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Prefixes in Uncertain Times: Reconfiguring the Human in the Human-Built World

"We are living in times of the beginning of mankind, and it cannot be completely ruled out that this incipient mankind might be the beginning of the end of mankind. Perhaps no age has ever seen the end of the world looming so dangerously before its eyes as our does." – Gustav Landauer, 1911[1]

I. Introduction

The history of the planet Earth has involved the eruption of massive volcanoes, the drifting of continental plates, the cataclysmic impact of asteroids, the rise and fall of dominant species, and more other types of upheaval than can be cleanly summarized in an opening sentence. All of which is to say: the geological epochs into which the planet's history are delineated are filled with their tumult, catastrophes, extinctions, and the changes that seismic shifts – of the literal and metaphorical kind – bring in their wake. Amongst the most significant of these events, at least from an anthropocentric perspective, is surely the bolide that is credited with creating the Chicxulub crater and bringing an end to the Age of Reptiles. After all, it is the move from the Mesozoic Era to the Cenozoic Era that heralds the onset of the Age of Mammals an age that eventually resulted in a species that would come up with terms like "Mesozoic," "Cenozoic," "bolide," and of course "extinction." These "zoic" eras are themselves made up of "cenes" and though the Cenozoic has passed through many of them eventually it came to pass that some members of the species bestowing the names saw fit to name a period after themselves: the Anthropocene.

[1] Landauer, Gustav. *For Socialism*. Candor: Telos Press, 1978. pgs. 112-113.

Though a grim irony lurks at the heart of the Anthropocene, for it may be that the period that designates that humans have become a geological force is also a period in which the future of humanity is less than certain.

Coined by the scientists Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000) the term Anthropocene denotes a period beginning at a non-specific point in the latter part of the 18th century. A moment roughly coinciding with the expansion of industrialization, as it is from this period that glacial ice cores "show the beginning of a growth in the atmospheric concentration of several 'green house gases', in particular CO2 and Ch4."[2] The Anthropocene represents a variety of impacts related to human activity: the human driven rise in the extinction rate, the creation of the ozone hole in the Antarctic, and the despoiling of the oceans.[3] In Crutzen and Stoermer's estimation, unless there is some unforeseen calamity (like an asteroid), the effects that humanity has had on the planet will continue leaving a dangerous mark for years numbering in the millions[4] – for even if humanity should go the way of the dinosaur and the dodo the impacts of humans upon the planet are not going anywhere. The Anthropocene is not a particularly celebratory term, as the list of human wrought planetary dangers with which Crutzen and Stoermer associate it suggests. Indeed, in presenting the concept in the journal *Nature* (Crutzen, 2000) the fact that, thus far, a great calamity has not occurred is presented as something that has happened "more by luck than by wisdom."[5] Thus, once more, it is clear that there is a certain irony present in the term Anthropocene – it seems that the human built world is one wherein the continued

[2] Crutzen, Paul J. and Stoermer, Eugene F. "The "Anthropocene"" in *IGBP Newsletter.* 2000 pg. 17.
[3] ibid. 17.
[4] ibid. 18.
[5] Crutzen, Paul J. "Geology of Mankind" in *Nature* 2002. pg. 23

existence of humans, and contemporary civilization, is made precarious. An instability that can be easily understood when one considers that the term emerged at a historical moment in which human impacts on the planet, as reified by climate change, indicate that the "collapse of modern, globalized society under uncontrollable environmental change is one possible outcome"[6] of the Anthropocene. And while doom saying is a recurring feature throughout human history, including in regards to the environment (Killingsworth and Palmer, 1996), the Anthropocene does not couch these predictions in religious rhetoric, but in a cold scientific analysis that states that the future is looking worryingly uncertain.

The concept of the Anthropocene is not without its critics. And while there is a long history of climate change denial (Oreskes and Conway, 2010), some of the criticism of the Anthropocene emphasizes that humans have been making a dramatic impact on the planet long before the onset of industrialization (Ruddiman, 2013). Beyond the questions of exactly when the Anthropocene began (or the utility of the concept) the term has also been seized upon as a convenient way for arguing that new action is required in the present period – with many of these calls occurring once the term had filtered out from the scientific community and into the broader discourse. These range from calls for a revitalized democratic politics (Purdy, 2015), to arguments for the need to revitalize critical theory in response (Wark, 2015), to calls to recognize the ways humans are entangled with the planet (Parikka, 2015), to analyses of what a concept like freedom means in such a period (Stoner and Melathopoulos, 2015) to questions of who is meant by the "anthro" in Anthropocene (Haraway, 2015), as well as ruminations on what will

[6] Steffen, Will, Crutzen Paul J., and McNeill, John R. "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?" in *Ambio* 2007. pg. 619.

survive in the ruins (Tsing, 2015). Indeed, the term Anthropocene has given rise to a variety of derivatives, including: the Capitlocene, the Plantationocene, the Chthulucene,[7] the Misanthropcene,[8] and the Anthrobscene,[9] While these various responses to the Anthropocene all mobilize the term in different ways they share a certain sense that the present moment, the now, is a vital time to act. Granted, at least in the estimate of some theorists, "now" may already be too late (Oreskes and Conway, 2014).

In an article about the Anthropocene written several years after one of its authors helped coin the term (Steffen, et al. 2007), the Anthropocene is broken down into several segments: Stage One denoting the "industrial era" from roughly "1800-1945," Stage Two "the great acceleration" from "1945-ca. 2015," and the present Stage Three beginning in 2015 "stewards of the Earth System?"[10] Perhaps the most significant aspect of the name of Stage Three is the presence of the question mark. For what that humble piece of punctuation suggests is that the Anthropocene is a sort of anxious "sociotechnical imaginary." Sheila Jasanoff defines a "sociotechnical imaginaries" as "collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of advances in science and technology."[11] What the Anthropocene represents is an odd future existing simultaneously with a hopeful sense that perhaps a desirable future can be eked out if only the "anthros" can take action. The Anthropocene is not

[7] Haraway, Donna. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities*. Vol. 6, 2015: 159-165.
[8] Clover, Joshua and Spahr, Julianna. *#misanthropocene*: *24 Theses*. Oakland: Commune Editions, 2014. https://communeeditions.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/misanthropocene_web_v2_final.pdf
[9] Parikka, Jussi. *The Anthrobscene*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2014. pg. 1.
[10] Steffen, et al. 616-620.
[11] Jasanoff, Sheila. "Future Imperfect: Science, Technology, and the Imaginations of Modernity" in Jasanoff, Sheila and Kim, Sang-Hyun. *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. pg. 4

synonymous with the apocalypse, and it is not inevitable that it will result in catastrophic results. In the act of naming the problem there is a hope that this call to awareness and responsibility might prevent the worst from occurring.

Many of these calls to action, in the Anthropocene, are framed around the issues of climate change, but as Jebediah Purdy writes this is not without reason, for climate change is "emblematic of the Anthropocene: it is both a driver and a symbol of a thoroughly transformed world."[12] And such sentiments, to revisit Jasanoff's definition, are "publicly performed" beyond the pages of academic texts – animating bestsellers (Klein, 2014) and resulting in massive protests that fill the streets of major cities. The Anthropocene is the world in which humans now live, it is the imaginary shaping much current discourse, but it is a world that bears the peculiar shape of human influence. It is as Hannah Arendt noted, several decades before the term Anthropocene was first used, "today we have begun to create, as it were, that is, to unchain natural processes of our own which would never have happened without us, and instead of carefully surrounding the human artifice with defenses against nature's elementary forces, keeping them as far as possible outside the man-made world, we have channeled these forces, along with their elementary power, into the world itself."[13]

To consider the term Anthropocene is to be confronted first and foremost by the human – the "anthro." And yet, in reading the texts in which Crutzen (and others) propose the term, and expand its definition, one is quickly confronted with the prominent role that technology plays in the creation of the Anthropocene. In "The Geology of Mankind" Crutzen places the technological connection in his initial paragraph, noting

[12] Purdy, Jebediah. *After Nature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015. pg. 249.
[13] Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. 148-149.

that even though the date picked to mark the onset of the Anthropocene is linked to deposits in polar ice, "this date also happens to coincide with James Watt's design of the steam engine in 1784."[14] Such technological synchronicities are drawn out in greater detail in the article "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?" wherein the move from early industrial civilizations into "the great acceleration" revolves around the spread and increased usage of energy intensive technological systems.[15] In that article technology is presented as Janus faced, it has been integral to the damages wrought during the early parts of the Anthropocene but now, in stage three, "technology must play a strong role in reducing the pressure on the Earth System" and yet "improved technology…may not be enough on its own."[16] It is the type of observation reminiscent of Melvin Kranzberg's "first law of the history of technology" that "technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral."[17] This tension animates much of the writing about the Anthropocene – unthinking use of technology may have helped get humanity into its present mess, but it is a topic of active debate as to what types of technology can help humanity moving forward, even as it some emphasize that the machines themselves are not the culprits but the ways in which they have been developed and used by humans. And at the fringes of this discourse some groups call for even greater technological "acceleration"[18] whilst at the other extreme others call for a return to a neo-pastoral way of life.[19] Jasanoff argues that sociotechnical imaginaries provide a

[14] Crutzen. "Geology of Mankind." pg. 23.
[15] Steffen, et al. pg. 617-618.
[16] Steffen, et al. pg. 619.
[17] Kranzberg, Melvin. "Technology and History: 'Kranzberg's Laws'" in *Technology and Culture* v. 27, no. 3 (July 1986) 544-560.
[18] Williams, Alex and Srnicek, Nick "#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics." Mackay, Robin and Avanessian, Armen. *#Accelerate#: The Accelerationist Reader*. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014
[19] Hine, Dougald and Kingsnorth, Paul. *Uncivilization*: *The Dark Mountain Manifesto*. London: The Dark Mountain Project, 2013.

way to "engage directly with the ways in which people's hopes and desires for the future—their sense of self and their passion for how things ought to be—get bound up with the hard stuff of past achievements"[20] and one sees this in the mix of mournful and hopeful stances that various thinkers and groups take towards the challenge of the Anthropocene. What has become clear, as Rosalind Williams writes, is that "instead of being a stage for history, the world has become part of the historical drama. Even when the drama has brought what is usually called progress, it has also inevitably brought loss."[21] Or, to put it in the even starker terms of Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway "lately science has shown us that contemporary industrial civilization is not sustainable."[22]

And yet, have we not been here before?

"You should not begin your day with the illusion that what surrounds you is a stable world"[23] – though it may seem that they easily could, those words do not in fact come from a recent text discussing climate change or the Anthropocene. Instead they are from Günther Anders "Commandments in the Atomic Age," and though their date of publication syncs rather well with the onset of "the great acceleration" they are cited not to demonstrate the onset of that stage, but to emphasize that the anxieties being presently expressed in Stage Three of the Anthropocene are not new to the present era. The era of industrialization, pinned as the start of the Anthropocene, coincides with the shift between what Lewis Mumford called the "paleotechnic" and "neotechnic" eras, but Mumford fervently illustrated that the shift of technological eras did not mean that human

[20] Jasanoff. 22.
[21] Williams, Rosalind. *The Triumph of Human Empire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014. pg. 335.
[22] Oreskes, Naomi and Conway, Erik. *Merchants of Doubt*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010. pg. 237.
[23] Anders, Günther. "Commandments in the Atomic Age," in *Burning Conscience*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961. pg. 11.

wisdom and ethics matured along with their technological capabilities – for "the new machines followed, not their own pattern, but the pattern laid down by previous economic and technical structures."[24] And to this list of structures could also be added the terms "colonial," "imperialistic" and "gender" as advances in the sciences and technology have been seized upon as a sort of steely proof superiority of one culture over another and of proof of power within a culture (Adas, 2014, Adas, 2006, Harding 1986, Wajcman 1991). True, the particular concerns as related specifically to climate change may be of a more recent vintage but the fear that human's use of technology may jeopardize "industrial civilization" and life broadly construed goes back nearly to the onset of the Anthropocene (Marx 2000, Thompson 1966, Williams, 2014) – granted associating utopian longings with technology also has a sturdy lineage (Tresch 2012). This is not simply a matter of the fear that technology has slipped from the control of humans (Winner, 1989), but of a deeper sentiment that – perhaps – catastrophe is the direction in which technology has been pointing humanity for some time (Kroker, 2004).

