Viewing the World as a Vision («*ὔπαρ*»[1]): Towards a New Meta-Physics?

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For the philosophical enquiry, «*θεωρία*» constitutes the «*ἥδιστον καὶ ἄριστον*» of knowledge, as Aristotle pointed out in his *Metaphysics*[2], an event of «*μέθεξις*» in the «*γιγνωσκόμενον*»[3], as Plato clarified the careful consideration of the subject to understand and reconstruct through concepts the surrounding physical reality and the social-political context. From the very beginnings of the objective reality's elaboration from philosophy, there has been a sense that lived experience is confronted with cosmic harmony and symmetry and that knowledge emerges as a crystallization of the mental adjustments concerning the functioning of the macrocosm and the microcosm in the realm of *συνειδέναι*.

Ὁ *Κόσμος* ("*good order*") as a harmonious synthesis of heterogeneous elements («*τὸ ἀντίξουν συμφέρον καὶ ἐκ τῶν διαφερόντων καλλίστη ἁρμονία*»)[4] was revealed in the sensory transparency as –to recall

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1. The word «*ὔπαρ*» (in contrast to the word «*ὄναρ*») the apprehension of reality in a state of wakefulness and awareness. According to *Etymologicon Magnum*: «*ὔπαρ, ἐγρήγορσις, ὀπτασία ἀληθὴς οὐκ ἐν ὀνείρῳ; ἀλήθεια οὐκ ὄνειρος*». See Friedericus Silburgius (ed.), *Ἐτυμολογικὸν τὸ Μέγα ἤγουν ἡ Μεγάλη Γραμματική* [*Etymologicon Magnum seu Magnum Grammaticae Penu*], Lipsiae 1816, col. 705; cf. H. G. Liddell – R. Scott, *Greek English Lexicon with a Revised Supplement*, Clarendon Press, Oxford [9]1940, p. 1853.

2. See Aristotle, Met*aphysics Λ*, 1072b1.

3. See Plato, *Parmenides*, 150e.

4. See Heraclitus, frag. B 8, in: H. Diels – W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Bd I., Weidmann, Dublin – Zürich [16]1972, p. 410; cf. H. Diels – W. Kranz, *Οἱ Προσωκρατικοί. Οἱ μαρτυρίες καὶ τὰ ἀποσπάσματα*, vol. I, V. A. Kyrkos (ed.), Papadima Publications, Athens 2011, p. 340. [Στὸ ἑξῆς: H. Diels – W. Kranz, *Οἱ Προσωκρατικοί*]. According to

here Heraclitus's statement– «*παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη*»[5]. Obviously, the historicity of the thinking subject is also refracted in the way in which its relationship with the physical reality in question was understood and interpreted and the social form of human cohabitation was constituted, which through the medium of *speech*, in the realm of language, molded the terms with which the originally unfamiliar environment was transmuted into cultural creations. *Reason*, as the ability to transcend the separate, particular coincident into a universal intellectual event and at the same time as the possibility of expressing and projecting individual mental processes in the public space, forms the constitutive act of human expression within the institutionalized boundaries of the city[6].

The answer to any question concerning the present technocratic organization of life, individually and collectively, can only come from a thorough examination of the sphere of knowledge, the reconstitution of the economic and scientific parameters that led to a break with the traditional forms of social life and the radical transformation of the ways in which the changes brought about by the unprecedented development of science are incorporated on a global scale. Obviously, the *discourse* on science today presupposes an undeniable fact: any change in the field of the technological reality takes place in the absence of social references, whether the individual subjects, who use the results of new research in their daily lives, are aware of them, or whether they depend on structures that institutionally control the novel achievements.

Pythagorean Philolaus, *Περὶ φύσιος*, B10 (*op.cit.*), ἡ «*ἁρμονία* [...] *πάντως ἐξ ἐναντίων γίγνεται*» and there is nothing else «*πολυμιγέων ἕνωσις καὶ δίχα φρονεόντων συμφρόνησις*»: Harmony in all cases is made of opposites; for harmony is the union of the complex things and the unanimity of the disunited. See H. Diels – W. Kranz, *Οἱ Προσωκρατικοί*, p. 769.

5. See Heraclitus, frag. B 51: «*παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη ὅκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης*». See H. Diels – W. Kranz, *Οἱ Προσωκρατικοί*, p. 349.

6. For more details, see: K. Th. Petsios, *Φιλοσοφία καὶ Ρητορικὴ στὴν κλασικὴ σκέψη*, Guttenberg Publications, Athens 2018, pp. 17 ff., 65 ff. and *passim*; cf. K. Th. Petsios, «Λόγος καὶ Πόλις στὴν κλασικὴ σκέψη», *Φιλοσοφεῖν/Philosophein* 14 (2016), pp. 147-159.

