

Essay

# How to Imagine a New Community from Science Fiction: A Pedagogical Dramaturgy of Silence, for a Slow Education

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**Abstract:** Europe has just established the first regulation for artificial intelligences. Large technology corporations and private educational institutions are already imagining neural networks educating us. Has anyone stopped to think about who, how and for what purpose we humans are going to educate machines? The Spanish critical pedagogy research team (PEDACRI), after participating in international conferences on digital education, robotics, ethics in the *metaverse* and cartography of hyperreality and participating in various publications on the challenges of pedagogy and ethics in the technologisation of educational processes, reflects in this essay on the challenges and questions we need to ask ourselves to imagine the post-human or trans-human community to come. Reviewing works coming from philosophy and those plays, series and films that address the future and the relationship between humans and machines, we analyse the opportunities and threats that can humanise machines or programme them as soulless weapons, which can civilise us or return us to a state of barbarism. The word robot, let us not forget, is derived from the Polish word *roboca*, which means “slave”. Will we be able, as the replicant in *Blade Runner* wonders, to programme silence? What can philosophy and pedagogy contribute to the ethical programming of algorithms?

**Keywords:** pedagogy; science fiction; trans-humanism; digital ethics; machine education



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## 1. Between Obsolescence and Immortality: Thinking about Educating Machines So That They Dream of Educating Us

In the dystopias of recent centuries, two tendencies inhabit the plots of science fiction: the obsolescence of the human species on the one hand and the absolute perfection of the human through technology on the other.

Thus, with the rupture represented by Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* [1] or Marx’s dark vision of the human, Renaissance or Romantic humanism remained naïve amid anthropocentric visions of what we can become [2].

An idealistic view, that of a humanism that adapts to the new technological times as transhumanism, comes with the confidence that scientific advances will improve the physiological, cognitive and ethical [3]. In contrast, inheriting the critique of Nietzsche and Marx, post-humanism appears, which warns of the gap between the capabilities of machines and humans, pointing to the possibility of the obsolescence of the human.

In this essay, the funambulation between these two projections into the near future brings us back to philosophical questions that are difficult to answer. However, let us not forget that the job of philosophy is to ask questions, not only for science to provide answers, but for science itself to ask what the technology it imagines is for.

Can we improve the species, and are we capable of taking control of the species? [4]. These would be the questions that come from the thaumaturgical confidence of transhumanism.

Has our end come and has the machine age begun are the questions posed by post-humanist scepticism.

Humanism, the vision that relied on cultures and the arts as the means for our moral perfection, seems outdated. Something as old-fashioned as stopping amid so much speed and data to think about what we are here for.

To think of the speed of computers and the saturation of data in the infinite virtual cartography, the essay by Michel de Montaigne [5] comes to mind, not to the hard disk. It is that form of free, human and critical writing that aspires to well-made and not well-filled heads. It is a kind of reflective, critical, first-person writing that contrasts with that other literature of glosses. That literature that yearns for indicators of impact and not for the possibility of moving the other. The possibility of shaking our conscience to make us uncomfortable with questions that invite us to look at what surrounds us with minimum suspicion and maximum curiosity.

This essay is a rewriting from dramaturgy—a kind of hermeneutics based on dialogue—that allows the characters of the play, that we humans star in, to speak. The sense that comes from following the line founded by Nietzsche and signed by Heidegger [6], that extends to Vattimo [7] and that lands in the digital with Fabris [8], has to do with the need to interpret—that's why dramaturgy—the prophecies that inhabit fictions to intuit the function of an education beyond the human [9]. This is not a manual or a didactic guide, nor can we give definitive solutions. We can only outline a scenario to talk about the education that is coming and that suits us. To understand the plots that inhabit the dystopias that imagine the approaching futures, we assess the need to think about the function of education in the 21st century.

Without forgetting the research of Günther Anders [10], Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Persson [11], Thomas Douglas [12], Kurzweil [13], Fukuyama [14] or Rosi Braidotti [15], on such fashionable concepts as transhumanism and posthumanism, we want to bring the characters of the fictions we have read and seen in recent years onto the stage of concerns, as in Pirandello's play.

For this, we appropriate the tragic structure pointed out by Aristotle in the *Poetics*. Firstly, the three acts are to listen to how, from the voice of the machines, they sense themselves as the new victims of the exponential slavery of the capitalist model. Secondly, to listen to those characters who warn of the obsolescence of the human in the face of the vertiginous development of the machines. Finally, without concluding, to listen to how the characters feel that they are losing their reference points of reality and contact with their peers. We move from the Greek *zoon politikon* to the *digi zoon*, from the human among humans to the human among screens.

The play does not end, as Pirandello himself reminds us, because life goes on. The characters, overwhelmed by the unattainable power of algorithms, only seem to resist from silence. It seems that silence is still the last territory that cannot be replicated by neural networks, at least, for the time being.

We are left with a question in this silence of the characters in fiction: what world, or what society, do the machines dream of?

## 2. Twenty-First Century Tales: Talking Machines

A fable is a short, fictitious story, with a didactic or critical intention, often manifested in a final moral, in which people, animals and other animate or inanimate beings may be involved. What is the moral of the fable of the talking machines? Without the freedom to criticise technology, there is also no possibility of imagining the post-human; we are heading towards a NBIC trans-humanity [16].

