Social and epistemic disparities of the *precariat*

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"Liberation as an intellectual mission, born in the resistance and opposition to the confinements and ravages of imperialism, has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics of culture to its unhoused, decentred, and exilic energies, energies whose incarnation today is the migrant, and whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and artist in exile, the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages. From this perspective then all things are indeed counter, original, spare and strange. From this perspective also, one can see 'the complete consort dancing together' contrapuntally."

Edward W. Said : Culture and Imperialism (1994).

Abstract : We are facing two major challenges in present times. The first challenge is the global mass migrations of people due to war, climate change and environmental degradation. These are people who are forced to work in precarious situations, often leading to socio-political disruptions. The second challenge lies in technology that provides a global network for the migration of ideas, liberating knowledge from its geographical and disciplinary boundaries and challenging our perceptions of human exceptionality. To bring together these challenges might seem impossible, but when one looks at the uncertainties emerging around humanity's future, this is possibly a necessary task. In this chapter I would like to initiate some thinking in that direction.

Key words : epistemic knowledge creation, social disparities, inequality, knowledge transformation.

1 Introduction

Current questions facing humanity include concerns such as : are we facing the end of history and what is the future humanity face ? Many of those grappling with these questions focus on the topic of the rise and fall of civilisations and base their premise on the idea that we are living in the end times of history as we know it (Acemoglu & Robinson 2012 ; Bongiovanni 2012). Following a take on history, these scholars often rely on long-term global economic and political conditions as indicators. It is possibly better to again adopt the proposal by Fernand Braudel (1980) and look at these

questions through different notions of time : individual (short run), social (medium term) and geographical (the notion of *longue durée*).

If we do indeed live in these 'end times' or 'post-human' times as Slavoj Žižek (2010. 2016. 2018) proposed, we are noticing an important factor emerging : due to technology, there is a dramatic change and transformation to be seen in the social structures of society as well as in the production conditions of research. This is introducing a destabilising *precariousness* of living and life-styles amongst global societies, a *precariousness* in the European Enlightenment regulatory principles in the generation of knowledge and a *precariousness* of generating knowledge outside of normative epitomes. In a broader sense, we experience the right of might (political power) pitted against the might of the pen (intellectual power) – with the growing numbers of murders of journalists serving as sad example.

What I would like then is to explore in this chapter some understanding on the social conditions that leads to *precaritisation*, but also to try to get a grasp on the epistemological transformations and reflections that overlap with the contemporary development of new subjects and new frontiers of knowledge production.

2 Migrants and miscreants

There is a lot of attention given to mass-migrations across the globe. On a political level, efforts to control the growing number of migrants are centred upon the establishment of a Global Compact for Migration to manage the co-ordination of human rights for migrants and establish global safety regulations. The main focus is on the large numbers of the people on the move. Inter-African migration, for example, grew from 12.5million in 2000 to 19.4 million in 2017. Migrations to Europe from across the globe is measured in thousands. While world leaders are mostly failing to improve the protection of migrant rights, to entrench domestic stability and to increase socio-economic and employment opportunities, societies are simultaneously, and somewhat unforeseen, transforming due to this influx of people.

Traditionally one can consider that migrations and social changes are happening against a very specific political frame of reference ; the establishment of Empires with the understanding that *"... in the traditional sense, most Empires shared certain features and characteristics resulting from their attempts to subjugate a conquered people permanently"* (Parsons 2010 :12).Empires are in a sense the 'hardware of societies' even if there is in a historical sense no universal model of Empire in its purest form, and in general it *"... entails the formal, direct and authoritarian rule of one group over another"* (Parsons 2010 :9). Linked to Empire is the term imperialism that refers to (military) territorial dominance – linked to colonialisation and colonialism (terms sometimes interchangeably used with imperialism). The expansion of a global economy and technology, facilitating human need/greed and cultural aggression often led to an imbalance in political power and is facilitated by these forms of imperialism.To maintain Empires we developed systems and divisions of labour to ensure that we participate in structured ways within economic imperatives. This division of labour, in turn, became closely bound with the formation of social classes.

