits imperative represents an act of obedience as well which could be easily read from a Pauline perspective: that Adam has been given no fixed seat or form means as well that humanity should never find one.
is that we have no nature.” However, this has nothing to do with a communal ‘our nature’, as Hauskeller (and many others) seems to believe, but it has to do specifically with a Christian understanding of identity – an issue to which I will return later. Given that nothing is stable or determinate in respect to the human being, the dualistic argument of unenhanced humans (something that suggests, a least in this context, an untouched natural ground level) versus enhanced cyborgs – a very popular one within the Posthumanist literature, including here the posthuman consumer culture – becomes very problematic. Also problematic is the association between the unviolated, technologically unenhanced with humanism. If indeed the text of the Oration is to be approached as the “manifesto of the Renaissance”, then we can see how problematic and misleading are those views of the human body that see it “as the seat of identity, a classic humanist assumption”.

The text of the Oration is used by leading Posthumanist thinkers in order to trace back the Movement to the Renaissance, and much earlier. Anders Sandberg considers that “Mirandola’s triumphant Oration on the Dignity of Man (1486) expresses the transhumanist project admirably.” Nick Bostrom, in his A History of Transhumanist Thought mentions both Pico and his Oration. He introduces the Florentine philosopher as a landmark of the Renaissance period while underlining what appears to be for Bostrom the central point of Pico’s piece, i.e. the responsibility that man has in “shaping himself” as he / she wishes. Gordijn and Chadwick begin their Introduction to the Medical Enhancement and Posthumanity (2008) with a fragment from Pico’s Oration. The Posthumanist and futurist Max More quotes extensively from it as well. According to More, Pico was definitely a proto-transhumanist humanist, his Oration being very much in line with the transhumanist philosophy.

But if seeing the body as ‘the seat of identity’ is not a classic humanist assumption - ironically, Pico used the exact same word as Campbell 2013 when making it very clear that there is “no fixed seat” - what is it then? What was the view the

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471 Hauskeller 2013: 83.
472 Pico defined the human as a creature of indeterminate image (Pico della Mirandola 1998: 4).
473 Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder write about “cyborgian enhancement” (Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 642). Lai assign the enhanced term to the cyborg as well (Lai 2012: 387).
474 Borghesi 2012.
475 Campbell 2013: 41.
476 Sandberg 2002.
479 More 2010.
480 “Nec certam sedem” (http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/pico/text/bori/frame2.html).
Florentine thinker was going against? In the following I am going to return to Protagoras and his statement in order to briefly show that the Posthumanists’ claims are based exclusively on Pico’s *Oration*, thus on a Christian, i.e. de-Form-alized / non-essential view of the issue.

Mainly known as the author of the highly influential astronomical and mathematical treatise *Almagest*, Ptolemy also wrote a Geography (c. 50 AD). As the historian and philosopher Leif Isaksen explains, the purpose of ancient geography

“was to set terrestrial localities within their wider cosmological settings. And so no matter how detailed an ancient map will be, it will be useless to us if we are going to understand it independently of its cosmological context. Which is to say: you cannot understand Ptolemy’s Geography independently from his *Almagest*.”

Leif’s main point here has to do with the ‘split’ between the Form-al supralunary and the phenomenal sublunary spheres: one cannot function without the other, so to speak. I have already mentioned various divinities of the limit, such as the Hellenistic Tyche, the Moirai, or Nemesis. The Romans, of course, had them too: Cuba, Interduca, Domiduca etc. These are only a few deities from a much larger chorus that patrolled the eternal, sacred and unshakable borders within which the possible was eternally fluctuating. In this section I would like to briefly address mainly two issues: the question of space or territory, and the issue of the human as the measure of all things.

Although mostly known as the Muse of erotic poetry and mimic imitation, Erato was also considered by some to be the Muse of geometry (from *γῆ* (*γῆ*) – land, earth + *metron* (*µέτρον*) – measure). The word ‘erato’ derives indeed from the same root as Eros, and she has been linked to territory and war. As the humanist Coluccio Salutati explained, Erato

“is derived from ‘eris,’ that is, ‘lis’ and ‘terra,’ that is, ‘cton,’ which means to argue about land. Every year the Nile river overflows its banks, wiping out the borderlines between countries; wars are fought to reestablish them. Thus, geometry becomes the basis for war.”

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481 Isaksen 2013.
482 Planinc 2001: 152.
483 By e.g. Diodorus Siculus (active 60 BC). See Marinella 1999.
484 1331 - 1406.
485 From *khthon* (*χθόν*): soil.
486 As quoted in Greenfield 1981: 139.
War, violence, measure: this is an interesting mix. Salutati was not the only one linking Eros, war and geometry. Before him, one of the leading jurists of Medieval Europe, Bartolus de Saxoferrato, noted that territory (territorium) is so called from terrifying (terrendo)\(^{487}\). Everything that involved the sacred Forms also involved extreme violence, involved Sacrifice, involved possession, and burning. It also involved the unannounced shock of the kairiotic ‘exaiphné’s’. When it comes to Eros, the first of the Gods (according to Parmenides\(^{488}\)), the situation was not greatly different. Eros was the unstoppable force that made everything crave the Form, the force that drove Archimedes to the sacrificial altar, made him draw sacred geometrical figures while being possessed by the Muses. Erato was obviously there. As Claudia Baracchi noted in her lecture In Light of Eros (2014), Eros is indeed central in Aristotle too. For him, Eros is a principle “within beings”, that is, a First cause in virtue of which “motion belongs to beings”\(^{489}\). Motion: that ‘evil’ craving of matter. The centrality of Eros in Aristotle, as Baracchi notes, has become almost completely inaudible today\(^{490}\), being replaced with Plato’s views on the issue – where Plato’s views are usually mutilated beyond recognition. Eros is also a child God, capricious and inexorable. He displays conciliatory tenderness, but also the power to incinerate\(^{491}\) and dissolve, to bring pain, rage and catastrophic wars, such as e.g. the Trojan war. Like His mother, Eros is thus ‘double’, as Plato noted, while one: the God of the celestial sphere, one to be encountered by following the path described in the Almagest, and the unpredictable putto of the phenomenal sphere, one which reigned over Geography.

I have previously mentioned the term gigantomachia. In the Sophist, Plato notes that when it comes to the issue of essence (οὐσία), there is a battle of the Gods being fought in there\(^{492}\). Heidegger would start his monumental Being and Time (1927) by reminding us that

“we believe that we are spared the exertion of rekindling a gigantomachia peri tes ousias ['a Battle of Giants concerning Being'].”\(^{493}\)

\(^{487}\) Elden 2013: 222.
\(^{488}\) As mentioned by Aristotle (Aristotle 1933: 26, 27).
\(^{489}\) Modified translation from Aristotle 1933: 24, 25; Baracchi 2008: 49.
\(^{490}\) Baracchi 2014.
\(^{491}\) The term hulé (ὕλη), matter, also means fuel – which can be used for Sacrifices.
\(^{492}\) Plato 1921: 370, 371.
\(^{493}\) Heidegger 1996: 1.
I mentioned the *essence* (οὐσία) because right next to the issue of land and partitioning, violence and Eros, there is the question of *metron* (μέτρον). If ‘know thyself’ is arguably one of the two most known Hellenistic statements, Protagoras’ claim that

"the human is the measure [μέτρον] of all things,"\(^{494}\)

might be the other one. There are of course difficulties and endless debates regarding the actual *translation* of Protagoras’ notorious line – not to mention its *interpretation*. The quantity of literature written on this is mesmerizing\(^{495}\). The term ‘metron’ itself however, has suffered neglect, the reason for this disregard being, as van Berkel somehow ironically shows,

"that at first sight the term is not problematic at all: μέτρον simply means ‘measure’."\(^{496}\)

What about at second sight? As van Berkel notes in his excellent study, in Protagoras’ time the notion of ‘measure’ had deep ontological, and thus epistemological connotations. As such, the expression ‘to measure something’, or ‘to know its measures’ meant ‘to know the thing itself’, in-itself. For instance: to know the ‘the size of the sea’ indicates *knowledge of the essence of the sea*\(^{497}\) and not of its apparent, phenomenal size. In other words, to know with certainty the measure of the sea meant to know the thing that will never change in relation to the sea, regardless of its actual appearance.

Heidegger mentioned the issue of ‘measure’ several times in his oeuvre. In his *Plato’s Sophist* (1992), he wrote that

"Μετρεῖν, to take measure [...] is the mode in which Dasein makes something intelligible. Μέτρον [...] belong in the same realm as λόγος, namely the realm of ἀληθεύειν."\(^{498}\)

In other words, metron belongs in the realm of the Form-al unconcealment, but not in detachment, or separation: the materiality of the phenomena is and should always be there. It is only though it that we can access the realm of Truth. As the classical scholar Christopher Long rightly notes,

\(^{494}\) Modified translation from Sextus Empiricus 1933: 130, 131.
\(^{495}\) Trinkaus 1976.
\(^{496}\) van Berkel 2013: 39.
\(^{497}\) Ibid. My emph.
\(^{498}\) Heidegger 2003: 87.
“τὸ ἀληθεύειν names truth as it grows out of the encounter between the human capacity for articulation and the expression of things. This legomenology of τὸ ἀληθεύειν points to the meaning of truth as co-response-ability: the ability to respond to the appearing of things – τὰ φανερόμενα – such that the truth they express is articulated.”

The ‘encounter’, following which the measure of something will be known with certainty, is facilitated not only by the omnipresent hegemonikon in all ‘natures’, but also by the human capacity for uttering the thing in-itself, e.g. the Form-al essence which is “awake and alive” and divine.

Furthermore, in his *The Age of the World Picture* (1938), Heidegger suggested that Protagoras’ statement concerns itself with preserving

“the always limited sphere of [the Formal] unconcealment through the apprehension of what presences”,

i.e. of the offering as. The Form was the bounding limit within that which presents itself as. Without the limit imposed by Being, nothing can be intelligible, thus known with certainty. If we are to go back to the Muse Eratos, she did represent the essence of the Earth, its Form. As the Muse of geometry and erotic poetry, Eratos was the principle ‘within beings’ that made the matter without Being crave Being. Hence, motion happened. Speaking of Hellenistic geometry or geography (sciences of the border or the limit), these defined terrifying places or territories. These are not what I am going to call in the second part of this work a Messianic place, a place that awaits to be gifted, a place that can only offer itself as. These were territories that are already perfect in-themselves. The presence of the Form, of the fixed limit, gave / gives them a sense of stability that can, in turn, sustain the construction of a temple and the stirring of a sacrificial fire.

Now, we recall of Plato’s prisoners that they would certainly bring about failure should they refuse to translate their contemplative experience into praxis. As such, the necessity to know the metron, the essence, did not only define a type of intellectual or contemplative knowledge, but also a practice, indeed a virtue: the virtue of metriótis (μετριώτης), with temperantia as its Latin equivalent. Socrates, in Plato’s dialogue *Philebus*, says that the Form of Good is concealed in the nature of the Beautiful (a Form

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500 Long 2011: 104.
502 Moderation, temperance. See Mathiesen 2014.
too); the measure μετριότης turned into virtue. As in the case of justice however, this understanding of virtue as moderation did not exclude the question of “evil” from its practice. It was thus an issue of equilibrium, of just measure. This is how various sayings such as Thales’ “observe the measure”, Cleobulus of Lindos’ “moderation is best” or the Delphic “nothing in excess” ought to be understood. Indeed, as I tried to show earlier, Eros (as Aphrodite and other deities) was always ‘double’. On one hand, he was the first of the Gods and the force that made the world go round, setting everything in teleological movement towards the Form-al perfection. Love, or Eros, was also the bringer of harmony and friendship, indicating the benevolent bond between every being within the Cosmos. On the other hand, however, he was the one that brought about the destructive force of war, having the power to incinerate and dissolve, to bring pain and rage. Erato, was the Muse of geometry, the science that occupied itself with the essence of the earth. Delineating borders through the use of boundary stones is a millennia-old practice known for the animosities it can incite (some of them mentioned by Salutati above). It is thus no wonder that Erato’s name, deriving from the same root as Eros, ‘means to argue about land’. Erato (as the muse of geometry) and Eros (as the one who instigated the Trojan war) came together in a passage from the Iliad, where Athena hit Ares with a boundary stone “that men of former days had set to be the boundary mark of a field”. Given all this, Thales and Cleobulus’ statements show that the virtuous one is the one who does not turn away from the ravages of kakón, let alone deny or annihilate them. Indeed, the virtuous person finds a way to stay with the ‘evil’, even deepening an (erotic) intimacy with it, accompanying its always-disordered movements and contingent unfoldings without which reaching the Truth of certain knowledge and Beauty would be impossible.

Tracing back the roots of the Posthumanist movement to the Renaissance and further back to Ancient Greece is, as shown, a staple trope throughout the literature on this topic. There are two main reasons behind this tendency. The first is linked with a Christian dogmatic request for naturalizing certain traits generally associated with the human species: creativity, the desire to surpass its own limits, scientific type of thinking.

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503 Modified translation from Plato 1925: 388, 389.
504 Bassu 2013: 101.
505 Bassu 2013: 86.
506 Known in Ancient Greek as ὅρος (ὁρος).
507 Homer 1925: 434, 435. A similar episode was mentioned by Virgil in his Aeneid, where a huge stone “set for a landmark to keep dispute from the fields” was used as a weapon by Turnus against Aeneas (Virgil 1918: 362, 363).
508 Defined here by an exclusive focus on the phenomenal, i.e. material world, and free from “metaphysical and theological hotchpotch”, as Comte himself put it (as quoted in Pickering 1993: 274).
etc. The second has to do with viewing contemporary technology as the great disruptor of the notion of self and the body. The immediate result of such a disruption was the creation of an ambiguous being with blurred edges: the cyborg. If indeed the cyborg might be defined as “a being for which no limits exists except those he sets for himself”\textsuperscript{509}, a definition Hauskeller applies to the Pico’s human, then the cyborg has nothing to do either with the Form-ally bounded Protagoras’ model, or with technological advancements. Therefore, associating certain views with Renaissance humanism – humanness as a given, bounding nature – or technological gadgetry might be problematic. Indeed, following Pico’s \textit{Oration}, Renaissance humanism was from its inception radically anti-humanistic. I thus agree with Campana and Maisano’s statement that too often “contemporary posthumanism presents itself as a rejection of Renaissance humanism when what it rejects is a straw man”\textsuperscript{510}. Rosi Braidotti, at the beginning of her book \textit{The Posthuman}, explicitly links Protagoras’ view on the human with Renaissance’s, noting that

\begin{quote}
the classical ideal of ‘Man’, formulated first by Protagoras as ‘the measure of all things’ [was] later renewed in the Italian Renaissance as a universal model.\textsuperscript{511}
\end{quote}

Braidotti is not the only one falling into the ‘straw man’ trap, thus associating the alleged Renaissance ideal of humanism with the pre-Socratic philosopher. Nico Wood, in a paper entitled \textit{Devising Cybernetic Fruit: A Posthuman Performance Methodology} (2012), notes that the “central project of a posthuman discourse is to directly challenge” and criticize Protagoras’ humanistic statement, one that became embodied in “the autonomous human subject of modernism or of the Enlightenment”\textsuperscript{512}. In his book \textit{The Transhuman Condition} (2014), Jeff Pruchnic makes the connection as well. A close reading of the \textit{Oration} next to an analysis of Protagoras’ statement within its original context will show exactly how problematic such an association is.

However, be this as it may let us try and read Protagoras’ statement through Pico’s lenses. In other words, if the human is the measure of all things, but the human is of an indeterminate image, it means that everything else is as measureless as the human is. Accordingly, his behavior is not and cannot be characterized by measure, i.e. moderation or temperance, which means that the ‘measure of all things’ is indeed the absence of measure. What makes this absence of measure possible is the absence of the Form, a central dogmatic issue within the Christian School, something that I am going to call a bit

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{509} Hauskeller 2013: 83.
\item \textsuperscript{510} Campana and Maisano 2016: 3.
\item \textsuperscript{511} Braidotti 2013: 13. My emph.
\item \textsuperscript{512} Wood 2012: 113. See Mara and Hawk 2010; Iveson 2014.
\end{itemize}
further down a ‘first-degree truth’. According to Aristotle, what does not have an essence, cannot be defined\textsuperscript{513}, thus nothing can be known about it with certainty. We are thus going back to Hassan’s apophatic definition of the Posthuman: the measure of the Posthuman is (and should be) the lack of it.

1.7.8 Conclusions

Let us circle back to the question that began this section: ‘do cyborgs dream of ancient Greece?’ I guess the answer depends on where someone stops reading: if the reader stops right after the Introduction to this section, then the answer is undoubtedly, ‘yes, a lot’. If, however, one allows themselves to follow the discussion up to this point, the answer changes radically, becoming instead: ‘no, never’.

Although it might have initially seemed an unnecessary stretch, the critical assessment of the views of various Hellenistic Schools on some key features (limits, matter, the scientific discourse and practice) in a text about Posthumanism was a necessary step, and for a number of reasons.

One reason is that leading Posthumanist thinkers themselves are root the Movement and its aspirations in the views shared both by some Hellenistic philosophers (e.g. Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus), and what they seem to consider as being engineers, designers and scientists (e.g. Archimedes, Ptolemy, Archytas of Tarentum). As it seems, one reason behind such a tendency is to create a powerful sense of continuity and naturalization.

By continuity I meant to express that, according to Posthumanist thinkers, elements central to narrative (technological progress, one desire to surpass its own physical and cognitive limits etc.) can be identified at various stages during the progressive development of the philosophical and scientific canon (Western or not\textsuperscript{514}). This progressive path is usually introduced as one that moves away from metaphysically informed worldviews and towards science-based ones. Accordingly, starting from distant Antiquity, our tools became more and more sophisticated, powerful, efficient, and intelligent. Similarly, our understanding of the world, once cleaned of its metaphysical elements, became more objective and accurate.

\textsuperscript{513} Aristotle 1933.

\textsuperscript{514} Apparently, the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh and various ancient Chinese philosophical Schools (e.g. the School of Yin-yang) seems to have a special appeal to those interested in Posthumanist thought. See Bostrom 2005.
In reference to the *naturalization* issue, given the presence of Posthumanist ideas and ideals throughout the history, this tends to be introduced as natural tendencies, i.e. as defining us as a species. In other words, they have been characteristic of being a human, regardless of culture or geographical position. Indeed, according to Nick Bostrom, the

“human desire to acquire new capacities is as ancient as our species itself.”^515

Such views are present within marketing and consumer research as well:

“The use of technology to augment human perceptual systems and alter our sense of self is not a novelty of the digital era, but an essential aspect of human nature.”^516

As we are about to proceed to the second part of this work, the other reason for introducing, however succinctly, Hellenistic takes on various issues, was that it will help us to understand against what kind of views the Christian School stands. Without such clarifications, some claims or positions that exclusively characterize the Christian worldview would escape us. An immediate result of this will be that instead of being approached as products of the Christian School itself, certain claims will be understood as either views that go against that religion and its theology, or as real alternatives to the status quo. For example, one of these ‘alternatives’ can be seen in the calls made within various fields (Organization Studies and management being some of them^517) for a return to Hellenistic philosophical views.

Be this as it may, an important point to be made here is that the views promoted by the Posthumanist thinkers are becoming increasingly popular. This would mean that no matter the amount of evidence that was and is always provided against these particular historicist approaches, such views are here to stay. The question then becomes, if not the factual and textual evidence, what it is then that legitimizes the success and the increasing spread of such opinions? This is an important question given that those supporting the Posthumanist agendas are, given their reliance on science, usually obsessed with factual evidence. My argument is that such views are proliferating under the pressure exercised by the dogmatic structure of the Christian School. This pressure remains, in most cases, unacknowledged, being translated into a natural tendency: the desire to progress and to surpass limits, while moving away from metaphysical explanations of the world, is a human desire ‘as ancient as our species itself’.

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^516 Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 642.
^517 Allinson 2011.
Paradoxically, it is because of this specific Christian dogmatic pressure that so many e.g. Hellenistic views are brought into and kept within the Posthumanist narrative. However, from a critical perspective, it seems rather clear that in order to sound familiar to us, such views first have to be cleansed of some ‘embarrassing’ features, such as e.g. the role the Gods played in various scientific discoveries, the pneuma, the hegemonikon etc. Those features are, of course, not ‘embarrassing’ in themselves, but are when put against a system that does not recognize their validity.

And finally there is a third reason for the analyses presented above. Between those working in the fields of marketing and consumer research, including here the emerging field of posthuman consumer culture, there is a growing accord that we are witnessing some powerful shifts in our understanding of what it means to be a human and more. Such shifts are understood in terms of departures from certain ontological-discourses such as humanism and Cartesianism, views that are allegedly based on dualistic presuppositions, prioritizing consciousness over matter. As I mentioned, if I were to describe the Hellenistic worldviews in one word, I would say: equilibrium. For various reasons that will be addressed in the following, these equilibrium-based worldviews will be retranslated within the Christian School as examples of dualistic thinking. Such models are at odds with the dogmatic structure of Christianity, a configuration which replaces the Hellenistic (or other types of) Form-al polycentrism with a monotheistic model, one in which the only Form left, i.e. God’s essence, will become unreachable, unutterable, and unknowable. Accordingly, as we shall see later on, the equilibrium / dualistic views will be harshly criticized, being gradually replaced by process-oriented or genealogical approaches, ones that lack the fixed, Form-al axis and so are not to be seen as involving any kind of search for origins or essences. There is no supra-lunary sphere left in Christianity.
2 Part. II: ‘In the beginning was the verb’

2.1 The rise of the Christian School

“All modern Western thought is within the Christian semantic trajectory, even if not everybody says ever the same thing.”

- Roberto Esposito518

“[T]o grasp the in-itself is impossibility itself.”

- Quentin Meillassoux519

“For theory too is something which is made, no less than its object.”

- Gilles Deleuze520

518 Ardovino 2014.
519 Meillassoux 2008: 27.
520 Deleuze 1989: 268.
The main question around which the first part of this text revolved was: ‘do cyborgs dream of ancient Greece?’ As shown, the short answer is: no. Now, the main question for this second part is: ‘what has Christianity got to do with Posthumanism?’

Terms, words, concepts are very important. There is a story about Confucius being visited by one of his students, Zilu. Zilu asked what he should do first if he were offered a job in the government. Confucius replied: “set the words right”521. Additionally, Cicero is known by saying: “by losing one word, the whole should escape you”522.

Although Cicero could sound a tad hyperbolic to the contemporary ear, it should be noted that he may actually have been completely right. As I have already tried to suggest, some of the most central issues of the Hellenistic philosophers became visible only at the level of the original language. The very same thing applies when it comes to the tremendous tensions raised between the Christian School and various pagan Hellenistic Schools: some of the fiercest battles were fought precisely on these microgrounds. The most brilliant minds of the time clashed on these nano-territories, changing the world with the change of an accent523; setting the words right was vital.

A very important question that Christian thinkers asked themselves was: if and how different heathen concepts should be brought into the new School. This section will try to address this question, and see how the answer to it influenced our understanding of what it means to be a human and how the world we inhabit and interact with is to be conceptualized. Accordingly, we shall see how the Christian School approaches the issue of limits, and how this, in turn, contributed to the subsequent rise of the Posthumanist movement and to the posthuman consumer culture field.

521 Rainey 2010: 46.
523 As Shorey shows in one of his notes in his edition of Plato’s Republic, some solved the much-debated ‘Homerican problem’ of attributing falsehood to Zeus by a change of accent from didomen (διδόμεν) to didómen (διδόμεν) (Plato 1942: 196-197).
2.1.1 The fundamental structure of the School

The Christian School looks, in its fundamental structure, pretty similar to the other Hellenistic Schools:

- it is based on a set of fundamental principles, i.e. the dogmas,
- it aims at creating a comprehensive, all encompassing world-view: a grand narrative which penetrates the pragmatic / contingent aspects of the social sphere on all its levels.

What then differentiates the Christian Schools from all others? If the answer was a relatively easy one when it came to the Hellenistic Schools, it is not so clear when it comes to other Schools, i.e. Judaism. In order to clarify these things and much more, the Christian theologians and apologists carried out an immense labor of defining, and subsequently enforcing the vast array of Christian foundational doctrines. Their work (exactly as was the case with the pagan Schools) took in simultaneous consideration of both 'halves' of the School's structural scaffolding: the conceptual and the practical.

In my view, the foundational doctrines, the dogmas on which the Christian School is based, can be ‘split’ into two sets:

- the primary ones: the first-degree truths. These are the dogmas that are not subject to discussion or debate;
- the secondary ones: second, third (or lower) degree truths. These are those doctrines that are continuously debated, rejected, or renewed.

It is important to note that these two sets of truths are, in the end, one and the same: the ‘split’ defines only polarizations, and not pluralizations. There is only one Truth, thus no plurality is to be allowed whatsoever.

When it comes to the first set, I would suggest that one ‘first-degree Truth’ around which the School is situated is the total denial of the Hellenistic Forms, or Ideas. Given that the recognition of the Forms influenced, as briefly seen, understanding and

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524 The members of the School start to be called Christians pretty early. In the Acts of the Apostles, written around 80-90 AD, “it is said that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26).
experience of the world – and everything within it (from subjects, objects, language etc.) – at all possible levels, it means that once such a denial happens, it triggers with it a gargantuan snowball effect. Radical reevaluations, or retranslations have to be made in order to align everything to a narrative that does not recognize the existence of such Forms. To the second set of truths usually belong the *intra-* and the *inter-*confessional distinctions\(^{526}\), the disciplinary measures\(^{527}\) and so forth.

In relation to these dogmas, the following section briefly discusses the issue of the *interpretive grille* or the *hermeneutic filter*. I have not covered this previously, i.e. in relation to the Hellenistic Schools, mainly because the main focus of this work is on the Christian School itself, and its impact on various domains.

### 2.1.1.1 The issue of the ‘interpretive grille’

In his book *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (1984), the historian of ideas Ioan Coulianu writes that the uniqueness of a certain historical period should not be

> “measured by the content of its ideological systems\(^{528}\) but rather by [...] the interpretive grille it interposes between preexisting contents and their ‘modern’ treatment.”\(^{529}\)

According to the same historian, the ideological systems “of a given period\(^{530}\) [...] are fundamentally recursive in nature”\(^{531}\), which means that they are dynamic, changing all the time in appearance, message and location. Unlike the grille itself (which rarely, if ever, changes), these systems are carriers of both the grille and the ontology of the School. The grille, however, is *not* the ontology of the School, and neither are these ideological systems.

This grille, or ‘hermeneutic filter’ of a certain School, acts in two ways (simultaneously):
- it is oriented outward, i.e. towards the dogmatic content that is outside the School itself. It stands like a ‘fence’ between the School it defines (and its ontology) and all the other Schools out there, setting forth a highly complex, yet subtle mechanism of filtering. Through it, everything that comes from other Schools and their ontologies (in terms of practices, theories, concepts etc.) is carefully transmuted in order to align all these elements to the fundamental principles (dogmas) of a given School. Importantly, this is not to be mistaken for cultural filtering, as the notion of culture itself is but a product of such filtering;

- it is oriented inward, i.e. towards the content that is inside the School itself. It acts, through mechanisms of emphasis, suppression, and inversion. On one hand, all the content that was let in is continuously purified and retranslated. On the other hand, this content continuously mutates, creating ‘ideological systems’ of oppression (suppression) and / or empowerment (emphasis). The mechanism of inversion usually affects the direction of a certain ‘ideological system’ (its development) in that what usually seems to be a distancing from the perceived structure of oppression (with the additional creation of an alternative) or the status quo is actually a move towards the dogmatic core of the Christian School, i.e. the ‘first-degree truths’. The dissociation is a stronger association. This is visible especially in the case of articulations such as postmodernism, post-structuralism, non-representationalism and other similar ones. Additionally, in the vast majority of cases, it is these systems that form the focus of debates and criticism and almost never the grille itself.\textsuperscript{532}

The main challenge here is to see not only what is preeminently and immediately revealed, the phenomena\textsuperscript{533} or the ideological systems, but precisely that which is not revealed: the grille (in its outward and inward expressions) that creates the content, and the dogmas, through which such content is expressed\textsuperscript{534}. The ontology itself, which is always one per School\textsuperscript{535}, does not produce anything, but is the one against which everything is judged.

It might be said that, up to a point, all this describes a contextual case of the Foucauldian notion of dispositif\textsuperscript{536}. While this is true, there are some fundamental differences to consider. As Agamben noted\textsuperscript{537}, the apparatuses are in no way a contemporary creation, and they are not to be associated with a specific School. While

\textsuperscript{532} See Couliano 1987: 11.
\textsuperscript{533} Couliano 1987: 11-12.
\textsuperscript{534} As suppressions and / or emphases.
\textsuperscript{535} There is no School that can recognize more than one ontology.
\textsuperscript{536} Foucault 1980: 194, 196.
\textsuperscript{537} Agamben 2009.
this may be true, the Christian School is arguably the only School urging its own members, for reasons I hope will become clear as I proceed, to continuously try to annihilate its own apparatus, to repudiate it (as a theory, as a universal, as a limit / separation etc.), to do whatever is in their power to get out of it. In order to be able to promote such tensions, the School introduces its own dispositif as a thoroughly bleak and oppressive one. The next move is to apply this particular view to every other apparatus: breaking free from one means breaking free from all.

Foucault and Couliano, his younger contemporary, where not the only ones pointing towards the existence of such a (self-denying, suicidal) structure. Referring specifically to Christianity, Wittgenstein noted that

“I am not thinking of these dogmas as determining men's opinions but rather as completely controlling the expression of all opinions [...] Any practical opinion can [and should] be made to harmonize with (the dogmas); admittedly more easily in some cases than in others.”

He then adds that this dispositif is “not a wall setting limits to what can be believed” but, I would say, quite the contrary: there should be no limits to what can be believed and done, there should be no walls forming within, or separations. The ‘no limits’ commandment should be observed by everyone who follows the School’s demands (be it as a member, or not). Heidegger too noted, in Being and Time, that

“a dogma has taken shape which not only declares that the question of the meaning of being is superfluous but sanctions its neglect [...] Whoever persists in asking about [οὐσία] is accused of an error of method [...] A questioning of being is not needed.”

As I said, one of the peculiarities of the Christian School is that it actively encourages its followers to go against its own features. In the vast majority of cases, those who do so tend to identify those issues – which I call ‘metaphysical rests’ – with the School itself, as a whole: getting rid of them means getting rid of the School itself and its teachings and dogmas. As it happens, even though they are already completely filtered, these “metaphysical rests” are still problematic because they keep the elements they

538 For some authors, this hopelessness is expressed even more radically through ‘there is no way out’ type of tropes – this ‘no way out’ being extended over all other possible worldviews. In other words, there is nothing that is not oppressive out there.
541 Heidegger 1996: 1, 2.
542 These ‘rests’ usually, if not always, escape deconstruction, falsifiability etc.
inform in tension with the School’s purer ‘first-degree truths’. By attacking them, the much stricter ‘first-degree truths’ gain precedence over the lower ones. As such, as Wittgenstein himself expressed it, people end up living under an absolute [dogmatic] tyranny, though without being able to say they are not free.

The absence of limits — (be it as a desirable ideal or as a concrete situation), in itself the result of such a ‘tyrannical’ dogmatic imposition, thus in no way a natural achievement — renders more and more people unable to claim that they are not free. Every time another limit is broken, another ‘metaphysical rest’ or present presence gets cancelled, the ‘freedom area’ expands a bit more. As Žižek noted, “[w]e feel free because we lack the very language to articulate our unfreedom”, i.e. we lack the Form-al side of the language. In other words, what we lack is the very language to express boundedness, limitations and Form-al closures. We are not able to say ‘we are not free’ in a world that does not recognize limits.

Because the mechanisms of emphasis, suppression, and inversion always act together and simultaneously, with that freedom always comes the creation of another oppressive limit. As we begin to destroy it, the mechanism of inversion starts rolling: moving away (from the oppressive limit) means moving towards (the core of the School). In other words, it is usually the social expression of dogma in its more purified form that tends to be approached as an example of freedom: the fewer the limits, the better. Which is to say, the purer the dogma, the more liberal its form(s) of expression will be. Equally, those structures that retain (reformed) ‘rests’ from other Schools tend to be seen as despotic and retrograde (hierarchical societies based on traditional, usually violent practices etc.). In its quest for pure expression, it becomes the same dogma that goes against its own less pure polarizations, pressing for their annihilation, rather than something that comes from an outside – another School, i.e. a different ontology. If we then approach these dogmas as a whole, we can see how right Wittgenstein is when he introduces them as “irrefutable”, “unshakable”, “and beyond the reach of attack”: destroying them means embracing them, only in a stricter, more tyrannical form.

543 However, a complete rejection of these elements from the School’s structure would never be possible, and not even desirable.
544 Wittgenstein 2006: 258.
545 One of the results of the Lyotardian war waged against totality.
546 Žižek 2002: 2.
547 Wittgenstein 2006: 258, 259.
Another important point to be made here is that these Christian dogmas, unlike the Hellenistic ones, are expressions of an essence that is ultimately absent. In other words, as we shall see, ‘behind’ them there is nothing. From this perspective, the dogmas are on the same level with the grille and the ideological systems of a given period: the dogmas too are not to be equated with the School’s ontology, as they are only expressions of it. Whereas the issues that refer to God in terms of essence are necessarily expressed through negations (apophatically), His actions are usually, but not necessarily, expressed through affirmations (cataphatically). As both expressions refer to the same God, it means that the absence expressed by the apophatic utterance is not and should not be resolved by the cataphatic one.

Let us see how is all this works when related to something that is not so overtly theological, but quite the opposite.

As pointed out by Agamben, the term dispositif comes from the Latin dispositio, which, in its turn, is a translation of the Greek term οἰκονομία [οικονομία]. I believe that what we face here is not just one translation, but in fact two. Aside from the evident philological one, a much-less evident translation was performed as well: a dogmatic translation. As such, dispositio simultaneously translates and radically cancels the e.g. Hellenistic / Aristotelian Form-al understanding of οἰκονομία. Once filtered, the concept is let into the School, being introduced by Agamben as a non-theological, purely practical activity of management and administration. This has nothing to do with Aristotle’s model. Then, the School goes against the ‘metaphysical rests’ that survive within it, these ‘rests’ being indeed (reformed, yet undeconstructable) issues taken from Aristotle’s system. As Agamben points out, it was only with the Church Fathers that “the Greek term οἰκονομία develops a decisive theological function”. The Italian philosopher seems indeed to go against the School.

Between the main (if we are to follow the School) / earliest (if we are to follow the chronology) architects of this dispositif are theologians such as “Tertullian, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and many others”. Agamben then asks the somehow unavoidable question: in what way, then, can we confront this bleak situation, what strategy must we follow in our everyday struggle against the crushing forces of the dispositif? The answer the notable Italian thinker offers points towards the urgency to ‘end the Sacrifice’.

The ‘end of Sacrifice’ trope is a profound and very complex one, with deep ramifications within the Christian School’s theological teachings.

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548 Agamben 2009: 11.
549 Agamben 2009: 8, 9.
550 Agamben 2009: 8, 11.
552 Agamben 2009: 15.
Defining religion as “that which removes [...] to a separate sphere”\textsuperscript{553}, Agamben shows that, as there is “no religion without separation”, there is no separation which does not “contains or conserves\textsuperscript{554} in itself a genuinely religious nucleus” either\textsuperscript{555}. What, in turn, “activates and regulates\textsuperscript{556} this separation is the Sacrifice. As we shall see, this is indeed where the mechanism of inversion starts spinning: if there is a School that completely denies the Sacrifice, that is the Christian one. Using the aforementioned Fathers in order to motivate the subsequent move against the Sacrifice(s) represents in no way a move against the Christian School itself, but one against everything this School stands against. As I tried to show in my depiction of the fundamental structure of the Christian School, every time Agamben (as many others) identify a ‘rest’ that is at odds with this School’s ‘first-degree truths’ (and the Sacrifice the way he presents it, is very much so), he extends it over all others: denying the Sacrifice in one School means denying it in all of them.

To return, if the Sacrifice is the problem (suppression), what is the answer (emphasis)? According to Agamben, the answer is profanation. Profanation

“is the counter-apparatus that restores to common use what sacrifice had separated and divided.”\textsuperscript{557}

If we now know at least some of the architects of the dispositif in its current form (Irenaeus and relevant others), Agamben seems to see himself as the originator of this idea of profanation as the counter-apparatus. Profanation will bring the Sacrifice to an end by returning “to common use [...] what has been captured and separated”\textsuperscript{558}. Ironically, with a closer look, however, the most vocal opponents of Sacrifice were exactly the same Fathers of the Church (Tertullian, Irenaeus) that laid down, according to Agamben, the foundations of the dispositif – an issue the Italian thinker seems to be completely unaware of. The opening he thus seeks, under the School’s pressure, is indeed a move towards its first-degree truths.

The matter of profanation is an important one for our topic here, as it directly links the issue of “the end of Sacrifice” with the one of Posthumanism. Donna Haraway posits her Cyborg Manifesto within the space opened up by ‘blasphemy’ – which is only another name for ‘profanation’:

\textsuperscript{553} Agamben 2009: 18. My emph.
\textsuperscript{554} Contains and conserves, thus closure and fixity.
\textsuperscript{555} Agamben 2009: 18.
\textsuperscript{556} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{557} Agamben 2009: 19.
\textsuperscript{558} Agamben 2009: 24.
“At the centre of [...] my blasphemy, is the image of the cyborg.”

The question is, again: next to what does the image of the cyborg, i.e. of the contingent, the partial, the incoherent become blasphemous? Definitely not next to dogmatic Christianity, where breaking the limits through the Form’s denial is not a blasphemy, but a dogmatic imposition.

2.1.1.2 Membership

Perhaps unlike the Hellenistic philosophical Schools, the Christian School is defined by a peculiar sense of membership. The most important point to be made here is that the Christian School should not be equated with the Church. As I noted above, the previously mentioned School continuously urges its own members to annihilate its apparatus, to repudiate it in whatever form it might be identified: as a law expressing a T/truth, as a normative structure, a metanarrative etc. As such, an important distinction ought to be made here, that is, between membership and following. Of course, not everyone that is not a member of the Christian School (one which usually, but not necessarily, defines him / herself as a churchgoer or a practicing Christian), follows the percepts of the School. But the number of those who do follow the dogmatic worldview proposed by the School is much, much larger than the ones who claim membership.

The much-debated relationship between science and religion might be used as an illustrative example here. Science (although, as Christianity, not a monolithic structure in itself) represents the Christian expression that is closest to the dogmatic core made of the ‘first-degree truths’. Which means that it does not need – in order to spread itself across cultures – to appeal to any (easily) recognizable “second-degree truths”, such as e.g. teleological arguments, notions of intelligent design. In fact, the dogmatic and theological imperative is precisely not to bring the ‘second-degree truths’ into the scientific worldview. Ideally speaking, the scientific method and its discourse is thus to be based on ‘first-degree truths’ only. In other words, on the ones that are not open to discussion.

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559 Haraway 1985: 291.
560 Truths, which, more often than not, carry with them ‘metaphysical rests’ – making them (the Truths) subject to heated debates within or between various Christian denominations.
561 Another reason behind the rejection of the second, or lower, degree dogmatic truths from the scientific worldview / discourse might be the fact that most of the fathers of the New Science (Bacon, Barrow etc.) displayed a strong ecumenical commitment. And it was precisely the second-degree dogmatic Truths that stood (and still stand) against the desired unity.
2.2 Reversing the ek / ex (ἐκ). From intentionality to agency, and from the contemplative ‘inward’ to the practical ‘outward’

Often used interchangeably, intentionality and agency are central issues within contemporary phenomenological debates, cultural consumer research and postmodern marketing scholarship. However, whereas intentionality gets mentioned only now and then, the use of agency is far more visible.

As I showed in the first part of this work, the terminology of intentionality belonged to specific worldviews, views that contrasted on many levels with the dogmatic structure of the Christian School. Which means that saying that the contemporary terminology of intentionality “can be traced back to the Stoic theory of vision”\textsuperscript{562} would be incorrect. Nonetheless, the hegemonikon, i.e. the ‘ruling principle’ and, of course, intentio entered into the Christian School early on.

In his Commentary on the Gospel of John, the Christian thinker Origen says the following:

“our hegemonikon is not free from agitation.”\textsuperscript{563}

When addressing the subject, Origen is indeed linking the heart\textsuperscript{564}, the ‘ruling principle’ and sight, proving that if one is affected, so too are the others. This small line above might indeed seem a trivial thing to say, but when compared with the views Hellenistic thinkers had on the issue, it is indeed a radical claim. What the Alexandrian theologian is doing here is smashing the division between the Form-al part of the hegemonikon and the one in which phantasms and impulses arise. In other words, the part where the phantasms and impulses arise is the only one that is left\textsuperscript{565}. The consequences of this move are enormous. First, as Origen himself noted, perceiving the essence of things, through a ‘ruling principle’ able to extract, by itself, the logos from the collected eidola, is beyond our ability. Second, the ‘ruling principle’ falls completely into the sphere of pragma. There is no separable, undisturbable divine in-itself supra-lunar ‘half’ anymore.

\textsuperscript{562} Caston 2007.
\textsuperscript{563} Origen 1862: 357.
\textsuperscript{564} Since the heart is in the middle of the whole body, and the hegemonikon is in the heart, the saying, “in your middle stands One whom you do not know / perceive” [John 1:26] can be understood as the logos which is within each (human being) (Origen 1862: 177).
\textsuperscript{565} Laertius 1925: 262, 263.
Speaking about the election of Simon the Apostle, Origen wrote:

“Christ looked approvingly to Simon, getting into and enlightening his 
hegemonikon through gazing at it.”

Here we arrive at the third radical change: light is not an inner quality of the created 
hegemonikon, but it comes from an outside source, a derivative one. The circle that 
Chrysippus described when saying that people were sinking into themselves in order to 
find themselves, is broken. In the Gospel of John, Christ said that

“I am light of the world.”

What this means, and we see it clearly in Origen’s comment, is that our inner light got 
extinguished. We can still have it, but only derivatively. In other words, we can still have 
light, but only from a source that is outside of ourselves: light became a gift. As the light 
comes from outside, the move towards it is an outward one. There is only one source of 
light, and because of this, nothing else has light in itself.

Augustine, following Origen in the quest of de-Form-alizing the Hellenistic 
hegemonikon, does not make a distinction either between its undisturbed area and the 
one in which phantasms and impulses arise: for him, they are both one and the same. In 
other words, what you see is what you get: whenever we gaze at something that 
contingently offers itself as (a house, a human being, or a book), the essence of that 
presence is absent. There is nothing in there that precedes the illusory contingencies, that is, 
it has been there before our gaze. In order to make this point very clear, Augustine makes 
use of Stoic texts – while, of course, approaching them through Christian lenses. In his 
monumental City of God, he tells a story taken from the Attic Nights, a text by the 2nd 
century grammarian Aulus Gellius. Gellius tells of being onboard a storm-tossed ship in 
the company of a Stoic who turned pale, apparently with fright. When the storm passed, 
Gellius asked the Stoic to explain the meaning of his pallor, since actual fright would have 
been inconsistent with the calmness and detachment (ataraxia) of a Stoic sage. In 
response, the Stoic told him that everyone, while in his becoming, wise or foolish, 
experiences involuntary impressions (phantasiae). But it is only the fool, however, that 
arouses to the impression; the wise person uses these while going further [to the 
noeta]. The Stoic wanted Gellius to know that his pallor gave no reliable indication of

567 John 8:12.
what he was really thinking or valuing at the time. In other words, the appearances should not be taken as an indicator for certain knowledge.

Augustine however treats the Stoic’s explanations as a merely verbal maneuver, which concedes that anxiety (perturbatio) does befall the Stoic sage. As the reading of Origen’s approach to the issue shows, Augustine’s understanding makes perfect sense. In other words, the only reason Augustine invokes the anecdote is to show that passions affect the Stoic hegemonikon as a whole; there is no ‘undisturbed’ part left. The Stoic philosopher in the storm did not succeed in giving no weight to his own life, but he failed. Everybody saw his panic and its signs (pallor, fright). However, the failure occurred not because the Stoic from the Gellius story was a mediocre character, but because, for Augustine, there was no way not to fail. That is to say that, if instead of that Stoic, either Zeno or Chrysippus would have stood there instead, they would have equally failed the test of the storm.

The idea here is not that Augustine ‘misunderstood’ the Stoic system, as Sorabji repeatedly put it, or because he was philosophically ‘unprepared’ to understand the Stoic distinctions. Augustine knew very well what he was facing there, but had a vested interest in not letting important Stoic distinctions make their way into the Christian School. In one single move, Augustine is arguing not only against the possibility of Stoic ataraxia, but also against the hegemonikon as a self-existing, divine in-itself structure. Left to its mercy, humans act as completely pathetic beings, utterly at the mercy of their impulses - while trying to find pitiful explanations such as ‘it is not what it looks like’. For Augustine, as for Origen, it is exactly what it looks like, there are no inner depths left – within which we can meet the perfectly realized self.

Obviously, all this greatly affected the understanding of intentio. Although Augustine uses the term throughout his oeuvre, it no longer has anything to do with its original understanding. Augustine’s world was one devoid of Forms, one in which the access to the essences of the created natures and God is denied. As such, the arch that took place between the hegemonikon of the gazer and the ousia of the (eternal) nature gazed upon was broken.

The moment when Christ chose Simon by enlightening his hegemonikon, that instance, that (unannounced) event represented the moment when we stopped being intentional subjects and became agentic objects of. It was indeed an act of baptism, through which Simon became another person: Peter. This radical change in perspective

(understood as an optical term too) happened through ontological gazing: Christ looked at Simon (ἐμβλέψας αὐτῶν).

Let us now go forward a bit (chronologically speaking).

Descartes would follow the Patristic lead, albeit differently. If Origen and then Augustine (to name but two) denied the ‘split’ between the unaffected / ‘passive’ parts and the impressionable ones of the hegemonikon, Descartes goes the other way. Indeed, the French thinker imposes a radical separation between the senses and the psyche. For him, in order to understand the metaphysical realities (of innate ideas), “the mind must be withdrawn from the senses”\(^{572}\). What interests us here is that this monotheistic, Kierkegaardian “Either/Or” approach\(^{573}\) united Origen, Augustine and Descartes in that the hegemonikon (understood from a Hellenistic point of view, i.e. as the site of Being) gets rejected in both cases. Even though it might appear that Descartes stands here against the Christian theologians, he actually does not, the logical conclusion of his argument being exactly the same: if in the first scenario there is nothing in the mind that can be approached separately from the senses, in the second one the mind does not need the senses at all.

Although the attacks against it – and its subsequent reformations – started from very early on (late 2nd century AD), the question of intentionality never completely disappeared from the conceptual firmament of the Christian School. In his book *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, Heidegger wrote that

> “[w]e must [...] make intentionality itself into a problem. Intentionality is indeed related to the beings themselves and, in this sense, is an ontic\(^{574}\) transcending comportment, but it does not primordially constitute this relating-to but is founded in a being-by beings. This being-by is [...] grounded in [ontological] existence.”\(^{575}\)

Making ontic intentionality into a problem means showing that it is a problem. In his *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger makes this point very clear:

> “The idea of a subject which has intentional experiences merely inside its own sphere and is not [...] outside it but encapsulated within itself is an absurdity.”\(^{576}\)

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\(^{572}\) As quoted in Menn 1998: 222.

\(^{573}\) Either no demarcation at all (Origen, Augustine), or radical demarcation (Descartes).

\(^{574}\) From ὄν, ὄντος.

\(^{575}\) Heidegger 1984: 134. My emph.

\(^{576}\) Heidegger 1982: 64. My emph.
Granted, Heidegger claims this in a Kantian context. And if this already twice reformed version of intentionality sounds absurd, let us imagine how much more absurd the Hellenistic version is by comparison, which would imply that simply immanentizing intentionality is not enough. More work has to be done.

How then can we use, as Graham Harman does, one of the founding fathers of ‘speculative realism’ and ‘object-oriented ontology’577, the term “intentional object”578 while simultaneously recognizing that the object’s essence is “withdrawn from any human access”579. It is thus clear that Harman’s construction ‘intentional object’ actually means ‘agentic object’.

The rejection of Forms brought with it a reversal in the understanding of space. For Deleuze, the inside is nothing else but “an operation of the outside”580, thus not at all a Form-al within. In his book on Foucault, he wrote:

“in all his work Foucault seems haunted by this theme of an inside which is merely the fold of the outside [...] On the subject of the Renaissance madman who is put to sea in his boat, Foucault wrote: 'he is put in the interior of the exterior, and inversely [...] a prisoner in the midst of what is the freest, the openest of routes: bound fast at the infinite crossroads'.581

Prisoners of the infinite, limitless openness, the unin-Form-ed endless becoming. Although in some cases it looks like ‘the old notion of interiority’ was brought back, that is not the case: the deep foldings did not resuscitate that understanding of interiority at all, “but constituted instead a new inside of this outside”582. The within gets thus turned over itself and the result gets turned over itself again, and again, and again: this “is the fold of the infinite”583.

One very important point is to be made here. Descartes has been repeatedly and harshly criticized (and rightfully so) for separating the subject, for putting it in an outside. He said that himself: the mind must be withdrawn from the senses. The issue here however is that it was not the entire mind that he abstracted, but only the part of it that contained the ‘innate ideas’. What was before only separable (the hegemonikon), now becomes completely separate. Which means that Descartes’ one subject – because of its ‘innate ideas’ – occupied simultaneously:

577 Which has been defined as “a radically de-humanized objectivism” (Fuller 2014).
578 Harman 2005: 162.
582 Deleuze 1988: 81.
583 Deleuze 1988: 80.
- a (already reformed) metaphysically tainted outside, i.e. the part of the mind that was the seat of the innate ideas,

- a more dogmatically correct exteriority, i.e. the rest of the mind (the adventitious and imaginative part), and the body.

In other words, Descartes’ subject occupied both an outside and an exterior. What then postmodernity (and the related approaches) is doing through its diatribes against Descartes and other authors guilty of keeping the ‘rest’ alive, is that it is canceling the subject’s access to an (metaphysically tainted) outside (of the reach of the senses), while keeping the exteriority untouched.

Within the fields of cultural consumer research, postmodern marketing and posthuman consumer culture, mistaking outsidedness for exteriority (while misunderstanding the latter) is quite commonplace. This leads to the impression that once the cartesian ‘rest’ is solved, the subject will stop being an outsider, being able to finally

“connect and reconnect itself, that is, to permanently set itself in relation to its environment.”

