

# *HOMO SLOTERDIJK: PHILOSOPHY OF TECHNOLOGY IN POSTMODERNITY*

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## *Homo Sloterdijk: filosofía de la tecnología en la Posmodernidad*

LEOPOLDO EDGARDO TILLERÍA AQUEVEQUE\*

Universidad Tecnológica de Chile INACAP, Temuco, Chile

leopoldo.tilleria@inacapmail.cl

Orcid Code: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5630-7552>

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### Abstract

The article tries to approach the non-systemic philosophy of the German thinker Peter Sloterdijk, the 'black beast' of current philosophy, from the idea of that his new Big Story (delivered fundamentally in this miscellany of philosophy of the history with philosophy of the technique that is Spheres) would constitute actually a kind of cocktail of different but cohabitants philosophies. This multiplicity of theories (spherical, immune, prosthetic, anthropotechnics, timotic) forms, in the facts, the same animal philosophy, which shows to Sloterdijk as one of the most influential representatives of the Nietzschean family. Together with this, the philosophy of Sloterdijk is presented itself as a new ontology (to say it well, as an ontogenesis of the inner space) whose essential component is the principle of information. However, it is necessary to understand his critique, rather than his post-liberal project, as a postmodern philosophy of the technique, whose key is the comprehension of the technology as destination inside the history of being. Finally, some ideas are decided a little more definitive in Sloterdijk: his political criticism as unmasking of the macrosphere of power (military, financial, journalistic, fiscal), his biotechnological offensive as a manifesto of a quinism historically rendered invisible by elite cynicism and, finally, that of the truth as an inessential concept to his psycho-political project.

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### Keywords

Sphere, philosophy, ontology, politics, technique, technology.

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\* Academic and researcher of the Technological University of Chile INACAP, social worker, journalist, master and PhD in Philosophy from the University of Chile. He is postdoctoral candidate in Philosophy of Technology at the Terra at Mundi Technological Institute in Mexico. Research lines: philosophy of technology, philosophy of religion, philosophy of art, aesthetics.

### Resumen

El artículo intenta abordar la asistemática filosofía del pensador alemán Peter Sloterdijk, la 'bestia negra' de la filosofía actual, a partir de la idea de que su nuevo 'gran relato' (entregado fundamentalmente en esa mezcla de filosofía de la historia con filosofía de la técnica que es *Esferas*) constituiría en realidad una suerte de cóctel de distintas pero cohabitantes filosofías. Esta multiplicidad de teorías (esférica, inmunitaria, protésica, antropotécnica, tímótica) configura, en los hechos, una misma filosofía animal, que muestra a Sloterdijk como uno de los más influyentes representantes de la familia nietzscheana. A la par con esto, la filosofía de Sloterdijk se presenta como una nueva ontología (para decirlo bien, como una ontogénesis del espacio interior), cuyo componente esencial es el principio de información. Pero también cabe entender su crítica, mejor dicho, su proyecto postliberal, como una filosofía posmoderna de la técnica, cuya clave es la comprensión de la tecnología como destino dentro de la historia del ser. Sobre el final del artículo se decantan algunas ideas un poco más definitivas en Sloterdijk: su crítica política como desenmascaramiento de la macroesfera del poder (militar, financiero, periodístico, fiscal), su ofensiva biotecnológica como manifiesto de un quinismo históricamente invisibilizado por el cinismo de elite y, por último, la de la verdad como concepto inesencial a su proyecto psicopolítico.

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### Palabras claves

Esfera, filosofía, ontología, política, técnica, tecnología.

## Introduction

Peter Sloterdijk has been declared persona non grata by the left-wing of the philosophical establishment and by much of the German intellectual elite. As Sordo and Guzmán (2013) affirm, he has transformed into a superstar of philosophy venturing into lands considered 'obscurantists' and flying a new non-unitary ontology that attacks with high firepower against Western metaphysical individualism. With the same enthusiasm, he directs his literary missiles both to entertainment fascism and to American politics.

As Duque (2002) observes, Sloterdijk faces Habermas's left, Apel, Tugendhat, which becomes obsolete in the face of technological, biotechnological and globalization progress. At the same time, he suggests a change of principles: parenting instead of education, biology instead of politics, race instead of class. In Sloterdijk everything is history: there is not a single man, nor a single humanism and there has not been nor will be a single way to face and understand the technique. This idea will be fundamental his its concept of anthropotechnics.

Margarita Martínez (2010) expresses this historicity very well:

Now, in the new interpretation of the post-Renaissance history offered by Sloterdijk, these three vexations raised by Freud obey the first primary vexation: vexation through machines or the idea of a system. For the Copernican turn, it implies that the earth is part of a system, subject of its rules, Darwinian vexation implies (with the antecedent of Vesa-

lian vexation) the dissection of the human body as a perfected machine from previous models (animals). Psychoanalytic vexation, meanwhile, implies the establishment of an uncontrolled system (even if one intervenes on it) of direct consequences on behavior. The irruption of the machine occurs exactly at the moment when new lands are discovered to conquer abroad and intimate domains to be investigated in the interior (p. 128).

Now, keeping in mind this understanding of the technique proposed by Sloterdijk, his thinking should really be understood as a postmodern formula in which different philosophies coexist in the same mediatic post-pessimism, so that his irreverent criticism (aesthetics, technological, financial, political, not to mention many other aspects of postmodern culture, especially European) responds precisely to that chameleonic quality that makes one wonder, more than ever, who Peter Sloterdijk really is.

We should start by placing Sloterdijk in the field of philosophy of technology, beyond the fact that his main detractors want to place him (assuming that this constitutes some type of discredit) in the field of literature. In this sense, and paraphrasing Floralba Aguilar (2011), his preferred task must then be “the apprehension of the being, and meaning of the technological phenomenon” (p. 134). Just what Sloterdijk goes for.

