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Is 'An-other Humanism' Possible Out of the Folds of Big Data?

Big Data Through the Ambivalence of the Technology that Drives the Information Revolution [1]

The information revolution has had such a thorough effect on our culture that we can fairly say that we live in a digital culture. It has brought us, with its successive revolutionary stages within itself, to the era of so-called big data and artificial intelligence. In this era, having the mass data that computing and telematics provide in the most varied of fields, new paths have opened up not only to learn more about our reality in its different dimensions, but also to affect it in such a way that we are seeing transformations of such magnitude and depth that they constantly give rise to an overpowering vertigo, even when these changes can be valued positively – which, however, is not always the case.

Undoubtedly, the capacity of technology is astonishing, and at the same time overwhelming: to handle millions and millions of data, in quantities that are easy to put into words but difficult to imagine, in order to extract from them, by means of algorithms that continuously expand the sphere of artificial intelligence, information capable of being converted into knowledge, whether for scientific progress, for greater financial gain, or for political manipulation. It is well known how having at one's disposal work that is well-oriented and effective with big data has a positive impact on the development of biotechnology. This has led to impressive results in genomics, for example, and spectacular applications, as has occurred in what is called biosurgery, hand in hand with nanotechnology. Nevertheless, even in fields such as these, we can see the ambivalence of the technologies that revolve around big data. For what is revealed with them can both help to deal with diseases that are difficult to treat, and provide data – and predictions – about health, including proclivity to certain pathologies, for millions of people. This can easily lead to medical practice, social guidelines or financial decisions that would be damaging for these people in light of the predictions made. We know how and why such harm is socially concentrated at one point: the increase in inequalities, whether by how the information accumulated in this way about individuals, social classes and groups susceptible to (even more) discrimination is handled, or by the actual difficulties of accessing these sources of information, or by the way in which the data they handle are made available (Eubanks 2021).

It is nothing new that computer and telematic technologies show both positive and negative possibilities in terms of their application. This has occurred and continues to occur with all the techniques and technologies that humanity has brought into being. What is new here, indubitably, is the weight of that ambivalence in these new technologies; just as their positive effects can be great, so can their negative consequences be immense. In addition to this ambivalence is the way in which, from their beginnings, many of the data that are subjected to algorithmic processes to extract the required information are obtained. When

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these data concern what takes place in the public sphere, from how the financial markets work to what the dominant trends in the literary field are – something of particular interest for the digital humanities – the obtaining of data should not be marred by processes that violate the freedom of individuals and their discretion with regard to the privacy of their lives. However, when the data are obtained using the footprint that all of us leave when we use digital resources, when we browse the internet, when we write emails, when we look up websites, when we interact through social networks, et cetera, then that is a whole other matter. In such cases, even while we as individuals may be aware that through these practices we are promoting the sale – without any profit to ourselves – of information about our habits, our convictions, our most personal decisions, and our most intimate messages, it is clear that we are faced with a serious, unresolved problem regarding ethical and – where applicable – legal limits concerning the obtaining and use of these data, just to prevent abuses.

The debates that revolve around such a thorny issue have, moreover, become especially vital since it has been shown how such use and abuse of what is done with the big data obtained in this way brings with it pernicious effects, whether in economic dynamics or in the political life of our societies, as well as possibly entailing harmful consequences for individuals. It is a clear fact that the algorithmic treatment of mass data provides valuable information for economic activity, from which, moreover, the most powerful businesses profit, starting with the very technological companies that dominate this same field. From the point of view of the market, it turns out that the conditions for competition are seriously affected. Intense concentrations of economic power have been facilitated, with strong monopolistic tendencies, which at the very least end up in oligopolistic conditions that have an enormous effect on the dynamics of capitalism today. This capitalism, which has been characterized by a dynamic marked by the primacy of finance, is now also being reshaped as "surveillance capitalism" – because capital gains now gravitate towards a new merchandise: the data that, individually and collectively, we offer up to the large companies that dominate the digital realm (Zuboff 2020).

