

Articoli/5

The Evil Berger in the Good Berger's Habit

Martin Heidegger, Peter Sloterdijk and the Apocalyptic Playground of the Anthropocene

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In his 1946 essay *Letter on Humanism* Heidegger set out to unveil the barbarism hidden in the humanistic subject, reduced to a calculating subject framing the world as an object of cognition and control. In his 1999 essay *Rules for the Human Zoo*, Sloterdijk will commend Heidegger for revealing the *homo barbarus* hiding beneath *homo humanus*, but will show that Heidegger as well hides a bad shepherd of breeding beneath the good shepherd of Being. After clarifying these two juxtapositions, I would like to expose a contemporary form of *homo barbarus* that Sloterdijk himself seems unable to grasp in his celebration of the posthuman. If Sloterdijk speaks of culture as the sum of homeotechnologies that have bred the human being, the Anthropocene era marks the spread of such breeding technologies to the entire planet. From deet-resistant mosquitoes to the o-zone heavens, human cultures have colonized the natural world, doing away with the separation between nature and culture and therefore also between good and evil. If the goal of separating *homo humanus* from *homo barbarus* has become impossible in the age of the Anthropocene, so indeed has the notion of human progress, inaugurating a post-historical age where the posthuman future being proposed in the place of humanism is decidedly apocalyptic.

L'homme n'est ni ange ni bête, et le malheur veut que qui veut faire l'ange fait la bête!
B. Pascal¹

Introduction

Ever since Plato, separating *homo humanus* from *homo barbarus* has been a question of education, requiring the technologies of reading and writing, which have been essential in the formation of humanism and the human exceptionalism that it celebrates. In the modern period, this exceptionalism was understood to

¹ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, Paris 1972, p. 164.

lie in the primacy of reason, for only reason was deemed capable of reaching the freedom and universality characteristic of the Enlightenment, and the dream of democracy that is its legacy. But after two World Wars, and the inhumanity of the Shoah and other reasoned horrors, the truth and the freedom of the *sapere aude* have been put into question by postmodern thought and its analyses of ideology, alienation and hegemony. Notwithstanding a classic education, *homo humanus* has thus become difficult to differentiate from *homo barbarus*, transforming our faith in humanism into a mixture of nostalgia and cynicism.

Perhaps the last attempt to salvage humanism and disassociate it from the Enlightenment hegemony of reason, was Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Humanism of Existentialism*, published in 1945. In this essay Sartre retains both Descartes' *cogito*, as the only truth, and Kant's categorical imperative, based in the Enlightenment notion of freedom. But in his attempt to escape from essentialist definitions of the human being and emphasize a politics of action, Sartre reversed the metaphysics of medieval scholasticism, where *essentia* precedes *existentia*, and claimed that man has no essence, since if «existence precedes essence» there is no essential human nature to contain him ideologically before he chooses to act. In his 1946 essay *Letter on Humanism*, Martin Heidegger criticized Sartre's understanding of the human being defined exclusively in terms of action and choice, pointing out that such an understanding reduces action to a question of causality, where the human being is understood as the active agent who is able to enact an effect in the world. Heidegger will thus differentiate himself from Sartre's existentialism, and particularly from his attempt to salvage humanism, by claiming that the *humanitas* of *homo humanus*, as defined by Christianity, by Marx or by Sartre, is in all cases determined by an already established understanding of man as rational animal². Though Marx finds the human in society³, the Christian outside of society in relation to God, and Sartre in the freedom of individual choice, they all take «the most universal "essence" of the human being as a given. The human being is considered to be an *animal rationale*»⁴. Heidegger traces the Greco-

² No matter how different Christianity, Marxism and existentialism appear, «they nonetheless all agree in this, that the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* is determined with regard to an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole». Cited in M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, in *Basic Writings: Martin Heidegger*, London 1977, p. 245.

