WHAT REMAINS OF THE HUMAN
IN THE ANTHROPOCENE?
Living between 'nature' and 'culture'
in the posthuman condition

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Abstract

In this contribution, I aim to develop a philosophical account of 'posthuman' that enables us to conceive a future society of humanoids, humans, hybrids, artificial beings, who are free and equal. This analysis will help me to answer the paradoxical question: what does it means to be human in the Anthropocene (the era of the *Anthropos*). This expression – 'posthuman' or 'posthuman condition' is to be understood as referring to symbols and phenomena different from those associated with 'transhuman'. (Critical) Posthumanism is the corresponding line of thought, necessary for the paradigm shift we are in need of. According to this, posthuman is to be interpreted here as material, not anthropocentric, but rather interspecist, osmotic and relational, a horizon of effective sharing of experiences, dangers and challenges. In contrast, 'transhuman' (as the transhumanist ideal movement is advocating with strong mediatic influence) is meant to refer to the ultimate transcending of humans into the pure ether of an 'ideal', immaterial network made up only of software, and lacking in relations with any material beings in the ecosystem or cosmos.

Keywords: Conceptual Clarification, Anthropocene, Posthuman Horizon, (Critical)Posthumanism *versus* Transhumanism .

1. *Premises and preliminary assumptions*

With this contribution, *the foundations are laid for an answer*, albeit provisional and partial, to the original question. In fact, it will not be possible to fully answer the question of what remains of the human in the Anthropocene (the era in which tangible changes on the planet are attributable to human interventions). The aim, preliminary but essential, is to reset, *from an interspecist and no longer anthropocentric point of view*, the terms of the question which recites: to what extent can we be modified by technologies while remaining human? Above all, it is necessary to ques-

tion the very same role of the human species in the cosmos, considering that the Anthropocene and the current ecological collapse (aggravated by the recurrent epidemiological crises) are merely the symptoms of a global instability that can be contrasted only with a radical change of pace, with an equally clear and decisive change of paradigm[1]. It is necessary to move from humanism, as it is represented and impoverished from contemporary transhumanism[2], to (critical, in particular) posthumanism[3]; we shall highlight here, after a preliminary conceptual clarification, its socio-political character, and not without emancipatory aspects. This will be gradually displayed with the help of examples and interpretations of some theoretical phenomena and positions. This critical hermeneutic of the posthuman constellation (or condition) aims to bring out the intercultural, symbolic, social and political characteristics indispensable for adequately addressing the contemporary era in which the (largely) degenerative mutations of the planet were triggered by our interventions on it carried out in the last three hundred and twenty years, with the interplay of the cumulative impacts of the various, and subsequent, industrial revolutions. The radical cybernetic and digital changes occurred a few decades ago, and could constitute, if well set up and managed, one of the keys to mitigating the damage caused by previous industrial revolutions to the ecosystem (from the climate to hydrogeological instability, from deforestation to pandemics caused by the passage of viruses from animal species to humans).

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1   F. Ferrando, "The Party of the Anthropocene: posthumanism, environmentalism and the post-anthropocentric paradigm shift". *Relations: beyond anthropocentrism*, 4, 2, 2016, pp. 159-173. Available at https://www.academia.edu/30144046/THE_PARTY_OF_THE_ANTHROPOCENE_POST-HUMANISM_ENVIRONMENTALISM_AND_THE_POSTANTHROPOCENTRIC_PARADIGM_SHIFT. The author argues for a post-anthropocentric turn by emphasizing the fact that the Anthropocene and the current ecological collapse are only the symptoms. The author defends theoretical and pragmatic post-anthropocentric shifts in the current perception of the human. This article concerns the ideal, but also uneasy, practices of letting go of anthropocentric privileges. Such changes can only result by fully acknowledging the human species in relation to the environment. The Anthropocene shall thus be addressed with a socio-political and cultural shift, a passage from humanism to posthumanism, which the author underlines in its specific meaning of post-anthropocentrism.

2   R. Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, Penguin Books, London 2005.

3   The resulting idea of dynamic and plural types of hybridization is the turning point enabling us to tackle Posthumanism as Critical (if not the common terrain of all facets of the Posthumanism(s in the plural.) See. I. Santoemma, *My Mother was a… Cyborg. Tecnologie e soggettività ibride a confronto*, S&F, 23, 2020, pp. 127-141.