To be concise, the appearance of new fronts of economic activity due to the use of a massive growth of digitally available information seems to favour the addition of new "entrepreneurs" to the business sphere; yet it also reinforces the expansion of capitalist logic to fields of activity that heretofore had remained untouched. If people's data, people's lives, become merchandise whose commercialization – irrespective of the people – provides high added value, activities that until recently belonged to the sphere of privacy in individual lives, such as travelling or owning one's own home, are now fully part of the dynamics of intensive economic exchange. What was known as the "sharing economy" ends up becoming pure capitalist economic exchange beneath a label that has cooperative connotations but which is actually one of subterfuge or concealment. The "uberization" of many activities confirms that capitalism is still omnivorous and voracious in the age of universalized digitalization.

From a political point of view, the handling of big data has introduced new ways of acting that have a large impact on the dynamic of our societies. If the available mass data makes it possible to have extremely precise knowledge about social trends, states of opinion, political preferences, and so on, and all this enables decision-making with a greater margin for political accuracy, then it is that same availability that gives rise to the distortion of politics. This leads to antipolitics, to serious interferences in actual electoral processes

from the moment that certain messages are spread on the internet and the various social networks, which manipulate information and thus harm or benefit particular candidatures or parties. And ultimately it gives rise to the spread and diffusion of the perverse cognitive dynamic that we have come to call post-truth, which is devoted to sowing lies and to consolidating the deceit that is expressly produced for political profit – including, since big data makes it possible to know the inclinations and emotional states of citizens, the cynical creation of supposed "alternative truths".

Digital Humanities in the Age of Big Data

For good or for ill, the huge impact of everything that big data makes available to us on our economic, social, political and cultural realities – taking into account how it can affect our individual existences and the collective life we form a part of – makes it an inescapable factor that we cannot ignore. This is also the case for the humanities, or forms of knowledge relative to our human realities as such, which we can see deployed in various areas, with different epistemic fields distributed around them. With an always notable common denominator, these have an enriching diversity in terms of knowledge about ourselves and the practices that we observe through them, be they favoured or questioned. The humanities encompass a wide range of fields, from the types of knowledge about languages and literary traditions that they have given rise to – we can say this of the philologies and studies of languages and linguistics as forms of knowledge of communication in diverse societies and ages – to philosophy as critical and argumentative knowledge regarding our forms of knowledge, aesthetic values and normative principles, to the search for meaning, passing through the different types of history, which as knowledge of memory constantly bring the knowledge of humanity's pasts to the present. And all this shares the company of disciplines such as cultural anthropology and geography, forms of knowledge with humanist roots that describe the plurality of cultures and spaces that humans inhabit.

The *humanities*, through their plurality and in their current state, neither can nor should be separated from what big data, and the digital culture to which it belongs, entails. They cannot, because they themselves are affected by the technological developments of our era: computing and telematics, which a few decades ago we began to call "new technologies of communication and information", have had a bearing on the humanities, introducing profound changes in their ways of working, with new epistemologies, and the issues addressed, and engaging with new perspectives (Vinck, 2018). For example, the study of languages makes use of the possibilities offered by data on linguistic uses in communities of speakers that would have been unimaginable previously. Philosophy itself has to deal with new moral dilemmas, such as in bioethics, wherein these "new technologies" have modified scientific knowledge and medical practices. The treatment of texts, the digitalization of documents, and the information accumulated about them by virtue of it, having impacted the humanities in general, have notably changed the ways of working in the field of history, including archaeology, with digital procedures applied to the information obtained in fieldwork, or as has happened in art history, with new knowledge that has led to spectacular innovations in the areas of conservation and restoration of cultural assets.

If, by virtue of the aforementioned changes and the reassessments made in the humanities as a result, we can speak of the *digital humanities*, encompassing all the new epistemic developments that have taken place, not to mention the promising nature of many of their approaches, then no less noteworthy is the fact that the humanities must also deal with

questions of digital culture that are unavoidable, both in the study of the facts and the processes that they fall within, and also from a normative point of view, whether epistemological or ethical. Big data – to give an example – can provide us with a huge amount of information on the habits and behaviours of millions of people, which would support studies on the construction of identities and processes of subjectivation that are most certainly novel. But at the same time, as I noted earlier, big data assists highly refined marketing or facilitates the gross manipulation of opinions that distort politics, occasionally coming close to breaching – or even overstepping – individuals' right to privacy, and even breaking the most basic legal requirements regarding freedom of expression and information. No approach to the humanities can avoid such tendencies, which are most noticeable in relation to problems such as those considered by the perverse cognitive dynamic that we find underlying the label *post-truth*, with negative political consequences (Pérez Tapias, 2018: 163–180).

