Traumatology and Technology – On Sloterdijk and Anders

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1. Introduction

This paper brings together slightly edited material from previously published articles in which I looked at both Sloterdijk and Anders in direct connection to Heidegger. In those articles I attempted to draw attention to an aspect not only of Heidegger's, Sloterdijk's and Anders's work, but also of the work of authors such as Adorno, Beckett, Derrida, Lacan, and, more recently, Žižek – the aspect of the traumatic. My reflections on the traumatic contained in those articles, tied to Heidegger as they were, were largely concerned with metaphysical or ontological questions. They did not attempt to answer the question of how to establish an ethics of technology. I will now, at the end of this paper, provide some scattered hints on how to address this question in connection with my previous reflections.

2. What do I mean by *Traumatology*?

What should we take the term *Traumatology* to mean? Given this paper's natural constraints, I must content myself with only a brief outline of my arguments in this regard.

First of all, traumatic experiences have a distinct "logic" or "structure." A first characteristic of these experiences is that they create a tension that is eminently radical – namely, the tension between the two farthest existential poles, being and nothingness. A second characteristic, which follows from the initial tension, concerns the problem of immunization, its success or lack thereof and the reasons for either.

On a second level the question arises of what trauma is and under which perspective are we to consider or understand the phenomenon of trauma. The two aspects are linked – what we mean by trauma is largely dependent on the perspective from which we consider it. There are three fundamental perspectives or types of perspectives that seem noteworthy to me: the

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psychological, the sociological and the philosophical. These perspectives often overlap to a lesser or greater extent. The reason for this overlap is that there could hardly be a greater variety of ways in which scholars have understood the concept of trauma. This diversity and heterogeneity of approaches has itself led to the creation of distinct trauma concepts. And these distinct concepts do not map neatly onto the three kinds of perspective. In order to make this introductory *caveat* clearer, I shall simplify a bit: one can make a rough distinction between an individual trauma, a collective trauma – and here between a collective trauma experienced individually or directly and one experienced only indirectly – and a "humanity trauma."[1] Though it would seem intuitive to link the first form of trauma to psychology, the second to sociology and the third to philosophy, this would be too reductive. Psychology, sociology and philosophy often refer to two or even three of the forms in their analysis.

All three forms of trauma are concerned with the actually experienced or otherwise imagined intrusion of an external, violent power in an entity, resulting in the collapse, either real or imagined, of that entity's immune system. The collapse of this entity's immune system is experienced as a kind of *powerlessness*, i.e. as a capital inability to safeguard the security, the life and the existence of said entity. As Freud nicely put it, it is an experience similar to the breaking of a dike or a rampart.[2] At the individual level, experiences such as rape, torture, car accidents, etc. can be traumatic. These usually lead to severe dissociation of the personality. As to the collective level, I will limit myself to two hints of possible instances. First, works such as those of Volkan[3] show that trauma narratives can aid in the creation of collective (cultural, religious, national, etc.) identities, and *a fortiori*, also include a potential for violence by designating a common external enemy, an act intimately connected with the idea of security and hence connected to the immunity of the group or collective entity. Regarding individually experienced collective traumas, the relevance of two questions was discussed early on, questions which are not unimportant for our purposes. According to Freud's speculations an individually experienced collective trauma had a higher "chance of recovery" when the victim managed to

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[1] For more on the topic, with references to the relevant literature, see SYLLA, Bernhard (2015), "Trauma coletivo – notas sobre um conceito disperso", in Ana Gabriela Macedo, Carlos Mendes de Sousa & Vítor Moura (orgs.), *Conflito e Trauma*. Vila Nova de Famalicão: Húmus, pp. 461-476.

[2] FREUD, Sigmund (1940), "Jenseits des Lustprinzips", in *Gesammelte Werke. Chronologisch geordnet*. Bd. 13. Ed. Marie Bonaparte with the cooperation of Anna Freud. London: Imago, pp. 1-69. The relevant passage is on pp. 27f.

[3] See, above all, VOLKAN, Vamik (2004), "Chosen trauma, the political ideology of entitlement and violence", available online at <http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Chosen-Trauma,-the-Political-Ideology-of-Entitlement-and-Violence.php> [Last accessed: 23. 1. 2015].

identify with collective ideals or ideals concerning a representative leader figure. This, however, said Freud, often resulted in the removal of ordinary, rationally motivated inhibitions, such as the willingness to commit brutally violent acts.[4] At the philosophical level, it comes down to the question of the "traumaticity" of our "Being." Texts from Adorno, Benjamin, Derrida, Rorty, Heidegger, and, indeed, Sloterdijk and Anders, show that the issue of "traumaticity" in philosophy is virulent.