Therefore, a reflection must be framed that goes to the roots of the question – the role and responsibilities of the human species in the cosmos, and which is consequently accomplished through the clarification of two pairs of crucial concepts: posthuman – posthumanism, transhuman – transhumanism. In them, 'the human and the conception that reflects it' is the pivot, around which the constellations of symbols, indexes, and codes rotate, disclosed by the two prefixes. These four categories, joined two by two, are emblematic with respect to specific lines of thought, which in turn innervate and condition the contemporary (theoretical, scientific, ethical, cultural) debate on the relationship between *human* and '*machinic*', between natural and artificial. Such a relationship embraces all spheres of existence and of the knowledge of which we have a notion, and prefigurative capacity. This is so also because it goes in the direction, both of the sublimation of natural and artificial materiality, and of the re-incorporation of the immaterial dimension, cybernetic and mental. This discussion appears crucial for our individual and collective future, since the future of the cybernetic age is already present in the modality of digitization. In particular, it influences the way in which we model our expectations and our predispositions to adapt to the transformations underway. In this debate, which is much more than an abstract dispute between experts, some cognitive, ecological, ontological, anthropological, even more than ethical, challenges stand out, precisely related to the connections between *homo sapiens sapiens* and *machina sapiens* (in all their created and/or conceivable variants). Therefore, in the following pages we will give a preliminary definition, by necessity somewhat meagre, of the categories mentioned above and of the respective corollaries. In doing so, due attention will be paid, at least in principle, to different ways of apprehension of the world, *noble and necessary* because they are devoted to the search for meaning, among which, in addition to philosophy in the strict sense, we have sapiential knowledge, art and the imaginary.

2. *A strategy of alliances for the paradigm shift imposed by the Anthropocene*

"Can we humans change and improve through technologies? If so, do we remain human? If so, to what extent can this happen without destroying the ecosystem and the cosmos starting from our proven ability to do so?" By asking these preliminary questions we declare *ipso facto* that we have radically changed our view of the world and the cosmos. We admit that

we have understood that starting from the ethical-political issues posed by AI, robotics and cybernetics within the Anthropocene, we must go to the root, identifying as the fundamental challenge that involving the cognitive, anthropological, ecological, even ontological sphere of our condition. We can lead off the dance for a new and unprecedented season of balanced dialogue between philosophy, science, theology and sapiential knowledge. It is appropriate to quote Cardinal Ravasi in his opening message of the meeting on the challenges posed by Artificial Intelligence, held at the Cortile dei Gentili on 6 July 2017: "Faced with this exiting but also disturbing panorama, without necessarily being technophobic, there is a need to pose, at least at a systematic level, premises and questions of a philosophical and theological nature"[4].

Hopefully, a polyphonic, multi-level, and above all irreverent question between philosophy, science and theology will no longer be characterized by relations of subordination, but by relationships of symbolic and cognitive alliance in the face of what at least *prima facie* appears to us as unknown, unprecedented and above all disturbing. It is a condition in which, in the very first approximation: a) the human becomes machinic, since it hybridizes with the artificial, whether reluctantly or with enthusiastic acceptance; b) the artificial, from an immaterial dimension of mathematically coded information and knowledge, expands beyond the boundaries prescribed by the structure of our personal computers, or by the walls of robotic factories and by our day-to-day devices, taking on new ways and forms, and 'demanding', so to speak, to interact with us humans. Indeed, we are already in a situation where we can conceive the possibility of accepting a living system, capable of homeostasis, based on silicon, in addition to/alongside our carbon-based life system.

This situation, requiring a radical rethinking of our cognitive and sense frameworks, can be a harbinger of beauty and value, as well as risks and threats. With the adoption of such a preliminary attitude, further discoveries can be made, given the overabundance of original ideas starting from the dilemmas and requests of the worlds of life, the various *Lebenswelten* of phenomenological memory, of which the sciences are also an integral

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4   The title of the first meeting, held on 6 July 2017 within the setting of the 'Cortile dei Gentili', at the Italian Embassy in the Holy See, on the initiative of Ambassador Mancini and his Eminence Cardinal Ravasi, was: "Artificial Intelligence. An ethical challenge?". The second, on 5 September 2017 at the same venue and following in terms of theme and organisation the previous meeting, was entitled "Homo Sapiens and Machina Sapiens? Hopes, Fears, Opportunities".

part, or more precisely, the historically and contextually connoted communities of scientists who develop competing theories and technologies.

What is the basic conceptual clarification strategy pursued here? That of choosing a conception and its related phenomena as the privileged interpretation. In a nutshell, we start by giving precedence to the first of the two couples referred to at the beginning: (critical) posthumanism and posthuman.

