



Transcendental Meta-Algorithmic Transhumanism: The Entelechy of the Human Being

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Introduction: Transhumanism as Transmutation

Even though there are different varieties and interpretations of transhumanism, one can, indeed, identify some central themes, values, and scopes that determine the identity of transhumanism as a movement and a philosophical system. According to the Transhumanist FAQ, which is available on the official website of Humanity+ (a Los Angeles-based non-profit 501(c)3 educational organization “dedicated to elevating the human condition”), transhumanism can be defined as follows:

- (1) The intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities.
- (2) The study of the ramifications, promises, and potential dangers of technologies that will enable us to overcome fundamental human limitations, and the related study of the ethical matters involved in developing and using such technologies.

Transhumanism can be viewed as an extension of humanism, from which it is partially derived. Humanists believe that humans matter, that individuals matter. We might not be perfect, but we can make things better by promoting rational thinking, freedom, tolerance, democracy, and concern for our fellow

human beings. Transhumanists agree with this but also emphasize what we have the potential to become.

(Online: <https://humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-faq/>)

The aforementioned definition is based on the scholarly work of Max More, President and CEO of the Alcor Life Extension Foundation, and Natasha Vita-More, a leading expert on human enhancement and emerging and speculative technologies and a Professor at the University of Advancing Technology, who have co-edited the book *The Transhumanist Reader* (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 2013).

In general terms, “transhumanism” refers to a historical becoming in the context of which humanity is in transition to becoming something superior through:

- (i) *the further evolution of the human being itself,*
- (ii) *the merging between aspects of humanity and artificial intelligence* (for instance, the use of complex algorithms and software in order to emulate human cognition in the analysis, interpretation, and comprehension of complicated medical and healthcare data; bioartificial organs manufacturing technologies; the Da Vinci robotic surgical system developed by Intuitive surgical; Fitbit, Apple, and other health trackers monitoring heart rate, activity levels, and sleep levels, as well as ECG tracings; IBM’s Watson Health, which helps doctors to efficiently identify symptoms of heart disease and cancer; genetic therapies; etc.), and
- (iii) *the amelioration of humanity’s external existential conditions through the utilization of technological advances* (such as genetic engineering; genetically modified organisms; robotics; nuclear fusion; space technologies; etc.).

The aforementioned approach to transhumanism has the following three major implications:

- (i) whereas posthumanism aims at changing the human being into a different kind of being and is often associated with the algorithmization of human life, transhumanism aims at enabling the human being to actualize its ontological potential rigorously and comprehensively through various methods of spiritual and material empowerment, and, instead of promoting the algorithmization of human life, it reinforces human creativity;
- (ii) not only is transhumanism different from posthumanism, but it also can be considered as an attempt to make humanity even more humane and, hence, as something clearly opposite to posthumanism, in the sense that transhumanism may be construed as a rigorous and comprehensive ontological upgrading of the human being, whereas posthumanism may be construed as a systematic attempt to ontologically degrade the human being to the point of transforming it into a completely algorithmizable bio-mechanical being;
- (iii) far from negating spirituality, transhumanism is an expression of the creativity of the human spirit, since both the transhumanistic vision of humanity’s evolution and technology proceed from and express the human spirit. At bottom, technology consists in the integration of ideas into matter and in the restructuring of the material world according to the intentionality of human consciousness.

As a result of my aforementioned approach to transhumanism, and in contrast to posthumanism, this movement and philosophical system does not aim at dehumanizing humanity and transforming it into another ontological kind, but it aims at transmuting humanity's state of being into a superior state of being in the context of a dual process that consists, first, of the ontological amelioration of humanity and, secondly, of the intensification of the presence of humanity in the world.

The term “transmutation” is an alchemical concept that means an attempt to understand the “logoi” (namely, the efficient and final causes) of beings and things in order, ultimately, to purify and ontologically perfect material objects and humanity itself. First, alchemy is related to the practices that were used in the Greco-Roman Egypt by goldsmiths and other artificers in metals, who had developed techniques for painting metals so as to make them look like gold. Secondly, alchemy is related to the theory of the unity of matter (originated by Greek Pre-Socratic philosophers), according to which all those things we are accustomed to call different kinds of matter were primordially derived from one primary kind of matter (in Latin, “prima materia”), whose alchemical symbol is the Ouroboros, namely, a serpent-dragon eating its own tail. Thirdly, alchemy is related to the Aristotelian principle that every art is and must be “mimesis,” in the sense that, according to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, 50a15, art “enmatters” species, and mimesis is “the constitution of things” (in Greek, “he ton pragmaton systasis”). Fourthly, alchemy is related to the ancient Greek concept of “cosmic sympathy,” also symbolized by the Ouroboros. In the context of ancient Greek medicine, according to the *Hippocratic corpus* (*De alim.*, 23:1), sympathy refers to the relationship among different parts of the body, particularly, it refers to the fact that, when a part of the human body somehow suffers, another part may be affected, too. In the context of ancient Greek sociology, according to Aristotle’s *Politics*, 1340a13, sympathy refers to the fact that people may share the feelings of their fellow-citizens. Moreover, during the Hellenistic period, Stoic philosophers, such as Chrysippus and Posidonius, developed the concept of “cosmic sympathy” in order to describe the interconnectedness among the different parts of the universe.

In the study of alchemy, practice and experiment are necessary, thus paving the road to modern natural science, but these need to be preceded by theoretical knowledge, which constitutes the philosophical or spiritual aspect of alchemy. In general, alchemy has two aspects: the material and the spiritual. The argument that alchemy was merely a primitive form of chemistry is untenable by anyone who is familiar with works written by its chief adepts. Additionally, the argument that alchemy is only a set of philosophical and theological teachings and that the alchemists’ chemical references are only allegories is equally untenable by anyone who is familiar with the history of alchemy, since many of alchemy’s most prominent adepts have made significant contributions to chemistry, and they have not been notable as teachers either of philosophy or of theology; in Antoine-Joseph Pernety’s *Dictionnaire Mytho-Hermétique* (Paris: Delalain, 1787), one can find a very important explanation of alchemical terms upon the material plane.

Ethan Allen Hitchcock’s *Remarks upon Alchemy and the Alchemists* (originally published in 1857; reprinted by Forgotten Books/FB&c Ltd, London, 2015) is one of the most important Western sources for the study of the history and the meaning of alchemy. From the perspective of modern chemistry, an “element” is defined as a body that is substantially different from all others, while having constant character itself, and that it is indivisible except into parts of itself. However, the alchemists’ elements, namely, Fire, Air, Earth, and Water, are types of four modes of force or matter, and they represent states that are mutually related and dependent, in accordance with the aforementioned ancient Greek concept of “cosmic sympathy.” In

particular, in the context of alchemy, the following correspondences hold:

Fire–Heat–Dryness
Air–Heat–Moistness
Earth–Cold–Dryness
Water–Cold–Moistness

The aforementioned alchemical correspondences are based on Aristotle's natural philosophy, according to which matter, simple or combined with its developments, may exist in each of these states.

Apart from the aforementioned four elementary states, the alchemists refer to minerals and seven metals, as forms of matter that are essentially stable, except in the hands of an adept alchemist, who might accomplish the Great Work, that is, the transmutation of one of them into another. For the alchemical process of transmutation, one substance was requisite, precisely, the Philosopher's Stone, which is also known as the Quintessence and as the Son of the Sun. This was to be derived from the Philosophical Mercury, the Philosophical Salt, and the Philosophical Sulfur, which by putrefaction or calcination, became Black, and then by further processes White, and, finally, the Redness of Perfection was achieved. In medieval alchemical texts, the sublimation or volatilization of a substance is called the White Eagle, whereas the Black Eagle refers to putrefaction, by which is meant conversion by heat of dissolved substances or liquids into a form of sediment or precipitate, or of melted substances into slag or a form of ashes. Thus, one of the most well-known alchemical principles is "Solve et Coagula," meaning either dissolve and precipitate from solution, or melt and solidify. The aforementioned Philosopher's Stone was the Key to Transmutation, since, according to the alchemists, by the power of the Philosopher's Stone, one form of matter could be changed into another: Lead could be transmuted into Silver, called by them the Moon (in Latin, "Luna") or the Queen, while Silver could be transmuted into Gold, called by them the Sun (in Latin, "Sol") or the King (important aspects of the so-called Higher Alchemy have been illustrated by Anna Kingsford (1846–88) and her co-worker Edward Maitland; moreover, see: Louis Figuier, *L'Alchimie et les Alchimistes*, Paris: Hachette, 1856, reprinted by Éditions Denoël, Paris, 1970; Albert Poisson, *Théorie et Symboles des Alchimistes*, Paris: Bibliothèque Chacornac, 1891, reprinted by Éditions Traditionnelles, Paris, 1991).

On the symbolic and the philosophical planes, the alchemical principle "Solve et Coagula," that is, "volatilize and fix," can be interpreted as follows: the fallen soul becomes fixed in matter, and, particularly, the mind that is coagulated and fettered by the sensuous world suffers the consequent loss of the power of direct spiritual communion with God; by mystical death, precisely, by being dead to the sensuous world, and by casting off the body's animal passions, the mind is released from its bondage and becomes a partaker of God's uncreated energies. The alchemical principles Sun and Moon, which, in chemistry, correspond to Gold and Silver, respectively, symbolize the soul and the body of man, respectively. The alchemical principles of Mercury, Salt, and Sulfur symbolize the active principle, the passive principle, and their synthesis, respectively. Furthermore, when alchemists maintain that, by time and force, the Black Dragon of putrefaction can become fashioned into the White Swan of purity, they refer to a mental change (in Greek, "metanoia"), precisely, to the return of the mind to the heart and the liberation of the mind from bodily sensation.

Western alchemy is intimately related to the resurgence of Hermeticism and Neoplatonic varieties of mysticism in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries A.D. According to Hermeticism, namely, the cult of Hermes Trismegistus, the classical elements (earth, air, fire, water) make up the physical world, while the spiritual

world (God, the One, the All) created the physical world by an act of will (The *Hermetica*, which form the basis of Hermeticism, are Egyptian-Greek wisdom texts from the second and the third centuries A.D. that are mostly presented as dialogues in which a teacher, generally identified as Hermes Trismegistus (“thrice-greatest Hermes”), enlightens a disciple; moreover, see: Willis Barnstone, ed., *The Other Bible: Jewish Pseudepigrapha, Christian Apocrypha, Gnostic Scriptures, Kabbalah, Dead Sea Scrolls*, San Francisco: Harper, 2005). In particular, according to Hermetic cosmology, there is a reciprocal relationship between the physical world (the physical “microcosm”) and the spiritual world (the spiritual “macrocosm”): the world is a beautiful whole, and creation can be understood by understanding that earthly realities imperfectly mirror supernatural realities, in accordance with the Hermetic maxim “as above, so below.”

Sir Isaac Newton has translated the Emerald Tablet—one of the most important pieces of the *Hermetica* reputed to contain the secret of the “prima materia” and its transmutation—as follows:

’Tis true without lying, certain most true. That which is below is like that which is above that which is above is like that which is below to do the miracles of one only thing. And as all things have been arose from one by the mediation of one: so all things have their birth from this one thing by adaptation. The Sun is its father, the moon its mother, the wind hath carried it in its belly, the earth its nurse. The father of all perfection in the whole world is here. Its force or power is entire if it be converted into earth. Separate thou the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross sweetly with great industry. It ascends from the earth to the heaven again it descends to the earth and receives the force of things superior and inferior. By this means ye shall have the glory of the whole world thereby all obscurity shall fly from you. Its force is above all force. For it vanquishes every subtle thing and penetrates every solid thing. So was the world created. From this are and do come admirable adaptations whereof the means (or process) is here in this. Hence I am called Hermes Trismegist, having the three parts of the philosophy of the whole world. That which I have said of the operation of the Sun is accomplished and ended. (B. J. T. Dobbs, “Newton’s Commentary on the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus,” in *Hermeticism and the Renaissance*, edited by Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus, Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, and London: Associated University Presses, 1988, Part 2, p. 183.)

