

*Stefano Moiola*

## **De-humanizing the World to Rethink the Human-Technology Relationship: From Guido Morselli's *Dissipatio H.G.* to Peter Sloterdijk's *Homeotechnology***

**ABSTRACT:** *This article examines Guido Morselli's novel *Dissipatio H.G.*, focusing on its exploration of the human-technology relationship. After discussing the hybrid nature of the work, which blends science fiction and philosophy, I delve into its narrative by emphasizing the theoretical functions of its peculiar post-apocalyptic setting. In particular, I engage with what I shall present as the de-humanization of the world, which serves as a backdrop for addressing issues concerning the Anthropocene, where the trinomial human/technology/nature is at stake. Based on this foundation, this study then develops a dialogue between Morselli's work and contemporary philosophy of technology, with a particular emphasis on Peter Sloterdijk's thought. Within these contours, I first aim to show how Morselli presciently anticipated certain themes of Sloterdijk's philosophy, and, second, demonstrate how the latter can enrich the former's discourse, especially through the introduction of the concept of homeotechnology.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Guido Morselli, *Dissipatio H.G.*, Anthropocene, Peter Sloterdijk, *Allo/ Homeotechnology*.*

### **1. Guido Morselli and His *Dissipatio H.G.* Between Philosophy and Science Fiction**

In the preface to Guido Morselli's *Diario* (1938-1973), published by Adelphi in 1988, Giuseppe Pontiggia identifies *solitude*, more than the contingencies of the stark editorial judgments, as the real reason behind Morselli's failure to meet with the publishing world of his time, which has made him a true literary case. Except for two essays, *Proust o del sentimento* (1943) and *Realismo e fantasia* (1947), both funded by his father<sup>1</sup>, none of Morselli's works saw the light while he was still alive. This forced exile<sup>2</sup>, which inevitably excluded the writer from active participation

1 Gratton 2009, 162.

2 The relationship with the publishing industry was so tumultuous that Morselli wanted to narrate the vicissitudes in a volume, which would collect his correspondences with publishers.

in the literary scene of his time, seems however to be rooted in the *untimely* nature of his work rather than on the lack of literary depth; Pontiggia writes: Woe to those who anticipate the times in literature; contemporaneity takes revenge<sup>3</sup>.

The history of the Italian (and arguably non-Italian) literature is rich in examples similar to Morselli's – i.e. of rediscoveries, posthumous publications, and philological recovery processes out of time – often due to the spontaneous emergence of the prerequisites for the encounter between this or that work and a specific *Zeitgeist*. In Morselli's case, we had to wait until *Roma senza papa* before the time was ripe for the conditions of this encounter, since the novel attracted, once again, the editorial attention of Adelphi, which in 1974 decided to publish the book, triggering a true process of requalification of the complete works of the writer from Gavirate. However, it is through *Dissipatio H.G.* (1977), a novel written between 1972 and 1973 – the year of Morselli's tragic suicide – that the author gained the favor of critics, being the work that more than any other provided the hermeneutic keys to grasp his poetics and appreciate his work more comprehensively<sup>4</sup>.

In a comment from his notebooks in October 1967, Morselli writes that he has to propose an exemplary futuristic essay (or novel), although it does not have much of 'science fiction', whose provisional title is '*Nel 2400*'<sup>5</sup>. Now, a novel/essay with this title was never written by Morselli, but we can infer from the year of the note that he was probably thinking about *Contro-passato prossimo* (1975)<sup>6</sup>, which marks Morselli's landing in the utopian genre, albeit it is an example of historical utopianism (oriented towards the past) and not of science-fiction utopianism (oriented primarily towards the future). Hence, the temporal counterintuitive reference of the title. Yet, what is interesting about this description is the fact that it is even more punctual in framing the character of *Dissipatio H.G.*, both for its futuristic nature and, above all, for the sense of indeterminacy that grips the genre of the work, considering its hybrid nature between a novel and an essay. From a strictly formal point of view, it conserves all the features of a novel, but the book also retains elements – typical of Morselli's style – of the philosophical treatise, exemplified by a highly digressive, didactic, and at times properly essayistic *modus*.

Morselli's last fatigue can not only be considered his *magnum opus* but also fully fits into the aforementioned vanguardism, i.e. that which exemplifies the quality of foreseeing literary times, thereby anticipating themes and reflections that a few years later will play a fundamental role; *Dissipatio H.G.* is, in fact, one of the first science fiction novels in Italian literature – along with the works of Paolo Volponi and Antonio Porta, among others – and in the 2020 English translation

See Gratton 2009, 163.