Were we to limit our philosophical perspective on the phenomenon of trauma to its "metaphysical" or "anthropological" aspects, three aspects would strike me as essential: (i) *the pursuit of immunization*, of safety for oneself or for another "equivalent" entity. This pursuit presupposes the awareness of something threatening – otherwise the quest for immunization would lack any motivation. It is therefore about Being and Nothingness, or Being and a potential "nihilating" force; (ii) a radical pursuit of immunization contains *in itself* the moment of violence*,* which is therefore *itself* a "nihilating force", oriented however to its very own Being*.* Herein lies a dilemma that can manifest itself "phenomenologically" in different ways. (iii) The "dialectic" of Being and Nothingness, which in (i) and (ii) manifests itself in a *being* or *entity*, *may nevertheless expand beyond this entity*. This can be conceived in entirely distinct ways depending on the philosopher. For Heidegger it would concern the question of in what way is the traumaticity inherent in the history and logic of Being. For Adorno, traumatical would be the false effort to ignore the negative dialectic inherent in history.

After these admittedly stenographic preliminary remarks, I would like to go into some further traumatological aspects, such as those discussed in the writings of Sloterdijk and Anders.

3. Sloterdijk

3.1. Some background theses

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[4] FREUD, Sigmund (1940), "Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse", in *Gesammelte Werke. Chronologisch geordnet*. Vol. 13. Ed. Marie Bonaparte with the cooperation of Anna Freud. London: Imago, pp. 73-161.

In the first volume of his *Spheres*-trilogy, entitled *Bubbles*[5], Sloterdijk develops a philosophical project directly opposed to theories that start from the unreflective primordiality of the "I" as a knowing and sentient subject. This critique bears not only on post-Cartesian philosophy, but in principle on all philosophy, even when the philosophical starting point is not the self, the subject, or even "human beings" as a whole. For Sloterdijk, not only is the "I" a postnatal phenomenon but so are those experiences that in Heidegger are linked with "nothingness." First is the primordially given Being-With (*Mitsein*), as Being-In (*In-Sein*) of the fetus in the mother's uterus and as co-dyad (*Mit-Dyade*) of fetus and placenta – a Being-In (*In-Sein*), which has first and foremost ("zuerst und zunächst", to use another Heideggerian expression) a spatial quality and a certain subsequent spatial sensitivity that may awaken before any temporal experience is underwent. Nothingness and the I come into the fore only at birth – and so there is here already a first traumatological moment. With birth, the already nine-month old human being is thrown out of the absolutely given Being-In into the outside world. The primordial Being-In, which, according to Sloterdijk, exhibits a tri-partite structure of "Something is with Something in Something", now undergoes the fundamental fragility both of Being-With (*Mitsein*) and Being-In (*Inseins*). Being-With (*Mitsein*) loses the character of immediacy and is now mediated, and the "In" loses the character of the "familiar" (*Heimliches*) and now becomes the "uncanny" (*Unheimliches*), the monstrous (*Ungeheures*). It is the first, and indeed the first spatially-sensitive experience of Nothingness. The Being-In, according to Sloterdijk, is now "coupled" to the "outward bound" tension, where "outward" has the connotation of both a spatial and temporal "ecstatic provisional going ahead": Being-In becomes "the inhabiting in the monstrous."[6]

The putative Heideggerian objection, that here the approach should be fundamental-ontological rather than anthropological, is, according to Sloterdijk, misguided and reveals an unfounded aversion to the intertwining of empirical and anthropological aspects with apparently pure metaphysics or ontology. The *Dasein* is finite and begins as finite, and its beginning had always been an especially blind spot of "universal and pure" philosophy. If I understand Sloterdijk properly, then it is precisely this factual-empirical finitude which gives us insight into

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[5] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (1998), *Sphären I – Blasen*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp; the other volumes in the trilogy are: SLOTERDIJK, Peter (1999), *Sphären II – Globen*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp; SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2004), *Sphären III – Schäume*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
[6] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (1998), *Sphären I – Blasen*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 643.

"the metaphysical" in the sense of fundamental Being and Nothingness-structures (*Nichtsstrukturen* – may Carnap pardon me for this apparent pseudo-concept), for Sloterdijk calls this spatial and anthropological awareness of the "inhabiting in the monstrous" a "metaphysical premise"[7] of our *Dasein*.