³ «The essence of materialism (Marx) does not consist in the assertion that everything is simply matter but rather in a metaphysical determination according to which every being appears as the material of labor. The modern metaphysical essence of labor is anticipated in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the self-establishing process of unconditioned production, which is the objectification of the actual through the human being, experienced as subjectivity. The essence of materialism is concealed in the essence of technology, about which much has been written but little has been thought. Technology is in its essence a destiny within the history of being and of the truth of being, a truth that lies in oblivion. For technology does not go back to the *techné* of the Greeks in name only but derives historically and essentially from *techné* as a mode of *aleteuein*, a mode, that is, of rendering beings manifest. As a form of truth, technology is grounded in the history of metaphysics, which is itself a distinctive and up to now the only surveyable phase of the history of being» (M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, cit., p. 259).

⁴ Ivi, p. 245.

Roman understanding of *animal rationale* back to Plato and Aristotle, where *ratio* means rational calculation and thinking is thereby confined to *techné*. He claims that this «technical interpretation of thinking» that he calls *Gestell* (or enframing) transforms thinking into causality in order to achieve a useful end. «They take thinking itself to be a *techné*, a process of deliberation in service to doing and making»⁵. *Ratio* has thus come to mean the essence of man, and metaphysics the means to reduce man to a calculating machine, to manipulate and dominate the world. For Heidegger, humanism is thus responsible for the barbarism of the techno-scientific world, and in order to find the essence of being human we must move beyond humanism, and beyond the technological objectification of the world that brings barbarism in its wake. Heidegger's critique of humanism thus put into question the modern subject, who could no longer be defined autonomously from within but rather in relationality to the world without. Always becoming in a state of constant self-transcendence, the essence of being human for Heidegger lies precisely in this ek-sistence in the world where the human being inter-is with other beings and things.

In his 1999 response to Heidegger, *Rules for the Human Zoo*, philosopher Peter Sloterdijk understands Heidegger's critique of humanism as opening «a posthumanistic space for thought», where we can see how the technologies of humanism have been replaced by other anthropotechnics that give themselves to be seen in the clearing of Being. Alongside the contemplation of Being, it is the ineluctable breeding of ourselves by means of our technics that Sloterdijk finds in Heidegger's clearing, just as Heidegger found *Gestell* in humanism. Sloterdijk's essay thereby relegates the classical education of humanism to the archive, and understands the essential ontological transcendence of the human being in its world as facilitating other means of taming and breeding that are being enabled by our contemporary technologies.

In this article, I would like to juxtapose the co-dependency of humanism and *Gestell* for Heidegger, and of the good shepherd of Being and the bad shepherd of breeding, for Sloterdijk. And finally, I would like to expose a contemporary form of *homo barbarus* that Sloterdijk seems unable to grasp in his celebration of the posthuman. Indeed, by calling our contemporary era the Anthropocene, we have moved from essentializing the human over and against the world to disseminating the human in the natural world, thereby dissolving the distinction between nature and culture. If Sloterdijk celebrates this dissolution and claims that such a posthuman era can replace modern domination with cooperation so that «a radically new view of cultural and natural objects comes about», such a view ignores the Anthropocene nomad hiding in posthumanist clothes, where the final transcendence of the human entails not cooperation but a post-historical age where human progress has been replaced by an apocalyptic end-time.

⁵ Ivi, p. 240.

1. Heidegger: *Homo Humanus is Homo Barbarus*

For Heidegger, the human being *does* have an essence, for as he puts it, «in what does the humanity of the human being consist? It lies in his essence»⁶. But this essence does not lie in the study of the human animal as a scientific enterprise, an objective and external explanation or proof. When we limit thinking to utilitarian instrumentalizing projects, «language surrenders itself to our mere willing and trafficking as an instrument of domination over beings»⁷. Nor does it lie in the freedom of choice that limits the human being to a doing that is a causal action where «Beings themselves appear as actualities in the interaction of cause and effect. We encounter beings as actualities in a calculative businesslike way, but also scientifically and by way of philosophy, with explanations and proofs»⁸. Humanism can thus never unveil the essence of being human, for such an essence lies precisely in our ek-sistence in a non-human world that is revealed to us once we heed his call to «free ourselves from the technical interpretation of thinking»⁹. Thinking is thus not a causal activity at all for Heidegger, and it therefore cannot be reduced to *techné*.