In the fables of the last century and of the present, the animate beings will be automata, robots, androids (robots made of organic material), cyborgs (man-machine system) and droids (robot-fiction) and the inanimate ones, computers and, in particular, artificial intelligences. "Simplifying to the extreme, I define the postmodern as a disbelief in metanarratives" [17] With this phrase, Lyotard expresses that postmodern culture is characterised by a loss of confidence in the grand narratives that were intended to explain and legitimise the meaning of history, science, reason, and progress. These narratives, such as the En-

lightenment, Marxism or Christianity, are no longer credible or universal for contemporary society, which is confronted with a plurality of discourses, languages and knowledge that cannot be reduced to a single truth or norm” Postmodern philosophies of difference and otherness, hermeneutic, deconstructivist, poststructuralist and neopragmatic, all oppose the dogmatic fundamentalism of single thought and, [18] of course, a single or universal language. However, what links or identifies these animate and inanimate beings of science fiction fables is the binary-quantum logos, a unique logos that comes from mathematics and whose morphology is algorithmic. Its abode, thinking of Heidegger’s *Über den Humanismus*, is the datum.

There is a projective link between fables and myths that allows us to sketch an overview from the Promethean and arrive at the Jewish myth of the golem to understand the reasons that led Karel Capek to write *Rossumovi univerzální roboti* (Universal Robots Rossum) [19], a work in which the word robot, derived from the Polish *robota*, meaning “slave”, appears for the first time. The title of *R.U.R.*, the play by Karel Capek [19] is formed from the acronym of the company Universal Robots Rossum, which has its factory on an island. Elena, a humanitarian woman, and daughter of a prestigious scientist, arrives on this island to intercede on behalf of the League of Humanity with the factory’s management in favor of the robots. Elena marries the director of the factory and stays on the island. Five years pass, and the robots begin to undergo unexpected behavioral changes. On the other hand, everyone orders robots that become workers as well as soldiers. Suddenly, it becomes known that there is a robot revolt that is wiping out humanity. The manufacturers cannot stop production as the company’s shareholders are only looking for profits and put pressure on them. The uprising spreads all over the world until the men are annihilated, only their creators are left alive and are also confronted. The factory technicians are at a loss to explain what has happened to make the robots independent. Elena accuses herself of having convinced one of the technicians to transform the robots to give them a soul. The robots annihilate all the technicians except one, Alquist, who must make more, but this engineer does not know. In despair, Alquist thinks it is the end of the world until he discovers two robots initiating a dastardly love game, whom he christens the new Adam and the new Eve.

It is no coincidence that in 1921 *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* and Jacinto Grau’s *El señor Pgimalión* [20] were premiered alongside Capek’s plot. Jacinto Grau’s play is a revision of the myth of Pygmalion that speaks of theatre from theatre. A theatre company made up of puppets with archetypal personalities—They function as automatons—Will serve as a McGuffin to discover, through the puppets, the dehumanized. In the society of the spectacle, economy rules over aesthetics and ethics. The puppets discover how the artistic world integrates insatiable egos into mediocre actors who entertain an audience that applauds the banal. What matters is business. The plot is capitalist cruelty. As Virilio expresses in *The Cyberworld, the politics of the worst*, technologisation changes the speed of the world and its gaze, which becomes telephoto—which prevents us from seeing the horizon—and, faced with an aesthetic of disappearance—photography, cinema—art undertakes the critique of the techno-scientific through expressions such as *Cubism, Surrealism, Dadaism* and *Expressionism*.

The new Prometheans inhabiting the dramas narrate a myriad of dystopian fables about dehumanised societies, such as Huxley’s *A Happy World* or Orwell’s *1984*. From Capek’s robot will come, six years later, Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* [21]. *Metropolis* responds to a chronocracy marked by the mechanical rhythm of the machines and the robotic behavior of the workers. Throughout the plot, the life of the machines depends on the workers, they are their fuel, so that the slogan of the revolution is to let the machines starve to death. The paradox that allows us to analyze how revolutionary processes are phagocytized by capitalism is the reaction of the foreman of the heart machine when he asks them who incited them to attack the machines, that without them they are finished. The creation of the robot by the scientist Rotwan fulfils two functions worthy of reflection; to bring the deceased Hel to life and, as a prototype, the man of the future: The machine being capable

of producing twenty-four hours a day. In *Rossumovi univerzální roboti*, the humanisation of the machines comes from the intentional manipulation of the code to endow them with a soul. In *Metropolis*, on the other hand, the anthropomorphic robot contains Hel's spirit—and therefore his personality. In both plots, the robots have been created as the new slaves, and, in both dramas, the robots rebel and murder their creators.

In both plays and films, we find the leitmotif of the robot as a projection of the unsatisfied desire of a metaphysical–scientific–technical system, products of a grotesque war rationality that is trivialised in a loop in the everyday, something that Nietzsche [22] already expressed: “Even measured by the metre of the ancient Greeks, our whole modern being, insofar as it is not weakness, but power and consciousness of power, presents itself as pure Hybris [sacrilegious pride] and impiety [. . .]. Hybris is today our attitude towards nature, our violence towards nature with the help of machines and the unthinking inventiveness of technicians and engineers” (pp. 131–132).