In its historical course, the human subject, manifesting its inherent rationality, confronted the reality that surrounds it and, despite the fact that it realized the dynamics that its unseen dimension encloses –Heraclitus had already underlined that the «*ἀφανὴς ἁρμονίη*» is superior to the sensible form («*φανερῆς κρείττων*»)–[7], it managed to *self-actuate* its presence and *create*. Man established an essential *dialogue* with physical reality; he understood it as the manifestation of a balanced relation of its material components, whose autonomy was transformed into a joint process within the inherent logic that orders the universe. The gradual transformation of unformed materiality into the distinguishing features of civilization presupposes the fusion of man's spiritual horizons in the field of transformation from *potentiality* to *actuality* and from *saying* to *acting*.

The historicity of the human subject is interwoven with undisputed questions about the expediency of choices in the field of *action*, the importance of technical inventions and their contribution to mitigating the difficulties inherent in its temporal presence. Still, what has historically defined the purpose of "*craft*", and reveals the meaning of the integration of technological achievements into individual and collective life, reflected in every historical period a certain world-theoretical conception. In other words, the tangible result of the technique offered in everyday use as an object that contributes to the realization of our multifarious wishes in not the only important thing; equally significant is the intrinsic content of the meaning attributed to the object in use. According to ancient Greek thought, «*μῆτις*», as a mythologized thought and an ability to expand the limits of human capabilities, is a characteristic of *acting* and *crafting*[8]. Within the same context, the reconstruction of the cosmic elements through the action of thought revealed the promethean dimension of the human subject in his dialogue with its surroundings. Through this prism, creation reflected not only the technical ability to transform materiality into a "production", but also an "artifact", the

7. Heraclitus, frag. B 54; see H. Diels – W. Kranz, *Οἱ Προσωκρατικοί*, p. 349.
8. For more details, see: J.-P. Vernant – M. Detienne, *Μῆτις. Ἡ πολύτροπη νόηση στὴν Ἀρχαία Ἑλλάδα*, transl. (Greek) Ioanna Papadopoulou, Daidalos / I. Zacharopoulos Publications, Athens 1993, especially p. 203 ff.

symmetrical proportions of which reveal the *worldview* as a frame of reference and a place where *meditation* manifests itself.

Aristotelian physics, adopted during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, from the point of view of method, was based on *per argumentum* thoughtful understanding of reality, a concept that we locate in the fundamental statement of René Descatrtes (1596-1650) concerning the radical separation of the *res cogitans* from *res extensares cogitans* ἀπὸ τὴν *res extensa*[9]. Modern science, with its *per experimentum* approach to the physical world, and especially with the mathematization of the relations that constitute the object under observation, gave impetus to the formulation of the causal functions that were summarized in Galileo Galilei's (1654-1642) laws for the motion of bodies, Johannes Kepler's (1571-1630) on the orbit of the planets and Isaac Newton's (1642-1727) on the tractive forces, an interpretation which also represents the pinnacle of the preceding scientific constructs[10]. The mechanistic explanation of classical physics led inevitably to *Positivism*, which was not limited in explaining the natural phenomena, but under the cloak of a philosophical viewpoint aspired to interpret all aspects of science and axiomatically decide on metaphysical questions. Undoubtedly, modern physics, by experimentally combining "tracing" with "observation" and understanding materiality's function in relation to the observer, interprets the physical phenomenon as the manifestation of the perpetually acting reality in its subordination with the observer. The theory of *Quanta* [Max Planck (1858-1947), Niels Bohr (1885-1962), Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976)][11] in combination with the theory of *Relativity*, formulated by

9. See R. Descartes, *Principia Philosophiae*, Pars Prima (1644), LII-LII (= *Oeuvres de Descartes*, publiées par Ch. Ad. – P. Tannery, Nouvelle Présentation, en co-édition avec Le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), VIII, 1, Paris 1964, pp. 24-25); cf. *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* (1641), II (= *Oeuvres*, *op.cit.*, VII, Paris 1964, p. 25; cf. p. 27: "*Cogitare? Hic invenio: cogitation est; haec sola a me divelli nequit. Ego sum, ego existo; certum est*"); cf. *Méditationes*, III (= *Oeuvres*, *op.cit.*, p. 34): "*Ego sum res cogitans*"; *Meditationes*, VI (= *Oeuvres*, *op.cit.*, p. 78): "*recte concludo meam essentiam in hoc uno consistere, quod sim res cogitans*".