Such anxieties are reflective of a deep, and historically stubborn, fear that humans have built a world for which they are unfit – in which they gradually make themselves obsolete (Anders, 2014). This worry has been a recurring theme not so much in the history of technology, but in terms of the history of reactions to technology as demonstrated by theorists, artists and activists. It should be noted that this worry, and the forms it takes, have hardly been monolithic though they are often united by a sense that "once underway, the technological reconstruction of the world tends to continue."[25] A recurring way in which this anxiety has manifested itself is through a focus on the human

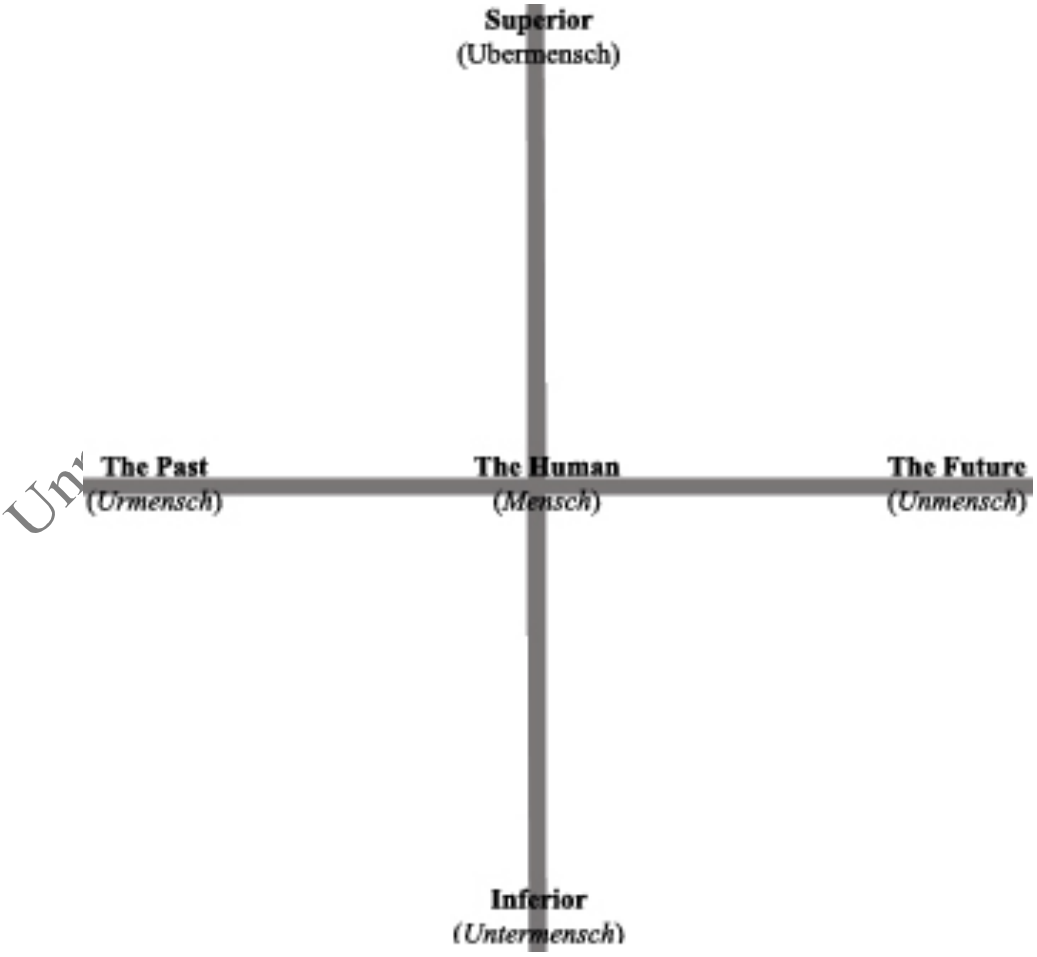
[24] Mumford, Lewis. *Technics and Civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. pg. 236.
[25] Winner, Langdon. *Autonomous Technics*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989. pg. 208.

being, as such, while raising the question of what the human being needs to become in order to survive in the new period. The "plain old" human often appears as outmoded, as if the species has not been able to keep up evolutionarily with the speed of technological change. And though attempts to re-imagine and reconfigure the human are common, these visions are far from monolithic. Writing in the aftermath of World War One and within earshot of the early rumblings of the coming storm (1931), Walter Benjamin somewhat playfully deployed a range of versions of the human in his essay "Karl Kraus"[26]. In the essay Benjamin writes of the "*Allmensch*" (cosmic man), invokes the Nietzschean "*Ubermensch*" (superman) and ends with a discussion of the "*Unmensch*" (monster). Of the "*unmensch*" Benjamin writes that this "monster stands among us as the messenger of a more real humanism. He is the conqueror of the empty phrase. He feels solidarity not with the slender pine but with the plane that devours it, not with the precious ore but with the blast furnace that purifies it…not a new man—a monster, a new angel."[27] The "*unmensch*" is the "*mensch*" (human) for the new era – a reconfigured "new angel" that by feeling "solidarity" with "the blast furnace" demonstrates that it is at home in the technologically built world.

This paper seeks to expand upon the typology that Benjamin develops in *Karl Kraus* – it treats Benjamin's thinking on the move from *mensch* to *unmensch* as an attempt to theorize what humans need to do to survive in a world that has been reconfigured by humanity's deployment of increasingly powerful technologies. Thus, this paper aims to construct a rubric by which to analyze and assess visions of the human, one

[26] Benjamin, Walter. "Karl Kraus." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings – Volume 2, Part 2, 1931-134.* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005. pg. 433-458.
[27] Benjamin. "Karl Kraus." pg. 456/457.

that does not see such visions in a vacuum but attempts to think of them in a dialectical relationship with other competing visions of the human. In building this framework this paper places the notion of the *mensch* (the human) at the center and maps the other terms around it (see figure 1) – on the x axis it places time with the past vision of humanity being the *urmensch* (primitive humanity) and with the future vision of humanity being Benjamin's *unmensch* (monster). In addition to a temporal aspect this graph considers that which is portrayed as above and below the human, this could be considered as a sort of evolution and de-evolution – above the human appears the superior *ubermensch* (the super human) while below the human appears the inferior *untermensch* (the subhuman). It is the hope of this paper that this framework will act as a useful theoretical tool for considering (past and present) attempts to imagine (or actively reconstruct) humans in the



human built world – and it is meant to function as a way of assessing competing visions of human life in the Anthropocene. While this method may place the various terms on axes and place the "human" at the center it does not attempt to assign ethical value to these permutations and new incarnations of humanity – it instead aims to illustrate the ways in which imaginaries and ideologies about the reconfigured human are themselves ideological tangles. Thus, for example, an ideology like that manifested in anarcho-primitivism may appear somewhere in the lower left quadrant of the map – existing in relation to the *urmensch* and the *untermensch*; while the singularity fantasy of humans becoming one with computers may appear somewhere in the upper right quadrant between *ubermensch* and *unmensch*. Thus each section on the graph provides a space in which to fit various ideas that can be mapped based on four groups: Past, Superior; Future, Superior; Past, Inferior; Future, Inferior. In this case the element from the x axis is not specifically linked to a date on a timeline but to the sense of direction – is humanity moving forward or backwards? Granted, moving backwards needs not be a sign of regression. As the "Past, Superior" quadrant allows for a mapping of ideologies that see a return to an earlier state as being a mark of superiority. The y axis, of superiority and inferiority, acts in relation to the central point of the human and emphasizes the question of whether or not a given viewpoint sees the version of the human it puts forth as one that is better or worse than the previous notion of the human figure. The ambition, to restate it, is for this framework to function as a useful tool for thinking about visions of a technologically reconfigured humanity – that functions by grounding these visions within the history and philosophy of technology and by demonstrating that each of these new visions has a mirrored version in odd ways across the various axes. While it is true that

placing the human at the center point may seem to be anthropocentric, the placing of various philosophies in distant points hopefully evokes deliberate attempts to pull away from such a human centric vision. And yet in the human built world it is important not to lose sight of the human. If for no other reason than for the need to maintain the human as a point of reference.

To illustrate the functioning of this framework this paper will discuss, albeit in abridged form, some of the manifestations at these poles. This is not an attempt to exhaust all of the attempts to imagine humanity in relationship to its technology – but provides examples to begin building a rough constellation of sorts. Instead of looking at ideas that would be mapped into the various quadrants, this paper aims to look at ideas that would best be mapped directly onto one of the axes. In considering the *ubermensch* this paper will examine the work of Ernst Jünger – in particular drawing upon the figure of the technologically enhanced worker/soldier that he developed in texts such as *On Pain* and *The Worker*. Moving from superior to the human the paper will then reorient to considering a view of those rendered inferior to the human by looking at the thought of Günther Anders in whose estimation humanity's construction of technological systems had resulted in a world in which humanity had made itself obsolete. Turning from the evolutionary axis to the temporal one this paper will turn its attention to the past (or the nostalgia for the past) by reading Chellis Glendinnig's "Notes Towards a Neo-Luddite Manifesto," and other texts related to the 1990's Neo-Luddite movement, to draw out the ways in which some orient their vision of the future by relying upon a returning to the human past. Speeding along the temporal axis the paper will consider the figure of the cyborg/post-human as it has been theorized by figures including Donna Haraway, N.

Katherine Hayles and Rosi Braidotti – a technologically enhanced human for the technologically altered world. Finally this paper will conclude by turning its attention, with the aid of Hannah Arendt, and Erich Fromm, back to the question of the human. These sociotechnical imaginaries occupy various places on the continuum between hope and despair, and this framework is developed out of a similar sentiment, though it aims to keep from forgetting Arendt's comment that "Progress and Doom are two sides of the same medal…both are articles of superstition, not of faith."[28]

Though this paper provides a tool for mapping sociotechnical imaginaries, it does not claim to definitively illustrate where humans are going nor does it claim to definitively demonstrate where humans have been. Instead it is best to view the framework as a compass – a tool for orienting oneself wherever that person may find they are standing. Be it amongst the gray ruins of collapsing civilizations or amongst its VR Technicolor heights.

II. *Ubermensch*

For the soldiers who fought in World War One the destructive power of technological advances was made brutally clear. Across the battlefields of Europe machine guns, tanks, heavy artillery, mustard gas, and airplanes were all deployed with devastating effect – turning once pristine landscapes into desolate no-mans-lands and transforming healthy humans into corpses. The world powers that confronted each other in WWI, particularly the European powers and the United States, had exploited their own technological prowess to justify their colonial and imperial ambitions – and had

[28] Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: A Harvest Book/Harcourt Inc., 1976. pg. vi.

harnessed technological advances in the spheres of weaponry, transport and communication in carving up the globe into colonies and protectorates; however, in World War One the tools that had been used to subjugate the colonized people were turned, by the colonizing powers, back on themselves (Adas, 2014 [1989]). The decades that had preceded the war had seen societies convulsed by rapid technological change, and even if "the period between the two World Wars [is] the time of full mechanization"[29] – World War One provided a glimpse of what mechanized warfare looked like. When it broke out, World War One served as a grim retort to those who had placed their trust in science and technology's progressive character, for the destruction of World War One was a testament to the violent power of science and technology.[30]

Among the soldiers who clashed in the European trenches in World War One was Ernst Jünger, an officer who led German shock troops in raids against enemy trenches. During the course of the war Jünger distinguished himself for his bravery, continually returning to the trenches despite being wounded in multiple battles, he received numerous decorations including the *Pour le Mérite* – the highest honor bestowed by the German military in World War One (Nevin, 1996). And yet Jünger did not achieve true notoriety for what he did in combat, rather he became a famous soldier in recognition for the way that he wrote about that combat upon returning home from the war. Jünger's autobiographical account of his experiences in WWI, *In Stahlgewittern* (*Storm of Steel*) (Jünger, 2003 [1920]), presents the war in brutal relief, but Jünger's text exalts in the

[29] Giedion, Sigfried. *Mechanization Takes Command*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2013 [1948]. pg. 41.
[30] Adas, Michael. *Machines as the Measure of Men*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014. pg. 365.

destruction turning the conflict into an epic of violence and terror.[31] Writing of *Storm of Steel*, Hannah Arendt commented that the text revealed how "war in the era of machines could not possibly breed virtues like chivalry, courage, honor, and manliness"[32] – and yet it may be more accurate to state that the success of Jünger's memoir is due precisely to the way in which he portrays "chivalry, courage, honor, and manliness" in the face of a inured acknowledgment of the meaninglessness of such values in the face of gas warfare.

Storm of Steel appeared in Germany after the war had concluded; it was a boldly heroic narrative capturing the bravery of Germany's soldiers that contrasted starkly with the social, political and economic turmoil battering the country. His connection to the military and his strength as a writer allowed Jünger to become a fairly prominent thinker for Germany's resurgent right wing in the period.[33] With Jünger's tales of fierce combat earning him a place of high regard amongst the para-military Freikorps and by the country's conservative elite (Theweleit, 2010 and 2010). While Jünger's war stories prominently featured accounts of combatants facing each other in a technologically transformed battlefield – these themes of technological change had become a prominent feature in much of the discourse of the period. Nevertheless, it is important to note that a focus on technology in Germany during this period was not only a right-wing preoccupation; the anti-art produced by the, largely left-leaning, members of the Berlin Dada movement was filled with unnerving images of humans warped by technology (Biro, 2009), and the philosophical investigations of many members of the Frankfurt School evinced a similar attempt to come to terms with the technological changes afoot

[31] Nevin, Thomas. *Ernst Jünger and Germany: Into the Abyss, 1914-1945*. Raleigh: Duke University Press, 1996. pg. 41.
[32] Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. pg. 329.
[33] Nevin. 75-114.

(Marcuse, 1998; Jay, 1996; Wiggershaus, 1994). While the Weimar era in Germany featured numerous occasions where actual violence broke out between activists of the country's radical left and right wings, the period also saw an intellectual melee taking place over the topic of technology. In his "Theories of German Fascism" (1930) Walter Benjamin offers an unflinchingly critical review of a collection of essays edited by Jünger.[34] Benjamin's review portrays Jünger, and the other authors in the collection, as lacking "contact with reality;" instead engaging in "rather impious mysticism" idealistically emphasizing "the German feeling for nature" and evincing "haste to seize control of the actual present without having grasped the past."[35] To Benjamin "war, in the metaphysical abstraction in which the new nationalism believes, is nothing other than the attempt to redeem, mystically and without mediation, the secret of nature, understood idealistically, through technology"[36] – while Benjamin retained hope that technology could be harnessed in the service of a greater good,[37] he identified in Jünger a desire to grip the violent reins of technology to control its power.