In the following pages, we will undertake the not easy task of chaining these philosophical perspectives in Sloterdijk, taking special care not to caricature his thoughts, no matter how much his prolific work has come to us apostilled in a gigantic kaleidoscope of ideas and counter-ideas. Probably the best way to understand Sloterdijk is to consider it a true oracle, only that this forecaster, who has become an expert in the historical analysis of the West, the only thing he seems to announce of the future is the crisis of coexistence within a society of pessimism. Moreover, the idea of the future tends to function as a kind of ‘anthropological obsession’, in the sense that for the Karlsruhe philosopher we live in a world that is increasingly futurized and that —and this is crucial— the deep meaning of what he calls ‘being in the world’ resides precisely in futurism.

Methodologically, the article is constructed from the approach of philosophical hermeneutics (focused preferentially and obligatorily on Sloterdijk’s theory of technology and partially on the existential ontology of Martin Heidegger) and the documentary analysis of authorized commentators on the developments of the German-Dutch philosopher. The notion of hermeneutics that is taken into consideration (especially since it is Sloterdijk’s philosophy the main object of study) is rather based on Gadamer’s critique (in Hermanus, 2013), for whom “art belongs to



the domain of knowledge and that it cannot be separated from practical activities such as decoration, technical and artisanal work, and the same perfection that technology points to” (p. 49).

This work is structured in five sections and one conclusion. In the first one, the concept of anthropotechnics is developed, a kind of anthropological thesis through which Sloterdijk defines man as a product of the technique. In the second, the idea of immune systems is approached, something similar to an adaptive shield of man in his future as a species. The third section deals with prosthetic techniques as the cynical nucleus of *Homo protheticus*, a sort of postmodern Prometheus. Next, the concept of *thymos* is analyzed, which in Peter Sloterdijk functions as a kind of heroic anger or ontological pride, something like the fundamental impulse that would allow the playful and ethical tendencies of *Homo technologicus* to be co-habitable. The last section, before the conclusion, discusses the neo-Nietzschean idea of genetic animality as a critique of Postmodernity.

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## Anthropotechnics

In *Spheres* (2006), his opus magnum, and as Sordo and Guzmán (2013) refer, Sloterdijk develops a complete *weltanschauung*, a kind of critique of the improvement of humanity, which attempts to synthesize a renewed Nietzschean animal philosophy with his own anticipations in mystical and magical traditions. According to Reyes (2019), Sloterdijk’s interpretation is “a strange medium hybrid between Heidegger and Nietzsche” (p. 218).

What happens is that Sloterdijk—in a strange mixture of cynicism and intellectualism—appears reversing a series of paradigms (the Heideggerian, for now) that, in turn, have consisted precisely in reversing, at the same time, other paradigms that had dragged Modernity moribundly (Cartesianism and Neoplatonism, to name just two). Without having to go much further, the concept of heroism itself, raised so messianically by the fascist tendencies of the left and right, is completely dismantled by Sloterdijk, to throw through his Frisian-Germanic jaws the only element that can somehow guarantee the survival of the ‘technological reason’: the sense of humor. Yes, as read.

From the point of view of ontological criticism, Heidegger’s being-in-the-world is replaced by Sloterdijk by being-in-spheres, right at the heart of his anthropotechnical theory, where the spheres would represent specific habitats, immunized, uncertain, fragile and, at the same time, therapeutic. Anthropotechnics means in Sloterdijk a system of being-in-

the-world training, just to survive in an environment not only hostile but also straight threatening (atmospheric terrorism). Hence, paranoia or schizophrenia are scenarios that can arrive at any time if the postmodern subject does not become ‘expert’ in the exercise of circumvention, irony, and acrobatics (therapeutic maneuvers par excellence). The spheres of Sloterdijk seem to be rather an armored cockpit that the individual must build and occupy to protect themselves from the dictatorship of the aristocracy ‘without virtue’, a dominant layer that, according to the philosopher, has been responsible for installing culture as a regulation.

In the words of Castro-Gómez (2012):

Without these artificial domes, without this technically produced “greenhouse”, without these immunological shells, men could never have become what they are. For Sloterdijk, being-in-the-world always means forming spheres, so that being-in-spheres constitutes the fundamental relationship for the human being (p. 66).

So what Sloterdijk understands by anthropotechnics (and this is extremely relevant from not only the philosophical point of view but above all anthropological) is nothing more than the true ‘nature’ of man, that is, the sociohistorical condition that defines and determines him. We reach a point in the philosophy of technology where the technique has succeeded in replacing nature as the essentiality of the species. Álvarez (2015) seems to think the same when he recognizes that in the anthropotechnics of Sloterdijk the ‘being’ is replaced by the movement of a historical dasein in the technical construction of its surroundings and of itself.

Such is the central idea of Sloterdijk’s theory: that anthropotechnics are a consequence of the theorem that considers the human being as a product, which can only be understood by understanding its relationship with the technique during the humanizing process. The idea of anthropotechnics, seen at the same time as ‘improvement of the world’ and ‘improvement of oneself’, does not mean anything else but to conceive man as essentially and originally technical, this technique understood as a certain degree of control over our own impulses. Sloterdijk himself specifies this idea in *Not Saved: Essays After Heidegger* (2001):

This term was recently misunderstood in a broad debate as a synonym for human biopolitics conceived in a centrally selfish and strategically planned manner and caused irritations that would be more typical of a religiously-motivated battle for man. But, in the context of the work developed here, the expression “anthropotechnics” responds to a clearly outlined theorem of historical anthropology: according to him, “man”

is basically a product, and can only be understood —within the limits of current knowledge— examining analytically its methods and relations of production (p. 100).

Thus, anthropotechnics are those immunological practices from which men from different cultures try to systematically protect themselves from the blows of fate and the risk of death. Hence, based on this technical essentiality of man, any possible prospect of technological optimization (including engineering and cloning, not to mention cryogenics) is finally inevitable. It is worth reading more closely to Sloterdijk (in *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2017) about this crucial idea of his anthropotechnics, that of considering —even biblically— man as the animal that lacks something:

There is some evidence that refers to the biblical account of the loss of paradise as the real beginning of the Western conversation about mankind. Certainly, it does not represent anthropology in the most specific sense of the word, but at the beginning, it emphasizes the fact that man is a being who had to survive an early change of place. Its position cannot be appreciated if the trauma of an original procession is not taken into account: a topological difference is printed on its psyche, that of paradise and not paradise, a difference that forms a scar more or less deep in the individual (p. 2).