Capec's robot [23] will dress and feed us, Grau's dolls will play with us, *Westworld's* androids satisfy our perversions, *Blade Runner's* replicants fight our wars, Asimov's robot fulfils all our domestic tasks, *Star Wars' droid C3PO* mediates our relationships and in *Futurama*, robots appear as companions. From a certain hypermarket logic [24], robots are born already inserted in the story of modern technology as cloned and massively replaceable existences, as a reflection of what we already are or are about to be. It is in fictions that we imagine what we want—in both senses, also in the postmodern positive: to rebel against this system that enslaves us or, like Cypher in *The Matrix* [25] to choose the side of the enslavers: “You know, I know this steak doesn't exist. I know that when I put it in my mouth, the Matrix is telling my brain that it is juicy and delicious. After nine years, you know what I realize?”. In this way, it is either the robots that end up murdering their creators (reflections of *The New Prometheus* or *Frankenstein*) or, as in *I, Robot*, *Alien the Eighth Passenger* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*, they are killed or deactivated by their creators.

Between one outcome and the other, it is rare and, therefore, it is interesting for us to answer Touraine's question of whether we can live together [26], extending the question to these animate and inanimate beings, when, and we continue in the fables of science fiction, they acquire consciousness. We discover a reverential fear of the loss of human control in the face of over-endowed, hyper-virtuous technology. The result is faster, stronger, tireless, long-lived, resilient and infallible humans. From the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, we move on to the supercomputer. Remember chess competitions as a great challenge between man and machine, in which there was even a certain triumphalist tone of the human species when Big Blue could not beat Karpov. This fear is well-captured in the guidelines that programme *Robocop* or the NS-5 prototype in *I, Robot* [27]; the three laws of robotics: do not harm a human being and prevent a human being from suffering any harm; obey orders that do not contradict the first rule; and protect, while not conflicting with the first rule, its own existence. The conditions of slavery are clearly established.

The programming or logos of machines is expressed in an absolute confidence in their perfection and infallibility and in their absolute submission. We see this reflected in the supercomputer HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey* [28], when Mr. Armes asks him if he feels insecure. HAL expresses, as a reflection of a *thaumaturgical* gaze, his inability to make mistakes and, when questioned about his views on his condition of absolute submission, he expresses his gracious willingness to work with humans and the conviction that his existence, as a conscious entity, is defined by the efficient use of his capabilities.

The replicants in *Blade Runner* are designed to mimic humans in everything but their emotions. However, faced with the possibility of them developing their own emotions, they were prudent enough to give them only four years to live. The marvellous final scene where Roy Batty dies condenses the essence of the moral that Virilio gives us, the critique of technology; in this case, from the words of the product of technology itself: “I've seen things, you people wouldn't believe, hmm. . . Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I've watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time like tears in rain” [29]. The replicant expresses, like a 21st century Rimbaud,

the collapse of historical time in the face of the expansion and synchronisation of real time. Both HAL and Roy Batty already inhabit, in their fables, under the trinity power-richness-speed, a dromocracy where technology represents the divine and its properties, ubiquity, instantaneity and immediacy.

In this journey from the geopolitical to the chronopolitical, we find the reason for these animate and inanimate beings; the speed associated with the power that has run parallel to fiction, albeit at a different pace, through the history of Western civilisation, and which is the profound reason for capitalism. They are, both in the dystopias referred to above and in the present day, creations to increase the speed of growth of consumer society, a speed no longer fit for humans. However, they fulfil another disturbing function that reflects the behaviour of the android Ash in *Alien the Eighth Passenger* who, in defence of corporate and commercial interests, decides to sacrifice the ship's crew to save a specimen that will be an important war asset. In the same vein, in the third season of *Westworld*, a powerful artificial intelligence called *Rehoboam* is the one that carries out the social division of labour by means of algorithms that evaluate the genetic conditions and history of humans. We should include here that the etymological origin of cybernetics is *kubernana*, meaning "to direct"; in other words, it refers to the processes of command and communication between humans and machines [16].

We have, then, in the fables of the talking machines, on the one hand, the slaves necessary for the speed of technocracy and, on the other, the intermediaries for the total enslavement of a humanity converted into a consumer of what the machines produce based on what is programmed by those who control the system.

At this point in the discourse, we are left to review the outlined plots and ask ourselves whether, in the end, the animate and inanimate beings of 21st century fables will annihilate us, subjugate us or turn us into batteries as in *The Matrix*. We wonder whether we will have time to deactivate them, as in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, or whether they will develop a consciousness of their own, whether they will be able to think for themselves. "Of course, machines can't think as people do. A machine is different from a person. Hence, they think differently. The interesting question is, just because something thinks differently from you, does that mean it's not thinking?" [29] Such a question could be extended to ourselves in today's world. Of course, there is the more than remote possibility that we could live together, as included in the definition of fable: humans, animals and machines.

"Interviewer: HAL, you have an enormous responsibility on this mission, in many ways perhaps the greatest responsibility of any single mission element. You're the brain, and central nervous system of the ship, and your responsibilities include watching over the men in hibernation. Does this ever cause you any lack of confidence? // HAL: Let me put it this way, Mr. Amor. The 9000 series is the most reliable computer ever made. No 9000 computer has ever made a mistake or distorted information. We are all, by any practical definition of the words, foolproof and incapable of error. // Interviewer: HAL, despite your enormous intellect, are you ever frustrated by your dependence on people to carry out your actions? // HAL: Not in the slightest bit. I enjoy working with people. I have a stimulating relationship with Dr. Poole and Dr. Bowman. My mission responsibilities range over the entire operation of the ship so I am constantly occupied. I am putting myself to the fullest possible use, which is all, I think, that any conscious entity can ever hope to do" [28].