<sup>3</sup> Morselli 1988, 14, my translation. If not stated otherwise, the translations from Italian are mine.

<sup>4</sup> See Gratton 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Morselli 1988, 369.

<sup>6</sup> According to his notebook and the curator's annotations, *Contro-passato prossimo* was presumably written between 1967 and 1970. See Morselli 1988, 20.

by Frederika Randall, published by the New York Review of Books, it is presented in an even more specific way as a post-apocalyptic novel *ante litteram*. Rich in insights and heterogeneous in character, *Dissipatio H.G.* continues to arouse the interest of scholars and critics, remarkably for its theoretical vein, capable of touching on ethical-political issues<sup>7</sup> and even, well ahead of its time, anthropocenic ones<sup>8</sup>, boasting a thematic pluralism that is still far from resolved and continues to stimulate conceptual investigations.

In this article, I shall examine this posthumous work by Morselli to delve into one of the neglected themes in the related debate – the one centered on the relationship between humans and technology – seeking to highlight the original features of Morselli’s reflection and, secondly, to open a dialogue with some examples from contemporary philosophy of technology, particularly with Peter Sloterdijk’s conceptual pair exemplified by *allo-* and *homeo-technology*. Not only will affinities of thought and specularities between the two perspectives be exhibited, but an attempt will be made, on the one hand, to highlight how Morselli anticipated some plots and ideas of Sloterdijk’s philosophy and, on the other hand, how the latter has advanced theses that in some way extend and enrich the discourse initiated by Morselli. Before proceeding, it is necessary to take a step back to contextualize *Dissipatio H.G.* and, above all, to consider it in its dual role as a science fiction narrative and (a particular kind of) philosophical treatise, with the aim of showing a fruitful and original example through which the two dimensions can produce a consistent discourse through their symbiosis and interaction.

Although *Dissipatio H.G.* fully belongs to the science fiction genre, exposing most of its foundational elements<sup>9</sup>, the relationship between Morselli and science fiction is anything but harmonious and transparent, not to say controversial. In the novel itself, the narrator-protagonist – presumably Morselli’s alter ego – explicitly distances himself from this literary genre: I have no aspirations for science, much less for science fiction<sup>10</sup>, a consideration that might be misleading with regard to its natural taxonomy. Nonetheless, in 1970s Italy, it was not uncommon for authors aspiring to write the so-called great novel to disassociate themselves – if their work revealed narrative solutions or plots of science fiction origin – from the legacy of this genre. Like Morselli, Primo Levi and Porta, in their own way, did the same, primarily due to how science fiction was perceived by intellectuals of the time, namely as a product of mass culture, which, although curious and interesting, was not considered worthy of rigorous critical analysis<sup>11</sup>. This artistic-cultural constraint, which often required explicit distancing, not only provides reasons to avoid debating whether *Dissipatio H.G.* belongs to science fiction but also becomes interesting in articulating a discourse on the modes of conjunction between philosophical reflection and science fiction narrative (especially in its

7 See Risso 2021.

8 See Guaraldo 2022.

9 Ceccherini 2015, 1-2.

10 Morselli 1977, 31.

11 Mussgnug 2003, 22-23.

post-apocalyptic lineage). If it is true, as described in Morselli's note from October 1967, that the novel does not present much that is science-fictional it is equally true that the post-apocalyptic setting leaves no room for whimsical classification attempts. Indeed, *Dissipatio H.G.* can rightfully be ascribed to the subgenre of science fiction known as the *last man on Earth* novels.

We should ask *why*, then, Morselli's novel appears useful in developing a discourse on the expressive modes of philosophical reflection and its trespasses into science fiction narrative. It should here be made clear again that Morselli's disassociation from science fiction is explained not so much in terms of rejection of the genre itself and its stylistic elements, but rather because of the writer's ambitions, aspiring to see his work elevated to the status of a great novel<sup>12</sup>. A kind of novel, then, which is not directed at mere entertainment but motivated by the presuppositions and aspirations of great literature. The choice to write a novel that has been categorized as pertaining to the "fantastico apocalittico"<sup>13</sup>, focused on the experience of the last person on Earth, thus responds to other needs than the mere imaginative exercise. Science fiction does not present itself as a limit but as a *possibility*. Consistently, *Dissipatio H.G.* does not offer any of the typical genre clichés, nor does it indulge in extravagant descriptions of the end of the world: there are no death-rays, epidemics, or nuclear clouds from remote explosions, only a narrating self grappling with the mysterious disappearance, or dissipation, nebulization, of the human race (*H.G.* is indeed the contraction of *Humani Generis*)<sup>14</sup>. Besides, the interest in the causes of this event almost immediately fades within the plot, emphasizing how it is not the focal point of Morselli's narration, thereby allowing the narrative space to focus instead on what happens *afterward*.