Beyond being simply a warning about the dangerous potential of the inchoate fascist movement, Benjamin's essay on Jünger points to the broader concern regarding the question of who was in control of the new technology – and who would take control of it. With tragic foresight Benjamin predicted, "any future war will also be a slave revolt on the part of technology"[38] – predicting the technologically enhanced destruction of the next war would make the disastrous results of WWI quaint by comparison. A certain

[34] Benjamin, Walter. "Theories of German Fascism" in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings – Volume 2, Part 1, 1927-1930.* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005. 312-321.
[35] Benjamin. "Theories of German Fascism." pgs. 313/314, 318.
[36] Benjamin. "Theories of German Fascism." pg. 319.
[37] Wiggershaus, Rolf. *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994. pg. 201. Of Benjamin, Wiggershaus writes: "either technology would become the means of salvation, or there would be no salvation."
[38] Benjamin. "Theories of German Fascism." pg. 312.

measure of post-war pessimism was present among many of Germany's conservative intellectuals, and the topic of technology was itself a source of much of this consternation (Herf, 1984). For these "reactionary modernist" thinkers technology was both a source of tremendous power and simultaneously an unruly force which threatened the established order – a hallmark of such thinkers was an urge to harness the power of technological progress whilst still rejecting enlightenment values.[39] Prominent amongst such thinkers was Oswald Spengler, whose *The Decline of the West* earned him renown in Germany and throughout the interwar world. Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* mournfully predicted a further decline for Germany, and the other Western nations, while casting a distasteful gaze at the way technology was shifting the balance of power in the nation and the world – and Spengler's vision was highly influential for Jünger.[40] *The Decline of the West* provided a stark view of the interwar period and glumly declared that Europe was, as the book's title suggests, in decline – and though Spengler appears anxious about technology his stance is not an outright rejection rather he imagines that technology can potentially be harnessed, by the right individuals, as a weapon with which to strike down the decadent society he so despised.[41] Beyond *The Decline of the West*, Spengler further expressed his hopes and fears about technology in his book *Man and Technics* in which he despaired at the possibility of technology falling out of the control of "Faustian" (Western) societies and being taken up and used against it by "the exploited world."[42] Animating much of Spengler's work is a twisted romantic longing for the return of

[39] Herf, Jeffrey. *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. pgs. 1-2.
[40] Nevin. 79.
[41] Herf. *Reactionary Modernism*. pg. 63.
[42] Spengler, Oswald. *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life*. Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2002. pg. 102.

"Faustian men" and "born leaders" who can yoke technology to their will – and what better example of a "born leader" could there be then a decorated war hero and man of letters such as Jünger?

It is in the desire for Faustian men and born leaders to control technology that one can detect a strain of belief that what technology requires is *ubermenschen* – superior humans. And it is through Jünger's work that one encounters not simply the belief that those who control technology are *ubermenschen* but the idea that to take such control itself represents a fundamental change in and of these people. Jünger had read and absorbed the stark warnings and prescriptions put forth by Spengler[43] and in the same vein came to believe that what technology needed was authoritarian guidance to ensure that its power was directed towards the nationalistic goals of a revitalized Germany.[44] Like Spengler before him, Jünger treated the technological transformation of the world not as some event off on the horizon but as something that was already playing out – indeed, he had born witness to the advance of its vanguard on the battlefield. What was necessary was, to Jünger, therefore "total mobilization" both "in war and peace" which "expresses the secret and inexorable claim to which our life in the age of masses and machines subjects us."[45] The presence of both "masses" and "machines" is an important aspect of Jünger's thinking, for it is in this situation that it becomes necessary for there to be some manner of figure who can direct these masses – some caste of figures is necessary to stand above the regular *menschen*. Jünger's essay "Total Mobilization," and

[43] Nevin. pg. 79.
[44] Herf, Jeffrey. "Technology and Twentieth-Century German Conservative Intellectuals." in Ezrahi, Yaron, Mendelsohn Everett, Segal, Howard P. *Technology, Pessimism and Postmodernism*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994. 115-136. pg. 124
[45] Jünger, Ernst. "Total Mobilization." in Wolin, Richard. *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992. pg. 128.

indeed much of Jünger's interwar writing about technology, bears heavy traces of his experiences in WWI, and yet it may be too simplistic to portray his thinking as being a lamentation that mechanized warfare "imposed on men nothing but the experience of bare destruction together with the humiliation of being only small cogs in the majestic wheel of slaughter."[46] Rather, to Jünger, those who could be reduced to such "small cogs" were simply the masses for which such a role was fitting,[47] and Jünger had a tendency in his interwar writings to view the technological transformation not as a source of "humiliation" but as a source of a sort of manic euphoria. True, "forms of compulsion stronger than torture are at work here" but "they are so strong, that human beings welcome them joyfully."[48] Sardonically eyeing the technologically reconfigured world, Jünger's sense was that the world around him was collapsing, but that from these ruins and ashes a new world better aligned with his vision might emerge.[49] True, Germany had lost the war, but from this Jünger predicted the emergence of a new Germany, and he saw this "confirmed by the agitation around us which is the mark of the new race; one that cannot be satisfied by any of this world's ideas nor any image of the past."[50] A "new race" was emerging that stood above the old – a fresh caste of men representing the Nietzschean "will to power" and embodying the ubermensch.[51]

The "total mobilization" of society in represents the intrusion of the logic of warfare into every sphere of life – hence the "total" – and is coldly predicative of the blurring of the line between combatant and civilian that would be a prominent feature of

[46] Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. pg. 329.
[47] a consummate elitist, to Jünger "humanity, democracy, liberalism remain alien notions." Nevin. 94.
[48] Jünger. "Total Mobilization." 138.
[49] Nevin. pg. 121.
[50] Jünger, "Total Mobilization" pg. 139.
[51] Nevin. pg. 125.

WWII. Yet, the figure of the soldier remains important in Jünger's work – those that witnessed the destructive force of technology seemed particularly well situated to seize the reins. In *Storm of Steel* Jünger recognized that the battles between infantrymen, amongst whose number he had been, was becoming less and less common as mechanized warfare moved into its malevolent maturity[52] – but with the war's end this mechanization had not ceased developing. Indeed, in the years since the war's end "technology's inherent claim to power has grown stronger."[53] This onslaught of mechanization changed war, and changed the rest of society with it. A certain reveling in this shift is evident in Jünger 's work *On Pain* in which the mechanized tools of warfare – airplanes, tanks – receive special praise. And yet Jünger remains aware that in these machines there is "a human being at the helm" who remains its "actual intelligence."[54] The machines that reduce so many humans to infectivity are themselves driven and controlled by a select few – the engines that turn some men into corpses transform others into killing machines. Jünger writes "the growing objectification of our life appears most distinctly in technology" and adds with his own italicized emphasis "*Technology is our uniform*."[55] As a proud veteran, Jünger would have been well aware of what he was evoking with the term "uniform" – and it is clear that for the soldier the tank, the plane and the guided torpedo are the new uniform for a select few empowered to actually steer such technology. Yet this vision required that the human be altered and thus a "second

[52] Jünger. *Storm of Steel*. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. pg. 69.
[53] Jünger. *On Pain.* Candor: Telos Press, 2008. *34.*
[54] Jünger. *On Pain.* 18.
[55] Jünger. *On Pain*, 31.

consciousness" was being constructed to enable a "high degree of accord between man and machine."[56]

These shifts appear in Jünger's reckoning as inevitable, and yet he does not wallow in Spenglarian despair or opine about a coming downfall – for the right people the embrace of technology becomes a way to not only steer that technology but to steer all of society. No great advocate of democratic values, to Jünger "the masses have been left with only *one* liberty, the liberty to consent"[57] – and what they were consenting to was an increased mechanization of society that was being enforced by those who stand above "the masses." It may be that technological transformation was reducing some *menschen* to *untermenschen* – but Jünger's attention remained fixed on those who could seize technology's power and use it to elevate themselves to the ranks of the *ubermenschen*. As Jünger explains: "we are dealing less with technical changes than with a new way of life…these changes [are] not restricted to the zone of technology but strives to place the human body under its command."[58] And this "new way of life" sees its clearest expression in Jünger's text *The Worker* – a text that appears as a sort of utopia for the totalitarian mind.

While the term "worker" may seem to be evocative of Marxism, for Jünger this figure is not redolent of the proletariat of old but symbolizes a new "worker" who is more in line with the requirements of machines than fables of democracy or of a socialist utopia.[59] The society of the worker (who is in actuality a sort of worker/soldier hybrid) is one where the work process has been transformed by technology and where the worker

[56] Jünger. *On Pain*. 38.
[57] Jünger. *On Pain*, 30.
[58] Jünger. *On Pain*, 42.
[59] Nevin. 123.

has been transformed along with it – Jünger's worker is the very figure that can adapt to such changes because this worker is the figure that has been produced by such changes.[60] Confronted by technology "man…finds himself placed before an unavoidable either/or…he accepts the particular language of technology and speaks their language, or he perishes"[61] – and the worker is the one who "speaks" technology's language. Though Jünger recognizes the upheavals wrought by technology, such as the destabilization of the bourgeois order, he still sees "a secret center" from whence the power can be understood when the workers learn "the new language" and he emphasizes that "a new humanity moves toward this decisive center."[62] Here what occurs is not simply a reconciliation of a spoken language but an alteration in the full physicality of the worker as being, as Herf explains it represents a "man-machine symbiosis" and to Jünger this represents a clear superior shift compared to the human body, for a machine can function with reliable precision.[63] The state of the worker is not, a la Spengler, a return to a more primal state of being – but is a fierce embrace of technological change and the technological changes that occur to the human. The worker does not seize power through a revolution that tosses off the capitalist order; instead the worker tosses aside the shibboleths of the capitalist order to accommodate a totalitarianism of technology.[64] Jünger does not ignore that there are those who pine for less technological times, those who are dismayed by the "conflict" between technology and the "traditions" it explodes but his own sympathies remain with

[60] Nevin. 126.
[61] Jünger. *The Worker* in Mitcham, Carl and Mackey, Robert. *Philosophy and Technology: Readings in the Philosophical Problems of Technology*. New York: The Free Press,1983. 269-289. pg. 273.
[62] Jünger. *The Worker*. 275.
[63] Herf. *Reactionary Modernism*. 79.
[64] Nevin, 127.

the new "race of men that feels strengthened by this conflict and which is destined to receive it as the source of a new sensation of life."[65]

The confrontation between humans and technology is a recurring feature throughout Jünger's work, and though his later writings would show a shift in his general outlook towards technology (Jünger 2013 [1951], Jünger 2015 [1993]), the texts he produced during the interwar period demonstrate a steely, hungry eyed, reckoning with technology's power. Jünger's memoirs of World War One show the frailty of soldiers on the mechanized battlefield, but this does not cause him to turn away from technology, instead he insists that it must be embraced. From the bloody baptism of war, Jünger envisions a new form of human rising, he casts the hazards technological change posed as threats to a bourgeoisie order which he saw as outdated, mechanized war had revealed the insufficiency of the *mensch* while simultaneously providing the occasion for the emergence of a new humanity that increased its power through embracing the destructive power of technology – the *ubermensch*.[66] In *Storm of Steel* Jünger recounts a running tally of soldiers horrifically slain by unseen artillery, choked by gas attacks, and gunned down by machine gun fire – yet Jünger never forgets that there were people directing the artillery, flying the planes, and steering the tanks.[67] Though Jünger's evocation of "the worker" may sound vaguely Marxist, the workers' revolution brings not a socialist utopia but a perfect state of conformity with the requirements of technology.[68] Technology was to be "the ways and means by which the *Gestalt* of the worker mobilizes and

[65] Jünger. *The Worker*. 270.
[66] Nevin. 128.
[67] Jünger. *On Pain.* 18.
[68] Nevin. 134.

revolutionizes the world"[69] – and as Jünger reiterates continually throughout *The Worker* these "worker types" were a new humanity. Indeed, technology would now finally allow for the emergence of that new type of human which had previously only appeared "in the cosmopolite's dreams and the teachings of [Nietzsche's] Superman."[70]

Technology created the conditions for the emergence of a new race of *ubermenschen* who were the only ones capable of controlling the powerful force which gave birth to them.

III. *Untermensch*

A powerful enough bomb can turn cities into rubble, humans into corpses, and hope into despair. With the defeat of the Nazis many thinkers who had fled before the fascist onslaught, or who had advocated for action to be taken to combat the Nazis, were able to momentarily find hope in the fascist's defeat. Yet the sense that the great threat had been defeated soon dissipated when mushroom clouds over Japan announced the arrival of a fresh apocalyptic danger. For while the Nazis had wreaked death upon those in their path, nuclear weapons ushered in a new era wherein the danger was not limited to this or that group – rather potential annihilation now hung over the entirety of the species.

Lewis Mumford captured the tenor of this horrified acknowledgement eloquently, and though he had been an early advocate for intervention against the Nazis,[71] he found himself gazing in agog horror at the specter of nuclear weapons, writing, "we have endowed mankind with godlike powers; but unfortunately we have not at the same time

[69] Jünger. *The Worker*. 286.
[70] Jünger quoted in Nevin, 134.
[71] See: *Men Must Act*, *Faith for Living* and *Values for Survival*.

become godlike men."[72] This imbalance between technologically bestowed capabilities and the wisdom to control such apocalyptic powers was a matter of grave concern for Mumford, and was a recurring feature throughout his work from the dropping of the atomic bombs to the end of his life[73] Yet, Mumford was far from alone in registering fierce dismay at the prospect of nuclear weapons and the other technological advances that appeared in the aftermath of World War II. Confronting dangers that could wipe out humanity, Hans Jonas proposed "that the prophecy of doom is to be given greater heed than the prophecy of bliss,"[74] Hannah Arendt observed that humans were now "capable today even of the potential destruction of what man did not make—the earth and earthly nature,"[75] and Erich Fromm cautioned his readers that if humanity did not change course without delay the species would wind up unable to change direction before it was too late[76] - and this short list is in no ways exhaustive.

One of the ironies of the danger of nuclear weapons was the potential scale of the devastation and the challenge of genuinely recognizing just how serious a threat such weapons represented. And it was in response to this difficulty that Günther Anders wrote, "don't be a coward. Have the courage to be afraid. Force yourself to produce the amount of fear that corresponds to the magnitude of the apocalyptic danger."[77] For Anders it was not simply that the new era of technological dangers, inaugurated by nuclear weapons, represented cause for humans to be alarmed, but that the onset of this age heralded a

[72] Mumford, Lewis. "Program for Survival" in *Values for Survival*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946.pg. 93
[73] Mendelsohn, Everett. "Prophet of Our Discontent: Lewis Mumford Confronts the Bomb" in *Lewis Mumford: Public Intellectual*. pg. 343-360.
[74] Jonas, Hans. *The Imperative of Responsibility*. *In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. pg. 31
[75] Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition.* pg. 232.
[76] Fromm, Erich. *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology*. New York: Harper and Row, 1968. pg. 27.
[77] Anders, Günther. "Commandments in the Atomic Age" in *Burning Conscience*. pg. 14.

significant change: the world as it had been was over, the world that existed now was one in which humans were simply waiting for the final flash. Humans had become unfit for the world they had created. In pursuing technologies that would make humanity greater than mere humanity, the species had flown too close to the sun whilst wearing waxen wings – and in the subsequent fall humanity had not returned to its previous level, but had fallen below it. Humanity had made itself obsolete.