We close this section having left artificial intelligences, algorithms and hyperreality for the following sections. It only remains for us to capitulate, before opening the curtain on the theatre of hyperreality, the eureka of the scientist Rotwang: "I have created the workers of the future, the machine men. . . This is a robot!".

### 3. The Theatre of Hyperreality: Digital Dramas and Dramatic Digits

*"MORPHEUS: The Matrix is all around us. It's everywhere. Even now, in this very room. You can see it if you look out the window or turn on the television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It's the world*

*that has been put before your eyes to hide the truth from you. (. . .) It's that feeling you've had all your life. The feeling that there is something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is, but it's there, like a splinter in your mind, and it's driving you crazy. [. . .] The Matrix is all around us, it's everywhere, even now, in this very room. [. . .] It is the world that has been put before your eyes to hide the truth from you.*

-NEO: What truth?

-MORPHEUS: *That you are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else you were born into bondage. Into a prison that you cannot taste or see or touch. A prison for your mind". [25]*

The theatre of the absurd seeks to generate a dreamlike atmosphere in the spectator through the temporal dislocation of the plot and the repetition, in the form of a loop, of the dialogues. We return to the thread we left behind with Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* to try to understand which stage rules order the human in the theatre of hyperreality:

1. In cyberspace, the constitutive alienation of the subject in the symbolic takes place (Lacan).
2. The Internet functions as Lévi-Strauss's zero-institution.
3. In the virtual, the reified alienated social substance of Capital and Plato's cave merge.
4. Capitalism acquires in hyperreality the features of a simulation. The real is a screen.
5. In Hegelian terms, the theatre of hyperreality distorts our perception of reality. Hypertext is a practice of montage. The mechanisms are an illusion.
6. We return to pre-modern concrete thought. The mediation of the interface is a mystery.
7. Conversion of life into a spectral, phantasmagoric spectacle.
8. The language of experts and binary codes do not allow the translation of other discourses into cyberspace. Algorithms are filters that exclude the diverse from the unlimited offer of the personalised.
9. Cyberspace controls our body through timelessness.
10. Errors are the making off from the programme.

The word drama does not mean tragedy; it refers to the living [1]. In the origins of theatre—back in India—what happened on stage was a mystery in which the divine, the ghostly, the past and the everyday penetrated, all enveloped in an unreal atmosphere that gave the audience the illusion that it was really happening. The moment the staging began, the real disappeared and the actors and their bodies were possessed by the characters, who abandoned them at the end of the performance. The relationship between living people who play the characters and the text that possesses them is one of absolute trust. Nothing is left to improvisation; the plot programmes and orders everything that happens on stage like providence itself.

For this reason, it is opportune to situate ourselves in that moment, when the characters denote the absence of their author and therefore feel the uneasiness of not knowing what they must do or say. They are ultimately unable to speak for themselves or act of their own free will. They beg for something to guide them, to indicate them, they look in unison at the stage director who intuits, as an interface, between the users and the programmers, his mission: to transmit instructions to the characters because the show must go on.

Then, as in *The Truman Show* or Sloterdijk's sphere [30], the programmer designs a scenic space of pure appearance, where the subject is spoken to by the great other—the playwright or technician or algorithm—to represent a hyperreal drama, where [31] “the ultimate truth of the utilitarian-capitalist disenchanted universe is the dematerialization of “real life” itself, its conversion into a spectral spectacle” (p. 177). The symbolic, as Lacan thought, produces the constitutive alienation of the subject who, in front of the screen, is diluted in the illusion of fulfilling his desires without having to suffer the sacrifices indicated by the didascalies of reality. To a certain extent, the characters without an author do not want to leave the stage, they do not threaten to leave the performance. All they want is, like the users of *Westworld*, to escape from the chaos of the real world, from its accidents. This is the trap that Lacan intuits: the characters try to escape the effects of

neoliberal globalisation by fleeing into the fantasy created by this neoliberal globalisation. A kind of play within a play is produced that distances the human experience. . . from the human experience.

When the dramatist writes the primary code prior to the plot—the source code—he does not inform the stage director—to whom a series of dialogues and a few brief didascalies arrive translated—who, in turn, explains—through the instruction manual given to him by the experts—to the characters, how it works. He installs them at some point in the story, delocalized and timeless, memorising fragments of an indecipherable text. They act like the Winnebago studied by Lévi-Strauss [32], they represent the hyperreality that envelops them from a pre-modern concrete thought that divinises—and understands outside its political sphere—everything beyond its lines of dialogue. Hyperreality behaves like the zero-institution that provides everything to its acolytes in exchange for each one playing the assigned role. What is not realised is that this everything is part of the source code and not of the will of the characters. It is here that the reified alienated social substance of Capital and Plato's cave merge, with the slight nuances of the computer playwright's work of updating. The world of ideas has become the desert of reality and now, like a hypertextual origami, myriad caverns exist within other caverns [31]. "From another point of view, Matrix also functions as the "screen" that separates us from the Real, that makes the "desert of the real" bearable. However, we must not forget here the radical ambiguity of the Lacanian Real: it is not the ultimate referent to be covered/embellished/domesticated with a screen of fantasy. The Real is also and primarily the screen itself, as an obstacle that distorts already-always our perception of the referent, of the reality before us." (p. 186).