As for the usual post-apocalyptic narratives, *Dissipatio H.G.* relies on a fundamental epistemological paradox, namely the *impossibility* that arises from positing an end of the world to then present a continuation of the same, which *de jure* would be excluded by its end invoked as a principle<sup>15</sup>. However, as Distefano<sup>16</sup> emphasizes in his study of these types of writings, this paradox is fundamentally a strategy – and this definitely applies to *Dissipatio H.G.* – to divert attention from the catastrophe itself to focus instead on how it reverberates in the psychological profile of the characters. The psychic excavation in Morselli's work faithfully presents this intimate and existential reverberation in the last man (or ex-man, as he self-defines), who, after a failed suicide attempt on the night before the apocalypse (June 2nd), finds himself in a world without humanity, destined to,

12 The judgment expressed here is clearly not to be intended as a value judgment, but is meant to draw attention to the existence of a clear division between high culture and low culture in the Italian literary scene of that time, which still prompted both well-known authors and aspiring ones to dispel any possible doubts in their potential critics and readers about their literary intentions.

13 Pishedda 2004.

14 As the narrator himself testifies, this expression is taken from a quotation by the Greek philosopher Iamblichus. See Morselli 1977, 47.

15 Distefano 2022, 243.

16 Distefano 2022, 251.

as we read, comment on, exorcising myself, the end of the world<sup>17</sup>. Nevertheless, Morselli goes even beyond inner psychologism to extend the reflection to society as a whole, or rather, to develop a reflection on man and society employing their end, as we will see, to touch on otherwise unexpressed issues.

Echoing the quasi mystical allusion of the title, in reference, as already noted, to the Neo-Platonic philosopher Iamblichus, a kind transcendence takes place in the imagery outlined by Morselli: not the one, though, of man's yearning for the divine, but rather the transcendence (understood as overcoming) of the human itself, in order to land on a speculative *over-worldly* position, so to speak, to provide new analytical lenses. In this sense, one could speak of distopia *astratta* (*abstract dystopia*), as Muzzioli<sup>18</sup> aptly observes, from which springs a kind of Beckettian stage determined by a pure absence, one which has never been so present for its drastic rethinking, i.e. the rethinking of man's role in the world, in its tension between earthly reality and an almost cosmic sense of placement.

Morselli's foray into science fiction speculation is therefore not exhausted within the boundaries of diegesis. It is the need for a more elastic philosophical reflection that propels him into the heart of science fiction, as the writer uses the narrative device as a compass to trace the coordinates of a discourse that activates precisely from the setting (specifically, post-apocalyptic) that the same device enables. Therefore, it is the nature of the resumption of the quintessential *topos* of the science fiction universe – a *pre-textual* resumption, with the specific function of proposing some critical insights into society, rather than an end in itself – that makes Morselli's work a fruitful example of experimentation capable of tiding, on the one hand, genre fiction and, on the other hand, philosophical reflection. As a scholar has observed, the nature of science fiction storytelling is exactly well-suited to this kind of process, in its inherent inclination to produce mental experiments (typical of the philosophical machine), thus using our imaginative faculties for argumentative triggers or to show the extreme consequences of certain philosophical issues<sup>19</sup>. By the same token, the core of *Dissipatio H.G.* – by posing the question in these terms – is based on a thought experiment, which in particular sees it depicting a world devoid of the human component, retained as a pivot to leverage the implications, taking into account correlated references and metaphors, that this dehumanization of the world conveys. In the next section, I shall briefly inquire about the assumptions and nature of the underlying expedient of *Dissipatio H.G.* before delving into one of the main trajectories traced from it, which leads us to focus on how Morselli sets the stage to establish the focal points of an examination centered on the relationship between man and technology.