What the idea of scar implies in Sloterdijk's analysis, or to put it another way, the figure of a 'fallen' subject in a 'technical' world that is not his, is precisely the point of difference that could be noticed regarding the Nietzschean superman. Indeed, if the cynical acrobatics of the *übermensch* was the response of the Zarathustra philosopher to the nihilism consecrated by Modernity (the work of Sloterdijk, *The thinker on stage: the materialism of Nietzsche*, 1986, is an obligatory reference of this story), in Sloterdijk the idea of 'eugenics' seems to occupy similar status as an operational and postideological principle, in a planetary scenario —paraphrasing Sloterdijk itself— where the only definitive thing seems to be the finitude of our energy reserves.

Summarizing: what appears on the surface of Sloterdijk's theory, as Consoli (2015) says, is a set of training techniques (anthropotechnics) that man applies to himself once anthropogenesis is completed as a form of production from the pre-human animal. However, the fundamental thing is happening in the current anthropotechnics, where a human being compulsively concentrated in himself (fitness, consumerism, technology of saying yes), forces more and more to the development of a 'private philosophy' in detriment of a 'public philosophy'. Consoli (2015) states: "The



intervention on oneself acquires more and more the form of augmenting, of physical, cognitive, prosthetic empowerment” (p. 139). It follows from this that prosthetics and biological techniques, as will be seen, represent the most efficient state of the new anthropotechnics in terms of the engineering of the operable man. Sloterdijk himself asserts (in Paredes, 2016): “Biotechnologies and nanotechnologies nurture, by their very nature, a refined and cooperative subject, and with tendencies to play with himself” (p. 154). In the words of Méndez (2013), the anthropotechnical dimension becomes a social history of the appeasement that demonstrates the way in which men are collected (in the sense of creating culture, but also of restraining themselves, of containing themselves) to correspond to the whole.

There seems to be no doubt that in the confines of this anthropotechnical phylogeny there would be, in a phase of definitive transmutation, the passage of the human being to become the technological being, lineage on which everything could potentially be expected.

## Immune systems

Paradoxically, and as Martínez (2010) puts it, given that ‘helpless humanism’ is the paradigm that has conveyed the traditional and bidirectional states of language and writing (typical of the European logo-phono-centrism widely treated by Derrida), “Sloterdijk’s final diagnosis is that, currently, you have to become a technologist in order to be a humanist” (p. 7).

But it is not about any humanism (or at least not one of the many that the boutique of philosophy offers, especially during the first half of the twentieth century). The humanism referred to by the German philosopher is technical humanism, in which precisely the technique provides man with a collection of immune systems that allow him to integrate himself, in an equipped manner, to his environment. In other words, a set of therapeutic and physical and spiritual shielding techniques of an adaptive nature with respect to nature from which the human species has not been separately born. Then, anthropotechnics (that is, the idea that explains this ‘new’ nature of man) can be seen as a general asceticism based on a biosophical interpretation of man, from which the immune systems, if it can be said so, refer to a virtual policy of acclimatization.

Consoli notes that (2015):

The ascetic practice —understood in the Foucaultian sense of “a personal exercise on oneself, through which man tries to elaborate, transform

and acquire a certain way of being”— represents not only the form of *epheleia heautou* (the “care of the self”), but also—less obvious— of the other forms of subjectivation, being forms of repercussion on oneself through undeclared exercises, “hidden training habits” (p. 136 ss.).

This psychodynamic training, this ‘self-care’ or asceticism that Consoli refers to, must be understood—if the thread of Sloterdijk’s discourse is followed with attention— as a technique of producing an artificial environment suitable to ensure the development of the individual-species, considering as operational principle (it could even be said, properly eugenic) all those transformations that the subject must make about himself and his own products. That is, it is the idea of an immune system as a sphere of protection but at the same time as systems of adaptation and artificial survival.

Reiterating the argument, immune systems of this type act virtually as second nature in man, something similar to an adaptive cortex that human beings have been changing through various training mechanisms during all these centuries (the *homo faber* and the *homo religiosus* are typical cases in the history of this trained man). It cannot be clearer in the words of Bordeleau (2009): “It is an enlightened position [that of Sloterdijk], which tries to combat the mass mediatic stench on its own ground with the help of a critical air theory that assumes the task of air-freshening public space” (p. 6). To put it another way: a theory of immune systems that propels the development of psychic-symbolic spaces (biopolitical, ethopoietic, domestic) in the Pharisaic scenario of the political philosophies of cynical power (Postmodernity).

The obvious thing is that Sloterdijk aspires to design a global immune system (a co-immunity or co-immunism) where not only all men but the entire ecosystem (to be exact, the atmosphere) are included. Indeed, for Consoli (2015): “The project of a global immune design should become planetary, where the globe, surrounded by networks and foams, is considered as its own, and the excess of dominatory exploitation as an alien” (p. 141). It is these immune systems—if Sloterdijk is well understood—that will allow *Homo immunologicus* to survive and develop the last anthropotechnology, completing—a half artistically, half technologically—the unfinished exercise of the Nietzschean *übermensch*.

However, there is an explicit accent of Sloterdijk (probably his most aggressive idea regarding the impact of his spherical theory on the contemporary state) on the issue of extended motherhood as a phenomenon of Modernity. The image that best represents this concern is precisely that of the extension of the maternal sphere (protection, pampe-





ring, care) towards a new limit: the formation of a new immunological layer, this time of State responsibility. What there is, in short, is the figure of allomaternal benefits, that is, a virtual incubator of zoopolitical protection at the hands of the very State.