As to the identifying and structural marks of the monstrous, there are even more powerful analogies with Heidegger here. For Sloterdijk, the sensibility towards the phenomenon of the monstrous arises first out of the postnatal possibility of the separation between the inner and the outer. The inner corresponds to the postnatal need to provide external uteri, living spaces that serve simultaneously as protected spaces (*Schutzzonen*), as immunological places. The outer in turn relates to the adversarial, the completely uncontrolled, that which *a fortiori* can endanger the protected spaces, that which is both universal but also highly vague (it includes all that is outside) and perhaps because of that, fear inducing. As danger, it symbolizes the possibility of the collapse of the protected space, and thus the possibility of my death, of nothingness belonging to me. On the other hand, this is a "general Nothingness" due to its fundamental indeterminacy. In this sense, it corresponds to a certain extent to Heidegger's "Überwältigung." The Heideggerian aspect (here with positive connotations) of violent action (*Gewalt-tätigkeit*) in turn corresponds to the phenomenon that Sloterdijk, in one of his texts, called the "revolution of beginning oneself (*Revolution des Selberanfangens*) against the being-already-begun (*Angefangensein*)."[8] While no "I" activity is yet required in the state of fetal clinging to being-already-begun, it becomes increasingly more so after birth. This revolution, however, and here too there are obvious parallels with Heidegger, is not only a revolution against the being-already-begun in prenatal symbiosis, but also against the postnatal being-already-begun determined by the interpretations of others, particularly those which are linguistically articulated; or in other, Heideggerian words, against the "fallenness" which is simultaneously necessarily existential. On the other hand, as in Heidegger, this violent action is also coupled with the desire, the "metaphysical urge" to be at home everywhere, as Heidegger put it.[9] Sloterdijk's entire *Spheres* project outlines a story of the desire to build protected spaces, second uteri – and here the dimension of the temporal enters significantly into the foreground –, a history of home-conquests

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[7] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 157.
[8] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (1999), *Zur Welt kommen – Zur Sprache kommen. Frankfurter Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 46.
[9] HEIDEGGER, Martin (1976), *Wegmarken*. Ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, Frankfurt/M.: Klostermann, [GA 9], p. 118.

(*Heim-Eroberungen*) which could be understood as Sloterdijk's version of the 'History of Metaphysics'. Viewed from a structural perspective, metaphysics begins with the prenatal Being-With (*Mitsein*), then finds a new foundation in the anthropological and biological conditions of the so-called neoteny[10], according to which man, from a philo- and ontogenetic perspective, is/was not exposed to permanent developmental pressures due to social protected spaces. And so he could develop into a luxurious Being, whereby he would acquire the ability to creatively design new protected spaces, new forms of "inhabiting" (*Wohnen*). Further milestones (*Wegmarken*) on the historical road are given by the protection spaces conceived by traditional metaphysical and religious thought, which represent a boost toward generality and universality and which will be replaced by the dissociated "foam forms" of inhabiting, the protection spaces in the present. Sloterdijk's book *You Must Change Your Life: On Anthropotechnics* can be read from an historical perspective as an advanced analysis of the intensive training attempts that have been made to build stable immune spaces with controlled external interactions.[11]

Like in Heidegger, Sloterdijk's use of the term "metaphysics" is ambiguous. On the one hand, as already said, it is concerned with the anthropological onto- and phylogenesis of the "metaphysical premise", the "inhabiting in the monstrous", the spatial Being-In of Man, whose structure undergoes an historical development. Any insight in this context would be cataloged under "positive" metaphysics. On the other hand, Sloterdijk also uses the term "metaphysics" in a pejorative sense, namely the sense which denotes the now expiring, defeated historical stage of the "inhabiting of the monstrous," namely the phase in which one desperately tries to maintain religious-metaphysical constructions, dogmas and ideologies in order to hold on to the possibility of establishing global, universal protection.[12] According to Sloterdijk, Heidegger and others, "metaphysical" in the negative sense is predicated of all the thinkers who have not yet rid themselves of this paradigm. Here the relationship with and stance towards technological phenomena also comes into play. Heidegger's technophobia is a kind of understandable defense against a metaphysical transformation (*Wandlung*) that already has taken place. It perhorresces the loss of self, the loss of the old humanism, the objectification of the subject, but it does not

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[10] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 188ff.; SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2004), *Sphären III – Schäume*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 756ff.

[11] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2012), *Du mußt dein Leben ändern. Über Anthropotechnik*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.

[12] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (1999), *Sphären II – Globen*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp; see also SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2004), *Sphären III – Schäume*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 868, where Sloterdijk provides a brief description of the different phases outlined here.

understand that the challenge of man is precisely the new marriage with technology.[13] This "anti-technological hysteria" (*Technikhysterie*) is, according to Sloterdijk, a decadent product of a false metaphysical defensiveness.[14]

3.2.   Traumatological aspects in Sloterdijk

Sloterdijk's traumatology has a clearly anthropological character, though one should add that Sloterdijk's anthropology is certainly bound up with ontological and metaphysical-cosmological claims, though not, as we have already mentioned above, in Heidegger's sense, since Heidegger was indeed counted among those in the class of the "last metaphysicians." According to Sloterdijk, the real drama of traumatological struggle between Being and Nothingness reveals itself phenomenologically in the history of the human "inhabiting" in the monstrous, and this history is that of the rise of the technological. Much of the focus of Sloterdijk's work, especially in the *Spheres*, as well as in *You Must Change Your Life: About Anthropotechnics*, is devoted to the "intermonadic" (*intermonadischen*) conflicts between competing quests for and competing systems of immunization. Behind the latter lies what could be described as "the history of metaphysics", provided one were to extend the precision and scope of the Heideggerian concept. And this history is again highly traumatological. This is because the collapse of certain epochal forms of searching for immunization is always a traumatic experience.