The oldest known text of the Emerald Tablet has been dated to around the eighth century A.D. We can find it in two Arabic texts: the *Kitab-i Sirri Al-Halika*, which was written in the eighth century A.D. by the Arab polymath and alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan (in the West, his name was Latinized into “Geber”), and the *Kitab Sirr Al-Asrar*, which was a tenth-century A.D. Arabic text translated into Latin in the twelfth century as the *Secretum Secretorum* (the Secret of Secrets). The Hermetic principle “as above, so below; as below, so above” refers to the interplay between spirit and matter as well as to the interplay between thought and form. In the language of alchemy, this principle is related to and represented by “distillation.” Distillation is the process of separating the components or substances from a liquid mixture by using selective boiling and condensation (for instance, this is the method by which brandy and other “spirits” are produced): the alchemists refer to the gas that is let off during the phase of vaporization as the “spirit” (representing our thoughts and emotions), and they refer to the fixed matter that is produced during the phase of condensation as the “body.” By analogy, nature has its own distillery: the heat of the Sun evaporates the water of the Earth, the water (moisture) goes up into the clouds, and then it rains. From the perspective of alchemy, distillation and the Hermetic principle “as above, so below; as below, so above” mean that we continually create and manifest our world, and, therefore, magic is the power of

consciously controlling what we send out; hence, Jesus Christ has said: “it is what comes out of a man that defiles him”(Mark 7:15). Hence, the great problems of the Rosicrucian Science are the transmutation of the elements, the fixing of the volatile, and the volatilization of the fixed.

Along with the Kabbalah, the Hermetic tradition is one of the foundation stones on which modern esotericism is based. In particular, the Hermetic theorem “as above so below” underpins an “analogical” reasoning about an astrological ascent of the soul. This astrological ascent of the soul through celestial bodies is described in the first volume of the *Hermetica*, specifically, in the tractate that is called *Poimandres*. One can find hints to the concept of the soul’s astrological ascent through the seven ancient astrological bodies (planets) in the myth of Er with which Plato concludes his *Republic* (10:614–10:621), and in the sixth book of Cicero’s *De Re Publica*, where Cicero describes the dream vision of Scipio (*Somnium Scipionis*). Moreover, this concept can be found in the Kabbalah since the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, inspired by Pythagoreanism and Neo-Platonism, shows an ascent through the following levels of consciousness and astrological bodies: Malkuth, which corresponds to the planet Earth, Yesod, which corresponds to the Moon, Hod, which corresponds to Mercury, Netzach, which corresponds to Venus, Tiphareth, which corresponds to the Sun, Geburah, which corresponds to Mars, Chesed, which corresponds to Jupiter, Binah, which corresponds to Saturn, Chokhmah, which corresponds to the Zodiac, and, finally, Kether, which corresponds to the “First Movement,” or “First Whirling” (see also: Kieren Barry, *The Greek Qabalah: Alphabetical Mysticism and Numerology in the Ancient World*, York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1999).

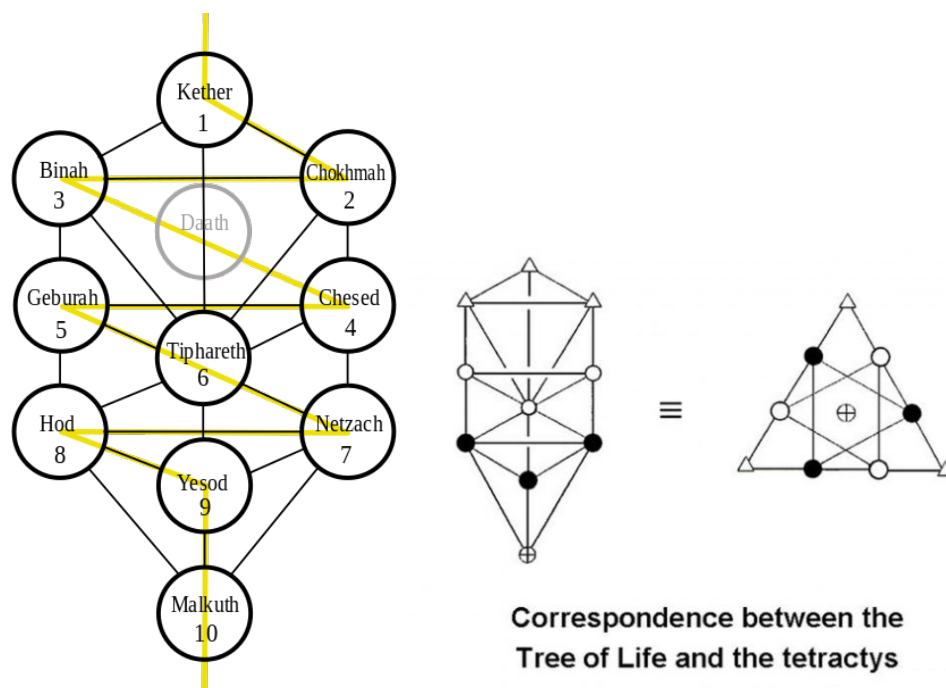


Figure 1: The Kabbalistic Tree of Life (on the left), and the equivalence between the Kabbalistic Tree of Life and the Pythagorean Tetractys (on the right).

In general, as Warren Kenton has pointedly argued, “the symbol in ancient times was what technological language is to us. It was the synthesis, in word or image, of the principles underlying a body of knowledge” (Warren Kenton, *Astrology: The Celestial Mirror*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1994, p. 9). Furthermore, the Byzantine hesychasts emphatically taught that, even though the essence of the uncreated, hypercosmic Unity is different from the essence of the created cosmos,

the uncreated energies of the hypercosmic Unity pervade and sustain the cosmos, for which reason they are referred to as the divine Providence, and the human being can actively and ontologically participate in the hypercosmic Unity's uncreated energies, thus experiencing them as *uncreated* grace.

The foregoing theses are in agreement with the scientific arguments put forward in *The Unseen Universe*, a popular book published anonymously in 1875 (third edition), and later revealed to have been co-authored by the Scottish mathematical physicists Balfour Stewart and Peter Guthrie Tait (a lifelong friend of the renowned Scottish mathematical physicist James Clerk Maxwell, who formulated the classical theory of electromagnetic radiation, bringing together electricity, magnetism, and light as different manifestations of the same phenomenon). In particular, Stewart and Tait maintain that there is a continuity between the visible realm and the invisible one, allowing divine intervention to be accounted for by energy transfer between the two, and they connect the fourth dimension with the invisible realm as follows:

Just as points are the terminations of lines, lines the boundaries of surfaces, and surfaces the boundaries of proportions of space of three dimensions: so we may suppose our (essentially three-dimensional) matter to be the mere skin or boundary of an Unseen whose matter has four dimensions. (Balfour Stewart and Peter Guthrie Tait, *The Unseen Universe*, third edition, New York: Macmillan, 1875, p.220.)

The ancient concept of celestial ascent is assigned to the seven celestial bodies that ancient mystics and scientists could see with naked eyes in the night sky. Moreover, even in the context of modern astrology, which includes Pluto, Neptune, and Uranus, all the astrological bodies that have been added to modern astrological analyses are seen to be the higher octaves of the seven ancient primary celestial bodies; specifically, Uranus is seen as a higher octave of Mercury, Pluto is seen as a higher octave of Mars, and Neptune is seen as a higher octave of Venus. Far from justifying any type of superstitious or fatalistic approach to astrology, the aforementioned mystical astrological perspective implies that the seven ancient primary celestial bodies (namely, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn) symbolically represent seven stages of spiritual unfoldment and is in accordance with King-Prophet David's Psalm 19, in which we read: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Alchemists have formulated their own rule whereby one can associate the aforementioned seven ancient primary celestial bodies (representing seven stages of celestial ascension) with the seven stages of the alchemical work. In particular, from the perspective of alchemy, the seven ancient primary celestial bodies correspond to the seven stages of the alchemical work as follows:

- 1) Calcination: chemically, it involves heating a substance over an open flame or in a crucible until it is reduced to ashes, and, psychologically, it signifies the breaking down of old imperfect forms, the overcoming of egotism, and the destruction of one's attachments to material possessions. The celestial body that corresponds to Calcination is Saturn. The element that corresponds to Calcination is Fire. The color that corresponds to Calcination is Magenta.
- 2) Dissolution: chemically, it consists in dissolving the ashes from Calcination in water, and, psychologically, it signifies a further breaking down of artificial psychological structures by total immersion in the unconscious. The celestial body that corresponds to Dissolution is Jupiter. The element that corresponds to Dissolution is Water. The color that corresponds to Dissolution is Light Blue, the characteristic color of Symbolic Masonry.
- 3) Separation: chemically, it refers to the isolation of the components of Dis-

solution by filtration and, subsequently, to the discarding of any unguenuine or unworthy material, while, psychologically, it signifies the elimination of inner impurities, the “rediscovery” of our essence, and the reclaiming of visionary “gold.” The celestial body that corresponds to Separation is Mars. The element that corresponds to Separation is Air. The color that corresponds to Separation is Orange-Red.

- 4) Conjunction: chemically, it consists in the recombination of the saved elements from Separation into a new substance, and, psychologically, it signifies the union between the feminine psychological qualities with the masculine ones as well as the recombination of the purified powers and aspects of our psyche into a more harmonious and adequately organized whole. The celestial body that corresponds to Conjunction is Venus. The element that corresponds to Conjunction is Earth. The color that corresponds to Conjunction is Green.
- 5) Fermentation: chemically, it refers to the growth of a ferment (bacteria) in organic solutions (for instance, the process of fermentation in winemaking turns grape juice into an alcoholic beverage, and, through fermentation, one can produce yogurt and cheese). At the symbolic level, Fermentation is preceded by the Putrefaction of the hermaphroditic “child” of Conjunction resulting in its death and resurrection to a new level of being, and the stage of Fermentation signifies the empowerment of the product of Conjunction in order to ensure its survival. Psychologically, the process of Fermentation signifies the concentration of the mind to a high goal, intense prayer, desire for mystical union with the good-in-itself, and the rousing of psychosomatic energy. The celestial body that corresponds to Fermentation is Mercury. The substance that corresponds to Fermentation is Sulfur. The color that corresponds to Fermentation is Turquoise.
- 6) Distillation: chemically, it consists in the boiling and condensation of the fermented solution to increase its purity (as it is the case for example in distilling wines into brandy), while, psychologically, it signifies further purification of the self through introspection in order to free oneself from irrational passions and sentiments and to ensure that no impurities derived from the ego or the id inhibit the completion of the alchemical process. The celestial body that corresponds to Distillation is the Moon. The substance that corresponds to Distillation is Mercury. The color that corresponds to Distillation is Deep Blue; this is the characteristic color of the Grand Master and the Grand Lodge Officers in Symbolic Masonry.
- 7) Coagulation: chemically, it refers to the precipitation or sublimation of the purified Ferment from Distillation, and, psychologically, it signifies a psychological state characterized by beauty, integrity, and incorruptibility. The celestial body that corresponds to Coagulation is the Sun. The substance that corresponds to Coagulation is Salt. The color that corresponds to Coagulation is Purple; this is the characteristic color of the 33rd degree (known as “Sovereign Grand Inspector General”) of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, and of the 97th degree (known as “Grand Hierophant”) of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis–Misraim.

The Scope of the Present Essay

Philosophy can provide one with a higher perspective of transhumanism. The declared scope of transhumanism is the transformation of humanity into a higher form of humanity. In the present essay, I shall investigate the foundations of transhumanism, and I shall distinguish transcendental meta-algorithmic transhumanism, henceforth referred to as TMT, from profane transhumanism. Profane transhumanism is a variety of transhumanism missing the backbone of philosophy and reducing to posthumanism; namely, it is an un-philosophical, or philosophically insensitive, variety of transhumanism. In the present essay, I shall undertake to investigate the ontological, the epistemological, and the moral underpinnings of transhumanism in order to elucidate TMT and its difference from profane transhumanism.

Philosophy is a methodic and systematic investigation of the problems that result from the reference of consciousness to the world and to itself. In other words, philosophy is concerned with the problems that result from humanity's attempt to interpret the quality of the integration of consciousness, as consciousness of existence, into the cosmic reality. These problems pertain to the world itself, to consciousness, and to the relation between consciousness and the world.

It goes without saying that science is also concerned with similar problems. However, science contents itself with the finding of relations and laws that can possibly (and even partially) interpret the objects of scientific research, whereas philosophy moves beyond these findings in order to evaluate the objects of philosophical research, and, thus, ultimately, to articulate a general method and a general criterion for the explanation of every object of philosophical research. Whereas sciences are "pictures" and explanations of these "pictures," philosophies are born by referring to wholes and by inducing wholes from parts. Hence, for instance, a philosopher will ask what is scientific about science, namely, what is the true meaning of science? The difference between philosophy and science is not limited to the level of generality that characterizes their endeavors. Another important difference between philosophy and science pertains to the manner in which the aforementioned problems are experienced by consciousness, to consciousness itself, and to the existence that is expressed by conscious life. Thus, philosophy is not a science, like any other particular science, but it is a "way of life," as the French philosopher Pierre Hadot has argued, and, specifically, philosophy signifies the freely and deliberately made decision of consciousness to freely and unrestrainedly seek truth for the sake of knowledge itself, since a philosopher is aware that knowledge is inextricably linked to the existential freedom and integration of the human being (Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, edited with an introduction by Arnold I. Davidson, translated by Michael Chase, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). Beyond the similarities between philosophy and science, philosophy is an impetus for the creation of a world of meanings that expresses human creativity.