Empires were often built on the belief that only through Empire are we able to constitute a civilised society. Empires are dependent on military prowess and social structures supported by the law, religion and cultural practices. Parsons (2010) argued that beneath the self-justifying rhetoric of benevolent paternalism (based on conquests being the products of military technology, wealth and political will) lay economic exploitation and the desire for wealth with little understanding of the historical social reality of subjugation. Giovanni Arrighi (1989 :23) aptly commented that in Empires : *"... the classes and ethnic/national groups or groupings that began to crystallize were crystallized, so to speak, from three directions. They defined themselves primarily in relation to these state structures that commanded the largest amount of armed force and access to economic possibilities, either through the direct distribution of ever-increasing tax income or through the creation of structured possibilities of preferential access to market (including training). They were defined by those in the centres of these structures (and in the centres of the world-system as a whole)".*

History indicates that states can fail (implode) under conditions of internal violence and dissatisfaction about the state's neglect to deliver positive social contributions and the abuse of power. When governments lose credibility, the continuing nature of the particular nation state itself becomes questionable and illegitimate in the hearts and minds of its citizens (Bongiovanni 2012.Chomsky 2006. Acemoglu & Robinson 2012)

A challenge to nation states lies therefore, on the one hand, within the massive migrations from the country to the metropolitan centres, the flow of legal and illegal migrant workers upon which transnational corporations depend, and the millions of dispossessed who flee famine and war. This destabilisation is currently introducing a different kind of Empire. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000. 2004) argue that a 'new Empire' is emerging, consisting of those migrants and workers who are without a state or whose labour preferences are emerging beyond geographically bound affiliations. Hardt and Negri adopted the Spinozan description of the *multitude* as a concept of a population that has not entered into a social contract with a sovereign political body and whereby individuals retain the capacity for political self-determination_._ These conditions of existence and of choice are increasingly possible due to the rise of industrial, managerial and communication technology in a world economy dominated by transnational corporations. When nation-state imperialism no longer lies behind the fundamental structure of the capitalist system, a 'new kind of Empire' and global hegemony, based on a 'systemic totality', replace the previous Empire-held dominant position in the global order (Hardt & Negri, 2001 :14).

In Niall Ferguson's (2017) take on our ever-growing technologically networked world, following the very human need for optimised and space-filling branches of networks (even in often bewildering ways), the notion of a Hardt/Negri 'new Empire', populated by the *multitudes*, is possible. The *multitude* represents individual freedom outside of geopolitical nationalist control, and consist mainly of an ensemble of individuals whose life-tool is the brain and whose productive forces function through intellectual and technological co-operation.

3 New socio-political transformations within the *multitude*

Pankaj Mishra (2017 :323) describes our current times as follows : *"We see again, in our sad age, the stark extremes of political inflexibility and anarchic revolt, insuperable backwardness and a gaudy cult of progress. Indeed the men trying to radicalise the liberal principle of freedom and autonomy, of individual power and agency, seem more rootless and desperate than before : even less constrained that the Russian nihilists or immigrant anarchists of the late nineteenth century by shared rules or possibilities of political participation. For society itself, let alone its spiritual substance, has been diminished by the loss of its relative autonomy and internal order in the age of globalisation".* In this 'sad age' Giovanni Arrighi, Terence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein (1989) observed two dominant anti-systemic movements that developed in recent times : the 'social movements' (oppression by employers) and the 'national movements' (oppression of ethno-national groups).The growth in inequality, the primary reason for the development of anti-systemic movements, is due to the increasingly centralisation of capital and the marginalisation of the labour force, loss of state control over civil societies and a growth in demands by minority groups – spectacularly supported and facilitated by technology.

Though nation-states are mostly geographically bound, these boundaries are being transgressed through the global reach of modern communication abilities, aided by mass- emigration patterns. Marshall McLuhan's (1964) prediction of the 'global village' whereby the medium becomes the massage, has emerged. The 'new Empire' fits nicely within the evidence we have on technology based social networks and the new labour structures that humanity adopted ; beginning with knowledge itself and the various forms and languages we use to communicate with, structuring a global workforce and ending in facilitating collective global solidarity (in various forms and formats). This is evident in how we now trace patterns of settlement, migrations, military and ideological/political transgressions in support of, as Ferguson (2017) argues : our innate (ancient) urge to network and dominate. In similar context Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000 :9) tell us that *"... what used to be conflict or competition among several imperial powers has in important respects been replaced by the idea of a single power that overdetermines them all, structures them in a unitary way, and treats them under one common notion of right that is decidedly postcolonial and postimperialist".*

Super-national organisations and multinational industries (IMF, World Bank) are key to organising and creating this global civil society and Hardt and Negri (2004) reason that these organisations are structured in a way that is contrary to democratically based social and public representation. The public, in this scenario is considered to be less knowledgeable than (IMF, World Bank) corporate 'experts' and, through their dominance, it becomes easy to wage wars according to (often misleading and self-serving) 'expert' advice. However, we could propose that Empire does not only position the public as passive victims of mostly exploitative socio- political and economic dominance. As subjects, the publics also constitute active knowledge producers (artists, poets, musicians, etc). The new Empire, one can argue, functions under a different kind of consolidated space, consisting of a merging of multi-cultures and

geopolitical and international legalities. Through the medium of social networks, the 'new' Empire provides expansive means of re/production.