In reality however, and as many post- thinkers have already pointed out, once the ‘rest’ is eliminated, the subject remains what it already was: an external ‘structure bound fast at the infinite crossroads’, an agentic automaton functioning on infinite feedback loops, i.e. a cyborg. Following Descartes, the world is missing but only one cyborg, everything in it being already populated by cyborgs of different shapes and indefinite extensions.

The issue of agency “cuts to the heart of critical theory”585, thus cultural, interpretivist, and posthuman consumer culture research. Although they have attracted heavy criticism, especially when starting to resemble “the fundamental modernist idea(s) regarding the individual”, being thus approached as essential and fixed, rather than constructed and ephemeral586, those approaches that stress consumer agency have been vital to the cultural consumer research tradition587. However, as Askegaard and Linnet note, the problem is that, more often than not, agency has been understood from a psychological, i.e. mind-centered perspective, with the consumer having been ‘discovered’

584 Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 664. My emph. The use of the term ‘permanently’ is crucial here: one cannot stop from permanently becoming a new human. In the moment one will be a ‘new human’, he will immediately become an ‘old nature’.
585 Murray and Ozanne 1991: 141.
as “the locus of [...] intention”\textsuperscript{588}. In turn, this has led to a voluminous body of work focusing on “consumer identity projects”\textsuperscript{589}, where ‘identity’, although always recognized as being socially constructed, is exceedingly close to an essentialist structure. This, from a Christian dogmatic perspective, is indeed very problematic.

I think Askegaard and Linnet’s 2011 paper is both an interesting one and seminal to the issue of agency within cultural consumer research, and this for a number of reasons. First, the paper seems to approach critically both the postmodern tendency and the scientific one. The authors are right in pointing out that, ironically,

“lived experiences’ of ‘real people’ became the standard (pun intended) behind which flocks of consumer researchers could rally in the paradigmatic fight against the ‘modelers’ of the ‘normal science view’.”\textsuperscript{590}

In other words, whereas the science might be gone (don’t hold your breath), the standard ‘real people’, i.e. the individualist, agentic consumers, are not. According to Arnould,

“the notion of agency attributes [...] some form of innate capacity [...] or intention to actors and their action.”

From here to approach the consumers as autonomous structures, able

“to emancipate themselves, to develop reflexive distance\textsuperscript{591} from the marketing code”\textsuperscript{592}

is but only a step.

Second, Askegaard and Linnet’s paper offers itself as a

“word of warning against letting contemporary individualism [...] overshadow the notion that the human being is first and foremost a social and cultural animal.”

It should then come to no surprise that, by supporting these models, “CCT work shows a propensity to turn inward”\textsuperscript{593}. This has to indeed be reversed, the challenge being to approach reality as it goes forth from itself\textsuperscript{594}. Indeed, but old habits die hard.

\textsuperscript{588} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{589} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{590} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{591} To step outside, entering in a Cartesian theatre.
\textsuperscript{592} Arnould 2007: 100. My emph.
\textsuperscript{593} Askegaard and Linnet 2011: 394. My emph.
\textsuperscript{594}
Askegaard and Linnet’s piece does not escape the confines of the dogmatic structure of the Christian School, quite the opposite. From this perspective its claims, as its directionality, are indeed the right ones. While asking for “a more contextually sensitive epistemology that emphasizes the social structuration of consumer practices”\textsuperscript{595}, it is evident that the actual outcomes of this call should not contain also the model of the consumer the authors just discredited. The quest for openness has its hard, unbreakable limits. Quoting affirmatively the marketing scholar Dominique Bouchet, the authors then say that

“the identification within the social of a space beyond intentionality’ finally gives us the opportunity ‘to reflect upon the complexity of the social bond’”.\textsuperscript{596}

Intentionality should not survive and, with it, a form of agency that follows it too closely. A ‘space beyond intentionality’ will finally open itself to more radical, critical aspects in contemporary consumer culture\textsuperscript{597}. A thrice-reformed form of agency appears, one that emerges in relation, and not as an intrinsic quality of either subjects or objects\textsuperscript{598}. A dialogic should then replace a dialectic approach\textsuperscript{599}. But let us be very clear in here: the dialectic that the dialogic is supposed to replace is an already reformed kind of dialectics, which means that the dialogic represents a purer version of it, not a real replacement. The dialogic method will help in avoiding the dangers of the ‘totalizing and dogmatic visions of the world’, views characterized by ‘closed reasoning’. Unlike dialectics, the dialogic approach does not resolve; in other words, it cannot / should not make T/truth claims. At the same time, the dialogic has to be ‘broken down into a number of constituent dialogics’. As with the Lyotardian prescriptions, in order to avoid the transformation of the dialogic back into a (de-Form-alized) dialectic, the former has to follow an uninterrupted dynamism. In the moment this constant, infinite breaking stops, “knowledge degrades”, falling into “objectivism”, “no invention”, i.e. stagnation, and “dogmatism”\textsuperscript{600}. Once the creation of the ‘new’ stops, the world is again in danger of falling back into the pitfalls of paganism, idolatry and representation.

\textsuperscript{594} Askegaard and Linnet 2011: 390.  
\textsuperscript{595} Askegaard and Linnet 2011: 396. My emph.  
\textsuperscript{596} Askegaard and Linnet 2011: 397. My emph.  
\textsuperscript{597} Askegaard and Linnet 2011: 386.  
\textsuperscript{598} Borgerson 2005: 441.  
\textsuperscript{599} Askegaard and Linnet 2011: 387.  
\textsuperscript{600} Askegaard and Linnet 2011: 398.
2.3 The ‘linear perspective’ and the rise of the contemporary technological object (the gadget)

“Without a knowledge of history and philosophy of religions, one cannot come to grips with what I have termed ‘technological fundamentalism’”

- Paul Virilio\textsuperscript{601}

“Could it be that the photograph [...] (is) able faithfully to represent its object [...] without fear of idolatry?”

- Devin Singh\textsuperscript{602}

As we have seen in the first part, the ‘natural perspective’ expressed a world that was alive, divine, and able to move by itself – thus not derivatively. That was a world perceived through, as Deleuze described it, ‘optical-tactile’ intentional seeing. In addition, the divine, enmattered Forms were fully accessible, but only through matter and the senses. This in turn, defined, as Florensky put it, a polycentric type of representation, one that mirrored polytheistic religious systems\textsuperscript{603}; each element of the representation had “its own perspective center”, “its own visual angle”, “its own horizon” of teleological becoming\textsuperscript{604}. In other words, the heathen polycentrim recognized multiple ‘final causes’, i.e. Gods. With the Forms, and thus the Pantheon gone, an important task of the Christian School was to envision a perspectival theory that would be in line with its dogmatic structure.

As with many other issues, the polycentric style of representation did not ‘remain’ in Antiquity, but it entered the Christian Middle Ages: the ‘odd’ distortions at play in the natural perspective did not vanish. As Alexandre Benois noted in his monumental \textit{A History of Painting of All Periods and All Nations},

\textsuperscript{601} Armitage 2001: 36.
\textsuperscript{602} Singh 2015: 251.
\textsuperscript{603} Lange 1877.
\textsuperscript{604} As quoted in Cristescu 2009: 42.
“the [Christian] mediaeval artists have no conception of making lines converge towards a single point, or of the significance of the horizon. It is as if [...] Byzantine artists had never seen buildings in nature [...] They were equally unconcerned with proportions.”

This situation did not define only the Constantinopolitan art, or the Eastern territories of the Roman Empire. Such ‘distortions’ were present in its Western side too. In the mosaic images in San Vitale in Ravenna (6th century AD), there is no horizon line or vanishing point; the figures are not organized in a space projected, through a grid of lines and planes, in a single direction. Indeed, the figures represented seem to float.

I find it fascinating that Florensky thought that Byzantine art (in itself an expression of a monotheistic School) followed natural perspective in the same way Hellenistic art (an expression of a polytheistic worldview) did – making the latter a sort of a rightful heir of the former. According to him, it is only because of the Latin West and its Scholastic theology that this way of representing the world started to disappear. According to Florensky, the dawn of Modernity — in itself a love child of Latin Christianity — brought it then to a definite end. That is, of course, not the case. The same School reigned all powerful in the West, as it did in the East. Not realizing this, might, again, suggest that Byzantine spirituality (as the one followed by the Orthodox Church) might offer a viable alternative to some of the current perceived problems. Deleuze already signaled this when he remarked that art critics find themselves puzzled when trying to figure out

“how Byzantine art remains linked to classical Greek art while at the same time, from another point of view, it breaks completely with classical Greek art.”

There is no continuity here; everything that seems to be Hellenistic is an already reformed ‘rest’, one occupying a rather awkward dogmatic space.

However, these elements did not enter into the School without first passing through its ‘hermeneutic grille’. Not taking this into account will make us think – as indeed the vast majority of scholars do, with some notable exceptions – that there was continuity between the Hellenistic period and the Middle Ages. Which also means that the subsequent developments in the perspectival techniques are in no way to be approached as being dictated by specific ideological forces, but as natural developments

606 Hendrix 2013: 37.
607 In its various expressions: the Sienese School, the early Russian and the Greek one, Romanian etc.
that could have happened anywhere. The fact that they appeared within a specific cultural environment is a pure contingency: everyone claiming membership to the Homo Sapiens’ club might have, at some point, stumbled upon such an idea.

As Pentcheva shows in her excellent study *The sensual icon* (2010), the word *eikon* (ἐἰκών) had in Byzantium a wide semantic spectrum ranging from the Saints’ bodies permeated by the Holy Spirit, to imprinted images on the surfaces of metal, stone, and earth. Eikon designated matter imbued with divine pneuma. Now, that pneuma was God’s Holy Spirit, *not* the same pneuma that Aristotle, Cicero and others were writing about. It was a given sacred pneuma, not an inherently existing one. Starting with the Middle Byzantine period (c. 843 - 1204), thus immediately after the Iconoclast crisis609, the sacred powers were exorcised from the representations, the contact with an objectified, essential holy being explicitly denied. The iconophiles (those who stood against the iconoclasts) ceased to defend the belief that pneuma was captured in such objects. What remained was the *shape* and the imprinted *image*; i.e. in Heidegger’s terms, only what it was offering itself as. The new token exemplified the ideal set after the victory against Iconoclasm: a shape void of pneuma610.

Shapes void of pneuma, or Forms. The plurality of the Forms was denied, the only Form that was still recognized being God’s *essence*: His unknown, separate, and eternally unapproachable ousia. Given the complete absence of the Hellenistic Forms, there was nothing *natural* (in the Hellenistic sense) within this sphere anymore: everything was *artificial*, made, created. Given this, how might the *polycentric* type of representation then be defended and sustained? The simple answer is: it cannot be.

It is important to remember that, following Kuhn, such reforms did not come into being one step at a time, but *all at once*, though the actual pace of implementation varied. They also did not follow realizations based on empirical observations – as we would think today. In other words, the order of implementation was not: empirical observation, test, implementation, test and so forth. What we have here is a fierce battle between multiple ontologies, a gigantomachy of a rare violence in which those elements that did / do not conform with the School’s dogmatic structure had to be completely annihilated, *regardless* of their potential good use from an empirical point of view (although, following the analyses introduced in the first part, there was not much chance of this occurring).

What happened in Byzantium in relation to the icon – which, in the end, had nothing to do with the icon per se, but with the way in which matter has to be approached – affected other types of representation as well, e.g. architecture. Indeed, as

609 The Iconoclast statement of 754 singled out the painted icon as a blasphemy, with painting being exposed as a pagan craft. The falsity of the painted icon was further exposed for its use of *dead matter* (Pentcheva 2010: 65). My emph.

Michel de Certeau wrote, a “new way of seeing is giving rise to a way of constructing”.

According to the leading art historian Erwin Panofsky, as he put it in his seminal essay *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (1927) – defined as “one of the most important works on the history and nature of pictorial space”.

*“the Romanesque destroyed the last remnants of the antique perspectival.”*

Chronologically speaking, we are now around year 1000: the ‘Dark Ages’. Although as of late the term has been criticised, the metaphor is telling: the fiery rays pouring forth from the hegemonikon (which was indeed the psyche), of which Chrysippus (among others) was talking, started to dim greatly, and then go extinct. Light was only to be received from an external source, and then given away: light became a gift. The commandment expressed in John 15:13 – giving the psyche – included giving the light and the fiery rays as well. The issue here however, is that neither the psyche, nor the light originate in the giver. The annulment of the Hellenistic model is twofold: nothing I have is mine, and I must also give away that which is not mine. Total poverty, the Franciscan, mendicant ideal of ‘altissima paupertas’.

There is a central liturgical moment in the Orthodox Church that addresses the double characteristic of light – as stemming from a *unique source* and as a *derivative element* – and it happens right before the celebration of Easter. During the Great and Holy Thursday, the entire church is darkened by extinguishing all candles and lamps: the gesture represents the darkness of a world that does not have light in itself. Its unique source of light, Christ, is dead. Then, during the Easter Vigil, the most important liturgical celebration in the Orthodox Church, that of Christ’s Resurrection, one candle, the so-called Paschal candle, is lit. The priest then comes out from the altar with this one light and shouts:

*“Come, and receive the light from the inextinguishable Light!”*

With these words, the entire church, previously waiting in complete darkness, lights up, the faithful ones lighting their candles from the Paschal candle and then sharing their candlelight with those around them that do not yet have light, and so forth. While sharing  

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611 Certeau and Porter 1987: 3.  
612 As we remember, Chrysippus likened Euclid’s perspectival theorems to the Forms, and it is thus not by accident that Panofsky uses the same term in the title of his essay.  
615 Plotinus introduces the psyche as a Form (Plotinus 1969: 96).
the light that was given to them (so its not theirs), they also greet each other with “Christ is Risen!”

The point I am trying to make here is that this practice is in direct contradiction with the apparent multiplicity of light centers seen in the Byzantine icons. Florensky does indeed speak about “the contradictory illuminations in different parts of the icon”616 – a situation which, as Antoine Arnauld would say, threatens to remind us about the heathen polycentrim. No wonder the iconoclasts destroyed many of these artifacts, seeing them as perpetuating polytheistic understandings of the world.

Now, the iconographical has to be aligned with the liturgical, or, as Sarduy put it, an “epistemological solidarity between geometric and rhetorical figures”617 has to be established. Returning to the Franciscans, according to Florensky, whereas the first faint whiffs of Reformation

“were emitted by that innocent ‘lamb of God’, St. Francis of Assisi [...] the first instance of Franciscanism in art was Giottism.”618

Giotto is indeed considered by some scholars to be the father of modern landscape. As Panofsky wrote, “the founders of the modern perspectival view of space were the two great painters whose styles [...] completed the grand synthesis of Gothic and Byzantine: Giotto and Duccio.”619 However, the elements – both theoretical and practical – they used in creating a new representation of space, one which would be in line with the School’s dogmas, “were present already in Byzantine art”620

The ‘modern perspectival view of space’ Panofsky is talking about was defined for and foremost by two things:

- the idea that converging lines meet at a single vanishing point, directly opposite to the eye,
- all shapes get smaller in all directions with increasing distance from the eye.

These two points sound very natural to us, and we can thus only wonder what took so long (chronologically speaking) for the artists to arrive at such conclusions. However, there is much taken for granted in our assumption that these rules describe

616 Florensky 2002: 206.
617 Sarduy 2010: 293.
618 Florensky 2002: 220.
619 Panofsky 1991: 54.
620 Ibid. My emph.
exactly how things are in reality – thus for us, as for everybody else. In order to realize this, we have to remember two things:

- the first one is the Euclid’s theorem saying that the apparent sizes of things situated at unequal distances from the eye are not seen proportional to those distances,
- the second are Florensky and Pinnell’s points on the issue of movement. Euclid’s theorem is correct only in an in-Formed world that, from a pragma-tic perspective is in continuous movement, i.e. a world in which ‘objects change, move, turn their various sides towards the viewer, grow and shrink’. Accordingly, the painter himself was continuously moving through his / her own illustration, depicting what he sensed from a multitude of distances, angles etc. All this means that, in order for the two laws of the ‘costruzione legittima’ of the Renaissance to be right, two things have to happen:

a. the first is that both the gazer and the object gazed upon have to stop moving. That way, the converging lines will always meet at a single vanishing point, while all shapes will always keep the same proportion in relation to their distance from the eye,

b. in order to be able to ‘freeze’ the reality, and this is the second point, the artist, which is now the only one looking (at a world void of Forms), has to step outside of it. This means that the world will always be in front of him / her / it (it can very well be a CCTV camera), and not around him. This outside place comes to be known as a “monarchical point”, or a “Cartesian theater”.

Additionally, that single vanishing point will be expressed in Meister Eckhart’s monotheistic demand for “one sight, one apprehension”, the plea being restated centuries later by Guido Schreiber, a professor of geometry and topography:

“The drawing should [...] have only one viewpoint, only one horizon, only one scale.”

No matter how much this ‘one viewpoint’ is to be polarized, it should never be pluralized. In other words, it is the one point that gets indefinitely multiplied, never with other additional points added.

We can then see what the claim made by many scholars is when they continue arguing that the Renaissance artists devised such theorems, and the subsequent

623 As quoted in Schaff 1930: 255.
624 As quoted in Florensky 2002: 229. My emph.
representations, in a quest to accomplish with their work a “lifelike reality”\textsuperscript{625}. Florensky summarized quite well what this specific perspectival revolution presupposes. First and foremost, it follows a dogmatic ‘first-degree truth’ stating that

“no forms exist in nature [...] for in general no reality exists that has a center within itself [...] Therefore, it is suggested, everything visible and perceptible is only simple material for filling in some general regulatory schema imposed on it from without [...] It is not hard to see that these premises reject both nature and man in one fell swoop, although by an irony of history they are grounded in the slogans called ‘naturalism’.”\textsuperscript{626}

As such, in a world subject to linear perspectival depiction,

“there can be neither history [...] nor biography – nor should there be.”\textsuperscript{627}

Florensky then concludes his analysis by saying that a world subjected to the rules of linear perspective,

“is a world [...] gripped in eternal sleep [...] a picture frozen in its ice-bound immobility.”\textsuperscript{628}

The created world does not move by itself. Accordingly, nothing in it moves by itself and towards itself (as is the nature of each) either. This state of absolute immobility offers in return the gift of absolute speed. When Deleuze and Guattari define their understanding of a nomad – a creature that might lead us into believing that we are back to the artist that moves around the things that move around him\textsuperscript{629} – they argue that

“the nomad is [...] he who does not move. [T]he nomad is one who does not depart, does not want to depart, who clings to the smooth space left by the receding forest, where the steppe or the desert advances, and who invents nomadism as a response

\textsuperscript{625} Zirpolo 2008: liii.
\textsuperscript{626} Florensky 2002: 216. My emph. It is interesting to note that the same Francis of Assisi, the one that inspired the inception of a new perspective, was also declared the Patron Saint of ecology (John Paul II 1989).
\textsuperscript{627} Florensky 2002: 263. The Christian matter is dead matter, no matter how many uncreated energies infuse it. Hence, the Christian can never become a histor (ἵστωρ).
\textsuperscript{628} Florensky 2002: 263. See Lippard 1999: 143.
\textsuperscript{629} Real movement is strictly prohibited, as it might create a polycentric worldview, pluralizing the unique ‘final cause’, i.e. God.
to this challenge. Of course, the nomad moves, but while seated, and he is only seated while moving.\textsuperscript{630}

Immobility, speed and omnipresence coincide, the relation between them being directly proportional\textsuperscript{631}. And what else can offer all the three attributes better than technological gadgetry? Indeed, the Virtual Reality headset “it’s the fastest way [...] to transport yourself across the world”, while on the couch\textsuperscript{632}.

Roland Barthes seems to agree with Florensky about the absolute incompatibility between linear perspective-based gadgetry and the issue of aesthetical memory\textsuperscript{633}. In his piece Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography (1980), he writes that the photographer

“does not call up the past (nothing Proustian in a photograph).\textsuperscript{634}"

On the other hand, according to the same thinker, photography “has something to do with Resurrection”\textsuperscript{635}. Deleuze joins the gang:

“We no longer have a chronological time [...] we have a chronic non-chronological time which produces movements [...] essentially false.”\textsuperscript{636}

Florensky then continues in saying that

“we have no right to understand (the artificial perspective) as some simple, natural way of seeing the world [...] The elaboration of [this] perspective was in no way the simple systematization of something already pre-existing in human psycho-physiology, but was the forcible re-education of this psycho-physiology in the sense of abstract demands made by a new worldview [...] a new structure of thinking [...] The perspectival picture of the world is not a fact of perception, but merely a demand made in the name of certain considerations which [...] are absolutely abstract [i.e. the dogmas].”\textsuperscript{637}

\textsuperscript{630} Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 381.
\textsuperscript{631} Only nomads have absolute movement, in other words, speed (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 381).
\textsuperscript{632} Pierce 2016.
\textsuperscript{633} Indeed, memory itself became artificial, an issue made clear in titles such as Memoria artificialis (1617), published by Lambert Thomas Schenkel. My point here is that memory is not ‘artificial’ in the sense that is ‘educated’, as a Hellene philosopher might say, but that it is created.
\textsuperscript{634} Barthes 1982: 82.
\textsuperscript{635} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{636} As quoted in Hietanen 2012: 94.
\textsuperscript{637} Florensky 2002: 225, 246, 250.
It is precisely for this motive that it has taken “more than five hundred years of social training to accustom the eye and the hand to [the artificial] perspective”\(^\text{638}\). According to Paul Virilio,

“[t]here is an ocular training that began with religious prohibitions\(^\text{639}\), which now has been extended to a manipulation of the eye, through the industrialization of vision.”\(^\text{640}\)

But was this training worth the investment? As the new media theorist Lev Manovich shows\(^\text{641}\), according to a widely accepted narrative, linear perspective was already dead by the time art historians like Panofsky began writing its history. For instance, Henri Lefebvre, in his magnum opus *The Production of Space* (1974), writes authoritatively:

“The fact is that around 1910 a certain space was shattered. It was the space of common sense [...] of classical perspective and geometry, developed from the Renaissance onwards on the basis of the Greek tradition (Euclid, logic) and bodied forth in Western art and philosophy, as in the form of the city and town. [T]his space today retains but a feeble pedagogical reality, and then only with great difficulty, within a conservative educational system. Euclidean and perspectivist space have disappeared as systems of reference, along with other former ‘commonplaces’ such as the town, history, paternity, the tonal system in music, traditional morality, and so forth. This was truly a crucial moment.”\(^\text{642}\)

What Lefebvre is doing in the above quote is an impressive, yet inoffensive mix that serves only the Christian School. After combining (apparently without even acknowledging it) the Hellenistic views with the ‘metaphysical rests’ that survived within the Christian School, he then proclaims them dead. First of all, as shown, the ‘perspectiva artificialis’\(^\text{643}\) or the ‘costruzione legittima’\(^\text{644}\) of the Renaissance break completely with the

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638 Florens 2002: 250.
639 Prohibition of the imagination and the “intentional seeing”.
640 Joubert 2001: 123.
641 Manovich 1993: 2.
642 Lefebvre 1991: 25.
643 Envisioned by Leon Battista Alberti, a priest and one of the most influential architects of the Renaissance, in his book *Della pittura* (1435). It was expresses such, maybe for the first time, in Jean Pèlerin’s work, another priest and Alberti’s younger contemporary, *De Artificiali Perspectiva* (1505). Interestingly, but unsurprisingly, Alberti is approached by some authors as a proto-Posthumanist, especially because of his revolutionary insides into perspective and vision (Constantin 2011).
644 The term ‘costruzione legittima’ was not used by any Quattrocento theorists. In fact, the term appears to have been introduced for the first time in the late 19th century by Heinrich Ludwig in his edition of Leonardo’s *Treatise on Painting* (Naumann 1979: 64).
‘perspectiva naturalis’ of Antiquity, thus it did not form on the basis of the Hellenistic tradition. And whereas it is true that Euclidean space has disappeared as a system of reference, the same cannot be said about the other one. It is precisely because of its existence that Lefebvre can celebrate the subsequent disappearance of *history* and *traditional morality*. The move that the Marxist sociologist thinks he is making against the School is in the exact opposite direction.

As I stated already, the dogmas are penetrating the social sphere on all its levels at once, involving, as Foucault will say, “an immense reorganization of culture”645. In other words, these perspectival theories did not remain within the paintings of the Masters of the Trecento (Giotto, Ambrogio Lorenzetti etc.), but they ‘leaked out’, permeating every single field of knowledge. One of the areas most affected by these views was technology.

According to Manovich, the externalization of the function of vision imposed by the ‘perspectiva artificialis’ was followed by its automation, starting with the development of various perspectival techniques and technologies: perspective machines, descriptive and perspective geometries, photography and video technologies. In fact, as Hietanen puts it, “all contemporary audiovisual expressions of the moving image”646 are based on this particular perspective. However, only digital technologies made possible mass automation in general, creating a *visual nominalism*647 (one that mirrors perfectly the linguistic nominalism) extended at a global scale: the use of automatized vision (video and photo cameras behind which there is no subject) to capture the unique features of individual objects and spaces by recording, through the strict laws of ‘costruzione legittima’, distances and shapes.

Speaking of digital technologies, Descartes played a central role in the development of the aforementioned perspective geometries. The so-called ‘Cartesian Coordinate System’ forms the unshakable bedrock on which the entire contemporary digital ecosystem is built. Indeed, the Cartesian Coordinate System is used in both regular computer displays and in Virtual Reality renderings. The system is also employed in contemporary gaming648, navigation, urban planning, robotics, AI, economics and policy modeling649, and many other fields. We face here, as in many other places, a very interesting case of *inversion*. Today, more than ever, the consumer understands, interacts with,

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646 Hietanen 2012: 196. As the central instruments of the Scientific Revolution were, i.e. the telescope and the microscope. See e.g. the work of the premonstratensian friar Johann Zahn *Oculus Artificialis Teledioptricus Sive Telescopium* (1685).
647 Manovich 1993: 2. Not to forget that Ockham, the brilliant nominalist theologian, was a Franciscan himself, another name for nominalism being ‘Via Moderna’. See Jay 2013.
648 Boulaire and Cova 2013.
649 Estrada 2008.
and augment the environment through linear perspective-based digital gadgetry, especially mobile phones and headsets.

Because the ‘Cartesian Coordinate System’ is a largely absent feature in most of the anti-Descartes posthuman / interpretivist consumer culture literature (which, understandably, focuses almost exclusively on the problematic ‘metaphysical rests’), it is interesting to see how culturally-oriented consumer research scholars are following the dogmatic requirements they are supposed, or expected to ditch. Indeed, the destruction of limits and the subsequent enwrapping of the phenomenal reality (way beyond the Earth’s atmosphere) within the GPS mapping network is seen as a sign of empowerment and individual creativity (both limitless). The entire world became a playground, one facilitated by the extension of the rules of the ‘linear perspective’ to the entire reality. It is upon this structure only that the consequent empowerment and endless creativity becomes possible. According to Boulaire and Cova, as they write in their study on the postmodern game of geocaching, the

“limitless postmodern game offers a boundary-less playing field where participants can celebrate their creativity by stimulating, cultivating and developing – each in their own way – playful, dynamic [...] selves.”

Postmodern and limitless, yes, although not to forget that geocaching is yet another application, another ‘leak’ into the physical, offline reality of the ‘Cartesian Coordinate System’. The foundation of the celebrated postmodern playfulness is indeed purely Cartesian and, by extension, linear-perspectival, thus dogmatically correct. The ‘Cartesian Coordinate System’ denies both the distinction between the (active) participative and (passive) nonparticipative, on- and offline, and between present and absent elements. In this scenario, the absent becomes as present as the already-present, while the nonparticipative becomes as active as the already-participative.

Additionally, these gadgets are increasingly blurring the line between abled and differently abled consumers. For example, when it comes specifically to vision, an increasing number of devices and apps are offering blind consumers an interaction with

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650 I am referring here to the Augmented Reality (AR).
651 Foust 2002.
653 Links between geocaching games and libertarianism have been made (Smith 2016).
654 Boulaire and Cova 2013: 22.
655 Through the use of the GPS.
656 Distinctions recognized by Boulaire and Cova 2013.
the world that follows only the strict rules of the ‘costruzione legittima’\textsuperscript{657}, allowing them to access previously unreachable segments of the market, e.g. fashion, design, architectural or landscape choices. Importantly, I think, having access to these divisions will allow the consumer to break his / her self more easily than before. Therefore, the act of gifting away will become more feasible.

What is then attacked in the postmodern marketing, cultural and interpretivist consumer literature, and the emergent posthuman consumer culture is not the dogmatically-correct Descartes, he of the ‘Coordinate System’ who stated that the scientific practice should be based only on de-Form-alized empirical observations, but the less dogmatically-friendly Descartes, the one of the ‘metaphysical rests’. I find it very interesting that the Descartes of the ‘Coordinates’ is the same with the Descartes of the ‘innate ideas’, which means that he himself created the tool to destroy the ‘rests’ he envisioned. The very same situation happens in other fields too: the only criticism I could find that is raised in relation to the place Descartes occupies in the contemporary digital environment refers precisely to the metaphysical ‘rests’ identifiable in his philosophy.

According to Anna Munster, Descartes’ conception of the disembodied self remains embedded in machines; concomitantly, the machine acts as a conduit for the perpetuation of these systems and ideas\textsuperscript{658}, keeping alive gender divisions and other similar limits. The idol remains alive. If we are to enter in a true Posthumanist era, we have to get rid of these transcendent issues: we have to clean the machines of the malicious code of metaphysics more thoroughly\textsuperscript{659}. According to William Brown, contemporary digital technology allows us to finally “rethink [optical] perspective” critically. However, as cheerful as this might sound (i.e. ‘we are going to dethrone the “costruzione legittima!”’), the perspective that is to be approached critically is not the linear one. Indeed, as Brown notes, such criticism will happen by taking into consideration the virtual spaces that are defined along the ‘Cartesian Coordinate System’. These spaces are fragmented, consisting of discrete units, which means that they are not continuous, they are contingent and endlessly manipulable. Accordingly, Truth, truthfulness and truth-telling are not and should not be functions of machines, codes and technologies.\textsuperscript{660} And last but not least, here is Nigel Thrift himself:

“[i]t is not difficult to see how many artists – and programmers – are using software to question conventional notions of representation”\textsuperscript{661}

\textsuperscript{657} Kincaid 2015; Brodkin 2016; Ackerman 2016; Clark 2016.
\textsuperscript{658} Munster 2006: 15.
\textsuperscript{660} Brown 2015: 48, 49.
\textsuperscript{661} Thrift and French 2002: 329.
As stated, the *inversion* acts in such a way that what usually seems to be a distancing from (the perceived structure of oppression) is actually a move towards. In fact, as Manovich rightfully shows,

“*digital computers completed the process begun in the Renaissance*”^662

or, as I tried to show, this was the case (chronologically speaking).

But the temptation to approach the ‘costruzione legittima’ *in-itself* – e.g. as something of which expressions (photo cameras, video cameras etc.) have (unlike the Hellenistic one) the capacity to show us reality as it truly is (the camera never lies), thus to provide us with with certain knowledge – is always there. The pagan in us dies hard. The main issue here is that the linear perspective never attempted to associate the pragma-tic reality with the Form-al Truth, but very much the opposite: its role was and is to show that there are no perfect, fixed limits that can be observed. In fact, its main goal was to disinfect the pragma-tic sphere from the Forms exiting *within* it, which means that the Truth completely evaporated from it. If there was some (essential) Truth, it existed *outside* of this layer. In other words, the goal of the ‘costruzione legittima’ is not at all to show the world *as it is*, but to show a world without Forms. Unlike the Hellenistic world, this reality, i.e. the Christian world, is *never other than what it is not*. When he speaks against the possibility of representing the world objectively through technological gadgetry (video, photography), Deleuze is indeed making an apophatic statement: *the world not being as it is, is how the world is*. Or, as Merleau-Ponty would have put it, the claim is true in what it denies (a Form-al sphere), and false in what it affirms (a break from modernism, Descartes etc.).^663 Given that there is nothing / there should be nothing essential behind this ‘how it is not’, the negation becomes the expression and the imposition of a (absent) truth. It is thus somehow ironic that Hietanen calls the Deleuzian approach to mechanized vision, a ‘heretical’ one.^664 If anything, these understandings are much more orthodox than the ones they explicitly stand against – something which makes Descartes the real ‘heretic’ here. Accordingly, the *inversion* keeps the “fanatics” (to use Panofsky’s expression^665) thinking that they move away, while they are only, finally, coming back, like

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^662 Manovich 1993: 10.
^663 Merleau-Ponty 2004: 305.
^665 The repudiation of the antique authorities and the subsequent implementation of this new understanding of space “occurred with a fanaticism only now entirely comprehensible” (Panofsky 1991: 63, 58). My emph.
long lost prodigal sons. True, one reason behind the current confusion in respect to these dynamics might be the term ‘linear’ in the construction ‘linear perspective’. This leads a number of scholars to mistake the linear in there for continuity or homogeneity, issues that infuse historicist visions and assigned identity roles. The name ‘perspectiva artificialis’ would probably be a better name for it: the Latin ‘artificialis’ translates as “false” or “illusory”. Following Deleuze himself, given that the Christian type of representation broke completely with the Hellenistic one, “the nonlinearity of the Deleuzean perspective” did not replace the Renaissance or Cartesian one but, from one hand, it continues the dogmatic, first-degree truth based radicalization started already from the very inception of the Christian School. On the other hand, it follows its unfoldings, cleaning up the ‘rests’ that survived.

The question now is: how to keep creating the ‘new’ without pluralizing the unique Form, i.e. God’s ousia? As noted, this is made by polarizing the one vanishing point, one that does not recognize pluralization. This can and should occur ad infinitum. By doing this, by creating a thoroughly encompassing environment, these gadgets are also nullifying the existence of the one, undeconstructible Cartesian subject that sits in a ‘monarchical point’. Indeed, as Giesler noted, consumer culture should be epitomized as a ‘hybrid marketplace matrix’ that no longer distinguishes between humans and technologies. The distinction that still exists (and it is entertained within the so-called ‘(bio)conservative’ circles) between humans (subjects) and technology (objects) is based on the ‘rests’. Once these ‘rests’ are gone, there will be only cyborgs, or werewolves, to populate the profane ‘hybrid marketplace matrix’. Nobody will be missing from the party anymore because nobody will be allowed to miss the party: everybody has to play the endless game.

One concrete example of such a totally polarized environment that cancels the one subject, leaving the world populated entirely by updated Cartesian automatons, i.e. cyborgs, is Jonathan Schipper’s Invisible Sphere (2005-2009) project. The Invisible Sphere contains 215 monitors and 215 cameras. Each camera is opposite to the monitor it feeds. The sphere constantly recreates its surroundings on its monitors from every conceivable angle at all times. The name of the project is telling here: it is both invisible (no identifiable limits), and is a sphere (containing everything, including itself, in its immeasurability). With the subtitle “215 Points of View”, the machine built on the linear perspective principles allows no subject, let alone an external one, in its long list of ‘points of view’. As Florensky rightly noted, the ‘linear perspective’ rejects both a Form-al nature

667 Hietanen 2012: 51.
668 Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 661.
and the subject, simultaneously: one cannot exist without the other. Offering 215 points of view, 215 truths, one equal to the other, the Sphere denies the Hellenistic views of the noun and the verb too: as Aristotle noted, *not to have one meaning is to have no meaning*. But let me be very clear here: denying the existence of an external subject does not deny its exteriority. In Foucault’s words, it only introduces it “in the interior of the exterior”, nothing else. This is indeed where the postmodern marketing researchers, non-representational theorists, consumer culture theorists, anti- and posthumanist enthusiasts could be called, paraphrasing Žižek, ‘anti-Cartesian Cartesians’, ‘anti-Modernity modernists’, and ‘anti-science scientists’.

The ‘social training’ Florensky mentioned continues fully today, mostly within indigenous cultures, most of them still polytheistic (hence polycentric) and firmly grounded on Truth-telling metanarratives. As the Posthumanist James Hughes explicitly stated,

“[w]e expect that human enhancement technologies will be adopted creatively into the theologies of all the world’s faiths”.

Within the posthuman consumer culture literature the same approach is taken:

“High-technology is a critically vital mindset that the human race must now adopt”.

Chief Almir Narayamoga of the Surui people of the Brazilian Amazon (first member of his tribe to go to the University), realized that the time had now come “to put down the bow and arrow, and pick up the laptop”. These technologies are specifically designed to break everything they touch into exteriorities: no inwardness and inward moves are allowed. This means that these gadgets are not structures that can be adopted – ‘claimed as ones own’, so to speak – and then everybody can build on them their own worldviews, their metanarratives, without much of a fuss. Alas, that can never happen. From this perspective, they are unhackable – because they break time and all the time,

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670 Aristotle 1933: 166, 167.
672 When he refers to ‘anti-Habermasian Habermasians’ (Žižek 2000: 172).
675 Moore 2007. Google “has trained the members of our community to use their technological tools. [...] Google showed us that these new technologies are a big responsibility and that we need to have specific objectives in mind when using these tools”. Chief Almir of the Surui people of the Brazilian Amazon was recognised as one of Brazil’s 100 most influential persons in 2009, and the 53rd most creative people in Business in the world (Chief Almir 2013).
literally and figuratively. They cannot be used as one goes along, even though at the early stage of the adoption this is precisely the impression they give. Superstitions and unorthodox ways of seeing the world are to be gradually left behind. As Rebecca Moore (the head of the Google Earth Outreach program) recounts,

“*in 2008 we took laptops to the Amazon to help the Surui people go from the Stone Age (their first contact with the modern world was in 1969) to the Internet Age. We gave them workshops; teach them to take photos and videos. We got the young people interviewing the elders. And then, put all this information on Google Earth.*”676

Historians of ideas and cultural geographers have shown that this specific development of understanding of space cannot be dissociated from the rise of early capitalism and the subsequent cartographic obsessions677. Rebeca Moore, once more:

“*Using cell phones (the members of the Surui tribe) can document [...] their plans for planting, so that they can gain access to the carbon offset marketplace.*”678

This is of course only one example aside countless others. Peter Diamandis has very colorful stories to tell of how Maasai warriors are dropping their weapons in favor of mobile phones, while Mark Zuckerberg679 (with a language nominalist framework already in place)680, Google681 and the U.N.682 all have grandiose plans to connect every single subject on the planet to the Web. Not to forget, of course, the Internet of Things. Drones, loons, wires, sensors, all are built on the same foundation: the linear perspective. In turn, this way of seeing and understanding follows the all-powerful and unquestionable dogma. This is probably a good place to note once again the amazing power of *naturalization*. When Stelarc noted that technology is

“*what defines being human [...] it’s part of our human nature. It constructs our human nature*”683

677 Omhovère 2007: 27.
678 Google Earth Hero 2009. Rebeca Moore’s Twitter account has as motto: “Developing and sharing new digital mapping technology to save the world” (https://twitter.com/rebeccatmoore).
679 Internet.org.; Hempel 2016.
680 Davies 2015.
682 Kaye and Solomon 2015.
683 As quoted in Hall 2002: 139. My emph.
he specifically uses the term ‘technology’ in reference to the gadgets based on ‘perspectiva artificialis’, and not to he Chief Alimr’s bow and arrow. As Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder noted in their paper on the body and technology,

“technology [is] an essential aspect of human nature”.

And if Stelarc’s claims are to be doubted or seen as not being radical enough, Campbell notes that,

“technology was here first, and the human evolved from it, instead of the other way round”.

Indeed, according to Campbell and colleagues, from occupying, until quite recently, a limited place within marketing and consumer research, being “often perceived as an abstract ‘nothing’”, technology became suddenly the ultimate power, bearing the ability to deconstruct everything from “everyday human experience of agency, free will, choice and self”. It has also “replaced religion and psychology as the main source of models for how the mind, body and universe work”. Here Campbell and colleagues are making the same argument I made above in relation to the native cultures that are adopting linear perspective based gadgetry. It is this technology that has the power to replace metaphysics-based worldviews (in their different expressions, i.e. religion, Cartesian psychology etc.). Of course, such replacements happen everywhere where this technology gets implemented, not only in the West.

It is important to understand that the perspectival achievements of the Renaissance define Christianity as a School, going thus beyond its confessional fragmentation. Finally, the ‘linear perspective’ opens up the space for the Posthuman, the cyborg, i.e. the re-crafted or updated Cartesian automaton: the same thing, only improved. According to Haraway, as he put it in her seminal Manifesto,

“[c]ommunications technologies and biotechnologies are the crucial tools recrafting our bodies.”

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684 Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 642.
686 Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 661.
687 Campbell, O’Driscoll and Saren 2006: 344.
688 Campbell, O’Driscoll, Saren 2010: 91.
In turn, as Donna Haraway notes, the cyborg defines ‘a technological polis’, a smart city, one ‘based partly on a revolution of social relations in the [old, Hellenistic] *oikos*\(^{690}\), and partly on revolutions on the bodies themselves. The concept of the smart city is, of course, a very popular one. However, following Koen De Paus, Posthumanism is not at all about salivating upon a new technological gadget\(^{691}\). Accordingly, the ‘smart city’ is not about technology per se, but about the capacity to *harmonize* (to use Wittgenstein’s word) the social space (or the vacuum left behind by the disappearance of the Hellenistic *oikos*, to use Haraway’ term) with the dogmatic structure of the Christian School. In the following I am going to give a concrete example of such a ‘smart city’ — one that resonates, also on a geographical level, with some of the arguments introduced above, including the Smart Sphere project.

In 1969, the radical avant-garde studio *Archizoom*\(^{692}\), founded in Florence, the very birthplace of ‘perspectiva artificialis’, envisioned the *No-Stop City*. The project proposed an infinitely extendable grid (i.e. the Cartesian Coordinate System) as the basis designed for a society freed from all kinds of alienations; free, therefore, to express in an endless numbers of ways its own creative, political and behavioral energies, as Andrea Branzi (one of the founders of the Archizoom studio) described it. In this project, mass society and its correspondent city was envisioned as an endless ocean, with neither a center, nor limits\(^{693}\). The center will be eliminated though the use of advanced technology. As Branzi wrote, in the No-Stop City the social dimension becomes a completely spatial (flat) dimension, the metropolis being seen as *one* large interior, *one* single space\(^{694}\).

True, Cartesian metaphysics might be “unable to frame the ‘technological texturedness’”\(^{695}\) of our extensions, as Giesler and others show, but this does not mean that such incapacity is to be solved by applying a different ontology. It is *the same Descartes* that will jump in to fill the void. In fact, with one Descartes gone, two others will replace him:

- the Descartes of the ‘coordinates’,

\(^{690}\) Haraway 1985: 293.

\(^{691}\) De Paus 2013.

\(^{692}\) *Archizoom* was a key participant in the ‘radical architecture’ movement of the 1960s, which reacted against everything (‘rests’ infused) modernist in architecture and society.

\(^{693}\) *Is* not that there is no center, but the center is not *within*, but *without*, completely unreachable. This describes Giordano Bruno’s famous formulation “the circumference is everywhere, but the center is nowhere” (Bruno 2004: 89).

\(^{694}\) http://quaderns.coac.net/en/2014/08/equal-sized-rooms;

\(^{695}\) Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 661, 662.
And so, the exact opposite claim to the one made by Giesler and Venkatesh (and many other cultural consumer anti-Cartesian researchers) seems to be true: Descartes is the only one able to frame the ‘technological texturedness’. In other words, the augmentative gadgetry is permanently transforming the subject (if we think about those who are only now adopting it, e.g. the Surui and the Maasai, the Inuit populations etc.), or the consumer in – and preserving it as – a Cartesian structure on steroids. With the ‘metaphysical rest(s)’\textsuperscript{696} gone - thanks, ironically, to the increasing amounts of qualitatively-oriented scholars – what we are facing here is a dogmatically purified structure in which the challenges posed to the Christian School are far fewer than before.

2.4 The issue of ‘difference’ and the ‘extension of the claim’

“neither on this mountain”

- John 4:21

“I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives.”

- Jean-François Lyotard\textsuperscript{697}

As I mentioned already in the main Introduction, the researchers working within posthuman consumer culture try to situate themselves outside of the mainstream, still dominant\textsuperscript{698} onto-epistemological, hence humanistic discourses\textsuperscript{699}. The recognition of an apparently unique Western logocentric worldview, or formal / essential centering that the mainstream discourses in marketing and consumer research still carry around is to be abandoned in favor of more inclusive, heterogeneous and pluralistic views. The post-Cartesian symbol of the cyborg, although a “double-edged sword”\textsuperscript{700}, is usually seen as a

\textsuperscript{696} Not only from Descartes, but from Kant and many others too.
\textsuperscript{697} Lyotard 1984: xxiv.
\textsuperscript{698} Campbell, O’Driscoll, Saren 2010; Ruth and Otnes 2006.
\textsuperscript{699} Campbell, O’Driscoll and Saren 2010; Giesler and Venkatesh 2005.
\textsuperscript{700} Campbell and Saren 2010: 166.
symbol for breakdown, bearing the capacity to radically question the Western epistemic monopoly, its representational accuracy and explanatory authority that has dominated the Academia for so long. The indefinable posthumanist culture within which the cyborg performs in an unstoppable manner

“is a polycentrically constructed universe in which no particular type of meaning-laden horizon of reference points – irrespective of whether it is institutional or ephemeral – can claim to possess an epistemic monopoly on the interpretation of reality.”

The spirit of the contemporary age can thus be defined, as the sociologist Simon Susen notes, as “post-teleological”, “postcolonial”, or indeed “posthumanist”.

In the following I will try to address the two apparently conflicting issues of colonialism and the Posthumanist ontological polycentricism and show that we do not need the absence or disappearance of the later in order to have the former. In other words, the celebrated postmodern / posthuman ontological openness does not and cannot solve the colonialisit tendencies of the West, in fact quite the opposite. Accordingly, the breaking down of the epistemic monopoly becomes in itself a vehicle of colonial control. Theologically speaking, as we shall see, the progressive displacement of the Cartesian consumer (regarded as a disembodied consciousness) by the posthuman, embodied cyborg within postmodern marketing and posthuman consumer research brings the conversionist aspirations of the Christian School to entire new levels.

At the very beginning of his book Postmodern Marketing, so early that even the pages are not yet numbered (very symbolic, indeed), the marketing scholar Stephen Brown asks the following question:

“[W]hat is postmodernism? [T]he definitive answer: postmodernism isn’t!”

Indeed, aspiring to explain ‘nothing’ is not an easy task. It took Brown 225 pages to somehow manage it. In direct relation to this nothingness, in the following I am going to focus on two main points:

1. the issue of difference / pluralism,
2. the issue of what I call [provisionally] ‘claim extension’.

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701 Susen 2015: 35.
702 Susen 2015: 194.
703 Venkatesh 2004; Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz 2011.
704 Brown 1995. An apophatic statement, one mirroring the definition of Posthumanism.
The first point has to do with the perceived distinction between the Enlightenment’s and postmodernisms’ projects (or the perceived lack of it in the latter case). In his book, Brown says the following:

“[T]he myth of the modernist, Enlightenment project through its political and social catastrophes (the Holocaust, neo-colonialism, ecological crises) has led to the erasure of difference, plurality and heterogeneity.”[^705]

That is a very interesting claim to make. Because, according to many other researchers from the postmodern marketing and consumer research fields, Enlightenment was not at all about the ‘the erasure of difference’, but about the creation and imposition of countless dichotomies: us / the Other, mind / body, subject / object, male / female etc. Indeed, according to Firat and Venkatesh, modernism “reduces the world into [...] dichotomous categories. Each pair represents a difference [...] [T]he ‘philosophy of difference’ permeates the modernist dogma.”[^706]

However, Brown makes the above assertion, and what interests me here is that the way in which he does it is as if difference and plurality are things to be celebrated and yearned. Their destruction is thus regarded as one of the cruelest things Modernity achieved in its unstoppable progressive march. But no longer is this to be the case:

“Modernism, as a social/historical construction founded in the principles of Enlightenment, has run its course.”[^707]

If there is a myth here, it is not at all in the ‘Enlightenment project’ and its celebrated failure or death, but in the illusion that difference is something to be celebrated and encouraged, not feared and kept away.

And then, there is the second point: this illusion has to be extended. In their 1994 paper Construing the Critical Imagination, Hetrick and Lozada rightly assert that critical theory[^708]

[^707]: Firat and Venkatesh 1995: 240. This, coming from the Firat and Venkatesh’s piece means that we shall see an end to differences (deemed as ontological, by other authors). Which stands against Brown, who wants to finally see them coming.
“is too locked into the projects of modernity and the Enlightenment and, consequently, the ultimate failures thereof. However, when critical theory is coupled with New French Thought and the writings of the post-Marxist discourse there may be renewed hope.”

In order to see if Hetrick and Lozada are indeed correct, in the following I am going to introduce a representative from the ‘New French Philosophy’, i.e. Lyotard, and what can roughly be called a post-Marxist thinker (he is indeed on the editorial board of Critical Inquiry), i.e. Peter Galison.

Many scholars fear(ed) that the ‘postmodern mood’ will create an epistemological anarchy (to say the least), opening knowledge’s ivory tower’s door and letting in whatever possible understanding of the world. The much trumpeted lack of dogmatic claims (claims usually expressed through heavy theoretical abstractions) and the move away from any expressions of ontological transcendentalism, seem to be two central elements in most of the postmodern, post-structuralist approaches, forming the basis on which the above mentioned opening(s) functions. Or not. The invitation to escape from the “too narrow views” or the “narrow conventionalism” of the monolithic and myopic modernity – and open up to a far weirder and wider world – is real, no debate there. This story is told over and over, reminiscent of a mantra. What is not told, however, is that once the door is open, the savages, the plural, the diversity are not to be let in unconditionally, in fact quite the contrary. The actual admission occurs only when those who want to enter share (or succumb / convert to) the same non-dogmatic and the non-transcendental views. In other words, the narrative ‘we are not making dogmatic / abstract / universal claims’ does not actually stop here, but it continues with a usually silent, second part: ‘so you [whomever is about to be let in] should not either!’ In other words, the claim made in the first half of the sentence gets extended over all other views. Such ‘extension’ becomes all the more evident if terms such as ‘never’ or ‘always’ are used in the claim’s construction. Take for instance the following absolute statements:

“Experiment, never interpret.”