Transhumanism *per se* signals and expresses an existential phase in which humanity is coming closer to its cosmic consciousness, that is, to an expanded psychic awareness. However, the relation between the world and consciousness, both as a theoretical issue and as a practical one, is a complex philosophical and essentially spiritual problem. Therefore, there are different approaches to transhumanism.

Profane transhumanism tends to overly materialize and contain the ego of the human being, and, for this reason, it takes a posthumanistic stance. Profane transhumanism speculates on human instincts and illusions, emphasizing primarily quantitative aspects and a few qualitative aspects of the material survival and the material gratification of the human being to such an extent that, ultimately, it seeks to subjugate humanity to an all-pervading mechanistic organizational structure and, thus, to total algorithmization. In this case, the cost of the benefits of transhumanism

is extremely high: the “salvation” and the “triumph” that profane transhumanism promises to humanity are caricatures of Jonah’s salvation by and triumph over the “cetacean,” according to the Book of Jonah in the Bible. The “cetacean” saved Jonah by swallowing him, and Jonah triumphed over this “cetacean,” because it “vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.” Similarly, profane transhumanism promises to “save” humanity if and to the extent that the latter will be swallowed by the “cetacean” of a mechanistic organizational structure, which will ultimately vomit out humanity upon the “dry land” of total algorithmization.

Nevertheless, many persons who criticize and, indeed, oppose transhumanism do so in an indiscriminate way, and they belong to at least one of the following categories: (i) spiritually-minded persons (e.g., religious persons and religious leaders, esotericists, scholars, etc.) who are overly conservative and imbued with a phobia of scientific and technological innovation and, in general, of structural change (their criticism of transhumanism and artificial intelligence is spiritually affine to medieval spiritual despots’ witch hunts and criticism of occultism); (ii) solipsistic mystics and absolute idealists who fail to understand the importance of the objectivation of the intentionality of consciousness in the realm of history and, hence, in the realm of matter, too, and, in particular, they ignore that the existential visions and wishes of humanity must be underpinned by a sufficiently high libido manifested as active love, intellectual creativity, and militancy in order to be structurally crystallized on the historical plane, because otherwise the existential visions and wishes of humanity are degraded into unsubstantiated and obsessive fantasies, phantoms, and delirium; (iii) devious persons who use scaremongering as a way to criticize and undermine their opponents’ technological status and achievements and to create the opportunities that they want in order to change the distribution of technological power in their own favor.

In contrast to profane transhumanism and in contrast to any type of indiscriminate opposition to transhumanism, TMT is a philosophical approach to transhumanism that interprets and evaluates transhumanism as an expression of humanity’s concern for the integration of life through both theory and historical action, in a consistent and morally responsible way.

The terms “algorithm” (namely, a step-by-step procedure that defines a set of instructions to be executed in a certain order to get the desired output), “artificial intelligence” (namely, the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions), “digital reality” (namely, electronic technological systems that generate, store, and process data in terms of positive and non-positive states), and “cellular neural network” (namely, a 2-, 3-, or n-dimensional array of mainly identical dynamical systems, called cells, which satisfies the following two properties: most interactions are local within a finite radius r , and all state variables are continuous valued signals) imply and underpin a new relation between consciousness and the world, but they do not necessarily underpin a new relation between consciousness and itself. Consciousness refers to the world in order to understand the beings and things that exist in the world, exactly because the beings and things that exist in the world are not merely “data” (objectively given things), but they are parts of a world of meanings that is created by consciousness. By contrast, according to the world-conception of artificial intelligence, the beings and things that exist in the world are merely “data,” and, on the basis of these data, the algorithmic universe is being built. Therefore, the algorithmization of the world implies not only that humans must discard an important part of their emotion, but also the replacement of understanding by the systematization of data, meaning that humans must, to a large extent, give primacy to static and formal elements over

personal experience and over the virtue of discernment. In other words, according to the world-conception of artificial intelligence, the algorithm of an object is more important than the corresponding object itself (see: John Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984). Furthermore, another significant weakness of artificial intelligence is that it cannot account for intuition, which is a fully legitimate avenue to knowledge, as René Descartes, a rationalist philosopher, has admitted, by arguing as follows:

By intuition I understand, not the fluctuating testimony of the senses, not the misleading judgment that proceeds from the blundering construction of the imagination, but the conception which an unclouded and attentive mind gives us so readily and distinctly that we are wholly free from doubt about that which we understand. (René Descartes, *Regulae 3*, in: *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, translated by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, 2 vols., New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968, I, p. 28.)

From the perspective of TMT, machines and, especially, automata must be used in order to support and enhance the traditional humanistic world, thus contributing to the integration of life, as I argued earlier, instead of creating a new world in which decisions will be made on the basis of data alone without bearing in mind other criteria, too, such as moral, aesthetic, sentimental, and interpretive ones. In the following sections, I shall study the ontological, the epistemological, and the moral underpinnings of transhumanism from the perspective of TMT.

Consciousness as Being: The Ontological Underpinnings of TMT

The subject matter of ontology can be summarized as the study of two notions: “esse” and “ens.” The term “esse” is the Latin word for “to be” (present infinitive of the verb “sum”), and, in the ancient Greek philosophical language, from which it derives, it is called “eînai” (“εἶναι”). The term “ens” is the Latin word for “being” (nominative singular of the third-declension neutral noun “ens”; plural: “entia”), and, in the ancient Greek philosophical language, from which it derives, it is called “on” (“ὄν”; plural: “ônta”: “ὄντα”).

A general overview of the history of philosophy leads to the conclusion that the term “being” (in Greek, “on”) means a self-sufficient reality that endures either by closing itself off or by tending to transcend its nature, specifically, by extending itself beyond its normal limits. In the first case, being is considered in a static way, whereas in the latter case being is considered in a dynamic way. The basic image of any being is available to the philosophizing consciousness due to the reality of humanity’s presence in the world, but, at a later stage, this image undergoes conscious processing. As a result of its conscious processing, the basic image of a being discards its most specific traits and its accidental properties, and it is projected in the most abstract way possible, thus underpinning both the conception of the corresponding idea and its comparison or functional relation to the world, into whose functional presence it is integrated. In fact, ancient Greece discovered science and philosophy because it discovered that human consciousness “is something different from the surrounding body of nature, and it is capable of discerning similarities in a multiplicity of events, of abstracting these from their settings, generalizing them, and deducing therefrom other relationships consistent with further experience,” and, in particular, “the establishment of mathematics as a deductive science” is ascribed to Thales (Carl B. Boyer, *The History of the Calculus and Its Conceptual Development*, New York: Dover, 1949, pp. 16–17).

Every philosophical activity is fundamentally concerned with the study of being, conceived of in the aforementioned way. Even when philosophy appears at first sight to be overwhelmed by the cosmic miracle and to aim at investigating and interpreting the latter, it still refers to the human being in an indirect way and from a long distance, and it tries to explain the apparent singularity of humanity's presence. Regardless of the extent to which and the manner in which humanity is related to the world, of which everything appears to be an outgrowth, and regardless of humanity's persistent attempt to be reintegrated into the world according to a new equilibrium ensured by humanity itself, the human being imposes itself as the most magnificent manifestation of being, both when it is considered separately and when it is considered with regard to its extension in and relation to the world. It is worth mentioning here that both matter-centered varieties of philosophical realism, such as Democritus's and Epicurus's atomism, and idea-centered varieties of philosophical realism, such as Plato's theory of ideas and Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz's monadology, are underpinned by the idea that humanity is an independent and largely free whole and a compact structural actualization (see: Nigel Warburton, *A Little History of Philosophy*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

The terms "esse" ("to be") and "ens" ("being") refer to specific presences, which differ from one another with regard to their complexion: "ens" (namely, "being" as a noun) is a system that consists of qualities, which can be attributed to it, whereas "esse" (namely, "to be," the present infinitive of the verb "sum") is a state in which an existence is in an absolutely positive way (and, hence, it is called a "beingly being"), or a state in which an existence is in an absolutely negative way (and, hence, it is called a "beingly non-being"), or any other intermediate ontological degree (between "beingly being" and "beingly non-being"). In his dialogue *Sophist*, Plato maintains that "being" and "non-being" are the extreme terms of an ontological series whose intermediate terms are the non-being of being and the being of non-being, and that, by means of these intermediate terms, the presence of the world can be explained. The four aforementioned Platonic ideas were utilized by Plotinus, who, in his *Enneads*, identified four primary hypostases, namely: (i) the One: it is the source of all existence, and, hence, it is totally transcendent (beyond the categories of being and non-being), it encompasses thinker and object, and it is identified with the ideas of "good" and "beauty"; (ii) the Nous (Mind, or Intelligence): it is the highest being, and it is emanated directly by the One; this second hypostasis, in which the ideas (namely, archetypal forms, which are the energies of the One) reside, emanates a third hypostasis, which is called the World Soul; (iii) the World Soul: it is an intrinsic connection between all living beings, and, according to Plotinus, it is composed of a higher and a lower part (the higher part is unchangeable and divine, and it provides the lower part with life), so that the World Soul contemplates both the intelligible realm and Nature as it previews what it produces, and, therefore, time and the physical world proceed from the World Soul; (iv) Matter: the process of emanation ends when being tends to non-being so much that a limit is finally reached, and this lowest stage of emanation is matter, which exists only potentially. Matter is not substantially evil, since it ultimately (even though indirectly) emanates from the One (and, thus, it is linked with goodness), but evil resides in matter's state of privation, or in matter's ontological weakness.

In his *Metaphysics Z'* and Θ' , Aristotle introduced and studied the distinction between potentiality (being potentially) and actuality (being actually). According to Aristotle, the matter of a being, namely, the stuff it is composed of, is linked with potentiality, whereas the form of a being, namely, the way that stuff is put together so that the whole it constitutes can perform its characteristic functions, is linked with actuality. For instance, consider a piece of wood that can be carved or shaped

into a bowl. In Aristotle's terminology, the wood has at least one potentiality, since it is potentially a bowl. The piece of raw wood in the carpenter's workshop can be considered a potential bowl (since it can be transformed into one), and the wood composing the completed bowl is also, in a sense, a potential bowl, but, when the bowl is used for the purpose intended, it exists actually, it is an actuality. Aristotle's distinction between potentiality and actuality presupposes a becoming in the context of which being is increasingly actualized and imposed according to an existential model that is originally contained in being; according to Aristotle, the aforementioned existential model is the "entelechy," that is, the programme of actualization, of being, and it remains incorruptible regardless of the changes that being may undergo. Moreover, according to Aristotle, being is the simplest mental presence, but it is not absolutely simple, since it can be conceived of as a resultant of categories (systems of general concepts); these categories, which correspond to the fundamental modes of being, can be summarized as follows: substance, form, structure (namely, the link, or relation, between substance and form), time, and space. The aforementioned five categories are qualities that can be identified in and attributed to being. In the aforementioned way, Aristotle transcends the antithesis between being and non-being, which was originally addressed by Parmenides in his poem *On Nature*.

In his *Categories*, Aristotle used the term "universals" ("ta kathôlou") in order to refer to the things that are "said of many," whereas things that are not universal he calls "particulars" ("ta kath' hêkasta"). According to Aristotle, each category contains a hierarchy of universals and particulars, with each universal being "said of" the lower-level universals and particulars that are below it in the hierarchy of generality. Thus, as Porphyry pointedly argued in his *Isagoge* (4, 21–25), each category has the structure of an upside-down tree: at the top (or trunk) of the tree, are the most generic items in that category (e.g., "animal"); branching below them are universals at the next highest level, and branching below these are found lower levels of universals, and so on, down to the lowest level universals (e.g., "cat"); at the lowest level (corresponding to the leaves of the tree), are found the individual substances (e.g., "that black cat").

The structure of being is of decisive importance, because it implies and underpins a specific mode of being, namely, the "structural mode of being." "Structure" is a peculiar relation that does not merely interconnect two constituent elements of a being (namely, its substance and its form), it also constitutes an inner element of a being itself. As an inner element of a being, structure is susceptible to self-reorganization, but it remains incorruptible for as long as a being endures, and, by determining the structural mode of being, it ensures that a being continues to be what it is, and that it is not identified with anything else. In addition, structure allows being to adapt to changeable situations without changing itself, since being remains structurally incorruptible. In other words, structure is that element of a being which underpins such a mode of being that allows one to endure through self-identification, regardless of the particular changes that one may undergo, and to determine one's ontological duration, thus ensuring and underpinning it. Moreover, structure is a cohesive force that allows a being to remain connected with its own self and to struggle for the imposition of its unchangeable ontological charter on the various stages of its duration. This becoming (the flow of "duration") can be construed in two different ways: it can be construed as a continuous change that characterizes the transition of a being from one state to another (this mode of thinking is represented by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and those philosophers who are inspired by his philosophy); alternatively, the aforementioned becoming can be construed as the decision of a being to be persistently oriented toward itself and to deepen its

understanding of itself in order to increasingly become what it already is (this mode of thinking was originally developed by Aristotle).