17 Morselli 1977, 29.

18 Muzzioli 2021, 111.

19 Tortoreto 2018, 13.

## 2. De-humanizing the World: Narrating on the Threshold of the Anthropocene

Following the hint given by the New York Review of Books, Guaraldo<sup>20</sup> identifies the relevance of Morselli's novel to the anthropocenic debate. This relevance extends beyond the duality of man/earth (or man/nature), where such duality is channeled through the lens of the end, into the forensic gaze (typical of the imagery and culture of the Anthropocene) embodied by the last man. It also extends to the speculative aspect inherent in the novel's purposes, particularly directed towards the projection and design of possible futures. The utopian and dystopian yearning has been a constant in human history, across its various cultural and artistic expressions. Nonetheless, with the invention of the atomic bomb (and thus the discovery of concrete means for humanity self-destruction) – and especially from the 1980s and 1990s due to the increasing technological evolution – this yearning gained more significance, spilling over into public debate and academic discourse<sup>21</sup>. The British dystopic and sci-fi writer J. G. Ballard spoke of the thinning line between reality and fiction, its gradual descent into reality, and argued that science fiction was increasingly flattening this line<sup>22</sup>, thus paving the way for a field where the preconditions for the intersection between conceptual elaboration and imaginative exercise become palpable, a kind of practice that also becomes useful as an instrument for cultural and social planification.

As highlighted earlier, Morselli's narrative is based on a mega-exodus or mass defection that works as an incipit – the cause of which remains unknown – and on top of it he aims to outline a critical-narrative space where plot and theoretical reflection continuously intertwine. Essentially, humanity disappears, but everything organic and living remains<sup>23</sup>: plants, animals, but also all the infrastructures and technologies created by humans. In other words, we could describe Morselli's apocalypse in terms of a kind of *dehumanization of the world*. Not the deprivation of the entire world, but the subtraction, following Martin Heidegger's existential analytics traced in *Being and Time* (1927), of its component *par excellence*, that is to say: the human being. Rather than the world (*Welt*), here carefully approaching the Heideggerian scaffolding, who in turn draws from biologist Jakob von Uexküll, what remains is instead the environment or ambient (*Um-Welt*), with the human being entirely collapsed into a narrating voice ([...] by now my inner history is History, the history of Humanity. I am now Humanity, I am Society (capital U and S)<sup>24</sup>) of which relatively little is known – and whose existential status is never entirely clear – as if literature were handed a passkey to access a posthuman future and bear witness to it. But for what purpose is this narration conveyed, and on what assumptions is it based?

20 Guaraldo 2022.

21 Mussgnug 2003, 19-21.

22 Ballard 2014, 237.

23 Morselli 1977, 6.

24 Morselli 1977, 18.

In a passage that we reproduce in full, the narrator engages in a reflection that seems to clarify some aspects related to the inexplicable and sudden dissipation of the human:

The end of the world? One of the jokes of anthropocentrism: describing the end of the species as implying the death of plant and animal nature, the very end of the Earth itself. The fall of the heavens. There is no eschatology that does not consider the permanence of man as essential to the permanence of things. It is admitted that things can begin before, but not that they can end after us.<sup>25</sup>

The end of the world, somewhat paradoxically, also unfolds almost desirable traits, surely far from dystopian tenets, as contemporary fiction has shown on many occasions (consider Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* as paradigmatic of post-apocalyptic narrative or other examples such as Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* or some of his other stories): the planet has never been so alive (...), so clean, sparkling, cheerful<sup>26</sup>, observes the narrator, and nature is repeatedly celebrated in its absolute imperturbability. Such a condition evidently conserves some internal reasons. To understand them, we need to return to the passage above, in relation to which I would like to draw attention to two fundamental kernels that come into play. First, Morselli's intention to distance himself from an anthropocentric view of the world, and second, connected to the first instance, the postulation of a dualism between man and things (of the world), where things refer to both natural and artificial entities.

The reason why Morselli targets anthropocentrism cannot be attributed to epistemological or metaphysical reasons alone; rather, as it becomes clear throughout the reading, it is rooted in ethical-political considerations and, to some extent, eco-critical perspectives. The subject of the dispute is the alleged exceptionalism of humans, their self-assumption of the role of master of nature. The *centrism* of *anthropos* should therefore be understood according to its self-elevation to a higher rank in a hypothetical scale of values of the planet Earth. Even more significant, though, is the subsequent observation and acknowledgment that multiple agencies operate and thrive within the Earth's ecosystem, existing both before and after human beings; hence, to some extent, *regardless* of them. Through the narrator, who types the following words, Morselli writes: 'Anthropological immanence is a law from which there is no escape, as the immanence of the idealistic nature once was. We have reduced the universal reality to man, not excluding the scientific datum'<sup>27</sup>. This consideration is of significant importance not purely at the epistemological level (in its reference to the development of models of the *real*) but also and more crucially at the existential and ontological levels, where humans are depicted as the measure and gravitational center of reality as a whole. The narrator continues to take notes writing that pan-humanism keeps existing, thus prompting

25 Morselli 1977, 30.

26 Morselli 1977, 30.

27 Morselli 1977, 68.

us to ponder – given that this concept is never fully clarified – whether we can still perceive the anthropic power exerted over nature. Turning now to the other aspect contained in the passage at stake, we will achieve further clarity on this point.