For Heidegger, modern humanism developed alongside the scientific and industrial revolutions, and can therefore not be separated from *Gestell*, the framing of the world into objects of knowledge that accompanied and fostered the development of humanistic subjectivity. Such a subject is understood over and against a world of things that were taken as use-functions for the subject's progressive mastery over himself and the world. Gail Soffer writes for example, that for Heidegger, «humanism lies at the root of the reification, technologization, and secularization characteristic of the modern world»¹⁰. As Heidegger explains in an essay published in 1938, *Age of the World Picture*, this projected objectivity necessitates a projecting subject, for they grow in direct co-relation:

[T]he more extensively and the more effectually the world stands at man's disposal as conquered, and the more objectively the object appears, all the more subjectively, i.e., the more importunately, does the *subjectum* rise up, and all the more impetuously, too, do observation of and teaching about the world change into a doctrine of man, into anthropology.¹¹

⁶ M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, cit., pp. 243-244: «Where else does care tend but in the direction of bringing the human being back to his essence? What else does that in turn betoken but that man (homo) become human (humanus)? Thus humanitas really does remain the concern of such thinking. For this is humanism: meditating and caring, that human beings be human and not inhumane, "inhuman," that is, outside their essence. But in what does the humanity of the human being consist? It lies in his essence».

⁷ *Ivi*, p. 243.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ G. Soffer, *Heidegger, Humanism and the Destruction of History*, «Review of Metaphysics», 49, 1996, p. 38.

¹¹ M. Heidegger, *The Age of the World Picture*, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York 1977, p. 133. And again in *The Question Concerning Technology*: «Meanwhile man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself and postures as lord of the earth. In

In *Being and Time*, this control over the world is what Heidegger calls being present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*), which entails the framing of the world as an object of contemplation and scientific inquiry. It is because Husserl continued to interpret phenomenology in this objectified and static fashion that Heidegger was inspired to write *Being and Time*, for Husserl had limited phenomenology to a study of the world from a perspective that reduced the human to a cognitive awareness presiding over the world understood as a still-life, dead to the context and usages that allow us to inter-be with our world. This is the mistake of *Gestell*, when we generalize the framing of the object of science as the only way of thinking.

Instead of this present-at-hand enframing that separates the subject from the world, Heidegger will propose a non-instrumental understanding of being that allows the human subject and the world to reveal themselves through their interactions. Heidegger calls this way of being with things ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*), and he believes that our being-in-the-world is precisely a being-with (*Mitsein*) the world in a 'between' that eradicates both subject and object. Thus, when Heidegger calls our being-in-the-world «transcendent» (p. 266), he intends to highlight the fact that we find our essence not in ourselves closed off from the world, but rather in the openness of our being with the rest of nature, and with the objects and tools that co-determine this world. «World», he writes in the *Letter on Humanism*, «is in a certain sense precisely “the beyond” within ek-sistence and for it» where «the *between* within which a *relation* of subject to object can “be”»¹². This 'between' is the space that is opened up in the clearing of being for relationality to claim itself as our essence, in the transcendent becoming of an inter-dependent world.

In this reading, the essence of being human cannot lie in humanistic individualism, for it does not lie within the human being at all, but rather in our care (*Sorge*) for Being in the clearing of the world. Thus what matters is Being, not human being, and «man is», he famously writes, «the shepherd of Being»¹³. So it is not the *ego cogito* that defines Being, but rather Being, when reduced to *Gestell*, that gives such an ego to be seen. He writes: «So the point is that in the determination of the humanity of the human being as ek-sistence what is essential is not the human being but Being - as the dimension of the ecstasis of ek-sistence», where ek-sistence «is the guardianship, that is, the care for Being»¹⁴. Being human thus entails shepherding (*Bergen*) Being in a clearing that is also a sheltering (*Bergen*) where we allow beings to be. Being then, is both proper to man and more than man. It is this more that has been hidden by humanism,

this way the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself», *ivi*, p. 332.

¹² M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, cit., p. 266.