Keeping in mind normative criteria when considering what can be done with big data, not only ethical criteria but also epistemological criteria are relevant, even essential. Digitalization provides new resources, through greater information, to store more knowledge and strengthen diffusion via new communication routes. Furthermore, it opens the way to generating knowledge in another way, and this is what is boosted many times over thanks to the use of mass data, its algorithmic treatment and the application of artificial intelligence. Hence one cannot lose sight of a fundamental epistemological question that, though it has been dealt with at length, is still of the upmost importance. This concerns being aware that the mere accumulation of data, however massive it may be, does not produce knowledge by itself. Obviously, the handling of big data has to be well guided, from search and selection with precise criteria, to the unequivocal formulation of the problems that need investigating or of the hypotheses that need addressing. Put concisely, having a lot of data is no guarantee at all that inductive strategies will successfully lead to the knowledge we desire and the conclusions we seek. Without clear questions there can be no satisfactory answers.

Delving deeper, where ethical and epistemological questions intertwine, we have what for the humanities is never unwelcome – quite the contrary, it is what we refer to when we talk of the *question of meaning*. The humanities, given that their objects of study concern humans as *subjects*, must always meet the need to move constantly between the interrelation of *explain* and *understand*, emphasized since the epistemological contributions of hermeneutics formulated in contemporary philosophy from Dilthey to Gadamer, Ricoeur and Apel. If sound explanations increase our knowledge of human realities with new meanings thanks to their articulation in well-founded theories, and also by being a component of empirical comparison, as is widely present in the social sciences, the humanities cannot give up trying to *understand* what such realities encompass, including what is relative to the *meaning* with which at their core humans live their existence.

Therefore, the *digital humanities*, which though digital must still be humanities, should not – and this is an epistemic task with an ethical dimension – lose sight of the *question of meaning* (Pérez Tapias, 2003). Moreover, they must address this question with reflexive contemplation, in terms of the most genuine meaning of the expression, as well as how to consider everything related to meaning in digital culture. And, more specifically, they must think about what it means to be human in the digital medium, when mediated digitally, and

how such mediation comes about, critically addressing when and in what ways it becomes mediatization, through the *big data* with which we operate in our world.

The Meaning of What is Human and the Humanist Tradition

The humanities are committed to addressing the meaning of what is human. To this we can add the consideration that, in the existence of all humans, what is key is how we manage, individually and collectively, to travel along the paths that go from the hominization we stem from to the humanization we must cast ourselves toward. Moreover, it is in what we recognize as the humanist tradition that the developments focused on it have hastened into – at least in the vectors that we consider shapers of the humanist tradition identifiable as western, however much it may harbour universalist pretensions. It should be stated, therefore, that those humanities in which that tradition reaps its harvest cannot be disassociated from the humanism that has been forged in them through the various contributions that have enriched it. Hence if we speak of *digital humanities*, we are obliged to consider which humanism it is that they maintain or promote. Furthermore, if we were to conclude that they are contrary to continuing to weaving the thread of an unrenounceable humanism – clearly needful of radical reconsideration – then we would be at the point at which it would no longer do to talk of *humanities*, however much we wished, by making them digital, to save an epistemic space for the forms of knowledge that have constituted them.

At this point in time we cannot allow ourselves any naïveté when speaking of *humanism*. Although the roots of its intended meaning are found in Graeco-Latin thought, one should not disregard the humanist components of other traditions, such as Enrique Dussel with regard to the Semitic world and, more specifically, the Hebrew tradition, or as Erich Fromm has shown of the presence of humanist components in different cultures. Yet though we may underscore that statement by Protagoras, long established as a mandatory humanist reference, in that "man is the measure of all things", and highlight the contributions of major figures such as Cicero or Seneca, expanding the conception of the human to some more effectively universalist terms – the *humanitas* that every individual intensively bears, widely recognized by all members of humanity – we are not exempt from critically confronting what underpins humanist discourse, even by those who in the Renaissance eagerly took up that thread, such as Petrarch or Pico della Mirandola. Indeed, such a requirement for critical reception is accentuated with regard to how humanism has become reformulated in modern philosophy.