Günther Anders came from the same social and intellectual milieu from whence hailed figures such as Hannah Arendt, Ernst Bloch, Hans Jonas, Bertolt Brecht, and the Frankfurt School – and his life followed a course both similar and distinct. An assimilated Jew born in Poland and educated in Freiburg, Anders studied philosophy under Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger,[78] though a combination of political and personal factors led to his failing to secure himself a place in German academia.[79] Like many other Jewish intellectuals in the 1930s, Anders found himself forced to flee as the Nazis took power, heading first to Paris and then on to the United States – though his tenure in the US was not marked by the same access to academic and cultural institutions as that enjoyed by individuals like Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno.[80] And though Anders published occasional articles of a philosophical sort, as well as quite a few poems in the German émigré newspaper *Aufbau*,[81] his time in the US was consumed by a variety

[78] van Dijk, Paul. *Anthropology in the Age of Technology: The Philosophical Contribution of Günther Anders.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998. pgs. 5-8

[79] Ellensohn, Reinhard. "The Art of Listening: On a Central Motif in Günther Anders' Early Philosophy of Music." in *The Life and Works of Günther Anders*. pgs. 106-107. The "political" circumstances alluded to are the rise of fascism, the "personal" circumstances have to do with Theodor Adorno who "was not impressed with the work" of Anders's habilitation.

[80] van Dijk, Paul. pgs. 9-13.

[81] Dawsey, Jason. "Fragile Apprehension: Günther Anders and the Poetics of Destruction" in *The Life and Works of Günther Anders*. pg. 21-34.

of odd jobs overshadowed by an unceasing deluge of tragic news from Europe.[82] Anders returned to Europe after the war, settling in Vienna, where he became closely involved with the anti-nuclear movement – not simply by penning articles but by visiting Hiroshima[83] and starting a correspondence with the pilot who had given the "all clear" for the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.[84] While some of Anders contemporaries are counted amongst the most prominent thinkers of the twentieth-century his own work has received much less attention – which may be attributable to how little of it has been translated into English.[85] Nevertheless, his body of work provides a stark and startling account of the place of humanity in the human built world. Anders' thought has the odd quality of making figures like Jonas, Fromm, and the Frankfurt School appear astonishingly optimistic in contrast to the border-line nihilism that often animates Anders' work. In writings that are aimed more at a mass audience than a narrowly academic one, Anders gave his opponents no quarter.[86] To Anders the question of life in nuclear/technological society was not an abstract query to be mulled over in a lecture hall – it was a matter of the survival of humanity.

Of the transformations that humanity had undergone, in Anders estimation, one of the key shifts was in the transition from humans as active participants in the world to being objects controlled by forces that had slipped from their control. In discussing the work of Franz Kafka, Anders describes this transition thus: "if man seems 'inhuman' to us in our time, this is not because he possesses a bestial nature, but because he has been

[82] van Dijk, Paul. pgs. 10-11.
[83] van Dijk, Paul. 13-17.
[84] Anders, Günther and Eatherly, Claude. *Burning Conscience.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961.
[85] Dawsey, Jason. "Introduction" in *The Life and Works of Günther Anders*. pg. 13.
[86] van Dijk, Paul. 23.

forced back still further into performing the *functions of things*."[87] This stance was echoed repeatedly throughout Anders oeuvre, often in cases wherein he despaired at the way in which people had become "cogs" within some vast "apparatus."[88] With a withering gaze, that is similar to Adorno and Horkheimer's broadside against "the culture industry," Anders recognized that the problems of technological control had filtered throughout all of society. The problem was not simply the apocalyptic danger posed by atomic weapons, but the way in which mass culture also worked to sap humans of their freedom and independence – by creating "mass-produced hermits" glued to their radios and television sets whose "knowledge of the ways of the world, which we formerly used to explore, and which made us experienced, is declining."[89] And though Anders does not fully develop his concept of this "apparatus" into an overarching theory – such as Mumford's "megamachine,"[90] Ellul's "technique,"[91] or Flusser's "apparatus"[92] – his work makes clear a belief that humanity has lost control of the technical systems it has set in motion.[93] Yet what matters for Anders is less the omnipresent control of an unseen system, and more the trend that is already visible – and it is a trend which Anders clearly thinks humans have had a role in: "What we constantly aim at is to bring about something that can function without us and our assistance, tools by which we make ourselves

[87] Anders, Günther. *Franz Kafka.* New York: Hilary House Publishers LTD., 1960. pg. 13. Italics in original text.
[88] Anders, Günther and Eatherly, Claude. *Burning Conscience.* pg. 109.
[89] Anders, Günther. "The World as Phantom and as Matrix." in *Dissent*. volume 3, issue 1 (Winter 1956), pgs. 14-24. pg. 21.
[90] Mumford, Lewis. *The Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company: 1966. pg. 12.
[91] Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological Society*. New York: Vintage Books, 1964. pgs. 3-7.
[92] Flusser, Vilém. *Post-History*. Minneapolis: Univocal, 2013. p. 25-26.
[93] Nevertheless, in the section of *We, Sons of Eichmann* titled "The Dream of the Machines" Anders expands upon this by noting that "our world as a whole is becoming machine like…it is becoming a machine" – Anders goes so far as to even use a term that roughly translates as "megamachine." It seems that Anders prefers the term "co-mechanize" to the various descriptors used by other critics of technology – though he does not develop this idea to the same extent as the similar ideas have been developed by Mumford and Ellul.

superfluous, by which we eliminate and 'liquidate' ourselves. It does not matter that this final goal has hardly been achieved yet. What matters is the trend. And its motto is: without us."[94]

To Anders it seemed as if the whole world was becoming more and more machine like, and humans were becoming little more than the moving parts that allowed the machinery to continue functioning. Such a transformation, for Anders, was not indicative of humans seizing technology to elevate themselves by becoming superhuman (*ubermenschen*) but was reflective of a trend whereby humans were becoming the tools of their own tools: "forced to be mere parts in a machine, raw material, or merely virtual scrap" – and even if Anders did not want to admit that this "night" had fallen "it is already too late to doubt that we are indeed moving toward that 'night,' or rather, toward the dawn of mechanized totalitarianism."[95] The fact that the final apocalypse had not yet occurred did not strike Anders as an invalidation of his hypotheses, it simply confirmed that humanity (or what had become of humanity) remained in "*die Frist*" ("the reprieve") which nevertheless remained within "*die Endzeit*" ("the end times"). Though "*die Frist*" could be extended for decades (indeed had to be extended in the face of the alternative) this "reprieve" was not the same as a positive resolution.[96] While Anders work remained largely oriented towards dangers in the future, his dark premonitions were an outgrowth of his commitment to holding onto the lessons of the recent past – to him Auschwitz and Hiroshima were simply points along the same path.[97] And what the transition from

[94] Anders quoted in van Dijk, Paul. pg. 34.
[95] Anders, Günther. *We, Sons of Eichmann*. "We are the sons of Eichmann." *Wir Eichmannsohne*. Munchen: Verlag, CH Beck, 2002. Quotations based on English translation by Jordan Levinson. As this translation does not feature page numbers, the citations are given based on section headings.
[96] Dupuy, Jean-Pierre. "An *Andersian* Approach to Nuclear Deterrence." in *The Life and Works of Günther Anders*. 35-44.
[97] van Dijk. pg. 52.

Auschwitz to a-bomb to h-bomb demonstrated was how much more efficient it had become to exterminate humanity.

Technology and humanity are constantly in conversation in Anders work, and the tension between them is eloquently captured in the title of his two volume opus *Die Antiquierheit des Menschen* – which is either translated as "The Antiquatedness of the Human Being" or, more strikingly, "The Obsolescence of Humanity."[98] What Anders aims to convey in these works is the way in which "anyone who still proclaims the 'transformability of man' (as Brecht did) is a figure from the past, since we *are* transformed,"[99] – these works function as a catalog of how this transformation has come about and what it has resulted in. In these two volumes Anders ranges over a variety of forms of investigation, mingling philosophical discussions, excerpts from his journal, and occasional fables of Molussia.[100] The second volume of the work is a litany of things that according to Anders have become "antiquated/obsolete" and these include "products," "the human world," "the masses," "labor," "philosophical anthropology," "conformism," and much else that comes in for Anders critical tearing apart.[101] What Anders continual evocation of "antiquatedness/obsolescence" demonstrates is his sense that "technology has placed itself as a ruler on the throne, superior to existing social classes and political

[98] Though the German title more literally translates as "antiquatedness" English texts about Anders generally refer to the title of these books as "Obsolescence."
[99] Anders, Günther. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II.* "Preface." *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen 2: Uber die Zerstorung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution*. Muchen: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2013. Translations based on Josep Montez Perez (Pre-Textos, Valencia 2011) translation of the text. As this translation does not feature page numbers, the citations are given based on section headings.
[100] Molussia is the setting of Anders anti-fascist novel *The Molussian Catacomb*, it was also a fictional setting to which Anders would return repeatedly throughout his writing. Paul van Dijk describes Molussia this way: "Molussia for Anders is a self-designed private myth, a magic reference point for his thinking that allows him to formulate observations, ideas, insights, and reflections in an outspoken and direct way, without having to bother about the rules of scholarship." van Dijk, pg. 88.
[101] Anders, Günther. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II. Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen 2: Uber die Zerstorung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution*. Muchen: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2013.

systems"[102] It is not merely that humans find themselves living in a world structured by technology, but that they find themselves to now be subordinate citizens in that world, and it is a world that, even in "*die Frist*," continues functioning under the ever-present threat of technologically wrought nuclear annihilation.[103] Furthermore, "*die Frist*" is itself only possible as a result of further technological systems such as the nuclear build up of "mutually assured destruction," bomber planes waiting for orders, and radar systems watching the enemy for any sign that "the button" has been pushed.[104] Technology, in Anders estimation, had usurped humanity as the subject of history[105] and he directs an incredulous derision at those who place their faith in "hope" as well as at the equally naïve belief that "man is still, as always, the master of technology and [the] view he will also survive as such."[106] Anders paints an unflinchingly dark picture of humanity's state in the technological world, dryly explaining, "We are antiquated beings, not equal to the level of our technology."[107] This world was not one in which humanity had literally vanished – though nuclear weapons meant that could happen at any moment – rather it was a world in which humans remained a dogged if ultimately unnecessary presence. It was not even as if humans persisted as "shepherds" of the machines, they had instead simply become "servants."[108] While *The Obsolescence of Man*, particularly the

[102] van Dijk. 116.
[103] van Dijk. 116.
[104] van Dijk. 116.
[105] Anders. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II.* "Technology as Historical Subject."
[106] Anders. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II.* "Technology as Historical Subject." the longer quotation appears in section 10 "The good guy, Superman, as saboteur of the truth."
[107] Anders. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II.* Chapter 22, "The Obsolescence of Space and Time" Section 6, "Let's get it over with."
[108] Anders. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II.* "Technology as Historical Subject." Section 6, "The shepherds of products. Technology is not only the subject of history, but also its goal. Production requires destruction."

second volume, alludes at many junctures to "machine breakers,"[109] and those who would resist, Anders remains solidly pessimistic: "by way of our universe of machines we have been transformed into being that are forced to use them."[110] Though Anders never allowed himself to fully give in to his nihilistic inclinations – even in the face of his dour predictions he was, after all, still attempting to make others aware of the world's predicament[111] – he remained coldly committed to the belief that humanity had been transformed.

That Anders should emphasize the importance of the "imagination" in confronting life in "*die Frist*" is perhaps indicative of an area where humanity can reach out of the obsolete catacomb to which it has consigned itself and perhaps climb back to a position as the subject of history. After all, Anders ascribes many powers to technology, but imagination remains a human ability. Having scoffed at the "professional hope-mongering" of figures like Ernst Bloch,[112] Anders has no interest in putting forth a utopian vision of what could be, instead casting himself as a sort of "inverted utopian" for "while ordinary Utopians are unable to actually produce what they are able to visualize, we are unable to visualize what we are actually producing."[113] Granted, Anders did not have much hope that such a broadening would occur – humans were afflicted by

[109] While the English translation I primarily referred to in writing this section uses the term "Luddites" quite often, checking the original German text reveals that Anders term of choice was actually "Machinenstürmer" which translate as "machine breaker." Though the term Luddite is often used rather interchangeably with the term Luddite (as section four of this paper will discuss), the term Luddite does have specific historic characteristics and meaning that make it worthwhile to avoid usage of that term when it was not explicitly used. Anders, did not use that term.
[110] Anders. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II.* Chapter 28, "Methodological Conclusions," section 6, "The re-coining"
[111] Palaver, Wolfgang. "The Respite: Günther Anders' Apocalyptic Vision in Light of the Christian Virtue of Hope." in *The Life and Works of Günther Anders*. pg. 87.
[112] Anders. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II.* "Technology as Historical Subject." in footnote 164.
[113] Anders, Günther "Theses for the Atomic Age" in *The Life and Works of Günther Anders*. pg. 189.

"*apokalypseblindheit*" ("blindness towards the apocalypse")[114] and such was a condition that was commonly found amongst the "mass produced hermits" of the world. A gulf had widened between the capability of humans to make things and for them to imagine the consequences of these actions and only an expansion of the moral imagination could allow humanity "to grasp and to realize the enormity of [its] doings."[115] Linked as it was to the need to see the consequences of certain technologies, Anders call for humans to expand their imaginations flows not from a rejection of technology (as such) but from a conviction that humans needed to assess the results of certain technologies.[116] Anders had counseled that people should use only those technologies that aligned with their moral principles,[117] but doing so necessitated a willingness to fully imagine and confront the moral implications of a given technology before such technologies were even produced. For Anders, by the time a technology appeared as a physical thing it was already too late, after something had been created it was inevitable that it would be used.[118] And though Anders did not think the chances of such a moral re-awakening were likely "as long as its impossibility has not been proven, it is morally impossible to renounce the attempt."[119] Simply recognizing that one has become outdated, obsolete, even subhuman, does not mean that one is freed from thinking and acting morally.