¹³ *Ivi*, p. 234. And again: «The human being is the shepherd of being. It is in this direction alone that *Being and Time* is thinking when ecstatic existence is experienced as “care”» (*ivi*, p. 252).

¹⁴ *Ivi*, p. 254 and 261.

in its attempt to limit man to a rational animal who understands the world as a standing reserve (*Bestand*). Heidegger is thus attempting to conceptualize thinking as lying outside of zoology and outside of calculative rationality. The objectivity of rational thinking cannot express the essence of being human, for it does not care. It is for this reason that humanism cannot be dissociated from barbarism. Rather, being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) is prior to the division between subject and object, immanent and transcendent, it is a being-with (*Mit-sein*) that is revealed as care. Allow me to quote at length from his *Letter on Humanism*:

But the essence of the human being consists in his being more than merely human, if this is represented as “being a rational creature”. ... The “more” means: more originally and therefore more essentially in terms of his essence. This means that the human being... is more than *animal rationale* precisely to the extent that he is less bound up with the human being conceived from subjectivity. The human being is not the lord of beings. The human being is the shepherd of Being. Human beings lose nothing in this “less”; rather, they gain in that they attain the truth of being. They gain the essential poverty of the shepherd, whose dignity consists in being called by Being itself into the preservation of Being’s truth.¹⁵

Heidegger’s critique of humanism is not intended to fall back into barbarism¹⁶, but to transcend the binary dichotomies of metaphysics altogether. Since all metaphysics is humanistic, «every humanism remains metaphysical»¹⁷ and mired in dualism. Because we cannot divorce the celebration of the humanistic individual from the violence of *Gestell*, we need to move to a more fundamental understanding of the human prior to the subject/object divisions inherent in humanism. Only by moving beyond human exceptionalism will we come to understand that «the essential poverty» of our role as shepherd of Being lies in a way of relating to and transforming the non-human world.

2. Sloterdijk: The Evil Berger in the Good Berger’s Habit

By decentering the human being in favor of Being, Heidegger has opened up what philosopher Peter Sloterdijk calls a «posthumanistic space for thought». In his 1999 essay *Rules for the Human Zoo: A response to Heidegger’s Letter on Humanism*, Sloterdijk sets out to show that just as Heidegger revealed *Gestell* to be hidden within humanism, Heidegger’s clearing also hides more dangerous activities from view. By positing ek-sistence as a continual transcendence of self in relation to world, where creation can take place when subject and object are overcome in the inter-being of tool use, Heidegger’s clearing, Sloterdijk claims, is a busy place. Indeed, the clearing is the place where anthropodicy is simply

¹⁵ Ivi, p. 260.

¹⁶ Ivi, p. 250: «it ought to be somewhat clearer now that opposition to “humanism” in no way implies a defense of the inhuman but rather opens other vistas».

¹⁷ Ivi, p. 245.

another word for culture, actualized through the homeotechnologies that we develop to tame, and even to breed ourselves.

If there is man, then that is because a technology has made him evolve out of the prehuman. It is that which authentically brings about humans. Therefore humans encounter nothing strange when they expose themselves to further creation and manipulation, and they do nothing perverse when they change themselves autotechnologically...¹⁸

Because Heidegger tells us that man is shepherd of being, he moves beyond the constraints of humanistic letters and calls for man to be more receptive to being than a good reader of the classics. In fact this submission is so fundamental that no reading list can be compiled based upon it, and the activities of *Dasein* in the clearing are more essential than reading to *Dasein*'s constitution. Heidegger's clearing thus gives to be seen an asceticism far deeper than that of humanism, a form of taming more fundamental than reading could enforce. Sloterdijk thus asks what exactly happens in the clearing, and if more happens there than the silent contemplation of Being. «My conviction», he writes:

is that both becoming-human in general and the opening of the clearing in particular has something to do with domestication, that is, with the domiciliation of homo sapiens. As such, becoming-human has been a spontaneous act of self-raising... Consequently, there are many more things in the clearing than a simple surveillance of what there is on the basis of itself... a certain prototechnics of intervention into vital processes is always given.¹⁹

Sloterdijk understands theory (from *teorein*, looking) as a form of homework, the activity of what he calls «house pets»²⁰ looking out the window from the safety of the home. Becoming a human being is thus a form of self-taming, an asceticism that thanks to birth control, endoscopic ultrasound, amniocentesis and genetic engineering, has also become a form of breeding. Thus, as Sloterdijk infamously wrote, *Lesen und Auslesen*, reading and breeding, cannot be separated, for not only lectures but also selections take place in the clearing.