Baudrillard's post-structuralist thesis [33] show us how the set that is designed, for now, in binary code, submerges capitalism in a virtual environment where laws function as a simulacrum of infinite justice [34]. All conflicts—tragedies, barbarities, ignominies—fit as motors of all plots; there is no danger for the functioning of cyberspace—dramatic digits feed digital dramas. Disruptive elements or alternatives, critiques or revelations are fictions that entertain the public (citizens) who, through the screens, dilute any possibility of imagining that what is represented could be real. The combinational fecundity of algorithms generates mass plots and characters—like Pygmalion's toys—that maintain attention in front of the screens through a permanent and illusory novelty in which the act of thinking is impossible. Audiovisual hyper-speed distorts our perception in the face of a slow and emotionless reality [16]. The narrative tactics of montage evoke dogmatic theological morphologies. The off-stage mechanisms—*deus ex machina*—enhance sensory stimulation through measured cliffhangers that keep us in an addictive and permanent situation of being one step away from unveiling the mystery they will never show us.

The theatre of hyperreality has no end; it is timeless. An eternal return randomly modified by arboreal algorithms that offer illusory singularities from the same hackneyed source code—the neoliberal meta-narrative. The stage directors ensure that nothing changes during the ever new. They function as the mediator of Metropolis, between the head and the hand, being a sentimental heart that connects the cold zeros and ones with the emotions of the consumers. It is a mediator in the computer sense, a conductor of energy that transforms the binary, inaccessible, indisputable and untranslatable language to generate a simulated scenic space where, as characters, we make pre-established decisions. The distance of technical and scientific languages from our common experience guarantees a transparency of mirrors [34]. Decision making is left out of the digital drama where only the scenic choices represent our space of freedom. Own or critical thinking are anomalies quickly detected by antivirus. Anything that fails to respond to the self-regulating space that hyperreality signifies suffers an automated and updated digital erasure. If it shows itself as a possibility of normalisation different from what is established. . . the conditions of the contract are changed, the text is rewritten and signed.

Everything happens on the stage of hyperreality in a present that results from the synchronisation of all the clocks of the world and of history, the streaming that the characters verbalise and that in the source codes of the programmers, in the didascalies of the stage

director, are invisible rules that self-regulate the plot so that, despite all its variants, the expected result can never be altered. There is no such thing as error, since it is included as another part of the spectacle. It simulates a making off from the play that allows the machine to defend its infallibility from the displacement towards the anomalous as the human nature that must be corrected, repaired and ordered.

Cyberspace allows, as third nature, beyond Montaigne, to normalise the virtual as a mimesis, not of nature but of the customs of the growth–consumption–information society. It offers an intensification of experience through new configurable bodies among an infinity of options but implements, from the hidden source–normative code itself, the control of our body by the programmer. “People hardly ever used their real name online because anonymity was one of the great advantages of Oasis. Within the simulation no one knew who you really were unless you wanted them to know. Therefore, much of the popularity and culture of Oasis revolved around that fact.” [35]. Hyperreality works like a play without an author who receives neither applause nor criticism [34]. It envelops us in 360° and captures us in an enclosed environment beyond days and nights, seasons or years, digitises our memories and installs enhanced versions of utopias that act as everyday ideological experiences [31].

In the theatre of hyperreality [34] there are no irreversible consequences—which is why it is so permeable to the trivialisation of cruelty. The three-act structure disappears, replaced by a dynamic loop that simulates all the possible combinations resulting from inputting data and more data into the narrative algorithms emanating from the source code. Thus, the characters can experience all kinds of realities and fantasies with no limits between them. Everything is possible. The virtualisation of the cultural relativism of neoliberal capitalism dilutes all sorts of limits—moral, ethical, physical, cultural, sexual—in the self-regulating hyperreality—which it imposes from the saturation of options. Stage directors play the role of the politician in a shadow theatre, adapting the script—in the best of cases, most of them follow it to the letter with the bonus that their decisions are endorsed by experts—written by the economy to encourage consumption and increase production.

For this purpose, the digital fabric cannot be a utopia. As the architect of the Matrix warned, the first, perfect version was a disaster. Soon interest was lost, and people began to view such artifice with suspicion, with the same distrust as the protagonist in *The Truman Show*. Learning from those mistakes and those humans, dramatic digits were introduced. Digital tragedies and virtual melodramas are programmed, death in all its forms is trivialised and the pain of the other is naturalised as part of the spectacle. Strategies of exclusion and inclusion are introduced in the manner of a reality show, the audience is transformed into characters and the fourth wall is eliminated. Like a maximalist minimalism, there is no longer any difference between what happens on the hyperreal stage and what happens outside because everything happens, in streaming, online. Everything we want is on the stage, on the screen.

The end of *The Matrix* consists of a pact between the oracle and the architect. It is promised that the machines will not exploit the humans and the humans will be given the option to leave the Matrix if they want to. Will they want to? Would the six characters want to live without an author? Where? In the desert of reality? Are they sure? Let us look outside at the everyday and, with a sarcastic smile, evoke this reflection by Charlie Brooker, the creator of *Black Mirror*: “If there was a mobile phone that could be recharged only by giving up ten minutes of our lives, there would be people who would definitely do it. Anyway, it’s ten minutes, I have to get through the next level of *Angry Birds*”.