As a first crux, with "philosophical and critical posthumanism" we indicate an extended conception, irreducible to preconceived schemes, *just as the symbolic-material universe is and the notion, posthuman, to which philosophy refers*. In fact, the source environment of the theoretical vision is a set of phenomena, difficult to catalog and with different cultural, historical and disciplinary origins, but already present among us, and which the Enlightenment has unfortunately obscured for centuries. It is a totality that foresees an unprecedented future society of interacting forms of intelligence and existence – human, non-human animals, bionic and hybrid, artificial – all to be considered, with the due categorical distinctions, to be on the same level in ethical-political terms, all equally free and worthy, at least in principle and presumptively. The burden of proof lies with those who deny them membership in the same class (be it varied and internally differentiated) of entities and moral subjects. This is because the posthuman must be assumed in the holistic, metamorphic and osmotic, materialistic and dynamic, interspecist and anti-dualistic meaning of the notion. It is therefore NOT lawful to identify the posthuman and the corresponding critical philosophy with an anthropocentric and technophilic vision, which is free from the relationships of the same human technological enhancement with the ecosystem, non-human species, matter and the cosmos (not an extraneous notion for those who adhere to the hypothesis of multiple, but not infinite, universes). The relationship with possible reasoning interlocutors with a living silicon-based structure are very much a part of this phenomenal and conceptual horizon. Not only. We will be forced by growing developments and incredible transformations in robotics and bionics, among other things, to review our vision, progressively and repeatedly, of what it means to be 'human'.

Some of the very relevant issues for the interaction between sentient beings and agents are the following:

a) Does being 'human' mean having a 'pure' biological pedigree?

b) Alternatively, is 'being human' equivalent to possessing/exercising the ability to make choices and to account for them with rational and/or reasonable arguments?

c) Are the artificial agents (intelligences, automata, cyborgs, mutants) created by us humans, albeit hypothetically, the new frontier of ethics in the Anthropocene?

d) What relationship is there between cybernetic/digital revolution and posthuman, or thinking inclusively, interspeciesist anti-anthropocentrism? What relationship is there with the antithetical ideology, transhumanism[5]?

e) What relationship is there between posthumanism and 'good politics' of the Anthropocene?

A coherent and convinced acceptance of posthumanism leads us to respond negatively to the first (a), and positively to the second and third questions (b, c). The fifth and sixth (d, e) require a rough structured and narrative response (III, IV, V).

By attesting to the first three responses, we can say that what remains of the human is what *we have not yet been*. From the point of view of an *embryonic and fallible attempt*, we could outline it (*without excluding other*

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5   This condition just described, in which machines capable of solutions have lost, thanks to their algorithms, the standardizing and replicative rigidity of the past and therefore have changed and are changing at an accelerated speed the methods: of doing business, performing managerial functions, of delineating industrial and above all socio-political design, of giving meaning to consumption and social relations, of conferring or denying legitimacy to political institutions, reconfiguring the position of the latter in this new era. Today's digital devices are increasingly capable of interacting with our ideas and capabilities, providing us with ever more flexible, personalized, collaborative services. The ways of generating value are changing: freeconomics and open source coding exist together in relations of reciprocal advantage or pacific co-existence or in competition with the sharing economy, with the global value chain, with the transformation of business models and of servitization. From here it is possible to understand how, for example, for L. Floridi the marketing of ideas configures the new form of rhetoric, and how using it is the crux for replacing bad policies with good policies of the ecosystem (be it natural, social, artificial, technological, cultural political) of which, according to this author's well-known diagnosis, the infosphere is constituted. It is a neologism to which we are accustomed, and which indicates the hybrid analogical and digital environment in which we are immersed. Marketing as transformative rhetoric is perhaps the most sincere interpretation, and therefore essential for an appropriate understanding of such an *ethical*-political project, which inextricably links – with the goal of mitigating the most severe environmental, social and political asymmetries – digital technologies and environmental policies (the blue and the green). I emphasize the prevalence of the first adjective (ethical) in Floridi's project, despite his contemporary regard for the crucial role of politics in the age of the infosphere, of the hybrid and totalizing environment in which for the cited author we shall swim with acquired skills and alternating fortunes, not being fish (as are, on the contrary, AI beings), but merely scuba divers. L. Floridi, *Il verde e il blu. Idee ingenue per migliorare la politica*, Raffaello Cortina Editore, Milano 2020.