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710 Hudson and Ozanne 1988: 519; Holt 1991: 61. The standard Habermasian argument against Foucault and the ‘post-structuralists’ in general is that since they deny any normative standard exempt from the contingent historical context, they are unable to ground resistance to the existing power edifice (Žižek 2000: 254). My emph.
713 Campbell and Saren 2010: 172.
714 Firat and Venkatesh 1995: 239.
“exegesis never adequately captures truth,”716

What does this mean? It means that every approach that does not conform to (at least) these two requirements would be immediately judged as ‘idealistic’, ‘abstract’, ‘universalist’ or as a sample of a ‘grand narrative / metanarrative’. Let us not be fooled: the rejection of a grand narrative / metanarrative (the Western one) is the rejection of all grand narratives.

It is important to note here that a metanarrative should not be criticized from the point of view of its size and ambitions, but by the comprehensiveness of its views. It is this comprehensiveness, this completeness-into-itself that makes a metanarrative, and not the number of people that share it. Let me give an example: although the members of the Epicurean School represented an insignificant fraction of the entire population of the Mediterranean Basin, having no pretensions to global spreading (hence, they could hardly be accused of colonialist tendencies), they did however, follow a totalizing, comprehensive account of reality – in other words, a metanarrative. The same thing applies to any other bodies of traditional narratives, usually associated with indigenous populations – be these the Surui people of the Brazilian Amazon, the Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania, or the Inuvialuit of Northern Canada. This means that from a metanarrative standpoint, an Indian shaman, say, is as guilty as the worst logical positivist out there in the sense that they are both the products and the followers of a metanarrative, which also means that in order to be let inside the ‘not-narrow’, ‘everything goes’ party they have to replace their Form-al onto-epistemologies with something else. With something that will help them to never capture the truth, to never make dogmatic, i.e. universalistic claims.

Various replacements for metanarratives were proposed.

The first might be found in Lyotard’s concepts of “petits récits” or “small narratives”718. Lyotard describes them as being precisely an indication of what is appropriate to do in a specific, non-universal context. Instructions are always local, he says. In

716 Sherry and Schouten 2002: 223. My emph. Someone such as Gregory of Nyssa would have completely agreed: Christian hermeneutics never captures the essence (Manoussakis 2007: 96).
717 As I was trying to suggest in the motto of this section, the Evangelical imperative “neither on this mountain” (John 4:21) should be read as ‘not on any mountain’, because every mountain is this mountain. The very same applies to the issue of the metanarratives too. In addition, the incredulity towards metanarratives has to be shown towards any metanarrative (be they Western or any other type), hence the use of the plural by Lyotard.
718 Lyotard and Thébaud 1985: 59.
other words: contingent. If the context that made them possible in the first place disappears, the instructions no longer have any meaning. As Lyotard remarks, the prescriptions, whatever prescriptions, are acceptable as long as they are not infused with an ontological charge.

"one [has] to leave prescriptions hanging [unfinished], that is, they are not derived from an ontology - which is terroristic and violent, wanting to subsume, like Robespierre [...] This seems essential to me. In this matter of instruction, though I start from a description, I do not draw prescription from it because one cannot derive [ontological] prescriptions from [phenomenological] descriptions."

Based on this understanding, what follows is that “none is privileged, none is dropped either”. Thus, everybody is equally welcome. But what does this mean then? In regard to ‘none is privileged’, it means that while there is no hierarchical ordering between various ‘small narratives’, there should be no hierarchical ordering within every and each ‘small narrative’ either. As for the ‘none is dropped’, indeed none is, but only as long as their stories are not going to give into ‘being true’, into expressing the Truth, hence into being “better than another” – two things that will make them terroristic and violent. If they do not want to drop the ontological charges from their narratives - or they bring these charges back at some point – they will be no longer be welcomed into the ‘everything goes’, ‘none is dropped’ gathering. They will indeed become a threat, an example of real difference.

Besides the already mentioned requests, there is even more to be accomplished. One thing is that the number of these stories should never be stable. One can (and should) have several at one’s disposal, or continuously invent new ones. However, ontology should be missing in all cases: everybody should be convinced of the fact that everything is made up, that is, socially constructed (created) and flat. The sense of progress, directionality, or ultimate purpose (teleology) should, of course, be missing too. When Lyotard declares, at the end of his highly influential The Postmodern Condition (1979), that

719 Lyotard and Thébaud 1985: 55.
720 ‘one cannot’ means also ‘one should not’.
722 Lyotard and Thébaud 1985: 58, 60.
724 Not that not making ontological assumptions is less violent. Not making ontological assumptions is in itself an ontology, albeit an apophatic one.
“Les us wage a war on totality” [...] let us activate the differences

it is through these kinds of ‘small narratives’ and these kinds only that the postmodern era of differences is to became a reality for everybody. In other words, Lyotard’s line is to be read as: let us wage war on the metaphysical (both Form-al and de-Form-alized) totality, wherever we are going to identify it, and make everybody focus on the phenomenal, empirical differences only. As we shall see a bit later, this in fact represents a radically Cartesian approach.

The second proposal comes from Peter Galison, and it is called ‘specific theory’. The ‘specific theory’ is characterized mainly by the two following points:

1. the approach should never measure itself against a transcendental qua ontological model,

2. it should not look for universal patterns or ‘universalizing accounts of the’ no matter how small these universal patterns might be.

Only those views that embraced such characteristics are then to be allowed into the ‘relativistic’, ‘everything goes’, ‘multiple truths’, ‘against the Western logocentric, ontological monopoly’ party. The ‘multiple truths’ standpoint obeys the same rule: the acknowledgement that ‘there is no Truth’ / that ‘there are only multiple truths’ is an entrance ticket. Postmodernism, post-structuralism, non-representational theory, the rhizome, the network, the assemblage, the fractal etc. etc. are not systems of democratic openings, but systems of dogmatic alignment that bear no difference to any of the other principles that sprouted out from the Enlightenment’s project or, more generally, the Christian School – except from their positions relative to the first-degree truths. Nonetheless, cultural consumer research scholars cannot be but celebratory in relation to this:

“...our discipline is finally being touched by the crisis of representation movement,” wrote John Sherry. Finally, the Absence touched the field. But things move slowly and half a decade later we can find the posthuman consumer culture and cultural consumer

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727 Where this ontological totality is an already de-Form-alized one.
728 Lyotard 1984: 82.
731 Sherry 2000: 277.
research scholars still calling for the recognition of poststructuralist\textsuperscript{732} and non-representationalist\textsuperscript{733} perspectives in their canon.

There are, of course, some scholars that noticed this somehow paradoxical situation. Nicholas Gane, for instance, wrote in one of his books that

\textit{“the fractal is the most ‘advanced’ stage of Western development, for it destroys [...] all forms of otherness which pose a threat to itself [...] The result of this process, Baudrillard argues, is that Western culture systematically removes everything other to itself from the world.”}\textsuperscript{734}

The postmodernists’ fondness for fractals is, of course, well known\textsuperscript{735}.

Now, finally, let us see exactly how these requests for ‘opening to difference’ and the ‘claim extension’ express themselves within cultural and interpretivist consumer research, postmodern marketing and posthuman consumer culture. As stated, the dogmatic claims are to be rejected. As it seems, within the cultural consumer research literature dogma is a term usually used in relation to the bad guys: Modernity, Enlightenment etc.:

\textit{“Postmodernists argue that modernism has become [...] dogmatic.”}\textsuperscript{736}

Brown too refers repeatedly to the “dogmatic, ideological strait-jacket of modernism”\textsuperscript{737}, considering scientists as being

\textit{“dogmatic [...] and strongly committed to their theoretical constructs.”}\textsuperscript{738}

For Thompson, Locander and Pollio, dogma and superstition occupy the same bench, the ‘logical positivists’ worrying that relativism will “open the way for dogma and superstition to pass as knowledge”\textsuperscript{739}. Either way, dogma is bad, being used in the above examples as an expression of a solidified and structured Form-alism, one that impedes the continuous creation of the new. The fear that once the knowledge’s door is cracked open,

\textsuperscript{732} Campbell 2006.
\textsuperscript{733} Giesler and Venkatesh 2005.
\textsuperscript{734} Gane 2002: 139. My emph.
\textsuperscript{735} Brown 1995: 90, 177.
\textsuperscript{736} Firat and Venkatesh 1995: 240.
\textsuperscript{737} Brown 1995: 99.
\textsuperscript{738} Brown 1995: 90.
\textsuperscript{739} Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1993: 142. Obviously, dogma is being seen here more as a metaphysical structure (filled with ‘rests’), hence its link with superstition.
we will be invaded by superstition (and who knows what other horrible terroristic ontosophies and metanarratives) is also there – at least for some.

When it comes to the dogmatic alignment issue – and the way I am using the term dogma here refers to the first-degree truths, the ones that refute the dogmatic Form-alism addressed above by the postmodern marketing and cultural consumer research researchers – postmodern marketing scholars are ready to be on board:

“there is simply no such thing as an objective fact.”\textsuperscript{740}

Not for them, and not for anybody else. There is also

“no such thing as objective data or confirmable results”\textsuperscript{741},
or

“no such thing as a clear-cut starting point for an historical event.”\textsuperscript{742}

Mentioning Doppelt, Laudan and Anderson (between others), Hunt tells us that marketing’s recent requirement is that “truth is inappropriate and should be abandoned”\textsuperscript{743}. Fierce censorship and powerful requirements pave the way towards tolerance and openness. Even Brown’s definition of postmodernity is shaped in this surgically precise way: postmodernism \textit{isn’t}!

As noted, the sentences I mentioned above stop at a halfway point. Is not only that ‘there is no such thing as...’, but ‘there should be no such thing as...’ at all – both for us, and for no one else that wants in. Is not only that ‘postmodernism \textit{isn’t}’, but also that ‘postmodernism \textit{shouldn’t be}’ – in the same way as the posthuman, or the cyborg: they both cannot be. In the moment postmodernism \textit{is}, it becomes a ‘modernity’, a (de-Formalized) ontology – and that is not fun, open and tolerant anymore. Another way in which this ‘extension’ takes shape is in assertions such as

“\textit{all knowledge [is] a construction of one sort or another}”\textsuperscript{744}

\textsuperscript{740} Holbrook and O’Shaughnessy 1988: 401. My emph.
\textsuperscript{741} Hudson and Ozanne 1988: 517. My emph.
\textsuperscript{743} Hunt 1990: 4.
\textsuperscript{744} Firat and Venkatesh 1995: 244. My emph.
By extending the deconstructivist stance over all possible forms of knowledge, Firat and Venkatesh (and many others) are actually saying that most of the traditional cultures – who still follow metanarratives (which are not prone to deconstruction) – are to be either converted, or crushed. Arnold and Fischer quote Rorty:

“No metanarrative is needed [...] “What is needed is a sort of intellectual analogue of civic virtue - tolerance, irony, and a willingness to let spheres of culture flourish without worrying too much about their ‘common ground,’ their unification”.” 745

The irony here is priceless. Openness and tolerance, yes (ironically, both are core Enlightenment’s values, as it is the civic virtue too) – but only if. What a twist! Tolerance and the “democracy of approaches”746 are nothing else but the direct result of the grand narratives’ violent rejection. It is only after everybody and everything becomes the same that we can finally reverse ‘the erasure of difference’, that we can finally start celebrating plurality.

Blatantly put, these are in no way “alternative ways of seeking knowledge”747. No matter how impressively exotic and elaborated in their entitling these ‘alternatives’ might sound (e.g. ‘deductive-nomological’, ‘critical-reconstructive’, ‘transcendental-pragmatic’ and many, many others), they all follow the same route, they all bow in front of the same unbreakable dogmas of the Christian School, ones not open to discussion, hence the accent I put on the use of the ‘should’.

2.5 From ‘disciplines’ to ‘Studies’: accommodating Posthumanism within Academia

“I believe the ultimate goal of the human sciences [is] not to constitute, but to dissolve man.”

- Claude Lévi-Strauss\(^{748}\)

In the previous section I tried to show that, however misleading, a ‘narrow conventionalism’ of Modernity is held responsible, by an increasing number of scholars from different fields based on process-oriented approaches, for an onto-epistemological hegemony. As stated, I did that mainly in relation to the postmodern marketing and cultural consumer research. In the following, I am going to link the topics of ‘claim extension’ and ‘small narratives’ to the Posthumanist movement, by focusing more specifically on how these dogmatic incentives are supporting and urging the transition from Disciplines\(^{749}\) to Studies.

\(^{748}\) Lévi-Strauss 1966: 247.

\(^{749}\) The Disciplines being the post-Enlightenment, heavily reformed heirs of the classical liberal arts taught in the Medieval Universities and divided into the Trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy). These divisions, however, were merely two sides of the same coin: the Quadrivium and Trivium rode in tandem (Chua 2001: 19). By the late 16th century however, this model was about to come to an end (Moyer 2012: 479). Giving the heavy presence within them of ‘metaphysical rests’, the traditional sciences of Trivium and Quadrivium were branded as ‘satanic’, ‘occult’, and ‘pagan’ (Rasmussen 1996). Without going too much into details, it has to be said that even though the question of why did this model ended was addressed by very few scholars, most of those who did it (Beaujouan 1991; Moyer 2012), did so from a progressivist perspective: new instruments were invented, new discoveries were made and so leaving these approaches behind was only natural. And so, the sciences that composed the Trivium and the Quadrivium came under heavy criticisms, leading the whole edifice to finally collapse. I do not follow this view. To me, the inception of the Trivium and the Quadrivium represented the challenge and the subsequent destruction of various pagan Schools’s curriculums. By the time Boethius (c. 480 - 524) coined the term quadrivium (Kaylor 2012), the Hellenistic corpus of ‘scientific’ knowledge was already under heavy attack from the Christian theologians. This means that the arts that formed the Trivium and the Quadrivium (including philosophy) were already reformed (or underway) in order to meet the expectations of the Christian’s dogmatic structure. From a chronological perspective, the cleansing of the (already baptized) Hellenistic ‘rests’ continued. With Petrus Ramus (1515 - 1572) and others, these ‘rests’ (although already reformed) came again under attack, receiving, if not their final, one of the most powerful blows. The rise of the ‘Studies’ represents, in my opinion, a third reformation. In here, challenge, destruction and continuous re-creation became part of their very DNA. From a chronological perspective, the distance between Boethius and the today’s supporters of the ‘Studies’ is indeed significant. But from a School’s perspective, the temporal gap between them gets irrelevant, all that counts being the dogmatic alignment between them.
In order to see why this transition important, we have to ask the following questions: can the posthumanist views be accommodated within contemporary academia? If not, as many critical theorists are suggesting, then what sort of changes have to be made in order to make such an accommodation possible?

As I already noted in the Introduction, Posthumanism can be approached as a tool for transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries between natural sciences and social/humanist sciences\textsuperscript{750}. Intensive criticisms have been voiced against the current academic institutions, the critical scholars approaching them as sanctuaries long distanced from the realities and challenges of contemporary society and everyday, pragmatic life. Unsurprisingly, Herbrechter, in his book on Posthumanism, has called the University “the most humanist of institutions”\textsuperscript{751}. Lyotard, in his \textit{Postmodern Condition}, linked the crisis of metaphysical philosophy with the current crisis of the university institution, which relied on it\textsuperscript{752}. In her book on the posthuman, Braidotti addresses the topic at length\textsuperscript{753}, many of her points being easily identifiable in the postmodern marketing and consumer research literature too. Campbell and colleagues speak about the heavy humanist underpinning of interpretivist consumer research\textsuperscript{754}, while others are warning against “the humanistic ideology that underlies qualitative research”\textsuperscript{755}. Arnould posits himself firmly against the illusions of essential humanism\textsuperscript{756} and if there is any other evil greater than humanism that is the ‘positivistic camp’\textsuperscript{757}.

The model of the ‘human’ present in the Humanities is the image of Man as a rational being endowed with language, and who lives in a hierarchically structured world\textsuperscript{758} where everything have its place according to its nature. What we then have then in today’s dominant disciplines of Humanities is “an exercise of hierarchical exclusion and cultural hegemony”\textsuperscript{759}. Natural sciences are, of course, not different. According to Peter Galison,

\begin{quote}
“\textit{[a]l]t the root of most accounts of the development of science is the covert premise that science is about ontology}”\textsuperscript{760}.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{750} Pedersen 2010: 246.
\textsuperscript{751} Herbrechter 2013: 14.
\textsuperscript{752} Lyotard 1984: xxiv.
\textsuperscript{753} As does Herbrechter 2013: 135-178.
\textsuperscript{754} Campbell, O’Driscoll, Saren 2010: 98.
\textsuperscript{755} Ruth and Otnes 2006: 560.
\textsuperscript{756} Arnould 2007: 102.
\textsuperscript{757} “We would fall in the […] humanistic rather than positivistic camp” (Denny 2006: 432).
\textsuperscript{758} In his article \textit{Markets as Educators}, the sociologist Steve Fuller writes that in the early 1960s in UK, the humanities were most clearly associated with “elite values” (Fuller 2016).
\textsuperscript{759} Braidotti 2013: 143, 144. See Lyotard and Thébaud 1985: 58, 60.
\textsuperscript{760} Galison 1996: 118. My emph.
According to Braidotti and others\textsuperscript{761}, in response to such views, over the last thirty years or so an entire plethora of anti-humanist and anti-science scholars\textsuperscript{762} questioned the idea of transcendental reason and the notion that the [relational] subject coincides with [its ousianic] rational consciousness\textsuperscript{763}. These scholars did not merely oppose Humanism, but, as Braidotti notes, they also helped in creating other visions of the self, i.e. of what does it mean to be a human. By today, the old sexualized, racialized and naturalized differences have evolved into fully-fledged alternative models of the human subject. Out of these denunciations, new critical epistemologies started to be offered, by inventing\textsuperscript{764} interdisciplinary areas which call themselves ‘Studies’\textsuperscript{765}.

Today we talk a lot about Studies: ‘Gender Studies’, ‘Communication Studies’, ‘Political Studies’, or ‘Cultural Studies’. Closer to our subject, there are ‘Science and Technology Studies’, ‘Cyber Studies’, ‘Critical Code Studies’, ‘Critical Software Studies’, ‘New Media Studies’, ‘Digital Studies’ and so on and on – all of them with their own audience, most of them with their own journal(s), some of them already ‘post’ed\textsuperscript{766}.

Although no older than a few decades, the number of these Studies is already absolutely disconcerting, and growing rapidly, both in the humanities and in the natural sciences, surpassing by far the number of the established, much older disciplines. As Galison wrote, to scholars in ‘science studies’ (but this applies to those in the humanities too),

\begin{quote}
\textit{\textquoteright\textit{such interdisciplinary splits reveal others. There are disunities [...] between disciplines, and these divisions threaten to divide even the component parts of subfields.\textquoteright}}\textsuperscript{767}
\end{quote}

Such disunities – as Galison calls them – or profound asymmetries, reveal the fact that science is not, and should not be, an ontologically unchangeable structure with fluctuating contingencies: a metanarrative, an ideal unity. Science is nothing else but its

\textsuperscript{761} Herbrechter 2013.
\textsuperscript{762} The anti- in there does not mean that these scholars are aganist human beings or science per se, but against the ontologically-charged views imposed, according to them, by various modernist frameworks.
\textsuperscript{763} Braidotti 2013: 143. My emph.
\textsuperscript{764} As in the case with the ‘petits récits’, these Studies, no matter where they are taught, have to be constructed, flat – thus with no pretentions to any ontological depth – and ephemeral.
\textsuperscript{765} Braidotti 2013: 38, 144.
\textsuperscript{766} Braidotti 2013: 104.
\textsuperscript{767} Galison 1996: 2. As in the case of ‘small narratives’, the divisions are not only between fields, but within the fields themselves.
practice, and only practice, no matter where it happens. As Keller put it (echoing a large number of scholars from similar traditions), in order to let the subject behind the metasubject free, we should radically reject the view that scientific knowledge

“is not made by men – not crafted, articulated, or constructed, but discovered, in a word, simply true.”

In terms of temporality, the ‘Studies’ is where ‘Disciplines’ became a kairotic event, a disruptive gesture that nullifies the chronological, linear teleological continuum. The ‘Studies’ should never be stable, their continuous split being thus dictated by their very nature: if they will stick around for too long, they will become Disciplines, reinstating the modernist ideas and ideals. Braidotti specifically associates the Studies with nomadism and iconoclasm.

Unlike the (not reformed enough) Disciplines, the Studies have the potential to form the scholarly ecosystem within which the post-humanities can develop. The whole situation here resembles perfectly the one about metanarratives: everybody is welcome to create their own (critical) studies (or small narratives, for that matter), but only as long, i.e.:

- as long as they are recognized as being constructed, not discovered, and anti-hierarchical,
- as long as they are to be as ephemeral as possible,
- as long as they will be iconoclastic and nomadic in nature,

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768 As Donna Haraway noted, science “is the result of located practices” (Haraway 1996: 439). Of course, her argument of locality (epistemology) over unity (ontology) fits into the anti-colonialist discourse, a discourse which is dissolving the ‘West’ and its highest product: the man. Unlike the old-school Marxism, this discourse does “not replicate the imperializing, totalizing revolutionary subjects” (Haraway 1985: 296). All this sounds fine, if it would not represent just another example of ‘claim extension’: science is not only the result of local practices, but it should be the result of such practices only, no matter where science happens.


770 See Deleuze 1993: 86-93.

771 “into myriad disconnected parts” (Galison 1996: 118).

772 Mirroring thus the situation presented in the ‘extension of the claim’ section: in moment postmodernism is, it becomes a ‘modernity’, i.e. a (de-Form-alized) ontology. Indeed, as the philosopher Patrick Bourgeois noted, even speaking of ‘postmodernism’ is already to make it something solidified and structured, which is precisely what many of its adherents oppose (Bourgeois 1995: 164).

773 “[N]omadic consciousness lies at the heart of [...] studies” (Braidotti 1994: 34). “Cultural studies” are iconoclastic fields (Braidotti 1994: 38). The nomadic subject itself is iconoclastic, representing a move against theoretical and especially philosophical thinking (Braidotti 1994: 4). My emph.
- as long as they will be based only on epistemological structures (practices), not ontological ones (theory).\textsuperscript{774}

The Lyotardian incentive to wage war on (de-Form-alized) totality, whenever and wherever that totality is to be spotted, is to be applied mercilessly in case the request for ‘openness and tolerance’ is not obeyed by all parts. As in the case of instructions, if the unique, irreplaceable pragmatic contexts that made a specific ‘Studies’ possible in the first place disappear, the ‘Studies’ no longer have any meaning, having to disappear or morph into something else.

In his critical analysis of Posthumanism, Stefan Herbrechter repeatedly noted that in the end, the ‘humanities’ (including here the natural sciences too) will have to transform themselves into what could be called “posthumanities”\textsuperscript{775}. Such a reform (the third one, in fact) ought to bring together “human, social, natural, cognitive and bio- or life sciences” in order to form an environment in which “new forms of critical knowledge”\textsuperscript{776} will take place. Interestingly however, although the move against Disciplines is already, at least according to Braidotti, a couple of decades old, there are no yet explicit departments of Posthumanities within the Universities across the world\textsuperscript{777}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{774} The Studies have to follow the same 'liberatory' structure regardless of the place they are implemented and taught (e.g. Japan, Cape Town, China or India) or the shape they take (e.g. Indigenous Studies).
\textsuperscript{775} Herbrechter 2013: 13.
\textsuperscript{776} Herbrechter 2013: 20.
\textsuperscript{777} http://www.tema.liu.se/tema-g/Posthuman/Network?l=en
\end{footnotesize}
2.6 The deanimation of matter within the Christian School

“the entire antisensualistic metaphysic of the priests”

- Friedrich Nietzsche\textsuperscript{778}

“All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.”

- The Communist Manifesto

“[W]hatever distinguishes the Roman Church from others is of no real significance, and consequently is constructed merely from superstition.”

- Baruch Spinoza\textsuperscript{779}

“[T]he sacralization of life derives from sacrifice.”

- Giorgio Agamben\textsuperscript{780}

I already mentioned some of the ‘first-degree truths’, the ones that characterize the Christianity as a School, and not as a loose ensemble of highly diverse views and tendencies. One of these truths was \textit{the radical denial of the Forms}. Such a denial had powerful implications, affecting not only the understanding of the human beings – their identities, bodies and the relations between them – but also the understanding of nature, i.e. the environment we occupy and our relation to it.

According to Deleuze and Guattari,

“\textit{Theology is very strict on the following point: there are no werewolves, human beings cannot become animal. That is because there is no transformation of essential forms; they are inalienable.}\textsuperscript{781}"

\textsuperscript{778} Nietzsche 1989: 32.
\textsuperscript{779} Spinoza 2002: 948.
\textsuperscript{780} Agamben 2006: 106.
\textsuperscript{781} Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 278.
What the above line is telling us is that there is no trespassing between the fixed Form-al limits, let alone any mixing of such allowed. What they do then (and with them an entire generation of scholars) is to move against this (according to them) medieval Scholastic, or Christian theological understanding. Content, or essence has to be radically separated from its expression, or contingency. Expression, instead of essence, becomes the bearer of distinction, “independent in its own right, in other words, autonomous”.

The essential term in here is ‘linearity’ (to be understood as in the ‘linear perspective’): a structure without depth and Form-al references. Linearity, understood this way, “takes us further in the direction of flat multiplicities”. In other words, what the linear form of expression determines can be only a “derivative form of expression” which in turn can determinate only other derivative forms of expressions and so on indefinitely. There is never pluralization, only endless polarizations. What is only derivative can never (and should never) reach for the Form-al. The craving becomes insatiable, thus endless. In short, what is specific to the organic stratum, or to matter in general is its reduction “to a unidimensional line”. Matter is thus “in movement, in flux, in variation”, and only so. The Form-al becomes a relation, indistinguishable from its expressions: the continuous variation of matter mirrors the continuous development of form. The transformation becomes essential. According to the same thinkers, matter goes back and forth between qualitative multiplicities, and metric schemas, both drawing it “outside of itself”.

This understanding of matter shapes, in turn, a specific understanding of identity. Given that this “matter-flow can only be followed”, the makers “are obliged to follow”. They are complete only as prospectors, as explorers: it is their incompleteness that defines them as complete beings, i.e. as cyborgs. Deleuze and Guattari define the maker, the artisan as “the itinerant, the ambulant”, indeed, the mendicant. Of course, as in the case of the nomads, this incessant following does not presuppose movement. Unsurprisingly, the issue of intuition shows up: to follow the flow of matter “is intuition in

784 Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 66.
785 Ibid.
786 Ibid.
788 Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 375.
789 Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 535.
790 Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 452.
791 Ibid.
As I have showed, *intentio* described the creation of an arch that took place between the two most divine, stable and pure elements: the ousia / hegemonikon of the gazer and the ousia / hegemonikon of the ‘nature’ gazed upon. Now, with the Forms gone, the arch is never to be completed: the *intentio* has to be *always* in action. *Intentionality* becomes *agency*. The main difference between the two is that the latter takes away the teleological charge from the former. In other words, unlike intentionality,

"*agency can and should be explained without reference to causally efficacious mental states and events.*"\(^{793}\)

This definition of ‘transhumants’, or transhumans, requires, besides the temporal one, a spatial axis, and Deleuze and Guattari introduce the notion of a ‘smooth place’ which is indeed an aspect “that determines them as nomad (essence)”\(^ {794}\). Both axes are defined by ephemerality. The ‘matter-flow’ should never stop transforming, relating. Accordingly, the ‘smooth place’ is a Messianic non-here and non-there that should not last long enough in order to create sedentary, Form-al settlements. Always going outward, looking agentically to things through linear perspective devices, while sitting in an ever-polarizing spot. It is this non-in-Form-ed *flow* that thinkers like Deleuze, Hayles, or Bennett define as *life*.

However, before proceeding to subsequent analyses about objects, matter and identity, let us see what is the matter with matter in the Christian School. But before proceeding, let us ask the following question: if it is not theology, already left behind, who can be held responsible for the current shifts in our understanding of matter and bodies? According to Halberstam and Livingston, the culprit is technology itself. Indeed,

"*technology makes the body queer, fragments it, frames it, cuts it, transforms desire.*"\(^ {795}\)

According to the same authors, the Form-al sphere, expressed through ‘master narratives’ associated with bodies, authorize only a very narrow (limit-ed) understanding of them. Once *liberated from their metaphysical constrains*, the bodies (with the help of technology) will become multitude, queer, forms of infinite expressions\(^ {796}\). Responsible for the liberation

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\(^{792}\) Ibid.

\(^{793}\) Schlosser 2015.

\(^{794}\) Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 452.

\(^{795}\) Halberstam and Livingston 1995: 16.

\(^{796}\) Ibid.
of the bodies from these metanarratives is, again, the technological gadgetry, concrete expressions of what Susan Squier calls “technological postmodernism”\textsuperscript{797}: machines

\begin{quote}
“do replace humanisms, to the extent that they enable theories that supersede the master narratives.”\textsuperscript{798}
\end{quote}

Within the cultural, interpretivist, and posthuman consumer culture research, the situation is quite similar with the one just presented. With the denial of the Cartesian dualism, a view deemed responsible for leaving it to the material world, technology enters the scene, stop being seen as “an external object of tool”\textsuperscript{799}. An immediate result of this is that from being “often perceived as an abstract ‘nothing’”\textsuperscript{800}, technology becomes ‘everything’, bearing the ability to deconstruct everything: from “everyday human experience of agency, free will, choice and self” \textsuperscript{801}. It also replaces religion as the main model for how the mind, body and universe work\textsuperscript{802}. Indeed, the consumer culture as a whole and increasingly at a global level is driven, shaped and constrained by technocultural and technopolitical considerations\textsuperscript{803}. Do I need to still repeat that this technological gadgetry that erases the intentio and the Form-al polycentrism follows, in its entirety, the dogmatic, unquestionable, unhackable rules of the ‘perspectiva artificialis’, i.e. the linear perspective?

The above considerations seem to describe, in a nutshell, the dominant views on matter within the postmodern / process-oriented circles, views that, in turn, open up the space for the Posthuman identity and its (dis)embodiments. The moving away from the classical / conservative theological and metaphysically charged views is repeatedly stated. However, what we have here is, I believe, an interesting case of inversion, with the additional elements of suppression and emphasis. As I am going to try to unfold this argument throughout the following sections, I will start by giving a short overview of how matter is conceptualized, from a dogmatic point of view, within the Christian School.

One central point concerning the nature of things is that their essential side, the thing-in-itself, remains inaccessible to us. In his work \textit{The Hexaemeron}, the Church Father Basil of Caesarea (c. 329 - 379) made a series of claims that were explicitly directed against

\begin{footnotes}
\item [797] Squier 1995: 120.
\item [798] Chasin 1995: 94.
\item [799] Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 661.
\item [800] Campbell, O'Driscoll, and Saren 2006: 344.
\item [801] Campbell, O'Driscoll, and Saren 2010: 91.
\item [802] Ibid.
\item [803] Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 661.
\end{footnotes}
various Hellenistic (Aristotle’s and others) philosophies of nature. In relation to the created sphere, the Cappadocian Father states the following:

"Let us depart from what concerns the essences [οὐσίαι] (of things) [...] (as) we are ignorant about the essential nature of the becoming."\(^{804}\)

Is not only the God’s essence that it is completely unknown / unknowable / unreachable, but with it, the essential nature (φύσιν) of the ‘accidents’ too, i.e. the things in-themselves. Even though the existence of essences is recognized, all we see is the transformational side of reality, and never the Form-al fixity of the essential forms. Ignorance (agnosis) is the word Basil uses when describing our relationship with the created world from an essential point of view – an experience that cannot / should not go beyond the perceived edges of things (res extensae) anymore. The ignorance of ousia is not a simple ignorance, but being the result of a dogmatic imposition, it represents an act of deep devotion. According to Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329 - 390), as he put it in his Fourth Theological Oration,

"we should understand the ignorance (related to the essences) in the most pious manner."\(^{805}\)

In order to understand the radicalism of these statements it is important to remember that for someone like e.g. Parmenides, certain knowledge could not happen except only in the presence of Being\(^{806}\). With Being qua Being absent, a Hellenistic thinker would have said that what we understand today by (certain) knowledge is actually faith: faith exists only in the absence of certain knowledge, which in turn is provided by full access to the Form-al essence.

The deanimation of nature had powerful epistemological implications, not only ontological ones. In Antiquity, as Peter Harrison has indicated in his Gifford lecture The Cosmos and the Religious Quest (2011), the Jews and Christians were virtually unique for not recognizing the celestial animation.\(^{807}\) As Origen stated in his book Against Celsus,

"certainly neither Jews nor Christians call the ‘heaven’, God.\(^{808}\)

Jerome (c. 347 - 420) makes this issue very clear, denying that the sun, the moon or other heavenly bodies were alive\(^{809}\). As we remember, Cicero, in his On the Nature of the Gods,

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805 As quoted in Vranic 2012: 162.
806 Heidegger 2015: 88, 91.
807 Harrison 2011.
808 Modified translation from Origen 2007: 545-546; Origen 1857: 1189, 1192.
stated explicitly that the world, the Universe [mundum] is God. Now, for Augustine, Cicero’s piece was a likely source for building up his arguments against pagan philosophy. In his *Confessions* he wrote:

“I asked the earth, and it answered, ‘I am not (God)’; and everything in the earth made the same confession. I asked the sea and the deeps and the creeping things, and they replied, ‘We are not your God; seek above us.’ [i.e. outside us] I asked the fleeting winds, and the whole air with its inhabitants answered, ‘Anaximenes was deceived; I am not God.’ I asked the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars; and they answered, ‘Neither are we the God whom you seek.’ […] I asked the whole frame of earth about my God, and it answered, ‘I am not He, but He made me.’ […] For the truth says to me, ‘Neither heaven nor earth nor anybody is your God’.810

The raison d’etre of creation moved outside itself: ‘seek above’, was Augustin invited. The great compiler of the Byzantine patristic tradition, John of Damascus (c. 675 - 749), wrote almost four centuries later:

“Let no one think that the sky and the heavenly bodies are alive; for they are inanimate and lack sense.”811

Because the Forms infused the entire pragma, the denial of teleological and intentional animation encompassed everything, not only the celestial spheres. Accordingly, when the Forms were denied, nothing was divine in-itself anymore: from the heavens (and everything in it), to the winds, and earth (and everything on it). Basil will add to the list the fifth element812, the dew, the frost, cold and heat813. Everything is made, constructed, and it is so out of soulless matter814. Even when the elements are introduced in the Scripture as praising God through hymns (as in e.g. the Book of Daniel 3: 57-88, Psalm 148), we should still not consider them, in-themselves, as ensouled ἐν ψυχος, living beings. These expressions are only figures of speech815.

Given all this, two things have to be underlined:

1. besides being Form-less, matter should not be conceptualized as being co-eternal with God’s essence either. As the Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich wrote, matter

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809 Dales 1980: 533.
811 As quoted in Dales 1980: 533.
813 Basil of Caesarea 1886: 75, 76.
815 Basil of Caesarea 1886: 75, 76.
“is not a second principle in addition to God”\textsuperscript{816}. Considering it so will introduce a plurality in the absolute uniqueness and simplicity of God. The idea that matter, thus that the world is eternal was a heavily debated issue throughout the Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance. It was opposed since early on, some of its supporters (both in the East, as in the West) being excommunicated by the Church. Being condemned for simply believing that matter is eternal might sound quite exaggerated, if not downright retrograde. We have to understand however that these beliefs never came alone, but always in a package (one including strong teleological hierarchies, plurality of final causes etc.). Although none of the Christian supporters of the idea of the eternity of matter followed the Hellenistic hylemorphic views \emph{ad litteram} anymore, but always approached the issue from a reformed perspective, their close proximity to the Hellenistic Schools was too dangerous. Even though the idea of the eternity of matter seems to have been resurrected in more recent times, especially within the Engelsian and Marxist materialism, the thinkers circulating them are careful enough not to temper with the first-degree truths and (some of) the lower ones. Any dangerous vicinity to the pagan views will be sanctioned drastically by their own peers (i.e. the radical, or the critical thinkers) or the ones from the ‘opposite’ side. If the formers will put the issue of \emph{limits} at the center of their critique (expressed as class restrictions, hierarchical structuring etc.), the latter will instead foreground the \emph{metaphysics} (pseudoscience). Old-school ecclesiastical excommunication might be out of fashion, but the request to observe the dogmatic correctness is definitely not. In the case of the aforementioned materialisms (but not only), the dogmatic alignment is visible in (at least) three occasions:

- teleology is rejected,
- infinity is preferred over Form-al boundedness,
- the Hellenistic \emph{separability} of the Divine becomes radical \emph{separateness}.

For Engels, evolutionary positivism cleaned Hegelian dialectic from residual mystifications and delivered it over to purely natural, (secondary causes only) scientific treatment. As he wrote,

“\emph{The old teleology has gone to the devil, but the certainty now stands firm that matter in its eternal cycle moves according to laws.}”\textsuperscript{817}

\textsuperscript{816} Stoker 1999: 218.
\textsuperscript{817} As quoted in Miller 1979: 107. About the (non-teleological) eternity of matter, see Zyga 2015.
2. not taking the Patristic lines I mentioned above into consideration, might lead us to believe that matter was appreciated *in-itself* – a very misleading, yet increasingly present view within both Eastern and Western theological scholarship. Here is the Orthodox theologian Elizabeth Theokritoff:

“Basil [of Caesarea] is not interested only in drawing morals from nature: he cannot restrain his fascination with the natural world per se.”

She then quotes John of Damascus saying:

“Never will I cease honoring the matter which wrought my salvation!”

In the Western theology such views are also present. Contemporary scholars and popularizers are increasingly introducing Francis of Assisi (c. 1181 - 1226) as some sort of a “heretical animistic revolutionary” and this does not apply to Francis only. As Roger Sorrell shows, a large amount of studies give the impression that the early Franciscan Order as a whole was a sort of

“countermovement representing a [...] radical view advocating respect for creation and opposing the usual Christian exploitation of the environment.”

As Mark Elvins, himself a Franciscan, points out, Francis and his followers have “nothing in common with ‘eco-warriors’ or ‘new-agers’”, and thus seeing his love of God in creation as nature worship is just plain wrong. In addition, Francis’ most famous poem, *Canticle of the Sun* (1224) is often misinterpreted as a passionate ode to the Sun, to the Moon and to other elements. Although Francis is repeating in almost every line of his poem that everything that exists does so only derivatively, and not in-itself (i.e. *because of* God, and *belongs* to God alone), scholars are still ignoring that, remaking the whole text into some sort of ode in which

“inanimate and unconscious matter [...] is viewed by Francis as very much part of divine cosmic consciousness.”

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822 Elvins 2007: 46-47.
824 Kinsley 1996: 123.
Less than a century after Francis death, from the Order will sprout out personalities like John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham – radical advocates of contingency, thus of a completely de-Form-alized nature, one swept clean of Essences. Of course, Elvins is not the only one warning against these misleading positions. As I mentioned, Florensky too noted that the roots of the Reformation could be identified in Francis’s teachings, whereas, from a technological point of view, some of the first instances of Franciscanism in art, hence of the ‘perspectiva artificialis’, was Giottism. Indeed, as some scholars are showing, the ‘via moderna’ was held in special favor among many Franciscans who, in addition to the optical nominalism of the ‘linear perspective’, accepted the logical and the epistemological nominalism of Ockham and other Masters. It was, in Baylor’ words,

“in the via moderna that Luther received his formal theological education and for long thereafter he continued to regard Ockham […] as his master.”

There are two points to be made very clear here. The first is that these thinkers never considered matter as being the seat of an essential Divine, Form-al structure. The second is that even those who think these Fathers were following a true hylemorphic model (which was not the case), are following a reformed one (so ironic, indeed). In other words, nobody is going anywhere near the despised Hellenistic models, but rather remain within the dogmatic frame. Introducing these Fathers as a real alternative to ‘the usual Christian exploitation of the environment’ is not only misleading, but also pointless.

Following the processes of the de-Form-alization of nature under the pressure of the Christian first-degree truths, it is only normal that the understanding of the ‘split’ and its different expressions changed drastically, with powerful implications on many levels. Some I already mentioned: the criticism various Christian thinkers directed at the hegemonikon brought the issues of intentionality and ‘intentional seeing’ to a stop. There was no part in our ruling principle that was ‘free from agitation’: everything is subjected to change and fluctuation, every single fold of our being has to open up, there should be no ‘within’ left where some immutable essence could conceal (as Heidegger would say) itself, waiting to be discovered through contemplation. As below, so above, because this was far from being the only area that suffered from the process of de-Form-alization. As shown, the pagan image of the Cosmos, as expressed by the Stoics, the Aristotelians, Plato and others, started to be criticized by Basil of Caesarea, Augustin, John of Damascus, John Philoponus and many others, up to Kepler and even later on.

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the Christian School, the same laws of nature should apply to the supra-lunary and sub-lunary alike – as they do ‘in Europe and America’. The same kind of matter ought to be governed by the same causes or forces\textsuperscript{827}, everywhere. There is no ‘split’, there are no Forms, there is nothing that can possibly escape the processes of corruptibility and change. By and large, from the 4\textsuperscript{th} century onwards, a somehow consistent Christian dogmatic framework rose within which specific cosmological issues could henceforth be addressed. This framework was not challenged and transformed in the course of the European 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries by a revolution in cosmology and science (as so many authors claim), but a more dogmatically friendly view replaced the one containing too many ‘rests’ that made it into the Christian School from various pagan ones. Indeed, as the historian Peter Harrison noted,

\begin{quote}
“\textit{many of the leading figures in the scientific revolution imagined themselves to be champions of a science that was more compatible with Christianity than the medieval ideas about the natural world that they replaced.}“\textsuperscript{828}
\end{quote}

At the level of senses, following the withdrawal of the essences, the ‘to sense is to know’ of the Hellenistic histor became impossible (sensation was not a reception of a Form anymore, as it was for e.g. Plotinus). Accordingly, the possibility to remember and to acquire certain knowledge vanished too.

As we recall, I started this section with a quote from the \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}. When Deleuze and Guattari are referring to theology as being very strict on the fact that there can be ‘no transformation of essential forms; they are inalienable’ – hence the werewolf, a metaphor for the cyborg, is an impossibility – they are attacking all forms of theology, except for the Christian one. What is the message these two thinkers are sending? Only by getting rid of the Form-al limits within the pragma-tic sphere, only after breaking them up, the cyborg will become possible. The cyborg cannot only become only within a de-idolatrized domain. Why except for the Christian theology? Looking at the issue from a Form-al perspective, Deleuze and Guattari are right in their analysis: from a Hellenistic point of view, the Forms were indeed inalienable. But from a phenomenal perspective, that was not at all the case. As an example, we might want to recall here Empedocles’ confession: from a pragma-tic perspective, “I have already been, once upon a time, boy, girl, plant, bird, and mute fish”\textsuperscript{829}. Simultaneously however, Empedocles was, from a Form-al perspective, none of these, but actually a God: “I, an immortal God...”\textsuperscript{830}.

\textsuperscript{827} Funkenstein 1989: 29-30.
\textsuperscript{828} Harrison 2012.
\textsuperscript{829} As quoted in Krell 2008: 20-21.
\textsuperscript{830} Laertius 1925: 376, 377; Panagiotou 1983.
As repeatedly noted, following the Christian dogmatic views, there can be no God, but one God. Accordingly, the Form-al category cannot be assigned to anything within the created sphere, but only to the God’s (unreachable, unknowable, and unutterable) essence. Therefore, when referring exclusively to the sphere of becoming, there cannot be but only ‘werewolves’, i.e. cyborgs.

2.6.1 Separating the “separable”

“All multiplicities are flat […] defined by the outside.”

- Gilles Deleuze\(^{831}\)

As I noted in the first part of this text, when it comes to the ‘split’ between the sense-perceptible sphere (the sub-lunary) and the intelligible one (the supra-lunary), or between the matter and the Form, between the inside and the outside of the Platonic Cave, or between the Form-al and the enmatttered appearance of the Gods, there is a term that proves to be crucial if we are to understand some of the subtle mechanisms that play a major role in regards to the Christian School’s understanding of various issues. That term is chôristos, which can be translated either as ‘separate’ or ‘separable’ – both variants being correct simultaneously.

Let us see in the following how a rather obscure translation choice – one based on strict dogmatic formulas – changed the course of history.

The ontological equivalency between the mortals and the Gods scandalized the Christian philosophers. Clement of Alexandria recorded in his Exhortation to the Greeks the epitaph of a certain Hippo:

“This is the sepulchre of Hippo, whom the Moirai made, through death, equal to the immortal Gods.”\(^{832}\)

Clement goes on by scorning at Hippo and at this view:

“Well done, Hippo!, for showing to us the delusion of the humankind.”\(^{833}\)


\(^{832}\) Modified translation from Clement 1919: 124, 125.
The Alexandrian author then extends what he perceives being an erroneous or delusional view, one shared by a member of a certain culture or School\textsuperscript{834}, to the entirety of humankind. In other words: everyone who is a member of this species\textsuperscript{835} and thinks about himself as being equal, from an ontological point of view, to some Divinity, is not only wrong, but altogether delusional. Because what they consider to be a Divinity is, in fact, just another human being (to which, following the Christian view, they are \textit{already equal}):

\begin{quote}
"Those whom you worship were once mortal humans. Fable / myth and (chronological) time have raised them to honours. While perhaps we look down at the present at hand because of our familiarity with it, the past, being separated from the now by the obscurity which time brings, gets invested with fictitious honour.\textsuperscript{836} And so, while (the phenomenal present) is doubted (by the heathens), (the past) is approached with reverent wonder. As an example, those being long dead, being exalted by the long period of delusion, are believed to be Gods by those who come after.\textsuperscript{837}
\end{quote}

Why did Clement call the belief in the ontological equivalency between the mortals and the Gods a ‘delusion’? Did Clement’s view define an exception within the Christian School? Not at all.

In his first epistle to Timothy, Paul wrote:

\begin{quote}
"the God alone is immortal (in Himself), dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no human being has ever seen or can see.\textsuperscript{838}
\end{quote}

There are a few points to address in the line above. The first is that God only \(\tilde{ο} μόνος\) is immortal with necessity (in-itself and by-itself). The second is that, from an ontological perspective, He dwells in a completely inaccessible place. Besides loosing its plural (even when applied to God: He has only \textit{one ousia}) – there are no ousia\textsuperscript{839} left in neither the created, nor the uncreated realms.

\textsuperscript{833} Modified translation from Clement 1919: 126, 127. Let us also remember here the Foucault 1988: 19.
\textsuperscript{834} That he was ‘equal \(\tilde{ι}σον\) to the immortal Gods’.
\textsuperscript{835} Who is a member of this species is another central question remaining to be decided.
\textsuperscript{836} This is why we always have to focus on the present, to not let the chronological past lead us (back in)to idolatry, traditions, thus memory. I said ‘chronological’ because obviously Clement is historicizing (thus, immanentizing / naturalizing) here the notion of mythical time.
\textsuperscript{837} Modified translation from Clement 1919: 126, 127.
\textsuperscript{838} 1 Timothy 6:16.
\textsuperscript{839} That can exists by themselves in themselves, or associated with just one individual.
Origen\textsuperscript{840}, a contemporary of Plotinus, and a student of Clement of Alexandria, is considered to be “the most important theologian of the Church before Nicea, and one of the most influential Christian writers of all time”\textsuperscript{841}. In his book \textit{Against Celsus}\textsuperscript{842}, a piece that should be regarded as a response to an attack on Christianity from a preeminent pagan philosopher – one thus familiar with the general technical vocabulary of the philosophical discourse of the period – the Alexandrian theologian writes:

“\textit{It is not merely a matter of speech when [the Christians] separate between Being / essence and becoming, between what is intelligible and what is visible / sensible, and they join together Truth with Being and by all possible means avoid the error that is bound up with becoming. They look, as they have learnt, not at the phenomenal [...] but at the (realities of the) better (sphere), whether one wishes to call these realities ‘Being,’ or ‘invisible’ - because they are intelligible - or ‘things which are not seen’ because their nature lies outside the realm of sense perception.}”\textsuperscript{843}

At a first glance, this fragment sounds so similar, almost identical, to what Aristotle, Plato or Epicurus had to say about the nature of reality, the relationship between Truth and Being, the issue of error and its relationship with the phenomenal sphere, and the fact that we should not focus on the ephemeral becoming if we want to obtain certain knowledge and so on. So, the question is: why was Origen telling these things to someone who already knows them well? The devil is, again, in the details. What Origen is saying is indeed radical, because, unlike in the pagan philosophers’ case, \textit{chôristos} is to be understood as ‘separate’, not ‘separable’. And he is making this point very clear in the fragment at least three times:

- by saying that the separateness between the Formal and the phenomenal sphere is not one based on intellectual, or noetical analyses (as it was in Aristotle or Plotinus’ case), but it is an actual / factual one: is not ‘a matter of speech’;
- by showing that the faithful ones try, ‘by all possible means’, to avoid / to flee from \textit{φεύγω}\textsuperscript{844} the deceit / error bound up with the phenomenal sphere, hence with the

\textsuperscript{840} C. 184 - c. 253
\textsuperscript{841} Lienhard 1996: xv.
\textsuperscript{842} Celsus is the author of \textit{The True Doctrine}, which survives exclusively in Origen’s quotations from it in his \textit{Against Celsus}. This work, written around 177 AD, seems to be one of the earliest known attacks on Christianity from a Hellenistic School (Cline 2011).
\textsuperscript{843} Modified translation from Parnell 2009: 170-171. My emph.
\textsuperscript{844} The verb \textit{pheugó} \((φεύγω)\) contains a powerful sense of complete detachment, to leave completely (as in going into exile, or live in banishment).
senses - an unthinkable situation for someone like Plato or Aristotle for whom the Truth / Form was within the deceit and error;

- by pointing out that the nature of things that truly matter (Being and Truth) lies completely outside \[\varepsilon\xi\omega\] of the aesthetic / sensual realm – which means that chóristos-as-separate opens up a new understanding of extoriety: from now, as shown, everything lies in an outside only (where everything is outside of everything else, no matter how internal a structure can be in relation to another – technology to the body).