In his book *The Transformations of Man*, Lewis Mumford traces the shifts that humanity has undergone before anxiously turning his gaze to humanity in its current incarnation "post-historic man." For Mumford the hallmarks of this "post-historic"

[114] Rohrlich, Elisabeth. "'To Make the End Times Endless:' The Early Years of Günther Anders' Fight against Nuclear Weapons." in *The Life and Works of Günther Anders*. pg. 55
[115] Anders. "Commandments in the Atomic Age" in *Burning Conscience*. pg. 13.
[116] van Dijk. 82.
[117] van Dijk. 82.
[118] van Dijk. 81.
[119] Anders. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II.* Chapter 28, "Methodological Conclusions," section 6, "The re-coining"

humanity are the over-privileging of a technological worldview, "post-historic man, backed by all the mighty resources of science, has so little confidence that he consents in advance to his own replacement, to his own extinction, if the price of survival is to stop the machinery or even lessen the amount of power fed into it."[120] And yet Mumford's woebegone tone is a reflection of the deflated optimism that had once animated Mumford's work – and yet in post-historic humanity what arises is the use of "superhuman powers for subhuman purposes."[121] Unlike animals, humans were forced to construct a world for themselves and in creating this world so too created history; however, as technology comes to be "the subject of history" humans find themselves once more alienated from the world – though this is no longer simply alienation from the natural world, but alienation from the world human's have created.[122] In Anders work one encounters this same confrontation – of the way that incredible technological power is used not to elevate humanity but to render humanity obsolete. Instead of emancipating humanity from want and war, technology has made humans unnecessary. This theoretical move to an "obsolete" humanity represents a shift whereby technology displaces humanity (technology has become the subject of history) – and thus humans have become *untermenschen*, subhumans.

And this, from the Promethean pride (or perhaps "Faustian" pride) of having harnessed fire (and technology), humans now find themselves wrestling with Promethean shame: "the human sensation of shame in the face of the potency and perfectibility of the

[120] Mumford, Lewis. *The Transformations of Man*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956. pg. 170.
[121] Mumford. *The Transformations of Man*. pg. 175.
[122] Liessmann, Konrad Paul. "Between the Chairs: Günther Anders-Philosophy's Outsider." in *The Life and Works of Günther Anders* pg. 74-75.

devices made by humankind itself."[123] It is the shame of never matching the technical perfection of technology, it is a result not of pride in that which humanity has constructed, but instead a feeling of inferiority in seeing that which has been created[124] – having stolen fire from the gods, Prometheus unthinkingly sets himself on fire. Or, to put it in exactly the terms Anders uses: Promethean shame is "*the incapacity of our imagination to grasp the enormity of what we can produce and set in motion*…it is only due to this fatal disjunction that we accept the ominous machines that we produce and use, and the apocalyptic effects that they entail."[125] Technology has shown to its creators that "we humans are smaller than ourselves."[126] Importantly, Anders consideration of the shameful/antiquated humans does not preserve space for a chosen slice of *ubermenschen* – all of humanity achieves an odd sort of equality in the face of nuclear weapons as all of human life has become equally eradicable. Anders does not see those making political, economic and military decisions as being in control but as themselves simply acting out the roles the machines need them to take, while he simultaneously resists the move to assume an elitist position of superiority over the rest of his "obsolete" species – indeed, "our horror at the 'average men' of the technological era is only permitted to us if we includes ourselves as objects of our horror."[127]

Technology had not made humans greater, nor had it even maintained their previous centrality. By its own industry humanity had made itself inferior to the things they had created.

[123] Liessmann, 76.
[124] van Dijk. 39-40.
[125] Anders. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II.* Chapter 1 "The Obsolescence of Appearance."
[126] Anders. "Commandments in the Atomic Age" in *Burning Conscience*. pg. 12.
[127] Anders. *The Obsolescence of Man, Volume II.* Chapter 9, "The Obsolescence of the Individual," Section 15 "Excursus on synthetic perverse murderers"

IV. *Urmensch*

The past can be a comforting refuge for those discomforted by their own day and dismayed by what they see as the likely shape of the future. And while any honest reckoning with history will force one to confront a galling quantity of violence and oppression, there remain some aspects of the past that can appeal to certain romantic inclinations. After all, the past – especially the distant past – can be seen as a time wherein the planet (and by extension humanity) was less imperiled by advances in science and technology. Therefore, what the past offers some is an alternative to the visions of technology that promise to either elevate portions of the populace, render humanity obsolete, or prophesize a coming union between flesh and machine – it can provide a vision of a sustainable future consciously modeled on a return to older practices. For the Neo-Luddites the future of humanity, assuming humanity is to have a future, relied upon humanity returning from whence the species had come. Not back to the primordial ooze, but back to less technologically intensive modes of life.

With their name, the Neo-Luddites made a conscious decision to cast themselves as the modern reincarnation of a group that had made a small mark in their own time, but perhaps a larger mark on the broader socio-technical imaginary. The original Luddites were skilled craft workers laboring in England in the early 19th century, they were amongst the first groups to see their jobs and lifestyles fall victim to mechanization (Thompson, 1966). When the Luddites' appeals to governmental authorities, for the protection of their crafts failed to earn the desired response the Luddites resorted to the

tactics that was to earn them a place in the history of technology: they smashed the offending machinery.[128] Ultimately, despite having strong local support for their actions[129], the Luddites failed in achieving their goals of putting a halt to the spread of "machinery hurtful to commonality."[130] Many of the Luddites wound up transported while others faced the hangman's noose – and still more simply returned to the factories where they had gone from skilled laborers to appendages to machines. Yet, the Luddites were not the first group to make use of the tactic of "machine breaking," or – as Eric Hobsbawm eloquently put it "collective bargaining by riot" – and they would not be the last group to do so either.[131] And while the post-Luddite machine breaking that took place during the Swing Riots was arguably more successful (Hobsbawm and Rudé 2014), it is the Luddites who are remembered – and caricatured – as the archetypal machine breakers. Gradually, "Luddite" came to be popular shorthand for unthinking opposition to technology,[132] an epithet to be used to equate any criticism of technology with the sin of being "anti-technology."[133] The Luddites became the bogeymen of technological society, straw men armed with hammers threatening to strike at any moment, or as Theodor Roszak described them "if the Luddites had never existed, their critics would have to invent them."[134]

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[128] Thompson, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage Books, 1966. pg. 529/530.
[129] Thompson, 547.
[130] Binfield, Kevin (Editor). *Writings of the Luddites*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. pg. 210. This line comes from one of the many "threatening letters" sent by the Luddites.
[131] Hobsbawm, E.J. "The Machine Breakers." Past & Present, no. 1 (Feb, 1952) 57-70. The term "collective bargaining by riot" appears on page 59.
[132] Postman, Neil. *Technopoly*. New York: Vintage, 1993. 43
[133] Loeb, Zachary. "Warding off General Ludd: The absurdity of 'the Luddite Awards'." *Boundary 2 – Digital Studies*. 1/7/2015. http://boundary2.org/2015/01/07/warding-off-general-ludd-the-absurdity-of-the-luddite-awards-2/
[134] Roszak, Theodor. "Foreword: In Defense of the Living Earth" in Mills, Stephanie (Ed.) *Turning Away from Technology: A New Vision for the 21st Century*. Gabriola Island: New Catalyst Books, 1997. pg. vii. In the essay "It is Fashionable to Critique Technology" in Jacques Ellul's book *A Critique of the New*

Despite the overwhelmingly negative connotations that surrounded the term Luddite, it was still a name that had a certain appeal to thinkers and activists aiming to advance a critical view of technology. While works of history such as E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* sought to redeem the Luddites place in labor history – the addition of the prefix "Neo" meant that the term Luddite demonstrates that for some the term could be repurposed as a prideful appellation instead of as a badge of shame. While a critique of technology, tied particularly to a broader critique of consumerism, had circulated in the 1960s counter culture thanks to works like Ellul's *The Technological Society*, Mumford's *The Myth of the Machine*, and Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*[135] – those works did not feature the call to Neo-Luddism. Rather it was a call put forth by those who had been influenced by those books. Langdon Winner's *Autonomous Technology* provided the transitional step, reframing Luddism in a new philosophical light that allowed for it to be easily taken up as not simply a thinking exercise but, once more, as a tactic. Describing his view as "Luddism as Epistemology," Winner framed his new Luddism as being linked to a search for new forms of technology that would be developed with the participation of those who would be most affected by these technological changes.[136] Such Luddism did not focus solely upon the troubles of a small set of skilled craft workers but broadened its view to take in all those impacted by technological shifts - it argued for technologies that could be easily used, had flexible uses, that increased freedom instead of dependence, and that were "appropriate."[137] Yet,

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Commonplaces (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1994) Ellul skewers the way in which advocates of technology continually act as though they are under attack.

[135] Turner, Fred. *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008. pg. 29

[136] Winner, Langdon. *Autonomous Technology: Technics-out-of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989. pg. 326.

[137] Winner. pg. 326.-327.

even as he sought to appropriate the term Luddism, Winner's text remains cognizant of the view associated with General Ludd's army of redressers, and thus Winner notes "I am not proposing that a sledge hammer be taken to anything" – instead of the hammer, Winner seems to be proposing the screwdriver which can be used in situations wherein "it may be useful to dismantle or unplug a technological system in order to create the space and opportunity for learning."[138] And whereas Winner's Luddism seems largely like a scholarly exercise that seeks to critically re-asses the interactions between humanity and technology[139] – his views would be seized upon by some quite eager to "dismantle or unplug" many things.

Appearing in 1990 in the pages of the *Utne Reader* Chellis Glendinning's "Notes toward a Neo-Luddite Manifesto" was not a call for scholarly introspection but a call to arms.[140] The manifesto drew upon the arguments put forth by Langdon Winner in *Autonomous Technology* as well as on the case made by Jerry Mander in his book *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* – in an attempt to draw out a set of Neo-Luddite principles and a "program for the future."[141] In punchy provocative prose, Glendinning declared the principles of Neo-Luddism as being couched in the recognition that "all technologies are political" and that "the personal view of technology is dangerously limited" – though the principle she fore grounded was that "Neo-Luddites are not anti-technology."[142] These principles echoed the views that had been put forth by the likes of Mander and Winner – as well as Mumford – but the manifesto's program

[138] Winner. pg. 331.
[139] Winner. pg. 331.
[140] Glendinning, Chellis. "Notes toward a Neo-Luddite Manifesto." in *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition – An Anthology*. Ed. Scharff, Robert C. and Dusek, Val. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. pgs. 603-605.
[141] Glendinning. "Notes" 604-605.
[142] Glendinning. "Notes" 604.

featured a more radical sheen than its principles. In addition to re-stating Winner's call for "new technological forms" the program emphasized a need to consider the environmental implications of technology while calling for a broader moral reconstruction that would involve not just a re-interpretation of technology's usage but would entail the creation of an entirely new worldview.[143] Yet the significant leap made in the manifesto – especially in comparison to Winner's "may be useful" – lay in the manifesto's list of technologies that Neo-Luddites favored dismantling. It was a list that included many environmental bugbears including "nuclear technologies," "chemical technologies," "genetic engineering technologies," "electromagnetic technologies," bit it also included such things as "computer technologies" and – in a nod to Mander – "television."[144] Thus the Neo-Luddite manifesto described a movement that was less interested in protecting various professions from the threat of mechanization or automation – but a worldview that rejected many of the defining features of the advancing technological society. Furthermore, the Neo-Luddite manifesto framed the rejection of technology in an ecologically minded terminology that would have made little sense to the original Luddites – who saw themselves as defenders of their crafts not the planet.