normative orientations) in partial analogy with the third Kantian imperative, to be modified, *ex parte Hominis*, as follows: "Act in order to treat sentient creatures, intelligent and interacting (artificial and natural) within the posthuman condition not as means but as ends, at least asymptotically, in principle, within given pragmatic conditions". *Ex parte Machinae*, the posthuman imperative should coincide with the extensive formulation of the Zeroth Law, already conceived by Isaac Asimov, which reads "A robot (an intelligence) may not harm humanity or, by inaction, allow humanity to come to harm." This universal and abstract norm has revolutionary and disorienting consequences. In it the science fiction robotic plots enable us to critically rephrase the notion and the emotional/cognitive coloring of the interactive experience with robots, artificial intelligence, cyborgs, entities invented by us humans, and other non-human creatures and things, neither made by humans. Only the second alternative, the Zeroth, allows us to open up still unusual but not unprecedented antispecist and posthuman horizons in some parts of the planet, even more inclusive horizons than non-'intelligent' species and entities, as happens in the world visions of the cultures of the Far East. This rule banishes at least in principle the negative attribution of the monstrosity to those who do not have a 'purely' and exclusively human biological pedigree. It should be agreed that in order to judge the possible consequences of an action, a capacity for analysis of discernment and non-trivial 'judgment in a situation' is necessary, and such that it cannot logically arise from the simple installation of a set of rules in a brain support. Zeroth Law is logically superior to the other three laws, however much more well-known and widely present, not always with good reason, in the side of the debate more accessible to global public opinion[6]. Consider that the ethical judgment capacity, while crucial, can only be developed with exercise, it not being innate or transferable as if it were software to be installed in hardware. The evaluative experience with respect to a standard of behavior exceeding 'one does, one says, here and now' devel-

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6   *The Three Laws of Robotics* were formulated in negative for the first time in the 1942 story *Runaround*. Their combined purpose is the welfare of human beings. They are: 1) a robot may not injure a human being, or through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; 2) a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law; 3) a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law. We should consider under this lens even the quotations of Isaac Asimov's robotic plots and fictional visions to be found in the Special Report on Robots of the Economist, March 2014, plots which are recognised therefore as a mainstream source of references for average-level educated people.

ops in its unfolding in comparison with the 'worlds of life' (deliberately in the plural) and the various contingencies that raise concrete, contextual and painful questions because they impact on the present and future worldly dimension, here coherently understood so far in a posthumanist tone.

3. *Transhumanist dystopies and degenerative impacts on the planet*

So let us start answering the question on the relationship between the two antithetical philosophies of the 'going beyond the human' and the digital cybernetic revolution. If the very different notion of "transhuman" and transhumanism[7], is considered in the regulatory, axiological, pragmatic fields, consequences that are irreconcilable with those deriving from the adoption of critical posthumanism arise. Transhumanist ideology, prevailing in decision-making contexts hegemonic in politics and economics, is cleverly propagated by the heralds of the undisputed domination of the market and of acquisitive individualism[8], which is to be criticized and rejected, not least

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7   "Robert Pepperell in 2003 wrote *The Posthuman Condition* (with clearly futuristic, anti-speciesist intentions) whereby he profiles its *Posthuman Manifesto*; some of the main misunderstandings of contemporary literature are today inherited from this reading"*.* See I. Santoemma, cit. (my transl.). The literary-philosophical collection of Raumar Zons, *Die Zeit des Menschen*, published with the subtitle *Zur Kritik des Posthumanismus* (Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp 2001), is a blatant example of this persistent and detrimental confusion; posthuman is used in the sense of transhuman. This confusion was not retracted, at least at a terminological level, until 2009, when Stefan Herbrecher published with WBG of Darmstadt *Eine kritische Einführung in Posthumanismus*, stressin at least at the level of a declaration of intent the distinction and endorsing the validity of a posthumanism that avails itself of the adjective 'critical' and of the legacy of critical theory. See the as yet unpublished manuscript of Giovanni Battista Demarta, *Critica del postumanesimo vitale*.