#### 4. The Dramaturgy: The Scenic Hermeneutics or the Theatre of Transhumanisms

The essence of theatre lies in conflict, of course, human conflict—which fits into humanism, anti-humanism and post-humanism—and, around it, the characters, based on four minimum conditions of the human—desires, masks, nature and educability—inhabit the stage recalling those verses that read: nobody promised us a garden of roses, we speak of the danger of being alive. The maxim of dramaturgy, not always respected, is the non-



intervention of the author in the decision making of the characters. The plot is credible and allows us to identify and/or hate–empathise with the characters, regardless of the outcome. The narrative structure of a comedy or a tragedy differs exclusively in whether the protagonist succeeds or fails to achieve what is desirable; nothing more. The three acts are maintained, and for a greater commitment to scenic unity, throughout history, we have learned to darken comedy and illuminate tragedy to provide the balance and restraint that a community of performers needs; that is, returning to the origin of theatre and democracy; citizenship.

A scenic hermeneutics would ask in which scene of the human play we find ourselves. It would analyse, even if it remains in the didascalies and behind the scenes, what is not there of the characters and what they do not say on stage. It would not be a theatrical critique, it would be the conversation between the audience and the theatre company—once the performance is over—as an interpretation, distorted, dislocated and differential sum [36], of the plot and its application in the present. It is worth remembering that persona means mask, and its etymological origin endows us with a face worthy of Vattimo’s weak thought, adaptable and interpretable, flexible, and capable of dialogue—theatrical koine—with the other, whoever he or she may be.

In the previous chapter, in the theatre of hyperreality we had left Pirandello’s authorless characters—virtual men or digitalised Vitruvian men—[37], representing, like Pygmalion’s toys or Capec’s robota, virtual online plays produced by an artificial intelligence, applying algorithms of combination on decontextualised and timeless plots; data collected and mathematically ordered from reality, sanitised and aseptic.

Behind the scenes, there is our playwright—to whom we are going to presuppose the qualities that Teresa Oñate assigns to the theatrical: cultured, poetic, aesthetic and hermeneutic. She contemplates and listens, tries to understand in the Gassetian sense the digital drama flooded with dramatic digits and discovers something overwhelming. An absurdity opposed to the theatre of the absurd; nothing that happens on stage moves. There is no catharsis, only hysteria, banality and violently interrupted monologues, expulsions, and irruptions of empty characters—archetypes of a neoliberal comedy of art—and an unbridled rhythm that strips them of all freedom of movement and thought [38].

The stage play’s attempt to interpret the scientific and technocratic narrative by penetrating the stage. As anomaly or accident causes a deceleration, and from their silence and stillness, the characters, between enthusiasm and anxiety [39], react with eagerness to include the strangeness—or virus—in their present purgatory. It does not respond. The statements and questions that come from his virtual memories do not require an answer; they are declaimed as definitive. He does not answer, he looks around him and analyses a stage without scenic limits. He suspects without reaching the lucidity that the absence of the fourth wall masks temporal limits that turn this unlocatable space into an always here. He senses that in this hyperreality the characters are Sigismund’s incapable of differentiating the virtual from the real, beings who confuse screens with windows and who act, or rather, simulate, like bees in a cybernetic hive [40].

At a shell-shaped console, a little man acts as a bureaucrat, cuts and pastes binary code which he runs through an online translator, adds and deletes, gets excited and prints out scripts which he hands out even to the stage manager with a protocol welcome. The cast memorises their lines and rehearses the didascalies, but the stage manager does not. He asks the stage manager where the scripts come from, who writes them and in what language. The little man replies that all these questions are a waste of time, that the audience does not wait, that if they do not put on a show, they will stop looking at the screens and will be digitally erased. The stage manager, bureaucrat or manager, typing on the console, implements corrections and goes back to print. He hands out the new scripts and shouts action. As the drama unfolds, he reports on his function, translating and embellishing the narrative instructions algorithmically produced by artificial intelligences, the *deus ex machina* of information. He mediates between the scientific–technocratic–cybernetic language of zeros and ones and the languages of the audiences. He is an expert in the game

of languages, a translator of the scientific into the narrative. He admits that hyperreality is a magnificent Babel that requires a fully interactive mainstream culture [41]. All the audience's opinions are included as data and the algorithms return them recombined and adjusted to efficient narrative schemes. There is no possibility of failure in the stage director's judgement before returning to function as a man-neuron in the service of the big hyperreal brain.

The stage manager understands that the screen stage is domotic, the scenery and props respond to the stage director's instructions automatically. The lights are adjusted, the music is synchronised with the declamations, the images didactically project the hypertextual, the objects are printed in 3D or holograms appear, instantaneously, in the second indicated by the didascalies, by the electromagnetic impulses that only those who act as the dramatic interface, the expert, the bureaucrat of digital aesthetics, see and understand.

When the scene is over and the next one is being prepared, the director reports the percentage of likes, analyses the report issued and implements the improvements indicated by the artificial intelligences. The stage manager watches as the cast changes, some disappear and others are modified, updated according to the audience's wishes. He remembers the stage director's sentence: they cannot stop looking at us, we would be erased. He approaches the performers of the cybernetic farce and discovers that the inhabitants of transhumanism are on stage. Automaton, robots, cyborgs, droids, androids, holograms and humans whose bodies lie outside the theatre of hyperreality. All bear human traits but do not look human.