The *multitude* is also looked at from a different angle. With more attention now shifted to the power of social movements, driven by revolutionary programs, Guy Standing (2010) is proposing the formation of new class structures : a tiny *plutocracy* (0.0001%) atop a bigger elite, a *salariat* (in relatively secure salaried jobs), *proficians* (freelance professionals still striving to be part of the economy), a core and growing working class called the *precariat* and a *lumpen-precariat* (jobless and poverty stricken) at the bottom. It is the working class of the *precariat* that catches most attention and provides the space for furthering revolutionary causes and brings about economic emancipation ; mostly facilitated by the technologically driven power vested within the social movements.

Underlying the idea of a working-class emancipation Jacques Rancière (2011 :27-28) proposed the possibility of *"... a network of individuals who by various paths, found themselves in a position of spokesman, at the same time central and outside the game : not people who carried the word to the masses, but just people who carried the word : individuals separated from their supposed fellows by what they have grasped, caught up in the circuitry of speech that came from elsewhere, and who were able to reconcile themselves in a common identity only by making themselves spokesmen in an opposite sense from that ordinarily understood : by taking speech to the masses".*

Major events are having long lasting effects on society : the slow decline of Capitalism after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 (referred to as Black Tuesday), the dramatic intellectual revolt against the hallowed corridors of academia (one such is the student uprisings in Paris during May 1968) and massive ecological changes due the rise of the Antropocene [1]. Frederico Campagna (2012 :2) declared that the age of austerity has brought about a new generation of protesters on the economic front : a *precariat* who feels stuck in a new 'Warsaw Ghetto', due to Capitalism, and who is *"... fragmented, conflicted and unsure about the outcome of the fight".* Todd Gitlin (2012 :17) further described *"people with quiet fantasies of a revolution and a communal lifestyle buried deep in their souls, stunned by the rapture of learning there were others who felt the same way, a discovery that only happened because of the rise of Internet social networking".* It is in the Occupy Wall Street movement that we witness how a social movement (the *multitude*) thumbed its collective noses at designated leaders, politically co-opted journalists and politicians, and mobilised in revolt against so-called

1. Humanity's impact on the earth is so profound that scientists are proposing that the earth is entering a new geologicalunit within the Geological Time Scale. During the current epoch, the Holocene, we experienced 12,000 years of stable climate. However,since the last Ice Age in the current Quaternary period and the Cenozoic Era, which are high rankings in the division of time, we saw anthropogenic changes associated with erosion and sediment movements, colonialization, agriculture, urbanisation, ocean acidification and rampant industrial driven carbon emissions. This new unit on our current time scale is referred to as the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene, essential to be translated into the humanities and the social sciences, is not politics, it is not (yet) an ideology, it is hovering on the fringes of the post-humanist discourse (talks about overcoming 'humanity'), and is dangerously close to political delineations based on economic privilege. Ed Ayres (2016) proposed 4 anthropogenic spikes, or rapidly accelerating trends, or four mega phenomena that should be considered as humanity's contributions to the changing climate : the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the number of species extinctions, the level of human material consumption and the global human population.

leaders. In these social movements, the *multitudes,* or then the *precariat,* organised socially horizontal (classless), leaderless and non-violent actions.

If we look a bit closer to the more specific political characteristics that is slowly emerging from the *precariat,* or then the *multitude*, in relation to the rise in socio-political conflict, Guy Standing (2017) identified the emergence of three specific identities. In the first place he identified the atavistic-populists : characterised by support for neo-fascist parties and populist demagogues. These populists play/prey on fears and social uncertainties by, for example, depicting 'strangers' (migrants, Muslims, whites, blacks, etc.) as the cause of their insecurity. Secondly we find the anarchic detached : displayed in anomic, anti-social behaviour, in the rise of violence, in social illnesses and loss of faith in politics in general. Thirdly there is the ever present idealistic-progressives (or utopian-progressives) who use social media as communication/organisational tool and whose network actions are displayed in global uprisings and social movements (Standing 2017). Each in its own way is looked upon as 'dangerous' by the state and each propose alternatives to capitalism in an 'unholy alliance' with democracy.