Sloterdijk's essay caused quite a scandal when it was published, for speaking of humanism as a form of taming raised the specter of Germany's fascist and eugenic past. In Sloterdijk's own understanding of the outrage caused by his article, he says that Heidegger's letter was a «timebomb», and his own response merely «its detonator»²¹. By critiquing humanism, Heidegger's timebomb destroyed Western metaphysics by enabling what Sloterdijk calls «the decentering of the human being»²². No longer the center of value, «the essential

¹⁸ Cited from selections of interviews printed in *New Perspective Quarterly*, volume 21, n°4, 2004, no page numbers.

¹⁹ P. Sloterdijk, *Neither Sun nor Death*, Interviews with Hans-Jurgen Heinrichs, Steve Corcoran (Trans.), Cambridge 2011, p. 58.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ivi*, p. 107.

²² *Ivi*, p. 104.

thing is not the human being, but Being as a dimension of the ecstatic character of (human) ex-istence»²³. Describing humanism as «the fundamentalism of our culture»²⁴, Sloterdijk claims that Heidegger set off a timebomb by moving beyond fundamentalism to embrace a new «religion of the clearing»²⁵ where we bow down before Being with the humility of unknowing. In this new religion, Heidegger has given us «an eleventh commandment», which enjoins disenchanted humanists to learn, in Sloterdijk's words,

to fear themselves as the *Unheimliche*, the uncanny strangers. My meditative recommendation... starts from this diagnostic, which can be summed up in a simple expression: humans do not know themselves in the least, since hitherto they have not scrutinized themselves sufficiently.²⁶

Though Sloterdijk acknowledges the importance of Heidegger's work in bringing to light the dark side of humanism in the modern arena, he accuses Heidegger of seeing only bucolic philosophers warming their hands by the stove in the clearing of Being. Indeed, Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* was an attempt to rehabilitate his reputation, tarnished by his support for Nazism, by separating thinking as an activity from all the other activities he was engaged with in an Aryan clearing, activities that indeed, he passed over in silence.

Developing Heidegger's critique of humanism, Sloterdijk shows that humanism cannot be separated from the arenas of the ancient roman and modern spectacles of violence, for if humanism was a form of breeding for maximization, reserved for an elite, the masses were bred for minimization on the games in the arena and its celebration of death. Sloterdijk's article thus sets out to show that not just humanism but all of our anthropotechnics breed for maximization *and* minimization, including those that take place in Heidegger's clearing. It is this contradiction that must be grasped if we hope, Sloterdijk writes, to «understand the gigantic conflict that runs through the modern world: the one which exists between the protectors of life and the consumers of life». Finding Nietzsche hiding in Heidegger's clearing, Sloterdijk reminds us that the *Übermensch* requires «big blond beasts» to both cultivate and finally overcome *ressentiment*.²⁷ Where we breed bucolic philosophers, fascists are close at hand.

²³ Ivi, p. 107.

²⁴ Ivi, p. 114.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Sloterdijk's reading of Heidegger is potent because it manages to lucidly capture the post-modern predicament, by merging Heidegger's neoteny and decentering of the subject with Nietzsche's biologism and will to Power. Sloterdijk thus finds Nietzsche's *Übermensch* hiding in the clearing, for the transcendence of timeless ontological definitions in favor of an open-ended ek-sistence in the world entails the quest to become always other, or rather, always *Über*. Foucault aptly encapsulates the postmodern position, when he writes: «The trajectory of the question *Was ist der Mensch?* in the field of philosophy reaches its end in the response which both challenges and disarms it: *der Übermensch*». In M. Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*, R. Nigro and K. Briggs (trans.), New York 2008, p. 124.