After what was described as *the anthropological turn* of the Renaissance, the protomodernity that began to excel in the culture of the Baroque – which in the thought of the Spanish Baroque found expression in the work of authors such as Francisco Suárez and Baltasar Gracián – was able to consolidate its humanism in a new anthropological conception, certainly, and in those ideas of ius naturale that used it to support a whole legal architecture around human dignity (Bloch, 2011). Such an ethical-political core would come to be a common element in all the humanist conceptions that followed, no matter that many of their constructions came to be the object of criticism due to their ethnocentric biases or ideological functions that were precisely contrary to the demands of that postulated dignity.

Modernity, which on the plane of thought gathered strength with the metaphysics of the subject that began with Descartes, added the value of autonomy to that demand for dignity,

which, stated first as belonging to consciousness in the exercising of rationality, began to forge ahead as moral autonomy – Kant being the culmination in this aspect – with the consequent requirements transferred to the political field as claims for rights that should accompany the formation of the condition of citizenry in what would in time be nascent democracies. While not diminishing the criticism Heidegger formulated of a humanism in debt to an onto-theo-logical view that it had not shed, trapped moreover in humanism's drift toward the nihilism that he himself wished to eliminate, we should not neglect the atheist humanism of Feuerbach, in the interest of saving human dignity by rescuing it from its bondage to religious alienation. Neither should we forget its legacy in a Marx that, on the same wave, maintained the humanist vector, repositioning it in his historical materialism.

The crisis of that humanism arrived, in anticipation of the crisis of modernity itself, after that boom of its versions incubated in the heat of existentialist currents, with Sartre and Camus at their head. Emerging from the same Marxist camp was a strong critique of what was presented as "socialist humanism", for considering it an ideological creation according to the concept of ideology originating with Marx: the structuralist thought of Althusser erected an antihumanist bastion – against even the humanism that could be found in Marx's earlier writings, since the later works were framed in a "scientific" paradigm that was alien to the humanist corruption via Feuerbach, along with the legacy of Hegel. The rejection of humanism gained ground with Foucault in "the death of Man", a formula that echoed Nietzsche's "death of God" and with which there was a radical questioning of a conception of man that, upon the pedestal of modern subjectivity, elevated the human being to an unsustainable deified condition, just as had been advocated by a philosophy that was both anthropocentric and idealist, with the social sciences themselves being affected by this concept since their outset, including versions of them in the Marxist field. Such Foucauldian anti-humanism prepared the way for post-humanism, in which many philosophical positions have grounded themselves, and in the sphere of the *humanities* themselves, since the crisis of modernity began to evolve into postmodernity. The questioning of the *subject*, the critique of a strong concept of reason, the objection to a view of history according to a mythicized progress and a way of thinking often unfolding in the shadow of Nietzsche, given the context of a culture permeated by nihilism, frame the criticism of a humanism for which the few proposals proffered for its recovery appeared unviable.

When, in the crisis of modernity, the criticism of humanism intensified, the questioning of it due to its connection to the metaphysics of subjectivity was added to entrenchment in the vector that was a response to a critical radicalization of ideologies: anti-humanism came to highlight how the humanist discourse has fulfilled certain functions of covering up and justifying a social order with a great deal of dehumanization. The general exposition of a conception of humanism linked to an idea of "human nature" that gave favourable scope to conservative political and religious approaches made humanism lose the emancipating potential that it had had when it was a bastion for the defence of human dignity. Humanism as an ideology became vulnerable to the most conservative interests present in society. Furthermore, since the last decades of the twentieth century, culturalist awareness has increased and feminist sensibility has strengthened, and so criticism has intensified, accusing western humanism of ethnocentrism and patriarchalism. Thus two fronts have opened up through which humanism is undermined, ending up as a mainstay of a false universalism, and simultaneously of a machismo underpinned by an androcentric view of the human.