10. For the relevant evidence, see indicatively K. Th. Petsios, *Ἡ περὶ φύσεως συζήτηση στὴ Νεοελληνικὴ Σκέψη. Ὄψεις τῆς φιλοσοφικῆς διερεύνησης ἀπὸ τὸν 15ο ὡς τὸν 19ο αἰῶνα*, Ioannina [3]2016, p. 191 et seq.

11. See indicatively W. Heisenberg, *Φυσικὴ καὶ Φιλοσοφία*, trassl. (Greek) D. Kourtovik,

Albert Einstein (1879-1975), caused a substantial break in the "scientific" certainties of positivism, making it clear that it is not possible to causally describe the phenomena of "atoms" within the categories of "*time*" and "*space*", and that –in contrast to the macrocosm– the "*principle of indeterminacy*" applies to the microcosm, since the result of observation is related to the position of the observer, who sees during the experimental process only a specific "form" of the microcosmic reality's continuum[12].

Undoubtedly, the unprecedented changes in the way modern technology accesses the field of microphysics and transforms the space of communicative action decisively affects man's cognitive dimension. In the Universe of living experience, he accepts and recognizes the contribution of the "technical spirit" in optimizing the conditions of life and mitigating the obstacles in accessing the information world. This discovery of the new reality, however, is made possible because the "technical spirit" has acquired a semantic dimension made evident by the transposition of meaning from the acting subject to the result of the technical activity. Spyros Kyriazopoulos's (1932-1977) remarks[13] on the ontological relevance of the "technical spirit" with what is produced as a "technical object" are based on the theoretical premise that "at the end of the day, modern technique appears as a transformation of the

Kalvos Publications, Athens 1978, espec. p. 46 et seq. («Ἡ θεωρία τῶν κβάντων καὶ οἱ ἀπαρχὲς τῆς ἀτομικῆς Φυσικῆς»); «Ὁ φυσικὸς κόσμος καὶ ἡ δομὴ τῆς ὕλης», in: Emm. Ch. Kasdaglis (ed.), *Ἡ συνάντησις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν 1964*, Vassilikon Ethikon Idryma Publications, Athens 1964, pp. 77-113.

12. For a philosophical understanding of the scientific changes that took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see for example Ev. P. Papanoutsos, *Περὶ Ἐπιστήμης*, Athens 1937, especially p. 152 et seq.

13. We do not possess yet a specialized monograph on the entire philosophical presence of the important modern Greek thinker. See in this direction: Vassiliki Solomou-Papanikolaou, «Ὁ Ἡρακλῆς καὶ ὁ Ἀπόλλων στὴ θεώρηση τοῦ Σπύρου Κυριαζόπουλου», *Δωδώνη/Dodoni*, Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρίδα τοῦ Τμήματος Φιλοσοφίας, Παιδαγωγικῆς καὶ Ψυχολογίας τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἰωαννίνων, 25, Γ (1996), pp. 133-148; P. Noutsos, «Ἡ φιλοσοφικὴ παρουσία τοῦ Σπύρου Κυριαζόπουλου», in: P. Noutsos, *Νεοελληνικὴ Φιλοσοφία. Οἱ ἰδεολογικὲς διαστάσεις τῶν εὐρωπαϊκῶν της προσεγγίσεων*, Kedros Publications, Athens 1981, pp. 161-174. For his philosophical views, see Georgia Apostolopoulou, «Ἡ κρίση τῆς Μεταφυσικῆς καὶ τὸ ἐρώτημα περὶ Θεοῦ στὴ θεώρηση τοῦ Σπύρου Κυριαζόπουλου», *Δωδώνη/Dodoni* 25, Γ (1996), pp. 93-109.

physical situation into a metaphysical possibility"[14]. This philosophical approach[15] is confirmed by accepting on a global scale the "perpetual growth" premise and pursuit of "progress" without thoughtfulness. These particular assumptions, interwoven with the maximization of profit, evidently marginalize the discussion of the instrumental and calculating character of the scientific research in all fields and disciplines, a fact that demonstrates the "oblivion" of the thought's essence and the abdication of the responsibility for radical questions to be asked about science's meaning and purpose (*τέλος*).