The other crucial element evoked, as anticipated, concerns the dualism postulated by Morselli. That dualism – indeed an artificial dualism, more of a mental experiment – is implemented with the purpose of realizing the awareness of the heterogeneous and pluralistic nature of the planet, inasmuch as it arises precisely due to the shifting of the center of gravity towards perspectives where humans are not deemed as *conditio sine qua non* for the existence of the cosmos in its entirety. The environment (*Umwelt*) is thus, through subtractive resolution, semantically charged with its existential vibrancy, revitalized in its existence beyond human beings. Such a strategy, which portrays *the end* as the gateway to lead us to an imaginative stage that remixes the present, openly plays – if we want to translate it into the terms of the current debate – *on the threshold* of the Anthropocene, one that marks the so-called point of no return.

Starting from different assumptions and expressive modalities, there have been similar examples capable, in some way, of anticipating anthropocenic refrains: Barros, Pieter and Pavanini<sup>28</sup> identify such an example in the work of Peter Sloterdijk. Within this framework, we can recognize an initial hint of convergence between the philosopher and the writer. Returning to the subject a few years later, when the discourse was already well-developed, Sloterdijk put forth the thesis that the Anthropocene represents a theme that needs to be addressed in eschatological terms. More than the (self)awareness of having reached the maximum degree of geological impact, as in the well-known definition of Paul J. Crutzen<sup>29</sup>, it is the matured understanding that our own earthly transit unveils and accelerates the end of humankind and the world as we know it today. According to him, therefore, the anthropocenic issue immediately leads us into the realm of discussion within which we operate following apocalyptic coordinates<sup>30</sup>. A mode of operation that well aligns with Morselli's declaration of intent. Both, in fact, do not intend to delve into the heart of the Anthropocene by outlining a genealogy or confronting the causes, but rather to emphasize the urgency of the issue starting from a hypothetical end that we must somehow consider as contemporaneous with our time.

As critics have properly illustrated, Morselli is accustomed to clearing the field – e.g. from all those remnants of ideologies, old literatures, and even old utopias (psychoanalysis, Marxism, Catholic ideology, intellectual values, etc.)<sup>31</sup> – to propel the imagination of the radical new. In *Dissipatio H.G.*, the anthropocenic imprint is driven in this direction towards its extreme consequences, and this precisely in virtue of the annihilation of the human in all its forms; also in this case, as we will see, the subtraction of an element aims to make it a generative principle, a

28 Barros, Pieter and Pavanini 2023.

29 Crutzen 2006.

30 Sloterdijk 2018, 20.

31 Sielo 2016, 18.



constructive aspect. It is, on this point, still Sielo<sup>32</sup> who puts forth the thesis that the ostensibly shocking act of the vaporization of the *Humani Generis* symbolizes the attempt, or rather the method, the suggestion, to reimagine man and humanity as a whole, lost, according to Morselli's view – embodied in the phobanthropic narrator – in the opulence propelled by the unrestrained economic *raison* and the exploitation of natural resources<sup>33</sup>.

In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to show how, at an even subtler level, Morselli's intention is indeed to lay the groundwork for a rethinking of the human being (and its place in the world) – that is, at least, *to allow for* a rethinking, through the mental exercise of its sudden vanishing – but above all to think of it again based on its relationship with technology, its ways of using and conceiving it. Especially when this relationship is considered in terms of its role as an active mediator between humans and nature.

### 3. Man and Technology Beyond Dissipation: Against the Hegemonic Technological Consciousness

The dehumanization of the planet, as suggested, served as a means to clear the field. It has also been, as detected earlier, a way to prepare the ground for an *ex-novo* projection and consideration of the human. Likewise, I have suggested that this reevaluation lends itself to a broader reflection, traversing the nexus that links it to technology, which we are now going to deal with.