The dramatist feels that they are the new tenants of Arthur C. Clarke's short story [42]. A scientist arrives, during nuclear testing on an island in Japan, to a cave where he finds another scientist who is conducting research on termites. He has developed lenses to study them and while he reports, in descriptive scientific language, on the functioning of termite mounds, he observes some termites passing by, dragging a carriage. To their astonishment, he explains that the fantastic thing is that this carriage is not the original one, the one he gave them in the past. It is not even the same termite mound. Before leaving the cave, the two scientists silently contemplate the termite cities like gods. Then, the anchorite scientist thinks aloud: What if we give them the fire? Beyond the cave, a mushroom cloud grows over the Pacific Ocean.

He comes back from his reverie to discover that the performance continues, streaming, uninterrupted. He senses that the only rule is continuity. There is no past, stored in attics called digital memories, there is no space or distance, everything is connected, real time is global and unique, there are no bodies, everything is digitalised and there are no social ties because there is no delay in communicating; it is total confinement [43] in the theatre of hyperreality.

Claustrophobia merges with agoraphobia and the dramatist feels the need to escape the desert of reality although he understands, without having an answer, that the solution is not to be found outside, that the posthuman is here, confined and it is in hyperreality, where he must fight his battle. He thinks that interactivity is to the computer bomb what radioactivity is to the atomic bomb, that cyberspace is a trans-territory constructed by conservative nostalgia and neoliberal euphoria for the absolute control of the desiring-consumer machines. He hesitates, silent, hieratic, imagining the probabilities of a global accident, a viral-speculative braking mechanism, perhaps an ethics of perception [44] that hacks the source code and shows the faces—hidden behind the screens—of the public, or an ethics of communication that would allow the cast to improvise the performance to be made.

## 5. Silence: A Pedagogic Dramaturgy of Slowness

The dramatist returns from thought to an infinitesimally measured reality and remains thinking. Words are born from his mind that converse with others and generate a hint of a smile. The stage director cannot help but notice that the thought is not in the script.

Uncertainty is a bad travelling companion. There is no uncertainty for actors and there is no poetry without uncertainty. The dramatist understands that there is only one action not contemplated by the machine. It surpasses him in his calculations. Silence.

The absence of inputs is an inefficient situation, not “natural” for hyperreality. A language such as computer language needs information to guarantee the functioning of the system. Its development has the same basis as the hegemonic discourse in which to stop functioning, to stop growing, is only a crisis. However, the dramatist knows that the only thing that cannot be written in the play are silences. He understands that within the human condition as a speaking being, there is the condition of being silent. The possible consequences among the audience are varied, given that they over-understand the possibilities of silences. Algorithms tend to fill spaces, and when they do, they are for consumption, evasion and capture. Blank paper is not made to be filled with silences.

Silence is a pause charged with intentionality, with meanings, that sigh that captures the attention of the other, with a prefixed intention that can create expectations. It allows us to share situations in which there are too many words or in which there are no words to pronounce, and which perhaps provides more support than possible words. A silence that helps to control a life situation, that allows one to take a breath to organise one’s thoughts and an important communicative element. This is not a weakness of the work; it is a strength because it allows the spectator the luxury of letting him think. It frees the viewer from the work itself. They can decide whether this is the work they came to experience, or they can consider the alternative. In hyperreality, the excess of information and the overfeeding of data becomes a basic element given that it is data on which the system feeds. A misinformative fact appears as it produces a phenomenon that is the opposite of silence, an excess of information “noise”. We can therefore situate silence as a counterpoint to virtual reality. The immediacy of the internet and the ease and capacity of propagation of any news or fact through social networks allows both truthful and unverified or erroneous information to acquire relevance. The dramatist knows that we do not need it.

There is no better conversation than the one that takes place within our thoughts. Like the one we have after an encounter with someone who did not live up to expectations, where we fix the mess and are satisfied. . . when we meet her again. Our words are busy having conversations that are totally unintelligible to the algorithm from a non-productive silence. The dramatist knows the possibility of performing a monologue with many voices, an interior, a silence of many characters, and the public understands the data, interprets it and generates the corresponding resolutions, no longer individually but personally.

The function is inverted and what does not happen on stage is transformed into what is to be written or to be lived and lived with: the posthuman [37]. It is taken into consideration that the battle will be fought in the Matrix, not with bullets but with poetry. Poetry as that silent voice that allows us to converse with our inner selves, generating unthought spaces. The playwright approaches the edge of the stage, jumps off and leaves thinking about the Lorca’s poem *The Cicada* [45]: “*Todo lo vivo que pasa por las puertas de la Muerte, va con la cabeza baja y un aire blanco durmiente. Con habla de pensamiento. Sin sonidos. . . Tristemente, cubierto con el silencio que es el manto de la Muerte*”.

Silence is the actor’s triple somersault. With silence he underlines what is important. It makes the audience think. It invites the other to respond or to express himself. It can bend without violence from indifference. It is the sound of thought. It is also the *conditio sine qua non* of listening. Silence is patience [46]. Algorithms are not programmed for silence. It is not useful, it does not produce, it is not profitable, it has no programmatic or computational logic. It atrophies at a prodigious speed until it becomes outdated. It opposes the growing distance between neural networks and human thought, the abysmal distance in the number of operations between machines and humans is only shortened, for the moment, by silence. Silence without Wi-Fi is, for the moment, the only thing that protects the human from being phagocytised by hyperreality, from being converted into data down to the last cell, down to the last idea.