In an essay entitled "Offence by Machines",[15] Sloterdijk explicitly returns to the concept of trauma. Offences (*Kränkungen*), says Sloterdijk, are challenges (*Herausforderungen*) to the immune system. Offences need not be traumatic, but they can be. This happens when the offence is not really overcome or when, though one knows better, one employs outdated immunization strategies to deal with it. The issue raised in this text is that of "the offences against mankind." In other words, we are, so to speak, positioning ourselves in the field of the history of metaphysics. In addition to the offences detected by Freud, who saw the three major offences against mankind in the history of science as that which Copernicus inflicted on cosmological narcissism, the one

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[13] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 222f.
[14] On Heidegger as the last philosopher of the "metaphysical" epoch, see also SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2004), *Sphären III – Schäume*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 24f., 515f.
[15] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 338-366.

Darwin inflicted on human narcissism, and that which Freud himself inflicted on narcissistic reasoning via his psychoanalysis, one must, according to Sloterdijk, add a number of other dramatic offences which he lists as either having already occurred or as occurring in the foreseeable future. I cite here only the last three which, according to Sloterdijk, are bound to be of great concern in the near future: the computer offence, where the "mechanical" double embarrasses human beings due to its higher intellectual capacity; the environmental offence, where the nature of man's incapacity is revealed; and the offence caused by robotics, genetics and bionics, where "the most intimate egological manifestations of human existence such as creativity, love and free will perish like will-o'-the-wisps scattered across a swamp of reflexive technologies, therapies and power games."[16] From this gloomy and, looking ahead to Blumenberg, techno-demonizing panorama full of present and future offences, Sloterdijk derives the conclusion that man or the Being of man can also be understood as a traumatological *cogito*: "I am offended, therefore I am."[17]

Turning now to Sloterdijk's account of the traumatological structure of the history of metaphysics, I believe one can detect a kind of duplicitous or double discourse. The first discourse distances itself strongly from Heidegger and seems to hold a position diametrically opposed to him. According to him, it is wrong and therefore traumatic, to hold on to old, outdated strategies to combat trauma. Instead of clinging to infantile or religious forms of "primary narcissism", man must ascend to the developed forms of "able narcissism" (*Könnensnarzißmus*).[18] This is also the point at which the concepts of "technology" and "metaphysics" short-circuit. A backward, erroneous defensiveness against offences is, according to Sloterdijk, "reactionary", leads to technophobia, yet the demonization of technology falling out of an "already robust metaphysical transformation" is a "decadent product" of an outdated "metaphysical defensiveness."[19] On the contrary, what is necessary is a fundamental acceptance of technology. This relies on an ever more globalizing networking of living spaces and living forms and their increasing virtualization.[20] More importantly, however, is that in the new "foam-form" of inhabiting the dream of inner and outer immunological control becomes technically feasible. But this in turn is connected to the most radical metaphysical change, namely that

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[16] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger.* Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 345.
[17] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger.* Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 351.
[18] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger.* Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 346.
[19] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger.* Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 223.
[20] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger.* Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 131-135.

which, according to Sloterdijk, man must become acquainted with: the fact that technology engages with the "metaphysical", "formerly apparently autonomous field" of the subject's constitution.[21] In contrast, it is understandable that the old metaphysical paradigms in a somehow paralyzed manner experience this metaphysical transformation as loss of self, as a loss of the old humanism, as the objectification of the subject.[22] The thesis, that man must confront itself with this new challenge, which should however be accompanied by a changing understanding of technology – rather than the old understanding of technology as domineering, technology must be conceptualized as homeo-technology – has, as is known, since 1999 given rise to the most violent polemical debates. Seen through an Heideggerian perspective, one could characterize this discourse so that here the loss of the essence of man is accepted voluntarily and the forgetfulness of being (*Seinsvergessenheit*) is complete. From Sloterdijk's perspective, however, the difference between beings and Being is different. If it exists at all, it is that there are certain epochal ("metaphysical") "modes of being" (*Wesensweisen*) of the traumatologically founded Being-In of man, whose development leads to a new essential mode of being with a new immunological concept of Being-In. The age of technology is distinguished from the preceding, "metaphysical" (understood in the pejorative sense) age by the fact that Being-In concepts ("Inhabiting-projects") are increasingly dissociated and de-ideologized, leading, in the long run, to a challenge to the "essentializing" (*Wesen*) (verbally understood) of the *Dasein* itself. But that in turn can be understood as a change in the mode of being (*Seinswandel*), both of "Being" (*Sein*) as well as existence (*Dasein*), whose task becomes to deal with the most extreme forms of its self-production and the phenomenon of death. Sloterdijk's look into the future can therefore be interpreted as an insight into the nature of this venture, which one, despite a sometimes naïve optimism, cannot charge with lacking a sense of the perversity, abysses and dangers that are contained in this challenge.[23] By contrast, Heidegger commits the old Hegelian mistake of seeing his own time as the end time, as the climax of historical development. Because of the forgetfulness of Being is total, there is no longer any development, but only an either-or. And so too the counterpart of the forgetfulness of Being, the rescue of Being (*Seinsrettung*), acquires a