According to Hegel, the thing-in-itself, namely, being, is the idea that, by giving rise to its contradiction, moves away from itself, in order to return to itself enriched by its adventure, and spirit or mind (“Geist”) is the idea realized (see: Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur, eds, *A Companion to Hegel*, West Sussex: John and Sons, 2011). Hegel’s model combines the perception of being with the perception of becoming. However, Aristotle’s conception of the transition from “potentiality” to “actuality” implies a kind of becoming that consists in the actualization of an ontological programme, whereas Hegel’s conception of the transition from the “in-itself” (“thesis”), through the “outside-itself” (“antithesis”), to the “for-itself” (“synthesis”) implies a kind of becoming that consists in change and corruption, as it was originally conceived of by Heraclitus, but, in the case of Hegel’s philosophy, the character of change and corruption is clearly and rationally organized.

Heavily influenced by Aristotle (and especially by Aristotle’s qualitative philosophy of time), Henri Bergson developed the concept of “duration,” equating reality with duration, and arguing that philosophers should “enter into” being in order to understand being from the inside, instead of merely analyzing it from the outside. According to Bergson, “duration” is a continuous flow, immeasurable and unquantifiable:

Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. [...] We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought. Such is the account of duration which would be given by a being who was ever the same and ever changing, and who had no idea of space. But, familiar with the latter idea and indeed beset by it, we introduce it unwittingly into our feeling of pure succession; we set our states of consciousness side by side in such a way as to perceive them simultaneously, no longer in one another, but alongside one another; in a word, we project time into space, we express duration in terms of extensity, and succession thus takes the form of a continuous line or a chain, the parts of which touch without penetrating one another. (Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, tr. F. L. Pogson, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1910, pp. 100–01.)

When we construe the existence of being as its duration (in Bergsonian fashion), we realize that structure, due to the intermediary and relational role that it plays within being, ensures what Aristotle means by using the term “entelechy,” namely, the continuation of the presence of being as such and not as something else. Hence, entelechy is the *a priori* existence of a developmental model within being, and it is expressed by the structure of being, which, in fact, is identified with the entelechy of being, and it discloses what a being is in the most general terms.

Consciousness is that existential state of an organism which allows an individual to develop the functions that are necessary in order to know one’s environment as well as the events that take place around oneself and within oneself. The level of consciousness of a normal person ranges from complete vigilance to deep sleep. Moreover, consciousness is not merely a framework in which experiences are imprinted, but it is a living and structured presence which has every attribute of a living being, namely, substance, form, structure, as well as temporal and spatial activity, and which is continuously restructured by determining the rules of its activity, its intentionality, and its integration into the world, that is, by instituting itself. Thus,

consciousness is the most authentic expression of the reality of the human being. From the aforementioned perspective, consciousness is the synopsis of the human being as well as the means through which the human being confirms itself as an agent of action and as the starting point of self-transcendence.

In view of the foregoing, consciousness is consciousness of existence. Existence is an ontological state that expresses a complete reality, either positively (in terms of presence) or negatively (in terms of absence), and this reality proceeds from another reality, which either encompasses or casts off that reality which it endows with a particular characteristic that allows it to be a distinct complete reality. For instance, in various religious and mythological texts, we find the idea that existence erupted from non-existence/chaos, either automatically or due to an external intervention (see: Philip Wilkinson and Neil Philip, *Mythology*, London: Dorling Kindersley, 2007). One of the most important expressions of existence is life. "Life" means a set of phenomena that characterize organisms in contrast to objects that remain inert and apparently invariable, lacking organic constitution.

One characteristic common to the different phenomena that lead one to the conclusion that a being is alive is motion, that is, we expect of living beings to act; Hans Jonas has put it as follows:

In all these cases we deal with motions, and we can already distinguish three kinds of motion relevant for the discrimination of life: External motion, which changes the spatial relation of the body to its surroundings or of some part of the body to the rest; formative motion, which adds to the existing structure; internal motion, which seems to change nothing, either with respect to place or to form, but simply coincides with the fact of a body's being alive, however inactive otherwise. (Hans Jonas, *Organism and Freedom: An Essay in Philosophical Biology*, Berlin: Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and Universität Siegen, 2016, Chapter II.)

However, as Jonas has pointedly argued, "before we commit ourselves to an inquiry in terms of activity alone," we should bear in mind that many examples of vital motion involve "an element essentially different from motility itself" (motility is the ability of an organism to move independently, using metabolic energy), specifically, they involve sensitivity (ibid). Thus, Hans Jonas has argued as follows:

Only if the reaction is one of responsive behaviour and not just one of physical effect equivalent to the dynamic force applied, i.e., if the body itself and not our external action is the efficient cause of the ensuing motion, do we regard it as evidence of aliveness.

Whereas mechanistic organizational structures induce actors to behave in predictable ways, organic organizational structures promote flexibility, so that actors have high responsiveness. Another important difference between mechanistic organizational structures and organic organizational structures is that, in the former, actors are characterized by individual specialization, whereas, in the latter, actors are characterized by joint specialization (so that, organic organizational structures give rise to complex forms of cooperation and coordination). Moreover, mechanistic organizational structures promote centralization and standardization, and they use simple integrating mechanisms, whereas organic organizational structures promote decentralization and mutual adjustment, and they use complex integrating mechanisms. Consequently, life cannot be reduced to or exhaustively explained by mechanistic organizational structures, and, as Jonas has pointed out, mechanists try to explain life "by making it one of the possible variants of the lifeless," and "the mechanistic theory of the organism" is a symbolical system that negates life, just as

various “rites of the tomb” are symbolical systems that negate death (ibid, Chapter I). In social life, characteristic expressions of the mechanistic theory of organization can be found in military structures, rigid state and religious bureaucracies, and in dictatorial regimes, but certain elements of the mechanistic theory of organization are often useful and applied in industrial organization, too, especially in those cases where an organization is primarily focused on repetitive activities. On the other hand, at the social level, organic organizational structures are person-centered.

Consciousness is an outgrowth of life, but it is not an *a posteriori* outgrowth of life, and, therefore, conscious life is a superior form of life vis-à-vis simple living. Consciousness exists potentially within what Bergson has called the “vital impulse” (“*élan vital*”), namely, within a being’s tendency toward existence. Furthermore, consciousness exists within instinct, which is a condensed logic governing the behavior of the simplest organizations, and within the adaptive processes, through which living beings improve their ability to deal with their living conditions.

The reality of the world and the reality of consciousness are not components of one and the same reality, but they are structurally united with one another (as I have already mentioned, structure is one of the five basic modes of being). As I have written elsewhere, opposing both solipsism and radical dualistic realism:

[...] if the world were not different from consciousness, then the latter would not need to try so hard to know the world. In other words, if the world did not differ from consciousness, then the knowledge of the world would be exhausted in the self knowledge of humanity [...] if the structure of the world were absolutely different from the structure of consciousness, then it would be absolutely impossible for consciousness to obtain even partial knowledge of the world. (Nicolas Laos, “The Relationship between the Reality of the World and the Reality of Consciousness,” *Esoteric Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Summer 2020), pp. 59–84; online:

<https://www.esotericquarterly.com/issues/EQ15/EQ1504/EQ150420-Laos.pdf#page=1>)

Whereas “consciousness” is a continuation, outgrowth, and projection of life, the term “soul” refers to the very force of life. Thus, from the perspective of ontology, the soul can be construed as the being of consciousness. In the case of the human being, the operation of consciousness is so important, ontologically, that the notion of the soul is inextricably linked to the notion of the personality, since, in the case of the human being, the soul refers to the personal way in which one carries and manifests the force of life. By the term “personality,” we refer to the set of the psychosomatic attributes and functions by means of which a human being interacts and communicates with oneself and with one’s environment; “character” is the expressive organ of the personality; and “behavior” is the executive organ of the personality, and it consists of impulses and learning.

As a conclusion, the arguments, approaches, and definitions that I articulated, explained, and defended in this section imply that, at the ontological level, TMT should be construed as a systematic attempt to fulfill the psychosomatic, spiritual-cultural, and technological requirements that ensure the manifestation and the imposition of the entelechy of the human being itself. In other words, I maintain that TMT should be construed as a superior, “enhanced” form of humanism, and not as an ontological alienation or degradation of the human being.

Truth, Knowledge, and Noesis: The Epistemological Underpinnings of TMT

Whereas ontology (known also as metaphysics) is the branch of philosophy which inquires into the reality of each philosophical object of study and especially into the reality *par excellence*, namely, the reality of being, epistemology is the branch of philosophy which deals with the theory of knowledge. The first of the four major questions of philosophy as understood by Immanuel Kant is the following: “What can I know?” (see: Graham Bird, ed., *A Companion to Kant*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006). According to Kant, the previous epistemological question is the most important philosophical problem, and it introduces us to every other philosophical question. Indeed, if we do not scrutinize the capabilities and the value of noesis (understanding and intelligence), which is the power or the organ through which knowledge is obtained, understood, and evaluated, it is rather impossible to articulate any meaningful argument regarding the validity of knowledge. At this point, it is worth mentioning that the great Hindu god Shiva always carries a “trishul” (that is, a trident) in order to point out the following three dimensions: (i) oneself, (ii) one’s way of being, and (iii) what one knows and what one does not know; and he has taught: “With your entire consciousness in the very start of desire of knowing, know.”

Kant correctly distinguished the object of consciousness from the reference of consciousness to its object, and, in fact, he showed that the reference of consciousness to any object of consciousness can also be regarded as an object of consciousness. In other words, Kant warned us against confusing a thing with the discourse on that thing, but inherent in this distinction is a trap, specifically, the trap of the indefinite distinction between things and the discourse on those things. Ignorant people, acting like they know, are fixated on the distinction between the thing, the discourse on the thing, the discourse on the discourse on the thing, the discourse on the discourse on the discourse on the thing, etc. This is a trap into which the so-called analytic philosophy has fallen, since analytic philosophy, gradually, became an attempt to articulate distinctions and calibrations that have actually lost their substantial value in the context of philosophical inquiry. By constraining philosophy to concern itself merely with the discourse on philosophy (as opposed to the substantial content of philosophy) and to distinguish between statements that have no real counterpart, one substitutes philosophy with a system of language games and emasculates philosophical inquiry. Ultimately, the over-critical attitude of analytic philosophy, following its own route, meets (and coincides with) the over-critical attitude of Friedrich Nietzsche’s and many postmodernists’ epistemological nihilism (see: Ken Gemes and John Richardson, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

The aforementioned arguments about the substantial difference between the object itself and the discourse on it can be applied to the study of the problem of truth. In fact, a widely accepted simplistic perception tends to confuse “truth” with “reality.” The event of reality, which consists of both existence and the consciousness of existence, is an indisputable given, which, however, becomes meaningful when meaning is assigned to it by consciousness, which is the means through which existence tries to be integrated into reality and, thus, to become meaningful, too. Hence, there is a dialectical relation between reality and consciousness. This dialectical relation is dynamic, and it is known as the “correspondence theory of truth.” Thomas Aquinas summarized the correspondence theory of truth as follows: “Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus,” thus defining truth as the adequate correspondence between the thing and the thinking consciousness, whereas medieval scholars who wanted to emphasize the semantic character of the correspondence theory of truth modified the aforementioned Thomistic formula as follows: “sicut significant, ita

est,” and, thus, under the influence of Aristotle, they emphasized the adequate correspondence between the signified and the thing (see: Ernest A. Moody, *Truth and Consequence in Medieval Logic*, Amsterdam: North Holland, 1953).

An appealing yet simplistic way of bringing out what is at issue in claims to objectivity is to postulate an “absolute conception of the world” (Thomas Nagel, *The Limits of Objectivity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 77–141). This is a conception of the world extracted and detached from the various points of view and from the various experiences that people have of the world. However, as Thomas Nagel correctly argues, in taking up any such objective viewpoint “something will inevitably be lost” (ibid, p.90). Following Isaiah Berlin’s thesis that there is no such thing as a world without loss, Nagel maintains that a completely objective viewpoint deprives us of the specific qualities that constitute the subjective point of view, and this, in turn, implies that any objective conception of the world is incomplete; “no objective conception of the mental world can include it all” (ibid, p. 90). Thus, any attempt to form a true conception of reality “must include an acknowledgement of its own incompleteness” (ibid, p. 90). Due to imagination (which is a mental function that allows us to represent possibilities other than the actual, to represent times other than the present, and to represent perspectives other than one’s own), the incompleteness of reality does not hinder us from conceiving “of experiences we have not had,” but it “may not allow us to detach the concept of mind from a human perspective” (ibid, p. 90).

