WAYS OF NOT MAKING ANYTHING: A CRITICAL POINT OF VIEW CONSIDERING SINGULARITY

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Abstract: In the generic notion of «ways of doing» (synthesized in the French expression as *savoir-faire*) is, as we all know, implied the cultural conception of a world made by humans, as thought by anthropology, sociology or phenomenology. In such conception, it is implicated two fundamental notions (which are interconnected) and from which rises the world as a whole: human action and the transmission of knowledge (whether by cultural tradition, by the colleges or the general media). However, the quick development of autonomous artificial intelligence became an uncanny possibility for this human world, since it seems to lead to the worst case scenario and, for the second time, to the threat (the first would have been with the atomic bomb) of the extinction of the human species. Thus, starting from what we can consider the last great invention, and therefore for this scenario described as singularity, we will try to rethink the essence of the ways of making the human world, and asking, therefore, if in the heart of this essence some solution will be able to be found.

Keywords: human world; cyberculture; singularity.

Resumo: Na noção genérica de «modos de fazer» (sintetizada na expressão francesa de *savoir-faire*) está implícita, como se sabe, a concepção cultural de um mundo feito por humanos, tal como é pensada pela antropologia, pela sociologia ou pela fenomenologia. Nessa conceção estão implicadas duas noções fundamentais (que estão por sua vez interconectadas) a partir das quais surge o mundo como um todo: da ação humana e da transmissão de conhecimento (quer seja pela tradição cultural, pelos meios académicos ou pelos media). Contudo, o rápido desenvolvimento da Inteligência Artificial autónoma torna-se uma possibilidade estranhamente familiar para este mundo humano, uma vez que parece conduzir ao pior dos cenários e pela segunda vez, à ameaça (o primeiro teria sido com a bomba atómica) da extinção da espécie humana. Assim, partindo do que podemos considerar como a última grande invenção e, portanto, para esse

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cenário descrito como singularidade, procuraremos repensar a essência desse fazer do mundo humano, e por isso, perguntar se no coração dessa essência poderá residir alguma solução.

Palavras-chave: mundo humano; cibercultura; singularidade.

In the beginning, it was the verb and the verb was «done». And it was also «to do». The verb had many forms and it assumed the entangled essences of the human world: creation, invention, transformation, transmutation. To create, to imagine, to make it happen, that would gradually become the wisdom of knowing exactly how and what to do, that would define much of what would be the destiny of man. In fact, that would even define the very essence of (what does it mean) being human: the achievement of wisdom and the way of doing that could be, somehow, transmitted to others. That is in fact what art was all about, the way of knowing how to do with *téchne*. One major question should be putted: what happen between those initial ideas (the early stages of human kind) and what is our reality today? Certainty there are many theories and many arguments can be expressed to tell the story — the story of evolution, the story of civilization, the story of progress — but maybe one can just recall of something that is (somehow) self-evident: progress has never been so accelerated as in the last century and specially in the last three/four decades. As we all know, ways of doing something start changing with industrial revolution but it was in the early twentieth century that becomes clearer the impact and feelings about it. If we regress for only a few decades we can see that most of the craft or arts that demanded accumulated knowledge, such as cobbler, blacksmith, carpenter, etc., are practically lost.

Nowadays, the scenario it is even worst. Everything is produced according to computer programs and robot's machinery and even those who still need human presence, are reducing the participation to mere spectators of panels. So, from cars to smartphone's, from education to jobs, everything changed (and continuous to change). Modern jobs are now quite different from three decades ago. And this brings new challenges, even to what it means to be human in a less human world. Maybe cyber culture can provide a few answers.

Things are rapidly and technologically evolving, and with it, changing our own perception of time and space (what we may call the alteration of neuronal structures) and therefore, changing the way we feel and think about life itself. It seems clear that one can see the quick development of technology and specially in the field of artificial intelligence and the implications that this will produce (because it is already producing) in our systems, that is in the social, economic and political organization, in changing the environment and natural resources (for instance, the production of lithium batteries is not only changing our own habitat and of several other species, but also creating new forms of exploitation of work or even slavery).

As Baumann would say, we live today in a kind of liquid modernity in which, the spectacular society born in the neoliberal model of hyper consumption and pseudo-hedonistic illusion[1] led to an unprecedented and vertiginous way of life, that is, led to a certain technologization of life, our life, if you prefer, led into the mechanization of the feelings and thoughts, to the simultaneity speed of everything in all[2]. Daily life is managed between work and home, and leisure time is conditioned, ironically, to seek to do nothing. This has led to social ties had become diluted and different kinds of communication weakened (which is most cases led to increase the social feeling of insecurity and, in most cases, of loneliness), which is also an interesting paradox of modern times: never men could be so close to each other and never felt so lonely. Loneliness and not knowing what to do, become a paradigm of our times. Take, for instance, how everything seems to escape in front of your eyes. Take, for instance, the way in which we incorporate in our daily lives the artificial intelligence, all those algorithms, in our credit card, in our computer, in our Smartphone, in our GPS, in the way we drive, etc., changing the way we could think and act. Like Yuval Harari points out, the more scientists understand the way humans make decisions, the greater the temptation to resort to algorithms, and thus to reprogram that human decision and behavior, making *Big Data* more reliable than human feelings[3].