To delve into the heart of this relationship, attention must be focused on a crucial question: what surfaces with the elimination of the human species? It has been stated that humans vanish, but not *everything else* in the broadest sense of the expression: neither what is other than *homo* nor its artificial traces. On the other hand, following universal dissolution, we do not witness the genesis of anything; instead, the absence allows us to view the human lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) from a different perspective. What emerges is not so much *a thing*, but rather *a condition*. The narrator's journey through those typical places of the 1970s infrastructure (airports, power plants *etc.*), and the fleeting contact with the devices and symbols of modern society (cars, radios, neon signs, computers – all still functional, as emphasized), are illustrative in this regard: the capitalist *mega-machine*, to borrow Lewis Mumford's vocabulary, is unleashed in its inseparable unity of technological infrastructure and its human agents, intertwining as a mesh that envelops the network of relationships expressed by this pair. What surfaces is a kind of dissonance, a short-circuit: on the one hand, we are shown that the disappearance of humans does not halt the functioning of their products, and on the other, it provides new lenses to reconsider the relationships between humans and this system. Morselli seems in this case to suggest that we should look at

32 Sielo 2016.

33 Morselli 1977, 36.

*relationships*, not just at *the terms* of relationships, as if they were atomic and fully autonomous elements. After the Event, and therefore without humans being present, the system continues to operate but is somehow defenseless, destined also for slow desolation. We read: In the age of technology, if the radio-world is silent, the so-called associated civilization must be suspended, not to say perished, that the Organization, the ominous cryptogram spread over five continents, has dissolved, that the octopus of the Economy no longer extends the myriad of its unclean tentacles...<sup>34</sup>.

Technology, in itself, devoid of its executing agent, is thus placed *beyond good and evil*, so to speak. The human position in this chain of connections, however, remains somehow ambiguous: despite initially being perceived as a threat, as an essential danger<sup>35</sup> – hence the survivor’s phobia – it is later even sought with nostalgia, and hopes arise to reconnect with humanity through messages left on walls and empathic attempts to celebrate its memory<sup>36</sup>. Even more interesting is another point that emerges from the subtraction of humans from the realm of the machine, acting as the *explanandum* that shows an automated world, the sub-world of cybernetic capitalism (in the terms of Bernard Stiegler) that is already here among us and operates, in some ways, *through us* and at once *beyond us*<sup>37</sup>.

Nevertheless, its conversion into a defenseless apparatus in the absence of humans (viz. the cessation of the tentacular attitude of hyper-rational economicism) leads us to a liminal position, critical and at times pessimistic, almost suggesting the hypothesis that in order for the ominous Organization to dissolve, which is born and propagated through humans, it is paradoxically required the total disappearance of the human species (and not of technology). Again, however, we cannot be certain about the subject on which the blame for this techno-capitalistic machination should fall: we do not see unequivocal repercussions in the text on either technology or humans, taken in their singularity, to translate the problem that Morselli intends to address. It is rather from what emerges *from their interaction* that the wills of control and domination come to the fore. Heidegger, among the first to touch on this issue, attributed to *the essence* (*Wesen*) of technology – in its predisposition of humans and nature as resources, as *Bestand* – the origin of that machination apparatus, defined as *Gestell*, which subordinated humans to technology itself<sup>38</sup>, identifying the impersonal dimension as the matrix of this overbearing disposition. Rather similarly, Jacques Ellul, in his work *The Technological Society* foresaw the technology’s tendency to become increasingly autonomous, shaping society independently of human will, while somehow making use of that same will<sup>39</sup>. Shortly after the invective against the Organization, Morselli reaches a somewhat analogous conclusion as the two philosophers

34 Morselli 1977, 28.

35 Morselli 1977, 65.

36 Morselli 1977, 38.

37 See Stiegler 2019.

38 Heidegger 1977, 11-17.

39 Ellul 1969.

when he writes in a concise and yet explicative manner that man has become the product of production<sup>40</sup>, suggesting that humanity now faces something infinitely greater than its horizon of intervention and control, something that is not entirely reducible to either of the two existing dimensions at play. Be it the autonomy invoked by Ellul or the machinic disposal, as warned by Heidegger, in both cases, the *relationship* between humans and technology have reached a degree in which a specific subjugation comes out of it.