Though the hope may have been that the manifesto would catalyze a broad based reaction, as Glendinning commented in 2009, ultimately "it was not so much a movement – but a gathering and a focus."[145] This was a "gathering" that brought together a variety of thinkers and social activists in the early 1990s – assembling for two conferences

[143] Glendinning. "Notes" 605.
[144] Glendinning. "Notes" 605.
[145] Glendinning, Chellis; Mills, Stephanie; and Sale, Kirkpatrick. "Three Luddites Talking: Part Two" May 29, 2009. Counter Punch, 5/29/2009. http://www.counterpunch.org/2009/05/29/three-luddites-talking/

"Megatechnology and Development" held in San Francisco in 1993 and "Megatechnology and Economic Globalization" held in Devon in 1994. The participants at these gatherings included Glendinning, Mander and Winner along with many other prominent thinkers linked to the environmental movement including: Vandana Shiva, Kirkpatrick Sale, Stephanie Mills, David Suzuki, Wendell Berry, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Susan Griffin, John Mohawk, Martha Crouch – and many others.[146] Beyond those actually present at these conferences, not all of whom chose to accept the Neo-Luddite mantle, the framework of Neo-Luddism provided an intellectual framework that allowed many scholars to participate, by publishing, at the edges of the movement – books like Neil Postman's *Technopoly*, David Noble's *Progress Without People*, and Theodor Roszak's *The Cult of Information* all engaged in emphasizing the continued importance of the Luddites. While Kirkpatrick Sale's *Rebels Against the Future* presented a popular retelling of the history of the Luddites matched with a conclusion that emphasized that contemporary society could learn some "lessons from the Luddites."[147] And though the Neo-Luddites could have been easily dismissed as an environmentalist fringe group, some participants – such as Glendinning, Sale and Mills – were invited to take part in a broader conversation about technology as their provocative philosophy was being disseminated at the same time that the Unabomber was waging his, much more literal, assault upon industrial society.[148] As the actions, and manifesto, of Ted Kaczynski forced the topic of opposition to technology to the fore in society it meant the Neo-Luddites

[146] Mills, Stephanie (Ed.) *Turning Away from Technology: A New Vision for the 21st Century*. Gabriola Island: New Catalyst Books, 1997. This book is an edited collection of the talks delivered at these conferences. A full list of participants is found on pages xxvii-xxxi.
[147] Sale, Kirkpatrick. *Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution*. Cambridge: Perseus Publishing. 1996. pgs. 261-279.
[148] Glendinning, Chellis. *Luddite.com: a book-blog mired in irony by Chellis Glendinning in honor of the 200th anniversary of the Luddite Rebellion.* "Chapter I: 'I am Luddite'" http://www.ludditeluddite1812.blogspot.com/2012/10/i-i-am-luddite.html

were, as they acknowledged themselves, "suddenly garnering more attention than, Unabomber-less, [they] would have" – Sale's book on the Luddites was published in the same year that Kaczynski's manifesto appeared in national newspapers.[149] Granted, this attention may not have been entirely a boon to the Neo-Luddites as they quickly found themselves cast into the role as the anti-technology straw men, or at best foils, in the media.[150] And this link often saw them accused of a sort of vague guilt by quasi-association with Kaczynski.[151] Nevertheless, the Neo-Luddites succeeded in demonstrating that the specter of General Ludd was still present, as Wendell Berry proudly declared at the first Megatechnology conference: "I'm a Luddite, not a Neo-Luddite. I've always been a Luddite."[152]

Yet this rebellious optimism was held in check by glum realism: "We are losing the battle…The Luddites failed, and there is no reason to think that we won't fail,"[153] Kirkpatrick Sale stated at the first Megatechnology conference. This was a sentiment that was hardly exclusive to Sale, and in retrospect Stephanie Mills glumly observed how far from heeding the manifesto's call to dismantle "computer technologies" the computer had only accelerated the things that the Neo-Luddites had sought to raise the alarm about.[154] In a 2015 interview, Glendinning reflected upon these early 90s gathering as having been "a rockin' good time" while worrying that now "the ever so cogent factor of technology had fallen from consideration as people were walking around like robots with

[149] Glendinning. *Luddite.com* "Chapter VIII: Interview with a Luddite." http://www.ludditeluddite1812.blogspot.com/2012/10/viii-interview-with-luddite.html
[150] Glendinning, . "*My Name is Chellis & I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization.*" Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1994. pg. 103
[151] Jones, Steven E. *Against Technology: From the Luddites to Neo-Luddism*. New York: Routledge, 2006. pgs. 211-233.
[152] Mills, Stephanie (Ed.) *Turning Away from Technology: A New Vision for the 21st Century*. Gabriola Island: New Catalyst Books, 1997. pg. 6.
[153] Mills. pg. 26.
[154] Mills. pg. xviii.

their omnipresent telephones attached to their brains."[155] And though Glendinning, Sale and Mills – in "Three Luddites Talking…" – sought to come to terms with the failings of the Neo-Luddites the ultimate conclusion is put forth simply by Sale: "It ended because it lost. The other side won."[156] Or, as Glendinning put it "the 'new technologies' that sat on the horizon of our 1970's-'90's Luddite-inspired visions are now fully and completely woven into the New World Order."[157]

While it is easy to read the thinking of the Neo-Luddites and conclude that they were fixated on technology, a deeper engagement with these thinkers may produce an alternative conception. Although technology is roundly critiqued by the Neo-Luddites it is continually framed in a way that emphasizes questions regarding what it means to be human in the midst of high technology. In looking backwards to the original Luddites, the Neo-Luddites were not simply accepting that "we are going to be called Luddites no matter what other name we choose for ourselves"[158] – rather they were engaging in a sort of romantic nostalgia. After all, it is worth bearing in mind that the world of the early 1800s was one in which none of the technologies that the Neo-Luddite manifesto deemed worthy of dismantling even existed. Speaking at the first of the Megatechnology conferences, Godfrey Reggio described how the modern world was one in which "we don't *use* technology, we *live* it"[159] and the situation which this gave rise to was one in which "we are remarkably becoming an alien species facing the loss of our identity as

[155] Glendinning, Chellis and Smith, Tom "Confessions of a Neo-Luddite." *Dark Mountain*, no. 8, 2015. 328-342. pg 333.
[156] Glendinning, et al. "Three Luddites Talking: Part Two."
[157] Glendinning. *Luddite.com.* "Chapter XIV: Dead Zero" http://www.ludditeluddite1812.blogspot.com/2012/10/xiv-dead-zero.html
[158] Mills. pg. 27.
[159] Mills. pg. 23. italics in original text.

human."[160] The Neo-Luddites perceived the status of contemporary humanity, expressed anxiety about the dangers to humanity posed by technological society and pined for a return to the past as both an ideal and as a way to ensure survival of humanity. If the *menschen* were to survive, this could only be accomplished through a return to the ways of the *urmenschen* – to go forward, humanity needed to go backward.

Glendinning's "Notes Towards a Neo-Luddite Manifesto" does not dwell at great length upon the question of what it means to be human, and though the text emphasizes the literal dangers to health that certain technologies pose[161] – the manifesto does not seem to treat human use of technology as an existential conundrum. Nevertheless, a gesture towards the *urmensch* can be found in Glendinning's brief note that the Neo-Luddite "perceive[s] the human role not as the dominator of other species and planetary biology, but as integrated into the natural world with appreciation for the sacredness of all life"[162] – this suggestion is clearly meant to indicate that such a shift would be contrary to the present trends. The manifesto is a brief text, as manifestoes are wont to be, but a further engagement with Glendinning's work shows a clear sense that she considered a return to the "primal" (*ur*) as necessary – as much can be clearly detected simply by considering the title of one of Glendinning's books: *"My Name is Chellis & I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization*." Within that book Glendinning emphasizes that humans evolved over millions of years in close relationship with the natural world,[163] and that technological society represents a disruption of the "primal matrix" which shows

[160] Mills. pg. 24.
[161] Glendinning. "Notes" 605.
[162] Glendinning. "Notes" 605.
[163] Glendinning. "*My Name is Chellis…"* pg. 13.

how human well-being is incumbent upon a direct relationship to nature.[164] As opposed to the Western civilization that has lost connection to its "primal matrix" Glendinning holds up the example of what she calls "Nature-based" cultures and peoples as preferable – a term which she traces to "indigenous people" or "in the parlance of anthropology, hunter-gatherers."[165]At the end of the book, Glendinning notes that "The question I hope I have raised is this: *what does it mean to be a human being?*"[166] and Glendinning's text makes it clear that in her estimation "to be a human being," means to exist in accordance with a way of life that is distinctly different from that which is represented by high-tech "Western Civilization." The problem is that "our world became decreasingly organic and wild, increasingly human constructed and technologically determined"[167] re-reading the Neo-Luddite manifesto with such lines in mind suggests that the manifesto represents a desire to deconstruct the present world to get back to the "organic and wild one." As Glendinning explained at the second Megatechnology conference "my underlying assumption is that native indigenous cultures are expressive of the full humanity we keep referring to"[168] and thus Glendinning emphasized that she saw her task as "to rehumanize myself, to reindigenize myself, to adopt a more organic and natural being"[169] – from modern *mensch* (or perhaps even modern *untermensch*) to *urmensch*.

Present within the various Neo-Luddite treatises is a certain element of apocalyptic romanticism, or to use Ivan Illich's term "apocalyptic randiness."[170] This flows from the Neo-Luddite desire to return to an older way of life, whilst these same

[164] Glendinning. "*My Name is Chellis…"* pg. 21-22.
[165] Glendinning. "*My Name is Chellis…"* pg. 9.
[166] Glendinning. "*My Name is Chellis…"* pg. 205.
[167] Glendinning. "*My Name is Chellis…"* pg. 86.
[168] Mills. pg. 168.
[169] Mills. pg. 138.
[170] Cayley, David. *Ivan Illich in Conversation.* Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1992. pg. 127.

individuals recognized that "techno-addiction"[171] had become a dominant feature of society wherein "we cannot even think of abandoning a technology."[172] Thus, the possibility of returning to the earlier way of life occupied a fraught position – it was meant as a way of staving off the possibility of catastrophe in the face of technological advances, while simultaneously being a potential result of those self-same technological catastrophes not being prevented. Little faith is reserved for a future, which the Neo-Luddites see as confirming their worst fears, even as they assessed their own present as representing the actualization of the fears of the likes of Mumford and Ellul. To the Neo-Luddites, like Glendinning, "survival in the technological system requires that people behave like machines"[173] – suggesting that the course of technological society was one in which humans became less and less like humans, and more and more like machines. A theme that crops up repeatedly throughout the various Neo-Luddite texts, and the transcripts from the Megatechnology conferences, is a sense that people could either willingly make the necessary changes, or find themselves forced to adapt when the whole edifice of technological society comes crashing down – as Sale described the situation in speaking with Glendinning and Mills: "it's come to the point that the technologies are destroying the earth. I'm convinced that the catastrophes of the next two decades will be so vast as to bring about a world where life, if it survives, will be far simpler—and the technologies too. Then we will have come full circle to something like life on the savanna."[174]

[171] Glendinning. "*My Name is Chellis…"* pgs. 97-111.
[172] Mander, Jerry. *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television.* New York: Harper Perennial, 2002 [1978].
[173] Glendinning. *Luddite.com.* "Chapter V: like dropping the atom bomb." http://www.ludditeluddite1812.blogspot.com/2012/10/v-like-dropping-atom-bomb.html
[174] Glendinning, et al. "Three Luddites Talking: Part One."

Thus the rediscovery of the *mensch*, indeed just the survival of the species, requires the return to the *urmensch*.

V. *Unmensch*

Humans did not evolve to function equally well in all environments. To put this slightly differently, the human species did not evolve to thrive at the bottom of the ocean or in outer space. Granted, in the midst of alarms sounding around the dangers of climate change in the Anthropocene, there are some who fear that humans have built a world in which the future of "contemporary industrial civilization"[175] – and perhaps even the future of the species[176] – is less than certain. Here the questions of human insufficiency are not necessarily a cause for bleak dirges about human obsolescence or sources of neo-pastoralist fantasies – though those exist as well – rather the question of human insufficiency can give rise to a rethinking of what human sufficiency might look like. If a human being is not evolutionarily well equipped to exist in outer space, what shape would such a being actually take?

It was in answering this question, in an article published in 1960, that Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline would coin the term "cyborg." Their interest was genuinely in thinking of the ways in which humans could potentially be altered so as to allow them

[175] "Lately science has shown us that contemporary industrial civilization is not sustainable." Oreskes, Naomi and Conway, Erik M. *Merchants of Doubt*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010. pg. 237.
[176] Purdy, Jebediah. *After Nature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015. pgs. 282-288. These pages provide a brief analysis of "the problems of pessimism and misanthropy" that are present among some environmentalists assessing the Anthropocene. This sentiment is also captured eloquently by Timothy Morton in *Hyperobjects* "doom comes from doom and dooms doom; this doom marks a decisive moment in which humans doom the nonhuman and thus doom the doom of Earth with greater doom…The cynic hopes: he is not beyond hope—he is a hypocrite. He is trying to escape doom." pg. 148.

to excel in the hostile environment of outer space.[177] The cyborg represents a fusion of cybernetic and organic aspects (the "cyb" and "org" that make up the term "cyborg"), it is a living unit in which various concerns related to the maintenance of the self become managed by cybernetic modification.[178] In short, to keep the astronaut from having to become "a slave to the machine" Clynes and Kline suggested that the astronaut become part machine.[179] What the cyborg solution put forth by Clynes and Kline represented was an attempt to solve "the many technological problems involved in manned space flight by adapting man to his environment, rather than vice versa" and though their article was focused on space flight the duo recognized that this "will not only mark a significant step forward in man's scientific progress, but may well provide a new and larger dimension for man's spirit as well."[180] In evoking "adapting man to his environment, rather than vice versa" Clynes and Kline are making a significant conceptual shift, insofar as it moves away from questions of the human built world and instead raises the prospect of re-building the human to meet the new challenges of the human built world. It is true that Clynes and Kline were primarily focused on cyborgs as a solution to the problem of space travel, but their concern with "man's spirit" demonstrates a certain recognition that the questions raised by the cyborg have terrestrial applicability as well. Indeed, even if Clynes and Kline are interested in outer space their concern with cybernetics places the cyborg in the broader discussion of cybernetics begun by Norbert Wiener. In his book *The Human Use of Human Beings*, Wiener puts forth a vision of the technically modified world that seems to undergird Clynes and Kline's discussion of the "environment" and in

[177] Clynes, Manfred E. and Kline, Nathan S. "Cyborgs and Space" in *The Cyborg Handbook*. New York: Routledge, 1995. pgs. 29-33.
[178] Clynes and Kline. 31.
[179] Clynes and Kline. 31.
[180] Clynes and Kline. 33.

discussing this world Wiener emphasizes that a return to the past is impossible, before noting with a mixture of hope and despair: "We have modified our environment so radically that we must now modify ourselves in order to exist in this new environment. We can no longer live in the old one."[181] The cyborg steps on to the scene as the standard bearer of such calls to "modify ourselves."