Similar to age-old emotions experienced by society's marginalised, misfits and the subaltern, Hardt's (2000) *multitudes* populating the 'new Empire' and Standing's *precariat* populating the workforce, are progressively and collectively experiencing anger related to the impossibility to advance towards (and in most instances to live) a meaningful life which is directly coupled with the frustration of not have any career and/or career prospects. This causes anomie with a rise in feelings of passivity born of despair. Most are suffering from anxiety due to chronic insecurity in the workplace and this results in alienation when working for others only at their behest (as a commodity rather than as a colleague) (Standing 2011). These issues are not new, but the collective numbers are surely indicating a cause of concern (or elation depending on one's perspective).

4 New knowledge transformations

It is not only socio-political and economic systems that are transforming. There is an undisputed intellectual transformation taking place, in tandem with a radical social transformation through the influence of technology. Aptly described by Federico Campagna and Emanuele Campiglio (2012 :5) *"... the role of the intellectuals – one of the most stable and conservative categories inherited from the twentieth century – is now undergoing a process of deep transformation".* Some intellectuals remain within the traditional solitary, inward side of labour but are now able, from a condition of freedom, to network, through the Commons, and share ideas and alternatives through instant connectedness. Others take to the streets in solidarity with the masses – similar as during the May 68 student uprising in Paris where the intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault and André Glucksmann, instead of keeping silent and stepping back to let the voice of the people be heard, acted as spokespersons and protectors of the people's voices. These 'philosophers in the street' earned the admission from the masses to become the 'activists for the people' (Rancière 2012).

Radical social transformations are not taking place as a triumphant social victory over the failures of capitalism, or through dramatic socio-political disruptions or some sort

of political catastrophe, but is already taking place 'like a thief in the night' according to Slavoj Žižek (2018), and through the experience of a cyber linked new freedom of thinking and a new freedom of 'being in this world'.

At the same time, technology is transforming, growing and becoming a manipulative force, putting to bed the sometimes misguided belief that technology is just a tool – in the same vein as the assumption that all science is good science and all scientists and intellectuals are good people [2]. This leaves the global authorities with two choices : to either try to contain the impact of technology through regulating (and curtailing) Big Data, the social media platforms and biogenetics, or to develop a 'state philosophy' in a desperate effort to try and *"... prevent the collapse of our established ethico-political order"*, by establishing some order and defining "... *some kind of 'proper measure' between the two extremes of normalization and the abyss of freedom*" (Žižek 2018 :3/4).

In this turmoil we are noticing two identities emerging : the *precariat* as those who are migrants, outsiders and misfits and the *precariat* as those who are to be considered as the intellectual rebels who think outside of the established order. The regulatory system of peer-review, application of scientific method and mentorship within designated disciplines form an integral part of the 'state philosophy's ideals. However, the limited number of workers who are part of this academic system, is hardly comparable with the *precariat* generating knowledge outside of these domains – knowledge facilitated and shared by and through the Internet, Open Science networks and the Internet of Things. Science, technology (machines) and cyberspace, expanding in tandem through, for example, Citizen Science. Here the *precariat* is able to generate important intellectual work to form part of a global movement whereby the public provides guidance and evaluation of usefulness of content. We could, in this context, even start to explore the possibility of a Mode 3 of knowledge production whereby technology provides a very different framework for the generation of knowledge beyond what Mode 2 could achieve [3].

The *precaritisation* of knowledge and the social situation of the *precariat*, outside the ivory towers of academia, are progressively causing epistemic disparities. Slavoj Žižek (2016 :10) proposed that such disparity, in its most elementary form, refers to *"... a Whole whose parts do not fit together so that the Whole appears as an artificial composite, its organic unity forever ruined"*. By labelling the *precaritisation*

2. Technology is defined by Val Dusek (2006) as having three subdivisions : 'technology as hardware', 'technology as rules' (when we rationalise behaviour and certain social actions by fixing such behaviour into regulatory rules) and, finally, 'technology as system'.