Humanism, then, seems to breed a docile, spiritual being who has tamed his body to remain seated so that the love letters of the past can be read and responded to. The humanist does not watch the death games in the arena, and she prefers Nouvelle Vague to the violence of Hollywood blockbusters, but her reading nonetheless requires such a prototechnics, for the earth had to be conquered and the savages tamed so that our humanist could read her love letters, with a cup of darjeeling tea, and a cube of cane sugar, in the safety of the home. The force of Sloterdijk's article lies in his underlining the fact that these two forms of breeding cannot be separated, that we are always manichaen, evil bergers and good bergers, at the same time.

My claim is that, in the clearing, we do not simply find silent pastors and serene guardians. There are also other, not such good, herders, who merit our speaking specially of them. We must be aware of the fact that there exist two radically different pastorals, one idyllic and one disturbing...²⁸

Endorsing humanism within, Heidegger showed us, entailed supporting *Gestell* without. And accepting that our essential nature lies in transcending ourselves in a 'between' that destroys the separation of the human from its world means accepting at the same time that taming and breeding are indeed essential to our nature.

The ethical dilemma of the moderns consists in the fact that they think like vegetarians and live like carnivores. This is the reason why, with us, ethics and technology can never run in parallel. We want to be as good as the good shepherds, but live as well as the bad shepherds, who are sadly famous for their feasts of slaughter and orgies in the course of which they squander life. This dualism is the reason that current debates on ethics have a displaced tone. Modern man speaks a double language; he is a nomad wearing sheep's clothing, or the evil berger in the good berger's habit; an ultimate consumer.²⁹

If postmodern philosophy has taken Heidegger at his word and has been able to move beyond essentializing the human as subject and the world as object, we will finally need to inquire if this has in any way helped us to understand the nature of our care, which is also the care of our nature. If our essence lies in our care for our world, we must heed Sloterdijk's call to look carefully at what it is we are shepherding in the clearing of Being. If as Simondon once put it, we are the bergers of our machines, it is perhaps through this care that our essential being has come to light, as Heidegger anticipated. As we disseminate our essence to the ends of the earth in the age of the Anthropocene, scurrying to and for in our cars and speaking back and forth in our smart phones, we may soon clear the clearing of life itself, and leave the feverish planet to the machinic objects of our care. It is to this danger that I now turn.

²⁸ P. Sloterdijk, *Neither Sun nor Death*, cit., p. 124.

²⁹ Ivi, p. 126.

3. The Last Pastoral: The Anthropocene as Apocalypse

As if he already saw the postmodern paradigm his writing would help to inaugurate, Heidegger spoke of the hegemony of *Gestell* as merely an initial phase of the techno-scientific paradigm. He thus believed that it is not by avoiding, but rather by becoming deeply involved in technology, that a human identity more essential than that reflected by the humanist subject could come to light. Technology thus constitutes what he calls our «saving power» He writes:

[...] the essence of technology must harbor in itself the growth of the saving power. But in that case, might not an adequate look into what enframing is, as a destining of revealing, bring the upsurge of the saving power into appearance?³⁰

In light of this upsurge, Heidegger predicted that a more essential manner of being would once more come to light, but only when the human being «has overcome himself as subject, and that means when he no longer represents that which is as object»³¹. In the clearing then, Heidegger indicates the possibility of a being-in-the-world that might transcend the subjective will to power by embracing the organic and artificial interrelations or 'actions' that constitute the human as infinitely open³². This overcoming of subject and object is indeed concordant with postmodern descriptions of a posthuman identity that has been formed in the crucible of technology itself, as Heidegger predicted³³. If our nature is revealed by transcending ourselves in our care for the world, then there can be no clear-cut boundary between the human and the rest of the world, for our essence is our *mit-Sein* with tools in a world that determines tasks that we accomplish together. When everything becomes available for manipulation in this way, human existence is dispersed into the world, but it is this dispersal that harbors the growth «of the saving power». It is thus not by retreating from technological globalization, but by seeking ever more connections, that the saving power will come to light, since these connections reveal the interdependence of all that is in a world where being human is no longer about domination but rather active participation.