The separability between the Formal and the phenomenal sphere is not an intellectual / noetical one, but a factual one: the separable became separate. Given this, one of the questions Origen (and other Fathers) had to answer was: how, exactly, the two are communicating one with each other then? How certain knowledge (about the world and about its Creator) can be attained without the full access to the Forms? In the very next section Origen tries to solve the conundrum:

“the disciples of Jesus look at the becoming, so that they use it as stepping-stones to the contemplation of the nature of intelligible. For the invisible things of God are understood by the things that are made’ and ‘from the creation of the world they are clearly seen⁸⁴⁵ by the process of thought. And when they have ascended from the created cosmos to the invisible things of God they do not stop. But after exercising their minds sufficiently among them and understanding them, they ascend to the eternal power of God, to His Divinity.”⁸⁴⁶

The question now is: where does this ascent really end? As we have seen, for someone like e.g. Diotima, the knowledge becomes certain when one comes to know the Form of Beauty in itself, the essence. Origen seems to speak about the ascent to ‘the eternal power of God’ as the ultimate stage of the ascension. But is that stage the one when we will know God in itself? In other words, is the ‘power of God’ God in itself, or only one of its attributes? In fact, Origen does not say that once we reach the eternal power of God that is the end of our journey. He does not say anything about the essence of God at all.

Gregory of Nyssa will use the metaphor of ‘climbing steps’ several times in his work. In his Homilies on the Song of Songs, he asks rhetorically about Moses:

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⁸⁴⁵ Origen is alluding here to Romans 1:20: “For the invisible things of Him are clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made”.

⁸⁴⁶ Modified translation from Parnell 2009: 171. My emph.
“who does not observe the upward steps that Moses climbed, Moses who was perpetually growing up and never ceased from growth toward the better / greater?"\(^{847}\)

Nyssa continues by saying that Moses (an archetypal image of the Christian), who chose since the very beginning “the reproach of Christ over the kingdom of the Egyptians”\(^{848}\), a metaphor for the phenomenal world, possesses

“an insatiable desire for more / greater.”\(^{849}\)

And although he was deemed worthy of speaking with God face-to-face, not even this put an end to his insatiability:

“neither the fact that he addressed God as friend to friend, nor his intimate conversation with God put a stop to his desire for higher.”\(^{850}\)

What in Plato and Aristotle was an image of gross unbalance\(^{851}\), in Nyssa, and within the Christian School more generally, became central, a definition of what does it means to be a Christian. No matter how high up the Christian would climb in his / her way towards God, the ontological meeting would never take place, because

“the place where (God) is found it is outside \(\varepsilon\acute{x}\omega\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\) of every move to apprehend Him, and hence he completely escapes the grasp of those who seek / desire Him.”\(^{852}\)

In his Homilies on the Beatitudes, Nyssa writes that God’s essential nature (\(\varphi\upsilon\sigma\varsigma\))

“in itself by itself (\(\alpha\omicron\upsilon\iota\vartheta\ \kappa\alpha\theta\ \alpha\omicron\iota\eta\nu\)) is beyond every apprehending thought.”\(^{853}\)

Given all this, Gregory concludes, in one of his most brilliant and influential pieces, Against Eunomius, that,

\(^{847}\) Modified translation from Gregory of Nyssa 2012: 374, 375.
\(^{848}\) Gregory of Nyssa 2012: 375.
\(^{849}\) Modified translation from Gregory of Nyssa 2012: 376, 377.
\(^{850}\) Modified translation from Gregory of Nyssa 2012: 376, 377.
\(^{851}\) Plato\(^{1}\) 1926: 406, 407; Aristotle\(^{1}\) 1926: 268, 269, 292, 293.
\(^{852}\) Modified translation from Gregory of Nyssa 2012: 376, 377.
\(^{853}\) As quoted in Manoussakis 2007: 97. Modified. As we remember, this is how Plato referred to the separable Forms: “as itself by itself with itself” (Plato 1925: 204, 205). Now, the very same expression defines the separate.
“the gap / the in-between μέσον] is great and impassable, the uncreated nature being thus cut off from the created essence.”

Augustine, a Gregory of Nyssa’s contemporary, in his piece On the Presence of God, formulated the interaction between God and the creation in similar terms:

“God is spread out throughout all things [...] Nevertheless, not such as He is a quality of the world but such as He is the substance that creates the world [...] He is not enclosed within the things in which He is present as though without them He could not exist [esse] [...] He is not present in things so as to need them, as if He could not exist except within them.”

The issue of ‘separate’ / ‘separateness’ did not apply only to the relation between God and His creation, but it deeply touched the human being and his world as well. As Nyssa explains in his Homilies on Ecclesiastes:

“The whole creation in unable to [...] apprehend through contemplation, (and so it) remains forever enclosed within itself. Whatever it beholds, it is looking at itself. And even if it somehow thinks it is looking at something outside itself, the nature which it sees has no Form [οὐκ ἰδεῖν]. One may struggle, however vehemently, to surpass or transcend the gap διάστηµα by contemplating into Being, but he cannot transcend it. For in every object it conceptually contemplare, what he always comprehends is only the diastemic gap in a particular.”

The radicalism of this passage reminds us of various issues. The first is that the ontological diastemic gap διάστηµα cannot be escaped. Second, we cannot know even the particulars in their essential fullness. Douglass is absolutely right when he sees in here the dogmatic roots of the postmodernist and post-structuralist approaches, and he gives the example of Derrida, who suggests that everything is not only unknowable theoretically, but also empirically. Douglass again correct in stressing out that the distinction between the Creature and the Creator is a qualitative, not a quantitative one – i.e. is a difference in

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855 Clark version: “Nevertheless, God so fills all things as to be not a quality of the world” (Augustine of Hipo 1984: 409). My emph. In other words, God’s relation with matter does not replicate the Forms’ relation with matter. The Christian world is not a hylemorphic world.
856 Both Clark and Lévy translate continetur by dependent – which, while correct, it misses the sense of being within (Augustine of Hipo 1984: 412; Lévy 2013: 115).
857 As quoted in Lévy 2013: 115. Modified.
859 Douglass 2005: 40.
kind, not in degree. Given the impossibility of reaching the Form-al side, the whole issue of contemplation becomes redundant as well.

Derrida is among between many contemporary thinkers that can be used as an example of how these dogmatic requirements, expressions of the first-degree truths, are followed outside the easily recognizable theological circles. In the following I am going to briefly present a few other central figures of contemporary philosophy, and how they deal with chôristos: Latour, Agamben, and Graham Harman.

In his Politics of Nature (2004), Latour deals extensively with Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, making its obsessive repetition throughout the centuries responsible for the current dualistic rupture between “the world of truth” and “the social world.” Science (with capital S) can survive only as long as it “distinguishes absolutely and not relatively between things ‘as they are’ and their abstractions, i.e. the ‘representation that human beings make of them’

In his critique, Latour is, of course, not advocating a unification between the Form-al realm and the pragma-tic one – thus going back to the Hellenistic views. The gap has to be ‘solved’ by making the ‘world of truth’, the one of the Forms, to disappear altogether. The story Latour it telling has nothing to do with Plato’s views. As I was trying to show, Plato never recognized or advocated such a rupture. What Latour is criticizing in here is only a ‘metaphysical rest’, one that made it into the Christian School only by being immediately aligned to its dogmatic requirements. In a perfect example of inversion, what we have here is the School going against itself, against its own problematic residues. The known unknown has to become an unknown unknown. Latour is thus more scientist than the Scientists he blames, for he is following Descartes, Comte and others in that the metaphysical structures shall be entirely banished from science. Everything we must enquire into are the efficient causes of created things. Latour is thus not an anti-scientist per se, as none of the postmodern thinkers are, but exactly the opposite.

The Italian thinker Georgio Agamben follows this path of dogmatic purifications and alignments too. His views on this issue are scattered all over his oeuvre, but one place where they can be found in a more concise manner is his 2006 essay What Is an Apparatus? The keyword in here is the term ‘separation’ and its link with religion. Religion is “that which removes to a separate sphere”: it is this very act of “separation that define religion,” all religions. Indeed, according to Agamben, there is “no religion

860 Ibid.
862 Latour 2004: 12. My emph. Without this absolute, radical distinction, “all moral and social life would be threatened” and “there would no longer be a sure way to distinguish what is true from what is false” (Latour 2004: 12).
863 Agamben 2009: 18, 19.
without separation”\(^{864}\). The main religions mentioned in the *What Is an Apparatus?* are the Christian one, and Plato and Aristotle’s Schools. However, like Latour himself, Agamben does not actually criticize the Christian dogmatic position on the issue (how could he?) as he starts his argument already from its perspective: he sees the ‘split’ between the Form-al and the pragma-tic as being defined by a factual ‘separation’, and not by a noetical ‘separability’ – as it was actually the case, at least within the Hellenistic Schools. The next step Agamben then takes is to ‘extend the claim’, applying this dogmatic position to the Christian Schools itself (thus addressing the ‘metaphysical rests’ that are still present within it and from which the School needs to be purified), and all other non-Christian religions: the war against one totality / separation is a war against all totalities / separations.

Before closing this section, one more example. For Graham Harman, the founder of the ‘Object-oriented ontology’ movement, ousia (a term he actually uses\(^{865}\)), or the “hidden reality”\(^{866}\), is “utterly distinct” from the appearance of things, although present within the things, at an “infinite inward depth”\(^{867}\).

Following Gregory of Nyssa, everything that fits within the created sphere ‘has no Form’. This radical change is expressed in the way the term chôristos is understood and thus translated. The separability between the (fully accessible and knowable) Forms and the phenomena within various Hellenistic Schools became in Christianity the absolute separation between God’s unique, uncreated essence (which is unreachable, unknowable, and unutterable) and his creation (diastema). Anything else that resembles a limit within the phenomenal sphere is to be repudiated, in order to keep the temptation to pluralize the Forms, the final causes, beyond the unique God’s essence (and hence to reinstate the idolatry) at bay. The possibility of discovering (understood as ‘creating’, from a Christian perspective) separations within the created sphere is thus to be dismissed.

This Christian dogmatic model has then to be extended over any other metanarratives, or totalities (religions) that recognizes Form-al structures, especially if they do so in terms of separability. No idolatrous separability should be allowed to survive, the diastema (the total separation) having to be applied anywhere essences are to be found.

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865 As kryptoousia (Harman 2005: 110) – thus recognizing that what we are dealing here with is not the Hellenistic ousia, but the created, Christian one: a pseudo-ousia.
866 Although inaccessible, Harman recognizes that every object has its own Form: “the withdrawn reality of the cypress is not that of a volcano, icicle, or star” (Harman 2005: 176).
867 Harman 2005: 110. The use of the ‘infinite’ makes the kryptoousia even more Christian.
2.6.2 The end of the Sacrifices

“[B]elieve me, Jesus said, a time is coming when you will worship the Father

neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem.”

- John 4:21

“If anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.”

- Matthew 24:23

“That the folly of sacrifices be abolished!”

- Emperor Constantius II\textsuperscript{868}

As seen, the cleaning off of nature from the divine Forms (i.e. its de-Formalization / de-idolatrization / desacralization) opened up the space for the ‘werewolves’, i.e. the cyborgs. This is a point on which the Church thinkers and some of the contemporary ones agree wholeheartedly: the cyborg cannot exist within a Form-ally bounded space, one prone to idolatrous or fetishistic approaches, restrictive hierarchies, teleological forces and more.

I concluded the main section on the deanimation of nature by enumerating some of the things that got affected by the ontological emptying of the phenomenal sphere. Between the affected elements I noted the cosmic ‘split’ between the sub- and supra-lunary, some of the physiological elements (the hegemonikon), etc. However, these were far from being the only places from within which the Forms were eliminated. In fact, there were many additional ones, some perhaps surprising to a contemporary reader: the theater, games, and dance.

I was pondering for quite a while whether there should be something related to these issues in a text about Posthumanism and limits, but then it struck me how central to the core of Posthumanism is the notion of playfulness, thus performance and

\textsuperscript{868} As quoted in Stroumsa 2009: 57.
performativity. In his seminal paper on the posthuman, Hassan himself called the Posthumanist culture “the matrix of all our performances”\textsuperscript{869}. He is not the only one making this connection. Haraway, in her \textit{Manifesto}, noted the fact that the cyborg is “written into the play of a text that has no finally privileged reading or salvation history”\textsuperscript{870}. The play has the power to cancel the teleological tensions and the hierarchical structures. Given the utterly contingent and pragma-tic nature of the cyborg, i.e. the one who is “fully implicated in the world”, in Haraway’s words\textsuperscript{871}, prominent points of intersection between theatrical practices and Posthumanist and cyber-presences have been identified\textsuperscript{872}. As the other grande dame of the Movement, Katherine Hayles, noted in her highly influential piece \textit{How We Became Posthuman} (1999), by quoting from William Gibson’s \textit{Neuromancer} (1984),

\textit{“all around you [is] the dance of biz, information interacting, data made flesh”}\textsuperscript{873}

This endless dance between “the body [any body, all bodies] and embodiment, inscription and incorporation” defines a set of distinctions that are “heuristic rather than absolute”\textsuperscript{874}: nothing is, or should be, normative or Form-al, everything is flat and created. When it comes to the issue of games, there is one expression that defines the very foundation of artificial intelligence, computing and robotics: Turing’s “Imitation Game”\textsuperscript{875}.

Within the emergent field of posthuman consumer culture the connection between performance, Posthumanism and the cyborg is made clear on various occasions. Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz write about Stelarc’s “spectacular performances of cyborgism”\textsuperscript{876}, while other authors are noticing the close relationship between contemporary technology and various act of performance, underlying the fact that under the influence of the technological object, the gadget, \textit{performance} became almost synonymous with \textit{information}, hence data\textsuperscript{877}. Indeed, as Campbell notes, performance “is translated into information which is measured and displayed as technological ordering on the screen”\textsuperscript{878}.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{869} Hassan 1977: 831.
\bibitem{870} Haraway 1985: 312.
\bibitem{871} Haraway 1985: 312.
\bibitem{872} Lehman 2010; Wood 2012.
\bibitem{873} As quoted in Hayles 1999: 37.
\bibitem{874} Hayles 1999: 193.
\bibitem{875} Turing 1950.
\bibitem{876} Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 646.
\bibitem{877} Venkatesh, Karababa, and Ger 2002; Campbell 2007.
\bibitem{878} Campbell 2007: 10.
\end{thebibliography}

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All these issues are not only representing something ‘new’, but they are affecting the entire humanity. As Haraway tells us, the matters described above define “fundamental changes in the nature of class, race and gender, an emerging system of world order analogous in its novelty and scope to that created by industrial capitalism”: we are witnessing a move “from all work to all play”\(^{879}\). According to Stefan Herbrechter, the contemporary “human and humanity are in radical transition or transformation”\(^{880}\) – a transformation that will culminate with the advent of “a new ‘episteme’”: the human becomes “a radically open category, for the promise of a postanthropocentric, posthumanist future”\(^{881}\).

The issue of the play, in its associations with Posthumanism, has maybe its most powerful and well known expression in the notion of “playing God” – something otherwise known as “theomimesis”\(^{882}\). Playing God, as Fuller and Lipiński noted, defines a situation in which the humans

> “have arrogated for themselves divine powers, while refusing to credit God for the inspiration; in this respect, such self-avowed ‘atheist’ movements as idealism, positivism, Marxism, etc. are properly called ‘Promethean’”\(^{883}\).

If we are to go back to Hassan’s paper again, we will find there the figure of the Titan Prometheus, introduced as “an emblem of human destiny”\(^{884}\). As Hassan points out, our world is characterized by “divergences, conjunctions and disjunctions [...] myths of totality”: limits are everywhere, and they usually bust out “under the twin aspects of totalitarianism (torture) and anarchy (terrorism)”, manifested in “ideology, religion, class, race”\(^{885}\). Prometheus however, by going against the Gods, i.e. those guilty for keeping such distinctions relevant, signals through his act of rebellion the dawn of a new era, one in which all the distinctions will be blurred: an era where “[e]verything changes and nothing, not even Death, can tire”\(^{886}\).

Speaking about Gods, in the section where I introduced the issue of the ‘interpretive grille’, I briefly mentioned the Agambian call for the ‘end of Sacrifice’. For Agamben, the apparatus that affects and regulates the separation, or the distinctions I just mentioned, is the sacrifice. This happens “through a series of meticulous rituals, which

\(^{879}\) Haraway 1985: 300. 
\(^{880}\) Herbrechter 2012: 5. 
\(^{881}\) Herbrechter 2012: 15. 
\(^{882}\) Fuller and Lipiński 2014: 46. 
\(^{883}\) Fuller and Lipiński 2014: 56. 
\(^{884}\) Hassan 1977: 831. 
\(^{885}\) Hassan 1977: 833. 
\(^{886}\) Hassan 1977: 850.
differ in various cultures”887. The rationale in here is the following: by ending the
sacrifice, the Form-al / normative distinctions and divisions on which e.g. religion, race,
class, or genders are based will disappear. Prometheus’ blasphemous move against the
Gods opens up thus a new space for endless performativity, a space which is profane
(Agamben), or blasphemous (Haraway) in nature: the space of the cyborg, of the nomad, of
the werewolves.

Following these kind of narratives, it is interesting to note here that
Prometheus, the humanity’s “great friend”, as Nietzsche calls him888, put the foundation
of the new paradigm of limitless, boundary-less space of “countless directions”889 by
making technology (i.e. the technology of fire) that was retained by a powerful,
hierarchical structure / institution – i.e. the jealous Gods gathered around the mount
Olympus – available to everyone through the act of sharing. Therefore, it is technology
that brought the metaphysics of the sacrifice-sustained limits down, for it is through the
use of technology that the blasphemy of the cyborg becomes possible, and it is the influx
of technologies that created a new kind of continually evolving and often paradoxical,
unfinished, fluctuating self890. Of course, Prometheus gesture has to be extended: once
we got the technology, we have to give it away too, we have to gift it away: everything
“should be able to become a game”891. As Boulaire and Cova note, the cyborgian site
does indeed expand, “spreading in countless directions, contaminating and contaminated
by various communities, cultures, spaces, places”892.

As it seems, the ‘end of sacrifice’ and the subsequent creation of the ‘matrix of
all our performances’ through the use and the sharing of (a certain type of) technology
echoes the argument I made in the section on ‘difference’. The welcoming of a
polycentrically constructed universe defines a model in which no particular set of
reference points can claim to possess an onto-epistemic monopoly on the interpretation
of reality – an worldview summarized in the Lyotardian line ‘none is privileged, none is
dropped either’. However, what is perceived as being an opening up to a weirder and
wider world, one characterized by countless onto-epistemological models, represent only
an act of ‘inversion’: the perceived ‘opening’ is actually an act of alignment to the
dogmatic structure of the Christian School. Similarly, what appears at first sight as an
‘atheistic’, ‘profane’, or ‘blasphemous’ move against various religiously legitimized limits
(race, class) – i.e. particular sets of reference points actualized through the sacrifice which

887 Agamben 2007: 23.
888 Nietzsche 1999: 23.
891 Lefebvre 2002: 204.
separates, impending the ‘self’ to jump playfully between identities, shapes and abilities – represents indeed the response to a specific dogmatic request made by the Christian School. Indeed, it is only after the de-Form-alization or the desacralization of nature that the “homo ludens” can rise and be celebrated as the postmodern ideal of identity.

The Hellenistic world was ripe with games, plays, and theatrical representations. The celebrated Olympic games were far from being the only ones: the Pythian, the Nemean, and the Isthmian Games were very important ones too, not to mention countless other local festivals and ceremonies. Similarly, it would be very difficult to imagine today the world of theatrical performance without the ‘big three’ Ancient Greek play writers: Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides. But apparently, as Henry Lefebvre noted in highly influential text *The Critique of Everyday Life* (1961), it is precisely our era, “the era of functionalism and technology, which has discovered homo ludens”. As shown, given that the deanimation / desacralization of nature works hand in hand with the ‘linear perspective’ based technological objects, it means that not all the Promethean ‘fires’ and not all plays and games are suitable for creating and expressing the ‘fundamental changes’ that will result in the emergence of the ‘playing man’, thus leading to a postanthropocentric, posthumanist future. Let us see in the following how all this fits together, and what is the role Christian dogmatic theology plays in aligning these rather disparate elements together.

The direct relationship between the Sacrifices and the Forms within various Hellenistic Schools is quite a well-documented one, the latter defining the stable grounds on which the pagan practices of Sacrifice(s) were standing conceptually and were performed practically. This is made very clear throughout the Hellenistic corpus and within various Schools. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates paralleled the work of the dialecticians to the one of the sacrificers: both dissect in accordance with the Forms, thus following the natural joints of the sacrificial offering. In *The Statesman*, Plato’s characters articulate their arguments as a sacrificial practice too, thus according to the “natural lines of joints”.

For Plutarch, the sacrifices directed to the Moon, Sun or other celestial bodies too into consideration the fact that the Gods were essentially within matter and fully reachable. As he put it,

“*let us not believe that the Sun and the Moon are only images of Zeus and Hera, but that the Sun is really Zeus enmattered and the Moon is Hera enmattered.*”

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893 Huizinga 1949.
894 Kernan and Domzal 2008; Sangiorgi 2014.
896 “Now pay attention to see if we can perceive any natural line of joint in it” (Plato 1925: 12, 13).
The enmattermnt of the divine Forms, as the one described by Plutarch above, defined and defended not only the necessity of the Sacrifices, but also their real pluralism and the centrality of the aesthetic experience. As Iamblichus wrote, one must always begin the sacrificial rites from the material Gods. There is no other way towards the immaterial and separable Forms, i.e. towards the within. For no matter how completely the Forms may be separable from the matter, in the exact same way they are present within it. In addition, the Sacrificial rituals occurred according to the nature of each, as they desired or craved to actualize their potentialities and to attain their individual ends. As Iamblichus wrote,

"everyone performs the Sacrifice bestowed upon according to what he is, and not according to what he is not. Therefore, one should not overstep the measure of the worshipper." 898

It is of course important to remember the fact that the possibility of sacrifices was given by the ontological equivalency between the mortals and the Gods – equivalency expressed in Ptolemy’s epigram, or in the Hippo’s epitaph. As the classical scholar Nichole Belayche noted, through the sacrifice, the individuals or entire communities were “allowed to share the table of the gods” 899, and nourish themselves full with the divine ambrosia. Now, the sacrificial practices had different forms of expression: from bloodless to blood ones. The bloodless ones consisted in offerings of incense, flowers, wine, games, theater, dance and so on. The blood ones consisted in animal and human offerings. As we shall see in the following, with the rise of the Christian School, all these forms of Sacrifices will come under radical reconsideration.

By 392 AD, a prohibition of any kind of pagan rituals came into being: not just the public worship (in all its forms) was strictly forbidden, but also the private forms. As stated in the Codex Theodosianus, no person should be permitted, anywhere

“to sacrifice an innocent animal to insensible image or to venerate, through solitary expiation, the lares with fire, the genius with wine, the penates with

899 Belayche 2001: 457.
900 pl. lares: divinities strongly associated with limits and borders, their shrines been placed on the City’s ancient, sacred boundary (pomerium), or at the crossroads.
901 The genii were deities also associated with transitions. For instance, when it came to the childhood, a number of them supervised processes such as the transition from cradle to a bed (Cuba), children stepping over thresholds, such as leaving the house (Interduca and Domiduca), and countless others.
the smell of incense [...] If anyone should dare to slaughter sacrificial animals or to interpret the still moving entrails [divination], he will – in the manner of a person guilty of high treason, whom anyone can take to court – be subject to the appropriate penalty, even if he were not seeking to learn anything against or about the emperor’s well-being. For it suffices for the magnitude of the crime that someone wants to abolish the laws of nature herself, to investigate what is unlawful, to examine what is hidden, to try to do what is forbidden, to inquire when another person’s well-being will end, and to offer hope of another person’s death.”

The partitioning of the space (house) and of the rhythms of the lives of ‘natures’ were heavily challenged. The temples – as the sacrificial centers per excellence – came under attack, sometimes in very subtle ways. In the same Codex, there is a very interesting decree:

“We decree that the temple formerly dedicated to crowded assemblies and now open to the people, in which images have reportedly been placed - which should be measured by the value [pretio] of their art rather than by their divinity [divinitate] - shall always be open.”

In an interesting example of ‘inversion’, there are quite a few scholars that see this decree as an example of religious tolerance, thus against the Church’s usually intolerant views against the pagans, and as a ruling against the usual destruction of the temples905, that were usually perpetrated by fanatical monks and bishops. This is absolutely not the case. Following Anna Leone, what the Emperor agreed to was that people could visit the temples as museums, “although the concept of a ‘museum’ as understood today did not exist in antiquity”906. Even though in our perception the transition of a certain place from a sacred to a secular one is something that bears no particular weight, within that social context the move represented an extremely violent act of censorship. Any identification of an act of worship directed towards the statues within the spared temple would have been severely punished. Indeed, as the very same ‘tolerant’ Codex stipulates907, divination was strictly forbidden under the pain of death for the

902 Deities guarding the over the penus, the innermost part of the house, or of the temple. Cicero explained that “they reside penitus, in the recesses of the house, owing to which they are also called penetrales by the poets” (Cicero 1933: 188, 189).
903 As quoted in Baudy 2006: 112.
905 Jones 2014: 172.
906 Leone 2013: 130.
907 In it, we also find edicts such as “If (somewhere) should be any temples, they shall be torn down without disturbance or tumult. For when they are torn down and removed, the [in-Form-ed] material basis for all superstition will be destroyed” (as quoted in Westerfeld 2003: 7). Modified. My emph.
divinator and the confiscation of property and exile of the one patronizing him. The sacred limits were broken, the ontological hierarchies denied, the aesthetical memory and the intentional seeing nullified. Now everybody has been equally allowed to visit those temples and admire the artifacts – while having to behave equally Christian, that is, to restrain from idolatrous worship.

Of course, when the issue of commodification of art (in itself a problematic construction, as art cannot exist but only as a commodity) enters consumer research, the dogmatic reasons behind such tectonic shifts are carefully avoided. It is better to introduce them as natural, contingent occurrences rather than the result of specific dogmatic impositions. This way, such episodes can be extended over any other culture or worldview. As long as the de-Form-alized

“conditions essential for the rise of material culture – political stability, urbanization, international trade, high levels of disposable wealth, and a broad base of affluent consumers”

are met, then there is no reason why very similar-looking episodes cannot happen in any other culture. In the end, this is what characterizes us as humans. I found it interesting that it took so many millennia to realize such a natural thing about ourselves and our practices, but only a few centuries to ‘convince’ everybody that art, rather than Form-infused idols, is the way to go.

Now it is the time to remember a few things. The first is the Christian thinker Gregory of Nyssa’s concept of diastema: the unbridgeable gap between the created sphere and the God’s essence. As I noted earlier, according to Gregory, everything that someone or something perceives, ‘has no Form’. There are no Forms, no final causes left within the created nature, the only final cause that there is being God’s ousia. The problem, according to the same thinker, is that no matter how hard one tries to surpass or transcend the diastemic gap and to contemplate into God’s essence, in the same way the Hellenistic philosophers were doing in respect to the Forms, he cannot achieve it. As Nyssa stated explicitly, the whole creation in unable to apprehend Being through contemplation. Following this, the second issue is that the God’s status that someone like Ptolemy, Hippo, Empedocles, or the world itself claimed to have, was radically denied: there was only one God.

Now, of course, the two edicts – this one and the one transforming the temples into museums – are in no way contradictory.

909 Schroeder and Borgerson 2002: 158.
As Daniel Ullucci, a scholar whose work is on the interaction among the early Christians and the pagan Mediterranean religions, notes, the Hellenistic sacrifice represented the ritualization of a worldview which posited that humans and Gods can participate into the sacrificial act in a fully reciprocal exchange, one that involved the full access to the ousianic essence. Given the dogmatic requirements of the Christian School, especially those expressing the first-degree truths, the possibility of such a fully reciprocal exchange disappears completely. As various scholars have thus noted based on in-depth analyses of the issue within the relevant Biblical and Patristic literature, together with the pagan temples’ destruction or ‘muzeification’, Christianity “put an end once and for all to the sacrificial violence of all the religions of Antiquity”. There are two reasons behind this ‘end of sacrifice’. The first is that the only one that can fully perform the sacrificial act properly is Christ himself, who is God. The second reason is that Christ’s death is the only necessary and sufficient sacrifice for all time, thus ending the need for any other ones: the benefit of it is perpetual (diénekés). As the Apostle Paul admirably expounds in his Letter to the Hebrews, Christ, the high priest – the one that, Form-ally speaking, sits outside of history and has no genealogy – “had offered one sacrifice [...], in perpetuity.” This means that the institution of sacrifice did not only end, but it has to end whenever and wherever is to be spotted.

In order to break open the Form-al separations which captures, contains, conserves, and divides, rendering the ‘self’ unable to jump playfully between identities, shapes and abilities, thus to became a ‘homo ludens’, i.e. a cyborg, the sacrifice has to end.

Before moving forward, there is one more crucial point to be made: the end of Sacrifice is in itself a Sacrificial manifestation, one made apparent every time it is imposed. This ‘end’ should not be mistaken with the quite similar denial of the Forms: every denial of the Forms is not an imposition of the Forms. The ‘end of Sacrifice’ trope is based on the fact that it was an actual blood Sacrifice (the Crucifixion) that put an end to all other Sacrifices by replacing them. Thus, it is the Sacrifice itself that forms the very foundation of its own absence. It cannot be canceled by promoting its annulment (as Agamben does): that only reinforces it.

What the end of sacrifices had to do with games and plays? As I noted, the Forms penetrated the sublunary sphere on all levels, whenever there was matter, and so did the sacrifices. As I also mentioned, although games and plays have existed for a long time, it is precisely our era which has discovered homo ludens, as Lefebvre rightly pointed out. This means that not all plays and not all games are suitable for creating and

910 Ullucci 2012: 30; 68.
912 Hebrews 10:12.
expressing the ‘fundamental changes’ that would result in the emergence of the ‘playing man’, but only a very specific kind, i.e. a desacralized kind. Let us see in the following how the end of sacrifice contributed to the creation of precisely that kind of plays.

Novatian (c. 200 - 258), in his treatise On Spectacles (c. 250), notes that idolatry and the performance of the Sacrifices were intrinsically linked with the spectacles – be them games, theater, dance or other related forms of (what we call today) ‘entertainment’, such as festivals – forming thus a triangle that could not exists if any one of these elements would be taken away. Calling idolatry “the mother of all games”913, Novatian asks his readers three main questions:

- what spectacle is there without an idol?
- which game is without a Sacrifice?
- which contest is there that is not consecrated to some dead person2914

The answer to all these questions was a negative one, of course: there is no performance without some aesthetical idolatry involved, without the performance of Sacrifice, or under the patronage of some Divinity. Then, Novatian notes that when famine held the city of Rome in its grip,

“theatrical plays were added. There performances were dedicated to Ceres and Bacchus, and later to the rest of the idols and to the dead. The celebrated Hellenistic contests – where they deal with oracular songs, musical instrumentation, speech, or feats of strength – have diverse demons as their patrons [...] Anything that draws the eyes and soothes the ears of the spectators has, as its origin, institution and cause an idol” 915

As mentioned, the performance of the Sacrifices were intrinsically linked to the games. Novatian recounts:

“Shall I go into further detail and describe for you the monstrous kind of sacrifices current in the games whereby, at times, even a human being becomes a sacrificial victim [...] Blood from the jugular is still hot when it is received into the spuming libation-bowl. It is then cruelly threw, still seething, into the face of a thirsting idol and given him to drink.”916

914 Ibid. Modified.
916 Ibid. Modified.
Novatian was far from being the only Christian thinker going against these practices. Countless others joined the chorus: from Cyprian of Carthage\(^{917}\) all the way up to the Reformation and much, much later. Given all this however, within the academic literature the claim that the repeated bans on the games and other forms of ‘entertainment’ by the fun-hating Church and the Christian emperors (such as Theodosius I in 393 or Theodosius II in 420 or 435) were in the end not that effective, is still a very popular one. As the argument continues, though there were some hindrances set up along the way, the games and all other forms of entertainment survived until quite late. With the Church finally losing its powerful grip on the society, especially after the Enlightenment, the games came back full force, being completely revitalized\(^{918}\). Is this really so? Apparently, not at all.

As we have seen, according to Novatian, the Hellenistic games and other forms of representations were part of a triangle. This triangle involved, besides the performance itself, Sacrifices and worship. Although there is good evidence for the popularity of the Olympics under the patriarchate of Severus of Antioch (512 - 518)\(^{919}\), as late as early 6\(^{th}\) century AD, “sacrifice and idol worship [...] were strictly forbidden”\(^{920}\). In fact, these particular aspects are most likely to have disappeared already in the 4\(^{th}\) century, if not earlier\(^{921}\). Without these two sides, the performances were not at all what they used to be. Strictly in relation to the games, unlike Tertullian, Novatian or other Apostolic Fathers, later vocal opponents of them (e.g. John Chrysostom, c. 349 - 407) do not mention sacrifices at all anymore, although, as Remijsen correctly notes,

“these would have been the most offensive element of all if they were still performed. This lack of Christian complaints about the sacrifice from the late third century on suggests that the ban on sacrifices (both animal and then the offering of incense) was indeed respected.”\(^{922}\)

A formal ban on the (Hellenistically understood) theater and dance however did not happened until 691-692 AD, at the Quinisext Council in Constantinople, where at least two canons (51 and 62) that dealt explicitly with the issue were released:

\(^{917}\) Cyprian 1844: 207 et pass; Cyprian 1868: 6-7.
\(^{918}\) Various uses of the term ‘Olympic’ to describe athletic events in the modern era have been documented since the 17\(^{th}\) century. The first such event was the Cotswold Games or the ‘Cotswold Olimpick Games’. It was first organized by the lawyer Robert Dover between 1612 and 1642. L’Olympiade de la République, held annually from 1796 to 1798 in Revolutionary France also attempted to emulate the ancient Olympic Games.
\(^{919}\) Remijse 2015: 219.
\(^{920}\) Remijse 2015: 162.
\(^{921}\) Remijse 2015: 162, 184.
Canon 51

“This holy and ecumenical synod altogether forbids those who are called ‘players,’ and their ‘spectacles,’ as well as the exhibition of hunts, and the theatrical dances. If any one despises the present canon, and gives himself to any of the things which are forbidden, if he be a cleric he shall be deposed, but if a layman let him be cut off [excommunicated].”

Canon 62:

“The so-called Calends, and what are called Bota and Brumalia\(^ {923}\), and the full assembly which takes place on the first of March, we wish to be abolished from the life of the faithful. And also the public dances of women, which may do much harm and mischief. Moreover, we drive away from the life of Christians the dances given in the names of those falsely called Gods by the Greeks whether of men or women, and which are performed after an ancient and un-Christian fashion […] nor may men invoke the name of the execrable Bacchus […] practicing in ignorance and vanity the things which proceed from the deceit of insanity. Therefore those who in the future attempt any of these things which are written, having obtained a knowledge of them, if they be clerics we order them to be deposed, and if laymen, to be cut off [excommunicated].”\(^ {924}\)

As shown, besides the Sacrifices, the temples – with their destruction, closure, or muzefication – also lost their role as sites of public ceremony in the form of games. Those which remained open, became sites stripped of any notion of Form-al sacred in-itself. Some became churches, but this did not bring back previous understandings of sacredness. Most of them thus turned into sites of complete neglect and fell into complete ruin. The few ones that survived as temples are today sites of consumption and further commodification. The Theodosian edict – ‘keep them open to everyone, keep everything associated with them as artifacts devoid of essential Forms’ – is still very much in place, being respected \textit{ad litteram} and without questioning. A return of these places to their previous status (with \textit{everything} that such a ‘return’ would entail) is now completely out of the question. Additionally, although the games and the theater never practically completely disappeared from the firmament, the Sacrifices and the worship were never to be reinstated again, the Christian School’s ban on them being closely guarded until today.

\(^{923}\) Ancient festivals of the Gods Pan (Bota) and Dionysos (Brumalia).

\(^{924}\) The Seven Ecumenical Councils 2007: 388, 393. 

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– not only in the West, but increasingly all over the world, regardless of the religious affiliations (or the lack of for that matter) of the players.²²⁵

2.6.2.1 ‘Baptizing’ mathematics

The aesthetic experience offered by the Hellenistic (and other types of similar ones)²²⁶ games and plays was a very inclusive one, involving all senses. However, the Christians did not unleash a war against olfactory (and other) sensual / aesthetic qualities per se, as many scholars – lead by Nietzsche himself – seem to think.²²⁷ They did not have anything against the senses of smell and taste as such, but against these specific understandings of matter which, in turn, triggered those senses in ways that were at odds with the dogmatic requirements of the School. In other words, with the Forms denied, none of the five senses was allowed to go ‘beyond’ the sphere of appearances. As Nyssa said, everything that someone or something perceives aesthetically, ‘has no Form’: apprehending Being is impossible. As the sense of sight had (and has) to be educated through the use of ‘linear perspective’ and other methods in order to (hopefully) completely lose its ‘intentional seeing’, so did all the other senses. The ‘new humanity’ had to be changed thoroughly, not only partially, i.e. an element here, another there. The postanthropocentric, posthumanist, cyborgian and blasphemous homo ludens have to have all its senses completely disconnected from the Form-al sphere.

Isaac Barrow, Newton’s teacher, a theologian known for his pioneering work on infinitesimal calculus and optics, believed that the senses of touch, taste and smell could (and should) be performed by mathematical, thus mechanical motions.²²⁸ Speaking about

²²⁵ Even though the Olympic games and other mainstream multi-sport events do have an opening and a closing ceremony – including rituals such as the Haka – they are not allowed to go beyond certain accepted limits. When it comes to the World Indigenous Games [WIG] or the World Nomad Games [WNG] – the closest things we might have today in relation to the pagan, Hellenistic Games – the things are not different at all from other mainstream competitions. The gathering aims to highlight indigenous cultures and values, but only as long as these values are in line to the structures previously discussed: non-ontological, non-hierarchical, ephemeral etc. None should be privileged, none should be dropped. In fact, the complete erasure of the limit was made evident already in the WIG slogan: “we are all indigenous” (Uribe 2015) or the WNG’s “we are all nomads” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrLvd1KIsIM). As one of the WIG’s organizers noted, the issue of ethnicity should not be brought up: “is not a competition between ethnicities”. In addition, as the same organizer said, that rules need to be established “so these Games are not [and should not be] seen as an indigenous folkloric moment” (Uribe 2015). See Bolton 2015.

²²⁶ As it has been noted, the ‘Connection to the Gods’ was an overarching belief system governing the Maori games (Tsai, Cushman, Gidlow, and Toohey 2014: 267). For Africa (e.g. the issue of the ‘talking drums’), see Tignor 1976; Thomas 2000; Crumbley 2003.

²²⁷ Smith 2007: 63-64; Milner 2011: 3, 314.

the mathematization of the senses, we have to understand that the mathematics used in these processes is not the same mathematics used in e.g. Ancient Greece. Aristotle, in a passage from his *Posterior Analytics*, tells us that “the mathematical sciences are concerned with the Forms”\(^{929}\), not with particulars. Within the Christian School, that became a very problematic statement. The moves against the Hellenistic understanding of number started very early. In one of his letters, Maximus the Confessor explicitly states that the number has to be considered a nonessential structure, one without any intrinsic Form-al quality in-itself\(^{930}\). Centuries later, Bishop Berkeley would reinstate this first-degree Truth, rejecting the contention that arithmetic (or any other branch of mathematics) was based on Ideas (Platonic or otherwise). For him, numbers were simply ‘creatures of the mind’ only. There was no speculative knowledge, no comparing of Ideas in arithmetic and algebra\(^{931}\). Before Berkeley (chronologically speaking), another theologian and mathematician, John Wallis, himself an ordained clergyman, was also a strong supporter of the de-Form-alized “mathematics of the moderns”\(^{932}\). The mathematics used to create the linear perspective based gadgetry and the Cartesian Coordinate System – that in turn are used to create the ‘boundary-less playing field’ where the ‘hominem ludentes’ can celebrate its creativity – is a dogmatically correct one.

2.6.2.2 ‘They are not who they claim to be’: the surprising contemporary architects of the ‘society of spectacle’

The destruction of the temples brought about a massive reformation of the understanding of space. As I was trying to suggest through the mottos I chose for this section, associating the Christian Sacrifice with a specifically identifiable, geographically bounded area is very problematic. The Christian Sacrifice cannot take place but only in a Messianic “neither, nor” (John 4:21), thus in a non-here / non-there (Matthew 24:23). As such, it radically disrupts the Classical concepts of autochthony, or authenticity: no place is true place. In his book *The System of Objects* (1968), Baudrillard makes an explicit connection between authenticity – certain (Form-al) knowledge – origin (autochthony) saying that

\(^{929}\) Modified translation from Aristotle 1960: 90, 91.
\(^{930}\) Maximus the Confessor 1863: 564.
\(^{931}\) Pycior 1987: 281.
\(^{932}\) Pycior 1987: 269.
“[t]he demand for authenticity is [...] reflected in an obsession with certainty – specifically, certainty as to the origin.”

The triangle authenticity – certainty – origin mirrors perfectly the other one I mentioned above: idolatry – Sacrifices – performances. Let me give some examples on how these linkages work.

Between the Athenian myths of origin, the figure of Erechtheus played a prominent role. In the *Iliad*, there is a reference addressing Athens as an

“well-built citadel, the land of great-hearted Erechtheus, whom Athena, daughter of Zeus, once nurtured, but the earth, the giver of grain, bore him; and she settled him in Athens, in her own rich shrine, and there the youths of the Athenians, as the years roll on in their courses, seek to win his favor with sacrifices of bulls and rams.”

The passage testifies the strong bond between Erechtheus, an earth-born by-itself creature, the Gods (i.e. the Forms that existed within), and the citizens of Athens. The sacrifices associated with autochthony were both blood and bloodless ones. In Erechtheus’ honor, the Bouzyga performed the sacred ploughing each year below the Acropolis. It is also important to note that the issue of autochthony did not apply exclusively to Athens; every place had its own autochthonous myths. The autochton was also an authentes: a ruler, an authoritative voice, the voice that tells the Truth with perfect clarity, thus certainty. The English word *authentic* is indeed derived from the adjective *authentikós* [Lat. authenticus]. The root *auto-* does not send only to a non-derivative, circular, inward-oriented situation, but it forms and informs the roots of all that is essentially, naturally authentic in terms of earth / territory-bounded ‘nation’, ‘race’ (-natus), local cults, and logos-centered language – a language able to utter the certain truths.
Strong blood relations were also present. Autochthonous clans, such as e.g. the Eteoboutadai, supplied the priestess of Athena of the City and the priests for Poseidon Erechtheus. The clan members were obliged to marry only born-Athenians, who were also descendants of the same ancestors who had entered the covenant of the polis with the Gods. It is difficult, if not completely impossible for us to understand these issues to their full extent. For some, they might sound horrible, for others, romantic. Indeed, although long gone they still haunt us: residual elements from such understandings are still present within the Christian School – and even more so within other cultures. One of the most recent reenactments within the Western culture itself of such ‘rests’ was noticeable in the ‘Blood and Soil’ (Blut und Boden), and other Nazi related ideologies. Heidegger’s highly controversial link between hören - gehören (to hear / to belong / to become part of) is also a manifestation of such ‘rests’. After the war, the Nazi episode was introduced to the whole world as an example of horror. And while it is true that the values around which the movement was organized are appalling, they are so only from a perspective that rejects all of them as illegitimate presences within a particular School. I am not saying that the Nazi doctrines and values would have not entered in conflict with other values from other cultures, i.e. native ones, but such conflict is different when compared with the one that it has with its own School. No matter how much they tried to present themselves as such, the Nazis where nowhere near to paganism: neither Hellenic, nor Nordic. Be this as it may, by making the Nazi period a global example, the message that is send is that all the cultures that recognize similar values – autochthonous myths, blood relations, Sacrifices and everything in between and around them – are susceptible to similar treatments: the war against totality has to be waged against any totality, not only the Western one. As I was trying to show, such treatments (with the subsequent social trainings) are in progress in different parts of the world: from the Surui people of the Brazilian Amazon to the Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania and beyond. And if that is true when it comes to linear perspective-based gadgetry, it is equally so about the Sacrifices.

Far from representing long forgotten issues, being today the interest of only a handful of researchers publishing in obscure journals with Baroque titles, the Sacrifices came repeatedly under attack, both in popular and academic media. In a very recent paper published in the highly influential journal Nature (with a more popular, free-access

943 ‘The authentic sons of Butes’. Butes was a priest of Poseidon and Athena and was worshipped as a Hero by the Athenians.
944 Blok 2009: 266.
946 Ziarek 2013: 110.
correspondent posted on a website) 947, a team of researchers from New Zealand identified in the practice of Sacrifices some of the reasons that ‘promoted and sustained the evolution of stratified societies’. Gathering information on 93 indigenous Austronesian cultures, they found

“strong support for models in which human sacrifice stabilizes social stratification once stratification has arisen, and promotes a shift to strictly inherited class systems [...] [The] results reveal a darker link between religion and the evolution of modern hierarchical societies.”

Knowing that both the study and the popularized paper were published by a New Zealand team, I think the message they are sending to the Maori and other indigenous communities from Australasia is a very clear one: their Sacrificial practices (be them blood or bloodless)949 have to go. It also serves as a reminder for the members of the Christian School too: even though the Sacrificial performances are long dead, they are not to be reinstalled anytime soon.

Going back to the notion of autochthony, the smoke of Sacrifices cannot rise but only from an authentic, in-Form-ed, non-Messianic ‘here’ and ‘there’. In order to prevent this, what is needed is a conceptualization of space that would be too unstable to stir a sacrificial fire on it or facilitate the construction of a temple. In other words, what is need it is a de-Form-alized space, one that can in turn accommodate the ‘matter-flow’. Various proposals have been made, one more dogmatically correct that the other. Without going into the murky waters of the Patristic views on ecclesiology, let us jump (chronologically, but not dogmatically) from the Gospel to the postmodern era. I already mentioned above the Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of ‘smooth space’. The smooth space breaks the hylemorphic continuum by endless processes of territorialization and deterriorialization (to use also DeLanda’s vocabulary), by making

“the outside a territory in space; consolidate that territory by the construction of a second, adjacent territory’, and then deterriorialize itself ‘by renouncing, by going elsewhere...”950

The smooth space “has no homogeneity” and it is “acentered”951, its rhythm being “a rhythm without measure”952, hence without essence. It prioritizes the line, the “lines of

949 Although human sacrifice is not practiced anymore by most of these cultures (mostly thanks to sustained Christian missionary work and industrialization), there are other problematic issues that still survive, all being equally based on metanarratives.
950 Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 353.
flight” - or infinitely polarized, but never pluralized ‘lines of perspective’, we might say. Unlike the ‘striated space’ – which closes and divides\textsuperscript{953} – the ‘smooth space’ opens, endlessly.

‘Inversion’ appears when Deleuze and Guattari (and a number of other thinkers), explicitly position themselves against ‘the sacred place of religion’. However, let us see to exactly which religion they are turning against. According to them, the absolute of religion

“is essentially a horizon that encompasses, and, if the absolute itself appears [...] it does so in order to establish a solid and stable center [...] Religion is in this sense a piece in the State apparatus, in both its forms, the ‘bond’ and the ‘pact or alliance’. But for the nomad the terms of the question are totally different: locality is not delimited; the absolute, then, does not appear at a particular place but becomes a nonlimited locality. The coupling of the place and the absolute is achieved [...] in an infinite succession of local operations.”\textsuperscript{955}

They are indeed going against and away from the ‘sacred place of religion’, but those religions they are going against are the ones defined by solid and stable, Form-al immutable centers. Given that the ‘smooth space’ is a Messianic “neither, nor” (John 4:21), a non-here / non-there (Matthew 24:23), firing up sacrificial fires or building temples in which the essential ‘absolute itself’ would appear becomes impossible, as the ‘here’ and ‘there’ keep endlessly breaking themselves into exteriorities, into ‘new’. There is indeed no time and no space for stirring a fire, no matter how fast someone is. Because, in the end, nothing can be faster than the immobile:

“We all live outside, nomads that never move.”\textsuperscript{956}

In cultural and interpretivist consumer research and postmodern marketing, the issue of authenticity is a very popular one, being considered “one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing”\textsuperscript{957}. However, it is always theorized in such a way that it would

\textsuperscript{951} Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 371. The air, the ice, the sea, the steppe, and the desert are offered as examples of such ‘smooth spaces’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 364, 379; 382), whereas the forest is an example of a ‘striated space’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 384).

\textsuperscript{952} Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 364. As Heidegger noted, giving that metron belongs in the realm of Truth (Heidegger 2003: 87), the position Deleuze and Guattari are taking in relation to rhythm is perfectly understandable.

\textsuperscript{953} Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 481.

\textsuperscript{954} According to Lyotard, ‘instructions’ are always local.

\textsuperscript{955} Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 382, 383. My emph.

\textsuperscript{956} Virilio, Lotringer, and Taormina 2001: 43.

\textsuperscript{957} Courvoisier and Ranfagni 2013: 1.
not enter in conflict with the dogmatic views of the Christian School. For instance, as Beverland and Farrelly noted (based on an in-depth analysis of the issue within the relevant cultural consumer culture research), there is an

“widespread agreement that authenticity is a socially constructed interpretation of the essence of what is observed rather than properties inherent in an object.”

As such, it is always another that bestows, that gifts authenticity to an object; in other words, authenticity is never there to be discovered (through the senses, acts of contemplation and ‘saving the appearances’ techniques), but it is always constructed, thus deconstructible. If the concept of ‘essence’ as seen in the Beverland and Farrelly’s quote might rise some hopes or anger, other researchers made it adamantly clear that “the essential nature of authenticity is developmental and thus a process of continually becoming.”

Whereas the old link between sovereignty and authenticity is still present, it is now carefully immersed within a Pauline understanding of the ‘new human’. As Holt tells us, in order to feel sovereign,

“postmodern consumers must adopt a never-ending project to create an individuated identity through consumption.”

The ‘never-ending’ of the ‘continually becoming’: next step is to deconstruct even these, in order to prevent their transformation into a de-Form-alized essence. The Christian authentes is not preoccupied to ‘observe the measure’ anymore. Given the absence of measure, of the Forms from nature, everything is now but simulacra. There can be no authenticity without autochthony, there can be no autochthony without the celebration of sacrifice, and there can be no sacrifice without final causes. And without full access to the final causes, there can be no certain knowledge. Therefore, it is not capitalism, neoliberalism, or consumption that is to be held responsible for this situation, one in which everything is a copy of a copy of copy. In a very paradoxical way, those laying the groundwork for the death of capitalism are the main contributors to this situation. Capitalism, neoliberalism, and other biopolitical processes are nothing but ‘rests’, instances that conceal, that create “impenetrable and unbreathable ‘withins’, limits, delimitations. They are ‘rests’ that keep the divisions between class, race and gender up.