Within this context, it is worth pointing out that the increase in the computational power of electronic computers combined with molecular nano-assemblies is a key component of modern technology, which is developing exponentially and not linearly. In contemporary discussions, the human brain and its millions of neurons and synapses are often contrasted with the "software" of artificial machines, "high intelligence" robots with computational capacities for processing data far exceeding human intelligence. The decoding of human DNA in the mid-20th century offered the possibility to intervene in the functioning of molecular structures and its information system, a fact that created hopes for the treatment of up to now incurable diseases and the solution of key health problems. However, modern medicine's tying to transnational economic interests resulted in the most tragic denial of the expectations; the results of the many researches and discoveries are not accessible on a large scale, but are appropriated from the privileged few. The real and grave danger of applying to social eugenics the unprecedented accumulation of genetic information, derived from human intervention in the cellular structure, and of subordinating biodiversity to genetic engineering is

14. See Sp. D. Kyriazopoulos, *Ἡ καταγωγὴ τοῦ τεχνικοῦ πνεύματος*, Athens 1965, p. 17: "Man's extrasensory attachment to that which makes him superfluous to the fulfilment of his intentions, presents technical work as a metaphysical boon"; see, also, the exploitation of Kyriazopoulos's view of "technique" by Alexandros I. Katsiaras, in his introductory presentation ("Theologizing in the machine world") of the present Conference's Programme (Orthodox Theology in via in the "Dematerialized Reality" of Late Modernity, Athens 2023, pp. 3-7, see https://www.ecclesiagreece.gr/theologia100/programme.pdf [19.9.2023].
15. See also the similar positions that Spyros Kyriazopoulos expresses in his books: *Ἡ παρουσία τῆς Φυσικῆς Ἐπιστήμης*, Athens 1963; *Ἐνώπιον τῆς Τεχνικῆς. Διαλέξεις καὶ Δοκίμια*, Grigoris Publications, Athens 1971.

masked by proclamations of "quality of life", "efficiency", "increased productivity" and, most importantly, the promise of satisfying a selfish singularity, aimed at the realization of desire through the achievements of technology and market opportunities.

The possibilities offered by modern biotechnology and complementary genetic engineering have already formed the conditions for the "human genetic engineering", so that man can declare himself the creator of his biological existence. The selfish erasure of his historical presence as a being distinguished for his humanness («*πολιτικὸν γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ συζεῖν πεφυκός*»[16]) is countered by the demand for "self-deification". The consequences of this conception on the ideological features of man's existentiality, which are difficult to be decoded, i.e. reason, decision making, and freedom, are glossed over. "Transhumanism"[17] with its promise of digital immortality for man as a species, through mind uploading, is, as we know, intra muros of modern scientific research, which emphatically ignores a crucial aspect: the human subject's reflective capacity to question, understand and interpret the world as a self-willed being, not subjected to any heteronomy and necessity.

Obviously, the intellectual precariousness, caused by Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) declaration, "God is dead", in his work *The Gay Science*[18], at the end of the 19th century, was met by technology with an ingenious answer: the reduction of the "artificial intelligence"[19] into a separate supernatural-metaphysical entity, which functions autonomously from its creator. The instrumental version of the human

16. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* A, 9, 11169b.

17. See indicatively A. Pilsch, *Transhumanism. Evolutionary Futurism and the Human Technologies of Utopia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN 2017.

18. See Fr. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 1887 (1882) [*Ἡ Χαρούμενη Ἐπιστήμη*, transl. (Greek) Z. Sarikas, Panoptikon Publications, Athens 2010]. This diffuse perception of the vain nihilism is echoed in the formulation by the poet Jean Paul (1763-1825): "there is no God". See J. Paul, *Die Rede des toten Christus vom Weltgebâude herab, das kein Gott sei*, Berlin 1972; cf. indicatively Fransisca Thiel, „Religion in Kunst: Die "innere Apokalypse" als literarishe Atheismuskritik. Jean Pauls "Rede des toten Christus" vom Weltgebâude herab, das kein Gott sei (1796)", *Studia Germanica Gedanensia* 34 (2016), pp. 37-47.

19. For the content of the term and its various applications see, for example, Am. Joshi, *Artifficial Intelligence and Human Evolution. Contextualizing AI in Human History*, Apress, Redmond, WA, USA 2024.

brain as a simple assembly of neural networks has led to the belief that it is possible to construct a "*super-intelligent machine*" that would be a feature of "*technological posthumanism*", in which man will be replaced by computer-embedded "*artificial general intelligence*" and the Universe will acquire a "*technical singularity*".