³⁰ M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, cit., p. 334.

³¹ M. Heidegger, *The Age of the World Picture*, cit., p. 154, appendix 14.

³² So long as human identity continues to be limited to an *a priori* definition, the human being will fail, in Heidegger's words, «...to hear in what respect he ek-sists, in terms of his essence, in a realm where he is addressed, so that he can *never* encounter only himself». M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*», cit., p. 332.

³³ Understanding this hybrid identity as what Heidegger intended when he speaks of discovering Being in and through technology is of course problematic. In the second phase of his career, after WWII, Heidegger speaks of a return to Being in terms that privilege an ancient Greek world view and an oracular presencing of *poiesis*. Thus in *The Question Concerning Technology* he mentions a return to the Greek meaning of the term *techné*, when it referred not only to technical creation, but also to art. I have developed the Heideggerian relation of art and *techné* in the trans-human framework of Actor-Network Theory in an article entitled *Techno-phenomenology: Martin Heidegger and Bruno Latour on how phenomena come to presence*, «South African Journal of Philosophy» 2013, 32(4), pp. 1-16.

Joining the celebration of the posthumanistic era, Sloterdijk thanks the disciplines of mechanical engineering and prosthetics for replacing the domination of modernity with cooperation between the human and non-human. He writes:

the agents of the metaphysical age... divide being into the subjective and the objective, and they put the soul, the self and the human on one side, and the thing, the mechanism and the inhuman on the other. The practical application of this distinction is called domination.

In the course of technological enlightenment – and this in fact takes place by means of mechanical engineering and prosthetics – it turns out that this classification is untenable, because it ascribes to the subject and the soul a superabundance of characteristics and capabilities that in fact belong on the other side. At the same time it denies to things and materials an abundance of characteristics that upon closer look they in fact do possess. If these traditional errors are corrected respectively, a radically new view of cultural and natural objects comes about.³⁴

Our contemporary Anthropocene age perhaps represents the victory of such a «saving power» and such a «radically new view of cultural and natural objects» in that it reveals the human in a deet-resistant mosquito and the o-zone heavens, thereby undermining essentialist humanisms and modern boundaries between nature and culture. And as Sloterdijk's analysis has shown, in the clearing, as the location of technological mastery, breeding has indeed been extended to the entire earth, where virtually everything has been transformed into a techno-human hybrid. Yet in the postmodern celebration of hybrid cooperation and the demise of the humanist subject, we must remember Sloterdijk's warning about ignoring the nomad wearing sheep's clothing.

If, as Heidegger put it, the human essence «is always beginning in a primal way», and has the potential to become Über – trans- post- or sub-human, to breed itself as god, beast or machine, our becoming renders whatever we ontologically are in the present immediately obsolete. Our constant transcendence of ourselves in the clearing of the world means that rather than making history, we seem bent upon concluding it, and bringing about what Jonathan Crary and Sloterdijk both call «post-history»³⁵. This recurring genesis seems today to exclude the possibility of continuous life experience or what Donna Haraway calls the «ongoing»³⁶, and Jonathan Crary describes as «long-

³⁴ Sloterdijk, extracts of interviews printed in *New Perspective Quarterly*, volume 21, n°4, 2004.

³⁵ Crary writes: «An illuminated 24/7 world without shadows is the final capitalist mirage of post-history...», J. Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, New York, 2013, p. 9. Sloterdijk writes: «An age is final if its constitution is such that no matter how much might happen in it, nothing during or after it could be epoch-making. Because of the temporal logic of its design, modernity is actually a constant dawning of a third or millenary age, an incessant crossing-over from history into post-history, a continuous transition into an end time without end», P. Sloterdijk, *The Time of the Crime of the Monstrous: On the Philosophical Justification of the Artificial in Sloterdijk Now*, Cambridge 2012, p. 173.