According to Morselli's readings during the writing of *Dissipatio H.G.*<sup>41</sup> we notice that the issue of the future of the human species – especially in light of the hegemonic imposition of a new technological consciousness that we could describe as *posthuman* – constituted a privileged interest, if not one of the key inspirations for the novel itself. Notwithstanding Morselli's concerns, we can see that his cardinal interest is in the exploration of the causes of the upheavals in modern society rather than the mere condemnation of one or the other element that may have triggered this trajectory. For this reason, among others, we could tend to exclude that the writer places blame for the deviations of the techno-capitalistic *ethos* – in its consumeristic command and alienating machination (for economic purposes) – on the side of humans, whilst we should look at the technological manifestations that result from a specific way of configuring and deploying technical knowledge, which, according to Morselli, has now even escaped human control. In this sense, we find in Sloterdijk, more than in Ellul and Heidegger, the one who has managed to grasp and conceptualize this trend in a theoretical paradigm that accounts for the complexities of the connections resulting from our relationship with new technologies and technology as such.

Sloterdijk is indeed a concrete example of how the discourse involving the combination of man/technology must be framed in light of the *relationships* between the two extremes. With the formulation of the conceptual duality of allo- and homeo-technology, dating back to an essay contained in the collection of texts *Not Saved*, he provides analytical tools to grasp the subtleties that involve the triad of man/technology/world, and shows how Morselli somehow glimpsed the need to postulate an endogenous difference to the ways in which humans and technology interweave. Unlike Heidegger – an inevitable interlocutor for any discourse on technology rooted in philosophical thought – Sloterdijk, if not a techno-enthusiast *tout-court*, demonstrates on multiple occasions his inclination to develop a positive conception of technology. The human being, he claims, is essentially a technical creature, being it always already *homo technologicus*, since it is technology itself the main agent provoking and guiding the process of anthropogenesis

40 Morselli 1977, 28.

41 The *Fondo Morselli* in Varese allows us to examine the texts read and studied during the writing of the author's volumes. Among those consulted while working on *Dissipatio H.G.*, we may point to *The Greening of America* (1970) by Charles Reich and *Future Shock* (1970) by Alvin Toffler, as both of which focus on the impact of new technologies on society and its significance for the future of humankind. See Guaraldo 2022, 165, who discusses these readings in more detail.

or hominization<sup>42</sup>. But beyond this position that he himself will later on frame according to his *anthropotechnics*, undoubtedly evocative of the assumptions from which his reflection moves, what interests the present discourse is the distinction between two systems of configuring *our relationship with technology*, in its impact and confrontation with the world and nature.

With *allotechnology*, Sloterdijk designates a particular orientation of man through which technology is used to dominate nature and exploit it as raw material – echoing the Heideggerian enframing or *Gestell*. On the contrary, *homeotechnology*, a concept we will return to later in detail, denotes an anti-servile mode of relating (through technology) to nature and the things of the world<sup>43</sup>. Within this scenario, it is evident that in Morselli's considerations, moving in an underlying ambiguity that surrounds the relationships between man and technology, comes to the ground the idea that somehow there is a problem concerning the incorrect, or at least pernicious and detrimental, ways of employing technology by individuals or by the systems of thought that underlie and guide Western society. He is keen on denouncing, in other words, the *allotechnological* inclination of human beings, even and especially in their encroachment into economic-political territory, placed at the forefront of what defines the place of humans in the world and their way of inhabiting it. The city of Crisopoli (probably the fictional double of Zurich) is, in this sense, the impersonal symbol of such a dominant and commodifying spirit (the brain of the System, as the narrator says), which the last survivor cannot exempt himself from condemning<sup>44</sup>. Allotechnology captures precisely that set of traditional technologies, carriers of a metaphysics of domination and exploitation, which objectify the individual and de-classify nature as raw material. If, on the verge of a resolute view, Morselli seems to leave no room for any optimistic solution, Sloterdijk, on the contrary, seeks to recover our relationship with technology, as the middle term influencing our way of dwelling the world. Inizio modulo

#### **4. Towards a Techno-humanistic Paradigm: Peter Sloterdijk's Homeotechnology**

After highlighting the affinities between Morselli's meditations and the theoretical framework of Sloterdijk's philosophy, in this final part of the article, I shall attempt to recalibrate the discourse starting from how it was, so to speak, interrupted by the extreme outcomes of *Dissipatio H.G.* Through Sloterdijk, I here try to suggest a way to overcome the *impasse* that Morselli himself perceived as insurmountable, hoping to stimulate further discussion on the topic at stake. Whereas Morselli, perhaps provocatively, concludes that there is no other solution but the disappearance of the human species (or maybe, less radically, the abandonment of the anthropocentric perspective) to reverse the fate of our planet, according to Sloterdijk, a re-orientation in this direction is achievable, specifically

42 Sloterdijk 2017, 113-118.

43 Sloterdijk 2017, 143-146.

44 Morselli 1977, 36, 42.

through a renewed usage of technology by humans, the goal of which is not to exploit nature but to cooperate with it. If man is used by Morselli as a subtractive element to highlight a problematic issue, Sloterdijk is instead inclined to recall *homo* in order to rediscover it in another guise, in its constitutive *technicity*, in order to present alternative ways to account for this relationship.