With these new realities come new forms of living and new pathologies, such as the internet addiction[4]. The strange obligation of continuous online presence that the social network encourages to do, as if it was a form of affirmation of existence, replacing the omnipresence of (an absent) God, create new challenges of what it means to be modern, of what it means to be human in a virtual world. But it is not only that. In 1997, George Steiner was already aware of the upcoming revolution, when he wrote: «Silences, the art of concentration and memorization, the luxury of the time necessary for great reading, are already greatly compromised[5]. Strange neuroses become more present in everyday life as that of the internet addiction. Nicholas Carr is clear when he says that «the internet may well be the most powerful technology of mental change»[6]. In fact, many studies show that intensive use of the internet has neurological consequences[7]. Put it in different words, people «know» the way to information but doesn't know the information which means to «know» nothing. The author points out the following example: how hypermedia (using hypertexts with multimedia) limits us more than it stimulates us

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[1] BAUDRILLARD, 1991; DEBORD, 1971; LIPOVETSKY 2007, 2011.
[2] EAGLETON, 1998; VIRILIO, 2000.
[3] HARARI, 2018: 79.
[4] CARR, 2012.
[5] STEINER, 1997.
[6] CARR, 2012: 146.
[7] SMALL & VORGAN, 2008.

to learn (according to several studies in the area[8]: «the division of attention motivated by multimedia requires the maximum of our cognitive skills, weakening our learning and our understanding»[9].

So, if this is already a dramatic scenario for our society, how is changing and how will it change with the fast development of Artificial Intelligence or even worst, with the possibility of dystopian scenario such as the Singularity? There are different ways of providing an answer, but first let us look to is call singularity and what can be the dystopian scenario for a near future (as some authors have diagnosed).

As it is known, Raymond Kurzweil[10] suggested the brilliant notion of «Singularity» to refer to the point at which artificial intelligence has surpassed human intelligence, and Nick Bostrom[11] poses the possibility of this superintelligence to escape human control. We must not think that this is science fiction. The well-known «brain emulation» hypothesis puts the hypothesis of mind-building scenario as real.

We see that the characteristic attributed for centuries to human beings — intelligence —, came to be attributed very easily to any instrument. So it is legitimate to conceive the appearance of an «artificial consciousness» as one might think of «artificial life», or even the possibility of this vocabulary disappear, since terms like artificial, life, mind can become other «things», can assume different meanings in a near future, that we cannot conceive now (it is possible that we do not have cognitive abilities to conceive such concepts).

So we can imagine an optimistic scenario, a scenario where a perfect world exists, where there are no wars, racism, sorrows or diseases, and in which humans do not need to use their brains or minds, like we find in different science fiction movies. So, taking this optimistic scenario that is a world where an Artificial Intelligence Entity would serve humankind, one would have a world full of androids but as we could guess, there will be no place for artisans. One can argue that this is not a necessary condition, since they are free from obligations and so they could dedicate their free time to create (producing films, paintings, sculptures, poems, etc.). But we must recall that humans no longer need to use their abilities (and so, their cognitive and intellectual capacities, and even as we can see in the movie *The Giver*, the absence of feelings). This means that everything will be planed according to what that Entity provided of Artificial Intelligence consider important to develop and that all human activities would be reduced to essential functions, and therefore, reducing brain/mind activity.

There is, however, another possibility which is the dramatic scenario of «Singularity» where humans can become an inferior species, can become slaves of that Artificial

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[8] DESTEFANO & LEFEVRE, 2007; ROCKWELL & SINGLETON, 2007.
[9] CARR, 2012: 162; see also HEMBROOKE, 2003.
[10] KURZWEIL, 2006.
[11] BOSTROM, 2014.

Intelligence Entity or even disappear. What is curious — and we think that this as not yet been thought —, is that in such a scenario, humans would return to those ways of doing, to that old wisdom of crafting, of *téchne*. When thinking about ways of survival humankind proves to be alert and inventive. It is natural to ask: have these scenarios some plausibility, can they be admitted? Or in other words: have these scenarios some plausibility, can they be admitted? Well, they can. So, what can be done to save us from those kinds of scenarios? Well, one possible way is to continue with the educational programs and preserving traditional ways of doing things, taking the advantage of technology, to spread by all social networks those skills and abilities. Another way is the demand to move forward with the construction of a friendly artificial intelligence, as suggested by Armstrong[12] and Bostrom[13], among many others. This could be fundamental to save us from ourselves and from our ambitions of a brave new world. Humankind has the duty to preserve all the things that came to be considered as part of the human world, even if some of those things are just ways of not doing anything.

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[12] ARMSTRONG, 2014.
[13] BOSTROM, 2014.