Sloterdijk explains (2006b):

The sociotechnical nucleus of Modernity consists of the explicit protection of maternal benefits. The “conception, which marks the time, of an artificial mother” is not only a whim of alternative medicine, which a pre-suicidal Swiss writer mocks; It is the hidden, but easily recognizable, business principle for a biased look of the welfare society. The State —now obliged to “bureaugamy” or to the politics of pampering—, since its reform as a welfare and assistance agency, functions as a meta-prosthesis, which it puts into the hands of concrete maternal-prosthetic constructs, of social assistance services, of the pedagogues, of the therapists and their innumerable organizations, the means for the fulfillment of their tasks (p. 605).

This condition of neo-immunization with respect to an individual-beneficiary, who seeks the same maternal pampering now in the domain of the society of opulence, has enabled, in Sloterdijk’s opinion, the great paradox of the postmodern state: to imply this logic of justice in the access to pampering and welfare systems (in fact, to the dynamics of consumption) in the political idea of access to human rights. Sloterdijk (2006b) says: “From the turn to the welfare of the ‘masses’ inside the great greenhouse, equality between human rights and comfort rights was enforced” (p. 606). In fact, it is quite paradoxical to try to include the Other in need (emotionally, financially, politically) in the subject’s own sphere of protection, that is, to give him guarantees of access to the advantages of the welfare system (as Sloterdijk says, also to open the access to the world of abundance), and at the same time consider him a direct rival in the field of consumption. In any case, it is not surprising for Sloterdijk this asymmetric configuration of the macrosphere; In fact, it is its foundation. When he calls this State of comfort ‘socio-thematic tension construction’, what the philosopher is doing is just revealing the essence of this greenhouse: the continuous thematization of irritation and discontent regarding urgent claims that are never satisfied. This is, with all precision, the genesis of the only discourses that remain available as discourses of dystopia (where curiously the stress of war would be, in this case, an exceptional synchronization).

It is convenient to consider the idea of a sphere system as a work of art (so to speak, in the aesthetics of Sloterdijk’s artificiality). Indeed, the

individuals who participate in this macrosphere, as a large greenhouse, develop endless discursive strategies in pursuit of care, lightening, consumption and even luxury (everything that comes to be the theory of comfort), exposing, more or less, their lack of drive. However, the scenario available for these unloading operations is the most artificial of all: all circumstances can no longer be designated with the concept of natural. This hypertificiality forces us to resort to aesthetics as a conceptual milestone when it comes to a better definition of the movements of this great museum. The meaning is broken, says Sloterdijk (2006b), of the opposition between art and non-art:

While the life forms of affluent society embody the artificiality prototype, it is not plausible to pay more attention to individual objects, such as works of art, than to any non-prominent objects. No individual object can be more worthy of consideration than the entire installation; consequently, the exhibition of works of art gets competition by the exhibition of devices that, until now, were outside the concept of art and, even, in short, the exhibition of the place of the exhibitions (p. 612).

This reference is transcendental from the theoretical point of view of Sloterdijk's philosophy, since it truly marks in the final stage of his meditation (if it were really possible to talk about it) a more or less determined inclination, although no less problematic, towards a surprising philosophy of art.

The premise is as follows: the system is so important from the point of view of the reconstruction and air freshening of human relations, that in the end, it ends up being as or more decisive than its own clientelist and social-bureaucratic dynamics. Individual object and complete installation (that is, human being and global sphere that contains it) are worthy of the same ontological-aesthetic consideration from the moment they both embody the same artificiality prototype: enveloping, comfortable, self-referential and extraordinarily mimetic. Such a statement makes possible even the obvious similarity between the concepts of art presented by Luhmann (particularly in his work *The Art of Society* from 2005) and Sloterdijk himself, especially if one thinks about the identification between the ideas of 'society system' and 'art system'. As Valenzuela (2014) refers, for Luhmann (without entering an iota in his sociological theory) art will take the form of intertextual networks of works that limit the scope of possibilities and the sense of future works that become the same networks, evaluated and reevaluated according to criteria that would activate an extensive binary code. In other words, art



considered a functional system of modern society in which the role of the work has been transferred as art applied to the concept of communication (quite far from the institutionalized systems of classical, ornamental, popular or even contemporary art).

On the same topic, the reflection of Sloterdijk (2006b) on the role of the hermeneutic way of philosophy in this phase of the total installation, is very compelling:

The museum of the present, philosophically curated, has the strange ability to show the permanent end of art by its decline in the artifice of superinstallation. It is the only place in the system where its primary quality can be observed as such: to be the installation of the enveloping or the totally artificial situation (p. 613).

Then: it is the philosophy of the sphere as the philosophy of art (as exhaustion of philosophy, paraphrasing Sloterdijk) that allows our author to operate a certain transmutation of artistic values (at least of the work, not to mention the editorial value of the critic) in what he calls “stock market system of art”. Sloterdijk says, *Art retracts on itself: presentation of a unique exhibition* (2007):

The expansion of the concept of art is a mirror image of the expansion of the subjectivity of the value-creating artist. Finally, everything that touches the artist’s life has to be transformed into art. King Midas is everywhere. If it had been legally possible, Andy Warhol would have sold entire streets of New York buildings to collectors with solid finances that he had transformed into works of art as he strolled through them (p. 104).

So this frothy vision of Sloterdijk what it does is to decentralize the artistic power of art, to configure the latter in a state of restitution of action. This question of art and of action, if the dialogue (sometimes more intense than it would be supposed) between Sloterdijk and Heidegger, looks precisely at the essential difference between both German philosophers, or to put it with a greater degree of historical drama, the fundamental leap from Heideggerian ontology to sloterdijkian anthropotechnics: is the matter of space. “In *Being and Time*, space is simply themed as a world, but it does not deepen on what that space consists of, or how we inhabit it (or we must inhabit)” (p. 225). In this regard, Rincón (2014) lucidly noticed the reverberation of Eastern philosophies that allowed Sloterdijk to reinterpret the relationship between philosophy and art, a path that in the intersection with Nietzsche’s meditation could only come from the flowering of a corporal philosophy:

[Sloterdijk] absorbs elements of Eastern philosophies, marked by two fundamental characteristics: first, the conception that thought requires a body in optimal conditions for the exercise of the contemplation of the cosmos and, second, language is always insufficient to represent the cosmos in its entirety (p. 316).