8   L. Ferry, *La révolution transhumaniste. Comment la technomédecine et l'uberisation du monde vont bouleverser nos vies*, Plon, Paris 2016. The author of this book argues whether it is possible to shape a new species of enhanced humans. We are not there yet, but many research centers are working around the world, with funding from web giants, such as Google, and this has led to the emergence of a so-called collaborative economy, symbolized by applications such as Uber, Airbnb and BlaBlaCar. The author discusses if all this is moving us towards a venal and deregulatory hyperliberalism. Some perspectives are exciting, while others are frightening. This book aims to explore them and rehabilitate the philosophical ideal of regulation, a notion now vital, both in medicine and economics. Regarding the increasing, subtle and uneasy role of techno-social engineering in reshaping humans, see Brett Frischmann, Evan Selinger*, Re-engineering human-*

because it is very weak in the face of the well-founded accusations of displaying characteristics of a declared anthropocentric and ontic exceptionality of a predatory, 'superhomistic and colonial' nature. These aspects are manifested in the programs of the supporters of the transhumanist conception, in a specific variant, which is hyper-enlightenment. "Transhuman" must be correctly understood and criticized in terms of the intermediated phase of ideology/philosophy (transhumanism) aimed at overcoming/abolishing the status of "human beings" as finite and embodied living entities. Of this program, the myth/prediction of mind uploading in the pure and immaterial sphere of a cyberspace surreptitiously separated from its infrastructural connective substrate, is a paradigmatic example in its radical consequentiality and coherence with respect to the premises[9]. The transhuman condition is certainly understood by its most consistent supporters as "transition phase between our animal heritage and our posthuman future", but interpreting the latter term in *the sense of reaching a further and immeasurable stage with respect to the condition of materiality and corporeality that makes us creatures, finite entities, with discreet and temporary identities*[10]. Even in the versions closest to the cult of perpetual physical and mental youth[11], the practices, *policies*

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ity, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2018. The core of the book is the issue as to whether smart technologies could reengineer humanity and make people act like simple machines. The authors critically analyse current trends in internet technology which make people's life easier, at the same time taking control of it, and explain how the idea of designing programmable worlds is closely related to the engineering of predictable and programmable humans. Having said that, the book is an example of a reasoned and well balanced set of arguments, neither an alarmist screed, nor an additional voice among the detractors of human enhancement as such. Frischmann and Selinger are fully aware of the worries and troublesome prognosis regarding what machines can do, especially the risk that machines might sap up our humanity, issues which have always been widespread for as long as machines have existed from the beginning of the first industrial revolution. According to them, in modern and contemporary times, an instrumentalist view of existence in a broad sense has increasingly and pervasively influenced our understanding of ourselves and has shaped accordingly the kind of societies we build up and live in. "Techno-social engineering refers to processes where technologies and social forces align and impact how we think, perceive, and act" (ivi, p. 4).

9   See as an example H. Moravec, *Mind Children. The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1988. For a critical genealogy of transhumanism, see C. Coenen, *Transhumanism and its Genesis: The Shaping of Human Enhancement Discourse by Visions of the Future*, in "Humana. mente", 25, 2014, pp. 35-53.

10   Cf. www.extropy.org/principles.htm.

11   Cfr. F.M. Esfandiary, *UpWingers: A Futurist Manifesto*, John Day Co., New York 1973.

and technologies hypothesized and/or designed are still directed against the constitutive imperfection of our species: finitude, impotence in the face of chance and more serious adversities, innate vulnerability, the irreversible decay of our body and our faculties[12]. Mortality is the enemy, the body like deciduous flesh, is seen as the gateway to *Thanatos*[13]. Furthermore, it is explicitly due to an uncritically superomystic root of thought, which sees the solution for the survival of a human species, in particular in the unlimited colonization of other planets and the cosmos, also thanks to the procedure of mind-uploading (transferring our brain identity onto a chip). This is so as to enjoy to the last drop of what Bostrom calls our cosmic endowment, as if we had inscribed within us an unfailing license to dominate, to enslave, to exhaust whatever exists or lives in the universe. This is as if to say: once a planet is desertified, we simply move on to the next. The Adornian prognosis seems to prove true, whereby the Enlightenment turns dialectically into its opposite.

Having said that, even those who do not share transhumanist positions often underestimate the danger that dematerializing narratives carry within themselves[14]. They should/we should not in fact minimize the powerful influence of these mythographies, and of the machineries of economic and technological power that support them, and which are also propagated as if they were the most reliable scientific projections in the field, and not a cognitive figuration in contention with others, as is every ideal apparatus in support of any specific epistemological theory and scientific doctrine. At the opposite to successfully make the 'posthuman cypher' emerge, inclusive and interspecist, from within the structures, both material and immaterial, of the present age, it would be advisable to combine the philosophy of posthuman-