With this kind of questioning of humanism, the *humanities* have been constantly impacted by the criticisms that have been heaped upon them. Though these criticisms are still relevant for the *digital humanities*, the latter finds itself open to another front of criticism: the accusation that humanism is succumbing to technocratism – or, phrased another way, to *technological fetishism* – as a consequence of a development of computing and telematics that is at the mercy of an instrumental reason that lacks purpose. The idolatrization of technology produced in such a case is what can give rise to the production of new applications of the pragmatist maxim that "one can do, or even should do, everything that it is technically possible to do," without further consideration about aims or a supposed morally legitimate use of means in the handling of big data, for example. If this is so, the meaning of the human becomes strangled between the algorithmic folds that mass data are being hurled at to produce calculations in virtue of which rules are established to be followed by humans or regarding them in some way.

Is it Possible for Humanism to Recover, and also Recover the Meaning of the Humanities Themselves as Digital Humanities of a Neo-Baroque Age?

The question that makes up the above heading contains a supposition, which could well be considered a cryptically communicated enthymeme. It is this: if we cease to sustain an approach that is somehow recognizable as humanist, it no longer makes sense to talk of *humanities*. I personally think that for different reasons we still need to use the denomination "humanities" for the types of knowledge that I briefly alluded to earlier, which we also, incidentally, call *Arts ("Letras"* – literally "letters" – in Spanish). And to this I would add that the use of the same word "humanities" becomes somewhat inconsistent if it is not accompanied by humanist thought – a humanist thought that must be reimagined in order to survive once the criticisms made against previous versions of humanism, which can no longer be defended due to the contradictions they contain or the epistemic shortcomings they have accumulated, have been confronted and overcome.

The defence of the *humanities* and the proposal of a humanism that is sustainable with good arguments, which is the heir to a tradition, but which at the same time involves an excess in what is transmitted that exceeds what is captured by ideological mechanisms, must be carried out in the context of the digital culture we are immersed in. This can be seen from another perspective as the culture of a Neo-Baroque age. This age shows many *symptoms* of the Neo-Baroque, which should come as no surprise since the Baroque was the cultural movement of a previous era of crisis – which marked the beginning of modernity – and that if we now speak of neo-baroque it is precisely in the midst of the crisis, after a few centuries, of that very modernity (Pérez Tapias, 2019: 297–312).

Baroque culture catalysed the crisis, between the end of the sixteenth century and the start of the eighteenth century, that was produced by the collision and resulting vacuum between the old culture of Christianity and the new culture that took off in modernity, with the Renaissance transition in between. We can add to that collision of Baroque Europe – with particular prominence at first of the Spanish Baroque or, more widely, the Iberian Baroque – with the clash between the European world of the conquistadors and the world of the indigenous cultures in America that were invaded and subjugated by them. The current crisis of the end of the twentieth and start of this century, meanwhile, is a crisis in which we clearly see the emptiness of questioned social and political institutions and secular ideologies of the modernity that is already breaking apart, overrun by the economic processes, socio-political events and cultural phenomena of our societies. It is worth

pointing out some vectors in which all this takes place: the computing revolution; economic globalization; states being exceeded by the market (crisis of democracies under the neoliberal paradigm); the digitalization of culture; the correlation between identitarianism and nihilism; and the environmental crisis that has gathered around what we call climate change. On top of that, there is the COVID-19 pandemic that since the beginning of 2020 has ravaged humanity around the whole planet, affecting ways of life, the economy, social life, political dynamics and the way we understand ourselves through a heightened consciousness of vulnerability.

In the midst of these circumstances, new practices and new ways of thinking have emerged and are being developed, which we can aptly call neo-baroque. At the same time that we are seeking answers to the crises we are going through, from ecological and economic answers to healthcare, we continue trying to explain the realities surrounding us, and ourselves in them, reconstructing resources to address, however *fragmentarily* – which is so baroque! – the nihilism that invades us. This is the gravest cultural problem, with excrescences of cynical behaviours everywhere, analogous to how in the seventeenth century our predecessors of the beginning of modernity dealt with the scepticism that then became ubiquitous.