959 Ibid.
962 Debord 2002: 12.
no matter where and base on which metanarratives these separations happen. And finally, these are the ‘rests’ within which notions of authenticity, tradition, or values happen. From a Christian School’s perspective, they have to be nullified, all of them. Baudrillard’s supporters, i.e. those lamenting the simulacrisation of reality (or its transformation into a Debordian “society of spectacle”⁹⁶³) – but here are to be counted any type of process philosophy scholars – are the ones that actively contribute to the situation: the more these ‘rests’ are destroyed, the more everything will be transformed into a nonentity. Today, these are the most active promoters of annihilation, to use Heidegger’s term. Therefore, it is not capitalism, or neoliberalism, or the Form-al metanarratives that are keeping the spectacle in place, but the increasingly empty show goes on precisely because of those fighting against the closures, against the divisions that such systems are concealing. As I noted in the section dedicated to the ‘interpretive grille’, following Coulano, the uniqueness of a certain period should not be measured by the content of its ideological systems (e.g. capitalism, socialism, Posthumanism), but by the interpretive structure it interposes between preexisting contents and their ‘modern’ treatment – in our case the Christian School’s treatment of various issues (limits, sacrifice, games etc.).

To conclude this very short overview, it is only through the desacralization of nature, the subsequent end of sacrifices, the destruction or the muzeification of temples, and the radical reformation of performance in its various forms (games, plays) that a profane (Agamben) or blasphemous (Haraway) space can be created, a utopian, non-hierarchical ‘smooth space’ within which the posthuman nomads, the cyborgs, can move without moving. It is within such a ‘boundary-less playing field’ that the cyborgian ‘homines ludentes’ can celebrate their creativity through the endless spectacle of the linear perspective powered gadgetry and media: the spectacle of Form-al annihilation.

⁹⁶³ Debord 1990, 2002. A society which Debord defines, interestingly, as “The Culmination of Separation”. Indeed, “Separation is the alpha and omega of the spectacle”. It is this recognition and celebration of separation, or division that has given rise to a ‘religious form of contemplation’, which represents an ‘universal devotion to a fixed religious imagery’ (Debord 2002: 13, 14). My emph. “Separation”, “contemplation”, “fixity”, “hierarchical societies” (Debord 2002: 12): we can see quite clearly against what exactly is Debord against. Aside religious Form-al separation, he too identifies the main culprit behind the creation of the contemporary society of spectacle as being “the single movement that has turned the whole planet into its field of operation: capitalism” (Debord 2002: 27).
2.6.3 The kinetic utopian space of Posthumanism

“The cyborg […] is utopian.”

- Donna Haraway\textsuperscript{964}

“We cannot give a description of socialism; what socialism will be like when its completed forms are arrived at – this we do not know, we cannot tell.”

- V. I. Lenin\textsuperscript{965}

“Let us progress on into a posthuman stage that we can barely glimpse.”

- Max More\textsuperscript{966}

“I can pass you no blueprint for Utopia, no timetable, no roadmap. All I can give you is my assurance that there is something here.”

- Nick Bostrom\textsuperscript{967}

Speaking about utopia, there is probably no better-known association than the one between the promise of utopia and Posthumanism. Indeed, the Dutch situationist architect and planner Constant Nieuwenhuys (it was Debord and Nieuwenhuys who steadily nudged Lefebvre toward an interest in urbanism\textsuperscript{968}) is commonly known for his ‘New Babylon’ project. Constant’s ‘New Babylon’ was specifically designed as a ‘city for homo ludens’. It was to be a series of linked transformable structures, some of which themselves were the size of a small city. Perched above ground, Constant’s megastructures would be populated by ‘homines ludentes’, nomads that would endlessly and playfully wander from one environment to another in search of new sensations.

\textsuperscript{964} Haraway 1985: 292.
\textsuperscript{965} Lenin 1918.
\textsuperscript{966} More 1994.
\textsuperscript{967} Bostrom 2008.
\textsuperscript{968} Merrifield 2006: 33.
Beholden to no one, they would sleep, eat, recreate, and procreate where, when, and with whom / what they wanted. Deductive reasoning, goal-oriented production, race etc. – all these were eschewed. In fact, the ‘New Babilon’ was just another embodiment of the theological views that supported the No-Stop City. As its Florentine version, the ‘New Babylon’ represents “a camp for nomads on a planetary scale”, depending completely “upon information and communication technologies”, thus ones of linear perspective. Both projects – No-Stop City and New Babylon – have been described as utopian, which is really not that surprising given that they are designed in order to accommodate the cyborg which, as Haraway mentioned, is utopian.

Based on in-depth analyses of the issue within the relevant literature, Anastasia Seregina has noted recently that within the cultural consumer research field, the notion of utopia is often used to describe either a future-oriented ideal, or a space that consumers can engage with and travel to through fantasy activities. Utopia is commonly understood as an imagined, socially constructed, infinite place that is better than the current one, a liberating force promising a brighter future. Considered by some authors to be very modern in its nature, the idea of utopia, or a more subjective version of it, called ‘youtopia’, underlines all consumption practices, but especially the consumption of entertainment (film, theatre, television etc.). The perceived (postmodern and post-humanistic) contemporaneity of the utopian trope might be related, as Seregina points out, to its disconnection from linear, hence rational, goal-oriented expectations models that are usually associated with modernity, humanism, and assigned gender role performance.

After being cleaned up from its teleological and ideological ‘rests’, the notion of utopia can be used as a critical tool. As such, utopia was (re)claimed by various authors as a powerful instrument through which the fixed end point of modernity’s telos can be polarized. Following this, some went so far as to approach utopia as actually standing in opposition to progress. Used in this way, utopia generates endless ‘new’ by breaking the time continuum, creating endless “chronoschisms”. The association between utopia and technology is crucial in here, inspiring authors as diverse as John Cage, Bruce Sterling, or Tom Stoppard to experiment with non-linear dynamics or chaos theory in


969 Goldhagen 2006; van Lente 2013.
971 Nichols 2004: 42.
972 Seregina 2016: 12, 13.
973 Ibid.
974 According to the Marxist thinker Ernst Bloch, “the essential function of utopia is a critique of what is present” (Bloch 1988: 12).
975 Jameson 1982.
order to stretch the “science’s potential to transform [...] bodies, minds, and cultures” to its limits.\textsuperscript{977}

Within the posthuman consumer culture literature, the direct link between utopia and technology is a central one too. The notion of utopia is linked with certain technologies, i.e. the cyberspace, which serve as sites for utopian discourses of emancipation\textsuperscript{978}, but also as places of purchasing, where the cyborgian consumer consumes and is consumed. It is also linked with future-oriented techno-utopian fantasies, e.g. the idea of a post-consumption future\textsuperscript{979}, one enabled primarily by the developments in fields like nanotechnology\textsuperscript{980}. At times, the views that are informing the Posthumanist discourse are deemed as offering a “too blindly utopian or dystopian accounts of the future”\textsuperscript{981}, “portraying a simple and painless ascent into a silicon existence that ignores the embodied realities of the subject”\textsuperscript{982}.

Unsurprisingly, tracing the roots of utopian thinking back in time is rather common in the relevant literature dealing with the issue. According to Herbrechter, the Posthumanist utopian radicalism “has a long history”\textsuperscript{983}, utopia being indeed just another name for myth\textsuperscript{984}. In his \textit{Letter from Utopia}, Bostrom extends the utopian realm so as to encompass the entirety of human species. He makes this very clear by addressing his letter to a nameless, raceless, and genderless character: “Dear Human,”\textsuperscript{985}. Prometheus makes an entrance as well, as our road to Utopia is motivated by the fact that human nature is essentially Promethean\textsuperscript{986}.

As Michael Hauskeller notes, what drives the Posthumanist call for radical human enhancement is \textit{the same old desire} that expresses itself in ancient myths and modern utopias: the desire for overcoming natural limits. The same visions are present not only in orally transmitted myths, but in written work as well, such as e.g. Plato’s or Aristotle’s. What has changed is that for the first time in history, \textit{mainly due to the development of the biosciences and related technologies}, it actually seems possible that we will very soon achieve all this\textsuperscript{987}. Technology is the enabler of utopia, an issue that is made abundantly clear within the posthuman consumer culture literature as well.

\textsuperscript{977} Heise* 1997.
\textsuperscript{978} Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 643. See Schmidt 2011.
\textsuperscript{979} Campbell 2013: 40.
\textsuperscript{980} Drexler 2013.
\textsuperscript{981} Campbell 2013: 47.
\textsuperscript{982} Campbell and Saren 2010: 165.
\textsuperscript{983} Herbrechter 2013: 46.
\textsuperscript{984} Hauskeller 2012.
\textsuperscript{985} Bostrom 2008: 1.
\textsuperscript{986} Hauskeller 2012.
\textsuperscript{987} Hauskeller 2012: 44.
Returning to the Johannine “neither here, nor there” (John 4:21), thus nowhere, so everywhere, some might say that the line perfectly describes a utopian place. Even though the roots are deep, the ‘new’ has to happen. Therefore, in accordance with the definitions of the cyborg I introduced above (the contingent, the partial, and the incoherent), utopia (i.e. the space that accommodates it)

“must be not static\textsuperscript{988} but kinetic, must shape not as a permanent state but as a hopeful stage, leading to a long ascent of stages”.\textsuperscript{989}

Of course, ‘long’ has to be understood in this context as ‘endless’, otherwise it will lead us to a Form-al end, similar to the one described by Diotima of Mantinea. Such a thing cannot, of course, happen within the Christian School – and H. G. Wells is quick in making it very clear. Indeed, the view of utopia he is proposing “throws the old idea of the social order and the new into the sharpest antithesis” – where the old order is defined “as a system of institutions and classes ruled by men of substance”\textsuperscript{990}.

Now, following Hauskeller, what is the relevance of all this? So what if Posthumanism is yet another kind of utopianism – this time one created and sustained by the contemporary technology\textsuperscript{991}? Answering to this question matters greatly, for at least two reasons:

- it is a specific kind of utopianism, one based on the dogmatic percepts of the Christian School,

- this specific type is then naturalized or normalized, being introduced as defining us as humans.

It was up to a Catholic Saint, Thomas More, to coin the word ‘utopia’. He created the term by putting together two Greek terms: οὐ + τόπος, meaning ‘no place’ or ‘nowhere’. In the following I am going to briefly address two issues in relation to More’s Utopia.

The first point regards the issue of irrational vs. the non-existent. There are many ways in Ancient Greek in which a negation can be formulated. Interestingly, More coined the word Utopia by putting together ‘ou’ (οὐ) / ouk (οὐκ) (without, not) + ‘topos’ (place),

\textsuperscript{988} Almost a century later, chronologically speaking, in his Transhumanist Declaration, Max More mentions the “static utopia”, an image of perfection, as something to be overcome through progress (More 1999).

\textsuperscript{989} Wells 1905: 5.

\textsuperscript{990} Wells 1905: 75. My emph.

\textsuperscript{991} Hauskeller 2012: 43.
not ‘a’ (ἄ) (without, not) + ‘topos’ (place). In my view, Utopia with ‘ou’ not only eliminates the place, but it does so through its complete de-Formal-ization. Why so? Let me start by saying that while the term \textit{utopia} is a neologism, \textit{atopia} is indeed not. When ‘a’ is used as a negation, the \textit{outopos} (οὐ-topos) becomes \textit{atopos} (ἄ-topos): something of a wicked, or injurious\textsuperscript{992} place, but also a paradoxical space. The whole issue here revolves around the question of a normative, Form-al worldview. Utopia understood as \textit{atopos} is, at least on some level, very similar to khóra – the place in which the Gods and daimons dwelled\textsuperscript{993}. Indeed, \textit{atopos} is charged with deep mythological aspects\textsuperscript{994}, connecting thus the ever-fluctuating becoming with the eternal Gods, retaining thus a strong paideutic sense. However, certain knowledge is reached through a specific type of education. Although Athena’s narrative role in the Homer’s \textit{Odyssey} is relatively small, it is nonetheless a very important one. Disguised as Mentes, the King of the Taphians, (thus as a man), she gives Telemachus a type of advice that is recorded in various scholia as being \textit{atopos} (preposterous, unreasonable), apparently putting him on a path that was not only dangerous and injurious, both for him and his house, but also fruitless\textsuperscript{995}. This made some commentators ask how such an apparently absurd advice could come from Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom? One of the answers was that Telemachus is sent on this irrational journey in order to be educated (παιδευθησόµενον)\textsuperscript{996} in discovering the Truth.

But atopos described not only places, situations (irrational guidance), or the Gods in their sub-lunar embodiment, but human beings (persons) too. Both the issue of paideia and the Goddess Athena found a perfect combination in Socrates’ person (the Athenian philosopher par excellence). As Claudia Luchetti puts it quite poetically, Socrates can be defined as the irrational representative of the \textit{middle}: an irrational, strange nature interposed in-between (the pragma-tic and the Form-al sphere) – as Plato wrote it in his \textit{Parmenides}\textsuperscript{997}. The Socratic \textit{atopus} is the environment in which the wonder caused by the Forms hits hard, leaving, at times, injuries: as traces, or blindness\textsuperscript{998}. It was within this kind of place that, \textit{suddenly}, the Forms erupted within the Soul\textsuperscript{999}. The term entered the

\textsuperscript{992} Homer 1925: 376, 377.  
\textsuperscript{993} Cf. Isar 2009: 264.  
\textsuperscript{994} Christias 2010: 227.  
\textsuperscript{995} Wissmann 2009.  
\textsuperscript{996} Wissmann 2009: 418.  
\textsuperscript{997} Plato 1926: 298; Luchetti 2013: 299.  
\textsuperscript{998} See Loney 2010: 73-74.  
\textsuperscript{999} Luchetti 2013: 299.
Christian School. In his Second letter to the Thessalonians (3:2), Paul mentions some atopon (ἀτόπων) people, translated in various editions by wicked, perverse, or unreasonable1000.

Knowing all this raises the question: having already this atopic space, why would More wanted to envision another kind of space – apparently, equally absurd? First of all, for someone like More most of the categories that constellated around atopos were obviously unacceptable. At the very beginning of his book, there is an epigram1001 in which our Saint makes Utopia speak:

“now I am the rival of Plato’s Republic, its possible conqueror.”1002

As some have pointed out, the victory of Utopia over the Republic represents the victory of the practical, or even life itself, over the Hellenistic theoretical emptiness1003. So, as a declared rival of Plato, More aims at creating a radically different structure – one that would be in line with the dogmatic scaffolding of his own School, i.e. the Christian one. The distinction between the pagan atopos and the Christian autopos is made by More himself. In his piece, the Achorians people (Achoriorum populi) were the close neighbors of the Utopians. The Achorians can be seen as the people without khôra, the absence being expressed in this case through the use of ‘a’ (ἀ). The lexical closeness between Achoria and Utopia has been remarked by several scholars. In her book on Renaissance Utopias (1999), Marina Leslie mentions that

“[c]uriously enough, the Achorian place-name seems to mirror Utopia in meaning.”1004

However, the subtle distinction between the two types of negation (‘a’ vs. ‘ou’) shows us that there was no such mirroring.

The second point is on many levels similar to the first one. While no-khôra (Achoria) was Utopia’s neighboring island, Utopia had something of a darker, khôra-ic past itself – one from which it nonetheless managed to escape. Indeed, as it appears, before being christened as autopos, Utopia itself was indeed a pagan atopos. As the reader of More’s piece can find out, the name of the island as we know it comes from Utopus, its first king. But before Utopus had conquered it (a possible hint to More conquering

1000 On the same ground however, the theologian and nonconformist divine John Owen approached, in his Doctrine of Justification (1677), the Incarnation as the “ἐπόνοιον ἀτοπονοτατον, – the most absurd conception that ever befell the minds of men” (Owen 2005).
1001 The verses were prefixed to the 1516 and 1518 editions of the book (Stock 2001: 94).
Plato?), the island was called Abraxa: the name of a Gnostic ‘great archon’. During that period, it was populated by a wild and brutish mob – very much like those described by Paul in his letter: the wicked, perverse, and unreasonable ‘old natures’. Under the Utopus’ leadership however, they reached a level of civilization and humanity “beyond almost all other mortals”1005.

It has been said that More’s Utopia is one of “the two great books that inaugurate modern political theory”, alongside Machiavelli’s Prince1006. The point I want to make here is that the contemporary utopians (be them socialists or Posthumanists) cannot build but only More’s version of Utopia, one that was baptized twice. In the first immersion, khôra sunk like an early modern Titanic or as another Atlantis, leaving its inhabitants achorians. In the second one, the weird-looking Abraxas drowns himself – and with him, all the heavens and everything they entailed. It was only after these two deaths that, finally, Utopia alone was able to reach a level of civilization and humanity ‘beyond almost all other mortals’.

What about dystopia? Dystopia1007 is, as Utopia, a word coined within the Christian School. Used as a prefix, dus-(δυσ-) tends to nullify the sense of a word. Thus, through this nullification, the ‘ou’ (οὐ) becomes a (pseudo-) ‘a’ (ἄ)1008. Reality turns itself into a wicked, injurious, and irrational nightmare – while remaining into the same School (hence the pseudo ‘a’).

I think John Ó Maoilearca, in his book All Thoughts Are Equal (2015), was perfectly right by saying that the utopian ‘no-place’ becomes an elimination of distance – because of the elimination of limits. If there is no-place, there is every-place. The ‘no’ in U(-topia), by being all-exclusive, it is also, simultaneously, all-inclusive: there should be ‘no place’ = every place is / should be ‘no place’. Where no understanding of space is dropped, none is privileged either. As such, utopia represents before anything else a deontologized space, a space that can be expressed and identified only apophatically. To paraphrase Bloch, utopia is what is missing1009, it is indeed the space of the never-ending performativity, the smooth and non-authentic space where no temple can stand. In the moment we stop unfolding this space, dystopia (the limit) happens. Following this, it means that utopia not only happens all the time, perpetually (hence its kinetic nature, as H. G. Wells noted) – with the kairotic ‘jetztzeit’ as its temporal correspondent, as we shall see later – but it should happen all the time.

1006 n.a. 2009: 15.
1007 The first known use of dystopia, as recorded by the Oxford English Dictionary, is a speech given before the British House of Commons by John Stuart Mill in 1868.
1008 Pseudo- because it cannot became a true khôra.
What I tried to show in this section is that the kind of utopian thinking that permeates the Posthumanist ideas and ideals is a very specific one, with firm roots into the Christian School’s dogmatic foundation. As in the case with many other issues (gadgets, theater, games), it is only through this specific model of utopian imagination that the cyborgian, the kinetic (i.e. de-Form-alized) ‘homo ludens’ can became (but not be) a reality. Therefore, this mirrors the onto-epistemological ‘oppenings’ I talked about earlier, ‘openings’ which are, in the end, only entrance tickets. As Hauskeller shows in his paper, following John Searle, the Posthumanist descriptions of the unreachable utopia are something very different under the surface: the descriptions are actually orders. In order to reach such a state, every body has to imagine the endless potentialities of the future in a certain way. In other words, in the way that

- the potentialities of the future have to be endless, i.e. no Form-al end have to be met,
- the (phenomenal) potentiality has to precede (Form-al) actuality,
- there is no hierarchical ordering within and between various utopian views,

and so on so forth. It is only after these conditions are met that we can talk about the potential unfoldings of the future: either as utopia, or dystopia. “The promise thus borders on an order,” as Hauskeller notes[^10]: it is an entrance ticket.

If in this section I touched, however briefly, the alwyas-new space of the posthuman, in the next one I want to address the temporal axis of the ‘homo ludens’. The unfoldings of utopian potentialities are posited towards the future, but what kind of a future is this? Is it a chronological future? If we just saw where, let us see now when does the Posthuman happens.

[^10]: Hauskeller 2012: 44.
2.6.4 Posthumanism as a ‘gesture’: de-nounifying the future

“Transhuman - noun -
[...]
Posthuman - noun.”

- Ramez Naam\textsuperscript{1011}

As with many other issues, what is needed then is a matching: a match between the spatial unfoldings of Posthumanism (the kinetic utopia), and the temporal ones. Then, of course, these two (the spatio-temporal dynamics) need to be matched with the subject / object understanding. I already touched the issue of de-Form-alized object, and a bit latter I am going to address the understanding of the subject within the Christian School. But for now, let us briefly focus on the Posthuman temporality.

The association between Posthumanism and the future is so popular and visible within the relevant literature (both popular and academic\textsuperscript{1012}) that it seems that the topic needs no more introductions or analyses.\textsuperscript{1013} However, there are a few issues in here that, at a closer look, start to seem problematic from a limit-perspective.

One thing that seems to dominate the Posthuman literature as a whole is that in order to be able to imagine the future, the future has to have a ‘where’ where it can happen: be that the line of the horizon, or other spatial similar representation. Given this, instead of asking ‘\textit{when} does the future happens’ we should probably ask ‘\textit{where} does the future happens’\textsuperscript{1014}. In other words, can the kinetic utopia accommodate a conventional understanding of the future, i.e. the future as a noun: an universal, forward orientation that happens at the horizon line?

Unsurprisingly, various posthuman consumer culture authors see technology as the great disruptor of the \textit{time continuum} – this adding to the list of technology being also introduced as the disruptor of \textit{limits, self, religion, or body}. Speaking about technology as the

\textsuperscript{1011} Naam 2012.
\textsuperscript{1012} Peters 2011.
\textsuperscript{1013} ”The cyborg bodies constitute theoretical postulations of how the future body will be conceived as technology advances” (Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2006: 344). My emph. “”The posthuman’ is an ideological account of the future of the human species in annexation with info-bio-technologies” (Campbell 2013: 41).
\textsuperscript{1014} Paraphrasing Heidegger 2016: 175.
great disruptor of the *time continuum* (a teleological, historicist continuum usually associated with modernity and humanism), several researchers working in the posthuman consumer culture field have noticed that it is technology, in its contemporary (bio-digital) embodiment, that is

> “shaping a dynamic relationship to time which resists simplistic categorisations of past, present, and future”.\(^{1015}\)

By using the concept of ‘proto-atavism’, Campbell and Saren noted that the future is made visible in the present\(^{1016}\), echoing Katherine Hayles’ argument that “the posthuman future [...] is already upon us”\(^{1017}\). Proto-atavism functions as a way of collapsing the quality of linear time. Therefore, it presents technological progress as nonlinear, punctuated and multiple, creating inharmonic, anti-cause and effect, “off-key”, cacophonies and endless polarizations\(^{1018}\): as it develops, there is much more then one possible future than the current technology could create. But let us not be mislead by this rather uncritical use of an otherwise dogmatically correct vocabulary (i.e. nonlinearity, cacophonies, polarizations): the technological progress (upon which all the above stuff depends) is still very much forward-oriented – otherwise it would mean that Singularity is already here, that intelligent “machines become the dominant life form on the planet”\(^{1019}\), all the ‘evils’ having been conquered, and connectivity having reached full covering. In other words, there is nowhere to go further anymore. Accordingly, it implies betterment, and has very specific goals on its agenda, the main one being the creation of ‘a technologized body’. Indeed, as Campbell, Driscoll, and Saren noted in their paper,

> “a posthuman orientation [...] first and foremost advocates a focus on deep-future.”\(^{1020}\)

Importantly, contemporary linear perspective based technology acts not only as a tool that shapes the ‘future human’, but also as something that is simultaneously

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\(^{1015}\) Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz 2011: 289.

\(^{1016}\) Mainly because of the technological advancements, we hear every so often that ‘the future is now’, or that the future is presented, that is, brought into the present (Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2006: 345; Kristol and Cohen 2002; Achenbach 2008). As some have noted, the cyberpunk trope ‘the future is now’ is a saying which could be translated as “that the past has been conquered” (Yockey 2005: 61; Lovink 2002).


\(^{1018}\) Campbell and Saren 2010: 169, 170.

\(^{1019}\) Hayles 1999: 35. Or that the cybernetic subject is not contained anymore “within the assumptions of liberal humanism” (Hayles 1999: 108).

“deconstructing the human as an ancient concept”\textsuperscript{1021}: the two (i.e. the ‘future’ and the ‘ancient’ human, i.e. the Pauline ‘old’ and ‘new’ nature) cannot coexist. By deconstructing the ancient human - something which shows that no matter how cacophonous and polarized the future would be, there are certain views that are / should be completely banned from it, hence not ‘everything goes’, but quite the opposite – many other linked elements will be eliminated. One of them is the notion of ‘origin’: “no recourse to a single, reassuring Origin” can or should to be made\textsuperscript{1022}. As I noted earlier, the notion of Form-al origin – the sacred in-itself principle (archē), or the “primary cause” (archēs aition) – stood, within various Hellenistic totalities, in direct relation to the notions of authenticity, certain knowledge, and blood relations, thus autochthony (a chain that Baudrillard himself recognized) – all these elements being approached critically by the Christian School.

However, given that both the ‘cacophonization of time’ and the ‘technologization of the body’ happens thanks to the advancements and developments in technology, thus science, it means that the future – as introduced in the posthuman consumer culture literature – does not in any way escape at all the ‘ancient’ orientation: the ‘ancient human’ might be dead, but he keeps going, like a zombie, forward / towards the ‘where’ situated at the horizon line. The only thing that changed is that the place of Origin, defined by the autochthonous ‘where’ switched from being in the past to being in the future. Another message we are getting is that without (enough) technological advancements, there can be no cacophonization, and no punctuation. In other words, the future remains a noun: an universal, forward oriented task that need an ‘where’ in order to happen: the fixed horizon line. The problem is that the kinetic utopia (the ‘neither / nor’, or the ‘non-here / non-there’) cannot accommodate such a temporal model.

Such nounifications that render active verbs – the ‘homo ludens’ – static and ossified have been defined by some contemporary scholars as “obscenities”\textsuperscript{1023}, and they are poised to remain that way for as long as the notion of the cyborg will remain attached to technology. Therefore, abandoning at least for a bit the dominant technological approach for a theological one might help us understanding that the posthuman cyborg does not happen (should not happen) ‘first and foremost’ in the future, but right now. The adverb (now) should replace the noun (future).

As I noted already, the cyborg (understood as a theological project) happens despite technological progress. Paradoxically, the only way for the posthuman to occur is by keeping it from happening in no matter what kind of future (near, deep etc.). The future represents

\textsuperscript{1021} Campbell and Saren 2010: 159.
\textsuperscript{1022} Campbell and Saren 2010: 170.
\textsuperscript{1023} Bash 2011: 26.
the death of the posthuman, it is a ‘where’ where the cyborg goes to die (by being something, e.g. a ‘technologized body’, thus a limit). Indeed, the future is a concept that should be banished from the Posthumanist lexicon. Accordingly, the New Babilon or the No-Stop City, examples of kinetic utopias, are not projects that might happen in the future either, once we will have the technology to build them, but dogmatic impositions that are happening right now. In this sense, utopia is already a verb. There is no point of building visions of a transformed future humanity, as – from a Christian School’s perspective – humanity is already transformed. What has to be done however is to keep it that way.

If the past is erased and the future is “presented”\textsuperscript{1024}, all we have at our disposal, as Augustine would note, is indeed an eternal, yet ephemeral ‘now’\textsuperscript{1025}: an infinite succession of local operations, as Deleuze and Guattari put it. Given this, what I want to briefly explore in the following are some ‘adverbial’ expressions that the (Wellsian) kinetic utopia can accommodate – expressions that are mirroring the Lyotardian ‘petits récits’, or Galison’s ‘specific theory’ I introduced earlier. Let us start with Walter Benjamin’s concept of ‘jetztzeit’, and Deleuze’s notion of ‘aion’.

Jetztzeit – the ‘now-time’ – is a term Walter Benjamin uses in his \textit{Theses on the Philosophy of History} (c. 1940) to describe a notion of time that is ripe with revolutionary possibility, a time that has been detached from the progressive and oppressive continuum of history. The ‘jetztzeit’ unveils a heavily reformed version of the Hellenistic \textit{kairos}:

\begin{quote}
- jetztzeit (i.e. the Messianic time\textsuperscript{1026} / kairos\textsuperscript{1027} is not anymore an occurrence that exists side by side with Kronos\textsuperscript{1028}, supposing to unveil, unexpectedly, the divine, bounding Form-al side of things. What jetztzeit unveils now are the horizontal-only dimensions of oppression and slavery – exercises of authority and power that put a limit to the free and unlimited becoming. From being the one bringing forth the finite disclosure of the Form-al Truth (through an act of unconcealment), the monotheistic
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1024} Campbell, O’Driocoll, and Saren 2006: 345. In other words, “converting the possibility of a “posthuman” future into an actuality” (Verdoux 2009).

\textsuperscript{1025} Replacing thus the noun, ‘future’, with an adverb, ‘now’. This follows William of Ockham’s point that the use of abstract nouns should be dropped from the philosophical discourse altogether, using instead only verbs, adverbs, or conjunctions (Dutton 1996).

\textsuperscript{1026} A Messianic time from which, however, as a dogmatically correct Derrida points out in his text \textit{Marx & Sons} (1993), has to contain nothing that cannot be deconstructed. As such, the ontic God ought to be left out of it, which is to say, radically separated. As Derrida then notes, all the “figures of messianism... have to be [...] deconstructed” (as quoted in Ware 2004: 110). Messianicity therefore relates only to the sphere of experience: “messianicity (which I regard as \textit{a universal structure of experience}, and which cannot be reduced to [non-deconstructible] religious messianism \textit{of any stripe}) is anything but Utopian: it refers, in every here-now, to the coming of an eminently real, concrete event” (Derrida 1999: 248). My emph.

\textsuperscript{1027} For Benjamin, \textit{kairos} becomes jetztzeit (Boer 2013: 153).

\textsuperscript{1028} Kronos and Kairos were both worshipped at Olympia (Robertson 2010; Pausanias 1926: 463).
Kairos became the destroyer of limits, the bearer of infinity\textsuperscript{1029}. Of course, these hierarchical figures of authority and power are, more often than not, using normative claims based on Form-al worldviews in order to legitimize their positions. However, the Christian dogmatic counterargument to this is that behind such claims there is no Form-al side: they are language games only. No matter where they happen, no matter who is making them, such claims are only inventions of the mind, socially constructed views waiting to be deconstructed and exposed for what they actually are; accordingly, Benjamin’s jetztzeit is always produced by the artist or revolutionary \textsuperscript{1030} from the ceaseless historical flow in which it would otherwise be trapped.\textsuperscript{1031}

Instead of jetztzeit, Deleuze seems to use, in his 1969 \textit{The Logic of Sense}, another term – one also borrowed from the Hellenistic philosophy (and then passed through the “interpretive grille” of the Christian School): aion (\textgreek{o\i\w}). He describes it as

\textit{“the instant, the present without thickness and without extension.”}\textsuperscript{1032}

Given its teleological charge, the chronological “is an encasement”\textsuperscript{1033}, which means that it cannot affirm the continuous production of the unmappable, unmeasurable new. And so, the aion – which stands \textit{in opposition} to the modernist kronos – is to be embraced, in that it cracks the kronic present, so that the ‘new’ could finally (and endlessly) break out. In other words, the aion enables the endless possibilities that are foreclosed by kronos\textsuperscript{1034}; it enables the rise of the playful werewolves.

For Deleuze, aion is then nothing but an

\textit{“empty form if time”}\textsuperscript{1035}

or, to put it differently, the time emptied of its Form. Accordingly, the aion is the movement which occurs “only at the surface”\textsuperscript{1036}, only in an outside. What unites

\textsuperscript{1029}Indeed, the “kairos of the postmodern” is associated with the “cooperative, the communicative, the multilingual, the polycentric, the border crossing, the intercultural, the interdisciplinary, the nonstructural […] the plural, the dispersed […] the relational, the coalitional, the communal, the reciprocal, the nonhierarchical, the empowering, as well as the ambiguous, the different, and the fragmentary,” including here, of course “the nomadic” (Geiser 2013: 90, 352).
\textsuperscript{1030}Boer 2013: 153.
\textsuperscript{1031}Buchanan 2010: 262-263.
\textsuperscript{1032}Deleuze 1990: 164, 168. My emph.
\textsuperscript{1033}Deleuze 1990: 162.
\textsuperscript{1034}Barber 2014: 61, 133.
\textsuperscript{1035}Deleuze 1990: 165.
Benjamin and Deleuze notions is that none is future oriented, but firmly planted in the present: whereas Benjamin writes about ‘now-time’, Deleuze focuses on ‘the present without thickness’.

Even though there is no memory in kairos, its main role is to recover – which is not the same thing with ‘unveiling’. What are to be recovered through the blasts of the Messianic time are the gestures. As Adorno writes, the gestures are nothing else but

“traces of experiences covered over by signification.”

Judith Butler expands and elaborates:

“Each gesture is an event [...] Gestures are the reanimation of what is covered over – they are indeed against those traces of signification that cover them over.”

The danger that a gesture, an experience (a Lyotardian ‘petits récit’) might end up becoming a totality, a Truth-telling device, hence a terroristic onto-epistemology, always hovers over. Or, if the gesture already signifies a totality (e.g. the sacrificial, material rituals always leading to the Formal sphere), it has to be reformed. This is why, as Benjamin himself advises, we (all) have to take continuous action, to never stop, but indeed to accelerate:

“the more frequently we interrupt someone [...] the more gestures result.”

Even though to lose the gesture is to lose, or break the trace (i.e. to keep breaking the Chain of Being), in order to avoid the transformation of the trace into a metanarrative, the gesture has to be continuously broken. In order to be new, it has to be always new: the new can never be, but only become. The experiences or the gestures cannot be let to form a pattern, or to take a direction (e.g. towards the future), otherwise the ‘homogeneous course’, the ‘covering over’, i.e. the concealment, the ‘within’ will return.

1036 Deleuze 1990: 166.
1037 Adorno 1981: 249. As it seems, Adorno is reinstating the Clementian critique of chronological time (Clement 1919: 126, 127).
1038 The process of covering-over implies a process of forgetting, of pushing into oblivion, into forgetfulness (Butler 2011).
1039 Butler 2011. My emph. See the use of the term gesture – as in gesture recognition – in the computer science and language technology.
1040 Benjamin 1969: 151.
1041 The trace was Ariadne’s thread [fila] (Ovid 1959), the Platonic fetters [δεσµός], the Peripatetic string [εἰρω], the Stoic chain [ἐἱρµός], or the more general alusis tou kosmou (ἀλυσις του κόσµου) – with the Latin catena mundi as its equivalence.
Therefore, as with Lyotard’s ‘small narratives’, if the context that generated the gesture disappears, the gesture no longer has any meaning(s).

The Platonic, Aristotelian, or any kind of in-Form-ed philosophies are thus, again and again, directly addressed and heavily challenged from the Christian School’s, monotheistic perspective. The Benjamin’s, Deleuze’s, Butler’s and many other kairological thinkers’ approaches, no matter how vocal they seem to be against the ‘rests’-filled oppressive forces of modernity, do not go outside of the dogmatic boundaries of the Christian School.

It is only through gestures that the Posthuman will stop be-ing (a noun) and endlessly become (a verb). Only this way the blasphemous space of the cyborg would never be ‘covered over by signification’, i.e. by customs and traditions. Therefore, to return to our initial argument, asking the cultural and posthuman consumer research researchers to widen their temporal range, thus to focus ‘not just in the immediate future, but the deep future’ is problematic given that both the ‘immediate future’ and ‘the deep future’ are ‘wheres’ – as they are defined chronologically, i.e. in “years from now”.

The Posthuman can never happen, because the Posthuman can never be. However, as the Posthumanist author Ramez Naam noted, both the Posthuman and the Transhuman are still nouns, they are gestures blanketed by signification. De-nounifying and then verbifying the cyborg and its environment is a very laborious task that must be performed simultaneously on both the spacial, and the temporal axes.

Even when introduced as ‘nonlinear, punctuated and multiple’, the future as portrayed within the vast majority of Posthumanist and posthuman consumer culture literature is still something that escapes the ‘now’, thus baring a definite psychological, idealist weight. To paraphrase Askegaard and Linnet (2011), such approaches are making the cyborg, or the ‘technologized body’ a fixed locus of intention – an approach that presupposes an arch that extends between the consumer’s mind and the product of his imagination. This model greatly resembles the Chrysippus’ and other Hellenistic philosophers’ theories of vision, bringing thus back a package of undesired elements, such as intentionality, normative de-contextualization, dialectics and more. Benjamin’s ‘now-time’ and Deleuze’s aionic ‘present without thickness’ try to escape such idealist approaches by completely erasing the future, i.e. the arch – according to Deleuze, the instance, the gesture is indeed ‘without extension’ – focusing instead on a contextual, ephemeral “now” that is always ‘new’, which is dialogical instead of dialectical, and has no meaning in-itself, but only in-relation.

The posthuman future should not happen in a ‘where’, i.e. in an ‘authentic’ space, a space stable enough to stir a sacrificial fire on it or facilitate the construction of a
temple, a space that someone can claim membership to through blood relations. There is no ‘where’ anymore within the Christian School: the deleuzoguattarian ‘smooth place’ is not a ‘where’. There are no ‘wheres’ in the No-Stop City, or the New Babylon. There are only gestures, or clicks.

To conclude, there has to be a match between the spatial unfoldings of Posthumanism (the kinetic utopia), and the temporal ones (the now-time). Therefore, following Deleuze and Guattari, for the cyborgian nomad, locality is not delimited; the absolute (i.e. the noun), then, does not appear at a particular place (a ‘where’, the universal line of the horizon), but becomes a nonlimited locality (a Evangelical ‘neither / nor’, or ‘non-here / non-there’). The coupling of the place and the absolute is achieved in an infinite succession of local operations (that are empty in-themselves). This is the verbalized time and space from which ‘none is dropped’, and in which ‘none is privileged’.

Given that the ‘post-’ in the posthumanism should not be understood as a temporal prefix, Posthumanism is endlessly kairotically post-poned through the acceleration and multiplication of the gestures.

Before closing this section on the Posthuman temporality, there are two more issues that I want to briefly address: the notion of progress, and the prefixes ‘post-’ vs. the ‘trans-’ – as they are used in the Posthuman and the Transhuman constructions.

1044 Campbell 2013: 41.
2.6.5 The notion of progress within the Christian School

“Our future is greater than our past.”

- Ben Okri\textsuperscript{1045}

“Prior to the Enlightenment [...] the prevailing perspective was that the past was superior to the present.”

- Stephen Brown\textsuperscript{1046}

If Posthumanism is a ‘gesture’, an accelerated interruption, a verb, a click, how can it accommodate a progressive framework that can only occur ‘now’? Progress in its present form is a noun, so little wonder that it is not a particularly loved concept within the process-oriented, anti-humanist, qualitative circles. Within the Posthumanist literature, the notion occupies a rather central place. Consider Max More’s description of progress, which is pretty well representative of the standard posthumanist vision:

“Seeking more intelligence, wisdom, and effectiveness, an indefinite lifespan, and the removal of political, cultural, biological, and psychological limits [...] Perpetually overcoming constraints”.\textsuperscript{1047}

More’s definition is an important one because it sheds light on one of the Christianity central tenets (as expressed in Paul’s Letters to Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11): to invalidate and transcend the racial, cultural, and biological divisions. There is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, or Scythian, there is no male and female, as there are no bounded elements in the human psychology and physiology that might escape deconstruction – and here we remember the deconstruction of the hegemonikon by Augustine, or Pico’s Oration (1486), the manifesto of the Renaissance humanism, where God is addressing Adam telling him that he will give him ‘no fixed seat, no form of thy very own’: ‘thou wilt fix limits of nature for thyself’. The removal of these limits not only

\textsuperscript{1045} From Okri’s poem Turn on your light (1999) (http://www.kalimunro.com/Turnonyourlight.html).
\textsuperscript{1046} Brown 1995: 68.
\textsuperscript{1047} More 1999. My emph.
creates the prerequisite for progress, but the perpetual removal itself is the very definition of progress: progress becomes a verb.

As we have seen, the Hellenistic notion of progress was ‘backwards’, or past oriented, i.e. towards what precedes the appearance, or beyond what contingently offers itself as. In sharp contrast, the Christian notion of progress has ‘two’ orientations: while one is defined by ‘rests’, hence turned towards a static utopia, a ‘where’, i.e. the future, the other one is more in line with the first-degree truths, i.e. it is now-oriented.

The notion of progress features in virtually all the posthuman consumer culture articles, being mostly linked with technology: progress usually means technological progress. When not introduced unsympathetically, e.g. as a humanistic, colonialist force that leads towards increasing civilization and linear, teleological progress, technology is seen ‘as a primal, instinctual force’ with deep, ancient roots\textsuperscript{1048}. Be this as it may, what I find interesting is that under its non-humanistic, non-Western, primal and dirty embodiment, technology bears the power to break the rigidity of humanist life, to disrupt the normative conventions and customs, and to disintegrate the borders between bounded and the unbounded. Sounds familiar? In a beautiful move of ‘inversion’, the ‘rests’ infected views (the ones based on teleological forces, the inward-oriented ones etc.) are taken over by approaches that are more aligned with the first-degree truths of the Christian School. This switch is then introduced as offering alternative approaches that are different from the humanist legacy that exists in the Western world\textsuperscript{1049}. However, things are not what they seem to be. What we have here is the Christian School going against its own problematic features, and, as I mentioned earlier, in the vast majority of cases, those who are hunting down those ‘rests’ tend to identify these vestigial remnants with the School itself, as a whole: getting rid of them means getting rid of the School, its teachings and its dogmas. In other words, while it is true that in here we do indeed have a switch, in this context the perceived alternative is only another expression of ‘inversion’: the move is challenging the ‘rests’-filled status quo by moving towards the core of the School, not away from it.

The situation I described in the section on ‘difference’ and the ‘extension of the claim’ repeats itself again and again. The notion of primal or dirty technology is introduced as standing against the / outside of the humanist onto-epistemologies, thus as occupying the side of the ‘others’, of ‘them’, of the neglected or oppressed “monsters”\textsuperscript{1050}. In other words, those who are not following / stand against the western colonialist concept of technology as a civilizational, progressive, inanimate force are also

\textsuperscript{1048} Campbell and Saren 2010: 167.
\textsuperscript{1049} Campbell and Saren 2010: 167, 172.
\textsuperscript{1050} Campbell and Saren 2010; Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz and Schroeder 2010; Lai 2012.
standing against all sorts of totalities (expressed through borders, normative conventions and customs, traditions etc.). Everybody but the West hates the Form-al worldviews, everybody but the West is dying to disintegrate the limits, to wage war against totalities. However, as I repeatedly noted in relation to other similar issues, going against a teleological understanding of progress is not an opening into the to a weirder and wider world, but only another imposition on any other culture of a specific dogmatic structure. The only difference is that now the imposition happens through an act of ‘mythological transference’: what specifically characterizes the Christian School, i.e. the radical denial of Form-al limits in all their expressions, gets transferred to those traditions that are originally based on Form-al polycentric metanarratives (say, the Surui, the Maasai, the Inuit ones), giving the almost perfect impression that by following those primal, dirty, animistic approaches we are indeed finally abandoning the values that characterize the Western logocentric, humanistic worldview (closeness, hierarchical ordering, immutable limits etc.). Accordingly, everything that might look as an expression of limit within those ‘other’ traditions is to be understood as an infection: they have been contaminated from the contacts they had with the Western colonial forces.

In order to clarify the points I set forth, in the following I would like to briefly explore how the notion of progress is conceptualized within the Christian School, how it gets linked with the notion of ‘new’ (thus making it from a noun, a verb), and how they both (new and progress) inform various contemporary philosophical positions that are then adopted by researchers working in various critical orientations, e.g. the cultural and posthuman consumer culture ones.

By the end of the Book of Revelation, there is the following line:

"And I saw a new (καινὸν) heaven and a new earth." ¹⁰⁵¹

The key term here is kainos (καινός), one I introduced in the first part when I discussed the notion of progress within various Hellenistic Schools. As mentioned, the concept described a circular, inward-oriented type of movement in which the perfectly realized Form-al sphere, towards which everything unfolded according to its own nature, preceded the phenomenal becoming. Accordingly, this inward-oriented type of development characterized not only the mentioned Hellenistic Schools, but also every other ones that had / has a Form-al bounded, metaphysical understanding of reality.

However, unlike the sense it had in the pagan authors, the Christian ‘new heaven’ and ‘new earth’ (with everything they contain) are not unfolding towards themselves

¹⁰⁵¹ Revelation 21:1.
anymore. The Forms are not within, and their move towards perfection is derived from an external kick: nothing self-moves anymore.

In his text On the Veiling of Virgins, Tertullian noted:

“Christ said of Himself that he is Truth, not custom.”

Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian’s contemporary, in his Exhortation to the Greeks explicitly links the new with the Truth:

“Error (deception) is old, whereas new [καινὸν] makes the Truth appear.”

The readers of the Exhortation are encouraged to leave behind the ‘ancient superstitions of their fathers’ and to to embrace a de-Form-alized, dynamic concept of novelty, one completely embodied into the sphere of becoming.

Now, something new, in order to be new, has to be always new. New understood this way is anti-teleological, breaking the chronological continuum into endless instants, or kairiotic events, gestures. When combined, Tertullian and Clement’s views give us an image of the issue: it is the continuous inception of the new which creates the Messianic disruptive environment within which the progress-as-verb happens. In the moment new stops, it immediately becomes the old error, the ancient superstition, the essence, the unmovable. Paganism, the limit, or the progress-as-noun threatens to return or to take over.

The Apostle Paul will base his anthropology – which will become normative in the Christian School – precisely on these views, radically opposing ‘the new human’ to ‘the old human’. As he put it in his Epistle to the Colossians, this represents indeed a radical renewal of the Hellenistic new.

Following all this, Christianity’s ultimate fulfillment resides exactly in its perpetual incompleteness: the new that makes the Truth appear has to be to be always new. There are no traditions, no customs, no ‘wheres’. Therefore, a society calibrated in perfect accord to the ‘first-degree truths’ is not and cannot be an image of a Christian society. On the contrary: the calibration would only transform the Christian School into “something solidified and structured” – a situation which will go against the first-degree truths. Therefore, in order to prevail, the Christian School has to constantly deny

1052 As quoted in Funkenstein 1989: 256. Fixed customs vs. dynamic new.
1053 Modified translation from Jáuregui 2010: 272.
1054 Idib.
1055 Colossians 3:10.
1056 If we are to use Patrick Bourgeois’ vocabulary (Bourgeois 1995: 164).
its formal foundation, it has to endlessly deconstruct itself so there will be no fixity left within it. Based on this, the Enlightenment, and the Modernity more generally, are to be approached as ‘unfinished projects’. Indeed, as Žižek rightly shows, the fact that Enlightenment remained an unfinished project is not due to a failure, or because contingent, external circumstances were or are still preventing its full implementation, as Habermas and others lament. On the contrary, this ‘unfinishedness’ defines ‘its very notion’, its very nature. Therefore, a

"fully realized project of Enlightenment would undermine its very notion."\(^{1057}\)

Accordingly, the same applies for humanism. Following Pico’s descriptions from his Oration, in the moment there will finally be a fixed seat, the subject will have a form of its very own, a fixed limit, or a nature for itself, the whole project of humanism will be undermined.

Innovation becomes not only imperative, but – once being freed from all possible limits, i.e. the land-based, stars-influenced, pneuma-infused superstition-motivated ratios of ancient customs – also a natural\(^{1058}\) (trans-geographical and transcultural) disposition. As such, innovation starts to characterize the humankind as a whole. However, there is only one kind of new: the outward oriented one, one that breaks limits, customs, traditions, disrupts normative views and disintegrates borders – wherever those are to be found. As noted, the war against totality has to be waged against any totality, not only the ‘rests’-based Western one.

Let us see now how are these views informing various contemporary critical positions. In the Preface to the first volume of his monumental The Principle of Hope (1954), Ernst Bloch seems to pick on exactly this understanding of new I just introduced:

"the new philosophy, as it was initiated by Marx, is the same thing as the philosophy of the New."\(^{1059}\)

The Marxist new philosophy (although with problematic ‘rests’ in it) is thus identical with the philosophy of the New: the new that nullify the customs, the new that makes the truth appear by perpetually denying its definite implementation, the new that makes itself new all the time. It is this process that defines the truth, not how true

\(^{1057}\) Žižek 2000: 240. For Habermas, phenomena like totalitarian political regimes or the so-called alienation of modern life are ultimately generated not by the inherent dialectics of the very project of modernity and Enlightenment, but by its nonconsequent realization (Žižek 2000: 347).

\(^{1058}\) Godin 2013: 24.

something ‘new’ is. It is the going, not the arriving. As with Modernity, Enlightenment and Humanism, the failure of the definite implementation does not represent a failure of execution, but it defines the very nature of the Christian project. Therefore, modernity has not “run its course”\textsuperscript{1060}. Modernity runs its course, perpetually. Speaking from a Popperian or Kuhnian perspective, as long as the truth is perpetually falsifiable, replaceable with other paradigms, or, following the posthuman consumer culture authors mentioned above, as long as we can continuously look for alternatives and different approaches (which, in turn, will be falsified and replaced by some other ‘post-’ alternatives), then we can be sure that everything runs according to the dogma.

Although the issue of progress has ‘been burrowing in great philosophy’ – from Plato and Aristotle to the Enlightenment – there was an element in those Hellenistic Schools that impeded its real take off for such a long time, i.e. the contemplation:

“What Has Been overwhelms what is approaching, the collection of things that have become totally obstructs the categories Future, Front, Novum. Thus the utopian principle could not achieve a breakthrough, either in the archaic-mythical world [...] or in the urbane-rationalistic one [...] The reason for this is invariably that both the archaic-mythical and the urbane-rationalistic cast of mind are contemplative-idealistic, consequently, being merely passive-contemplative, they presuppose a closed world that has already become, including the projected over-world in which What Has Become is reflected\textsuperscript{1061}. The gods of perfection in the former, the ideas or ideals in the latter are in their illusory being just as much res finitae as the so-called facts of this world in their empirical being.”\textsuperscript{1062}

In order to achieve real progress, in order to make progress a verb, the inward-oriented act of contemplation\textsuperscript{1063} of the perfect, divine in-themselves and immutable Forms has to be destroyed: the noun has to disappear and with it, the entire network of concepts that revolved around it (e.g. introspection). According to Bloch, Marx was the first to posit a new kind of theory, one which does not resign itself to contemplation.\textsuperscript{1064} Although the claim itself is not correct, the more general point Bloch is making in here is indeed accurate: banishing contemplation / theory is a prerequisite of making progress a kinetic process bursting with new.