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12   Cfr. A. Caronia, *Il Cyborg. Saggio sull'uomo*, ShaKe, Milano 2008.
13   Cfr. J.D. Bernal, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil. An Enquiry into the Future of the three Enemies of the Rational Soul*, Jonathan Cape, London 1929. Cfr. U. Fadini, *Principio metamorfosi. Per un'antropologia dell'artificiale*, Mimesis, Milano 1999; C. Coenen, S. Gammel, R. Heil, A. Woyke, (Eds.), *Die Debatte über 'Human Enhancement'. Historische, philosophische und ethische Aspekte der technologischen Verbesserung des Menschen*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2010. For the more widespread versions of this concept in the global imaginary see the plot of the film *The Lawnmower Man* (not the short story by Stephen King, on which the film is loosely based), some pieces of the first *cyberpunk* literature and derivatives of these (both taken to their extremes) and some episodes of the first seasons of the TV series *Star Trek*.
14   Let us not forget that a *place of theoretical elaboration and global influence*, like the "Future of Humanity Institute", was founded by N. Bostrom near Oxford and is today one of the think tanks most consulted by personalities such as Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Barak Obama.

ism with critical imagery and global art. The imaginary is very much plural-istic, and corroborated by the physical sciences, as it is situated and suitable for materializing in objects and dimensions of existence. In it prevails the contamination not only of the genders and the forms, in all the meanings of the two terms, but also of the situations of life and experience, of the same social attitudes. With respect to the latter, the plasticity and manipulability of human and organic corporeity in general is transformed into a changing *totalen Kunstwerk*. Also the use of special techniques for certain artistic per-formances aimed at overcoming the *limes* between nature and artifice come from some and are included in the particular case of the *cyborg*. An example is the so-called *body-machine performer*, who is certainly the closest to the human being for the temporary nature of the grafts and the bodily manipula-tion of the artist, even though it is aimed at exasperating the vision according to which organism and machine appear to the spectator as if they were ful-ly in symbiosis. It is necessary to emphasize[15] that the cybernetic organism is primarily a metaphorical figure and capable of representing the complex and sometimes contradictory relationship that exists between humanity un-derstood in all his symbolic dimensions and technological artifacts. In this respect, the following formulation of Yehya is very clear; it enhances the symbolic significance of the figure of the cyborg, harbinger of repercussions on anthropology, on the cultural studies and visual arts, as well as on the philosophy of technology:

> The cyborg is a metaphor, an image and an instrument used to study man and his ideology as a hybrid manufactured from organic matter, myths, obsessions, inventions, dogmas and fantasies. […] The concept of cyborg enables us to study the history of the human species from the point of view of the relationship we have with the technologies and ideas we have made of it, as well as offering us a different perspective to understand their impact on the guided evolution of our species[16].

A direct analogy in intercultural terms and of 'low' culture of this artistic example can be seen between the hybrid and prosthetic bodies of the artists and biomechanical creatures such as the *Baiometarobistu*, present in *anime* and *manga* of the Japanese tradition and, with terminological and symbolic variations, in the imagination of much of the Far East. In fact, consider that

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15 P. Benanti, *The Cyborg: corpo e corporeità nell'epoca del post-umano. Prospet-tive antropologiche e riflessioni etiche per un discernimento morale*, Cittadella Editrice, Assisi 2012, *Introduzione*, pp. 6-7.

16 N. Yehya, *Homo cyborg. Il corpo postumano tra realtà e fantascienza*, Eleuthera, Milano 2005, p. 39.

the posthuman condition and its philosophy at the moment seem to be the only ones capable of corresponding, not without difficulties and contradictions, to a dense and structured interlocution between natural, hybrid, and artificial entities, an interaction that includes in perspective possible and unprecedented branches, both symbolic and material, and regulatory[17]. Ultimately, posthuman is the *dimension*, critical posthumanism the *conception* in which such dense interlocutions are recognized and activated. This would be evident, if we were to carry out in reality and not only in declarations of intent, the intercultural dialogue between the various branches of *human* spirituality already present, and from very ancient times, on the planet. This is as Ferrando repeatedly points out, showing how spirituality makes the internal-external, human-non-human distinction fall, and is proven true in mysticism[18]. Metaphorically, and in a sense that is not opposed to matter, "the spirit blows where it wants", since this creative instance is not afraid of degrading itself in shaping the forms of life, with which, even *according to the western symbolic heritage*, it is inextricably intertwined, moreover, outside of predetermined schemes, from wherever and whichever cognitive sphere they come. The acroamatic dimension of sapiential knowledge, since the axial age, or perhaps even before then, "accompanies" us with discretion but with constancy, as a species called *Homo sapiens sapiens*, in our vital and historical itinerary on this planet and in the cosmos. Among these forms of knowledge open to the multifaceted nature of life are those which flourished in specific eastern areas characterized by non-homologous modernizations compared to that which has characterized – albeit with consistent variations – the western hemisphere of the globe. In the Far East in particular, with differentiations that are reflected in *manga* and *anime*, mentalities and indexical patterns of behavior, very close to the post human condition, have already dominated for centuries as a condition of existence and reflection that is well established and experienced, and not only as futuristic utopia[19]. There are and there will be phases of conservation and phases of transformation, not necessarily painless, even within the posthuman condition. This is a condition which makes the question regarding the extreme limit beyond which we cease to be 'human' inappropriate. *Not living worthily* in relation to sentient and interacting creatures (of whatever origin and configuration they are), equally worthy of our respect, is non-human.