In short, the idea of language, or of discourse, as a psychopolitical form par excellence of art. It is not surprising, therefore, that art and immunization appear in Sloterdijk's theory as part, so to speak, of the same notion of sphere. The entire philosophical journey that Sloterdijk has borne, mounting and dismantling, again and again, the technical implications that he notes in the civilization of man (that is, and only to choose an essential dimension to his project, in the political sphere), acquires consistency if it is accepted, even reluctantly, that its purpose is still messianic: to provide the individual with a general immunology against the inevitable collapse of the current state of affairs.

This would explain, in a way and resorting to a well-known wink, Sloterdijk's 'turn' from an aggressive nietzscheanism to cynicism close to that of the Diogenes (the dog), demonstrated above all in a more cheerful and absurd philosophy, and, therefore, with a more affirmative sense of civilization.

## Prosthesis

Now, in this strange philosophy of technology that Sloterdijk proposes, artificiality, as it was said, happens to play the role of a second or, so to speak, of the 'true' nature of man. Hence, all those movements aimed at strengthening, adapting or optimizing said artificiality constitute fundamental adaptive maneuvers of human evolution. It is precisely the case of the prosthesis. In *Critique of Cynical Reason* (2003), Sloterdijk will do just a sort of unmasking of the Nazi ideology, which he sees hidden in a delirious spirit of technique expressed in the image of mutilated German soldiers returning from the 'great war'. There, prosthetic techniques are analyzed as the core of a medical, military and ideological cynicism, which strategically manages to impose the will of what the philosopher calls *Homo protheticus*. For Sloterdijk, Third Reich's cynicism manipulated not only the use but, in particular, the sense of a technique transformed into 'organic', which ranged from the prosthesis as restoration of the residual stump to the organization of the military community. It reads in this work:

The optimism with which the instructors of the invalids, of that time, infused their protected positive feelings and joy of living and urged them to continue working seems paradoxical to us today. With extreme seriousness, patriotic doctors, ragingly jovial, addressed the crippled: “Also in the future, the country will need your services, even the crippled, the lame or those who wear prostheses can continue fighting in front of production.” The great machinery does not wonder if they were activated by “individuals” or human-prosthetic units. A man is a man. In the manuals for invalids and in the writings of medical technique, a human figure of enormous contemporaneity is constituted: *Homo protheticus*, who must say a fierce “yes” to everything that says “no” to the “individuality” of the “individuals” (2003, p. 632).

If the underlying idea about the status of the prosthesis is well understood, it is realized that what is relevant to the immune processes is not related to quality or complexity, not least to the usability of the prosthesis, but in reality, with the social structure that this technique requires and determines. In other words, with the very exercise that the prosthesis demands as a “natural” additive to the body. Seen in this way, Sloterdijk’s prosthesis represents the probability of connecting body-artifice in the same ontogenetic unit, possibly in the most successful combination that nature can provide for any living system. The distinction of Martínez (2010) is, therefore, very clarifying, when he indicates that “Sloterdijk defines the immunological success of an individual as the development of a powerful narcissism that is a sign of integration of that individual in his moral collective” (p. 3). So, the prosthesis described by Sloterdijk goes on to fulfill an optimizing (therapeutic) function of the biopolitical viability of man, especially in a society where biotechnologies have come to configure, one could say, the ‘new anatomy’ of Postmodernity. In this sense, the conceptual leap that Sloterdijk provokes from the idea of prostheses is fully introduced in his ontological proposal of asceticism of Postmodernity. Indeed, this kind of additional instrumentation that involves the prosthetic, however, should not play any role in a heroic sense, nor in a pitiful consideration, let alone in an epic extolling of the Nietzschean court. On the contrary, the prosthesis should only guarantee a genuinely civilized becoming precisely because with Sloterdijk it is a ‘post-Miserabilistic’ metaphysics, which thinks the subject in reality as the subject of impossibility (precisely foreshadowed in the prosthesis thesis as ‘nature’).

In this way, the prosthesis, far from appearing as a prototype of denaturation or artificiality, imposes itself as a kind of technical-natural contraption closer to stoicism than to the political, technocratic or reli-



gious fundamentalisms of the last hundred years. The best trick of the postmodern tightrope walker. Sloterdijk argues as a guide to the idea of 'absolute imperative' (in Ríos, 2013):

Every individual will have to admit, if seriously analyzed, that he has done of himself less than he should have done according to his capacity, except for the few moments in which he could say that he has performed the duty of being a good animal. Like a mediocre animal, spurred by ambitions, infested with excessive symbols, man lags far behind of what is asked of him, even when he wraps himself in the victor's jersey or the cardinal's (p. 13).

Paradoxically, this prosthetic philosophy has a peculiar similarity to Lewis Mumford's machine theory, for whom the machine is a projection of human organs and the goal of technology is to satisfy man's superorganic aspirations. The fascist prosthesis seems, then, to be equivalent to the Mumford mega-machine, a complex, ductile, transformable and multifunctional machinery. Now, the philosophical background of the prosthesis program seems to be found by Sloterdijk in Friedrich Dessauer's ideas. For Sloterdijk (2003), Dessauer represents the engineering affirmation of the technique, a statement that the Reich quickly transformed into a will to dominate:

In this double affirmation, the steel subject of the future moves. This is inseparable from this subject's high mastery over himself: that is why the dominant theory of that time speaks incessantly of the heroic. This does not mean anything other than intense autosuggestion: the rhetoric of courage means, in this case, to dare to a higher degree of self-deformation (p. 643).