3. Michael Gibbons (1984) proposed a structural distinction between two modes of understanding.The first mode – Mode 1 – captures the conventional, discipline bound way of research where knowledge "... is validated by the sanction of a clearly defined community of specialists" (Gibbons, 1984 :22). This is the mode followed by scientists in the traditional way. When one shifts outside the parameters established by accepted research paradigms and academically constructed disciplines one starts to work transdisciplinary. By breaking the hold of discipline bound structures one renders their methodologies inadequate. Gibbons (1984) called this alternative way of looking at the production of knowledge Mode 2 and proposed an alternative route for research methods that could also capture knowledge that was embedded within communities in their traditional 'ways of doing and knowing' and thereby provided additional (and different) knowledge to that of the discipline that the scientist/researcher is working in. Gibbons (1994) later on proposed that, in Mode 2, "... the determinants of a potential solution involve the integration of different skills in a framework of action ..." and the result (or 'consensus' as he called it) might not be permanent as it is depended in its conformity to the requirements of the application (Gibbons, 1994 :4).

of knowledge in the context of disparity is necessary when we consider the free sharing of information, on a global scale, through networks such as Citizen Science, the Science Commons, the multiple Social Media platforms, Big Data and the use of algorithms to study human behaviour through the 'reign of the meme machines' of Twitter, Facebook and Aps. Slavoj Žižek (2010 :331) appropriately argued that : *"... for the first time in history, we, humans, collectively constitute ourselves and are aware of it, so that we are also responsible for ourselves : the mode of our survival depends on the maturity of our collective reason".* Recall what Hardt and Negri (2000) called to task : to consider biopolitics as a means to examine the strategies and mechanisms through which human life processes are managed under regimes of authority, over knowledge, power, and the processes of subjectivation ; as well as Michel Foucault's concept of biopower (2002).

Consider Hannah Arendt's (1958 :3) apt prediction that in future "... *it would be as though our brains, which constitutes the physical, material condition of our thoughts, were unable to follow what we do, so that from now on we would indeed need artificial machines to do our thinking and speaking. If it should turn out to be true that knowledge (in the modern sense of know-how) and thought have parted company for good, then we would indeed become the helpless slaves, not so much of our machines as of our know-how, thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technically possible, no matter how murderous it is".* This leads to the realisation that : *"... this future man, whom the scientists tell us they will produce in no more than a hundred years, seems to be possessed by a rebellion against human existence as it has been given, a free gift from nowhere (secularly speaking) which he wishes to exchange, as it were, for something he has made himself".*

Indisputably we are witnessing a new 'politics of knowledge', most visible in the biogenetic revolution that is blurring perceptions between human/machine, human/nature through the 'uncontrolled' development of technology ; technology that escalated humanity into a 4th Industrial Revolution. However, the complex links between the politics of power, social resistance and empowerment of technology might not yet be fully understood (Caygill 2013). This poses a challenge to our philosophical understanding of both the concept of resistance, the question of technology and the role of intellectuals working outside of academic institutions in knowledge production. What we currently do know is that the use of the Internet and cyberspace has become an integral part of modern humanity as Hannah Arendt (1958) previously warned about, and in the context of what Bernard Stiegler (1998) more recently proposed : *"... technology is a milieu or an ecology : it is not something extraneous to the definition of the human and used instrumentally, but is constitutive of it".*

5 Radicalised social transformation

Social transformations are happening and there are many champions emerging. Some, like Howard Caygill (2013), explores the many forms of social resistance, as a 'living genre' when it joins forces with a new 'technology of resistance'. This is related to the political and economic defiance following the recent resistances of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, the Indignados Movement in Spain and America's Occupy Wall Street.

Looking at how technology as a 'milieu' or 'ecology' is becoming constitutive of being human (following Heidegger's premise that 'the essence of technology is nothing technical'), Caygill (2013 :202) demonstrates how supposedly coherent and stable networks tends towards unification or monopoly but also experience resistance within and against networks through *"... deviations from specific routes, making unsanctioned entrances and exits, feigning position or even exiting the network altogether"*. The social movements demonstrated that the mobilising role of the Internet is not to be ignored since there is now nothing *"... to stop all kinds of action, from educating and organising political action, to demonstrations"* (Caygill 2013 :208).

Humans developed diverse systems for configuring reality (cognitive polyphasia), whereby different kinds of knowledge, possessing different rationalities, live side by side in the same individual or collective. Despite such diversity Gilles Deleuze (1995) observed that we have moved from a 'disciplinary society' to a more invasive 'society of control'. We still have institutions, those that, by separation and segregation, control the behaviour of society and regulate the academic production of knowledge within the boundaries of religion, the monarchy and the state. But what we find is that authority is no longer confined to particular institutions : authority is being integrated into every aspect of social life through increasingly interconnected networks. These interconnected networks, partly depending on memes (Blackmore 1999), are used to mobilise social uprisings but also represents the growing fascination with what can only be described as gossip, a culture of flattery and leading 'soap-opera lives' through, what Masao Miyoshi (2010 :253) identified as, *"... the spread of desocialised individualism, or self-interest and self-indulgence as the rational choice in everyday life"*.