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17   F. Ferrando, *Il Postumanesimo filosofico e le sue alterità*, ETS, Pisa 2016, pp. 48-54.
18   Ivi, pp. 71-73.
19   See also A. Crisma, (Ed.), *Neye. Il Tao dell'armonia interiore*, Garzanti, Milano 2015.

4. *Polymorphous worlds of life and 'dense' intercultural encounters. Overturning the paradigm of the 'government' of the Anthropocene*

The posthuman as it is interpreted and taken in charge by critical posthumanism (the symbolic-pragmatic system that originates the good practices of care and safeguarding of the planet) is ultimately a material horizon of effective sharing. That is, it is built on the knowledge scrutinized in depth and on the well-founded interpretation of the differences, the vulnerability, the finitude, of the insurmountable condition (the inscribed destiny for which one must have *sooner or later* an end and one must have limits) of *all organic and inorganic, natural and artificial entities*. Especially with respect to the latter class of *unprecedented* or at least unusual for most people, such an objective must be pursued without categorical confusion, because it can only be achieved through rigorous conceptual analysis. New methods of distant participatory and interactionist origin should be included in the future, according to a radical and even unprecedented version of pluralism, which should be declined in all its cultural, political, methodological meanings, in order to bring out the multiplicity of local languages from the worlds of life. These are in turn to be conceived in their extreme eccentricity and unpredictability, and without giving supremacy to a presumed rational and unique superordinate *logos* with respect to prelogical *patois* (a supremacy unacceptable even if it was described in an asymptotic or communicative way). With the participatory methods revised in this way, we are not trying to be right with the argumentation or to prevail with strategic rationality. At least in hypothesis, we are ready to give voice to others by listening, alternately, to the points of view different from our own in order to understand and grasp within the positions that at the beginning of the exchange were felt as radically alien, extraneous, adverse to the point of being 'uncanny'. Thus are, to the highest degree, the combinations of natural and artificial, between organic and *machinic,* that is to say, *cyber*. In this, it is possible to give birth to an exchange aimed at enriching results and not at certifying the biological pedigree of the partners of the interlocution. These are mutually decentralized and eccentric 'figures', immersed in a context of appeals and responses, and engaged, even if *pro tempore*, in a transformative event, open in its outcomes and in the unfolding of the phases of which it is made of. It is, therefore, a basic methodical attitude looking for clarity and some meanings in the rich and diverse textures of radically different perspectives, at least at the beginning. The stress on the interlocutory characteristics and of the 'tact' adequate for the situations typical of the participatory model may have, and

this remains an interrogative, a side effect, but nevertheless a perceptible effect on practices that confer a 'dense' sense to the lexicon of the rights of *future and unprecedented sentient and interacting beings*, if these rights and their bearers are seen and allowed to grow in visibility starting from the margin, which is changeable just as is changeable the type of context of the living worlds (multiple and unprecedented) from which one starts. Such real or presumably alien worlds should be given credit by all parties of the dialogue, at least in principle. This 'taking seriously' opens up the broadest possible conditions of a contextuality and conditionality that is not hegemonic but expansive/inclusive, of regulatory systems (ethical and legal) not determined *ex antea*, but however still finite. Unlike transhumanist dystopias, the posthumanist conception, being *critically* based on dynamism and openness to unprecedented contaminations and alliances between instances and entities, is the only one capable of corresponding to the characteristics of a dense, structured, polymorphous interlocution/ conversation/ interaction, and still to be probed in all its possible and unprecedented deictic and symbolic branches[20]. These paths are already accessible in our present, starting from a distant and authoritative past. They are so if we carry out in reality, and not only in declarations of intent, the intercultural dialogue/interlocution between the different branches of religiosity and spirituality present, since ancient times, on the planet. I am referring to the specific eastern areas characterized by 'other' modernizations compared to that which has characterized, with variations between Europe and North America, the western hemisphere of the globe. In the Far East in particular, mentality and indexical patterns of behavior and judgment have already dominated for centuries, and these are already predisposed to learning and 'governing' the post human condition, to be taken in its critical definition: that is osmotic, not anthropocentric, but infra and interspecies, anti-dualistic, pluralistic and inclusive, *not dependent on the latest technological revolution, but pre-existent*. This has already been expressed