\textsuperscript{1060} Firat and Venkatesh 1995: 240.
\textsuperscript{1061} What Bloch is hinting here at is the Hellenistic model where actuality preceded potentiality. In other words, what is not yet (but already perfectly realized) precedes what apparently is (but in its becoming).
\textsuperscript{1062} Bloch 1995: 8.
\textsuperscript{1063} In both its expressions: as the old theoria, and as the Christian ‘rest’, i.e. the Evagrian and Maximian’s notion of ‘contemplation of natural things’ (Costache 2015; Ramelli 2015).
\textsuperscript{1064} Bloch 1995: 8.
As I was trying to show, given the deanimation of matter, the perception of the separable Forms (Bloch’s ‘gods of perfection’) through the mediation of the senses followed by noetical contemplation became impossible. Accordingly, because of the diastema (the unbridgeable gap between the created and the uncreated sphere), the senses and everything related to them became ‘trapped’ within the ever fluctuating, created phenomenal sphere (within which there are no Forms). In his diatribe against contemplation, Bloch is only reiterating Nyssa’s (and many, many others) contention that the whole creation in unable to apprehend through contemplation. Therefore, in some early modern authors, progress starts to be expressed almost exclusively in utilitarian, pragmatic and empirical terms. Innovation, the practice through which progress is kept as a verb, became naturally ingrained into the very texture of what it means to be a human. According to Guillaume Cave (d. 1713), an English theologian and chaplain of King Charles II, it is

“without doubt natural for man to prefer the better to the lesser, that which is useful to that which is not.”

Obviously, Cave’s ‘better’ is not the Hellenistic, Form-al ‘better’ – the one that preceded potentiality. Accordingly, human, or machine’s creativity (wherever it is that might happen) is not to be expressed through acts of inward contemplation, but only as outward oriented practices that are perennially renewed, deconstructed, criticized, abandoned, and exchanged for alternatives that are more ‘open’, more ‘inclusive’ or ‘strange’.

Slowly but surely (thanks especially to the limits-breakers, process-oriented thinkers), there will be / hould be no progress left outside of the utilitarian realm of practical life. As Godin puts is, innovation

“is essentially what is useful or productive of good effects: the improvement of the [de-Form-alized] material conditions of men.”

The almost cliché association between the notion of progress and other problematic terms such as humanism or Modernity, leads to the impression the there is nothing positive about the term. However, as I have tried to show, some versions of humanism, e.g. Pico’s version, or the one of Modernity and the Enlightenment period,

1065 Godin 2013: 12; Godin 2015: 168.
1066 As quoted in Godin 2015: 143.
1067 Within a Posthuman environment, creativity stops being “a uniquely human trait” (Berman 2016), being designed and implemented in the next generation of AI.
e.g. which Žižek is talking about, are proposing a form of progress – one firmly planted on the dogmatic structure of the Christian School – that bears no actual difference from the version proposed not only by thinkers like Ernst Bloch or Žižek, but also by the researchers working specifically within fields such as postmodern marketing, cultural and posthuman consumer culture research. As I have attempted to demonstrate, what I find interesting is that this particular version of progress – as a verb – gets transferred (through a process I called, for a lack of a better word, ‘mythological transference’) to cultures that have nothing in common with it, while its noun embodiment remains attached to Western culture. Of course, both versions belong to the same Christian School, and this is evident in the position both variants (the noun one being more ‘rests’ infected, the verb one being closer to the first-degree truths) are taking in respect to the reality of the limit and other related issues, such as contemplation.

There is no Janus-like figure of time, one facilitated by technology and characterized by a simultaneous gaze to the future and the past. As I noted, linear-perspective based technology cannot register the past. Indeed, by taking the photo camera as an example (interestingly, the same gadget Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz 2011 are using to make their point), Barthes wrote that it does not call up the past: there is nothing Proustian in a photograph. The past has been conquered, the future has vanished. We do not stand ‘on the shoulders of the giants’: all we have at our disposal is a ‘now’ without thickness and without extension, an empty and ephemeral form of time without depth and meaning in-itself, flat multiplicities without ‘withins’. Progress is an infinite succession of local operations that happen in a ‘smooth place’ where nomads move without moving, not having a ‘when’ and a ‘where’ where to stop and contemplate (or idealize) the gods of Form-al perfection.

2.6.5.1 The Apostle Paul’s ‘new humanity’: the Posthuman vs. the Transhuman

Deconstructing the human as an ancient concept: the way I read Campbell and Saren 2010’s point is that the two – i.e. the ‘new’ and the ‘ancient’ human – cannot coexist. The battle here is indeed between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’, not between the ‘past’ and the ‘future’. If that is truly the case, they cannot be more right. As I noted already in

1069 Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz 2011: 289.
the Introduction, I prefer the notion of Posthuman to the one of Transhuman and, in the following, I am going to briefly show why this is the case.

In his *Epistle to the Ephesians*, the apostle Paul explicitly states that Christ was spawning a “new humanity”\(^{1070}\), not a future one. The Christian Posthumanist author Micah Redding aptly describes the Pauline ‘new humanity’ as the one that, “was no longer going to be limited or defined by the things that bound it before - geography, politics, race, gender, or the circumstances of one’s birth. This humanity was going to be limitless [...] Christianity is not just compatible with the desire to reach beyond ourselves, it is the call to reach beyond ourselves [...] And so every end in Christianity is the end of boundaries, the end of constraints, the end of limitations\(^{1071}\).”

If Paul uses the term ‘new humanity’ in his *Epistle to the Ephesians*, it is in his *Epistle to the Colossians* that the apostle will talk about its antagonist, ‘the old human’. The relationship between the ‘new’ and the ‘old’ human is by no means a friendly one. As Paul notes, when it comes to the old self, one have “to wholly strip it off from oneself”\(^{1072}\). By using the verb *apekduomai* (ἀπεκδύομαι), Paul cannot emphasize enough the depth and the radicalism of the renunciation to the old self: there should be no reference to the old nature left in the new one whatsoever. Obviously, one cannot stop from permanently becoming a ‘new human’. In the moment one will be a ‘new human’, he will immediately become an ‘old human’. From this perspective, nobody can ever be a new human being.

All this might answer Don Ihde’s well placed question: “Of which human are we post?”\(^{1073}\). At the fundamental level, it is of this “old nature” that we are indeed post-. True, the term trans-humanism also suggests a distancing between the old and the new human, but it is one in which the breakup between the two happens in a friendly manner, even with a handshake. ‘My time is up, my friend’ seems to say the ‘old’ essential, Form-al self, ‘it is time for you to take over’. Transhumanism represents then the transition\(^{1074}\) to something else, something obviously better.

However, there is no place for such niceties in Paul’s argumentation: the rupture between the two has to be absolute, total. The old nature has to be annihilated, with no mercy. It is in relation to this that statements like the following ones ought to be understood. As Ferrando noted, Posthumanism represents,

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\(^{1070}\) *Ephesians* 2:15.
\(^{1071}\) Redding 2012.
\(^{1072}\) *Colossians* 3:9.
\(^{1073}\) Ihde 2011.
\(^{1074}\) Transhumans are “transitional humans” (Bendle 2002: 48).
“a radical onto-existential re-signification of being.”\textsuperscript{1075}

or,

“the posthuman condition introduces a qualitative shift in our thinking.”\textsuperscript{1076}

In other words, ‘re-signification’ and ‘qualitative shift’, yes, but from what? Definitely not from the humanist or modernist ways of thinking, as most of these and many other researchers seem to believe, but from the old person, the old, Form-\textit{al} nature.

Nonetheless, this old nature is not necessarily a thing of the past, at least not yet; it might happen right now in some indigenous cultures, but not only. The ‘rests’ from the ‘old nature’ still exists within the Christian School as well. No matter how wide are the postmodern onto-epistemological openings, any model based on ‘old nature’ cannot be let in. Therefore, the way in which it is addressed replicates the way in which the Hellenistic ‘old human’ was: through annihilation, which is only another word for the ‘radical onto-existential re-signification of being’. The ‘re-signification’ of one ‘old nature’ is the ‘re-signification’ of all ‘old natures’.

The question now is: is this ‘new nature’ definable? According to Hassan, not at all. But the posthumanist culture should not be credited for this incapacity for ascribing definitions – an incapacity Hassan (amongst many others) so eagerly celebrates. Let us give credit where credit is due. Now is perhaps a good time to remember the section Falsehood and Truth: the issue of language from the first part of this text. Given the denial of the divine Forms, of the essence of things, the noun cannot be used anymore as a shuttle, to ‘save’ the separable essence from the becoming, thus to make visible the Being of the things named. Hence, to make certain knowledge possible. All we have at our disposal is faith, never certain knowledge. Without the noun, everything explodes into bits, to use Guattari’s expression\textsuperscript{1077}. Indeed, as Aristotle noted,

“If (the noun) ‘human’ has an infinite number of meanings, obviously there can be no claim (made); for not to have one meaning is to have no meaning, and if words have no meaning there is the end of dialogue with others and, in all truth, with oneself.”\textsuperscript{1078}

\textsuperscript{1075} Ferrando 2013: 8.
\textsuperscript{1076} Braidotti 2013: 1-2.
\textsuperscript{1077} Guattari 2009.
\textsuperscript{1078} Modified translation from Aristotle 1933: 166, 167.
Within the Christian School, this is however exactly what happens: the notion of the ‘human’ acquires, through the loss of Form-al boundaries, ‘an infinite number of meanings’ – hence Pico’s humanistic model: no fixed seat, no form. Hence, following what I noted earlier when I introduced the Posthuman as a gesture, the Pauline ‘new humanity’, in order to be new, it has to always be new. Accordingly, as the theologian John Caputo notes, the word ‘meaning’ should never be uttered in singular.1079

The death of ‘human-ism’ and the subsequent ‘rise of post-human pragmatism’ did not happen thus at all with the dawn of the post-modern era – as it is usually thought and taught1080 – but it represents a dogmatic requirement of the Christian School. The complete fall of every possible essential nature into the pragma-tic sphere made it brake into an infinite number of meanings. No word should ever (and wherever) be able to express the Being of the things named – be that a word from some ‘Western’ culture (e.g. English, French), or from an indigenous one (e.g. Maasai). The first-degree truths cannot be questioned, and this is made abundantly clear by the early Church thinkers. All words are empty: they are unable to express anything that precedes them – be those words about God, the human being, or any other element of the world. As Gregory of Nyssa noted in his work To Ablabius: There are not three Gods (c. 381):

“Many believe that the name of the divinity is properly given according to its nature and that, as it is the case with the sky or the sun or any other element of the world which by their proper name connote the meaning of their substances [...] We, however, following the Scripture, have learned that (the essence) is unutterable and ineffable; and we think that every name [...], be it by human custom or by scriptural tradition, is hermeneutical, without containing the meaning of the nature itself.”1081

Following the patristic scholar Alden Mosshammer, Nyssa’s philosophy of language might be summarized in four main points:

a. language is a human invention and therefore both arbitrary and fallible, so that the ability of language to express any reality whatsoever in its own essence is highly questionable,

b. because of the diastemic gap, language is forever bound to the immanent sphere,

1079 Caputo 2016.
1080 As we are told from the very beginning of the Virtual Futures (1998) volume, the book “heralds the death of humanism and the rise of post-human pragmatism.” (n.a. 1998: i).
c. Gregory argues that apparently all theological language, including the language of the Bible, can in fact only have the created order as its referent,

d. Gregory claims that to the extent theological language expresses divine truths at all, such language can have no fixed content, but must forever be reinterpreted in an endless pursuit of an ever-elusive meaning\textsuperscript{1082}.

And if that applies to the name of the divinity, the sky, the sun, or any other element of the world, it does so to the human one as well. Basil of Caesarea, in his text *Against Eunomius*\textsuperscript{1083}, specifies the following:

> “Whenever we hear ‘Peter,’ the name does not cause us to think of his essence [...] but to contemplate (only) the unique marks that are considered in connection with him and are impressed upon our thinking [...] However, none of these (contains) his essence [οὐσία].”\textsuperscript{1084}

Therefore, according to Basil, none of the phenomena contains, or is bounded by the essence anymore. A fundamental step was thus taken, the focus being changed from *essence to appearance*\textsuperscript{1085}; hermeneutics takes precedence over ontology, which also means that the one-to-one relationship between words and what they are able to designate, breaks. As Mosshammer then pointed out, the Christian School’s thinkers laid the ground for “the fundamental emphasis on the gap between signifier and signified that unites the many disparate “schools” of post-modern literary theory”\textsuperscript{1086}. Importantly, this approach is unambiguously based on the Bible, which means that every time any of these many disparate ‘schools’ are expressing the diastemic gap, they are expressing and reinforcing a very specific dogmatic view. In other words, recognizing the deep asymmetry between signifier and signified, between essence and appearance, thus acknowledging the fact that an infinite number of meanings can *and should* be associated to any element of the world – all this represents a pledge of allegiance to the first-degree truths.

Nonetheless, the firm grip of the first-degree truths, of the present absences, is never to be felt as a closure, but quite the opposite. This is an example of what Wittgenstein meant when he noted that we live under an absolute dogmatic tyranny, though without being able to say we are not free. In fact, we are infinitely free. The ‘de-nounified’, or de-Form-alized language we are employing is pushing us towards infinity,

\textsuperscript{1083} See also Basil of Caesarea 1934: 332, 333.
\textsuperscript{1084} As quoted in Rasmussen 2013: 109. Modified. My emph.
\textsuperscript{1085} Maspero\textsuperscript{b} 2010: 751.
\textsuperscript{1086} Mosshammer 1989: 122.
while simultaneously denying the possibility that we might use it as a language through which we could articulate our unfreedom.

The ‘new humanity’ spawned by Christ is the one that cannot define itself, but only in relation to another, any other, equally indefinable, element of the world. It is a humanity that is called so only by convention, thus not in virtue of its nature. It is a humanity that instead of fearing the utter nullification of all discourse – one which will bring along the greatest calamity, i.e. the end of philosophy – embraces it. Not despite it, but because of it. This is how the greatest spectacle of all, the spectacle of Form-al annihilation, begins.

The subsequent complete fall of every possible nature into the pragma-tic sphere means the fall under the powers of the false, to use a rather fortunate Deleuzian expression1087, i.e. the fall within the pseudos, one which does not contain the Truth anymore. Any identification of the false with the t/Truth would be an act of idolatry, one that will interrupt the “perpetual movement [of any element of the world] toward a new form”1088. Indeed, as Esposito continues, there should never be a moment “in which the individual can be enclosed in himself or be blocked in a closed system”1089, and from this point of view, the only value that remains stable is the transition itself1090.

The term *posthuman* seems to be the preferred one within the fields of cultural and posthuman consumer culture research. It is used almost exclusively by those interested in the subject, the *transhuman* alternative being virtually absent. As I mentioned, in Paul’s argumentation, the rupture between the old and the new human has to be absolute, total. The radical split is underlined in e.g. Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010 study where they write about the “dramatic break between the “human” and the “posthuman””1091.

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1087 Deleuze 1989.
1088 Esposito 2008: 108.
1089 Esposito 2008: 188.
1090 Ibid.
1091 Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 10. My emph.
2.7 Matter in the posthuman consumer culture

“The standpoint of the new [materialism] is human society, or social humanity.”

- Karl Marx

We saw earlier in this text how matter was understood within some Hellenistic Schools and, subsequently, within the Christian School. We then saw how these understandings of matter influenced views on identity, senses, space, performance, the issue of Sacrifices, mathematics and mechanization etc. The main message of all this is that without the reforms brought by the Christian School, the creation of an environment within which a non-essentialist, anti-humanistic, non-hierarchical and infinitely open Posthumanist philosophy could rise and flourish would have been impossible. Accordingly, when analyzed side by side, there is no sense of continuity or commonality of views between the Christian School and various Hellenistic Schools whatsoever – as many Posthumanist authors wants us to believe.

Recently, the rise of the so-called ‘new materialist’ movement has led to the emergence of matter within the cultural and interpretivist consumer research and related fields. After the long Cartesian denial, ‘matter is back, as dangerous and vibrant as ever!’ seems to be something that we hear in an escalating fashion. Indeed, within the Posthuman Consumer Culture literature, the notion of embodiment is a central one. Generally speaking, the term is used in order to describe a move that is supposed to bring the disembodied Cartesian subject, in its entirety, within phenomenal sphere. There should be no rests, within which some parts of the assemblage could escape deconstruction, left. And the realm of the innate ideas represents exactly such a rest. Given this, it is important to note that Descartes’ notion of innate ideas has been criticized since very early on. As the theologian Antoine Arnauld noted, a contemporary and one of Descartes' first supporters, Descartes argument

“takes us back to the Platonic view (which M. Descartes nonetheless rejects) [...] – a view which gives rise to the definition of man as a ‘soul which makes use of body’.”

The main problem in Descartes’ approach was thus a dangerous vicinity to the Hellenistic views – views which Descartes, of course, rejects. This means that what he employs is an already reformed model: through Arnauld’s critical voice, the School goes against itself, i.e. against its own problematic residues.

Arnauld was not the only one criticizing the philosopher. Other two of Descartes’ contemporaries, Thomas Hobbes and Henricus Regius, denied the existence of the ‘innate ideas’, as Locke will do it too. According to the latter, all ideas are the product of sensation, no exception allowed. Be this as it may, the main point here is that the rejection of the innate ideas it is a theological rejection that happens because of the pressure the first-order truths are putting on this problematic feature, and not because of the inception of the new technologies and the process-oriented paradigms – as generally suggested. Indeed, when it comes to the Posthuman Consumer Culture literature, the embodiment, i.e. the complete and total fall into the pragma, occurs thanks to either the technological advancements, or the process-oriented paradigms. It is technology that leaves nothing separated or separable, respectively. Hence, the Posthuman Consumer Culture researchers speak about “technological embodiment”, “cyborg embodiment”, and “posthuman embodiment”. According to Campbell and Saren, the embodiments of the era of high-technology are due to the ubiquitous technological artefacts “that are collapsing humanist categories”. When it comes to the knowledge paradigms, it is Posthumanism that is “creating new cultures of technological embodiment”. However, given the centrality of technology, these are embodiments that can only occur on the surface of the Cartesian Coordinate System. One Descartes is ditched (i.e. the one of the innate ideas), two others are kept (the one of the Coordinates, and the one of the Principles of Philosophy).

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1093 As quoted in Fowler 1999: 309.
1094 A professor of medicine at the University of Utrecht and one of Descartes’ students. He was described by his teacher as “one of his most gifted students”, being the “first professor to introduce Descartes to Dutch universities” (Verbeek 1994: 533).
1095 In Regius’ Philosophia naturalis (the 1654 and 1661 editions), there is a paragraph entitled The mind does not need any innate ideas [Mens non indiget ideis innatis]. Locke will state his position in regard to this ‘rest’ in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689). See Locke 1836: 50, 51. On Hobbes, see McClure 2016: 130.
1096 Lai 2012: 386. For a view on the issue outside of the Posthuman Consumer Culture field, see See Balsamo 1995; Featherstone and Burrows 1995.
1097 Campbell and Saren 2010: 165.
1098 Venkatesh 2004: 400.
Could it be the case that, finally, the immensely powerful dogmatic constrains of the Christian School have been challenged and even broken? In the following I will take a closer look at the issue to see if this is the case.

In her book *Vibant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010), Jane Bennett seems to approach matter from a vitalistic perspective, showing us how strange in the end matter really is:

“I will turn the figures of ‘life’ and ‘matter’ around and around, worrying them until they start to seem strange, in something like the way a common word when repeated can become a foreign, nonsense sound. In the space created by this estrangement, a vital materiality can start to take shape [...] I will try to [...] awaken what Henri Bergson described as ‘a latent belief in the spontaneity of nature.’”

Strange and foreign, yes, but not too strange, and certainly not too foreign. These are indeed the same types of ‘weird’ and ‘different’ that are welcomed by those eager to escape from the ‘too narrow views’ or the ‘narrow conventionalism of modernity’. Bennett quotes approvingly the sociologist John Frow in saying that before being welcomed in, the differences need

“to be flattened, read horizontally as a juxtaposition rather than vertically as a hierarchy of being.”

Indeed, materiality has to draw human (all humans) attention “away from an ontologically ranked Great Chain of Being”. According to some posthuman culture thinkers this should not be difficult: apparently, everybody is doing this, except the humanistic West. Unsurprisingly, together with this explicit denial of ontology (in its various forms) comes also a strict positioning against teleology too. While it is true that Bennett uses in her book sexy, weird sounding concepts (at least for a contemporary ear) such as *entelechy*, she does that only after cleaning them off of their embarrassing

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1099 By ‘vitality’ Bennett means the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own (Bennett 2010: vii). My emph.

1100 Bennett 2010: vii-viii.

1101 The deleuzian (following Ockham) ‘conjunction’: “and... and... and...” (Deleuze and Parnet 1987: 25).

1102 As quoted in Bennett 2010: 9-10. ‘And’ over ‘or’.

1103 Bennett 2010: 112.


1105 The perfect, Form-al status of a ‘nature’ was described through the term *entelechy* (*ἐντελέχεια*), from ‘en telei echon’ (*ἐν τελεί ἐχειν*): having attained its end (Peirce 1993: 404). Heidegger translates
features, such as teleology and metaphysics. In an apparent move against Kant, Bennett follows the German biologist Hans Driesch that took “entelechy from Aristotle, [while] rejecting its peculiarly Aristotelian teleology”\(^{1106}\). A vital materialism is to be considered so only when it interrupts the teleological continuum\(^{1107}\). The continuum has to become a ‘gesture’ free of signification that happens in a now-time. Accordingly, Bennett’s vibrant materialism is and cannot be other then nonteleological\(^{1108}\). The Form-al and teleological limits / boundaries are dissolved (a melting process started with the Church Fathers, continued through the Enlightenment [Descartes, Kant] and then Bennett herself), leaving in place a flat space of perennial uncertainty and eternal incompleteness. The space of the posthuman is a Messianic place indeed, one in which no essential who would ever come\(^{1109}\), thus Be, and even less a teleological because.

The implicit, essentialist-sounding moral imperative of Western thought – “Thou shall identify and defend what is special about Man”\(^{1110}\) – does not lose its salience at all, as Bennett (and countless other) hopes. It only either gets flipped on its head, being retranslated apophatically as ‘Thou shall not identify and defend what is special about Man’ – the imperative then being extended over all other cultures and views – or, is to be understood in Pico’s way, as he put it in his manifesto of humanism. In other words, thou indeed shall identify and defend what is special about the human, i.e. the fact that it has no fixed seat, no form of its very own, no fixed limits.

The complete absence of metaphysics, teleology and hierarchy\(^{1111}\) form the triangle which, in turn, form the (smooth) foundation, the kinetic utopia on which the nonhuman rests.

After all these dogmatic alignments and third-degree purifications (Fathers, Reformation, Postmodernity), the trend of introducing matter as finally (re)becoming, after centuries of theological oppression\(^{1112}\), “vibrant, vital, energetic, lively, quivering, it as “being-present of a being as end,’ in the sense of the final point that is completed, that has itself in itself in its ‘end’ [...] that which maintains itself in its being-completed, what is there in the genuine sense, ‘possession of completion’” (Heidegger 2009: 200, 201).

\(^{1106}\) Bennett 2010: 71. Obviously, Bennett does not realize that Kant’s notion of teleology was, in respect to the Hellenistic understanding, already reformed.

\(^{1107}\) Bennett 2010: 112.

\(^{1108}\) Bennett 2010: x.

\(^{1109}\) Hamacher 2014: 227.

\(^{1110}\) Bennett 2010: 112. As if only the Western culture perceived the man in such an ontologically-informed way. However, restricting the metanarrative to the West only is very common within the critical / radical approaches, giving thus the impression that the war against totality is one against the West only, and not against every possible totality.

\(^{1111}\) “[A]ny notion of a preformed or static hierarchy of nature” has to be erased (Bennett 2010: 89). The new forms of practice made possible by the vibrant matter should “not rely upon the image of an intrinsically hierarchical order of things” (Bennett 2010: 12). My emph.

\(^{1112}\) Bennett 2010: 86-87.
vibratory, evanescent, and effluescent”1113 looses its appeal. The interest in the (only apparent, but much trumpeted) revival of matter is not rejuvenated even when discovering Bennett’s reliance on some (heavily reformed) Hellenistic authors such as Homer, Aristotle, Democritus, Aeschylus, Lucretius, or Epicurus1114.

I mentioned Bennett because her work, alongside others (e.g. the anthropologist Daniel Miller), features preeminently in Janet Borgerson’s analyses. Borgerson is a scholar that explores the radical role the ‘new materialities’ play within the cultural consumer research and postmodern marketing fields. In the following I am going to briefly rely on some of her work, including others, in order to show how this issue is conceptualized in the aforementioned fields and how it resonates with the dogmatic views of the Christian School.

As Borgerson makes it very clear, theorizing materiality comprehends related implications for identity1115: the Posthuman ‘subject’ has to resonate with the material world it inhabits. One term that catches the attention when it comes to the ‘new materialities’ is indeed the word ‘new’. Borgerson uses it repeatedly in her piece The Flickering Consumer (2013). Here, she speaks about new notions and new understandings of materiality. Indeed, what the social sciences (including here postmodern marketing, cultural, interpretivist, and posthuman consumer research) are experiencing today are “new ways of approaching materialities”, or “new groundings of materialities”1116. From conceptual to physical, the ‘new’ dominates the entire spectrum of reality. What defines the discussion on ‘new materialities’ is

“a foundational theoretical shift1117: understandings anchored in notions of substance give way to understandings anchored in [...] relation.”1118

The use of the term ‘new’ is to be understood here in two ways: on one hand, it defines indeed a ‘foundational shift’, one that happens when the dogmatic percepts of the Christian School take over those views that do not conform with its own worldview, i.e. any totality based on teleological, hierarchical, or Form-al principles. On the other hand, it is a ‘new’ that should signal that the shift Borgerson is writing about is not here to stay! The ‘new’ has to be kept ‘new’, it needs to be kept running, perpetually.

1113 Bennett 2010: 112.
1114 “I find Epicureanism to be too simple in its imagery” (Bennett 2010: xi).
1117 A shift in kind, not in degree (Zizioulas 1985: 85).
Speaking about the notion of ‘substance’ Borgerson refers to in the above quote, it should be noted that it is not the Aristotelian one anymore\(^{1119}\), but an already Christian, de-Form-alized ‘substance’, hence a ‘metaphysical rest’. Nonetheless, the presence of that ‘rest’ is a problematic one from a first-degree truths perspective and it has to be addressed accordingly. As such, the key components of the new materiality should remain interaction and co-creation\(^{1120}\) only. In other words, no Form-al, substantial side whatsoever:

“[b]y materiality, I mean co-creations, interactions, and relations between.”\(^{1121}\)

After making the dogmatically correct approach of relation, i.e. the identity, or meaning-creator, over substance (which does not precede relation) abundantly clear throughout the Flickering piece\(^{1122}\) and others, Borgerson is addressing the issue of identity, thus of agency. As she rightly noted, the way matter is comprehended has direct implications for the understanding of identity. Let us briefly see how this particular model of matter influences the understanding of identity. Again, as in the case of ‘essence’, she starts her discussion from an already reformed perspective, in other words from within the Christian School. As she notes,

“[p]art of the context relevant to the agency of objects in consumer research, and material culture studies more generally, emerges from a genealogy in which human subjects were imbued with god-like powers.”\(^{1123}\)

Given that this is a view on humans that is not shared by the Christian School thus neither by Borgerson, our scholar’s criticism has thus two very specific targets: the old Hellenistic philosophies, and the contemporary indigenous views. The dogma is not to be questioned, and so the idolatrous “intentional subject”\(^{1124}\) (or what is left of it, if we are to refer to the ‘rests’-infected one from the Christian School) is to be crashed by the non-teleological, non-Form-al “force of agency”\(^{1125}\). Indeed, agency is, like identity, a

\(^{1119}\) Aristotle 1938: 18.
\(^{1120}\) Borgerson 2013: 128.
\(^{1121}\) Borgerson 2013: 126.
\(^{1122}\) Ousianic-based worldviews are seen as “an attack on the social world”, they been obstacles that prevent “the potential to acknowledge, comprehend, and communicate ongoing interactions” etc. (Borgerson 2013: 129).
\(^{1123}\) Borgerson 2013: 131. My emph.
\(^{1124}\) “Most materiality theorists, and followers of actor network theory, do not claim that objects have intention” (Borgerson 2013: 132).
\(^{1125}\) Borgerson 2013: 131.
result of interactions\textsuperscript{1126} only. Nothing immutable should persist or be found ‘beneath’ or beyond these relations. The Form-al, the unshakeable site of the Sacrifices, on which the altar stood still no matter how its appearances fluctuated, is replaced by a de-animated ‘matter-flow’ which, in its agentic force, crashes the idols of the old (or of the ones that still keep them up) – Bloch’s ‘gods of perfection’, or Campbell and Saren 2010’s ‘ancient human’ – with a deconstructive force that will make both the early 4\textsuperscript{th} and the 16\textsuperscript{th} century Christian idol-smashers (to use Latour’s expression\textsuperscript{1127}) look like a bunch of amateurs. Sometimes, a little ‘tolerance’ is to be shown: they can keep their idols or their temples as long as they can be measured by the value of their art, but nothing else.

And if this defines the ontological part of the subject of matter within cultural consumer research and postmodern marketing, when it comes to epistemology we find ourselves on dogmatically solid (pun unintended) territories too. So solid that sometimes it gets difficult to realize that we do not read a Patristic text, but a 21\textsuperscript{st} century academic text. Unsurprisingly, with the ‘substances’ gone, Borgerson (following the existentialist thinker Emmanuel Levinas) speaks about “the immensity of ignorance”\textsuperscript{1128}, reminding everybody involved in consumer research and other related fields the verb \textit{agnoeó}, i.e. the word Basil of Caesarea uses when describing our relationship with the created world: there is no certain knowledge in a deanimated world, only ignorance and faith. The immensity of ignorance: the Truth was a bad dream the world itself once had about itself. In some parts of the world some are still dreaming it and, given that ignorance is an act of deep and perpetual devotion, as Gregory of Nazianzus noted, it is our duty to wake them up and make them forget about Form-al Truth – in the end such a foreign concept to their culture, to any culture. And we should not feel bad about waking them up because the views exposed above characterize not only a specific group of people that share the dogmatic percepts of a certain School. Indeed, these visions

\textit{“of relation and interaction [are] at the base of all human existence”}\textsuperscript{1129}.

\textsuperscript{1126} Borgerson 2013: 132.
\textsuperscript{1127} Latour 2002: 24.
\textsuperscript{1128} Borgerson 2013: 139.
\textsuperscript{1129} Borgerson 2005: 12. My emph.
2.7.1 The nature of the (neo-)material object

“The thing itself, so far as concerns this testimony of Scripture, is not discoverable.”

- Augustine

As we are told, a theory of the consumption object itself still eludes consumer research. One reason for such an important absence might be that the field has not yet engaged with what consumer objects actually are. Therefore, consumer research scholars should think through new methods and theories to account for the objects: what is and what does an object?

Whereas is not my intent to offer here a fully-fledged theory of the ‘consumption object itself’, I do intent to briefly address some of the issues concerning the nature of object precisely from a perspective that seems to be the most dismissed within the fields of interpretative, cultural and posthuman consumer research: the Enlightenment one. The are various reasons behind such a rather paradoxical approach, one of them being that the above mentioned fields do not need a theory of the consumption object at all: such a theory exists, and the researchers working in those fields are already using it.

According to an important number of researchers working within the mentioned fields, the main culprits behind the object itself’s neglect are, of course, the humanistic onto-epistemologies, the ones that privilege(d) the mind over the matter, condemning everything else that was consciousness-free to “invisibility”. The object was indeed perceived either as a “abstract ‘nothing’” or as a tool, one at our disposal.

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1130 As quoted in Athanasopoulos 2013: 57.
1132 Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2010: 92.
1133 And I am not necessarily referring here to various “object-oriented” approaches such as Katherine Hayles’ “Object-Oriented Inquiry” (Hayles 2014), or Cohen and Yates’ “Object-Oriented Environments” (Cohen 2015) – all being spin-offs of the Graham Harman’s “Object-Oriented Ontology” and various other contemporary theories of subjectivity – or “heresies” (Longo 2014), such as the ‘vibrant materialism’, ‘new materialism’, and ‘speculative realism’ (https://punctumbooks.com/titles/object-oriented-environs/).
1134 Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2006.
to be possessed and used\textsuperscript{1136}. In both cases, the interest in it from a cultural, social, or political perspective was minimal. Therefore, when it comes to this topic, Enlightenment’s style dualistic humanism is “an inadequate analytical philosophy”\textsuperscript{1137}, unable to deal with the issue at hand.

Signaling the end of the centuries-long Cartesian, idealist domination – a domination with which, following Gieseler and Venkatesh (2005), the scholars have been careful not to tamper – the Posthumanist contemporary approaches are calling for radical changes in how we understand what constitutes objecthood\textsuperscript{1138}. These moves appear immediately beside various contemporary philosophical approaches, technology, the other hero of the day, which has profoundly affected the everyday material culture, transforming the objects “\textit{themselves}” into structures that are “new and strange”\textsuperscript{1139}. In which way are they so? Campbell explains: the new kinds of objects are not “\textit{simple}”\textsuperscript{1140}, but increasingly porous, sites of intersection between “material [the hard physical dimension] and non-material [the data] flows”\textsuperscript{1141}. Indeed, contemporary technology helps the objects transcend’ the previously fixed borders of their ‘material existence’. From a tool, the object becomes a “\textit{technomystical}” presence\textsuperscript{1142}.

In short, the ‘old’ defined a type of object that was definite and enduring: one may return to them with the assurance of rediscovering the familiar\textsuperscript{1143}. The ‘new’ object however describes a presence with radically blurred edges, continuously changing and overlapping, becoming increasingly difficult to determine its exact position in space or to associate it with one given task. The ‘familiar’ disappears, leaving in its place the ‘strange’. It is, again, an issue of limits: where are the limits of the new object? From a static, essentialist noun, the object becomes a verb: a relational “field of forces and relations”\textsuperscript{1144}.

Now, the question to be asked here is: are the technological advancements (e.g. the implementation of Radio Frequency Identification Devices within objects\textsuperscript{1145}) and the contemporary philosophical perspectives (e.g. posthumanism, various object-oriented inquiries) really the reasons behind this radical transition? Again, the answer to this question matters greatly because if the response is a negative one it means that the (neo-

\textsuperscript{1136} Giesler and Venkatesh 2005.
\textsuperscript{1137} Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2010: 94.
\textsuperscript{1138} Campbell 2013: 40.
\textsuperscript{1139} Scott 2007: 229.
\textsuperscript{1140} Campbell 2013: 45.
\textsuperscript{1141} Campbell 2013: 45, 46.
\textsuperscript{1142} Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 662; Sherry 2000: 275.
\textsuperscript{1143} Ballard 1976.
\textsuperscript{1144} Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 663.
\textsuperscript{1145} Campbell 2013.
material object of consumption (the de-Form-alized object-as-verb) happens regardless of the technological progress and the inception of the contemporary philosophical paradigms, it being the result of a different set of disruptive forces. This means that the foundation on which the contemporary views rest has already been laid, and my argument in this section is that an important part of this foundation has been set precisely during the Enlightenment – a period defined by a number of thinkers against which the vast majority of the posthuman consumer culture researchers are explicitly positioning themselves. Accordingly, what we experience in cultural and posthuman consumer research is not a shift towards something ‘new’, but rather an expansion of a very specific worldview.

The noun ‘object’ comes from the Latin *obiectum*, a composed word from: *ob* (towards) + *iacio* (to expose, to bring forth into appearance), but also ‘to project as a shadow’, thus an illusory thing.\(^{1146}\)

As in the case of matter, the discussions within the Christian School about what is an object started very early. Because some issues concerning the nature of the de-Form-alized object were already touched upon, in the following I am going to focus my analyses on some later (chronologically speaking) thinkers, such as Kant, Marx, Heidegger and others.

As Heidegger noted in his text *The Thing* (1950), most of us are recognizing scientific knowledge as something compelling and certain, something that tells how the world is. However, albeit immensely popular even between the scientists themselves, approaching it as a generator of certain knowledge gives a very misleading understanding of what science does. As he notes, what science really does is transforming the thing, the object

> “into a nonentity [...] [T]hing as thing remains proscribed, nil, and in that sense annihilated.”\(^{1147}\)

What this means is that since its inception within the Christian School, science has been busy with transforming the pragmatic reality and its objects into nonentities. This happened through the denial of the presence of the Forms within the phenomenal sphere. As I noted earlier, for various Hellenistic philosophers, matter in-itself was appropriately called non-Being, it was an idol and a phantasm. Therefore, as Aristotle noted, matter should never to be addressed in-itself, but always together with its Form-al ‘half’.

\(^{1146}\) [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=iacio&la=la#lexicon](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=iacio&la=la#lexicon)

\(^{1147}\) Heidegger 2001: 168.
Heidegger then continues by noting that the immediate result of this annihilation is that the object’s essence, its nature “remains concealed, forgotten”: it “never comes to light”.\textsuperscript{1148} The object is not what it is in virtue if its Form-al nature, but only by convention, as Ockham would put it.\textsuperscript{1149} Giving the subsequent rise of the artificial perspective (which, we remember, its Latin name was 'perspectiva artificialis' that translates as ‘false’ or ‘illusory’) and the related destruction of the capability of ‘intentional seeing’, the natural scientists cannot observe but only the ‘skin’ (as Florensky put it), or the “nonappearance of the thing”.\textsuperscript{1150} In other words, the only thing than can and should be addressed is the things’ immediate contingent appearance, and never their ousianic essence. Giving this, the object-character, as Heidegger calls it, is only what offers itself as.\textsuperscript{1151}

Kant is important in here because the vast majority of the “new materialists”\textsuperscript{1153} introduce themselves as anti-Kantians. Kant, the essentialist, is the new materialism’s bad boy,\textsuperscript{1154} in the very same way Descartes is for the process-oriented cultural and posthuman consumer culture researchers. The reasons for being considered so are multiple, but most of them have to do with Kant’s notion of noumenon and other transcendental ‘rests’.

It is well known that Kant made a distinction between “die Erscheinung” – the appearance – and “das Ding an sich” – i.e. the thing-in-itself. We might be tempted to say that this looks pretty similar to the Ancient understanding: the Form-al and the phenomenal. They might, but at a closer look we will see that they do not, at all. As Stephen Palmquist shows, one crucial difference rely on the fact that in spite of his use of transcendental-type argumentation, Kant does not believe he can gain any knowledge of the thing-in-itself, of its essence – the existence of which, true, he does not deny.\textsuperscript{1155} Kant always stresses that the essence characterizes something of which

“we cannot have the least cognition”. The Form, or the simple [einfach]\textsuperscript{1156}, remains for us “entirely unknowable.”\textsuperscript{1157}

\textsuperscript{1148} Heidegger 2001: 168.
\textsuperscript{1149} Ockham 1974: 79.
\textsuperscript{1150} Heidegger 2001: 168.
\textsuperscript{1151} Heidegger 2001: 170.
\textsuperscript{1152} This is what Marx will call “objectification as loss of object” (Marx 1992: 386).
\textsuperscript{1153} A term apparently coined by Manuel DeLanda and Rosi Braidotti (Barad 2012: 47).
\textsuperscript{1154} Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012.
\textsuperscript{1155} The ousia is thus an known unknown.
\textsuperscript{1156} Unlike “the sensible composite” (Kant 2004: 299), or the pragma-tic sphere.
\textsuperscript{1157} Kant 2004: 299, 301. See Palmquist 1985: 104.
In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant equates the concept of einfach with that of God, defined as a

“single, simple, all-sufficient, eternal [...] being.”\(^{1158}\)

This seems to respond to an important question: does Kant ever pluralize the einfach?\(^{1159}\) Giving that the einfach is a single, completely separated God, the plural form seems very unlikely. Accordingly, the sensible, i.e. the phenomenal sphere, is not only composite, but it also

“lacks completeness because of the total lack of the simple”\(^{1160}\)

i.e. of the Form-al, one that is both

“outside the whole field of sensory [aesthetic] intuition”\(^{1161}\)

and, as shown, entirely unknowable. Kant’s understanding of the sensible sphere as ‘lacking completeness’ and being devoid of Form links well not only with the Patristic understandings of the issue, but with the views present within the cultural and posthuman consumer culture literature too: objects are not ‘simple’, and the phenomenal sphere is composite and lacks completeness.

Kant thus abides perfectly to the Christian dogma: the simple does not support a plural form, it is unknown and the access to it is denied. The simple is outside not only of the reach of the senses, but also of the mind. As he writes in his text *On a discovery*... (1790), reason

“cannot and should not conceive any simple that would be in them [in the objects in space]\(^{1162}\), from which it follows that even if our senses were infinitely sharpened, it would still have to remain completely impossible for them even to get closer to the simple\(^{1163}\), still less finally to reach it, since it is not to be found in such objects at all. So no recourse remains but to admit that bodies are not things-

\(^{1158}\) Kant 1996: 569, 570.
\(^{1159}\) In the sense that is there more than only one simple – as it was the case with the e.g. Platonic Ideas or the Aristotelian Forms (see Jiménez 2014: 371).
\(^{1160}\) My emph. He reinstates this later again: “in the corporeal world [...] the simple is not to be found in it at all” (Kant 2004: 301).
\(^{1161}\) Kant 2004: 299.
\(^{1162}\) In his *Prolegomena to any future metaphysics*, Kant will describe the “objects in space” as “mere appearances, i.e., not things in themselves” (Kant’ 2004: 83).
\(^{1163}\) This applies to the gadgets too. No matter how sharp the senses, sustained by the gadgets or enhanced at the genetic level, will get, the Form, the ‘within’ will / should still be unreachable.
in-themselves at all, and that their sensory representation, which we denominate corporeal things, is nothing but the appearance of something."

Accordingly, as he noted in his highly influential *Critique of Pure Reason*, although the (refomed) Idea, i.e. the simple, is still kind of there, trying to realize it into an

“appearance [...] is unfeasible and has, moreover, something preposterous and not very edifying about it [...] [T]he good itself that lies in the idea is [...] made suspect and similar to a mere invention.”

So, what in the Hellenistic Schools was a request, a necessity for anyone aspiring to gain certain knowledge, within the Christian School became ‘something preposterous’.

A direct result of such desimplifications (Kant), or annihilations (Heidegger) – I used the plural giving the original plurality of the Forms, i.e. of the ‘primary causes’ – is that when an object becomes unbounded, i.e. when something becomes a commodity, everything that characterizes it (i.e. its unique qualities: blue, thick etc.) gets immediately ‘externalized’, put in front of it, becoming too a perennially deconstructible commodity.

No interior, no immutable “within” should be allowed to exist. Indeed, when Kant addressed the issue of thing-in-itself, he noted that because the thing-in-itself remains entirely unknowable to is,

“[e]verything in an appearance is itself [an] appearance”, however far the understanding may resolve it into its parts.”

As such, a commodity can never exist as a stand-alone structure; can never and should never be uttered in singular. In other words: there is never one commodity, but only multiplicities, flows, endless relations. A commodity is a contradiction in terms, much more so than the absurd construction ‘a commodities’. Thus it might be said that in relation to the act of ‘putting in front of’ we can also say that, in Christianity, all use is abuse: it is putting something in front of itself, in an act of unconditional offering. Indeed, it represents an act of absolution (ab-solve): consuming as abolution.

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1164 Kant 2004: 301.
1165 Kant 1996: 562.
1166 As Deleuze (the great anti-Kantian) put it, the inside is only an operation of the outside.
1167 Kant 2004: 301, 302. There is no end to deconstruction, and there is no essential core beneath those parts. See Basil of Caesarea 1886: 22.
1168 From ab + usus: the practice of putting something in front of itself. It represents an exercise of ex-traction, the performance of an exorcism, similar with the one performed by Christ in Matthew 8:31. To abuse in this sense is to cancel the inside, the ‘within’. It is indeed a violent act that liberates something of its Form-al charge, it is an act of which end is offering forgiveness: ab-solution. Abuse as absolution. The reverse of this would be consuming through sublimation. The term sublimation
The issue of ‘exteriority’ is foundational to Marx’s philosophy. Indeed, Marx builds his entire understanding of subject, labor and commodity on the Christian foundations of the reversed ‘ex’ (ἐκ), i.e. the within / the inward oriented move translated as without / outward move. When Marx defined the subject as a being with its nature outside itself, he had to align to this definition other ones too. At the very beginning of this monumental Capital, he noted that,

“[t]he commodity is, first of all, an external object.”

In other words, a commodity is an object without ‘withins’. Then, he links this view with theology and production:

“The more man puts into God, the less he retains within himself. The worker places his life in the object [...] now it no longer belongs to him, but to the object [...] The externalization [Entäusserung] of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently of him and alien to him.”

Before moving further, a few clarifications should be made in respect to the term ‘entäusserung’. As Pheng Cheah, a leading theorist of cosmopolitanism, shows, in his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Marx praises Hegel for understanding

“the self-production of man as a process, objectification as loss of object [Entgegenständlichung], as externalization [Entäusserung] and as sublation of this externalization.”

comes from sub + limen and might be translated as ‘going for the limit within’. The tension between the inward-oriented sub- and the outward-oriented ab- is a central one within the Christian School.

1171 Separate, not separable.
1173 The right type of objectification is the loss of object (i.e. of its essence, nature, or thingliness), in the same way the Foucauldian ‘care of the self’ is the annihilation of the self, and the Deleuzian ‘becoming’ is the un-becoming. Indeed, as Agamben noted, for Foucault, the ultimate goal of self-fashioning is the complete dispossession or annihilation of the essential self (psyche): “the art of living is to destroy identity, to destroy psychology” (Vacarme 2004: 117). Deleuze himself describes Foucault’s subjectivisation as the disintegration of the subject so that neither persons nor identities survive (Culp 2015). When it comes to Deleuze’s much-celebrated notion of becoming, as Andrew Culp shows, it “has nothing to do with ‘subjects developing into more of themselves’. Becoming is really a process of un-becoming, a process that works to “undo the stabilities of identity, knowledge, location, and being” (Culp 2015). My emph.
Now, ‘entäusserung’ has been translated in mainly two ways: either as “alienation”, or as “externalization”. Cheah translates it by *externalization*, and I believe that in this particular context this choice renders better the original meaning of the phrase. The human, and everything else within the phenomenal sphere, produces itself as a process only, e.g. as a completely non-Form-al structure. There is *nothing* beneath these processes of ‘self’ –production: no model, no design (i.e. no ‘ought to be’) to be discovered and, accordingly, no direction to be followed. It is this continuous externalization that will eventually be assimilated, becoming the identity-as-verb of the subject. The problem with the term ‘alienation’ is that suggests an estrangement from an origin, from an autochthonous place the subject once occupied, about which it had certain knowledge, to which it belonged and craves to go back to. From a first-degree truth’s perspective, that is indeed a very problematic kind of identity.

Going back to Marx’s quote about the worker placing his life into the object, I should also note that, while being absolutely right, Marx stops there, not allowing the object-as-thing to became, in its turn, an object of: is not just the worker that have to *give itself*, that have to *lay down for*, unconditionally, but the recipient of his labour has *to do the very same*. In other words, the recipient has to *lay down for* another too – as God himself did it. Marx’s undersanding of God in that particular context is thus quite problematic from a dogmatic point of view. It is only through this chain-offering (so to speak) that the fetishization of the laborer (human or non-human), the labor (physical or virtual), and the commodity (tangible or intangible) will be prevented. Nobody is entitled to keep for himself the fruits of his hands. But Marx does not go that far. Because of the presence of this ‘rest’, things turn out badly. Refusing, in its turn, to *lay down for*, the recipient (which can be anything, from a human CEO to an AI, an object (a smart phone) or a company / brand)

“begins to confront [the worker] as an autonomous [essential] power; that the life which he has bestowed on the object confronts him [the worker] as hostile and alien.”

What is interesting in here is that the receiver of the psyche mirrors itself onto the giver. What it sees is a non-relational, abstracted autonomous structure that occupies a within, refusing to became, in its turn, an exterior, an object of. As such, life-within, or life-unoffered

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1175 Boer 2010; Cheah 2003.
1176 In John 3:16 we are told that God *gives away* His Son. The verb used in here is ‘didómi’ (δίδωµι), which defines a sacrificial offer to the Gods.
1177 Barack Obama addressed the issue directly, noting that unbreakable encryption is “fetishizing our phones above every other value and that can’t be the right answer” (McGarry 2016).
becomes hostile, violent, idolatrous. It starts resembling too much the pagan painful, violent experiences of the sublime, a terroristic, all subsuming and all-embracing ontology\textsuperscript{1179}. This situation looks like those dystopian apocalyptical scenarios in which non-relational gadgetry rise up, in an always hostile manner, against humanity. We should not forget however Nicholas Gane’s point that this endless lay down for represents nothing but a violent assault on the symbolic order\textsuperscript{1180}, a performance of self-exorcism in which nothing is supposed to remain within.

To conclude, what I was trying to show in this section was that the fact that the field of consumer research is still missing a ‘theory of the consumption object itself’ is not due to the inexistence of such a theory through which the object-as-noun became object-as-verb. Ironically enough, the current foundation for such a theory was laid by no one else but the much-hated Enlightenment thinkers. Giving that without the Form-al side, the object enters into a Messianic non-here / non-there, into the kinetic utopia, becoming a ‘playful object’\textsuperscript{1181}, what the posthuman consumer culture thinkers are doing is only cleaning up the ‘rests’ still present and – while keeping the applicability of such views to the humanity as a whole intact. Therefore, the notion of object they propose is not ‘new’, in terms of onto-epistemological shifts, or radical transitions. They are not only not going away from the humanistic and modernist fundamental assumptions about the nature of the object and matter, but while they are taking these views along with them, they are also moving towards the dogmatic core of the Christian School by cleaning these views up from the problematic ‘rests’ that are still present in them. Therefore, Enlightenment’s style humanism remains not only an adequate philosophical tool perfectly able to deal with the issue of objecthood, but it also remains the only analytical philosophy able to do so.