In attempting to fuse the organic and the cybernetic, the human with the machine, the cyborg cannot help but enter into conversation with broader concerns – often manifested through speculative fiction – about humans and machines. After all, Clynes and Kline praise the cyborg as a way for humans to be able to solve problems in a "robot-like" fashion.[182] Before the term cyborg, or even cybernetics, had been coined there was already a detectable strain in literature and in political discourse wherein human built creations including automatons, Frankenstein's monster, the golem, and various other "artificial beings" were framed as reasons for fear and anxiety.[183] Such fears are bound up in the very origin of robots as they have been featured in speculative fiction – the term "robot" comes from a play in which a species of proletarian robots violently rise up against their human masters.[184] And these nervous responses are not something that can easily be isolated to some bygone era of cultural production as works of cyberpunk fiction like Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (and its film version *Blade Runner*) as well as contemporary cultural works like *Battlestar Galactica* and *Ex-Machina* have kept alive the fear that humans will create technological "life" that will

[181] Wiener, Norbert. *The Human Use of Human Beings*. Boston: Da Capo Press, 1954. pg. 46.
[182] Clynes and Kline. 31.
[183] Voskuhl, Adelheid. *Androids in the Enlightenment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. pg. 214.
[184] Kang, Minsoo. *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines*. Cambridge: University of Harvard Press, 2011. pgs. 279-286.

rise up against humanity. And in many of these cases some of the anxiety may be linked to a panic that a point may be reached at which humans are not able to tell themselves apart from the machines.[185] But despite the cyborgs close association, perhaps inextricable kinship, with speculative fiction – it remains a figure of nuance and import.[186] The cyborg, to return to Wiener, is not synonymous with the robot, automaton or android – rather it is a fusion of the organic and cybernetic; it appears as the new name for the human modified to fit the human-modified environment. The cyborg can be considered as that which comes after the human, it is post-human. In the estimation of some thinkers, this new posthuman location is where much of the species formerly known as humanity currently finds itself as it becomes ever more intermingled with technology. Thus "for some people" as N. Katherine Hayles writes "the posthuman evokes the exhilarating prospect of getting out of some of the old boxes and opening up new ways of thinking about what being human means."[187] It emerges as a recognition that as humans have transformed the Earth they have also transformed themselves.[188]

In her book *How We Became Posthuman*, N. Katherine Hayles offers a multipart answer to the question "What is the posthuman?" which encompasses a view that treats "embodiment in a biological substrate…as an accident of history," also "considers consciousness…as an epiphenomena" views "the body as the original prostheses" and "most important…configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with

[185] Kang. pgs. 286-296. Kang alludes to this through his description of the character of Maria in the film *Metropolis*, wherein Maria is replaced by a robot – and this switch is only revealed when the character is burnt by angry workers.
[186] As Andy Clark writes: "Cyborgs, it seems, remain largely the stuff of science fiction, forty-some years of research and development notwithstanding." Clark. pg. 16. Clark, Andy. *Natural Born Cyborgs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
[187] Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. pg. 285.
[188] Allenby and Sarewitz. *The Techno-Human Condition*. Boston: The MIT Press, 2011. pg. 70.

intelligent machines."[189] Such a conception of the human's body as being itself a site of plasticity has even inspired some, such as Any Clark as well as Braden R. Allenby and Daniel Sarewitz, to hypothesize that cyborgs are not some odd exception but are themselves the standard form of humanity.[190] That humans are able to technologically modify themselves to be able to better fit the world around them is treated as a tale that pre-dates high-tech fantasies – and thus the development of language and writing are treated, by some, as steps in the cyborg direction.[191] Implicit in many discussions of the posthuman is a critique and rejection of traditional humanism, it is a stance that sees how, in Rosi Braidotti's words, "the human of Humanism is neither an ideal nor an objective statistical average…the human is a historical construct that became a social convention about 'human nature.'"[192] Granted, in the estimation of some thinkers, this attempt to move beyond the shortcomings of humanism is seen as just an attempt to compensate for those very shortcomings.[193]

Nevertheless, posthuman thinking is not satisfied with confronting humanism with the anti-humanism that brings to light the exclusions and oppressions that at times have been advanced under the guise of humanism. Rather, "Posthumanism is the historical moment that marks the end of the opposition between Humanism and anti-humanism and traces a different discursive framework, looking more affirmatively towards new alternatives."[194] What offers the possibility for these "new alternatives" are technological shifts that potentially allow for moving past the stodgy old human: "the

[189] Hayles. pgs. 2-3
[190] Clark, Andy. *Natural-Born Cyborgs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. pg. 3. Allenby and Sarewitz do not use the term cyborg, instead stating "we are already transhuman." *The Techno-Human Condition*. pg. 11.
[191] Clark. pg. 6.
[192] Braidotti. pg. 26.
[193] "post-humanism, which is perhaps just another name for an enriched humanism." Purdy, 288.
[194] Braidotti. pg. 37.

posthuman appears when computation rather than possessive individualism is taken as the ground of being."[195] Thus the posthuman's arrival seems to announce that the human has simply become outdated – a relic of an outmoded and insufficient ethos, an artifact of a bygone era. Here it seems as though posthumanism appears as the philosophical, ideological, and ethical operating software for beings who have come to increasingly resemble cyborgs, or perhaps always were cyborgs. The human recedes into the past, the posthuman/cyborg moves into the future.

While the cyborg has a lengthy history in speculative fiction, it was brought into academic and activist discourse largely thanks to Donna Haraway's essay "A Cyborg Manifesto." In Haraway's estimation "by the late twentieth century…we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short we are cyborgs."[196] Technology and humanity no longer existed in separate spheres but had become inextricably entangled, and Haraway's claims take on an almost precognitive quality when it is considered that she was theorizing the cyborg decades before the omnipresence of smart phones or the rise of wearable technology. The cyborg solution provides a defiant retort to humanist calls "on the necessary domination of technics" and humanist calls for a return to "an imagined organic body to integrate our resistance."[197] Instead, the cyborg casts a skeptical – perhaps technologically modified – eye towards such notions of an "organic body" and the ways in which determinations of bodies have been used as a way of controlling those organic structures. The cyborg refuses to endorse the notion of clear demarcations and instead embraces a notion of hybridization, as Judy Wajcman

[195] Hayles, 34.
[196] Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. pg. 150.
[197] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto." pg.154.

explains, "the collapse of these oppressive binaries – nature/society, animal/man, human/machine, subject/object, machine/organism, metaphor/materiality – is liberating."[198] The cyborg is a response to the viewpoint that tries to conceive of humans as somehow existing at a safe remove from their science and technology – the cyborg affirms that humans are embedded within their techno-science, even if some would like to think the contrary.[199]

Though the posthuman does not immediately or automatically refer to the figure of the cyborg – it nevertheless seems as though the cyborg lingers prominently in the background. After all, Haraway's work serves as an important touchstone for Braidotti and Hayles. Thus, though posthumanism may represent a philosophical move away from humanism that seeks to reestablish a new ethical space for present times the figure of the actual posthuman seems to represent a figure that is somewhere on the continuum towards fully becoming cyborg – it is the philosophy that prepares one for accepting cybernetic modification as a positive occurrence. A certain vaguely apocalyptic romanticism surrounds some of these speculations, a sentiment manifested in observations such as Braidotti's that: "If anxiety about extinction was common in the nuclear era, the posthuman condition of the anthropocene, extends the death horizon to most species."[200] In the midst of such fears it rather makes sense that concepts emerge claiming that, "humans can either go gently into that good night, joining the dinosaurs as a species that once ruled the earth but is now obsolete, or hang on for a while longer by becoming machines themselves."[201] What posthumanism offers is a way to continue to

[198] Wajcman, Judy. *TechnoFeminism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004. pg.88.
[199] Wark, McKenzie. *Molecular Red*. New York: Verso Books, 2015. pg. 165
[200] Braidotti. pg. 111.
[201] Hayles. pg. 283.

make ethical arguments even after abandoning humanism (and anti-humanism), but what the posthuman – the cyborg – offers is the figure of an altered humanity that can face the coming calamity. And survive it. Or, perhaps, even thrive in it.

A feature that unites many of the theorists contemplating the cyborg and the posthuman is a certain defiant optimism even in the face of potential catastrophe – and this is an important way in which such thinkers set themselves apart from the dour stances many humanist thinkers assumed when considering technology.[202] Without irony Braidotti writes, "Being rather technophilic myself, I am quite upbeat. I will always side firmly with the liberatory and even transgressive potential of these technologies."[203] This is the same enthusiasm manifested in Hayles claim that "by becoming machines themselves" humans can avoid simply becoming a species "that once ruled." A similar upbeat stance animates Haraway's writings about the cyborg, even as she notes the ways in which the cyborg is the "illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism"[204] the manifesto holds fast to the belief that the union with technology can lead to a freedom from domination instead of leading to intensified domination. Yet, particularly in retrospect, Haraway warned against the temptation to find too much optimism in the cyborg, noting that the "human/posthuman is much to easily appropriated by the blissed-out," by those who put forth sentiments such as "'Let's all be posthumanists and find our next teleological evolutionary stage in some kind of transhumanist enhancement.'"[205] Or, as Haraway writes in a way that seems to offer something of a retort to Braidotti's technophilia, "I am a compost-ist, not a posthuman-

[202] Many of these thinkers were discussed in "Section III – Unmensch" of this paper.
[203] Braidotti. pg. 58.
[204] Haraway. "A Cyborg Manifesto." pg. 151.
[205] "When We Have Never been Human, What Is to be Done? Interview with Donna Haraway." *Theory, Culture & Society*. Vol. 23 (7-8): 135-158. pg. 140.

ist: we are all compost, not posthuman."[206] Yet, even if Haraway would later sour on some of the seeming techno-enthusiasm of *The Cyborg Manifesto* it continues to be a useful foundational text for those who look anxiously upon the state of the technologically altered world but who continue to sync their hopes to technology.[207] As McKenzie Wark writes: "We are cyborgs, making a cyborg planet with cyborg weather"[208] – this is not necessarily a flouting of responsibility for the state of that planet, but it does suggest that humans can modify themselves to fit that planet. It is a significant and striking philosophical move disguised by clever wordplay: humans are no longer a species that has evolved on the planet, rather humans "are cyborgs" not just living on the planet but "making a cyborg planet." Thus the planet ceases to be a place humans must share with other life forms, but becomes a home specifically for them – "a cyborg planet" is a home for cyborgs. Such provocative statements are the types of ideas that provoke critics of technology to stir uneasily and ponder what becomes of those who do not see themselves as "cyborgs" or have little interest in becoming more "cyborg" like.

Along these lines, it is worthwhile to consider the way in which the "cyborg planet" appears in some of the speculative stories that recur in the theorizing of the posthuman and the cyborg. Works of science fiction – particularly cyber-punk science fiction – provide much of the cultural source material upon which these theorists draw with the work of William Gibson and Phillip K. Dick being cited frequently (though with Dick the film adaptations of his work are also heavily cited). The appeal of such fictional worlds may be that, as Wendy Hui Kyong Chun puts it, they offer "representations of

[206] Haraway, Donna. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities*. Vol. 6, 2015: 159-165. pg. 161.
[207] Wark. pg. xxi.
[208] Wark. pg. 180.

survivors, of savvy navigators who can open closed spaces."[209] These are not utopian futures, but blighted ones in which the protagonists struggle to survive in an overwhelmingly hostile realm – these are the types of grim futures warned of in works like Oreskes and Conway's *The Collapse of Western Civilization*. In other words – unless something is done to alter the course of the Anthropocene, and industrial civilization, these futures may well be where humanity winds up. If – to return to Hayles comment – fusing with machines may provide a way for humans to stave off extinction than many of these fictional worlds depict just that. The Phillip K. Dick novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* – perhaps better known in its film version as *Blade Runner* – provides a stark image of a cyborg or posthuman future in which a bounty hunter/police officer (who himself may be a cyborg "replicant" – in the film version) is tasked with hunting down and "retiring" (killing) a group of androids. The story features a great deal of existential confusion as the various androids – who are designed to be "more human than human" – struggle with their identities, particularly when one that was convinced it was human (the replicant Rachel) comes to realize that she is in fact a cyborg. For Hayles the story represents "staging a moment in human history when androids rival or surpass human intellectually" the tale "shows the essential quality of 'the human' shifting from rationality to feeling."[210] While, for Haraway, "the replicant Rachel…stands as the image of a cyborg culture's fear, love, and confusion"[211] for Chun "the viewer identifies with protagonists such as Case and Deckard, who are faced with a world dominated by

[209] Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the age of Fiber Optics.* Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006. Footnote 16 on pg. 178.
[210] Hayles. pg. 175.
[211] Haraway. "A Cyborg Manifesto." pg. 178.

technology."[212] Thus, cyborg fiction provides those in a cyborg culture with a way of becoming accustomed – or acculturated – to the new posthuman reality that is unfolding around them.

And yet, the question which uncomfortably lingers amidst considerations of the ways in which posthuman and cyborg thinking return to images from works like *Blade Runner* is the fact that the future portrayed in many of these works is – to make an ethical claim – horrible. Existence has become monstrous. People are portrayed as living in cluttered corporate controlled cityscapes where government has ceased to function except as a police force of cynical outsiders trying, and barely succeeding, to keep technological forces in check. In these futures capitalism has not collapsed under its internal contradictions – democracy has. Being a cyborg is not a liberating experience. These characters may have modified themselves to live in these worlds, but the nagging question at the fringes of these works is: would you want to be a survivor in such a world? These dark visions of the posthuman future – marred by ecological blight and continuing corporate control – echo Wajcman's warning that "there is nothing inherently progressive about a cyborgian identification with machines."[213] The imaginaries that crop up in discussions of cyborgs and posthumans may thus be indicative of the fact that "technological enhancement of humans is not going to help us confront the most fundamental challenges faced by our societies."[214] Thus the cyborg is not necessarily inferior or superior, it is just the figure further along the axis of time.

[212] Chun. pg. 235. Case is a character from the novel *Neuromancer* by William Gibson.
[213] Wajcman. pg. 96. She goes on: "Indeed, one of the longstanding themes of feminist writing on warfare has been the identification of men and masculinity with the technology of destruction."
[214] Allenby and Sarewitz, 59.