6 Epistemic disparities

Epistemic disparities, or then the *precaritisation* of knowledge, poses the biggest sociopolitical challenge to the state, while simultaneously providing a challenging epistemological opportunity to those working and thinking outside of the formal structures of institutions. When we look at the strength of the 'misfits' : the creative artists, writers, poets, musicians among the growing numbers of the *multitudes* and the *precariat* who on the whole rejected regulated standards of behaviour necessary to produce political conformity, those seeking alternative life-styles and preference for autonomy and freedom of choice above economic 'security', we begin to recognise the strengths of generating knowledge beyond the 'control'of academia. What we witness is probably a reverse of the accepted academic practice of science speaking to the public, to one whereby socially robust knowledge is now able to speak to science research ; replacing the old dictum of publish or perish with participate or perish. It also, most importantly, provides space for artists and artisans, musicians and the subalterns to find their voice and transform their knowledge as scholars in own right. It is within the latter that the depth and reflection of the knowledge of the subaltern, the *precariat*, the marginalised and the silenced in all its transformative unpredictability is finding a common voice.

James Surowiecki (2005) poses that the wisdom of groups of people, given the opportunity, is not less informed and intelligent than that of the individual scientist. The Internet has become the facilitator (and home) to this collective intelligence, probably due to what Alain Bourdieu (2001) called *flexploitation* (fear of losing a job and fear while having a job). Or then shifts closer to what Friedrich Nietzsche (1954 :130) so aptly proposed : *"... one still works, for work is a form of entertainment. But one is careful lest the entertainment be too harrowing. One no longer becomes poor or rich : both require too much exertion. Who still wants to rule ? Who obey ? Both require too much exertion. No shepherd and one herd ! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same : whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse".* For Surowiecki (2005) three social issues can be facilitated by the Internet : cognition problems (finding a common solution to a problem), coordination problems (getting people to act similarly for safety sake) and finally attending to problems requiring cooperation (working together for a common cause).

7 Intellectual transformation

Emancipatory ideas are emerging from the *precariat*, the workers, the poor, the misfits and the subaltern. These ideas are transgressing the normative disciplinary boundaries of academia as well as challenging the exclusiveness of being an academic. Note how Jacques Rancière (2010) took on the concept of 'the people' as the ambiguous name for the political subject who is a disruptive force, endowed with the burden of blowing apart all barriers and of accomplishing itself in the form of a perceptible community. Its disruptiveness causes instability through either facilitating a process of political *subjectivation* or as a power that invigorates.

Pierre Bourdieu (2001 :12) describes those who, *"... opting for the cozy virtuousness of their ivory tower, see intervention outside the academic sphere as a dangerous failing of that famous' axiological neutrality' which is wrongly equated with scientific objectivity".* Introducing the notion of the 'collective individual, as replacement of the "*... single great intellectual, a master thinker endowed with the sole resources of his singular thought, or by the authorized spokesperson for a group or an institution presumed to speak in the name of those without voice*", he challenges the essence of academia : the embedded philosopher king working under the guise and protection of the self-proclaimed academic privilege and as 'owner' of the application of the scientific method. Recall Michel Houellebecq's take on this in Submission (2015) where he cynically demonstrates the emptiness of academic lives within a late-capitalist society where consumerism has become the ideology and Islam the main religion.

And then there is Slavoj Žižek (2016 :14) who, in his reflections on disparities (inequality) and the human condition, warns that our experience of reality *"... is always truncated, filtered : some dimension is excluded from it and can appear only as fiction, as 'not a part of our reality"*[4]. We have already 'merged' with technology so that as-

4. Our understanding of what it is to be human (Humanism) constitutes the cornerstone of the Enlightenment and its origins can be found in agnosticism and Buddhism. Humanism is a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and generally prefers critical thinking and evidence (rationalism and empiricism) over acceptance of dogma or superstition.Humanist movements are secular and centred on human agency by looking to science rather

pect is a done feat. When we look at a living human body embedded with a metallic limb, a glass eye or false teeth, our perception of reality is already being shaped into humanity being somewhat merged with technology. In addition, we need to acknowledge that the interactive human/technological changes leading to the Anthropocene requires a new heuristic perspective programme that will require a new way of seeing the world. Here Žižek (2010 :327) proposes that we should pay attention to : *"... our living in apocalyptic times of ecological breakdown, the biogenetic reduction of humans to manipulable machines and the total digital control over our lives. We require an understanding of the apocalyptical changes humanity is facing in this period of planet transformation (referred to by some scientists as the 'Anthropocene') – indicating that we, as a species, should be considered a geological force".*