The nature of the object has changed, indeed\textsuperscript{1182} – for starters, it does not have a nature anymore – but not because of the reasons the cultural and posthuman consumer theorists might think.

\textsuperscript{1179} Lyotard and Thébaud 1985: 62; Docherty 1996: 62.
\textsuperscript{1180} Gane 2002: 139.
\textsuperscript{1181} I recognize that the notion ‘playful object’ is problematic, in the same way Huizinga’s ‘playful human’ is too. Giving the Form-al absence from the phenomenal sphere, it became impossible (not “difficult” [Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2010: 94]) to assign the object to the side of the human or the side of the nonhuman (Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2010: 94).
\textsuperscript{1182} Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2010: 95.
2.8 The de-Form-alized science of the Christian School

As I noted in the discussion concerning the role of matter and sense perception within various Hellenistic Schools, for someone like Aristotle, science was about the certain and evident apprehension of the Truth. As he noted in various places, we have certain knowledge when we know, through the mediation of the senses, the final cause of an accident. Therefore, the focus of a philosopher or scientist is always on the Form, i.e. on the final cause ‘behind’ or within the fluctuating phenomena, and never on the phenomena themselves. Indeed, according to the same philosopher, there is no science of the accidental, of the matter in-itself: in order to have certain knowledge about anything, “we must obtain knowledge of the primary causes”\(^{1183}\). Accordingly, everything that is defined by a primary cause will have a science.

There is an interesting conundrum present within the Posthumanist field, having to do mainly with the way we read the label: on the one hand, through its commitment to progress and other features\(^{1184}\), the Posthuman-ist movement introduces itself as something firmly established within the Western scientific tradition. On the other hand, the one thing the Posthuman-ities (understood as an otherwise very heterogeneous group of ‘Studies’) seem to have in common is the move against or beyond the ‘narrow’ views of the Cartesian humanism and other onto-epistemological discourses that have been dominating both the natural and social sciences for so long. Therefore, the posthuman-ities can be seen as occupying an anti-scientific position, one that addresses critically the perceived core assumptions of the dominant scientific narrative: the search for and the subsequent uncovering of a universal Truth. It is within this latter framework that most of the cultural, interpretivist, and posthuman consumer culture research situates itself. Indeed, the researchers working in these areas are quite clear in pointing out that ‘there are no final answers to the traditional questions about ‘knowledge’, ‘truth’, and ‘representation.’ In a declared move against “the Cartesian representationalist framework”, some are suggesting that such questions should be banned altogether from the inquiries regarding the cyborgian consumer and society\(^{1185}\), while others are showing their animosity and postmodern incredulity towards various Modernist concepts – e.g.

\(^{1183}\) Aristotle 1933: 17.
\(^{1184}\) More 1990.
\(^{1185}\) Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 662.
truth – by putting them in quotation marks, e.g. “truth”1186. Descartes and other representatives of the “modernist sensibility”1187 are thus to be left behind, and new posthumanist approaches, that stay “in contrast”1188 with the Cartesian / humanistic / dualistic ones, having to be envisioned and created.

Giving all this, the question is a twofold one:

- how can the issue of ‘certain knowledge’, thus truth, survive within a de-Form-alized worldview?
- are the current moves within the posthuman consumer culture field really against Descartes – and science, more generally – or are they embodying and reinforcing a more dogmatically correct view on how a scientific approach should actually be conducted?

The short answer to the first question is: it cannot. Just two years after Kepler had gone to print with his *Astronomia nova* (1609), the English clergyman John Donne published a poem called *An Anatomy of the World* (1611). In here, Donne expresses anxiety about the effects of the ‘new philosophy’:

"And New Philosophy calls all in doubt,  
The element of fire is quite put out;  
...  
‘Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;  
All just supply, and all relation."

This fragment from Donne’s poem shades light on a few issues that characterize the new approaches to various sciences in respect to the old ones – astronomy being only one example from a rather long list1191. The first thing that drives our attention is the direct association between the ‘new philosophy’ and the notion of uncertainty: certain knowledge has no place within the new philosophy. There are a few reasons for that, all visible within those few lines. As Donne notes, the ‘intentional seeing’ (the

1186 Campbell 2007.
1189 Considered to be “arguably the greatest poet of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries” (Bernstein 1997: 175-176).
1191 The adjective ‘new’ (nova) – used in order to express the position these views occupied in relation to the old (vetus), i.e. classical, mostly Hellenistic ones – is visible in titles covering issues from logic to mechanics and much more. Some examples: Ramon Llull’s *Logica nova* (1432), Sébastien Leclerc’s *Nova geometria practica* (1692), Bernhard Perger’s *Grammatica nova* (1485) etc.
“fire”1192, in Donne’s words, i.e. the fiery rays poured forth through the organ of sight, about which Chrysippus was writing) was ‘put out’: being able to reach the thing in-itself cannot happen within a de-Form-alized worldview. Now, the ‘out’ could be understood in two ways: as being pushed from within, without, thus being assigned to an external source, or as being got extinguished altogether. Either way, accessing the essences of things, i.e. the Aristotelian primary causes, becomes impossible. Another important point Donne is making is that with the Forms gone, the succession and order of principles made visible in the Great Chain of Being went ‘all in pieces’, leaving behind a relational-only setting.

These few lines from Donne’s poem are extremely important if we want to understand the foundations of Western science – foundations which, if we are to follow some original sources, might look quite different from the usual narratives we are getting from the posthuman consumer culture literature. With very interesting implications and consequences.

As I noted in the main Introduction to this work, one reason for introducing, however succinctly, the Hellenistic takes on various issues is that it will help us understanding against what kind of views the Christian School stands against. Without such clarifications, some claims or positions that characterize exclusively the Christian worldview would escape us. An immediate result of this would be that instead of being approached as products of the Christian School itself, certain statements or positionings will be understood as either views that go against the mentioned School, or as alternatives that stay ‘in contrast’ to the received views under modernist thinking.

We know now the Aristotelian views on the scientific endeavor: certain knowledge equals knowledge of the primary or final causes. But that was the Hellenistic, polytheistic world. Within the Christian School, the Forms, or the final causes, have to be hunted down and banished from everywhere, including the scientific practice. And they were. According to Descartes,

"It is not the final but the efficient causes of created things that we must inquire into. [W]e shall entirely banish from our philosophy the search for final causes."1193

The main reason for such a ban, as he explains, is that God is the only efficient cause. Giving however that we can never know God in His entirety, we should seek

“what conclusions should be drawn concerning those effects which are apparent to our senses.”\textsuperscript{1194}

As the French theologian Nicolas Malebranche noted repeatedly in his magnum opus The Search after Truth (1674-1675),

“natural causes are not true causes [...] There is [...] only one single true God and one single cause that is truly a cause, and one should not imagine that what precedes an effect is its true cause. God cannot even [directly] communicate His power to creatures [...] He cannot make true causes of them. He cannot make them gods.”\textsuperscript{1195}

Malebranche radically denies the multitude of divine, existing-in-themselves, eternal Hellenistic Forms, ones existing within the sphere of becoming. As many other Church thinkers, he considers God as the only ‘single cause that is truly a cause’, the only thing that exists with necessity. Everything else is a derivative, empty contingency with no meaning in itself whatsoever. However, Malebranche is very aware that there can never be only One true cause, unless it is completely separate from the sphere of becoming, thus inaccessible in itself. There can be no other true causes except this one: that will introduce a plurality into the divine essence, bringing back the Hellenistic paganism.

What all this has to do with science? Giving that the true causes are and should be out of touch, it means that the interest of science moves from essences to phenomena only. This also represents a change in directionality: science stops being concerned with the Form-al within, and start focusing exclusively towards the outsides. What we call today ‘science’ is not only monotheistic at its core, but it represents a form of Christianity that is the closest to the dogmatic core of the School.

One main reason why people are inclined to be misled by abstract terms as used in physics or other natural sciences is that they think that the natural scientists are concerned with finding and then exposing the true efficient causes of phenomena. This is a mistake the vast majority of the qualitative researchers are making, not realizing that the ‘realism’ behind the quantitative approaches has nothing to do with the Hellenistic to on (τὸ ὄν) / ta onta (τὰ ὄντα). As Bishop George Berkeley, one of the central figures of the Enlightenment, pointed out, science (in ‘both’ its incarnations: qualitative and quantitative) has to remove itself as far as possible from essential issues. As such,

\textsuperscript{1194} Descartes 1985: 202.  
\textsuperscript{1195} Malebranche 1997: 449, 451.
“the concern of the physicist or mechanician [is] to consider only the rules, not the efficient [final] causes [...] and from the established laws to assign the solution of a particular phenomenon, but not an efficient cause.”¹¹⁹⁶

The Utilitarian thinker John Stuart Mill, deemed as “the most influential English-speaking philosopher of the 19th century”¹¹⁹⁷, in his 1865 book *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, noted that

“[t]he fundamental doctrine of a true philosophy, according to Comte [...] is the following: - We have no knowledge of anything but Phænomena; and our knowledge of phænomena is relative, not absolute. We know not the essence [...] of any fact, but only its relations to other facts in the way of succession or of similitude. These relations are constant; that is, always the same in the same circumstances. The constant resemblances which link phænomena together, and the constant sequences which unite them as antecedent and consequent, are termed their laws. The laws of phænomena are all we know [...] Their essential nature, and their ultimate causes, either efficient or final, are unknown and inscrutable to us.”¹¹⁹⁸

According to the father of positivism himself, i.e. Comte, it is

“absolutely inaccessible and senseless for us to search for what is called the causes, be they primary or final causes”¹¹⁹⁹

The main idea here is that the dogmatic interdiction not to look for essences applies equally to the qualitative, and to the quantitative approaches. When the qualitative researchers are criticizing quantitatively-oriented scholars for looking for truth(s) or for making truth claims, they are reinstating the dogmatic percept to never look for final causes. The temptation is that when the quantitative researchers / natural scientists are abstracting certain elements from the ‘constant sequences’ of the phenomena, they might start approaching these laws as truth(s) in-themselves. Against such temptations, philosophers of science such as Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn designed specific methodological devices. Their well-known divergences aside, both Popper and Kuhn were absolutely right: the claims, hypotheses, or theories have to be falsifiable (Popper)¹²⁰⁰.

¹¹⁹⁹ As quoted in Voegelin 1975: 164.
¹²⁰⁰ According to Popper, in order to be ranked as scientific, statements or systems of statements must be capable of conflicting with observations (Popper 2002: 51).
the paradigms have to change (Kuhn). Accordingly, all knowledge is / should be provisional and conjectural, thus radically contingent. No formal immutability allowed. The qualitative fields are not exempt from criticism either. It is true that they are distancing themselves as much as they can not only from ‘truth claims’, but also from those situations that can generate such claims too. More often than not however, problems arise when notions that are getting too close to ‘core’ understandings or problematic directionalities (i.e. inward ones) are applied and defended. Between these, there are certain understandings of agency (ones that are anthropocentric, or too close to intentionality), or the presence of approaches such as introspection, auto-ethnography and related methodologies – which, although already reformed, are still containing problematic ‘rests’ referring to essence (self) and direction (inward).

Of course, Popper and Kuhn’s views in these areas were and are criticized and continuously deconstructed, but this only proves their point: the only trustful Popper, or Kuhn, is a wrong Popper, or an obsolete Kuhn. And, if we consider Kuhn’s views as describing in themselves a paradigm (the paradigm where we approach science as the result of shifts between paradigms), then abandoning them in favor of another (and then of another, and so on and on) would be the only normal thing to do. In the moment their views are approached are being true, they will become unscientific, metaphysical.

1201 Which are, in the end, “systems of statements” (Popper 2002: 51).
1202 Stephen 2015.
1203 By following a nominalist path, thus radicalizing the contingency of the world even more: not only do we not know the essences, but in addition, we cannot make sense of the ‘constant resemblances which link phenomena together’ either. The nominalists could not but object to any attempt to see God symbolized in nature. The order of nature was, in their eyes, utterly contingent upon God’s will (Funkenstein 1989: 57). Such approaches reverberate in the views shared today by thinkers such as e.g. Quentin Meillassoux. For Meillassoux, radical contingency is the one and only universal necessity (Shaviro 2015), something visible in the subtitle of his seminal book After Finitude (2006): An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency.
1204 Both presupposing an inward move. Gould describes introspection as a “research process recounted as an inward process” (Gould 2011: 4).
1205 In his 2011 piece, Gould offers a list of forms introspection can take: researcher introspection, subjective personal introspection, reflexivity, self-reflexivity, introspectionism, autoethnography, auto-nethnography, narrative introspection (also storied), metacognitive introspection, meditative introspection, systematic self-observation, self-experimentation, spiritual, and synthetic introspection (Gould 2011: 4).
1206 For instance, Kuhn’s views can be seen as problematic because they are following a progressive (yet, non-teleological) understanding of science: “The net result of a sequence of such revolutionary selections, separated by periods of normal research, is the wonderfully adapted set of instruments we call modern scientific knowledge. Successive stages in that developmental process are marked by an increase in articulation and specialization [...] And the entire process may have occurred, as we now suppose biological evolution did, without benefit of a set goal” (Kuhn 2012: 171). See also https://aeon.co/videos/falsification-ruled-20th-century-science-does-it-need-revision-in-the-21st
Through Popper's apophatic method we can only establish the falsity\textsuperscript{1207} of a statement or system of statements, but never its / their truth\textsuperscript{1208}.

In one of their studies, Campbell, Driscoll, and Saren introduce the posthuman, the cyborg as being “not an Enlightenment-style project”\textsuperscript{1209}. Following the above presentation, I found it very difficult to perceive the cyborg – i.e. the non-Formal, the purely phenomenal, always-becoming structure, never completed, and carrying no meaning in-itself – as anything else but an Enlightenment-style project. Such a creature could have never existed within a Hellenistic understanding of reality, or any other Formal type of reality for that matter. This also responds to the second question I asked at the beginning of this section: are the current moves within the postmodern marketing, cultural, interpretivist and posthuman consumer culture fields really against Descartes, and science more generally, or are they embodying and reinforcing a more dogmatically correct view on how a scientific approach should actually be conducted? As in the case of the ‘linear perspective’, what it comes to the fundamental rules of the scientific inquiry, those scholars who are readily introducing themselves as anti-humanist or anti-Cartesian are following Descartes and other Enlightenment thinkers to the letter, while going against the views that are at odds with the first-degree truths of the Christian School – e.g. the Hellenistic ones or the ‘rests’ presents within the Enlightenment thinkers themselves. As mentioned, these kinds of dynamics are quite difficult to be understood without knowing against what kind of views the Christian School positioned and positions itself. Without such clarifications, positions like the elimination of limits through the denial of the first causes will be perceived as alternatives that stay ‘in contrast’ to the received views under modernist thinking. Accordingly, even though for the qualitative researchers ‘positivism’ is considered to be the ultimate evil, one greater than ‘humanism’, their allegiance to some of Comte’s fundamental views on science and other areas is strong without doubt. It is only by following the dogmatically correct positivist and the Enlightenment views that a non-humanistic cyborgian space could be opened.

Before moving on, let me conclude this section by emphasizing one more aspect related to the current discussion. The dogmatically imposed criticism of the “final causes” – in their various expressions, i.e. as “rests” (within the Christian School), or as totalities (within other Schools) – represents the very foundation on which the scientific method stands. As Descartes pointed out, conclusions should be drawn only from those things which are apparent to our senses. This means that all the other issues which are

\textsuperscript{1207} The investigator can test the truth of “his theory only by trying to refute it” (Popper 2002: 55). Thus, apophatically. To paraphrase Michel Segre, science is ultimately nothing more than an infinite series of mistakes’ (Segre 2011-2012: 62).

\textsuperscript{1208} Popper 2002: 444.

\textsuperscript{1209} Campbell, O'Driscoll, and Saren 2010: 91.
not (i.e. God, the place of the ‘innate ideas’ within the mind) do not enter under the concern of science. However, those approaching him critically are bringing them under the scientific scrutiny too. Giving that, according to some, Descartes’ notion of mind is kept in high esteem by the ‘positivist’ consumer researchers\textsuperscript{1210}, those who are taking the responsibility for eliminating such a ‘rest’ are those positioning themselves against the scientific realism and representationalism, i.e. the qualitative / postmodern / non-representationalist / anti-historicist scholars. The irony here is priceless. When Descartes makes his way into their analyses\textsuperscript{1211}, what usually gets under attack are not his scientific views on optics or mathematics (as probably expected), but those issues that, according to his own views, should not be discussed in there in the first place. What this shows, however, is that those ‘rests’ should not be allowed to survive under any circumstances, the war against them being waged precisely by those who are preaching on openness, and anti-dogmatism. Everything is permitted, only as long as it is not substantial (in the Hellenistic sense). In other words, the task of purifying science of all that is spurious and dross is taken (also) by those who are positioning themselves, sometimes very vocally, against the scientific positivism. All this also shows why is it fundamental not to put equivalence between the Christian School and the Church. As I briefly noted in the section on Membership, there is no need for someone to be a member of the Church in order to follow the dogmatic percepts of the School. Which means that in case of dogmatic wrongdoings, those found culpable of such misconduct will be sanctioned by their own peers (the radical / critical thinkers) – no matter what their actual faith (or the lack of it) is.

\textsuperscript{1210} Giesler and Venkatesh 2005 are writing about the ‘sacrosanct’ and ‘essential’ status mind has for the positivist consumer researchers.

\textsuperscript{1211} I am referring here specifically to the posthuman consumer culture literature, but the issue can be extended over the much larger area of the cultural and interpretivist consumer research fields.
**2.9 Separating the ‘evil’: Posthumanism and the issue of ‘good society’**

“Don’t be evil”

- Google corporate motto

As I put it earlier, if someone would ask me to define the immense diversity of the Hellenistic worldviews in one word, I would say: equilibrium. Keeping everything in balance was the very function of a ruler, i.e. the guardian, or the protector of justice. The balance was, of course, between the Good and the ‘evil’, any excess in whatever part being prone to raise the anger of various Divinities of the Limit, e.g. Nemesis. Indeed, even assigning to oneself or to his / her subjects (if we are talking about a ruler) more Good and less evil was an example of injustice. No wonder then that one term used to describe the notion of injustice was the verb *adikeó* (ἀδικέω): to breach the law by disturbing the balance. As we have also seen, the Hellenistic Gods were represented by a ‘double’ structure: a Form-al one, and a pragma-tic one. For instance, there was Aphrodite Ourania and Aphrodite Pandemos. In the same way, there was Eros the God of the Cosmos, the one that kept everything together in perfect order and balance, and Eros of the sublunary sphere of becoming, the one that brought pain, rage and catastrophic wars. The Goddess Tyche was represented with a rudder (signifying the one guiding the fate of the world) and with a ball (in order to suggest the pragma-tic ephemerality and phenomenal unsteadiness). Various Hellenistic thinkers described the balanced observance of natural limits through statements such as ‘observe the measure’, ‘moderation is best’, or ‘nothing in excess’. The virtue of temperance was also an expression of these worldviews. The main point here is that the question of ‘evil’ was never to be approached in-itself, but never excluded either. All this changed within the Christian School where from being a necessary presence (as it was in some Hellenistic views), ‘evil’ became a problem.

Covering the issue of evil within Christianity in a few lines is, obviously, an impossible task. What is important to note for the time being is that, within the Christian School, the notion of “evil” (exemplified through sickness, death etc.) looses its necessary place. Arguably one of the most known and most spoken prayers on the planet, the
Lord’s Prayer, ends with the petition: “deliver us from the evil” (Matthew 6:13). Towards the end of the Book of Revelation, we are told that “the devil [...] was thrown into the lake of fire” (Book of Revelation 20:10). A new world, one without evil and death, mourning and pain, will rise, and that will be a world from “which the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

In one of his Letters, the Apostle Paul equated evil with the old self or nature (Colossians 3:9). Giving the link, the Apostle indorsed that one should completely abandon this old self, suggesting that one can (and should) function without any reference to the kakós. Some Church Fathers (from Gregory of Nyssa to Augustine, John of Damascus, Aquinas and so on), approached the issue of evil in an apparently very similar manner to the way in which it was by the pagan philosophers: as something that has no Being in itself. However, the difference here is that the kakós not only is not, but should not be informed by agathos anymore. Whereas the Good gets retranslated from being a Form to being a God’s uncreated energy, the evil remains something that populates, or informs only interiors. Indeed, a very powerful reversal took place: what was previously within (the divine in-itself Form-ative, bounding principle) gets pushed outside, whereas the unlimitedness, the shapeless becoming starts to occupy the inside, the within.

Without going into further detail, what all this means in relation to our theme here is that the world and its members (humans, objects etc.) can – and should – exist without kakós (in whatever form this evil might unfold). Being completely separate, the issue of working with, or working through kakós (and by necessity so, as Plotinus put it) in order to reach the Good (i.e. the God’s uncreated energy) became superfluous.

To conclude in two lines, whereas various Hellenistic schools presupposed the necessary existence of both good and evil, hence the notion of equilibrium that permeated their views on various issues, the Christian School denies the necessity of evil altogether, urging its followers to go against all its manifestations. The equilibrium is no more, the Christian scale has one single arm.

Now, what is considered as being evil within the Posthumanist movement? Let us start with the biggest one: death. Max More, in his piece Transhumanism: Towards a futurist philosophy (1990), calls death, “the greatest evil”, one that has to be completely abolished from the world. Another leading Posthumanist, Nick Bostrom, in his The Fable of the Dragon-Tyrant (2005), represented death as a thoroughly evil, giant dragon
(interestingly, a hybrid creature) that tyrannizes the planet and has to be eliminated – as, in the end, it was, through the common work of the entire human race. Another evil on the Posthumanist list is aging. Aubrey de Grey, one of the leading voices on human life extension, speaks about unleashing a ‘crusade against aging’, a crusade that has to be accelerated in order to completely eliminate ‘our oldest foe’: aging. Scarcity, thus poverty, are present too, featuring preeminently among other evils to be ended.

What happens into these accounts is that a specific understanding of evil gets naturalized. It is thus not the responsibility of only one culture to recognize and face these evils, but of the entire human race. In Bostrom’s account, the dragon terrorized the entire planet, not only one culture or one society. Death, understood in a certain way, became everybody’s problem. In other words, the war against death – in which the whole world should engage – is a war against a certain type of death, and that type only. The same, of course, applies to aging, poverty (understood as the lack of access to a certain amount of material possessions or financial resources) and other evils. The end goal of these Posthumanist aspirations is

“to achieve a positive-sum society and freedom from suffering, bodily and material constraints, mortality and limited intelligence.”

As in the case of the war against the metanarratives, every type of G/good that does not conforms to the standard dogmatic specifications of the Christian School, becomes immediately an evil that should be banned and eliminated. An example of this could be seen in pursuing forms of good that are retaining the Form-al side (be it completely, or as rests), e.g. sacrificial goods.

Obviously, when kakós was only separable, its unfoldings, however unpleasant, served as means for learning or discovery: there was always a reason, a logos, i.e. a meaning behind the association between the pragma-tic kakós and the Form-al agathos – these two being indeed the two ‘halves’ that made the súmbolon click. If we are to compare the situation here with the linguistic one, if agathos was the noun, then the kakós was the verb. But with agathos being approached by the Christian School as separate, sufferance, illness, pain or any other type of perceived evil does not play the role of a ‘necessary half’

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1216 de Grey and Rae 2007: ix, x, 14.
1217 Kurzweil 2005.
1218 The end of some biological functions understood from a mechanistic point of view.
1220 E.g. those Goods that express themselves as / through Sacrifices, essential or Form-al ones etc.
anymore. Although the issue survived\footnote{Especially in the popular expression of Christianity, but not only, the belief that there is meaning in suffering, pain, and death – a meaning which, however, remains a “mystery often inscrutable to reason” (O’Rourke and Boyle 2011: 201) and known only to God – still holds very strong. See Larchet 2002.}, it does not mean that it is also a correct one from a purely dogmatic point of view.

What I tried to address in this section is the fact that the Posthumanist worldview, following the dogmatic structure of the Christian School, argues for the gradual implementation of ‘a positive-sum society’, one in which ‘evil’ has no place. The concept of evil is understood in a non-metaphysical way, i.e. death means ‘biological death’, poverty means ‘lack of financial / material resources’ etc. This also means that this particular notion of ‘evil’ includes all the understandings of good that are either based on full Form-al totalities, or are infected with “rests”, e.g. various traditional practices that are central to a group’s identity.

2.10 ‘Thou shalt be connected!’: a Christian perspective on the issue of connectivity

In their study on the relationship between the body and technological gadgetry, Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder (2010) mention one print advertisement made by Ericsson for its mobile phones line. It features a human body with blue skin onto which glowing electronic circuits are etched. According to the paper’s authors, the image seems to speak

“to the intertwining of the biological body and the digital era’s non-biological circuitry, encouraging consumers to view the mobile phone as a means of connecting one’s body to the digital network – thus becoming a cyborg.”\footnote{Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 640-641.}

The issue of connectivity is central within the Posthumanist literature, being regarded as one of the fundamental issues on which the cyborg is based: indeed, to be a cyborg means to be able to connect and to allow connections. This is the “hybrid marketplace matrix”\footnote{Interestingly, Giesler and Venkatesh (2005) never use the plural matrices.} where there are no (or should not be) one-way streets: everything responds to nonlinear feedback loops\footnote{Campbell 2013: 44-45.} from anything else. Piercing into and being
pierced by, merging and disjoining with other systems: all that exists is ‘bound fast at the infinite crossroads’. All this signals the dawn of “a new language” about life itself, a “fundamental change in thinking”\textsuperscript{1225}. Accordingly, being disconnected means to ‘withdraw’ into a ‘within’, it means entering into a “paranoid-narcissistic-self-nexus”\textsuperscript{1226}. Therefore, entering and remaining into a “dynamic web of interconnections or hybrid contaminations”\textsuperscript{1227} is the way to become. Only by being connected one can be playful, a nomad, a flâneur in the No-Stop City: the New Babylon. There are only two excuses for disconnection. The first responds to the question: getting disconnected from what? The answer: from the Pauline ‘old human’, from the Form-al nature, from the essential self. As the Posthumanist author David Roden shows, the connection does not happen between essences or kinds, and thus every disconnection understood this way is an anti-essentialist move: a move away from the toxicity of Forms\textsuperscript{1228}. The second excuse for disconnecting is for getting too attached to a certain connection, thus starting to fetishize it, to idolatrize it, hence to approach it as an essence.

But is technology the one to be credited for the existence of these ‘metamorphings’ and cruise ‘effortlessly and seamlessly’ through de-Form-alized ontologies – as many authors seems to suggest\textsuperscript{1229} In other words, are technology and the Posthumanist paradigms something more than simple ‘channels of distribution’ or ‘enablers’, elements facilitating the spread of something much more elusive and powerful? What I am trying to show in the following is that the above analyzes do not signal an opening towards the new, the different, and the alternative. The pluralization of certain concepts – e.g. “paradigms”\textsuperscript{1230} – defines only polarizations, them being based on an yet another Christian School’s imposition. If in various Hellenistic worldviews substance preceded relation, within the Christian School it is the other way around: the phenomenal potentiality precedes the Form-al actuality. This is indeed ‘a new language’, but this language is not one of the technologically-powered future, but of the Christian dogma.

As John Zizioulas, one of the most influential Orthodox theologians noted, to be = to be in relation.\textsuperscript{1231} Or, if we are to translate this into today’s terminology, to be = to be connected. Keeping people connected / hyperconnected through different gadgets is a way of preventing them from being (noun), while keeping them becoming (verb), perennially.

\textsuperscript{1225} Campbell 2007: 4.
\textsuperscript{1226} Braidotti 2006: 205.
\textsuperscript{1227} Braidotti 2006: 199.
\textsuperscript{1228} Roden 2012: 284, 289.
\textsuperscript{1229} Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010: 642; Giesler and Venkatesh 2005, Campbell and Saren 2010.
\textsuperscript{1230} Campbell 2007: 11.
\textsuperscript{1231} Zizioulas 1985: 87, 88.
The new has to be always new, the playing cyborg can never stop playing. Being connected in this way becomes a way of avoiding identifying as, instead of identifying with, from going inward instead of outward.

According to Aristotle, as he noted in his *Metaphysics*, “actuality is prior to all potentiality”\(^\text{1232}\). Therefore, the essence, the Form, the perfectly realized of something that contingently offers itself as (a house, a human etc.) is already present in that contingency, prior to our interaction with it. In other words, the Form is to be discovered, brought forth out of concealment and into the unconcealment, as Heidegger put it.

Now, the Church thinker Dionysius the Areopagite (5th century AD), usually regarded as a great proponent of hierarchical order\(^\text{1233}\), seems to have completely reversed the Hellenistic ‘actuality precedes potentiality’ model: now, relation precedes Being, relation creates Being / beings. As he noted in his highly influential text *On the Divine Names*,


“it is relation that saves and creates Being.”\(^\text{1234}\)

In other words, now it is contingency who ‘makes’, to use Heidegger’s term, actuality. This is indeed a radical reversal, one with powerful and irreversible implications. A direct result of this reversal is that now it is another that bestows, that gifts authenticity to an object; in other words, authenticity or meaning, the logos, is never there to be discovered (through the senses, acts of contemplation and ‘saving the appearances’ techniques), but it is always constructed, thus deconstructible. But, as it usually happens, the dogmas fall into the background, leaving their imposition as the responsibility of thinkers that apparently are going against them.

According to Kevin Attell, ‘potentiality over actuality’ represents a heterodox position, initiated by Agamben (the same thinker who apparently initiated the call for the end of the Sacrifices too). Indeed, as Attell noted, one of the fundamental goals of Agamben’s work was

“to reconfigure the traditional hierarchy that Western philosophy has established between actuality and potentiality”\(^\text{1235}\)

\(^{1232}\) Modified translation from Aristotle 1933: 454, 455; Stein 2002: 221.

\(^{1233}\) He authored two treatises called *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Based on these two, an enormous body of literature had spawned, detailing on the strict hierarchical structure of the world as divinely ordained. See Louth 1989.

\(^{1234}\) As quoted in Manoussakis 2007: 170.

\(^{1235}\) Attell 2011: 17.
Obviously, this ‘reconfiguration’ was not initiated by Agamben, and has nothing to do with neither ‘Western philosophy’, nor with some heterodox positions. In fact, it represents a very dogmatically-correct approach to the issue.

Millennia after Dionysius, Deleuze will reinstate again dogmatic reversal in saying that

“[r]elations are not internal to a Whole; rather, the Whole is derived from the external relations of a given moment [the context], and varies with them. Relations [...] must be invented everywhere, and are the very condition of evolution.”

The Christian reversal of potentiality over actuality will become the fundamental tenet of the Existentialist movement, most notably in Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, being expressed through the trope “existence precedes essence”\(^{1237}\). According to Sartre, a representative of the ‘atheistic existentialism’,

“existential philosophy is above all a philosophy which says that existence precedes essence”\(^{1238}\)

Accordingly,

“man first of all exists [pragmatically] [...] and defines himself afterwards.”\(^{1239}\)

Nonetheless, Sartre was not the author of the reversal either – as Heidegger seems to believe\(^{1240}\). For de Beauvoir, one “is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”\(^{1241}\).

Unsurprisingly, the claim made its way into the writings of some leading Posthumanist thinkers, such as Donna Haraway (1992) and Rosi Braidotti (1994). It is thus this understanding of connectivity, and this one only, that gets embraced (in endlessly ‘new’ expressions, forms, and purifications) by the process-oriented scholars and then extended over all other views.

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\(^{1236}\) Deleuze 1998: 59.


\(^{1238}\) Sartre 1948: 58.


\(^{1240}\) Heidegger 1998: 250.

\(^{1241}\) de Beauvoir 1953: 273.
The desire to connect understood in this way starts to define the humanity as a whole, providing the very definition of what does it mean to be human. As Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, stated in a manifesto,

"the need to open up and connect is what makes us human [...] It's what brings meaning to our lives."\(^{1242}\)

Now, all the other views on connectivity that do not follow this understanding ought to be annihilated. Additionally, all the residual elements, the ‘rests’, present within the Christian view are to be continuously identified, sanctioned and banned. If thinkers such as Sartre, Deleuze, Agamben and many others function as ‘channels of distribution’ of the aforementioned Christian dogmatic views, technology does the same thing. The pragmatic, contextual expressions of this dogma can and should be endlessly diverse: countless types of connectivity platforms are sprouting out like mushrooms, each of them focused on specific themes, promoting different topics, practices of consumption, brands, types of empowerment and authenticity etc. Nonetheless, if things are getting too much in the dogmatically wrong direction – e.g. starting to create ‘withins’ – the correct way to be connected will always be reinstated.\(^{1243}\) Therefore, nothing is to be spared, including here the very gadgets that are supposed to help us getting rid of the limits. The blunt warning that no mistake should be made – the screen ‘should be’ social!\(^ {1244}\) mantra is only one vocalization of such a warning – covers thus the way various linear perspective based gadgets work, but also the way we approach them. If some specific technology becomes a reason for inward orientation and concealment, the issue has to be addressed immediately. One example here can be the WWW itself, approached by the technology and culture writer Nicholas Carr as the ‘world wide cage’: a technology that while promised to set us free, it has instead “trained us to withdraw from the world into distraction and dependency”\(^ {1245}\). The point Carr – and many others – is making here is not against technology per se, but against its incapacity to implement and reinforce the dogma of connectivity in a more successful way. As I pointed out earlier, getting too attached to a certain type of connection (Carr mentions Facebook as the epitome of isolation), thus starting to fetishize it, to idolatrize it, represents a good excuse for disconnection and

\(^{1242}\) Zuckerberg 2012.

\(^{1243}\) See, e.g. the ban Reddit inflicted on racist subreddits (http://arstechnica.com/business/2015/08/reddit-decides-quarantining-isnt-enough-bans-racist-subreddits/), or the attacks conducted on the so-called ‘dark web’, a secluded area of the Internet, perceived as a nest for terrorist organizations, racism, drugs and arms dealers, pedophiles and other types of molesters etc. (Greenberg 2014, Holman 2014).

\(^{1244}\) Stinson 2016.

\(^{1245}\) Carr 2016.
the immediate reconnection to something that will keep the ‘new’ flowing (e.g., following Carr, is the blogosphere).

The essentialization of relation is a real threat, and has to be addressed accordingly. Nothing has to stay stable for too long, so that it will end up getting ‘covered over by signification’. Indeed, as Caputo noted, immediately after a new relation appears, a new, always contextual gesture, it has to be deconstructed in order to prevent its transformation into a totality:

“After making a distinction in deconstruction, the first thing to do is to deconstruct it, to show that it leaks, that its terms are porous and intersecting.”

As such, the role of deconstruction, as Richard Kearney noted, is to show

“that nothing is pure; everything is contaminated, mixed.”

It is this type of connectivity that creates the place of kinetic and hybrid matrices, where everything responds to everything. This space is Joël de Rosnay’s “fully clickable reality”, the ‘smooth space’ where the disconnection from the essences of things is total: a place without idols, without temples and without sacrifices.

To conclude, this indeed defines a “new culture” and “a new language”, but the ‘new’ here is the Pauline ‘new’, e.g. the ‘new’ of the ‘new human’. This ‘new’ was established, chronologically speaking, long ago, while from a dogmatic perspective it unfolds very much today with the help of contemporary technology and of the mentioned thinkers (between many, many others).

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1246 Gutting 2014.
1247 In his chat with Kearney, Derrida agrees wholeheartedly: “I totally agree with you” (as quoted in Manoussakis 2004: 3).
1248 Bullis 2014.
1249 Lai 2012: 386.
2.11 ‘Worshiping the becoming’: fetishism, idolatry, and the issue of present absence

“You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.”

- Exodus 20:4-5

As I mentioned earlier, the cyborg cannot exist within a Form-ally bounded space, one prone to idolatrous, or fetishistic approaches. The issue of the fetish is a subject of predilection in the Marxist literature, encompassing the fetishization of the laborer (human or non-human), the labor (physical or virtual), and the commodity (tangible or intangible) will be prevented. Within cultural and posthuman consumer research literature, the issue of fetish is also quite present. As Sherry noted, an analysis and understanding of technological fetishism “is essential for consumer researchers”\[1251\], especially for those with interests in Posthumanism and related movements. Although the article does not go into much detail, by the end of it the author places the concept next to a set of others, that are indeed expected to be seen in relation to it: sacrifice, authority, and essentialist views\[1252\]. The issue of Sacrifice, motivated by the Form-al presence within mater, is present in Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989 paper. Building on Baudrillard, the authors mention, however briefly, the fetishism represents a celebration of the essential “closed perfection” of an object\[1253\]. In their 1991 piece, Murray and Ozanne put the issue of fetishism next to a set of types of consumption (fanatic, or obsessive-compulsive) that steam mainly from social withdrawal and anomie (a wild and unruly type of behavior)\[1254\]. Of course, the reciprocal is also valid: fetishism can steam from these, but can as well lead to these, transforming our world into an Abraxa populated by wicked, perverse, and unreasonable Pauline ‘old natures’.

\[1251\] Sherry 2000: 276.
\[1252\] Sherry 2000: 277.
\[1254\] Murray and Ozanne 1991: 139.
Two decades after Belk and colleagues’ 1989 paper, Fernandez and Lastovicka approach fetishization as a fluid process, inherently reshaping the previous more static perspectives of it\textsuperscript{1255}. From a noun, the issue becomes a verb. Accordingly, the fetishistic dreams are introduced as staged (performative), and socially constructed\textsuperscript{1256} – an issue, if not explicitly present in all other mentioned papers, at least unambiguously assumed. Up to this point, the way in which the issue of fetishism is introduced in the cultural consumer research literature raises no concerns from a Christian dogmatic perspective whatsoever: it is socially constructed and naturalized (it can be identified in various cultures and geographical zones). It also carries a bleak, violent sacrificial charge: when left unchecked, it can lead to inward-oriented behaviors. And although the issue is sometimes introduced quite innocently within the cultural consumer research literature – one having a playful attraction to his guitar, one fetishises the future as an object of imaginative resources, or the heart as an indubitable source of emotion – there is no good meaning associated with fetishism in Marx.

When it comes to the more specific issue of ‘technological fetishism’, the theme is also well covered in the literature. Giving the presence of the ‘closed perfection’ of an object or of a system, the technological fetishism has been closely related to technological determinism\textsuperscript{1257}. Others are linking the fetish with the seduction of the new\textsuperscript{1258}.

However, a clear association between idolatry and fetishism is rarely made. Unsurprising, giving that for many fetishism is an invention of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. In the posthuman consumer culture literature, the term idol or idolatry is, to my knowledge, never mentioned. Why it is important to make this connection as sound as possible, especially in a text about Posthumanism?

First of all, it is important because, at its core, the critique of fetishism is a theological critique of idolatry. Therefore, making this link as clear as possible might help us understand that the Marxist critique of fetishism is an imposition of a monotheistic worldview, an imposition accompanied – at least in its Christian expression – by the annihilation of Form-al essences in all their expressions, including the ‘rests’. Second, approaching fetishism as idolatry will show that some the most active promoters of such impositions - impositions usually introduced, through the act of ‘inversion’, thus as examples of liberation and emancipation – are the critical theorists. Following Marx and Nietzsche as their main sources of inspiration, social theory becomes iconoclasm, a “great

\textsuperscript{1255} Fernandez and Lastovicka 2011: 295.
\textsuperscript{1256} Fernandez and Lastovicka 2011: 292.
\textsuperscript{1257} Roderick 2016.
\textsuperscript{1258} Huggett 2004.
declaration of war” against any kind of idol, e.g. against be-ing. Between these idols can be the ones of some contemporary indigenous populations in the name of which they practice sacrificial rituals (blood or bloodless ones), but also some others, more elusive, e.g. reason, technology, the cyborg, the nomad, the utopia, or capitalism. Did I mention iconoclasm, deconstruction, or secularism? Everything can be or become an idol if approached in-itself, as the bearer of some truth, as ‘something’ that is ‘somewhere’. When worshiped, the verb becomes a noun, we (re)enter into the ‘the misty realm of religion’, ‘superstition’, and metaphysics. The becoming stops, and is. However, as the commandment expressed in the Book of Exodus notes, nothing, absolutely nothing, visible or invisible, physical or virtual, should be approached as a “limit that contains”, as Aristotle put it: everything that is made, can be unmade – and we cannot know anything else beyond this.

In the following, I am going to unpack this argument by following Roland Boer’s own analyses of the link between fetishism and idolatry. Boer is a Calvinist theologian with a “major interest in Marxism, philosophy and religion”. He is, of course, not the only scholar addressing the issue of fetishism from an idolatrous perspective: one of the most recent instantiations about such links have been made in the Martijn Konings’s 2015 book.

As Marx put it in the Capital, a commodity

“it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.”

The ‘metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties’ Marx is referring there to are nothing else that the ‘metaphysical rests’ that are still populating our understanding of

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1260 E.g. children sacrifices in Uganda (Rogers 2011; Straziuso 2015).
1261 The cultural theorist and Posthumanist author Claire Colebrook wrote recently about the “fetish of unity, connectedness, attunement, mindfulness and humanity as an intertwined ecology that pervades post-Anthropocene pop culture” (Colebrook 2016: 82).
1263 https://www.newcastle.edu.au/profile/roland-boer
1264 As he points out, the critique of idolatry is “associated with Marxist thought, in particular its theory of commodity fetishism” (Konings 2015: 5). Giving the (increasing) popularity of the terms ‘iconoclasm’ (and its variations) within various streams of Postmodernism, we can see how heavily we still rely on the critique of idolatry. Between others, Deleuze “follows the iconoclastic trajectory radically” (Shults 2014: 18). His iconoclasm “is intensely theological” (Shults 2014: 29). Foucault, Derrida and others are constantly approached by scholars as ‘iconoclastic thinkers’. The issue is indeed so central that Latour cannot help by asking: “Is it really the task of the humanities to add deconstruction to destruction? More iconoclasm to iconoclasm?” (Latour 2004: 225). The answer cannot be other than ‘yes’.
matter and objects. It is precisely because of these ‘residues’, as Boer calls them in his piece\textsuperscript{1266}, that fetishistic attachments to these commodities are formed. As soon as the products of our labor, Marx continues, starts to be translated into something “which transcends sensuousness”, they evolve into “grotesque ideas”\textsuperscript{1267}. The reference to the pagan Hellenistic views on sense perception, the creation of phantasms and the extraction of the Idea is, I think, more than clear. If not, here is Marx himself:

“In order, therefore, to find an analogy [to the fetishistic behavior identifiable in the capitalist societies\textsuperscript{1268}] we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands.”\textsuperscript{1269}

Let us now put the whole thing into a more historical context. As Boer notes, the story of the fetish begins with the Portuguese colonial encounter with the African coastal societies in the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries. The term ‘fetish’ came to be used by the Portuguese as a way of describing the religious practices encountered there. From the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century, the category of fetish starts to be elaborated by Enlightenment intellectuals into a general theory of religion; it was then used by Dutch, French and English Protestants to describe Roman Catholic sacramental objects and practices – which, as we have seen, were largely perceived as pagan. By the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century Marx took upon the idea, and started to adapt it into economics\textsuperscript{1270}.

As Boer shows, Marx entered in contact with the notion of fetish through Charles de Brosses’s 1760 seminal work, \textit{Du Culte des dieux fétiches ou Parallèle de l’ancienne religion de l’Égypte avec la religion actuelle de Nigritie}. What is interesting is that de Brosses’ primary source for addressing the issue of idolatry in ancient Egypt was the Bible. In a true dogmatic fashion, after cutting back all the theological accretions surrounding the term ‘idol’, de Brosses uses precisely those biblical accounts concerning Egyptian religion in order to expose (his words) the ‘ridiculous’ and ‘stupid’ sacrificial practices of those inhabiting (Marx’s words) ‘the misty realm of religion’, ‘magic and necromancy’, ‘superstition’, and ‘illusions’. In the process, the Biblical notion of idolatry starts to perfectly overlap with the category of the fetish. By the end, fetishism wins the conceptual battle, and so, for de Brosses, the Biblical accounts of idolatry become an

\textsuperscript{1266}Boer 2010: 102.
\textsuperscript{1267}Marx 1990: 163.
\textsuperscript{1268}Geras 1991: 190.
\textsuperscript{1269}Marx 1990: 165.
\textsuperscript{1270}Boer 2010: 96, 97.
expression that fetishism may take across cultures and eras. Nonetheless, the important thing here is that although the more naturalized term fetish became le mot du jour (the more theologically charged ‘idolatry’ fading into the background), there are no fetishistic practices that do not presuppose some form of idolatry and sacrifice. And so, the term fetish ended up into Marx’s Capital, alongside his older friend, ‘idolatry’. However, Marx’s interest in idolatry and fetishism did not end up within the Capital’s covers, but it continued until the very end of his life. Indeed, the issue shows up repeatedly in his Ethnological Notebooks, in relation with essential hierarchy, human sacrifices, astrology, and as representing an invention.

Arrived at this point, Boer notes that “the constant theological analogies whenever (Marx) invokes the category of fetishism to speak of labour, alienation, money and capital are by no means arbitrary”: he knew what he was talking about. Marx’s critique of fetishism is indeed one of the most powerful contemporary critiques of idolatry.

To conclude. As I noted in the general Introduction, my main intent in this text is not to compile an exhaustive list of seemingly theological references and allusions that can be identified within the Posthumanist literature, e.g. immortality, eschatological hopes, the rapture of the Singularity etc., but quite the opposite. In other words, what I want is to show that the Christian dogmatic system permeates various aspects of the Posthumanist thinking (and not only) in very profound ways, ways that in a lot of cases are not wearing any kind of easily recognizable theological clothing. Nonetheless, such present absences, as Böhme rightfully calls them, are much more powerful than the present presences. In this section I tried to introduce such a present absence, i.e. the issue of idolatry, and its relationship with a present presence: fetishism.

1271 Boer 2010: 108.
1272 Marx 1974: 131, 252, 189.
1274 Boer introducing Marx as a reader of Isaiah 44 (one of the most powerful anti-idolatrous texts in the Old Testament) together with his (by then) close friend and teacher Bruno Bauer (a leading biblical scholar and Young Hegelian) represents indeed an amazing detail (Boer 2010). As Boer then notes, “the details from Isaiah may be more graphic than Marx’s notes on fetishism, but the underlying argument is exactly the same: this inanimate product, made with ordinary, everyday labour out of metal or wood can never be more than the material out of which it is made. The worisher may claim that it is a god, or that it bestows blessings and curses, but it is nothing of the sort. The passage from Isaiah plays up the sheer ordinariness of the idol with a good dose of satire. Indeed, it stresses the everyday materiality of the idol, one that punctures the exorbitant claims made for it. Like Marx, this text points out that the religious belief attached to the idol is a delusion. Like Marx again, it points to the need for an analysis [a deconstruction] of the material object in question and not the vapid claims made on its behalf” (Boer 2010: 112). And I would add: again, like Marx, it points to the need for complete destruction of those idols, no matter where they are or who is worshipping them: the war against one idol is a war against all idols.
1275 Böhme 2014: 386.
Fetishism – and its spawns: objectification (understood as reification), essentialization, or metaphysics (among others) – is not approached kindly in most of the critical literature, be it Marxist or not. Giving the strong relation between the idol and the Form-al limit (and here is where the link between metaphysics and fetishism becomes noticeable), and the equally strong relation between idolatry and fetishism, any critique on fetishism represents “a great declaration of war”\textsuperscript{1276} on idolatry, thus the limit. The world still “has more idols than realities”\textsuperscript{1277} – be them the idols of old age, i.e. the “eternal idols”\textsuperscript{1278}, or the ephemeral ones of our age – they all are to be destroyed, whenever and wherever they are to be spotted. Nobody shall bow down to them or worship them.

\subsection*{2.12 ‘Going down, down, down, down’: what is a ‘posthuman commodity’?}

“...The Commodification of Everything”

- Immanuel Wallerstein\textsuperscript{1279}

What Bruce Springsteen’s – “going down” line is from his song \textit{I'm Goin' Down} (1985) – has to do with the Posthumanist’s gist for breaking of limits? Well, for starters, he recently cancelled a concert as a protest to a law against transgender people\textsuperscript{1280}. Be this as it may, the issue I want to briefly address in this section is how the radical changes brought about by the Christian School might change the issue of consumption itself, both as a practice and as a conceptual framework. In other words, the question I want to address in the following is: how are the theologically informed Posthumanist views introduced in this work influencing the current and the future understandings of consumption? Accordingly, how theology might help providing a different understanding of the concept of commodity?

\textsuperscript{1276} Nietzsche 2005: 155.
\textsuperscript{1277} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1278} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1279} Wallerstein 1983: 11.
\textsuperscript{1280} Reuters 2016.
In his paper *Consuming Cyborgs: Researching Posthuman Consumer Culture* (2004), Markus Giesler introduces the notion of ‘posthuman consumption’, which he defines, by citing Erik Davis, as

“the circulation of desire and commodities in environments that are so highly mediated and technological that it begins to generate behavior and situations that are quite foreign to existing thinking about what markets are and what consumers want.”^{1281}\footnote{Giesler 2004: 401.}

The issue of ‘posthuman consumption’ is still an emergent one within the posthuman consumer culture literature. A decade after Giesler, Campbell (2013) reiterates the subject, noting that the idea raises the question:

“Is posthuman consumption something to do with the use of futuristic technologies?”^{1282}\footnote{Campbell 2013: 39.}

As it appears, the answer is ‘no’, as she identifies the main conditions of ‘posthuman consumption’ in five “nascent”^{1283}\footnote{Campbell 2013: 47.}, areas, all of them having to do with already existent technologies:

- computation: originating with the rise of the computers in the mid-19th century,
- laboratorization: marked by the biotechnical revolution that occurred in the 1970s,
- miniaturisation: linked with the development in the late 1970s of the Radio Frequency Identification Devices, or the RFIDs,
- complexification: the direct result of a combination between increasingly complex and sophisticated software and breakthroughs in recordings technologies,
- automation: defined by increasingly computerized, hence autonomous vehicles.\footnote{Campbell 2013.}

If, for Giesler, the online music file-sharing community Napster allowed the consumers to “rewire the rhizomatic patterns of authority and meaning”^{1285}\footnote{Giesler and Venkatesh 2005: 666.}, and thus to shift the
‘where’ of their identity, for Campbell it is technology too that leads to radical reconsiderations of the everyday conception of what the human is and how it consumes.