It may not be entirely clear what, or who, exactly is a cyborg or posthuman – but it is clear that this figure is different from the regular old human. And yet the cyborg moves away from the human on an odd trajectory – it certainly does not retreat into the past, but it is not entirely clear if the cyborg is superior or inferior to the figure of the human it leaves in its wake. As Haraway puts it "Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other."[215] The cyborg is thus not necessarily better or worse than the human, but the cyborg is a survivor – if humanity has disfigured the world than the cyborg is the being that can continue surviving in this world. Not *urmensch*, *ubermensch*, or *untermensch* but *unmensch* – a monster living in a monstrous world. Walter Benjamin imagined the *unmensch*, this strange new figure Benjamin as: "the monster stands among us as the messenger of a more real humanism. He is the conqueror of the empty phrase. He feels solidarity not with the slender pine but with the plane that devours it, not with the precious ore but with the blast furnace that purifies it…not a new man—a monster, a new angel."[216] To identify with the "plane" and with "the blast furnace" shows that this being reifies Haraway's comment that, "The machine is not an *it* to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment,"[217] the cyborg, Haraway reminds her reader, carries "the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world".[218] And as Wark notes "Cyborgs are monsters,

[215] Haraway."A Cyborg Manifesto." pg. 175.
[216] Benjamin. "Karl Kraus." pg. 456/457.
[217] Haraway. "A Cyborg Manifesto." pg. 180
[218] Haraway. "A Cyborg Manifesto." pg. 181

or rather *demonstrations*, in the double sense of to show and to warn, of possible worlds."[219]

If humans find themselves living in a monstrous world it will do them no good to retreat to the wilderness to hide in caves and tell frightening tales of the monsters that ravaged the world. The cyborg as monster is not the beast one flees from, but the fearful other that one confronts when one looks in the mirror.

VI. Conclusion

At the core of the term anthropocene is the question of who is included and who is excluded by "anthro." Of course, as this paper has aimed to illustrate, questions of the human constitution predate the coining of the concept anthropocene, and have a lengthy legacy that is bound up with a confrontation with the human built world. Whether it has been the onset of mechanized warfare, the threat of nuclear weapons, approaching environmental danger, or the approach of increasing human intermingling with cybernetics – technological change has, for many groups and thinkers, represented a need for a rethinking of what it means to be human. In some cases such considerations have led to visions of power, in others to visions of powerlessness, for some it has given rise to a desire to retreat into a seemingly safer past, whilst for others it has been seen as an opportunity to march bravely into the cybernetically modified future. Yet, one of the features that all of these reactions share is a sense that what it means to be human has changed in some way – for better or for worse – and perhaps that we can no longer even

[219] Wark pg. 146.

refer to ourselves as human. After all, what "we" is this that is being referred to in the previous sentence?

It is vital to recognize that the points represented by the terms deployed in this paper – *ubermensch, untermensch, urmensch,* and *unmensch* – are not intended to be absolute. Instead, these variations exist simultaneously in a sort of uneasy conversation and balance with each other. Here it may be useful to briefly return to a tale that seems much beloved by theorists of the posthuman and the cyborg, though it is worth focusing not on the film version of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*[220] but on the book itself. The novel is set after a World War that has turned the planet Earth into a contaminated tomb, populated by a sad remnant that fantasize about immigrating off world. While the novel's film version, *Blade Runner*, sets up the opposition between the human bounty hunter and the renegade cyborg/replicant/androids that he is tasked with hunting down, missing from the film is another important variation of the human, those who are derisively called "chickenheads" in the book. Victims of exposure to the "dust" from the war, these "chickenheads" are those whose mental state and capabilities have deteriorated – and now they are ostracized, if potentially pitied, and banned from immigrating to the off world colonies or reproducing. What is evident in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is that the extremes of the human always exist as a sort of palimpsest.[221] Thus the *ubermensch* bounty hunter (a human warrior/worker making use of the latest technologies) battles against the renegade *unmensch* (the beings that are blends of cybernetics and organics) whilst watched from the sides by the *untermensch*

[220] Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* New York: A Del Rey Book, 1975.
[221] Shapin, Steven. "What Else is New?" *The New Yorker*. May 14, 2007. Shapin does not apply the concept of the "palimpsest" to the human condition, but his essay is from whence this idea comes. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/05/14/what-else-is-new

(the "chickenheads") who have not been able to harness technology to elevate themselves to keep pace with the advances that have propelled the others forward. And amidst all of this there is something of a longing for a pastoral past (*urmensch*) in the novel's focus its human characters' obsessions with owning livestock. To focus solely upon the cyborg aspect of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is to risk overlooking the degree to which the book is an account of multiple variations upon humanity. What these figures share is their attempt to survive in the world that humanity has wrought. Even though it may have become a "cyborg planet" they are still clinging to their humanity.

Thus, what the typology in this paper hopes to illustrate is that these four extremes (and they are extremes) represent not just concepts in and of themselves – but relationships to other views of humanity. The technologically enhanced vision of "the worker" developed by Jünger is a sort of premonition of the cyborg, albeit one that sees such a state not as the new natural condition but as a mark of superiority for a select few who will therefore stand above the rest of humanity. The Neo-Luddite pining for the past is a reaction resulting from a reading of the history of technology that reveals that advances in technology do not result in an equitable distribution of the "goods" or the "bads" – even as the view offers itself as an alternative for being made "obsolete" as a species. The cyborg and posthuman appear as rejections of the regressive views that imagine that humans can somehow return to a simpler past, while putting forth a new vision of humanity that seeks to form a new type of unity in the cyborg which can escape the superiority and inferiority that has been such a dominant feature of Western civilization. Whilst Günther Anders foreboding pessimism, greater than that of many of his fellow critics of technology, anticipates a coming fall for which humanity is ill

prepared – even as Anders remained committed to resisting apathy and inactivity – humanity may have become outdated, but as the date changed perhaps humanity could gain a second life. Furthermore the thinkers within these various frameworks have themselves shifted over time – resulting in new positions that exist somewhere between various concepts in this typology; the quadrants on the graph are more important than the poles. After World War II, Jünger would shrug out of the uniform of technology and fascism and re-imagine himself as a "forest rebel"[222] and "anarch"[223] – from worker/solider/philosopher to worker/hermit/philosopher operating in the murky space of quiet superiority while searching for a mythical past (the *ubermensch* as *urmensch* – a point that would be mapped as Past, Superior). While Haraway seemingly moved away from the optimism captured in her *Cyborg Manifesto* to embrace a perspective of apocalyptic anticipation with vaguely Malthusian undertones[224] - a move that sees Haraway claiming "we are all compost, not posthuman."[225] And what is this vision of "compost" if not the cyborg as soil (the *unmensch* as *untermensch* or Future, Inferior)?

All of these variations on the human, some of which are quite happy to be done with the antiquated idea of "the human," exist not in a vacuum but against a backdrop of a world transformed and a world transforming – they are intermingled parts of a sociotechnical imaginary in which humanity is immersed. They are attempts to re-think what it means to be human at a time when the old definitions have clearly broken down.

[222] Jünger, Ernst. *The Forest Passage*. Candor: Telos Press, 2013.
[223] Jünger, Ernst. *Eumeswil*. Candor: Telos Press, 2015.
[224] Haraway, Donna. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities*. Vol. 6, 2015: 159-165. on page 162 Haraway writes "Over a couple hundred years from now, maybe the human people on this planet can again be numbered two or three billion or so, while all along the way being part of increasing well being for diverse human beings and other critters as means and not just ends. So, make kin, not babies." Though this is not necessarily an overt call for population control it is still evocative of a sense that there are too many humans.
[225] Haraway. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene." pg. 161.

In her book *The Human Condition* the philosopher Hannah Arendt considers what it means to be human while simultaneously expressing antipathy towards the idea that humanity has some kind of distinctly knowable nature.[226] Rather, humans appear to Arendt as "conditioned beings because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition of their existence."[227] Such conditions are that which give rise to the seismic shifts in the human condition – the types that lead to visions of the condition that could earn prefixes like *uber*, *unter*, *un*, and *ur*. Though Arendt writes with an awareness of the central malleability of the human condition she also writes with a notion of the way in which such a state can be made precarious due to advances in humanity's destructive capabilities.[228] Of the things that humans "come in contact with" a primary item is, of course, the world itself, and she sees much of the work of humanity, especially *homo faber* as being tasked with doing "violence to nature in order to build a permanent home for himself, and who now was persuaded to renounce violence together with all activity, to leave things as they are, and to find his home in the contemplative dwelling in the neighborhood of the imperishable and eternal."[229] Arendt recognized that adapting to a changing world was part of the human condition, and yet amidst this change she could also caution that perhaps a time arises at which point "a permanent home" needs to be made – and at that point what becomes necessary is to live in that house. Regardless of whether the variation of that human condition is living in that house belongs to a cyborg or a Neo-Luddite.

[226] Arendt. *The Human Condition*. pg. 10.
[227] Arendt. *The Human Condition*. pg. 9
[228] Arendt. *The Human Condition*. pg. 232-233, see also 238.
[229] Arendt. *The Human Condition*. . pg. 304

And yet in considering the human condition, *homo faber* (human as tool maker), and the adaptability of the species it can become easy – tempting even – to envision the shifting species as one which is simply capable of adapting itself to changes as they come. In this situation we shall become *urmensch* and next week we will become *untermensch* but the week after that we'll become *unmensch* which will lead to a systemic collapse that will render us into *urmensch* who shall once more master technology thereby becoming…and so forth. Lost in such formulations is much of agency and its cousin responsibility, but such factors can be reinserted into the discussion through Erich Fromm's concept that humans are "Homo negans—man who can say 'no,'" and also "Homo esperans—the hoping man."[230] The ability to say "no" and capacity to "hope" thus represent, for Fromm, key aspects that set humans apart from other animals. And it is these capacities that play out in the typology that has been considered in this paper – as the variations on the human condition that have been discussed herein have not solely been based upon simple adapting to changes, but have also consisted of permutations of "hope" and even of the ability to say "no." And though Fromm, like Arendt, recognizes that there is a certain "malleability" to humanity, he also recognizes that this only goes so far[231] – there are conditions to which humanity cannot become accustomed. Though Fromm is more willing than Arendt to consider "human nature" for him this is not defined by a coherent unity but by "fundamental contradictions that characterize human existence and have their root in the biological dichotomy between missing instincts and self-awareness."[232] Saying "no" and having "hope" represent, for Fromm, the ability of humans to fight against the alienation of their

[230] Fromm. *The Revolution of Hope*. pg. 58.
[231] Fromm. *The Revolution of Hope*. pg. 62.
[232] Fromm, Erich. *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Picador, 1973. pg. 254-255.

world[233] – seizing upon such powers prevents one from simply worshipping the future and instead enables one to question what kind of future one wants to see. Fromm's hopefulness was always checked by a certain measure of pessimism, and when he writes, "life is precarious and unpredictable, and the only way to live it is to make every effort to save it as long as there is a possibility of doing so"[234] – it is clear that the life worth saving has certain features in his mind. The life worth making "every effort" to save is the one wherein humans can still say "no" and in which they can still "hope."

However "hope" and the ability to say "no" do not feature prominently as points in the typology that has been constructed in this paper. *Homo faber, Homo negans,* and *Homo esperans* are not mapped alongside *ubermensch, untermensch, urmensch* and *unmensch*. To the extent they are present they are at the center, away from which the other ideas move. And though human as toolmaker might be an assumed aspect of variations on this typology, *negans* and *esperans* present alternative questions by which to assess the strengths and weaknesses of these views. Thus, the *ubermensch* says no but in so doing makes this declaration for one and all – its hope is only the preservation of its own superiority; the *untermensch* says no but has lost hope that doing so will still have any impact – it is the "no" of the one who refuse when all around them people say "yes;" the *urmensch* says "no" and hopes that this refusal will allow for a reconstruction of days gone by; while the *unmensch* does not say "no" but "yes" and hopes that in saying yes that a new future will be opened up. Granted, there are certainly some who would look askance at the claims of the likes of Arendt and Fromm – as such thinkers seem to be the advocates of the very humanism that some in the posthuman camp seem to decry. And it

[233] Fromm. *The Revolution of Hope*. pg. 8.
[234] Fromm. *The Revolution of Hope*. pg. 141.

is a similar humanism for which the earnest *ubermensch* has no patience. Nevertheless, this very remnant of humanism is that which the Neo-Luddite seeks to reclaim and which the *untermensch* imagines as a still present potential reason to hope. Here it may be worth recalling that in considering the *unmensch*, Benjamin did not portray it as the destroyer of humanism but as the harbinger of "a more real humanism." Even if "humanism is inappropriate to the present,"[235] as Vilém Flusser observed, it is out of the ruins of the previous humanism that a fresh humanism – or posthumanism – is constructed. The ruins of the past may be just that – ruins that tell of a fallen society – but these are still the foundations upon which people build, and the stones from yesterday's fallen castles are appropriated to build the structures of today and tomorrow. One can gaze critically at the past, but disavowing it does not make it disappear, as Gustav Landauer put it in 1911: "We are the heirs of the past, whether we like it or not."[236]

And thus, at the end it may be worth paying closer attention to terminology: specifically the choice of the term "*mensch*." Sometimes a single word can appear across multiple languages with a meaning that shifts in subtle if important ways across languages. In German, "*mensch*" is a simple term for "humanity" or "mankind" – but in Yiddish the term has a different meaning. In Yiddish the term "*mensch*" denotes not just a human being, but specifically "an upright, honorable, decent person" or "someone of consequence; someone to admire and emulate; someone of noble character."[237] To apply the Yiddish definition of "*mensch*" in line with the German prefixes presents an altered view of these terms – but one that may actually be far more useful. For the question that

[235] Flusser, Vilém. "Orders of Magnitude and Humanism." in *Writings*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. pg. 160.
[236] Landauer, Gustav. *For Socialism*. Candor: Telos Press, 1978. pg. 139
[237] Rosten, Leo. *The Joys of Yiddish*. New York: Pocket Books, 1970. pg. 237

such a definitional shift helps demonstrate is that all of these variations are ultimately attempts to answer the question of what it means to live, and to live well, in a world that has undergone significant technological shifts. Thus this typology does not simply indicate variations of the human condition, but perceptions of what it means to live well in the human built world – different ways of modeling how one should act in the human built world. These are visions that make claims about what the human is, what the human can be, what the human has been reduced to, and what the human can return to being.

And all of these variations exist simultaneously in the tangled "anthro" at the core of the anthropocene.

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