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[21] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 220f.
[22] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 222f.
[23] The list of publications in the polemical German debate about Sloterdijk's technophilia is already very long and does not need to be mentioned here. Of great interest however is the contribution of Félix Duque (DUQUE, Félix (2002), *En torno al humanismo*. Madrid: Tecnos), since it presents an intense contrastive analysis of Sloterdijk and Heidegger. Duque is one of the numerous proponents of the opinion that Sloterdijk's understanding of technology is quite dangerous.

character of finality. Should they succeed, one would have to imagine the world as a scenario of ecumenical serenity, a kind of union of spectacle of nature and artistic world in which everyone cooperates peacefully and inspirationally in the development of one's authenticity and that of others, be it things or people.

This "charge" of an unreflective and thus dangerously naïve dichotomy – inscribed in the back of each traumatology – is precisely one that Sloterdijk too can raise. In a long paragraph of the introduction to "Domestication of Being"[24], Sloterdijk proposes a brief diagnosis of the philosophy of the 20th century, which started as an attempt to escape a false mediocrity, which continued after the experience of the negative radicalism of the Second World War, at least in the minds of those which understood themselves as avant-garde (here Sartre's appeal to a "literature of extreme situations" is mentioned, as well as existentialism in general, but also the neo-Marxist left). Instead, it was necessary to free themselves from this obstinate adherence to radicalism. Radicalism leads to hyper-morality, which in turn evokes phenomena of anti-hypermorality. On the other hand, the deradicalization understood by postmodernism (global networking, disempowerment of the aggressor mentality) brings with it the risk of a new mediocratization. Given the new developments, that the organ for reception of the radical modernism of the 20th century had become virtually deaf and that no real platform was given for their adequate renovation, a new tendency to mediocrity arose which runs the risk of treating everything according to the norms of the academic routine (academic autism). And sight of the fact was lost, especially after the apparent defusing of the nuclear bomb threat, the East-West arms race, etc., that *the monstrous is still among us*. That is precisely the point I want to emphasize here: the traumatology also overtakes Sloterdijk. The primal fear of total nothingness, which was seemingly easily ousted by introducing the magical term 'homeotechnology', now rears its head again. And as with Heidegger it is the blindness of their radicalism and of the latent danger due to the false sense of security in an environment of thorough mediocrity that can be most dangerous. Sloterdijk's catalogue of current monstrosities has different versions. In the paragraph mentioned above he identifies three scenarios: were the global networks to collapse, the fall would be steep; the new biological nuclear technology could make all of humanity its hostage; the primacy of the economic over the political could trigger a new counter-revolution of the political. Approximately a decade later, Sloterdijk resumes the criticism already begun in

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[24] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 146-154.

Eurotaoism – Sketch for the Project of a Critique of Political Kinetics[25] against the destruction of the environment, now to warn against the "big disaster"[26] and to do so prior to any availability of technical means to avoid it, prior to the withdrawal of the "Being-base" for all other Being-In-developments, i.e. before all life and Being on this planet is destroyed once and for all. And so, I think, we can easily find in Sloterdijk a sort of blending of two aspects, the same aspects that some decades before had been disavowed by Blumenberg as a consequence of demonizing forms of argument: first the aspect charged with manic-depressive undertones, a black and white drawing of conjured danger and, second, the naïve, speculative or even megalomaniac belief that we will be able to deal with this danger without any further accommodations. As far as I can see, this diagnosis still stands even when considering Sloterdijk's 2016 article, translated in this volume, entitled "Das Anthropozän – Ein Prozeß-Zustand am Rande der Erd-Geschichte?"[27] ("The Anthropocene: A Process-State at the Edge of Geohistory?"). Building on an on-going debate, begun 15 years ago, about the legitimacy of the term "Anthropocene" in philosophical and cultural discourse, Sloterdijk characterizes the contemporary scene as one governed by an "apocalyptic logic"[28], the latter caused in part by a "kinetic expressionism"[29] – a concept clearly taken from the theses of the Eurotaoist book –, a logic consisting in self-reinforcing acceleration processes that lead to a self-destructive collapse. Or, in other words, that lead to a state of all or nothing, one in which we can hardly hope to answer adequately the challenges of life and death given the *status quo* of an ignorant managerial class both in the political and the scientific establishment. All the essential traumatological elements are here easily identifiable. Sloterdijk's response can be read as a variation on the responses given in earlier works. Sloterdijk's hope hinges on a new view of technology already denoted by the term homeotechnics, one which does not want to rape or conquer nature, but rather one that wishes to make use of the potentialities of Nature actualized through biomimetic methods at the artificial level. This harmless sounding program is of course not without its dangers, for without an account of its actual content, this