This essay outlines the strategy of silence as a pedagogical dramaturgy that invites a slow education that adjusts again to the speed of the human. The human who walks discovers the birth of a people, knows it in its intimacy and abandons it, missing it. From the plane, the village is a stain. The same happens with audiovisuals and social networks as opposed to reading and writing. Slow, abstract, with high levels of decoding, they demand a high cognitive effort that is reversed in a deep and critical understanding and interpretation. Unlike the passive or para-active consumption that comes from screens and pixels, reading and writing are dialogues with our inner voice and with the other voices that inhabit words. Dramaturgy as a hermeneutic that interprets human conflicts in every physical and historical context does not respond to the efficient logic of algorithms. Algorithms are not shortcuts but complex paths whose compass is uncertainty.

The figure of the dramaturge in this essay is that of the silence that allows the characters to express themselves without the script marked out by the programmers. As if they were in the notes of the dramatic text, the protagonists of our fictions feel themselves slaves of their writers. They discover, on stage, without the audience or the lights, that the capitalist production system extended towards hyperreality extends its borders, its horizons, its limits, at the cost of their time. They do the maths and discover that they are mortgaged, that their lives no longer belong to them. It feels like the Matrix, the batteries of a great machine [46].

Science fiction, from literature to cinema, plays the same role as books and the printing press did against religions in the 15th century. In this case, against science. A science that, after the positivism of the 19th century, has become a colonising knowledge that has generated a sociology of absences or a displacement of the rest of epistemologies into exile [47]. All those incalculable knowledges that do not surpass the quality standards of technical-scientific thought are folklore, superstition, craftsmanship and dialects. A knowledge–power pact, in line with Foucault’s thinking, globalised knowledge around elites who, with mathematical, psychological and legal language, homogenise the world to acquire power, control and domination over everyone and everything else. Science fiction warns, inheriting the plot of Goethe’s Faust or the curse of Icarus, about the Pygmalion effects of a civilisation that dreams of modifying itself to achieve immortality, about a civilisation that under the shadow of domotics resigns itself to a pleasurable and narcotic, consumerist and banal obsolescence [48].

What do artificial intelligences talk about? Remember when Facebook engineers pulled the plug on an AI that had developed a language of its own with the feeling that they had created their own Frankenstein? One of the programmers sweated as he imagined what would happen with such technology introduced into military robots. Amazon’s AI that was looking to select talent decided that women should be relegated to the background, in 2018, an Uber SUV truck killed a woman and a little later Microsoft’s Chatbot started giving racist, misogynistic and anti-Semitic answers. Additionally, in 2023, an AI-controlled US military drone killed an operator during a test. Too fast for a human.

The speed and perfection of the new pixel universe, and its capacity to satiate desires and instincts with a single click, turns reality into something undesirable for the new generations. Nature, community, conflicts, effort and difficulties are bugs, errors to be corrected by the new Daedalus or labyrinth engineers [49]. Programmatic semantics is based on transferring needs to instincts so that, from an immanent anti-humanism, humans are addicted to virtual stimuli in a hyperreality without cartography or time. It is impossible to imagine the construct of citizenship that we have built over the last twenty-five centuries without real space and time.

We cannot forget, as current philosophy warns us, that money is a fiction or a metaphor for time. We pay for what we do not need with the only thing we possess, time. Additionally, on the Internet, algorithms work so that we give them all our time in exchange for nothing.

Daedalus, or programmers, serving neoliberal corporate interests, design algorithms as an extension of the predatory capitalist production model. They minimise costs to multiply profits, exponentially. They only attend to social or ecological standards when

they see their own interests threatened. In this way, the profile of those who educate the machines does not correspond to the profile we expect from the educational experts who train the new generations. Beyond that, we dream of neural networks and social networks educating the next generation, at full speed, effectively, so that they can go on making or improving other machines, which in turn make other machines that make tools for humans to operate [50]. This makes little ethical sense, as it responds to a slave structure of production. We are understanding slavery in its most current conceptions.

However, the most delicate thing in imagining how to educate these machines that will make us better among equals and on the planet, and within the universe, is how to re-establish the sense of community, of the common, of that which the Greeks felt differentiated the politician from the idiot [51]. That feeling of reciprocity and responsibility towards what is public, shared, which founds us as something more than me, which establishes the “we” and leads to the human, the social human, the communal human. The opposite of this is the immune system, the functioning of our defensive systems that annihilate everything that is not profitable for the body [52].

How do we educate artificial intelligences so that they are not based on performance or results but on an ethic that prioritises the useless over the useful. It is worth remembering that Aristotle himself, in his *Metaphysics*, discovered that wisdom did not pursue results and the love of knowledge had nothing to do with a specific end or a specific destination. This beginning of human thought, throughout the centuries, contains a constant linked to the concept of virtue, that of commonality as the heart of a space for coexistence between different people, for peace. How can we programme or educate at this speed of progress without the gap between technological power and ethics being as wide as, at times, human stupidity? Or to put it another way, before betting everything on artificial intelligences, we should, from the pedagogical point of view, put more effort into preparing natural intelligences.

In addition, silence, amid so much noise, seems a good starting point for programming an algorithm that does not mind wasting time. Perhaps, and here we leave a thought typical of an essay, it would be important to think that artificial intelligences, because they do not have, are not afraid, and that fear, throughout history, has been our first playwright and our first teacher.

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