Whether with efforts still based on theological survival, or with creations that were exclusively based on independent reason, the thinkers of the Baroque Seicento attempted to come up with solutions to their crisis. One way or another, in this new view of the world, they had philosophical-anthropological developments of a humanist ilk at their disposal (though these had differing degrees of coherence, particularly regarding their compatibility with universalizable requirements of respect for human dignity, for example for women, people considered heretical, or Indians and blacks, who were subjected to exploitation or slavery). Such contributions are of great value for comparing similarities and differences between their baroque and our neo-baroque age, between their search for answers in a world in crisis and ours in a world no less beset by new crises.

Between the Folds of Leibniz as Baroque Philosopher and the Folds of Big Data in our Neo-Baroque

When searching for comparable references from the Baroque of modernity that help us to consider ourselves in our Neo-Baroque crisis of modernity, it is Leibniz who, from the end of the seventeenth century, gives us a body of work that is particularly suited to the task. For Leibniz, moreover, there is the additional circumstance of his having been an exceptional mathematician, the creator of infinitesimal calculus and inventor of a suitable notation for it (invented simultaneously but wholly distinct and apart from the similar intellectual feat by Newton, as is well known). Between his infinitesimal calculus and his metaphysical thought, in which ontology and theodicy are combined, there is an interesting correlation: an ontology in which force displaces extension when thinking of reality, and in which matter, insofar as force, is assimilated to spirit[2] – an ontology that has a notable structural correlation with his mathematical achievements in terms of conceptual development.

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[2] Thus leaving behind Cartesian dualism, as Leibniz had already emphatically underlined in his Discourse on Metaphysics, which preceded the great works of his philosophical thought (it was written in 1686 but not published until 1846), notably in paragraph 18 on the importance of force as opposed to extension, and the paragraph, following those in which he outlined his concept of

Giving thought to the finite-infinite relationship in a construction of explanations of reality capable of opening up pathways in the search for meaning, Leibniz offers a solution in a great metaphysical construction. This has two parts. First, the ontology describes a reality made up of monads, some separated from others, but each one with their own perspective on the world, and in such a way that in turn each monad is a constructive result of other monads, according to a *principle of compossibility*, by virtue of which the real world is formed and, thanks to each and every one of the monads, is continually updated. Second, it leads to a theodicy – a justification of God (in view of the glaring problem of evil in the world) – that aims to demonstrate that this world is, thanks to that God, the effective realization of the best of possibilities that can be conceived. Such is the *sufficient reason* – the *principle of sufficient reason*, indubitably the "unifying element of the Leibnizian system" (Saame, 1988: 125), which obtains both for *truths of reason and for truths of fact or contingent truths*[3] – which makes it possible to give an account of reality and its meaning, in close relation to the compossibility thanks to which the combinatorics of monads is considered the basis for justifying this world as it is, in which its *meaning*, since the presence of evil becomes neutralized, as a lesser evil, as not contradictory – *principle of non-contradiction* – is at the core of the reality that is given as the best possible.

The sufficient reason that the compossibles provide is, therefore, the keystone to regaining a questioned meaning, when not lost, in the midst of the infinite folds of reality – "pleats [*replis]* of matter", "folds in the soul", signs of identity likewise of baroque thought (Deleuze, 2009: 11 ff.) – which is coiled in each monad and which finds its unfolding in the forming of an order in which the positions of every monad in the flow of the series they are found in leave space for the human being to find their place and live their freedom through conditions that are more and more enlightened by a reason that sheds light on the need that emerges from those conditions. The ontology that speaks of a reality constituted by monads, and monads of monads as dynamic substantial entities, opens up to a humanist view in which humans find their place in the constant flow between the *folds of folds* of a reality of unending complexity that, nevertheless, is in accordance with the "harmony pre-established" by a God who can only want the best. This God's existence is (supposedly) proved out of what is in effect truly best, in a reformulation of Anselm's ontological argument. Through the same divine freedom, to the rhythm of the principle of reason, human freedom is saved in that history of the world in which the possible – including the maximum good – and the real – where the actual minimum of evil counts – are joined thanks to the intelligence and will of God, thus writing, as is stated in the Theodicy, that "novel of human life" that is effectively universal history (Givone, 2006: 308–309).