It is beyond the scope of our paper to thoroughly discuss all the above; still, we would like to emphasize at this point that the inherent "*violence*" in any imposition of material or symbolic sovereignty, which Greek thought has discredited as "*hubris*", is manifested as a result of the integration of advanced technology in manufacturing and using weapon systems, as well as in the organization of the globalized economy – more specifically in the social sphere, in the space of everyday interaction and especially in work. Already the application of automated systems and the replacement of "*physical labour*" has led to the maximization of the surplus value of products, in the creation of which the participation of workers is minimized. Contemporary post-industrial capitalism is increasingly oriented towards producing *knowledge-information systems* that are autonomous from any social references, which is then made available as a privileged commodity. Obviously, the way that post-industrial society is nowadays organized, the internationalization of "*markets*" and the latter's "*metaphysical*" function in relation to individual "*national*" economies forms a field in which the human subject is cut off from its relationship with creative labor and society as a framework of meaning-making reference. The pursuit of profit maximization through reducing "*maximum possible efficiency*" to the sole criterion of the productive process is masked by the promises of future prosperity for the masses, a large part of whom still live in tragic conditions of poverty, hunger, disease and misery. In this way, technology is shaping an eschatological myth intended for the masses and annunciating the elimination of the evils of contemporary life in a technocratic future.

At the same time, the dominant and homogenized digital image, which constitutes the major expression of the instrumentalized *Reason*, takes pleasure in the well-being of the recipients of global television and internet messages, simultaneously suggesting the requirement of alignment with the dominant aspects of "*rational monism*", which elevates

the autonomy of scientific research to a religious absolute truth. Various forms of "religious overcompensations" of the traditional theological doctrines are nowadays projected as an answer to the undisputed existential questions, disguising the question of the presence of the being and the agony of redemption, with the stoppage of *questioning* and the imaginary emergence of the "*messianic*" technology. The transformation of "physical" space into a "digital" one, despite the obvious contradictions –e.g., the subject still exists as a physical-psychic fact attested by experience-, has shaped a new perceptual universe which projects itself as a "waking vision" («*ὕπαρ*»), as a virtual projection in consciousness, in the form of an imaginary reality. The dominant "computational logic" inscribes in our gaze a virtual representation that claims to asserting itself as the *Religion of Humanity* –to recall here Auguste Comte (1798-1857), detached, however, from the individual persons' humanness and what constitutes agency in the field of *saying* and *acting*, i.e. their constitutive reason.

In this way, an intangible reality is presented, beyond the sensory data, crystallized in a mental world and understood through mathematical relations that emerge as the only "language" of conversation with the intangible reality. This transition from the "*physical*" to the "*virtual*" conspicuousness retains the declarative character of the terms of our linguistic semantics only as a form, since the subject seems to understand the "*computational*" way of thinking as the only possibility of being in "*dialogue*'' with the counter-textual world, "*the world of life*" ("*Lebenswelt*"), of which, however, it is still part, even as mere observer and recipient of the new technological functions of "*knowing*" and "*being*". In the context of contemporary reality, Jean François Lyotard's (1924-1998) view on the significant role of *calculation* in the rationality's recognition and distinction[20] raises a crucial question about the method by which the image of the "*self*" as existential self-consciousness is formed and molded. Undoubtedly, for the philosophical intellect, the question of the "self"-awareness most urgently arises: the way in which our corporeality behaves and the way in which its intra-communion with

20. See, for example, J. Fr. Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, 1979 [: *Η μεταμοντέρνα κατάσταση*, transl. (Greek). K. Papagiorgis, Gnosi Publications, Athens 1988, p. 116 et seq.].

the psyche or the Ego is taking place. The starting point of our reflection must be the transparency of thought and the possibility of supervising the interaction of the "self" with natural and social reality, falsified by the heteronomous design of human nature's techinicalization and the consequent power of *προαίρεσις* (*decision making*).

The philosophical questions arising by the "*representation*" formed by modern technology in synergy with the "*markets*'" unbridled power are multifaceted; yet, within the limits of this introduction, we could highlight as predominantly imperative the question about how the human subject's consciousness is constituted under the present conditions. Man seems to understand scientific "*logic*" as an "*existing*" indispensable necessity of oriented and cumulative development, contributing to the establishment of human happiness and to his "*deification*" in the social and working environment that has been realized through technology.

Within the context of an alienated and alienating social reality, the masses, voluntarily or involuntarily, are obviously aligning themselves with the dominant choices, which offer the illusion of people's present or future happiness, evading the fundamental question about the meaning of their existence. It is no accident that the debate on the "artificial intelligence's" autonomous development is missing key questions concerning the role it might play in the "*objectified work*" of the economic mega-machine, the necessity and limits of genetic engineering, and the way in which social control of the operation of computing machines is exercised. In any case, it should not escape from our attention that, according to the well-known platonic myth, Prometheus's "goods"/ "technical skills" were necessarily accompanied by «*αἰδώ*» and «*δίκην*». To Hermes's congenital question about the way in which the moral criteria were to be shared, Zeus's answer was crystal-clear: «*ἐπὶ πάντας* […] *καὶ πάντες μετεχόντων*»[21].

21. See Plato, *Protagoras*, 323a.