As an outgrowth of life, consciousness is consciousness of existence and an expression of the relativity of existence. The relativity of existence consists in the temporality of existence. The relativity of the temporal is contradicted by the atemporality of the absolute. By the term “absolute,” we refer to anything that transcends the temporal. The transition of consciousness from temporality to atemporality is achieved by substituting the temporal categories of “before” and “after” with the categories of “not yet” and “not any more.” The categories of “not yet” and “not any more” underpin the determination of the limits that consciousness imposes on the temporality of the relative, and, beyond these limits, consciousness seeks the atemporality of the “eschaton,” namely, the ultimate meaning and the ultimate event of the world. Thus, reality, as it is understood by consciousness (which is an organic part of reality), is differentiated into two regions: the “relative region,” which is related to temporality, and the “absolute region,” which is related to atemporality. Between these two regions, the region of the “eschaton” stretches, representing an incomplete knowledge of the absolute by consciousness. In other words, the “eschaton” is the part of reality through which consciousness, being unable to conceive of the essence of the absolute, obtains a substitute for the knowledge of the essence of the absolute. Therefore, philosophy can corroborate the belief in the reality of the absolute, even if it is unable to penetrate the essence of the absolute. Moreover, in this way, philosophy can offer valuable tools to theological and mystical systems, which try to access the absolute on the basis of a belief in a revealed truth and on a kind of enlightened intuition (I shall explain this notion later).

It goes without saying that, in the context of science, consciousness tries to transcend the realm of the relative (which pervades the existential constitution of humanity) by referring to the supposedly absolute way in which the laws of the universe are manifested. However, according to scientific advances that took place in the twentieth century, the laws of the universe are not intrinsic to the natural world, but they are projections of conscious conceptions, that is, they are relations (specifically, generalizations) formulated by consciousness (see: Jerome R. Ravetz, *The No Nonsense Guide to Science*, Oxford: New Internationalist, 2005). Therefore, the complete understanding of the absolute without recourse to religion and/or mysti-

cism cannot be achieved by science.

In view of the foregoing, I shall subscribe to the thesis that reality differs from truth, in the sense that reality is only one of the components of truth. For instance, one cannot but define an object that is in front of him/her as something “real.” However, what can be said to be “true” (or “untrue,” depending on the case) is not the object to which one’s consciousness refers, but only one’s judgment about the given object, and this judgment is a mental act through which one assigns or refuses to assign a property (including the very property of existence) to the object to which one’s consciousness refers.

The concept of reality is not necessarily related to a sensuous objectivity, to which humans are related through their senses. As René Descartes pointedly argued in his *Meditations*, purely imaginary representations are also present within consciousness, and these imaginary entities (for instance, mythical beings, such as Chimera) are mental objects which are not less real than sensuous objects, provided, of course, that we are ready to recognize their peculiar nature and that we do not wish to attribute all of the properties of the sensuous objects to the imaginary ones (René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated by John Cottingham, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, Meditation III). The representation (mental image) of Chimera is a mental reality, just as the laptop that is in front of me is a sensuous reality.

When mental realities and sensuous realities become contents of consciousness, they constitute two of the most important categories of experienced realities. Moreover, several states that are experienced by consciousness, such as psychological states, moral states, and aesthetic states, are realities, too. All of these realities, irrespective of whether they correspond to a segment of the sensuous world or not, are realities that differ from truth. *Truth is not reality, but it is a relation between reality and the consciousness that refers to reality through a judgment. In other words, truth is a judgment, which, in turn, is a relation between an object and its (corresponding) presence within consciousness.*

The concepts of reality and truth are neither identical nor confused with each other, but they are strongly related to each other. According to the arguments, approaches, and definitions that I articulated, explained, and defended up to this point, an affirmative or a negative sentence is true if and to the extent that it agrees with the reality to which it refers, and it is untrue if and to the extent that it disagrees with the reality to which it refers. Thus emerges the philosophical problem of fallacy, which consists in the determination of whether the aforementioned correspondence (between a statement and the reality to which it refers) is complete, or incomplete, or in contradiction with the nature of the object to which it refers.

In essence, truth is the set of those preconditions which constitute the terms under which the knowledge of the real, namely, the presence of the real in consciousness, is in agreement with the nature of the real, that is, it corresponds to the presence of the real. Truth can be found in statements that either affirm or negate the reality to which our judgments refer, and, whereas reality is pure existence, truth is not equal to existence itself; instead, *truth is an epistemological property*, which affects the reference of consciousness to reality, and, thus, it determines the degree of the validity of both the aforementioned reference (namely, one’s judgment) and the consciousness that makes the given reference. Classical logic recognizes only two logical values: that which validates a judgment, and that which invalidates a judgment. However, modern logic has invented several intermediary logical values, thus significantly enriching the stock of categories by means of which noesis can articulate evaluative judgments.

Whereas in classical logic, there are two particular truth degrees or values, usually

denoted by “0” (“falsum”) and “1” (“verum”), non-classical logics are many-valued logics (and even infinitely-valued logics), in the sense that they treat truth degrees as technical tools for the evaluation of judgments in cases where “truth comes in degrees” and “truth is a matter of degree” for various reasons, such as incomplete information, complexity, subjectivism, etc. (see: Petr Cintula, Petr Hájek, and Carles Noguera, eds., *Handbook of Mathematical Fuzzy Logic*, vols. 37–38 of Studies in Logic, London: College Publications, 2011; Petr Hájek, *Metamathematics of Fuzzy Logic*, vol. 4 of Trends in Logic – Studia Logica Library, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers – Springer Science, 1998). Petr Hájek argues as follows:

Logic studies the notion(s) of consequence. It deals with propositions (sentences), sets of propositions and the relation of consequence among them. The task of formal logic is to represent all this by means of well-defined logical calculi admitting exact investigation. Various calculi differ in their definitions of sentences and notion(s) of consequence [...] Often a logical calculus has two notions of consequence: syntactical (based on a notion of proof) and semantical (based on a notion of truth); then the natural questions of soundness (does provability imply truth?) and completeness (does truth imply provability?) pose themselves. *Fuzziness is imprecision (vagueness); a fuzzy proposition may be true to some degree.* Standard examples of fuzzy propositions use a linguistic variable as, for example, age with possible values young, medium, old or similar. The sentence “The patient is young” is true to some degree – the lower the age of the patient (measured e.g. in years), the more the sentence is true. *Truth of a fuzzy proposition is a matter of degree.* [...] In a narrow sense, fuzzy logic, FLn, is a logical system which aims at a formalization of approximate reasoning. In this sense, FLn is an extension of multivalued logic. [...] In its wide sense, fuzzy logic, FLn, is fuzzily synonymous with the fuzzy set theory, FST, which is the theory of classes with unsharp boundaries. (Petr Hájek, *Metamathematics of Fuzzy Logic*, vol. 4 of Trends in Logic – Studia Logica Library, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers – Springer Science, 1998, pp. 1–2.)

Since, in the context of non-classical logics (many-/infinitely-valued and fuzzy logics), “truth comes in degrees” and “truth is a matter of degree,” it logically follows that truth covers and encompasses the realm of fallacy (as an approximate, or partial truth), too, and that that the realm of fallacy is different from both falsehood and absurdity. Truth does not refer only to a being, nor does it constitute a cognitive guarantee, but it is a value toward which consciousness tends continuously, and it is created by consciousness as the latter is connected with reality. Therefore, according to Gaston Bachelard, truth is not a given being, but it is a value and a goal continuously and increasingly approached by consciousness, even though consciousness cannot access the deepest interiority of reality (see: Roch C. Smith, *Gaston Bachelard: Philosopher of Science and Imagination*, New York: State University of New York Press: 2016).

Consequently, we gradually realize that *truth can be understood as the concretization of the intentionality of consciousness when the latter has to determine its relation to a reality that is continuously structured and restructured by consciousness.* In contradistinction to pure subjectivism, the intentionality of consciousness leads consciousness to the conception of structures that are in agreement with the structure of consciousness and simultaneously to the reintegration of itself into the world on the basis of these structures. Far from subscribing to any idealist negation of reality (especially of the “external world”), my aforementioned analysis of consciousness and of its relation to reality highlights the attempt of consciousness to impose an interpretation of reality that is acceptable to consciousness and in agreement with the legitimate goals of consciousness. In other words, instead of

subscribing to any idealist negation of reality, I maintain that the correspondence between reality and consciousness is dynamic, rather than static, and, therefore, in contrast to the passive role that Aristotle's and Thomas Aquinas's correspondence theories of truth assign to consciousness, I maintain that consciousness exerts intentional influence on reality. In particular, the intentionality of consciousness is directed toward those regions of reality that are relevant to the requests of the intentionality of consciousness and, most importantly, can be reconstructed by the intentionality of consciousness, and, therefore, they satisfy consciousness more strongly and more completely.

Truth is created by the contact between consciousness and reality, and it is the outcome of this contact, underpinning the autonomy of consciousness and the creativity that characterizes the flexible availability of reality. The reconstruction of reality by consciousness, in accordance with the model of the latter's intentionality, is not a consequence of an arbitrary idealistic activity, but it is a consequence of the quest for significant regions of reality that can become the centers of interest and activity or the pivots of a rational and critical model of creativity that complies with the model of the intentionality of consciousness. The truth that emerges from the aforementioned process is partial and relative, but it does not preclude the pursuit of absolute truth. As a matter of fact, this philosophical understanding of truth is in agreement with the way in which truth is understood in the context of occultism and, especially, in the context of high magic, whose scope was described by Arthur Edward Waite as follows: "It proposes the deification of intelligence and the illuminated mind; it offers to the adept the secret of royalty and priesthood; it explains his right of life and death over the profane; it indicates the method in the creation of adept-men who shall reform the conception of Deity" (Arthur Edward Waite, *The Mysteries of Magic*, second edition, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1897, p. 32).

"Falsehood" must be distinguished from "fallacy," and "truth" must be distinguished from "correctness." "Falsehood" is opposed to "correctness," but the opposition between "truth" and "fallacy" is not necessary. In particular, if we remove correctness from truth, then a fallacy may be regarded as an approximation of truth. Correctness is the unique state at which the most generally conceived truth arrives, and this truth encompasses fallacy, which is a deviation from correctness, but it is a deviation that is subject to correction. Falsehood is a mental construct that tends to replace correctness, and it appears to be plausible, that is, it is a carefully crafted inversion of correctness. In Figure 2, I depict the aforementioned concepts as follows: Let us consider a point P on a plane, and let us draw a line perpendicular at the point P; this perpendicular line represents correctness. From the point P, we can draw infinitely many oblique lines, each of which represents a particular fallacy. The system that contains all of the aforementioned oblique lines and the aforementioned perpendicular line is the realm of truth. If we extend the perpendicular line at P in the opposite direction, then this extension represents falsehood. If we extend the oblique lines that pass through the point P in the opposite direction, then this system of extensions represents the realm of irrationality (an "irrationality" is a series of inconsistent syllogisms).

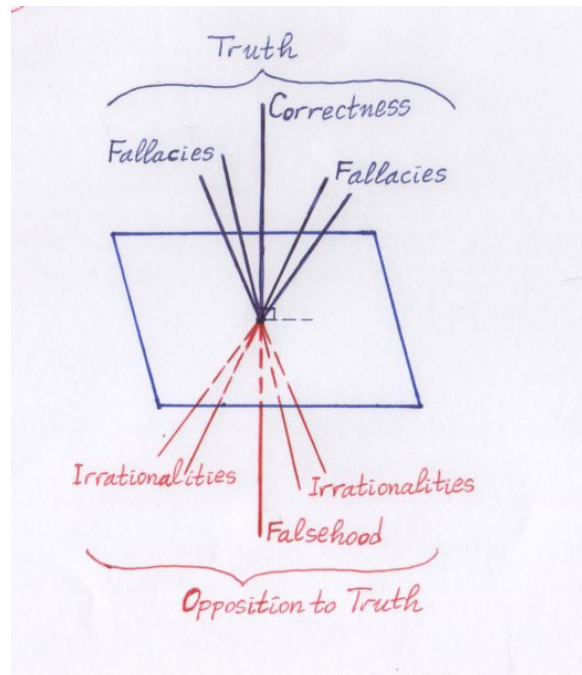


Figure 2: The Realm of Truth

There are several reasons why consciousness may deviate from truth, such as the following (see: Nigel Warburton, *A Little History of Philosophy*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011): According to Descartes, the deviation of consciousness from truth is due to the intervention of volition in pure noesis. According to Baruch Spinoza, the deviation of consciousness from truth is due to imagination. From the perspective of the *Port-Royal Logic*, a highly influential logic text written by Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole (philosophers and theologians associated with the Port-Royal Abbey, a center of the heretical Catholic Jansenist movement in seventeenth-century France), the deviation of consciousness from truth is due to the impacts of passions and emotions on the human intellect. According to Plato, the deviation of consciousness from truth is due to ignorance. According to Aristotle, the deviation of consciousness from truth is due to accidental and deliberate distortions of logic.