Deleuze's reading of Leibniz's thought as a thinking of the *fold* has its correlate in the force and presence of the fold and the measureless *fold of folds* not only in thought but also in Baroque painting and sculpture, in architecture and even in music (Chambers, 2006: 101–130). Reality, and the human being at its heart, is a monadological kaleidoscope, in which each part (monad) reflects the whole, although the whole is not perceivable from and by any part. This can only be done by the God that is indicated by a thought that tries to save

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individual substance, in which he called it monad, differentiating it from Descartes' concept of substance (Leibniz 1983: 72 ff.).

[3] As Leibniz states in his Monadology (par. 32–38) and in the corresponding paragraphs of his Theodicy (for example, par. 44, 280–282 and 340–344).

reality in its immanence based on a *hubris* of metaphysical principles through which the transcendence of that same absent God is retained.

What our reality suggests is to associate the Leibnizian *folds of folds* with the folds of an Artificial Intelligence, which could be considered a reiteration of infinitesimal calculus. Now it is a question of *statistical folds* in which the *unfolding/ deployment of big data* takes place to *coil/refold* them on the individualist condition of human beings with a virtual perspective on a world whose reality nobody encompasses. Because it is only for the "great algorithm" which, transcending the materiality of data, tells us that this world is the one that exists without any alternative – the "there is no alternative" attributed to Margaret Thatcher. This is the discredited discourse in which the digital variant of the preestablished harmony is reformulated, with the conclusion that this is the best of all possible worlds because there is no possibility of another – the digital successes do not annul the neoliberal paradigm and its cognitive (that is, ideological) effects. It is thus as a *hubris* of data – the *dataism* Yuval H. Harari discerned as counterpoint to the atheism that the atheism of modern humanism culminated in, now promoted like a new religion, so necessary for the transhumanist faith (Harari 2017: 400 ff.) – that it carries with it the danger of big data as a threat to all humanist ambition, including the commitment to the dignity of each and every human being.

The Proposal for "An-Other Humanism", Also Through Big Data, Opposed to Dataism

Being able to establish parallels in this way between the baroque folds of Leibniz and the folds, with their unfolding and refolding, of *big data*, the limit of these parallels becomes apparent as soon as one observes that the nihilism of our technological civilization is not capable of harmonious development in which meaning can shine, as Leibniz still intended, albeit with his theodicy, for his humanism, running through all the complexity of his ontology. Today not only do we know that theodicy is impossible, but that we prove daily that the "unbearable lightness of being" – as per Kundera – in absence of theodicy, provides scandalous scope for cynicism that appears in the various spheres of our lives (Pérez Tapias 2016: 410–417).

Is it possible to save meaning without God, through a maze of algorithms in which there is no Ariadne's thread? Modern humanism, when all is said and done, attempted it, but the very criticisms of humanism showed its failure. The truth of these anti-humanisms concerns the shortcomings that they revealed of prior forms of humanism. And the humanism that can be found in Leibniz not only is not free of this diagnosis, but also contributed in part to bringing about such criticism. In his book, The *Era of the Individual*, Alain Renaut points this out, showing how Leibniz's thought, as well as that committed reference to transcendence, sees its humanist pathos due to the extreme individualism of his monadology (Renaut 1993: 60 ff. and 131–175). Hence, a non-individualist humanism is necessary – although there is no reason why this should not aim to be metaphysical, a point that Renaut himself comes to recognize, without it necessarily having to accompany the rejection of individualism. Is this possible? As long as the aim is to address the question of meaning, metaphysics appears. Therefore, the answer we are looking for would have to be provided by a humanism that entails an alternative metaphysics with respect to previous iterations – ancient, premodern and even modern; in other words, *another sense paradigm*. It is to such a need that Levinas's metaphysics of alterity responds, and it is because of this that the French-Jewish philosopher can speak of a "humanism of the Other man", for which recognition of the alterity of the *other human* through the constituent responsibility of moral conscience, in which freedom is justified, is key (Lévinas 1993).