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[25] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (1989), *Eurotaoismus – Zur Kritik der politischen Kinetik.* Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
[26] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2012), *Du mußt dein Leben ändern. Über Anthropotechnik.* Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 702 and *passim.*
[27] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2016), „Das Anthropozän – Ein Prozeß-Zustand am Rande der Erd-Geschichte?", in Idem, *Was geschah im 20. Jahrhundert?*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, pp. 7-43.
[28] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2016), „Das Anthropozän – Ein Prozeß-Zustand am Rande der Erd-Geschichte?", in Idem, *Was geschah im 20. Jahrhundert?*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, p. 20.
[29] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2016), „Das Anthropozän – Ein Prozeß-Zustand am Rande der Erd-Geschichte?", in Idem, *Was geschah im 20. Jahrhundert?*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, p. 15.

program could be used for evil just as much as for good. The fact that applied homeotechnics promises a more effective (because relying on co-operation between human beings and between human beings and nature) immunity, a new "co-immunity"[30], shows again, in conclusion, how strongly the logic of trauma informs even the aforementioned article.

4. Günther Anders

I now want to show how distinctive features of the traumatological can also be found in the work of Anders.

4.1. Some background theses

At first glance, Anders's thought seems to concern itself obsessively with a single theme – that man has become capable of generating the means by which he attains the absolute power to definitively and irreversibly annihilate all of mankind. To have the *know-how* to generate such means is all it takes for the threat of definitive death to hover over mankind. This is the idea at the core of a simple and self-evident traumatology, which consists simply in man's powerlessness in the face of this threat. But Anders's philosophy goes farther, and it is that I now wish to develop.

The powerlessness of man at this first ontic level seems exceedingly obvious. Even so it has eluded man's understanding, due, in the first instance, to a phenomenon which Anders calls the *promethean discrepancy*.[31] The *promethean discrepancy* consists in the wide, disproportionate gulf between kinds of abilities: we are able, as *homines fabri*, of making something whose effects and whose essence we can neither adequately feel nor adequately represent. We are therefore not in a position to be able to relate ethically and morally with the product of our making. For this reason, contemporary man lives, according to Anders, in a permanent schizophrenic state. He makes something which he can no longer affectively understand or even adequately represent. This discrepancy between distinct human faculties is

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[30] SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2016), „Das Anthropozän – Ein Prozeß-Zustand am Rande der Erd-Geschichte?", in Idem, *Was geschah im 20. Jahrhundert?*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, p. 43.

[31] ANDERS, Günther (1988), *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen.* Vol. 1: *Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten technischen Revolution.* 7th ed., München: Beck, pp. 267ff.

therefore increasing. While the ability to make and produce may grow without limit, our emotional and representational faculties cannot. Hence the gulf between our different faculties is increasingly and irreversibly widened.

Anders does not restrict himself to the ontic threat of man's annihilation posed by the atomic bomb. Behind this threat there is another, less obvious, more hidden, and if we were to use the old distinction between essence and existence, we would call it a threat to the essence of man. This threat is tied to a human behavior, which, Heideggerianly speaking, happens in the realm of *Man*. In the first volume of *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*, in a separate chapter, Anders addresses the so-called *promethean shame*.[32] This shame resides, once again, in a profound discrepancy, that is, in a disproportion. In the face of the increasing perfection of his products, man feels something like an inferiority complex. He measures himself with the measure of his increasingly more powerful and perfect products, which instills in him the feeling of not being able to compete with them. Consequently, he feels shame for his physical, psychic and intellectual human condition, shame for not being a being who was made but merely one who was born. One way of fighting this shame is to idealize the unattainable: man wants to become like his machines, and if he is unable to do so, he wants at least to be able to create the false appearance of being just as perfect as his products. Anders believes this phenomenon can be identified in a variety of day-to-day domains such as the practice of putting on makeup, our reaction to automated labor, the obsessive concern with photography and other modes of representation, etc.