³⁶ D. Haraway, *Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene: Staying with the Trouble*, Talk given on 5/9/14, retrieved on vimeo.com/97663518.

term undertakings, even to fantasies of “progress” or development»³⁷. Such a separation of time from any notion of long-term ethical objectives, consigns history to a deterministic causality constrained by the laws of nature, outside of human influence or control. By replacing domination with what Sloterdijk calls cooperation, and dissolving the distinction between culture and nature, ethical judgements become impossible and human values *ringards*. Because what will come next threatens the present with imminent upgrade, the human is always living *Apocalypse Now*³⁸.

Avoiding what he calls the «irrational and excessive connotations» of the catastrophic scenarios that this lack of historic continuity might imply, Sloterdijk prefers to retain the notion of history as continuous, and to speak of «an incessant crossing-over from history into post-history, a continuous transition into an end time without end». Such continuity enforces what he calls «continuous self-upgrade» such that the future remains open and the end begins anew. He writes:

the “project of modernity” futurizes itself. A world process that produces its own futures, however, corresponds to the concept of the millennium or of end time without end. In that sense, the non-excessive version of a theory of modernity is forced at least to admit to the millenarist aspect of the current world form... This concession would bring the monstrous character of modernity’s temporal structure alarmingly into view.³⁹

But Sloterdijk’s posthumanistic age is still very much focused on the human subject, and in denial about the very real end time being predicted by scientists based upon the non-human world, such as the level of methane in the atmosphere, the 30% rise in carbon dioxide emissions, the acidification of the oceans, the rise in global temperature, the rate of species extinction, the loss of soil fertility due to fertilizers, and the loss of arctic ice. Scientists have made abundantly clear that the end time of the Anthropocene is not without end, and that this end is fast approaching if we do not come to terms with the evil berger hiding in the respectable habit of the bourgeois lifestyle of the inhabitants of industrialized nations, and in the ‘freedoms’ of neo-liberal capitalist industry. Rather than «continuous self-upgrade», as Sloterdijk would have it, the Anthropocene era may very well be the last era of life on the planet earth, for if greenhouse gases are not reduced within the next fifty years, the

³⁷ J. Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, cit., p. 9.

³⁸ I have taken this usage from Jacques Derrida, *D’un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie*, Paris 2005, pp. 59-60, who cogently writes: «je vous le dis en vérité, ce n’est pas seulement la fin de ceci mais aussi et d’abord de cela, la fin de l’histoire, la fin de la lutte des classes, la fin de la philosophie, la mort de Dieu, la fin des religions, la fin du christianisme et de la morale (ça, ce fut la naïveté la plus grave), la fin du sujet, la fin de l’homme, la fin de l’Occident, la fin d’Oedipe, la fin de la terre, *Apocalypse Now*, je vous dis, dans le cataclysme, le feu, le sang, le séisme fondamental, le napalm qui descend du ciel par hélicoptères, comme les prostituées, et aussi la fin de la littérature, la fin de la peinture, l’art comme chose du passé, la fin de la psychanalyse, la fin de l’université, la fin du phallogocentrisme et du phallogocentrisme, que sais-je encore?»

³⁹ P. Sloterdijk, *The Time of the Crime of the Monstrous: On the Philosophical Justification of the Artificial*, cit., pp. 173-175.

ecosystem will reach a point of no return. If we were to base our understanding of how to reduce this global catastrophe on the international political protocols reached at Kyoto and more recently at Paris, the end time will most certainly not be without end.

If the human being is seeking, in its techno-transcendence, the salvation of absolute renewal, this salvation has come to coincide with an apocalyptic end. Indeed, Upo-calipto – to un-conceal, lift the veil, disclose what is hidden – is a synonym for phenomenology itself, defined by Heidegger as the study of the disclosure of being, the allowing to appear of what is. So perhaps this is what Heidegger was pointing toward with his phenomenology of Dasein: The Being of the world will reveal itself to us only at the end time, when the apocalypse lifts the veil of our unknowing, and reveals that the technics that we make and that make us are what Michel Serres calls «God-making machines», designed to externalize our agency and our responsibility onto all-powerful techno-deities. Heidegger was perhaps right after all, when he said that «only a God can save us». These new techno-deities may bring the apocalypse, but the salvation that follows will be post-human.

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