Whatever the case, Sloterdijk will see in Dessauer's program hardly anything more than a philosophy of technique as an imitation of an unfinished Kantian philosophy of science. Far from conceiving, in Dessauer's way, the operation of technique as an extension of the Creator's work, Sloterdijk will delineate an approach, if it can be said so, markedly ultra-liberal about its possibilities.

In summary, for Sloterdijk the machine will not be more machine (or at least not purely machine) if viewed from a new ontology; if it were, it would be to return to the univalent and worn out ontology of the soul versus thing. According to the philosopher, the machines are by nature prostheses and as such, they are made to complete and replace the first machine construction (the one that delivers nature) with a second, arising from the spirit of the technique. Care must be taken, therefore,



not to understand by ‘protheses’ only the primitive substitutes of the organs that have already been finished. On the contrary, the nature of the prosthetic involves replacing more imperfect organs with more efficient machines. Thus, for Sloterdijk (2000) the offensive quality of these replacements appears just at the moment when the restorative protheses are abstracted and considered, from a genealogy of the technique, the expansive protheses as the determining protheses.

## Thymos

Well then, for Sloterdijk, Modernity is —as it has not gotten tired of repeating it— pure anthropological stagnation, a pathological state that for which he blames a diverse number of factors: the legacy of the Enlightenment, the Frankfurt School, psychoanalysis, Heidegger, Sartre, the authoritarian-absolutist tradition of the monarchical impositions of premodern states, the welfare state, and a long etcetera. In any case, what matters here is that, as an aesthetic thinker, Sloterdijk believes he sees in the thymos-Eros couple the update of the Nietzschean vital impulses: Dionysus and Apollo. It says more or less this: that man has by nature a set of vital impulses aimed at self-affirmation, that is, internal forces charged with privileging the feeling of pride as part of a general immune system (through indignation, revenge, guts, the demand for justice, pride). This theme, as Reyes suggests (2019), “opens up paths for men so that they are able to affirm what they have, can, are and want to be” (p. 213).

Quite nietzscheanly Sloterdijk affirms that (in Reyes, 2019):

The Greeks thought that seeing was the most important fact. He who sees is rich, this was an Aristotelian conviction. The word “cosmetic” is related to the cosmos, the one who sees the cosmos is, therefore, in front of the treasure chest of being as such and is per se holder of it. So at the same time you can rejoice and be proud to exist. This implies that we should not want those qualities but see them as something that is at our side (p. 214).

Said in plain English: Modernity has meant that in the history of being, war gives ground to *Eros*. It is the same as saying that in the current phase of history, the erotic impulses (which until now had been confronted with an abundant literature focused on *logos* when not on *ethos*) have left man in a state of complete ontological indigence, especially considering the platonic idea that eroticism is essentially the desire for what we don’t have. But it is, according to Sloterdijk, quite the opposite: not to





look at what is needed (much less get to suffer it), but to consider what is and what can be from a point of view of a irreducible ontological pride, that is, under the premise that, as Reyes (2019) points out, “existing does not imply any lack, but, on the contrary, the satisfaction of belonging to the cosmos” (p. 214).

Actually, it's about rage. Then, it should not be surprising that the text where Sloterdijk pours his idea about the timotic impulses is precisely *Rage and Time* (2010), a title that by itself speaks of his attempt to sweep with the Heideggerian *dasein*. However, it should be clarified that what the Karlsruhe philosopher postulates, even though sometimes a little contradictory, is the restoration of the ancient rage of the Greeks (embodied, as he emphasizes, on the first page of Iliad: “Sing, oh goddess, the rage of Achilles form Peleus”). This Hellenic rage has nothing to do with the anger systematized by Christianity in its veteran or neo-testamentary versions. Much less with the anger most recently administered by communism or nationalist fascism. Not to mention the cinematic sadism posted on the Internet by the Islamic State.

The rage of the timotic impulse that the German-Dutch philosopher sees is rage in the heroic sense, that which exalts the existence as a prior right to any other psychopolitical or anthropological consideration, and which in no case has to do with the anger of resentment or with that of cowardly revenge. The latter is defined by Sloterdijk as a ‘reactive feeling’ towards ‘hurt pride’, a sort of accumulated resentment that continues to sharpen our current pathology of being. It happens that Sloterdijk makes a reevaluation of this idea of Hellenic belligerence and exports it to the postmodern situation, not placing it in the pure revenge of the Hoplite warrior, but in the manner in which we react when our comfort zone is threatened inside the uterotope (as a space of protection or topological reality in which we act outside the mother's womb).

Sloterdijk says in *Rage and Time* (2010):

Is not “world” the word for a place where men inevitably accumulate memories of wounds, insults, humiliations and all possible episodes against which they subsequently wanted to clench their fists in anger? And all cultures are not always, in an open or hidden way, traumatic collective archives? From reflections such as this, it can be deduced that the rules of cunning of all civilization belong the measures to erase or contain the inflamed memories of afflictions (p. 62).

Now, when this anger fails to express itself therapeutically, that is, restoring or healing these collective, moral or psychic wounds (for





example, in the feats of victories and defeats typical of a history of war), something similar to a castrated, cancerous, political anger is produced. Sloterdijk completes the argument, suggests Huerta (2016), indicating that anger begins to disappear from charisms when heroic-warrior virtues become citizen-bourgeois qualities, which would only be manifested in ‘ghostly enthusiasms’ until finally being excluded from culture.

In the same way, as Nietzsche did through his transmutation of values, Sloterdijk undertakes through his timotic philosophy a complex exercise of transvaluation that basically involves facing two enemies: on the one hand, the doctrinal religions of humility (the Christocentric of preference), and on the other, the psychoanalytic and erotic theories that have replaced the warrior and vengeful impulses with the neurotic (*Tanatos*) and libidinous (*Eros*) complexes. This valuatory hostility would justify in Sloterdijk his description of Modernity as a broad antigenealogical experiment. Sloterdijk is revealed in his theory of thymos as the kaleidoscope of philosophies that he is: thymic and biopolitical impulse, merge into the fundamental concept of an ‘antigravity’ trend. What this tendency does, to some extent, is to connect the ethical, biophysical and economic spheres in the metadiscourse of a general immunology, in the simultaneous design of individual movements and fiscal and business determinations with a view to what has been called ‘civilizational altruism’, behind which Sloterdijk places the principle of private property as a kind of *sanctasanctorum*. The thesis is quite simple: private property will guarantee the individual the affirmation of himself, simply because ‘he who has, gives, and only he who gives affirms himself’.