Truth is not something finally given, but it is something that becomes apparent and stands out, and something that can be adjusted and reformed, and that can be structured and restructured, according to the direction that is followed by the intentionality of consciousness. Therefore, a fallacy paves the way to a truth. This is the way in which one can understand truth as a mental and an existential goal that is gradually approached. This goal consists in the achievement of a superior state of being.

Given that existence means duration, the consciousness of existence aims at maintaining the corresponding existence under the best possible terms in order, ultimately, to transcend existence without destroying existence. In other words, as I mentioned earlier, the consciousness of existence aims at achieving a superior state of existence. The levels at which the consciousness of existence pursues this goal are those of instinct, experience, and noesis.

Instinct is a condensed logic whose validity has been confirmed by the practices of an indefinite number of generations, and which reflects the logic of organic nature. According to the renowned Dutch biologist Tinbergen, instincts are complex behaviors that have fixed patterns throughout the species, and they are unlearned (Nikolaas Tinbergen, *The Study of Instinct*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1951). At the level of instinct, conscious activity is minimal, since the two basic instincts, namely,

those of self-preservation and reproduction, impose themselves on existence, and, in fact, they are identified with existence.

At the level of experience, the intentionality of consciousness is manifested due to the functioning of the senses, which are oriented toward the world, with which they connect existence. Experience is an event of which one is cognizant, and it is imprinted in the framework of the receptive capacity of existence. In other words, experience is about the person finding oneself in some situation, and being aware of it. The early use of the word experience was “knowledge gained by repeated trials,” and it derives from the Latin term “experiri,” which means to try, or to test; the word is composed from the Latin terms “ex” (meaning “out of”) and “peritus” (meaning “tested”/“from trial”). The level of conscious activity that characterizes experience is significantly higher than the level of conscious activity that characterizes instinct. However, at the level of experience, consciousness is rather passive, because, according to empiricist philosophers (such as John Locke, David Hume, etc.), consciousness is originally a “tabula rasa,” meaning a blank slate, on which experience writes, thus filling the mind with ideas, and it is only at a second stage that consciousness recalls those ideas that seem useful to it in order to act on several occasions. However, both Immanuel Kant and Gestalt Psychology have pointed out that consciousness plays a much more active role in perception than the one thought by empiricists.

Gestalt Psychology was founded by Max Wertheimer (1880–1943), an Austro-Hungarian psychologist (see: Solomon E. Asch, “Max Wertheimer’s Contribution to Modern Psychology,” *Social Research*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (March 1946), pp. 81–102). Wertheimer noted that we perceive motion where there is nothing more than a rapid sequence of individual sensory events. This argument is based on observations that he made with his stroboscope at the Frankfurt train station and on additional observations that he made in his laboratory when he experimented with lights flashing in rapid succession (like the Christmas lights that appear to course around the tree, or the fancy neon signs in Las Vegas that seem to move). Wertheimer called this effect “apparent motion,” and it is actually the basic principle of motion pictures. According to Wertheimer, apparent motion proves that people don’t respond to isolated segments of sensation but to the whole (*Gestalt*) of the situation.

Gestalt psychologists have shown, through various experiments, that consciousness does not respond to isolated segments of sensation but to the whole (*Gestalt*) of the situation, and they have argued that, in perception, there are many organizing principles called Gestalt laws (see: Wolfgang Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology: An Introduction to New Concepts in Modern Psychology*, renewed by Lily Köhler, New York: Liveright, and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1992). Examples of such laws are the following: the law of closure: if something is missing in an otherwise complete figure, we shall tend to add it (e.g., a triangle with a small part of its edge missing, will still be seen as a triangle, and also we shall “close” the gap); the law of similarity: we shall tend to group similar items together, to see them as forming a whole (*Gestalt*), within a larger form; the law of proximity: things that are close together are seen as belonging together. Thus, the conscious mind perceives and thinks in nonlinear ways and it actively influences perception.

Furthermore, Gestalt Psychology has shown that, in perception, the method of trial and error coexists with psychological intuition. In general, by the term “intuition,” we mean the conception of truth by consciousness when the latter starts from a minimal empirical or logical datum and rises into a whole world, realizing that it is connected with this world or perceiving itself as an integral part of this world. The term “psychological intuition,” in particular, has been thoroughly studied by Henri

Bergson. According to Bergson's conception of psychological intuition, the subject and the object of intuitive conception meet each other and mingle with each other in the context of the reality of duration (see: Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, tr. F. L. Pogson, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1910; Mark Sinclair, *Bergson*, London: Routledge, 2019).

At the level of noesis, reason plays an active role. According to Kant and those philosophers who follow his definition, reason is *an a priori* ("transcendental") structure, in the framework of which there are functions of categories, and, when these categories, are adequately activated, they connect isolated empirical data with each other, so that they underpin the articulation of synthetic judgments, and, thus, they allow consciousness to transcend the level of mere experience. Regarding the distinction between "synthetic" and "analytic" judgments, Kant argues as follows:

In all judgments in which the relation of a subject to the predicate is thought (if I only consider affirmative judgments, since the application to negative ones is easy) this relation is possible in two different ways. Either the predicate *B* belongs to the subject *A* as something that is (covertly) contained in this concept *A*; or *B* lies entirely outside the concept *A*, though to be sure it stands in connection with it. In the first case, I call the judgment analytic, in the second synthetic. (Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, edition of 1781, translated by P. Guyer and A.W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, A6–7.)

For instance, the statement "General Pathologists are doctors" is analytic, because its truth depends upon the meanings of its constituent terms (and how they are combined) alone, whereas the statement "General Pathologists have excellent job prospects" is synthetic, because its truth depends also upon the facts about the world that the sentence represents (e.g., that the job can afford a general pathologist a better work-life balance along with respectable remuneration).

The level of noesis is characterized not only by the active functioning of reason, but also by the possibility of enlightened intuition. "Enlightened intuition" (as opposed to other varieties of intuition, such as "psychological intuition") is a peculiar variety of intuition in the sense that its manifestation has a peculiar metaphysical form. A characteristic type of consciousness that represents enlightened intuition is designated by the Neoplatonic conception of "ecstasy," which underpins mysticism, and it refers to a state in which consciousness, having achieved its liberation from the yoke of the laws of the body, pursues its pure absorption by and into the absolute. In particular, Plotinus has described enlightened intuition as a suprarational (not irrational) apprehension of divine truth, and he has argued that there are not many people who attain to this apprehension, which enlightened individuals come to possess in immediate contact with the deity, and that even those who attain to this apprehension do so only in very special and rather rare moments (see: Wilhelm Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, translated by James H. Tufts, London: Macmillan, 1914).

Intimately related to enlightened intuition is the opportunization of time. "Opportunization" means not only a "proper moment" to do something but the exclusive "temporal point" at which the "common" time undergoes a fundamental qualitative change. This is the moment of the transfiguration of time. In order to elucidate the concept of opportunization, we can describe it from at least five different perspectives, namely: (i) Neoplatonic (specifically, in terms of Plotinus's philosophy), (ii) phenomenological-existentialist (specifically, in terms of Martin Heidegger's philosophy), (iii) religious (specifically, in terms of medieval Christian mysticism), (iv) mystical (specifically, in terms of the Kabbalah, and in terms of the Islamic Gnosis studied by Henry Corbin), and (v) psychological (specifically, in terms of

Zen Buddhism).

In Neoplatonic terms, opportunization refers to the particular moment when the “horizontal” flow of time is intersected by the vertical line understood as a kind of eternity or “eidetic chain.” The Neoplatonic thought follows Plato in perceiving time as the reflection or image of eternity. However, according to Plotinus, eternity is not the whole time but the everlasting moment of being always equal to itself. From this perspective, the direct experience of eternity is possible as the act of transcending time, that is, of ecstatically moving out of time. This process does not mean that one “exits” from time, but it means the transfiguration of time, specifically, the transformation of the “horizontal” time into the “vertical” one. Hence, from this perspective, opportunization is the moment of rapture and instant elevation to the utmost levels of being. According to Plotinus, in the context of divine illumination, the soul becomes one with the deity, namely, it partakes of the divine mode of being, but this existential achievement involves no change from self to someone or something else, in the sense that the soul becomes elated and manifests its entelechy (which is the deity), without loss of identity.

In terms of Heidegger’s philosophy, opportunization can be understood as an event, specifically, as something “coming into view,” or as “enowning” (in German, “Ereignis”), and, more precisely, it refers to the transition of “Dasein” (“being-in-the world”) from an unauthentic mode of being to the authentic mode of being. This is the moment of the awakening of Dasein to its own finitude, of the direct meeting with its own limits (death, nothingness). In facing our own finitude, we find that we are always future-directed happenings or projects, and we realize that what is crucial to that ongoing forward movement is not the actualization of possibilities, but the “how” with which one undertakes one’s life. In this context, opportunization can be compared with the future ecstasy of time as it is described in the second part of Heidegger’s book *Being and Time* (translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962). This is the time of authentic being in contrast to the time of unauthentic being; in the time of unauthentic being, one always hesitates whether to be or not to be (yet). Thus, from Heidegger’s perspective, opportunization is the moment of decision (in German, “Entscheidung”) that implies whether it is possible or not for “gods” to return.

From the perspective of medieval Christian mysticism (some of whose paradigmatic representatives are the Byzantine hesychasts, Meister Eckhart, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, Ramon Llull, and Jakob Böhme), opportunization can be interpreted as the meeting point of “ens creatum” (created being) and “ens increatum” (uncreated being) when one becomes a partaker of God’s grace, specifically, of God’s mode of being.

In the context of the spirituality of the Kabbalah (which is a synthesis between Pythagoreanism, Neoplatonism, and Biblical mysticism), the opportunization of time corresponds to Tiphareth. In Hebrew, “Kabbalah” means a primordial tradition, or an oral tradition. The primary Kabbalistic treatises are the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the *Zohar* (or *Book of Light*), and the *Sefer Yetsira* (or *Book of the Creation*). The treatise *Wisdom of Solomon* is said to have been written in Hellenistic Alexandria, and it is attributed to Philo of Alexandria (ca. 25 B.C.–ca. 50 A.D.), a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, whose purpose was to harmonize Greek philosophy with Jewish spirituality. The *Zohar* was written by Simeon ben Yochai and first printed in Mantua in 1558. The author of the *Sefer Yetsira* is unknown, but it was originally published in Provence, in the thirteenth century A.D., by Rabbi Isaac ben Abraham.

The most important Kabbalistic symbol is the Tree of Life (Figure 1), through which one can understand the universe in connection with the Bible, and, in particular, one can understand that the one God produces all and sustains all, by tracing

the gradual and orderly process of creation and its inner harmony. The Kabbalistic Tree of Life consists of ten Sefirot (singular, Sefira), that is, emanations, or levels of reality, through which the “Ein Sof” (the Infinite and Unknowable One) reveals Himself and continuously creates and sustains both the physical realm and the chain of higher intelligible realms. “Sefira” is singular, and “Sefirot” is plural. In Hebrew, “-ot” at the end of a word is the female plural. “Ein Sof” literally means no boundary, and, generally, it means total fulfillment.

The ten Sefirot of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life (listed in order from the Beginning to the End) can be understood better through the following correspondences:

- 1) Kether: Crown; major esoteric emblems: the crown, the point, and the swastika.
- 2) Chokhmah: Wisdom; major esoteric emblems: the uplifted rod of power, the straight line, and the tower.
- 3) Binah: Understanding; major esoteric emblem: the chalice.
- 4) Chesed: Mercy; major esoteric emblems: the pyramid, the tetrahedron, and the scepter.
- 5) Geburah: Power; major esoteric emblems: the pentagon, the sword, the spear, and the chain.
- 6) Tiphareth: Beauty; major esoteric emblems: the cube and the rosy cross.
- 7) Netzach: Victory; major esoteric emblems: the lamp, the rose, and the seven veils.
- 8) Hod: Splendor; major esoteric emblem: the apron.
- 9) Yesod: Foundation; major esoteric emblems: the perfumes and the sandals.
- 10) Malkuth: Kingdom; major esoteric emblems: the Equal-Armed Cross, the double cubed altar, the circle, and the triangle.