This 'forecast' and identification of human actions being a somewhat damaging force (in contrast with the religious assumption that humans are the 'rulers of the earth'), exemplifies the radical adjustment awaiting constrained and regionalised visions. New fields of research are on the rise such as Posthumanism where we encounter the hybrid figure of the posthuman—and related concepts, such as the non-human, the multispecies, the Anthropocene, the more than human, the transhuman and the decentering of the human. All of these are closely related to the use of technology and challenges our understandings of the multiple agencies, dependencies, entanglements, and relations that make up our world.

We have the antihumanists who reject concepts that speak of human nature and mankind as being central in the way we look at the world. Central to antihumanism is the view that concepts of 'human nature', 'man', or 'humanity' should be rejected as historically relative or metaphysical. Mankind is not seen as the evangelic (biblical) overseer of all on earth since scientific evidence shows that humans are carrying out a ferocious assault against nonhuman life. Even though humankind's rate of uncontrolled population growth has declined slightly since the 1970s, the rate of species extinction continues to accelerate (remember, Žižek warned us we are one of the species). The rainforests are burning, the polar icecaps are melting, the oceans are dying, and deserts are spreading rapidly. By conservative estimates, we are exterminating an entire species every thirty minutes . Each species that vanished forever is irretrievably lost and we have permanently erased its genetic information from earth's 'hard drive'. The best description that adequately describes our behaviour is that we are responsible for a *species holocaust* – and possibly heading towards our own.

Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut (1990 :xvi) take up a relevant position about antihumanism when they declare the impossibility of a return (after reading the philosophies of Marx, Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger) *"... to the idea that man is the master and possessor of the totality of his actions and ideas. Today we know the illusions and danger inherent in such a denial of the unconscious in its various forms. But how can we not acknowledge that this assertion must in no way encourage us to place ourselves in a philosophical position, which, though apparently radical, in fact consists of quietly*

than revelation from a supernatural source to understand the world. This perspective is undergoing quite radical transformations since the Internet of Things, the Science Commons and the social media platforms are populated by a society considered to be post-human and anti-humanist which in itself provides a conceptual challenge.

conducting a critique of subjectivity when today it is a question of rethinking – after this critique and not only against it – the question of the subject".

The post-humanists differs from classical humanism by relegating humanity back to being one of many natural species, thereby rejecting any claims founded on anthropocentric dominance. Humankind is continually co-evolving in tandem with technology, and the post humanists reject the various assumptions of human dogmas (anthropological, political, scientific) and take the next step of decentring the human in multiple discourses (evolutionary, ecological, technological) with the purpose to uncover inherent humanistic, anthropocentric, normative notions of humanness/human. Here John Caputo (2018 :248) talks about post humanism as : *"... an eerie imaginary is taking shape – not only postmodern, post-industrial and post-religious but, even spookiest of all, post-human. Our imaginary is now being shaped not by religion, art and philosophy, as it had been in the past, but by the new technologies".*

And finally as the ultimate human/technology merger, the transhumanists want to enhance humans and escape death by turning humanity into machines (cryogenic life extension, cyborgs, Internet as cultural influence, religious subtext). Transhumanism is sometimes known as futurism or extropianism.

8 Are we heading towards an intellectual liberation ?

The question could be asked : do we have the prospect to achieve intellectual liberation within this technologically assisted evolution in knowledge generation ? While exploring all the new fields of research by means of the human/technological interface, or then human/technological symbiosis, coupled with the social changes/challenges amongst the *precariat*, we are certainly changing the way we think and do – thereby changing the way we generate knowledge.

Revolutionary intellectuals are not new. Edward Saïd (1993) took care of describing the conditions of those individuals who are marginalised from mainstream society and those in exile *"... being a sort of permanent outcast, someone who never felt at home and was always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about the past, bitter about present and future"*. On the other hand you encounter intellectuals who are at odds with the society they are born into, who prefer a condition of mental exile and a dislike for being part of a national group's wellbeing ; a condition similar to that of a migrant or refugee. Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense creates the condition for being critical, independent and revolutionary to the extent of exciting as well as alienating society.