Taking Levinasian humanism as a starting point, rejecting individualism, one can move on to reconsider the autonomy of the subject that has been inseparable from modern humanism, beginning with that paradoxical heteronomy that Levinas highlights as the seat of autonomy itself for those who must earn it in response to another's – or others' – interpolation in the interrelation of co-subjects in which demands of justice manifest themselves. It is true, however, that when that autonomy matures and is exercised as responsibility, in the face of others and against otherness – including nature as otherness that calls us to responsibility – the matter of anthropocentrism that humanism had historically borne with it returns under a new light. This must be transmuted from *anthropocentrism of control* to *anthropocentrism of responsibility*, which is a touchstone for combining the same relationship of humans with animals without having to sacrifice necessary humanism to a supposedly possible animalism.

ary humanism to a supposedly possible animalism. There is still some way to go in what could be considered a rehabilitation of humanism – analogous to what might be done with the very concept of "human nature" – in order to be able to talk of "an-other humanism": and we should make clear that this rehabilitation cannot be limited to creating one more variant among the known forms of humanism, based on fiddling with the details. What we need is precisely a reformulation of humanism so that it is not ideological cover for capitalism, neocolonial practices, patriarchalism, hidden forms of racism or cultural supremacism, and so on. Such an "other humanism" could follow the lead of decolonial thought and of the epistemologies of the South advocated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2019), when they speak of "an-other thinking" or of thinking through "an-other paradigm" – a common thread of the contributions collected in *El giro decolonial [The Decolonial Turn]* (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007). I should qualify that it is not a question of sweeping away the entire humanist tradition, rather of tidying up the excess once the relevant criticisms have been made.

It is time to pay attention to the persistence of the legacy and need for humanism, even by those who have gone through anti-humanism and, furthermore, not remaining merely negative in respect to it, have positioned themselves within the parameters of a post-humanist thought. A particularly significant case is that of the Italian philosopher Rosi Braidotti, who on the one hand insists on the rejection of humanism, for the reasons already given, but on the other hand recognizes that there is a kind of humanist urge that we cannot free ourselves from – that we do not want to be free of, such as when we again take up the question of the subject, in a manner that recalls the later Foucault with the processes of subjectivation, after his watertight critiques of the *subject* (Braidotti 2020: 59 ff.). Leaving to one side Braidotti's untenable excess, as performatively self-contradictory, when she not only speaks of posthumanism but also of the "posthuman" (2015), in order therein to set up and place thought itself in that supposed position, the case she represents serves as a contrasting reference to support the proposal of the "other humanism", which we refer to in the Aristotelian way as the "*humanism we seek*".

When through the current world and culture we advocate "an-other humanism" – accompanied by a dialogic universalism, not imperialist, sexist or racist . . ., but quite the contrary – it must be done without demonizing the technological resources that computing and telematics have placed in our hands, and, at the same time, resisting the fetishism with which they are often treated. The aforementioned dataism is a result of this: it is this cult that incentivizes the excesses of the datum, both fanciful and humanly detrimental, which

we see in the sphere of transhumanism. Critical assessments of this phenomenon, such as Luc Ferry's *La Révolution Transhumaniste*, are much needed. When transhumanism reaches an inhuman concept of the human being, which, as well as being destructive for the individual who accepts it against the evidence of their own finitude, even aiming for immortality, is radically anti-egalitarian in how it understands the relations between humans and supposed transhumans (Pérez Tapias 2020), we find even more reasons to take the side of Jacques Rancière from the moment that he also turns his gaze upon humanism for always having contemplated, in the best versions of itself, the equality of all humans – that ontological equality that moral exigencies must be based on in terms of equality of treatment and the political objectives of social and gender equality (Bodas 2012: 185–204). *The question of sense*, as a metaphysical matter that demands ethics, makes it necessary for the rehabilitation of humanism as "another humanism" to use an ontological approach regarding equality so that the *humanization* that all human beings have the right – and duty – to access is not tangled up with all kinds of conditions that make it impossible. We must therefore cultivate "an-other humanism" that, emerging from the crisis of modernity, points to the *transmodernity* that Dussel and others consider when in theories and practices they set forth toward new inter-individual and inter-cultural relationships through an "other paradigm" (Dussel 2005: 257–294). Such "an-other humanism", being necessary, is the humanism that is proving possible in a digital culture in which the *humanities*, without succumbing to the tyranny of the algorithm, are still capable of putting all their epistemic might to the service of the dignity of each and every human being.

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