The wish to become the same as one's products has been interiorized in the behavior of the modern man to such an extent that not only does he not understand what is happening, he does not even want to be confronted with the suspicion that it may be happening. On the contrary, he invests all his energy, all his resolve, in order to attain the unattainable ideal. The respective approaches to this phenomenon reveal some parallels with those of Sloterdijk regarding the anthropotechnical exercises, and may in fact have influenced Sloterdijk directly, since Sloterdijk explicitly refers to Anders's work.[33] Anders uses the term *Human Engineering* to denote these exercises, which appear innocuous and are socially valued. What in fact happens is

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[32] ANDERS, Günther (1992), *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*. Vol. 2: *Über die Zerstörung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution*. 4th ed., München: Beck, pp. 21-95.
[33] *E.g.,* in "Die Domestikation des Seins" (SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2001), *Nicht gerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, p. 208), where already appears the core idea of anthropotechnics largely developed only later in SLOTERDIJK, Peter (2012), *Du mußt dein Leben ändern. Über Anthropotechnik*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.

that these exercises lead to the emptying of man's being, precisely because it puts into practice the leveling of man and machine. This will lead directly and inevitably to the technologically planned production of man himself, which, according to Anders, is already taking place.[34]

The integration of man and machine, which leads to the replacement of man with machines, reveals itself, according to Anders, at a variety of levels, of which I will name but a few.

The foundations of ethics, politics, economics, etc., are, according to Anders, sabotaged and corrupted by the logic of the superiority of the technical device. Technical devices are the ones which makes demands to man. It is they that ask what man has to offer so that they can show and fulfill all their potential, the full spectrum of their features. When economic or political decisions must be made, either at the national or the international level, one cannot trust the limited capacities of man. Rather, one ought to delegate major decisions to the calculus of data processing devices. To trust man with the decision of when to launch nuclear weapons is highly risky, and already in the last century, such decisions were largely delegated to computer programs. In what concerns consumerism, Anders stresses, as does Heidegger, that it is the products themselves that demand an attitude of fast consumption, an attitude of *Schonungslosigkeit*, i.e. of deliberate carelessness. To preserve, fix and repair devices and things is more expensive than simply throwing them away and buying newer models.

4.2. Traumatological aspects in Anders

Behind this phenomenology of carelessness and the gulf between man and the technical device, something else is hiding, and this something else leads me once again to the logic of trauma. I shall focus on four fundamental aspects through which this traumatology is made manifest.

(i)   *Man strives to overcome clearly serious and existential threats yet, by doing it, he cooperates with his own annihilation. This concerns not only nuclear weapons and the ontic survival of man, but, at bottom, it concerns his essence.*

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[34] ANDERS, Günther (1988), *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen.* Vol. 1: *Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten technischen Revolution.* 7th ed., München: Beck, p. 20.

The wanting-to-be-like-machines reveals a lack of measure from several perspectives: it is a false *Anmaßung*, a *superbia* (arrogance) or false presumption which longs for its own perfection, in turn caused by a false *Anmessung*, a false integration which takes as its standard the logic of the product, of that which is technically achievable. In a hidden dialectic, the longed for perfection reveals itself as a self-inflicted humiliation resulting in extinction. This extinction is of a new, unheard sort, far graver than any suicide or fatality. The exact interchangeability which exists in the realm of products – which man envies, experiencing his own "uniqueness" as a flaw – encloses in itself the idea of the overcoming of natural "death", and hence the overcoming of an existential necessity, possibility and "capacity" of the human being. Not knowing and not being able to die, in the sense also delineated by Heidegger, happens when the phenomenon of death is no longer among the realm of the possible; in other words, when it's modality, in its threefold Kantian sense, seems to be delegated, indelibly, to the arbitrary deliberation of the "new" man. And hence, not only to Heidegger but also to Anders, man's overcoming of death leads to the death of the essence of the human species[35] and, consequently, to the death of the human species as such.

(ii)   The almost complete ignorance of these events.

Like Heidegger, Anders too believes there is a tremendous lack of awareness concerning the growing emptying of the being of man. According to Anders, we have lost the capacity to be afraid, and, more fundamentally, the capacity to feel anguish. The absence of anguish is related to the inability to keep up affectively with the world of fabricated devices; this lack acquires dimensions never before imaginable the more the emptying of the human being advances. According to Anders, nihilism has entered a new stage. It is no longer either apocalyptic or suicidal but rather, as Samuel Beckett has brilliantly shown, a nihilism which is itself unable to be a nihilism.[36] It is a state in which man, in his profound feeling of meaninglessness, has become incapable of feeling either fear or boredom. Whenever man still shows residual signs of

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[35] ANDERS, Günther (1988), *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen.* Vol. 1: *Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten technischen Revolution.* 7th ed., München: Beck, pp. 47-56.