Speaking about commodification, technology is also playing a central role in providing the global market with a whole new set of commodities, be them lab-grown organs, personalized stem cells (and storage facilities for them), or genes. The skin is no longer a limit, a site of encounters between the enfleshed self and society: the inviolability of the body as the seat of identity is nullified, its edges being being siliconized, digitized, technologised, and neutralised. The ‘posthuman consumption’ expands into subcutaneous territories.

Taking heed of all this, I would like to flip the ongoing discourse on its head, and to show that technology, or the “modern world” are not to be held responsible for the current (subcutaneous) commoditization. In fact, such deep penetrations became possible because long before (chronologically speaking) the existence of such technologies, all the Form-al boundaries have been lifted from nature, a move that lead to the commodification of everything, thus to the creation of what we might call the ‘posthuman commodity’.

2.12.1.1 What is a posthuman commodity?

What is a posthuman commodity? Let us first remember Marx’s definition of commodity, as he tells it in the very beginning of the Capital: the commodity is, first of all, an external object. Following this, as I tried to show earlier, the act of consumption is an act of abuse (from ab + usus): the practice of putting something in front of itself. It represents an exercise of extraction, the performance of an exorcism – similar with the one performed by Christ in Matthew 8:31. To abuse, in this sense, is to cancel the inside, the ‘within’ of whatever nature. Is to keep unfolding, perpetually, transforming everything into external objects. This is indeed an extremely violent act, one of which end is liberating something of its Form-al charge, of its limit that contains. Acknowledging that the world is filled with both idols of old age, and ephemeral ones – i.e. the ones of our age, as Nietzsche noted -, consumption thus understood externalizes, breaks the limits of

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1286 Lai 2012; Campbell 2013;
1287 “non-biological material is piercing the traditional boundaries of ‘biological skin-bag’” (Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz 2010: 646).
1288 MacCormack 2012: 22.
1289 Campbell 2013.
1290 Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2006.
1291 Campbell 2013.
1292 Lai 2012.
‘within’ and ‘where’, into ‘smooth places’ unsuitable for the construction of temples and the stirring of sacrificial fires. The most powerful iconoclastic weapon is not a hammer, i.e. an object with definite edges, an item, a noun. That would only replicate the idols it tries to smash: the hammer that smashes have to be smashed as well, impeding its transformation into an idol.

A commodity is thus not an item per se, but an infinity mirror effect, a multiplicity, a bottomless polarization. In other words, if consumption were the practice of setting up the mirrors, the commodity would be the endlessly multiplied, thus externalized items: all of them, at once. Focusing on only one appearance would make it into a fixed substance, hence into an idol, into an original.

As the Cappadocian Fathers insisted, we should arrive at no fixity, no matter how deep are we going to look – through our linear-perspective based gadgets. Beneath the unique qualities something possesses, there is no substance. Indeed, as Basil of Caesarea, in his Homilies on the Hexaemeron, noted,

“You arrive at nothing if you try to take away [...] each of the qualities (something / someone) possesses. If you take away black, cold, depth, density, the qualities associated with taste [...] or any other that may be seen / contemplated around it, the essence will be nothing.”1293

Kant followed this dogma, and showed that everything in an appearance is itself an appearance, no matter how much are we going to break it into its parts. No matter how deep we will be able to gaze into the fabric of matter – e.g. through the lenses of some of the most powerful microscopes – we will ‘arrive at nothing’, at no Form, no fixed, sacrosanct essence of life. Accordingly, there should be nothing that cannot be putted in front of itself: there should be noting that is not a commodity.

Following this, the commodification of everything did not occurred or occurs because of technological developments (as many cultural and posthuman consumer culture researchers seem to suggest) or, as Wallerstein believed, because of “the historical development of capitalism”1294. To a large extent, capitalism is a process that goes against the commodification of everything, by creating concealed ‘wheres’, paywalls behind which idolatrous notions such as ‘value’, ‘authenticity’, and ‘meaning’ are cherished. The same applies to issues like biopolitics, or biopower: spaces on the boundaryless playground where sovereign, autochthonous structures immunize themselves, thus enclosing and keeping watch over life relentlessly1295. These terroristic territories (to use Lyotard’s

1295 Esposito 2008: 43.
expression) are where the infinite regression stops, and one appearance is picked up as being true, in detriment to all others. These claustra are where the becomings get frozen into actualizations, where minoritarianism starts to coincide with fetishism. 

Prior to the commoditization understood as reification, there is the commoditization of everything, the one that de-nounifies the nature, transforming everything into a verb. Those fighting against the second type – against the reification, i.e. the thingification of the relations – are the purists, thus those going against anything that might create closures, or ‘within’ on the otherwise completely commoditized, thus boundaryless playground. Even though there are mentions in the literature that the notion of commodity is (or it should be) considered as an agentic system, thus as a verb, the issue is introduced as a recent one – one caused mainly by the technological developments in the five areas Campbell mentions – without any link to a specific theological view. However, as I tried to show in this short paragraph, the commodity cannot be approached as a verb, as an action, without an implicit recognition and a tacit acceptance of the dogma – as expressed by Basil of Caesarea, among many others – that ‘beneath’ the contingent appearances associated with something (black, cold, depth, density), with anything, there is nothing. It is this dogma that pushes its followers, the exorcists, to go against any kind of closures, wherever and in whichever shape they might found them, and turn them inside out – and not modern technology or the contemporary philosophical articulations such as postmodernism, post-structuralism, Marxism, Posthumanism, or non-representationalism, as usually assumed. In other words, it is only through this dogma that we can stop seeing the body, or anything else for that matter, as a site peaceful enough that temples of identity and truth might be erected on it.

An example of such an exorcist is Guattari himself. As he declared in his text To Have Done with the Massacre of the Body (1973), “[w]e want to see frigid, imprisoned, mortified bodies explode to bits”. The sacrificial massacre occurs only as long as the body is kept intact, as an identity-giving whole, and it ends when everything explodes into

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1297 Indeed, according to the Marxist thinker György Lukács, reification happens when “a relation [...] takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a ‘phantom objectivity’” (Lukács 1972: 83). My emph. As Berger and Luckmann have noted, reification occurs when nature, cosmic laws, and the divine will are back at the center of existence (Berger and Luckmann 1991: 106). Through reification, the world becomes “necessity and fate” (Berger and Luckmann 1991: 108). In other words, the “metaphysical dread” (Berger and Luckmann 1991: 108) is back.
1298 As Saren points out, most consumer research has tended to commodify the human body into a body-as-object, an inert entity. In this view, “the body is fetishized”, approached as a site “where identity projects are enacted”. More recently however, these views started to be problematized by “viewing the body as active” (Saren 2011: 39).
1299 Christ was literally throwing the demons that were within, without (ἐκβάλλεις) (Matthew 8:31): the very definition of an exorcism.
countless bits. It is only then the body, or whatever surface might became a “boundaryless territory”\textsuperscript{1301}, the playground of the werewolves.

2.12.1.2 Smashing the ‘within’: from the essence of life to mass production

Now, speaking about the fact that ‘posthuman consumption’ expands into subcutaneous territories, certain elements such as blood, organs, tissues and reproductive cells\textsuperscript{1302}, tend to be understood in some circles as foundational, as limits on which identity, memory, or meaning are based. To use the theologian John Caputo’s vocabulary, these elements are ‘distinctions in deconstruction’ which, once identified, the first thing to do is to deconstruct them, thus to show, as Richard Kearney noted, that nothing is pure; everything is contaminated, and mixed. Nothing is a seat of something. Whatever has been constructed, created, made, is deconstructible.\textsuperscript{1303} Identity cannot seat on impure grounds, on smooth spaces.

The theological dogmas behind the ‘posthuman commodity’ have acquired recently a technological expression. The current (linear perspective based) technology restates the doctrine by showing that nothing is pure. \textit{It is only from this level up that the vast majority of the postmodern, cultural, and posthuman consumer researchers start their analyses}. Theology and later approaches (especially if these are coming from names such as e.g. Kant or Descartes) are fading into background. Therefore, the curent advances in biomedicine and transplant technologies are approached as the reasons because of which the body disintegrates, or explodes into parts\textsuperscript{1304}. Indeed, the technology is nothing else but the “disintegrator”\textsuperscript{1305}. Giving that the deanimation, or the de-Form-alization affected nature \textit{in its entirety}, not only the human beings, it is important to note that the name ‘body’ here defines every conceivable ‘body’: from the body understood as the entire structure of a human being, to everything that composes it. Thus, blood is a body, the cells, the organs, the tissues and the reproductive cells, the DNA – these are all de-Form-alized bodies. Accordingly, everything from the subatomic particles to the planetary

\textsuperscript{1302} Lai 2012: 386.
\textsuperscript{1303} Caputo 2015.
\textsuperscript{1304} Lai 2012.
\textsuperscript{1305} Campbell, O’Driscoll, and Saren 2006: 350.
objects, the Universe itself are ‘bodies’, thus posthuman commodities: infinity mirror effects within which there is no enmattered Form.

As I repeatedly noticed, although the ‘commodification of everything’ happened all at once, its unfoldings still happen very much today, the war being waged against various Form-al totalities as much as against the Christian School itself, i.e. against the ‘rests’ still present within it. When it comes to the Christian School, between these ‘rests’ – ‘withins’ approached as sacrosanct sites of identity – we can mention the DNA, a highly contested assemblage, especially when it comes to its role in shaping identity and destiny, and the stem cells. Among the actors that approached these ‘bodies’ as ‘rests’, thus as inviolable sites, was the George W. Bush’s notorious Bioethics Council.

Bush’s Bioethics Council was populated by, what the Posthumanists like to call, “bioconservatives”, including several Christian clerics, who adopted a ‘rests’-infected moral model that stresses the necessary rootedness of social realities in normative, ‘natural’ attitudes and responses to the world. Accordingly, the bioconservatives recognize the world as a harmonious structure where everything occupies its place, or, where everything has its own rhythm within an universal symphony. At the first glance, such a model looks quite similar to the ones proposed by Aristotle and the Stoics, and so it is of no surprise that Fuller and Lipińska describe the members of the Bioethics Council as adopting a broadly Aristotelian worldview. But, as I discussed earlier, such views have nothing to do with Aristotle’s or the Stoics’ normative theories of nature in general and / or human nature in particular.

Giving the central position that such ‘rests’ occupied within the Bush’s Bioethics Council, it comes of no surprise that its members called for a ban on US federal funding of stem cell research. It is difficult to underestimate the importance this particular brand of research on stem cells have for the Posthumanists. It is regarded as bearing the capacity to unlock the restrictions and the limitations that the human body faces and to prolong human life to an indefinite timespan. As the molecular biologist Lee Silver put it, stem cell research opens the door for reprogenetics, a

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1306 Neilson 2016; Talbott 2010; Cloud 2010.
1307 It is important to note that forms of bioconservatism can be identified in both ends of the political spectrum, i.e. in the conventionally right-leaning politics of religious conservatism, or in the conventionally left-leaning politics of environmentalism (Carrico 2004).
1308 Fuller and Lipińska 2014: 30.
1310 See http://humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-faq/#answer_23. Many animals can regrow lost body parts. This process – known as regeneration – relies on stem cells. However, (natural) regeneration in humans is very limited, the stem cells mostly healing, not replacing. Scientists are looking for ways in which they can couch them to go beyond their natural, restricted abilities. Cf. http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/tech/stemcells/scfuture/
1311 Pelletier 2013.
technology capable of producing fully functioning organs on demand. Accordingly, the Nobel laureate James Watson, who co-discovered the structure of DNA, defended stem cell research too, precisely in response to Bush’s Bioethics Council’s ban.

Speaking about reprogenetics, what this means from a consumption perspective is that functioning organs are to be manufactured in complete detachment from the (human) body (i.e. in the lab, or inside non-human animals), thus as spare parts. The cultural and interpretivist consumer researchers already addressed the issue. In his 2012 piece, Lai noted that emerging transplant technologies are challenging "the Western understanding of the ‘integrated self’, which is predicated on the ideal of the ‘bounded body’." Of course, that challenging the ‘Western understanding’ (whatever that might mean) of the self does not happen because of those emerging transplant technologies, but because of the denial of the ‘rests’.

Going back to Bush’s Bioethics Council, such a ban, while seen by many as slowing or even stopping scientific progress was consistent with the Bush’s belief "in the fundamental value and sanctity of human life. The [...] decision reflects his fundamental commitment to preserving the value and sanctity of human life". It would be quite difficult to put more problematic terms within a single phrase than in the one above: fundamental values, sanctity of life, preservation.

A large chorus of voices raised against such heretical understandings, proclaiming that we are not “marionettes dancing to the tune of their DNA” and that the DNA (or whichever other ‘body’) does not have an “unique, absolute, and universal control over the totality of inheritance in all forms of life”. Nothing has. The ‘we’ there defines, of course, every form of DNA-based structure – which, by now, starts to include e.g. computers, algorithms, transistors and more. It is important to understand that such views, as the ones shared by Bush’s Council, are becoming heretical only after

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1312 Nguyen 2014; Steenhuysen 2014.
1314 Lai 2012: 392.
1315 Lawler 2010.
1318 Commoner 2002.
1319 Including here the e.g. Surui, Inuit, Maasai etc.
the acceptance of the first-degree truth, that reality is a fully de-Form-alized one. Therefore, what those rising against such views are really demanding is that everything should be recognized as a ‘posthuman commodity’: no exceptions are allowed, no matter how infinitesimal (or colossal) such structures may be.

Therefore, from a Christian School’s dogmatic perspective, the language of ‘essence of life’ is totally inadequate if what we are talking about are molecules of DNA, or stem cells. As I tried to show in the first section of this chapter, no matter how deep we will be able to gaze into the fabric of matter – e.g. through the lenses of some of the most powerful microscopes – we will never arrive at something, at some Form, fixed, sacrosanct essence of life. What is more, it is especially because we are gazing through linear perspective based instruments that we are not supposed to arrive at such limits. Genes are nothing but simple molecules of DNA, which, in turn, are composed elements made of atoms, which in turn are made of protons and neutrons, which in turn are made of quarks etc. We are going down, down, down, and there is no bottom, there is no end of knowledge. Nothing is pure; everything is contaminated, and mixed. This is a dogma, and it cannot be questioned. Whatever has been constructed, created, made, is deconstructible, thus reproducible.

Giving that the ‘new humanity’ is a created one, one in which nothing exists in-itself and by-itself, technology should not be approached only as a ‘disintegrator’ (a thing that only blows up limits) but, simultaneously, also as an ‘aggregator’: an instrument that keeps creating, manufacturing, producing. Mass-producing, that is, doing things for everybody. While the need for large-scale stem cell manufacture has already been expressed1321, the DNA manufacturing is already entering the age of mass production1322: the essence entered the production line.

Of course, rising against those views that see the stem cells, blood, or DNA as expressions of ‘the value and sanctity of human life’, as undeconstructable distinctions, does not solve the limit issue in all its unfoldings. The boundaryless playground keeps containing ‘within’. For example, speaking about the manufacturing of the DNA, there can be two types of restricted access to related products and services:

- the access can be restricted from the individuals occupying various minority statuses, e.g. members of indigenous communities where myths and taboos about certain body parts are central. Some of these beliefs disappeared, but others did not and are rarely challenged “because it is believed that any challenge can bring a curse upon the

\[1321\] Thomas and Williams 2009.
\[1322\] Strickland 2015.
particular person” or the community as a whole. This types of restrictions can exists within the Christian School as well, e.g. the Jehovah Witnesses’ taboo on blood;

- the access can be restricted for those individuals which, although not sharing views as the ones presented above, do not have the financial means to access the products.

I would like to conclude this small section by making something very clear: by speaking about everything being a verb, a relation, I am not saying that structures like DNA, or the stem cells are not real. They are indeed real: the very fact that they can be sequenced, replicated, and mass-manufactured shows precisely how real they are. However, it is only after the exorcisation of the Form, only after the smashing of the idolatrous ‘wheres’ and ‘withins’ that they become real, approachable, and malleable. It is only after the annihilation of limit that they become a ‘posthuman commodity’.

2.12.1.3 Delivering and consuming the verb

The Posthuman have been compared with the Baudelairean and Benjaminian figure of the flâneur / flâneuse. The cultural and digital theorist Debra Shaw then uses the concept of cyberflâneur in order to describe the cyborg as the flâneur’s rightful heir. What is important to note here is that the cyberflâneur does not replaces the flâneur, but it rather expands it: the cyberflâneur defines not only how the human, but how every possible ‘body’ inhabits and experience the hybrid spaces of the boundaryless playground. Accordingly, with the rise of what the futurist and molecular biologist Joël de Rosnay calls “a fully clickable reality,” a reality completely defined by the gesture-click, the distance, or the border between the physical spaces and the cyberspace will be completely abolished, and with it the dichotomy online-offline. As such, the Internet

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1326 Shaw 2015.
1327 “The cyberflâneur not only reveals the radical entangling of commodified digital space with the space of the city, but it also addresses critically the residual subjectivities still present within the flâneur” (Shaw 2015: 231). My emph.
1328 The necessary technology for this a reality is already out there, in various forms and various stages of development. Transparent films containing carbon ‘nanobuds’ — molecular tubes of carbon with ball-like appendages — could turn just about any surface, regardless of its shape, into a touch sensor (Bullis 2014). Then there is the Tap Systems startup: “We’ve invented a new smart textile that when you place it on your hand you can turn any surface into a keyboard” (Ackerman 2016). Popper 2016.
will be no longer, because it will be everywhere\(^{1329}\) – a scenario which invites us to imagine a gadgetless future too\(^{1330}\). The cyberflâneur becomes on an environment where the traditional channels of consumption are completely re-envisioned. Following the ‘commodification of everything’, all the distances, the Form-al boundaries are erased. Giving this, nothing moves anymore. Indeed, the unmatched speed of the cyberflâneur represents, as Virilio and Deleuze pointed out, an expression of outsideness and immobility. They indeed “ignore the rush hour”\(^{1331}\): there is no more excuse for delays in delivery. The consumption of the ‘posthuman commodity’ should not happen in a stretch of time defined by an ‘waiting for’: Messiah does not come in the future, but now. The wait is over, the sacrificial massacre has ended, once and for all: everything exploded. What we have now is only ‘now’ – the ‘jetztzeit’, the ‘aion’.

The dogma pushes for the creation of mindsets and technologies that will, in turn, act as ‘channels of distribution’, normalizing these views across the globe. We all want stuff, we all want to be connected: these are all inherent desires of humans “from time immemorial”, this “is what makes us human”\(^{1332}\). Indeed, as it has been noted, a “new and emerging [...] customer-satisfaction mind set” \(^{1333}\) demands a shorter and shorter time interval for delivery. As a result, more and more customers, from the U.S. to China and UK, are willing to pay premium prices for faster and faster responses to their insatiable needs or cravings\(^{1334}\). For the nomad, the distance between willing and receiving (arriving at), thus making it real, is nullified.

In addition to the technology and mind-sets, the commoditization of everything spawns new Studies, each of them challenging – with various degrees of radicalism – either the already reformed concepts of corporeality (but still containing ‘rests’), or the ones that are entirely based on in-Form-ed totalities (e.g. of the Surui’s). The hunt for heretics and witches has only just begun. In the process, what corporeality consists in – whatever corporeality – should become an open question everywhere: having an infinite number of answers to it is the only right answer. In the moment the answer will be

\(^{1329}\) Rosnay 2008: 19.

\(^{1330}\) Mokka 2015.

\(^{1331}\) Seal 2013.

\(^{1332}\) Bostrom 2005; Buchanan-Oliver, Cruz, and Schroeder 2010; Zuckerberg 2012; Campbell 2007.

\(^{1333}\) Sherwood and Moghaddam 1996.

\(^{1334}\) Amazon, among many others, is experimenting heavily with various “instant delivery services” (Alba 2014; Seward 2014), one of them being called Amazon Prime Now: Ultra-fast FREE delivery service (https://primenow.amazon.com/onboard?sourceUrl=%2F). Jingdong’s strategy, a Chinese ecommerce giant, is “offering blazing speed-standard delivery faster than you would ever get in other markets” (de Carayon 2013). See McKenzie 2013.
uttered, an outcry against it will necessarily happen, followed by constant processes of deconstruction and the subsequent creation of ‘posthuman commodities’.

Adding to the ongoing discussion on ‘posthuman consumption’, in this last section of my work I tried to address the strangely missing – at least from the posthuman consumer culture literature – notion of ‘posthuman commodity’. As the cyborg needs a specific type of space that will allow its continual becoming – the kinetic utopia – and a specific type of time that will permit its non-teleological gestures to occur without getting them covered over by significations – the jetztzeit – there is also only one specific type of commodity able to populate that environment: the posthuman one.

C. Conclusions: ‘the end of noun’

“Ἐν ἀγαν (Everything in excess!)”

- Nikos Kazantzakis1335

The main aim of this research was to introduce Christian theology as the main force that shapes and legitimizes the Poshumanist movement and to show the ways in which, in turn, this movement influences fields such as postmodern and critical marketing, cultural, and interpretive consumer research and, especially, the emerging field of Posthuman Consumer Research. Accordingly, this study aimed to contribute to the ongoing discussions within the field of Posthuman Consumer Research about the rise of the so-called ‘cyborgian consumer’. By taking on the proposed approach, this research explored issues pertaining to the future of identity, technological gadgetry, the commodity, and consumption at large.

1335 Kazantzakis 2012: 543.
Within the Posthumanist and the posthuman consumer culture literature, the contemporary technological gadgetry along with equally contemporary, various process-oriented knowledge paradigms (postmodernity, post-structuralism, non-representationalism etc.) are regarded almost exclusively as the main actors behind the rise and the spread of the Posthumanist movement and its progeny, the cyborgian consumer. Accordingly, the vast majority of the postmodern marketing, cultural and interpretivist consumer research literature identifies the two mentioned techno-philosophical elements as the ones responsible for the radical shifts and transformations the fields of marketing and consumer research have experienced lately. Generally speaking, these shifts are understood in terms of departures from certain onto-epistemological discourses such as humanism and Cartesianism. The consequences of these shifts were (and still are) profound on many levels, pushing scholars to reconsider entire conceptual scaffolding of their respective fields and to question received wisdom on issues such as consumption practices, markets, identity and more. Previously, many of these questioned elements have been built on strong dualistic and essentialist views: approaches that were both legitimizing and operating on clear, unbridgeable distinctions between subject / object, male / female, or biology / technology. Today, the fields of marketing and consumer research are witnessing a powerful and undeniable swing towards views that favor and ultimately replace the sharply edged structures with fluid and hybrid matrices, the limits between various ‘bodies’ (be them physical [a human] and / or virtual [an algorithm]) being questioned, blurred, and ultimately abandoned.

Usually, the need for more sophisticated, open, and inclusive understandings of the human being and its relation to the world is motivated by a pressing need to escape from the ‘too narrow views’, or the ‘narrow conventionalism’ of Modernity. The urgent need to depart from certain onto-epistemological discourses is also motivated by the strong associations made between these views and certain policies and advocacies, such as colonialism, imperialism, hierarchical exclusions, racial and gender prejudices and objectification – to name only a few from a rather long list. Therefore, the abandonment of these discourses is seen as bearing the potential to bring the Western logocentric, onto-epistemic monopoly to an end, opening up the narrow non-pluralistic space for a non-hierarchical, non-essentialist, onto-epistemological, Posthumanist polycentric environment.

Unsurprisingly, given the contemporaneity of both the technological gadgetry and of the philosophical discourses used to create and legitimize the non-Cartesian, non-humanistic perspectives, the vocabulary being used by the postmodern marketing, cultural consumer research and posthuman consumer culture researchers to characterize these changes is very homogenous, the concept of ‘new’ (and variations) being the dominant
keyword. Therefore, what we start to witness is the emergence of new paradigms\textsuperscript{1336}, a new era on its own\textsuperscript{1337}, “radical shifts” and “moves from”\textsuperscript{1338} a preexisting order to something else. Everything culminates with the advent of a “cyborgian society”\textsuperscript{1339}, a “hybrid marketplace matrix”\textsuperscript{1340} and a completely “new consumer behavior”\textsuperscript{1341}.

Given all this, the core argument of my text is that Posthumanism and the cyborg do not depend on contemporary technology, nor the aforementioned contemporary philosophical approaches. That being said, I am not discounting the recent techno-philosophical developments; they are indeed relevant, acting as ‘channels of distribution’ or enablers through which these two (the Posthumanist discourse and the system, i.e. the cyborg) spread across cultures and geographical boundaries. In turn, as noted, both the Posthumanist discourse and the cyborg are ‘channels of distribution’ too, facilitating the spread of something much more elusive and powerful.

Therefore, what is essential for the existence of the Posthumanist discourse and the cyborg is a theology, and in this work, I identified that theology as being the Christian one. Accordingly, the sole container of this theology is the Christian School – a structure that should not be equated with the Christian Church in its innumerable denominational expressions.

Consequently, when it comes to the transformations the fields of marketing and consumer research are experiencing lately, the argument I am advancing is that what these areas of research are witnessing recently is not really a shift (i.e. a foundational move\textsuperscript{1342}, or a radical breaking off from a preexisting condition\textsuperscript{1343}), as it has been repetedly suggested, but rather a purification of sorts.

As I have tried to show throughout this text, the Christian theology adopted a number of themes from various Hellenistic Schools, but not before passing them through its ‘hermeneutic grill’ in order to align these views with its own dogmatic system – a system composed of what I called the first-degree truths and the second-degree (or lower) truths. As suggested, one such ‘first-degree truth’ is the total and unequivocal denial of the Hellenistic Forms, or Ideas. Given that the recognition of the Forms within various Hellenistic Schools (Aristotle’s, Plato’s etc.) influenced the experience of the world at all levels, any denial of these Forms triggers a gigantic snowball effect. Radical reevaluations,
or retranslations have to be made in order to align everything to a narrative that does not recognize the existence of such Forms. Accordingly, this denial was extended to all other worldviews based on Form-al understandings, models that came to be known as ‘totalities’.

From a marketing / consumption perspective, a Forms-centric reality imposes certain (what we might call today) consumption practices in which certain products were restricted to certain segments of the market. For example, the use of the Tyrian purple, otherwise known as the imperial purple, was severely restricted throughout various historical periods: the Roman emperor Nero decreed that only the Emperor was allowed to wear this particular color, any violation was considered ‘a crime similar to high treason’, and could result in capital punishment. The idea I want to illustrate in here is that what might today sound like a classical example of using certain products as, to quote Goffman, “symbols of class status”, for the people in the Ancient world it meant something completely different. Indeed, such an association between a color and a position suggested a deep affinity between one’s role or position within a natural hierarchy and his appearance. As it was made very clear in various documents from that period, the economic and financial powers of an individual, no matter how significant, could not be used to purchase products reserved to those inhabiting certain positions – any breach of this rule could potentially cause social and political unrest. As noted, this example describes a model based on affinities between the phenomenal side and the Form-al side of reality: it was only when these two clicked when the symbol (of the e.g. Emperor) was complete. Plato and Aristotle will express this affinity in terms of the attraction between like and like, whereas the Stoics expressed it through the use of the term heimarmene: fate, destiny, and allotment. The limits defined the natural place of someone or something within the Great Chain of Being: a structure of hierarchies based on an interrupted, unbreakable succession and order of primary causes.

Together with the denial of the Forms by the Christian School, such affinities were also questioned and, ultimately, rejected. However, because translations are never perfect, some of the themes that were adopted from various Hellenistic Schools into the Christian one continued to contain what I called ‘metaphysical rests’ or residues – which, although already heavily reformed, are still at odds with the dogmatic requirements of the Christian School, especially with those requirements expressed by the first-degree truths. Some examples of such ‘rests’, or residues are e.g.:

1345 Goffman 1951.
- the notion of the *substance* – which can then be expressed in various ways, such as e.g. the foundation of life, the essence,
- the Cartesian notion of a ‘disembodied cogito’,
- the Kantian issue of a ‘transcendental reason’, or the noumenon,
- the notion of ‘intentionality’,
- the theme of sustainability,

and others. Let me give an example.

While much has been written within marketing and consumer research about the urgent need for sustainable models\(^{1347}\), models that have to be considered also in relation to the rising digital economy\(^{1348}\), very little has been done by the sustainability advocates to understand the concept from a ‘limits’ perspective.

The concept of ‘sustainability’ comes from the Latin ‘sustineo’, meaning to “restrain”, or to “preserve”\(^{1349}\). Giving this, behind the concept of sustainability lurks the idea of Form-al fixity, thus boundedness, cyclicity\(^{1350}\), and restrictions. All these elements are getting visible within the so-called precautionary principle.

Generally speaking, the precautionary principle – increasingly present in the environmental legislations, ecological policies\(^{1351}\) and sustainable business decision-making literature\(^{1352}\) – states that the possible should be equated with the actual\(^{1353}\). The value lost through species extinctions, deforestation, and overexploitation of resources, most of these happening in the name of scientific and technological progress, can never be counterweight by however much room is thereby left to humans to utopianistically expand their inner potential ad infinitum. It was this views that informed aforementioned George W. Bush’s *Bioethics Council Report*, which called for a ban on US federal funding of stem cell research.

The modern roots of this approach go back in late 17\(^{th}\) century’s England and late 18\(^{th}\) century’s Germany. While John Evelyn published in 1664 his forest conservation’s dedicated treatise *Sylva, or A Discourse of Forest-Trees and the Propagation of*

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\(^{1347}\) Werbach 2009; Ottman 2011; Arnould and Press 2011; Martin and Schouten 2012.

\(^{1348}\) Wilsdon and Porritt 2001.

\(^{1349}\) http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=sustine&la=la#lexicon

\(^{1350}\) Fullan 2005.

\(^{1351}\) In theory, EU links the precautionary principle (which it adopted in 1992 [Whiteside 2006]) to the environment’s protection. However, in practice, the same authority recognizes that “its scope is much wider, and specifically where preliminary objective scientific evaluation, indicates that there are reasonable grounds for concern that the potentially dangerous effects on the environment, human, animal or plant health may be inconsistent with the high level of protection chosen for the Community” (as quoted in Watson 2013: 190).

\(^{1352}\) Tickner and Raffensperger 1998.

\(^{1353}\) Fuller 2012.
Timber^1^3^5^4, Georg Hartig set the scientific foundations for the precautionary principle – known at the time as Vorsorgeprinzip. As Evelyn and Hartig pointed out, each present generation should leave the next one with forests in the same state in which they found them. This law persists to this day in a much-enriched form: not just the forests, but all the resources should follow this regulation^1^3^5^5.

Going back to the precautionary account that the possible should be equated with the actual, what I mean by that is that the precautionaries follow, generally speaking, a ‘closed Earth’ paradigm, a model created by Kenneth Boulding, a devout Quaker with neo-Malthusian concerns^1^3^5^6. This model assumes that we should not exceed the Earth’s capacity to provide for us; everything we have got is here and now. Boundedness, cyclicity, and restriction: the universal recycling symbol expresses these three elements quite well. However, this model has (at least) two big issues, both linked to the notion of limits. The first one has to do with population control, not only human, but any kind of population. The second problem is visible in the fact of extracting the Earth from the larger network in which it exists: Space. Both problems show the fact that certain amounts of human and non-human populations must find their place in a bounded, autonomous ecological system that works cyclically, being thus capable of continuous reproduction^1^3^5^7, but not expansion.

Obviously, I am not the only one seeing the problematic presence of the limits into the “rests” contained within the concept of sustainability, therefore in the precautionary principle. Some leading Posthumanist thinkers reacted to this view, responding with the publication of the proactionary model. Generally speaking, the proactionary argument is that the actual should never be equated with the possible. In other words, the proactionaries regard the risk-taking as fundamentally necessary in order to discover the limits, if any, of what is possible – which by no means is exhausted by any kind of natural, genetic, geographic, religious or cultural borders as manifested in the actual. The roots of this particular approach go back in 2005 when Max More – a leading Posthumanist thinker – published a manifesto bearing this title^1^3^5^8. It was written as a response to the aforementioned George W. Bush’s Bioethics Council call for a ban on US federal funding of stem cell research. In contrast to the precautionaries, the proactionaries

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^1^3^5^4 Regarded as the most influential treatise on the subject (Nisbet 2009: 47).
^1^3^5^5 Fuller and Lipiński 2014: 26, 27.
^1^3^5^6 de Steiguer 2006.
^1^3^5^8 http://www.maxmore.com/proactionary.htm. Apparently, the roots are going further back. John Patterson, the author of Innovation entitled to a full and candid hearing (1850) mentions between the qualities of a true inventor the fact that he is progressive, “regardless of consequences” (as quoted in Godin 2013: 47).
are following a much inclusive ‘open Space’ paradigm of unlimited resources\textsuperscript{1359}. Accordingly, the ‘open Space’ paradigm recognizes that the Earth is not to be approached from an ‘atomistic’ point of view, i.e. abstracted from a larger network and thus being regarded as both our cradle and as our tomb. In fact, there is a lot outside of it that waits to be discovered, explored, and exploited\textsuperscript{1360}.

The marketing and consumer research process-oriented researchers working in the area of sustainability are undoubtedly occupying non-essentialist and non-hierarchical conceptual spaces – spaces that are relatively easy to find once someone is relying on contemporary philosophical standpoints such as post-structuralism, non-representationalism and others. In addition to the reliance on these philosophical approaches, also important here is the accent put on continuous growth – mostly in order to counteract various highly contestable normative assumptions, such as the steady-state model\textsuperscript{1361}. Indeed, according to Martin and Schouten, sustainable marketing happens when both natural and human spheres are not only preserved, but enhanced throughout\textsuperscript{1362}. However, an exclusive reliance on these philosophical views (including here the contemporary technological gadgetry) is not always enough in order to keep the argument or the approach (in this case, the sustainable one) clean of residual elements, i.e. the ‘metaphysical rests’. Theology might help identifying these ‘limits-related’ rudiments, which, albeit invisible at the first glance, are able to produce on the long run unexpectedly large effects.

These examples (among many others) of dogmatic alignments (with the ‘first-degree truths’) and purifications (from ‘rests’) I addressed in my work where and are having a huge impact on our understanding itself and, accordingly, on our understanding and perception of the commodity, the practice of consumption and the markets (CCM henceforth).

The noted impact happens on two levels: on the way we think and perceive, and on the way we think about CCM. Following the rejection, or total denial by the Christian School of any kind of Form-al worldviews, a set of subsequent number of statements are made: there are no natural hierarchies based on divine Forms or final causes, that there is no end of knowledge, that nothing (be that biological, or metaphysical) is to be regarded as an essential site for anything (identity, life, meaning), that there are no existing-in-themselves essences, that everything is constructed and so on.

\textsuperscript{1359} Schrunk, Sharpe, Cooper, and Thangavelu 2008.
\textsuperscript{1360} “I believe the first trillionaires will come from space,” said entrepreneur Bob Richards, the founder and CEO of Moon Express. Richards is looking to space as a place of vast and potentially lucrative opportunity (Mann 2013).
\textsuperscript{1361} Fuller 2012.
\textsuperscript{1362} Martin and Schouten 2012: 10.
and so forth. As I mentioned, these dogmas to which the Christian School’s followers adhere (be them Christians or not) are unquestionable. They shape the way we think about and perceive the world. It is only after we align our way of thinking to these dogmas that we might, accordingly, start thinking about the changes the CCM is currently experiencing or is about to experience in the future.

When it comes to the purifications, these concern themselves mainly with the issue of the ‘rests’. In other words, they follow a call for abandoning certain ontological discourses, narratives most commonly associated within the literature with humanism, modernism, or Cartesianism. Relinquishing such accounts is seen as bearing the potential to bring the Western logocentric, truth-centered, onto-epistemological monopoly to an end, opening up the space for alternative models of knowledge – models which will finally “overthrow the existing orthodoxy” informing our understanding of CCM. The shifts are defined as moves from narrow to wide, weird and dirty, from goal to process-oriented, from noun to verb. But is the monopoly finally overthrown? Maybe, if by ‘monopoly’ we mean the ‘rests’ that infect the noted discourses. But if by ‘monopoly’ we mean the dogmas of the Christian School – the same ones that shape the way we think about and perceive reality – then the monopoly is definitely still very much in place. What this means is that the ‘too narrow views’ are still very much in place too, and that getting dirty actually means getting clean.

Now, the shifts that are currently happening within the postmodern marketing, cultural, interpretivist and posthuman consumer culture fields are also an expression of a synchronization between certain views and the Christian School’s first-degree truths. These shifts define an act of conversion, and they are not to be considered in relation to the humanistic and modernist ‘rests’ (which are to be only cleaned up), but in relation to the ‘old’ worldviews: the Form-al and polytheistic ones - e.g. the Hellenistic, Surui, Maasai, Maori, Inuit ones. It is these views that are to be completely abandoned, or shifted from, as Paul noted. In other words, the shifts I am talking about here is not from the Cartesian subject to the postmodern one, but from the old, pagan one, to the Christian new human.

To put it more clearly, what we have here are three movements that sustain the continuous ‘brownian motion’ that defines the noted fields: alignments, purifications, and shifts. The alignments define the motion in relation to the first-degree dogmatic truths, the purifications regard the ‘rests’ that keep infusing the fields of marketing and consumer research in one form or another, while the shifts define a much deeper move from the ‘old’ to the ‘new’ model, the one spawned by Christ.

The theoretical and empirical explanations and approaches regarding various issues – e.g. what does it mean to be a human, CCM, matter and materiality etc. – cannot move against or outside the dogmatic space. No matter how radically the perceived main actors (technology and contemporary knowledge paradigms) held responsible for the creation of the Posthumanist culture, the ‘matrix of all our performances’, might change in the future, they cannot do so outside the unbreakable cloister defined by the dogmas, i.e. by these present absences, or the first-degree truths. For example, a return of the natural perspective - with everything that entails - is very, very unlikely. Accordingly, no matter how much we are going to tune our understanding of the CCM in order to meet the challenges brought about by the two actors, this tuning is always going to happen in accordance with the first-degree truths.

As I tried to show, what usually seems to be a distancing from the perceived structure of oppression, or the status quo, is actually a move towards the dogmatic core of the Christian School, i.e. an alignment with the ‘first-degree truths’. This ‘entrapment’ is evident in a large number of cases. In the work I mentioned few of the architects of the open (the network, the rhizome, the assemblage) and the weird (the werewolf, the nomad) approach, e.g. Foucault, Lyotard, Deleuze, Bennett, and Braidotti among others. As I tried to show, none of them managed to liberate himself from the powerful grip of the Christian School. Yes, e.g. polycentrically constructed universes, non-representationalist accounts, and vibrant models of matter are making their way into the postmodern marketing, cultural, and posthuman consumer culture fields. However, all the views based on natural hierarchies, metaphysics, ontology, and teleology are rejected. No totality. No single type of meaning-centered horizon of hierarchically ordered reference points can claim to possess an epistemic monopoly on the interpretation of reality, no matter who makes these claims – Western, or no Western, e.g. the Surui, the Maasai, or the Inuvialuit people. In a model in which none is dropped, none can be privileged either.

Following all this, it does not matter, at all, how these shifts are, in turn, going to change the way we think about CCM as long as the way we think about CCM keeps changing. Ad infinitum. This is the biggest change – behind which lurks the unquestionable dogma of the Christian School: there is no end to knowledge.

In turn, these ‘open’ and ‘weird’ views are promoted universally. If the views based on the residual elements led to an understanding of the entire reality through those lenses, now the war against totality – totalities expressed through e.g. metanarratives, normative orientations, abstractions, and decontextualized assumptions – has to be waged against any totality, not only the Western one: every worldview that recognizes essentialist, Form-al categories has to be cleaned up of those elements. Therefore, what corporeality or materiality consists of – whatever corporeality – should become an open question
everywhere: having an infinite number of answers to it (all of them being, in turn, falsifiable) is the only right definition. As I noted, in the moment the answer will be uttered, an outcry against it will necessarily happen, followed by constant processes of deconstruction (i.e. limit-breaking) and the subsequent creation of what I have been calling ‘posthuman commodities’: an infinity mirror effect, a multiplicity, a bottomless polarization.

Seeing the contemporary technological gadgetry and process-oriented philosophical approaches as ‘channels of distribution’ or enablers of certain dogmatic views or tendencies is another thing I briefly addressed in my text. Considering these two from this perspective is not a novel approach, of course, especially in the case of technology. Technology has been already approached as an enabler, or as a key driver of various traits that define us as humans (e.g. creativity, or innovation\textsuperscript{1364}), and as the main actor behind the concretization of our natural need to open up and connect with each other, and everything around\textsuperscript{1365}. However, the argument I am making in my text is different in that I introduce technological gadgetry and various process-oriented philosophical approaches as the key drivers for the dogmatic views of the Christian School. In other words, technology is not augmenting “what’s already there”, in all of us, thus acting as “the Great Amplifier of Our Humanity”\textsuperscript{1366}, but quite the opposite.

The technology that gets associated the most with the Posthumanist movement is the digital one, it being based on a form of perspectival representation called ‘linear perspective’. Descartes, among others, played a crucial role in developing this type of perspective, the ‘Cartesian Coordinate System’ being a practical expression of it. The ‘Cartesian Coordinate System’ forms the unshakable bedrock on which the entire contemporary digital ecosystem is built. Indeed, the Cartesian Coordinate System is used in both regular computer displays and in virtual reality renderings. The system is also employed in contemporary gaming, navigation, urban planning, robotics, AI, economics and policy modeling, and many other fields. The main argument in here is that the ‘linear perspective’ follows closely the dogmatic requirements of the Christian School, replacing the Hellenistic (and many others) types of Form-al representation, i.e. the so-called ‘natural perspective’. This means that all contemporary technology is non-representational.

Now, giving the current, almost global spread and usage of the linear-perspective based technological gadgetry, the consumer understands, interacts with, and augments its surrounding environment almost exclusively through the use of such devices, especially mobile phones and headsets. The argument I am then making is that

\textsuperscript{1364} Linturi 2015.
\textsuperscript{1365} Zuckerberg 2012.
\textsuperscript{1366} Berman 2015.
through the adoption of such devices, an entire worldview is also gradually embraced, one firmly based on the dogmatic resolutions of the Christian School. It is only after such foundational shifts – i.e. only after humanity becomes a ‘posthuman commodity’ – that such devices can be finally seen as amplifiers of our humanity: only an endlessly amplifiable humanity can be amplified. Such adoptions do not need to be conscious or assumed ones. Paraphrasing the sociologist David Beer, these gadgets do not need to be trusted or eagerly adopted in order to be given power to shape our lives: they only need attention. The rest will eventually follow. In order to illustrate this claim, I gave a few examples about how these technologies keep implementing a vast ‘social training’ within various indigenous cultures around the world that adopt them (e.g. the Surui people, the Maasai warriors and others), most of these cultures being still polytheistic (hence polycentric) and firmly grounded on Truth-telling metanarratives, natural hierarchies, and traditional practices built around the meticulous rituals of the Sacrifice.

The diffusion within various cultures of a certain dogmatic understanding through technological adoption might be seen as staying in sharp contrast with what I noted a bit earlier in this section, i.e. that what we are witnessing is not really a foundational shift, or a radical breaking off from a preexisting condition, but rather a purification of sorts. However, the contrast is only apparent, once we consider the fact that in the first case I was referring to a situation that happens within the same School, whereas in the above example I was pointing to a situation that happens between different Schools. In other words, whereas there are no real onto-epistemological shifts happening within the Christian School (as usually assumed), such tectonic transformations do happen within various Schools under the impact of the Christian one. The second situation represents indeed an example of a true gigantomachy, one happening right before our eyes.

The process of cleaning up the ‘rests’ is not supposed to be a finite one. As I tried to show, Christianity’s ultimate fulfillment resides exactly in its eternal incompleteness. A society calibrated in perfect accord to the ‘first-degree truths’ is not and cannot be an image of a Christian society. On the contrary: the calibration would transform the Christian School into a Form-al, fixed system – a situation which will go against the first-degree truths themselves. And so, the Christian School, in order to prevail, has to constantly deny (i.e. express it apophatically) its own Form-al foundation, endlessly deconstructing itself so there will be no fixity within it. Hitting the rock bottom would indicate the discovery of a ‘first cause’, an essence different than God’s unique, unreachable and unknowable one. And this is something that cannot happen. Giving this, the annihilation of certain limits will always make room for other ones, keeping the space

1367 Beer 2016.
1368 See also Alexander 2011; Greenwood, Aika, and Davis 2011; Beaton and all 2016.
of debate, criticism and dialogue open and alive. There is always a residual limit to be broken, a war to be waged against some metanarrative hiding in some corner of the Earth, a new polarization to be created, a plural to be singularized, and thus a new understanding of CCM to be envision. Attention has to be on high alert all the time, as literally anything can stop becoming, and start be: iconoclasm, deconstruction, connectivity, relations, processes, secularism, the linguistic, or the materialist turn. All these can be or become an idol if approached, fetishistically, in-themself, as the bearer of some truth. When worshiped, the verb becomes a noun, bringing us back into the ‘the misty realm of religion’, ‘superstition’, and metaphysics.

Let me now conclude by summarizing the above discussion in three main points:

- first, because they are primarily based on dogmas, i.e. truths considered to be divinely revealed (thus not on technological developments, or socially constructed philosophical paradigms), it means that the space for onto-epistemological change remains a very narrow one. Accordingly, the more we clean up the ‘rests’, the narrower this space becomes – while the narrowing is being expressed as an infinite broadening. No matter how radical the perceived main actors (technology and knowledge paradigms) held responsible for the creation of the Posthumanist culture, the ‘matrix of all our performances’, might change in the future, they cannot do so outside the unbreakable cloister defined by the dogmas, i.e. by these present absences, or the first-degree truths. Accordingly, no matter how much we are going to tune our understanding of the consumer, consumption, and markets in order to meet the challenges brought about by the two actors, this tuning is always going to happen in accordance with the first-degree truths,

- second, being based on the dogmatic foundations of the Christian School, it means that the changes have to be implemented, or imposed, universally. The ‘new humanity’ spawned by Christ affect all humanity, not only those living in e.g. Finland. Which is to say, the Form-al hierarchies of Being, the ontological categories, and teleological or causal tensions (among other things) are to be eliminated not only from one worldview (i.e. the Western one), but from all other cultures that recognize such presences. Following Lyotard, the war against totality has to be waged against all totalities, all metanarratives, all closures,

- third, as it has been often mentioned, the technological development and the legislative or ethical one (not to speak about theology) function on two very different speeds, the former being way ahead to the latter ones1369. A synchronicity between the

technological and the legislative / ethical advancements is thus missing. This means that by the time of its publishing, it is very possible that an analysis of the contemporary technological developments and the challenges they pose on various levels (individual, society, the environment etc.) might be already outdated. However, as I tried to argue, the speed of development and the sheer diversification of technology are only apparent. Giving that the technological gadgetry is based on a specific foundation, one informed by various dogmatic percepts, the changes through which it continuously passes – from a hardware / software point of view – do not, and cannot affect that foundation, but only reinforce it.

Following Crist’s advice “seek, and you shall find”\textsuperscript{1370}, all we have to do it to look around and within, as far and as deep as possible, through ‘linear perspective’ based devices, and find such limits which contain, limits that are impeding the rise of the ‘new humanity’ and its world: the flawed cyborgs with endless definitions.

D. Limitations and future research

The main focus of this text was to identify and analyze some of the Christian theological elements that inform the Posthumanist discourse. Then, to show how this discourse affects, through the emergence of the posthuman consumer culture field, the larger fields of postmodern marketing, cultural and interpretivist consumer research.

Speaking about theological elements, in the present work I have been focusing my attention only on the notion of limit, trying to expose the ways in which the presence of this concept in various fields and under various disguises influences our understanding of what does it mean to be a human, of matter, technology and more. But the limits are far from being the only component that might be addressed critically through theological

\textsuperscript{1370} Matthew 7:7.
lenses by the marketing and consumer research scholars. There are many others, and giving the rise of the emergent posthuman consumer culture field, such issues can be identified easier and more accurately than before.

Giving the specific directions the Christian dogmas impose on the understanding of the human being, its society and the environment at large, future research could take into consideration the understanding of biology-as-technology and thus the subsequent disappearance of gadgetry. For example, as noted, one visible tendency is towards the creation of a fully clickable environment. Giving this, the question how a posthuman future without gadgetry, Internet, and cyborgs (defined here as a visible blend between organic and mechanical parts) would look like becomes an important one. Some scholars are already working on that which means that avenues for fruitful further research in this area are already open.

Deconstruction and commodification make indeed an unexpected bedfellowship, one worth researching especially within the areas of sustainability, critical marketing or neo-materialism. These fields tend to take a more reserved, thus less enthusiastic approach towards postmodernity (replacing the linguistic turn with a materialist, senses-oriented one), addressing critically not only the market-centric ideologies (especially in their neoliberal embodiment), but also the cycles of exploitation enacted by commodity exchange. As I noted, to a large extent, capitalism, through processes of reification, goes against the ‘commodification of everything’, and thus the creation of ‘posthuman commodities’. It does that by creating concealed ‘wheres’, paywalls behind which idolatrous notions such as ‘value’, ‘authenticity’ and ‘meaning’ are cherished. These clastra are where the becomings get frozen into actualizations, where minoritarianism starts to coincide with fetishism. Therefore, a fertile territory of research opens up, a territory defined by the clashes between the creation of first-degree truths based ‘posthuman commodities’ on one side, and the ‘rests’-influenced processes of reification on the other.

Generally speaking, until now, the marketing and consumer research scholars’ main area of interest has been confined within the Earth’s boundaries. Giving this, another potential avenue of investigation is to further extend the geographical borders of research, analyzing the ways in which the views proposed by the Posthumanist movement are spreading not only globally, but – through space tourism, space exploration and exploitation and space colonization – even far beyond the Earth’s borders. If the ‘open space’ paradigm will succeed over the ‘closed Earth’ one (which is something that already seems to happen), the outer space will create new and vast opportunities for

1371 Mokka 2015.
consumption: if anything, space is a gigantic generator of resources, filled with countless valuable materials and opportunities.
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The aim of the following text is to introduce Christian theology as the main force that shapes and legitimizes the Posthumanist movement and to show the ways in which, in turn, this movement influences fields such as postmodern and critical marketing, cultural, and interpretive consumer research and, especially, the emerging field of Posthuman Consumer Research. Accordingly, this study contributes to the ongoing discussions within the field of Posthuman Consumer Research regarding the rise of the so-called "cyborgian consumer". By taking on the proposed approach, this research explores issues pertaining to the future of identity, the commodity, markets, and consumption at large.