Intellectuals are able to generate knowledge about what is happening 'out there' with a better understanding of why things change and being more aware of the contingency of things. Their quest is normally to achieve a more challenging intellectual and cultural life, typically similar to the task of the *bricoleur*[5]. Within the constraints of

5. In the observations by the ethnographer Claude Levi-Straus (1966) during his travels amongst so-called 'primitive' cultures the French word *bricoleur* is used to describe a handyman/woman who makes use of the tools available to complete a task. His main interest, however, was to describe the methodological process whereby the underlying structure (the so-called deep grammar of mythical thought) is revealed "... as the unifying force which unites endless multiplicity and culture-specific meanings and forms" (Honde-

academia many individual intellectuals, especially those who are pursuing their passionate interests instead of constantly seeking funding, are increasingly risking labels of being irrelevant, elitist, out of touch and even being marginal in what they do (Furedi 2004. 1997). Due to the economic model in academia that insist on sourcing funding to enable research, knowledge has become a ready-made digestible product to be delivered, digested, marketed and consumed. It is here where we witness the growing market-driven banalisation of cultural life (populist rhetoric,etc) and a sociology of 'dumbing down' of difficult ideas.

Leaving academia with its focus on a career 'doing well', the *precariat*, due to the growing sense of intellectual disorientation, can enter a process of freedom and of discovery set on an eccentric course of own choice. Michel Foucault (1989), however, did warn us that humankind, as an invention of recent data, is perhaps nearing its end. If the modern episteme, a particular arrangement of knowledge, is to change, a particular view of human cognitive processes to disappear, humanity as we currently understand it, could disappear.

With the identity of intellectuals and artists being formed around other kinds of interests than those related to social positions, and living for ideas rather than off ideas (ideas that cannot be formed according to schedule or institutional dictates), the *precariat* can be intellectual, controversial, unpolitical and revolutionary at their heart's content.

This is slowly emerging since, with the proverbial 'genie out of the box' we now have new theoretical frameworks, and ways of thinking such as eco-socialism as a system of thought. Concepts embedded within biopolitics and biopower, represented and accommodated through social networks, are progressively becoming more relevant within the increasingly 'immaterial labour' provided by the *precariat.* Through the massive generation of data, David Bollier (2008 :11) poses that the development of *"... a radically different order of society based on open access, decentralised creativity, collaborative intelligence, and cheap and easy sharing is ascendant".* Knowledge generation in itself is transforming ; hence the attention paid to issues such as 'cognitive dissonance theory' which proposes that people seek psychological consistency between their personal expectations of life and the existential reality of life. To function by that expectation of existential consistency, the process of 'dissonance reduction' is activated in order to continually align people's perceptions of the world with their actions in the real world.

The path ahead is unpredictable. Knowledge is not purely a representation of the world through a blow-by blow account of world events. Logic and reason, leading

rich, 1995 : 482). Bricolage was considered to signify interdisciplinary research methods by later academics such as Joe Kincheloe (2001 :682) who defended this method of 'picking up the pieces' by describing it as : "... *bricoleurs* recognise the limitations of a single method, the discursive strictures of one disciplinary approach, what is missed by traditional practices of validation, the historicity of certified modes of knowledge production, the inseparability of knower and known, and the complexity and heterogeneity of all human experience, they understand the necessity of new forms of rigor in the research process. To account for their cognizance of such complexity *bricoleurs* seek a rigor that alerts them to new ontological insights. In this ontological context, they can no longer accept the status of an object of inquiry as a thing-in-itself". What *bricoleurs* look for is new ontological insight beyond the traditional practices of validation, based upon inseparability of 'knower and known' to have a better understanding of complexity and heterogeneity of all human experience (Kincheloe, 2001 :681).

to new knowledge, is not simply a matter of substituting the true with the false, because logic and reason, in all their details, are rather about comparing alternatives (Munz 1985). We need to acknowledge that 'information', different from 'knowledge', is representational of the 'here and now' in social, political and economic details, reflecting unique perceptions. Again Munz (1985 :26) reminds us that *". . . knowledge is always knowledge of regularities, and has therefore to be couched in terms of universal laws, it follows that knowledge cannot be representational. Knowledge is neither a map nor a mirror nor a portrait".* What the future holds is unpredictable but one thing is certain : the *precaritisation* of knowledge, and the socio-political changes brought about by the *precariat,* are growing forces that requires a better conceptual understanding.

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