Somehow, Sloterdijk strips a new dialectic (one might even say, a new historical materialism) just as the engine of his psychodynamic theory: the timotic and erotic forces are still indispensable in the strategy of self-affirmation. In this sense, the Sloterdijk dialectic seems to be closer to the Georges Gurvitch dialectic (in Ogaz, 2012), for whom “dialectics is only applicable to society and to history and partially to nature” (p. 90). Sloterdijk seems to flirt with Jaspers’s idea of one-self, although he never recognizes it. However, it is clear what his formula is: the erotic impulses (individual, greedy and appropriating) must be replaced by the thymic energies (generous, prestigious and donor), if our horizon truly is a more ‘materially’ democratic society.

Said allegorically, the timotic impulse seems to be the one that changes in the game board (for system efficiency) the card of indignation for that of generosity.



## Animality

The thesis of this article suggests the existence of several cohabiting philosophies in Sloterdijkian meditation. It is necessary to retain this, as it is the only way to be able to understand, at least with a minimum degree of certainty, the apparently arbitrary transit from an animal philosophy to another based on the idea of sphere, or a technique-centered one (or as it has been called here, from the prosthesis) to another constituted by immune systems, or even one based on thymic impulses.

Sloterdijk, in *The operable man: notes on the ethical state of gene technology* (2006a), describes a new form of culture, founded on the role of micro-networks of information as tensors of biotechnical acclimation from preferably domestic spaces. This means that the key to the anthropotechnical connection systems is the principle of information: “In the phrase ‘there is information’ there are other phrases involved: there are systems, there are memories, there are cultures, there is artificial intelligence” (p. 8). And the Germanic thinker adds, in which could be said is his main ontological idea: “Even the sentence ‘there are genes’ can only be understood as the product of a new situation: it shows the successful transfer of the principle of information to the sphere of nature” (P. 8). It should be emphasized that the fundamental thing of these observations is that they represent a new subjectivity (which adds elements of the natural environment) and, at the same time, new objectivity (constituted essentially as ‘informed matter’). Such performances, says Sloterdijk, may include the emergence of planning intelligence, dialogic ability, spontaneity, and freedom.

Thus, the information co-produced homeotechnologically will determine this new human-machine relationship through interaction with complex texts and hyper-complex contexts. According to this new information ontology (specified in the concept genome as data available for the whole species and not only for the cynical biotechnology entrepreneur), the data is no longer seen as a strategic trophy, to move into context of productive intelligence as technological ‘self-operation’.

It is clear that Sloterdijk’s criticism places technology at the center of culture, as a kind of hyperconnector of multiple intelligences, without margins for domination, enslavement or concealment of information and knowledge. Thought this way, the contest develops in these same moments. On the one hand, alotechnology, as advanced technology, in its strategic and dominant use as a ratification of the Pascalian affirmation that man ascends endlessly beyond man; on the other, homeotechnology, founded on multi-purpose information media and an ecology of intelli-



gence. Sloterdijk provides the verdict (2006a): “Developing technologies will mean in the future: reading the scores of embodied intelligences, and contributing to subsequent interpretations of their own works” (p. 17).

Such engineering, whether one likes it or not, is a theory of machines, which puts the technical object within the idea of human nature and not outside or against man, as humanism had pontificated. This explains why Sloterdijk, continuing Nietzsche’s critique of Modernity, reveals in his *Rules for the Human Park* (2000) a human genetic animal, which, domesticated by culture and training, would not have yet been able to develop, showing thus our failure as a species.

On this, the analysis of Martorell (2013) is still suggestive. For him, what Sloterdijk does plainly is to decree that “biotechnology must replace the pericyclic humanism” (p. 174) or in his happy literary analogy, that “only genetic engineering can train, perhaps annihilate, Mr. Hyde in the coming stages” (p. 174). By the way, Martorell’s critique of Sloterdijk’s technological determinism is very acceptable, which presupposes that “given non-totalitarian techniques, we will automatically have democratic relations” (p. 177). Now, it is not that technological development cannot occur in terms that Sloterdijk observes. On the contrary, the current technological drift gives man possibilities of intervention in gene, medical, economic and military processes that, like never before, can dramatically alter the meaning and configuration of the concept of species. Only that it is hard to think (if we blindly follow Sloterdijk) in a group of men of science who agree on bona fide a responsible, collaborative, symmetrical and controlled bioethical management status of their technological practices.

Granting the possibility of the Mr. Hyde hypothesis as essential to human nature (the innatist thesis of violence), there is no evidence of how sensibly it can work, following Martorell’s (2013) argument, “the suggestion, openly neo-eugenic, to pacify man through genetic engineering” (p. 171). The main question of Sloterdijk, following Martorell himself, seems to fall into an idyllic vision of technology: “While in anthropology he is pessimistic in the sense that I have been describing, regarding the recent developments in technology, his optimism brushes on credulity” (p. 177).

However, this criticism does not destroy the central argument of the ontological project of Sloterdijk, which understands technology as a destination within the history of being. As much we don’t share his questioning about whether the human race will undergo a transformation from the fatality of birth to an optional birth and prenatal selection, nothing authorizes us to discard or minimized it just because it is not to the taste of some. In fact, it will not be in the field of ontology, but in the field of bioethics



(that is, very ‘anti-sloterdijkally’), where the detractors of the Teutonic philosopher will draw their best harquebuses to try to bring down the *bête noire* of current philosophy and bury all vestiges of Mr. Hyde.