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20 The reference is to the «dense conversation» of Fred Dallmayr (*Il dialogo tra le culture. Metodo e protagonisti*, Marsilio, Venezia 2010); it is a notion indebted to the «dense description» of Clifford Geertz (*The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York 1973), and to the distinction between «dense moral cultures» and «thin moral cultures» of Michael Walzer (*Geografia della morale. Democrazia, tradizioni e universalismo*, Dedalo, Bari 1999). The origin of the conversational idea is to be discovered, in these terms, in the theoretical proposal of Michael Oakeshott regarding the practice of a conversation of humanity through the voice of poetry: cfr. M.J. Oakeshott, *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind*, in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, Basic Books, New York 1962, pp. 197-199.

from the beginning and gradually indicated up to now with the help of examples and interpretations of both phenomena and ideal constructs.

5. *Critical posthumanism, imagination, good politics of the Anthropocene*

From the foregoing, in critical posthumanism it is evident that there are, on the one hand, bonds and alliances between the species and the dimensions of the real, characteristics of compresence, contiguity, transitivity and co-belonging of the different levels and forms of materiality and life. On the other hand, what can be overcome from a conceptual and ontological point of view are three dichotomies:

a) between the rational-spiritual dimension and the material dimension;

b) between immanent and transcendent dimensions;

c) between humanity and other forms of existence, both organic and inorganic.

The visions of reality and the pragmatic images of the world, such as those of Shinto, Taoism, of the syncretic (equally sophisticated) versions of much older animistic roots, do not at all promise "a night in which all cows are black". On the contrary, they presuppose and legitimize systems of symbolic-material relationships, stratified and structured axiological and potestative systems, according to sophisticated and contemplated taxonomies, subjected for centuries to the test of social repercussions within their respective collective contexts. The signs affixed to things are fluid, but the rules for inscription follow codes established in a well-defined order. This sapiential and cosmic order is evident to the maximum degree both in the texts already considered to be canonical and in those recently rediscovered of Taoism. It expresses a universality revealing unexpected assonances with the words of Simone Weil, according to whom the future of wise harmony and interrelation between entities is not abstractly uniform but is irreducibly and robustly plural[21]. This is an original plurality that requires us to reconsider the centrality of the role of the human being in the cosmos and his disposition to the listening to the semantic and indexical polyphony which is the enemy of speciesism and of the anthropocentric logo-phallocentrism that has characterized us as modern Westerners. In such plural

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21   Cfr. A. Crisma, cit.; S. Weil, *La prima radice. Preludio a una dichiarazione dei doveri verso la creatura umana* (1949), SE, Milano 1990; P.C. Bori, *Ogni religione è l'unica vera. L'universalismo religioso di Simone Weil*, in "Filosofia e teologia", VIII, 1994, pp. 393-403.

contexts, and symbolically connoted in the direction of non-scientific (but not for this) irrationalistic forms of apprehension of reality, seen both in a diachronic and synchronic sense, the counter-poisons must be sought with respect to the possible or already ongoing re-proposition in our societies of the racist and sexist framework within which both the discourse on *humanitas* and the discourse on *techné* have historically been declined. This has been widely expressed, within the studies on mutant differences and identities, by feminist and gender theories, as well as by post-colonial studies. It is certainly not possible to conclude, but merely to outline the conditions for continuing to proceed in the anti-anthropocentric and critical direction indicated so far. In fact, the perpetuation of the anthropomorphic paradigm in the Anthropocene risks transforming the differences that have emerged from the artificial (cybernetic/digital) dimension into new forms of stigma, reproducing and amplifying to the detriment of non-human entities *qua talis* (hybrid and artificial, but also organic and inorganic) the ancient racist and xenophobic aberrations for which anthropocentric humanism has made itself responsible.