The supernal triad of the Tree of Life, consisting of Kether, Chokhmah, and Binah, is known as the Spiritual, Super-Celestial World, and it corresponds to the supernal alchemical triad, which consists of Mercury, Sulfur, and Salt. In terms of ontology, Kether is pure Being, Chokhmah is Energy, and Binah is Form. Tiphareth is the Law of Harmony and the channel of God’s Love in the world, the Christ consciousness. Tiphareth corresponds to the transcendent Sonship through which one can know the Father. Tiphareth, Chesed, and Geburah constitute the second triad of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, while Yesod, Netzach, and Hod constitute the third one; these two triads combined constitute the Hexad, or Hexalpha, known also as the Seal of Solomon. Moreover, the second triad (namely, Tiphareth, Chesed, and Geburah) is often mentioned as the subjective principle, and, from this perspective, it refers to the realm of culture, while the third triad (namely, Yesod, Netzach, and Hod) is often mentioned as the objective principle, and, from this perspective, it refers to the realm of historical objectivation.

We can also recall the concept of “discrete time” proposed by the French philosopher, theologian, and Iranologist Henry Corbin in his analysis of the structure of time in the Shia and Sufi Islamic traditions (Henry Corbin, *La Topographie Spirituelle de l’Islam Iranien*, Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1990). According to Corbin, a mystic following the path of Islamic Gnosis should make time somewhat personal; one can personalize time by discovering its unique features (name, figure, character, etc.). By doing so, a mystic achieves the transformation of time into space. That was the original meaning of the ancient concept of “Aeon”; namely, a personalized “time entity.” Acquainting oneself with this “time entity,” a mystic avoids the doom of the “horizontal” time and finds the way into the imaginary one, “alam-al-mithal,” the inner realm of the “malakut” (“beyond birth and death”); this

is the very place where the “hidden Imam” lives.

Additionally, we could point out the Zen Buddhist practice whose aim is the achievement of “satori,” the momentary and spontaneous enlightenment of the mind reached through a special mental technique called “koan” (see: Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, with a foreword by Carl Jung, New York: Grove, 1964). The latter is a pithy question or dilemma that is posed by a master to the aspiring student in order to produce a “short-circuit” in the aspirant’s rational mind and, in this way, to lead the aspirant to new insights and to qualitatively different ways of understanding or experiencing the world. The koan stimulates the specific mental state in which the notion of emptiness (“shunyata”) is perceived, and inner transformation of the self is achieved: in this case, “emptiness” signifies the transition from ephemeral and temporary forms (the “ordinary”) to pure energy (the “extraordinary”). Therefore, the koan might be considered a Zen Buddhist analogue to the concept of opportunization.

From the perspective of enlightened intuition, the spiritual quality of the soul underpins inner illumination, and the soul can be deified, not by intellectual perception, but by contemplation, specifically, through an inner association and conversation with the absolute (namely, the deity). Moreover, given that this mystical experience of illumination is suprarational but not irrational, its content can be conveyed to other persons, especially through symbols, allegories, myths, art, and esoteric religion.

Every invention and every construction aim at an advantageous use of the corresponding invented/constructed object by consciousness for the purpose of changing the relations that determine the reference of consciousness to the Nature and the imposition of consciousness on the Nature. The pursuit of the most efficient ways in which consciousness can be imposed on the Nature leads to the continuous pursuit of those instruments that can facilitate the utilization of the Nature by consciousness according to the latter’s intentionality. It goes without saying that technology facilitates the utilization of the Nature by consciousness according to the latter’s intentionality. Just as the development of language has positively contributed to the development of the capabilities of consciousness with regard to the latter’s intellectual functions, so too technology reinforces the intellectual functions of consciousness and the overall biological substance of consciousness, namely, the body. However, the technological means that human creativity puts at the service of human consciousness may degrade the functions of the latter, if human consciousness has not achieved inner harmony.

Finally, the conception and the construction of an artifact consist not only in the enmatterment of an idea, but also in the inner erection of a form, since an artifact proclaims the structuring of a form (e.g., a sculpture, a story, a piece of music, a painting, etc.). An artifact reflects, highlights, and maintains the communication between the intentionality of the artist’s consciousness and the receptive intentionality of the consciousness of those persons who gaze at and contemplate the corresponding artifact. An artist, like a magician, acts as a sovereign conscious being that subjugates material reality to a programme of actions from which an artifact emerges (see: David Boersema, *Philosophy of Art: Aesthetic Theory and Practice*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2013; Clive Bell, *Art*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011). Therefore, the inner erection of a form in the context of art consists not only in the conception and the construction of a form, but also in the creation, the realization, and the imposition of a value. Just as the development of language and technology empower humanity and allow it to improve its existential conditions, so too art intensifies and enriches the presence of the human being in the world, and it is a necessary component of TMT.

As a conclusion, the arguments, approaches, and definitions that I articulated, explained, and defended in this section imply that, at the epistemological level, TMT should be construed as a systematic attempt to fulfill the psychosomatic, spiritual-cultural, and technological requirements that ensure a continuous expansion of consciousness, an increasing confirmation of consciousness, and, particularly, the identification of those opportune regions of reality which are reducible to existential centers or existential pivots through which reality can be restructured and, indeed, recreated by consciousness, in accordance with my thesis that TMT should be construed as a superior, “enhanced” form of humanism, and not as an ontological alienation or degradation of the human being.

Moral Consciousness: The Moral Underpinnings of TMT

“The unexamined life is not worth living” (“ὁ [...] ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ”): this is a famous dictum uttered by Socrates at his trial for impiety and corrupting the youth (Plato, *The Apology of Socrates*, 38a5–6). This statement highlights the importance of investigating the quality of human decisions and of articulating evaluative judgments and norms. In other words, this statement highlights the importance of ethics.

Ethics, or moral philosophy, is the branch of philosophy that concerns itself with the study of evaluative judgments and norms (see: G. Wallace and A. D. M. Walker, eds., *The Definition of Morality*, London: Methuen, 1970). In other words, ethics cares about the quality of human decisions. It is for this reason that ethics investigates values.

Action is an energy that changes a situation, and it substitutes a continuity of events with a discontinuity. The gap that is created by the aforementioned discontinuity is bridged by the causal underpinning of action, namely, by a value. A value is an action’s point of interest and pole of attraction (see: André Mineau, “Raymond Polin on Values,” *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 28 (1994), pp. 455–61). Whereas a “price” is a fact, a “value” is a judgment, as the distinguished French philosopher Louis Lavelle has pointed out; and it is a value that justifies a specific price (Louis Lavelle, *Traité des Valeurs*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951). Thus, values transcend action, but simultaneously they are intrinsic to action, in the sense that values constitute the structure of action and evaluate action, which, in turn, confirms the presence of values. This is the reason why ethics is inextricably linked to the entire spectrum of personal life, societal relations, business, government, international relations, and philanthropic entities (see, for instance, relevant research projects developed at the Carnegie Center for Ethics in International Affairs, the Institute for Ethical Leadership at Rutgers Business School, the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University, the Center for Professional and Personal Ethics at Central Michigan University, the McCoy Center for Ethics in Society at Stanford University, etc.). Moreover, from the aforementioned perspective, we can understand why the *Emulation Ritual*, which is one of the most widespread Masonic ritual systems (originally approved and confirmed by the United Grand Lodge of England in 1816), states that “Freemasonry is a peculiar system of *moral-ity*, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols” (The Lecture of the First Degree of Freemasonry; emphasis mine).

With regard to its nature, moral consciousness is not a being that can be separated from the consciousness of existence. Moral consciousness and consciousness of existence have the same identical essence. Moral consciousness is a name that is given to the consciousness of existence when the latter expresses approval or disapproval of the structure and the style of an action whose goal is to change a being’s relation to the world or to other beings according to the creativity of humanity. Moral con-

sciousness, as a special functional form of the consciousness of existence, should be distinguished from psychological consciousness. Psychological consciousness is the consciousness that perceives itself as a living being, and, therefore, it operates as a “witness”; but moral consciousness makes evaluative judgments, it criticizes, and, therefore, it operates as a “judge.”

As regards its structure and operation, moral consciousness is a unified being, but it is not homogeneous. Specifically, the operation of moral consciousness has the following three aspects or dimensions:

- (i) The sentimental aspect or dimension: by the term, “sentiment,” we mean an emotion combined with a judgment, and the sentimental elements that determine moral consciousness are revealed and expressed through action, that is, when they are experienced by consciousness, because our deeds reveal the extent to which we comply with the values that, according to our perceptions, should be respected by every conscious being. Sentimental elements of this type are respect, pride, indignation, and guilt.
- (ii) The intellectual aspect or dimension: it is based on the faculty of thinking, which is characterized by the creation and use of symbols, which represent various objects and events as well as the relations between them; the intellectual elements that determine moral consciousness consist of determinate concepts that can be clearly distinguished from values and can be conceived of as the logical causes of action.
- (iii) The volitional aspect or dimension: by the term “volition,” we mean the faculty or power of making decisions and executing them kinetically; the volitional elements that determine moral consciousness refer to the firm decision of a conscious being to accomplish an action that may be associated with the execution of one’s duty, or with the defense of one’s rights, or with a procedure for restoring a disturbed order.

The aforementioned three aspects/dimensions of moral consciousness are inseparable from each other, but the sentimental aspect/dimension plays the predominant role in the formation of moral consciousness, because the influence that the sentimental aspect/dimension exerts on moral consciousness is stronger than the influences that the intellectual and the volitional aspects/dimensions exert on moral consciousness. For instance, a concept, namely, an intellectual element of moral consciousness, may be blurred, and, therefore, it may not be able to guide moral consciousness to a clear decision, but, due to a clear sentimental orientation, moral consciousness may be able to clearly and correctly assess the situation in which it has to act. Furthermore, the volitional aspect/dimension of moral consciousness may be manifested in a weak manner, and, it may not be able to guide moral consciousness to a clear decision, but, due to a clear sentimental orientation, moral consciousness may be able to remain strong and lively and to express itself in an intense manner. Consequently, *the sentiments are the major source of power for the development and the expression of moral consciousness.*

Every moral act is determined and evaluated by moral consciousness according to a moral criterion. Depending on the moral criterion that underpins the creation of a moral theory, there are different moral theories, namely: hedonism (whose most important paradigmatic representatives are Eudoxus of Cnidus and Aristippus of Cyrene), eudemonism (whose most important paradigmatic representative is Epicurus), utilitarianism (whose most important paradigmatic representatives are Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill), sentimentalism (founded on sympathy according to Adam Smith, or on compassion according to Arthur Schopenhauer, or on altruism according to Auguste Comte), and moral rationalism (whose most import-

ant paradigmatic representative is Immanuel Kant). None of the aforementioned moral criteria can account for the entire spectrum of moral life, since pleasure simply expresses the charm of life (specifically, humans' fascination with life), sentiments simply express inner vibrations, and reason simply expresses the control that consciousness exerts on itself. However, beyond every particular moral principle, there is the art of combining all of the aforementioned aspects/dimensions of human life into a multivariable function of moral life, through which the intentionality of consciousness is manifested, thus expressing the tendency of existence toward a superior state of being.

Given that transhumanism, in general, and TMT, in particular, are inspired by the vision of an "enhanced," superior form of humanity, it follows that the aforementioned multivariable function of moral life is not only a purpose but also a presupposition of TMT, and it should be optimized through technological, bio-chemical, psychological, philosophical and other spiritual means, according to the existential strategy, namely, the guiding spirituality, of the corresponding human/social entity's consciousness. In other words, the optimization of the aforementioned multivariable function of moral life is not only a presupposition but also a purpose of TMT, and the criterion for the evaluation of any technology that is used in the context of TMT. In the following section, I shall analyse the significant yet elusive relation between TMT (as I have defined it in this essay) and the creation of a cosmopolitan world order.

Intimately related to the development of moral consciousness is a state of inner vigilance. Through its moral development, human consciousness becomes increasingly vigilant, and, therefore, it becomes increasingly able to discern the difference between *being* intelligent and merely *demonstrating* intelligent behavior, between *having* certain merits and merely *demonstrating* meritorious behavior, as well as between *having* certain conscious qualities and merely *simulating* them. It is worth mentioning that Gregory of Nyssa (a Byzantine theologian who served as the bishop of Nyssa in the fourth century A.D. and is venerated as a saint in Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Lutheranism) has cited the following example, paraphrasing in fact a similar story originally narrated by the ancient satirist and rhetorician Lucian:

An animal trainer in Alexandria taught a monkey to skillfully impersonate a female dancer on stage. The spectators at the theatre praised the monkey, which was dressed as a female dancer and danced to the beat of the music. But while the viewers were occupied observing such a novel spectacle, some comedian decided to show everyone that a monkey is nothing more than a monkey. While they all shouted and applauded at the skill of the monkey, the comedian threw some sweets onto the stage that monkeys particularly like. As soon as the monkey saw the sweets, it forgot the dance, the applause, and the elaborate costume, and dashed around, groping with its paws for the sweets; and since its dress interfered, it began to tear it apart with its nails, attempting to remove it. And in place of praise and amazement, laughter broke out among the spectators. (*Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 46, 240C.)