## Conclusion

So far it has been possible to incubate what research has determined as the key pieces of Peter Sloterdijk’s philosophy. Thus, the notions of anthropotechnics, immunization, prosthetics, thymotics and animality, far from being conceptual collections for a kind of translation of the ‘Sloterdijk’ code, have turned out to be (very much in Luhmann’s line) systems of distinction with respect to psychodynamic functions of the individual. Both the idea of an essentially technical man (and thus transformed into *Homo immunologicus*) and that of a new dialectic of self-affirmation (which replaces erotic selfishness with timotic generosity, facing a more civil-centered democracy that in the verticality of the institutions), they put into play the figure of a new animal that, it could be said, ‘improves’ the debatable ontology of the *übermensch* of Nietzsche. From a cynicism, in any case, closer to that of Diogenes of Synope, Sloterdijk reworked the idea of the Nietzschean *übermensch* and transmuted it into an acrobat of creativity and overcoming, bearer of the new fire of the gods: the ethical-aesthetic imperative of the Postmodernity.

The project of future philosophy of Sloterdijk can be seen as the continuity of a line that was born with the philosophy of art of Nietzsche, continues with the philosophy of the technique of the second Heidegger and connects later with the doctrine of the multiplicities of Deleuze. However, its radicality and novelty consist of erasing this metaphysics and social theory of the totality at a stroke to give significance to the ontological cutting of the foam as a true possibility of immanence of the real. Indeed, foams are biogenetic processes in whose chaotic interior there are constantly jumps, transformations and changes in format. Predictably, says Acevedo (2013), with the image of the Sloterdijk foam, he immerses himself in the proposal of a new philosophy, knowledge theory, ontology, linguistic theory and form of appropriation of the world. In any case, the amount of questions that remain is overwhelming. At least two will be indicated.

First, who will define (in a world where nature and culture practically become indiscernible) the ontological limits and implications of the species (androids, ginoids, cyborgs, men-prostheses, transhumans,



replicants) that pretend to live ‘dialogic’ and ‘no-Dominantly’ with the human being? How and with what arguments will the protocols, rules or deontologies be decided in a ‘biotechnological century’ formed as ‘inter-intelligently condensed world-network’? And that, without considering the discussion about some positions that are based on the thesis of genetic improvement (or even the idea of immortality) and that seem to have been certified by post-liberal projects such as Sloterdijk (is enough to mention his defense of transhumanism and cryopreservation). Bonet (1999) synthesizes it clearly: “Sloterdijk relies on Plato to defend a society in which philosophy is discipline, which dictates to the experts in genetic technology the ethical rules for using their science” (p. 3).

Second, the question of truth. The problem could be translated into the fact that there is not a single and definitive truth, and there is not simply because the truth is inessential to Sloterdijk’s psycho-political project. His theory of reality based on a model of foams, according to Goycolea (2017), does not need permanent or non-contradictory categories of thought, so that what exists is a new epistemology, which sees in humanism an epistemological expansion of The Roman *humanitas*. What interests the Sloterdijk project is not the statute of the true statements, but simply the materialization of the self-affirmation of the individual, in an absolutely rectilinear edge with respect to the best survival policies. In any case, the enunciative question of reality (within the framework of a global ethic) is protected by Sloterdijk’s own immune systems: the biological, that of social practices and that of symbolic or psychoimmunological practices.

In this regard, the superb analysis that Professor Cordua (2008) makes of the concept of truth in Sloterdijk makes clear this veritative scope. There will be truths from both laity and experts: “There have never been a people that does not at least rudimentary develop a ‘bicameral system’ of access to the truth” (pp. 181 ss.). Thus, it is expected that a reality that works and is explained under the spherical mode, shows multiple forms of truth at each point of contact and disappearance of their joints and edges, precisely a fragile discourse that is at the antipodes of the programs of the right and left fascisms. In a second idea from Cordua (2008): “Instead of linking the historicity of truth to the problematic set of human knowledge, Sloterdijk prefers to see it associated with decisive events that inaugurate times of the historical process, equally affecting man and his world” (p. 187). In other words, the truth of Sloterdijk is not an enunciative or declarative matter, but rather of a psychodynamic nature: typical of the cultural habitat of a given space. Hence, what really



matters to Sloterdijk is not exactly what the truth is, but in reality, how it is that the truth happens and is related to those who experience it.

That said, we can only ask: having so many possible and natural truths, thought of a new phenomenology of the marginal and the domestic, and turned technology into an essential coevolutionary element of the human being, was it not just to expect the next step to be in the direction of eugenic truth as normal? Not only has Sloterdijk not betrayed his way of interpreting the world, but he has been very careful to unlock the anthropotechnical problem of Postmodernism without resorting to the resources of metaphysics (being, consciousness, cosmos, etc.). However, what is still at stake is the cynical condition of man. So much so that the political criticism of Sloterdijk seems to show itself as the unmasking of a macrosphere of power (military, economic, journalistic, fiscal) that seeks to eternalize in a system without tensions or contradictions.

Seen in this way, the biotechnological offensive presented in the *Rules for the Human Park* must be understood as a sort of manifesto of a cynicism that has historically been made invisible and unfeasible by elite cynicism, whose camera aid has shamelessly almost always been the yellow press. For this reason, it will be necessary to recognize in this chemical disinhibition put into play by the biotechnological displacement of Sloterdijk, the merit of trying to return to the simplicity of the original cynicism. According to Bordeleau (2009): “his desire to develop a philosophy called ‘integral’ and anti-schizoid by him (p. 4), an issue that, as noted by Bordeleau himself, has consistently earned Sloterdijk the criticism of reducing the political to the domestic sphere. The physiognomy of a philosophy of difference seems in Sloterdijk, then, evident. Consistently, the philosopher of Baden-Württemberg has cut the Gordian knot of onto-technology with the weapons he has preferred: an undercover cynicism in the media figure of the ‘double agent’, paraped in as many philosophies as possible, an unequivocal sign of his postmodernity.

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