The other side of the allotechnological coin, as foreshadowed, is embodied by the concept of homeotechnology. If the former de-classifies nature as mere usable material, the latter fosters an approach to nature through technological mediation in an anti-servile and cooperative manner. Sloterdijk speaks in this regard of bio-mimetics standards<sup>45</sup> and identifies as homeotechnological experiments all the attempts to apprehend intelligently and produce new states of intelligence<sup>46</sup>, where these are subsumed into an eco-logical perspective and in continuity with the realm of the natural. At the heart of this reflection there lies a fundamental question, a question that resonates to some extent in Morselli's pages, which asks whether we are truly capable of mastering technology, or whether we are instead dominated by it<sup>47</sup>. Following a different standpoint than Sloterdijk's, we can refer to some theoretical formulations regarding the intersections between humans and technology, mainly ascribable to the transhumanistic agenda<sup>48</sup>, according to which, in response to the question just raised, technology would be depicted as the tool which humans should possess and master in order to be employed for the enhancement and improvement of human beings themselves.

The reason which led us to set forth this stance is to be found in the clash of views it entails, which brings us to the crossroads of the discourse on the future of the human species – overlapping at times with the pioneering insights promoted by Morselli – at its current stage of development and specifically in the context of accelerated technological development. In Morselli, traces of a residual humanism are found, as rightly observed<sup>49</sup>; this is clearly not a problem *per se*, and is even especially useful for its capability to reveal the polyvalent *hiatus* that emerges from the encounter between humans and technology. Conversely, it does become problematic to the extent that it is grafted into the impossibility of forging new paths for a drastic reconsideration of the relationship between the human and the artificial sphere, especially in its recent digital and bioengineering advances. Taking into account the transhumanistic *credo* as forwarding the unbounded technological intervention into human beings' inner nature, we can infer why it could not represent a hypothesis in line with Morselli's approach (considered also his political background). It is Stiegler who specifically argues that such kind of approaches would entail the subjugation of humans to control and manipulation<sup>50</sup>, not to mention the enormous gap it could create between different social classes, as to further testify its fallout into a worldview that Morselli himself,

45 Sloterdijk 2018, 57.

46 Sloterdijk 2017, 144.

47 Sloterdijk and Heinrichs 2011, 327.

48 See for instance Bostrom 2014, Kurzweil 2005, Sorgner 2009.

49 Sielo 2016, 15.

50 Stiegler 2019.

and Sloterdijk along with him, sought to target and criticize. Within these theoretical outlines, transhumanism would see man operating *against* nature (not *in continuity with it*) and, above all, following Sloterdijk's outlined principles, according to anti-mimetic and nihilistic tenets. For such reasons, Sloterdijk rejects all those attempts replying at, as it were, materialistic over-humanism of the sort, and contrast them instead by signaling the importance of practice and exercise<sup>51</sup>, particularly when it is viewed from an ecological and eco-critical perspective.

Homeotechnology, according to Sloterdijk, can also bear the title of science of complexity and ecological thinking, and in this regard he is eager to comprise it according to a chain of feedbacks where technology, human, and nature interpenetrate according to equivalent degrees of kinship, as well as in a functional way for hyper-complex contexts such as today's<sup>52</sup>. Still following the avant-garde spirit characterizing Morselli's work, it is no coincidence that he approached ecological and cybernetic themes during the gestation of *Dissipatio H.G.*, as if he sensed that the reorientation of humanity should pass through such a theoretical and practical scaffolding, just as Sloterdijk believes. The homeotechnological endeavor of the latter, formulating a kind of techno-humanistic paradigm, seems to embody a Morsellian *unexpressed*, a kind of natural landing place that Morselli's intuitions and concerns might have otherwise encountered. In this sense, we can approach the more than arbitrary affinities between Morselli's insights and Sloterdijk's propositions as intimating the potential for a more balanced trajectory forward, one that acknowledges the intrinsic interconnectedness of human existence with both the technological and natural realms.

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51 Sloterdijk 2013.

52 Sloterdijk 2017, 144.

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