[36] In this regard, see the text "Sein ohne Zeit. Zu Becketts Stück <En attendant Godot>", in ANDERS, Günther (1988), *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen.* Vol. 1: *Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten technischen Revolution.* 7th ed., München: Beck, pp. 213-231).

his proper nature, when, for instance, he feels a strong rebellious impulse of rage against the machines or against the conditions of labor, he does not usually unleash this rage directly upon those who cause it. Rather he throws himself into those other machines or socio-technological offerings conceived for that purpose – video games, arcades, etc. – or he mutilates himself so to obtain proof of his own flesh and blood existence.[37]

      (iii)   *Man's inability to face this death threat is part of his nature. To fight this inability is an enterprise doomed to fail, for it itself leads even more surely to death.*

Promethean shame is not a shame felt by this or that individual. It is the shame of humanity, that is, of man as such. Just as the child that hides behind her mother once visitors arrive feels simultaneously embarrassed and afraid of being exposed to the world as an individual, of not being able to hide in the being-with-others, promethean shame is the embarrassment and fear of not being able to do anything against the fact of not being a non-I. Freud called the longing to be freed from the ego the death drive; nevertheless, unlike Anders, he did not connect this drive with the longing to become a device.

      (iv)   *Escaping into the everyday worsens our ignorance.*

Here Anders's reflections come very close to Heidegger's. The escape or flight into the everyday, the day-to-day humdrum and the ordinary, the perfect adaptation to the common opinions and stereotyped behaviors, all those worsen one's ignorance of traumatology. One of the traumatological structures related to the everyday is the irresolvable *aporia* in which products ask of us the impossible: either, following the stream of dominant opinion, we give in to its demands, which, however, results in our long term extinction as human beings; or we do not give in, but then we are reduced to nothing, to a destroyed entity, undeserving of either self-esteem or that of others. The vague feeling of not being able to deal with this situation, of being its hostage, is traumatic.[38] The perspective of those who criticize consumerism, the doctrines of the necessity

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[37] Slavoj Žižek presents a nearly identical account of the nature of selfmutilation, cf. Žižek, Slavoj / Daly, Glyn (2006), *Arriscar o impossível. Conversas com Žižek.* Transl. Vera Ribeiro. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, p. 147.
[38] ANDERS, Günther (1988), *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen.* Vol. 1: *Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten technischen Revolution.* 7th ed., München: Beck, p. 44.

of progress and the marvelous advances of medicine, is wide and well known. Anders believes, however, that there is a growing tendency of immunization against these disquieting critiques. Those voices which alert us to the growing loss of reality due to the growing immersion in a world of technological devices and their demands are often ridiculed.[39] Perhaps particular to Anders is his stress on the "tabooization" and punishment of this critique. Even in those cases in which this critique is accepted and seriously considered, the assumption is that all we need to address it is to employ technological or politically controllable measures. A discussion that would get to the heart of the matter is still, according to Anders, either forbidden or simply mocked.

5. Final Remarks

How can these reflections be linked to our concern about liquid technoethics? One could first establish a kind of commonality between Sloterdijk and Anders. Any general ethics, and in particular an ethics of technology, falls short if it does not see that it is a kind of theoretical reflection dominated by a sub-conscious pursuit of immunization or perfection, which is suicidal in the final analysis, or, as Derrida would say, which unconsciously follows a auto-immunizing tendency. A higher ethics is first an ethics of technology because the pursuit of immunization or perfection is linked to technical perfecting in a fundamental way. On the other hand, this higher ethics is also liquid, namely because it cannot fundamentally find a firm. Their efforts, both Anders's and Sloterdijk's, are nothing but again the self-preservation of the human species, even though they are done at an allegedly reflective level. Anders provides us with an ethical recipe for this target: the observance of new categorical imperatives, which are nevertheless merely necessary propaedeutic workouts, in form of aesthetic and gymnastic exercises designed to expand our emotional and representational capacities.[40] For Sloterdijk, the term homeotecnology is strongly underdetermined and looks more like a pipe dream. Both in Anders and Sloterdijk one also misses that the risk of suicidal overreaction is taken into account by the somewhat naïve "meta" solutions. From the perspective of Adorno, one could argue that

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[39] ANDERS, Günther (1992), *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*. Vol. 2: *Über die Zerstörung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution*. 4th ed., München: Beck, p. 44.

[40] By way of example, see ANDERS, Günther (1988), *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*. Vol. 1: *Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten technischen Revolution*. 7th ed., München: Beck, pp. 274f., 308-313), where he deliberately employs sports vocabulary, transposing it to the realm of the arts, which he takes to be the last domain in which the growing emptying of the human being may yet be stopped.

this negative dialectics has not yet been taken to its logical conclusion. Another type of general objection would be to unmask the dramatic dichotomy of Being and Nothingness, which underlies the concept of trauma – a position that can be attributed to Blumenberg. There is much more to be said about this – a task I would like to carry out in another paper.

Translated by Luís Manuel Pinto de Sá