TMT as a Cosmopolitan Model of Civilization

In general, by the term "civilization," we should understand a way of life. In a narrow sense, civilization is a structure that consists of institutions and technologies, and, in a broad sense, civilization includes culture. The term "culture" consists of the results of the human being's deep contemplation of one's life, and it is historically objectivated through artistic creation, philosophy, religion, and science.

Culture is embodied in civilization and underpins civilization, and simultaneously civilization underpins the integration of culture into history. Thus, culture, corresponding to spiritual “creation,” and civilization, corresponding to technological “construction,” are inextricably and dialectically related to each other, regarding their substances and their manifestations (see: Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, translated by John and Doreen Weightman, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

Culture is a contemplative attitude toward institutions and an attempt to transcend institutions through myth. Myth’s complex structure reflects the structure of institutions, and it is the core of culture. Myth translates experienced reality into a symbolic language, and, in this way, it is conducive to the participation of a society as a whole in the same experience of reality, since myth integrates every area of humanity’s conscious and unconscious life into a common experience of reality (Carl G. Jung, “The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious,” in *The Portable Jung*, edited by Joseph Campbell, New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 1976).

There is a strong relation between “myth” and “logos” (as I have already mentioned, by the term “logos,” I refer to the efficient and final cause of a being or thing). In the context of myth, knowledge is not the result of a static representation, but, due to myth’s plot, it is an itinerary toward logos. Myth does not serve ideas in a passive way, but, due to its plot, it endows ideas with inner life. Thus, myth is not an allegory, which is something intrinsically static (a metaphor); myth is actually a symbol.

A symbol is something different from an image, or visual icon. In the case of an image, the signified is absent. On the contrary, a symbol discloses the signified. For instance, a pair of scales signifies not only counterbalance, but also administration of justice. Instead of simply referring to something external, a symbol discloses, within itself, qualities of the symbolized object. In other words, a symbol is not an outward, formalistic reproduction of the symbolized object, but it participates in the spiritual reality (significance) of the symbolized object, without, however, encompassing the entire reality of the symbolized object. Thus, the knowledge that derives from symbols is always combined with a person’s faith and intuition (see: Hans Biedermann, *Dictionary of Symbolism: Cultural Icons and the Meanings behind Them*, translated by James Hulbert, New York: Meridian/Penguin Group, 1994).

Ancient Greeks called the universe “cosmos”: the Greek noun “cosmos” is semantically related to the Greek noun “cosmema,” which means “jewel,” “ornament,” and “embellishment.” By contemplating the overall formation of the beings and things that exist in the world, ancient Greeks recognized the harmony and, hence, the beauty of the world. According to ancient Greek aesthetics, the overall formation of the beings and things that exist in the world has “kállos” (“κάλλος”), which means beauty (Plato, *Timaeus* 29a–d, 47b–c, *Republic*, 443d, 500c, *Phaedrus*, 246–251, 247c–d, *Laws*, 734a–741a; Aristotle, *Physics*, 265a25 ff., *Politics*, 1289b25, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1181b21 ff.). The Greek noun “kállos” (beauty) is semantically related to the Greek verb “kalô” (“καλῶ”), meaning “attract” and “invite,” and, thus, referring to universal magnetism.

The logos of the beings and things that exist in the world consists in the way in which they participate in the corresponding species/form, in their entelechy, and in the way in which they relate to each other in the context of the cosmic harmony and order. The logos of the cosmic entities that belong to the same species is common to all of them, and it is unchangeable and eternal, regardless of the characteristics of any particular entities. Moreover, the logos of the cosmic entities that have the same entelechy (ultimate existential meaning, or ontological potential) is common to all of them, regardless of the characteristics of any particular entities. Therefore,

the concept of logos includes both the concept of the efficient cause (which refers to one's participation in the corresponding species) and the concept of the final cause (which refers to one's entelechy). Furthermore, logos refers to the relationship of participation in the formation of the entire cosmos.

A being or thing exists truly if and to the extent that it is united with its logos, it manifests its logos, and it confirms its logos. According to classical Greek political philosophy, the essence of politics consists in the provision and the maintenance of those existential conditions which allow, encourage, and help humans to exist truly in the aforementioned sense. In particular, the ancient Greek "polis" (city-state) has a unique characteristic on the basis of which and due to which the institution of "polis" has been differentiated from other forms of organized collective behavior, and has given rise to the notions of "political art," "political virtue," and "political science." This unique characteristic of the ancient Greek conception of "polis" consists in a collective attempt to institute a community whose "telos," or existential purpose, is not exhausted in the management of needs, but it is an attempt to live in harmony with the principle of truth, which signifies the disclosure of logos (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X and II–VI).

By defining the essence of politics in the aforementioned way (namely, as the provision and the maintenance of those existential conditions which allow, encourage, and help humans to exist truly, namely, to be united with their logos, to manifest their logos, and to confirm their logos), and by understanding the logos of humanity in terms of TMT, we come up with a general criterion for the evaluation of civilizations and for the establishment of a cosmopolitan order. What is crucial to a cosmopolitan attitude is the thesis that no existing political structure (including the nation-state) is the source of ultimate value; far from being the source of ultimate value, any existing political structure is meaningful if and to the extent that it serves a source of ultimate value that transcends the corresponding political structure. Secondly, cosmopolitanism is a universalist principle (but not every universalist principle is cosmopolitan), in the sense that cosmopolitanism organizes the particular logoi of beings and things within the context of a universal logos, according to the model of a choir and the principle of "harmony."

The term "harmony" derives from the Greek term "harmonia," which, in turn, derives from the Greek term "harmôs." "Harmôs" means a joint, and "harmonia" means joining together, that is, uniting otherwise desperate and chaotic elements into a rational and beautiful whole. Pythagoras, based on his studies in music and mathematics, saw the cosmos as a state of harmony, specifically, as a "being in tune." According to Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and the ancient Greek Mysteries, harmony underpins the transformation of otherwise desperate and chaotic elements into a cosmos. In ancient Greek mythology, the importance of harmony was highlighted by Orpheus, whom the ancient Greek poet Pindar called the "father of songs." According to ancient Greek mythology, when Orpheus sang and played his lyre, the human and the divine were harmonized with each other. Orpheus was a great mythical Greek initiate who taught the harmony of the universe, and he represents a magnificent synthesis between mysticism, music, song, and mathematics. The ancient Greek tragedian Aeschylus approaches music as a philosophical principle that refers to the cosmos while simultaneously operating within the context of human life, which is imitated by tragic poetry. The aforementioned conception of harmony cultivates the sociality of the human soul while simultaneously maintaining the existential otherness (individuality) of the human person, just as individual notes compose the harmony of the whole in the context of a concord of sounds without losing their individuality.

As a conclusion, genuine cosmopolitanism (being founded on the model of a choir

*and the principle of “harmony”) not only opposes nationalism and the modern French theory of the nation-state, which are founded on communitarianism and legal positivism, but also discards imperialist policy (irrespective of how “soft” or “hard” it may be) and the selfish propaganda of any particular Great Power of the international system. Imperialism is an anti-cosmopolitan variety of universalism, since it is an attempt of a particular political actor to universalize one’s own selfish interests and perceptions (see: Hannah Arendt, *Imperialism: Part Two of the Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: A Harvest Book/Harcourt Brace and Co., 1968).*

According to TMT, as I have defined it in the present essay, humanity is in the process of continuously intensifying its presence in the world and of continuously realizing and manifesting its entelechy by using both spiritual and technical means. Therefore, *humanity increasingly tries to rationally structure/restructure the world according to humanity’s logos, thus universalizing humanity’s logos; and this is in agreement with the religious thesis that God and the human being are images of one another (and that humanity knows the deity by becoming deified).* In fact, history is the most complete expression of the dynamism of humanity’s existence. The continuity of historical becoming is not totally abolished by the discontinuity that is caused by humanity’s critical and creative intervention, but it is restructured through the imposition of humanity’s intentionality on time. Instead of being defeated in its dramatic struggle against historical necessities, humanity manages to vanquish the necessity that characterizes the natural world, because, due to its freedom, humanity can critically and creatively restructure the world and, thus, become the creator and the manager of its own destiny.

In light of the foregoing, human rights are inalienable, and their value is superior to the value of any political structure. From the aforementioned perspective, a genuinely global government could be accurately conceived of as an institution (e.g., an adequately reformed and empowered United Nations) whose purpose will be to safeguard and impose the absolute authority of human rights on a global scale, thus giving rise to a world society that will be the optimal historical framework for the objectivation of TMT.

Conclusion

In the present essay, I have explained the meaning of the term “Transcendental Meta-Algorithmic Transhumanism” (TMT), which I have coined and proposed as a more accurate approach to and conception of the research programme of transhumanism. TMT, as I have explained it in the present essay, is not simply a contemplation of transhumanism, but it is primarily a philosophy, and, for this reason, it is inextricably linked to a continuous evaluation of the way in which humanity expresses its freedom and historical creativity vis-à-vis cosmic necessity. The optimism that characterizes my conception of TMT implies my trust in humanity’s creative presence. In this context, I endorse the physical chemist and Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine’s espousal of the unity between science and culture (see: Carol M. Thurston, “Ilya Prigogine – Towards a Unity of Science and Culture,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 8, 1980, online:

<https://www.csmonitor.com/1980/1008/100835.html>)

Furthermore, in the present essay, I have explained the ontological, the epistemological, and the moral underpinnings of TMT, and I have argued that TMT gives rise to and underpins an alternative model of civilization centered on the reality of the human being. Far from subjugating humanity to another being or to a totally algorithmized world, TMT signifies the transition from the being of humanity to a

superior being of humanity, thus taking traditional humanism to its ultimate conclusion and providing humanity with the spiritual and the technical means necessary for achieving this end.

Notes:

1 Dr. Nicolas Laos's interests and research works cover the entire spectrum of philosophy and the history of philosophy as well as the entire spectrum of esotericism and the occult sciences and arts, including the interplay between philosophy, esotericism, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. He started delving into such interdisciplinary studies in the 1990s at the University of La Verne, California, where he completed his B.Sc. in Mathematics as well as several courses in the social sciences and the humanities, and his interdisciplinary research and studies led him to philosophy and earned him a Doctoral Degree in Christian Philosophy from the Saint Andrew's Theological Academy of Mexico (Academia Teológica de San Andrés de la Iglesia Ortodoxa Ucraniana en México). Moreover, having been raised to the Master Mason degree (in the context of the United Grand Lodge of England, in London, U.K.), and having been elevated to the 33rd degree of the A·A·S·R· (in the context of the Ordine Massonico Tradizionale Italiano, in Rome, Italy) and to the 97th degree of the A·P·R·M·-M· (in the context of the "Lodge of Sons and Daughters of Aaron," maintaining the Initiatory Lineage of John Yarker–Papus (Gérard A. V. Encausse)–Michael P. Bertiaux–Allen H. Greenfield, in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.), he conducts systematic research in and gives lectures on Freemasonry, emphasizing its esoteric aspects and focusing the occult light on the (often silenced or ignored) moral, religious, and political messages of Masonic rituals. He presented this essay in August 2020, at an international workshop organized by the Scholarly and Political Order of the Ur-Illuminati, of which he is the Grand Master, on the occasion of the publication of his book *Masters' Manual: The Quest for Humanity's Illumination, the Enlightened Ones (Illuminati) throughout the Centuries, and the Secret History of Civilization* in Greek, by the Greek publishing company New Dimension Editions:

<https://www.newdimension.gr/dida/>

Dr. Nicolas Laos appreciates interesting questions, rigorous thoughts, and opportunities for epistemologically sensitive discussions (and, inspired by the Gnostic researcher and podcaster Miguel Conner's Word, he subscribes to the motto "Coffee, Cigars, and Gnosis"). He can be personally contacted according to the guidelines that are available on the following website:

www.urilluminati-spoui.com



Above: on the left, Nicolas Laos presenting his voluminous hardbound book *Masters' Manual* at a Masonic meeting that took place at the historic Thessaloniki Club, in Thessalokini, Greece, in July 2020



Above: Nicolas Laos holds *Masters' Manual* with his publisher (on the right) at a gathering that took place at the Ensayar Bar in Thessaloniki in July 2020.

