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POSTMODERNISM AND THE SIMULACRUM OF RELIGION IN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to show that in Western postmodernism, both religion and the university are under the sign of simulacra. Friedrich Nietzsche's "death of God" instigates a discussion of postmodernism and a simulacrum of religion. According to Jean Baudrillard and the theory of the Three Orders of the Simulacra, reality died and "hyperreality" took its place and now governs our existence. If, for Michel Foucault, the religious phenomenon today is outside theological beliefs and traditions, oriented towards the body, power and panoptic supervision, for Jacques Derrida the phenomenon appears more as a negative theology of deconstruction. The theoretical objective seeks to explore the mutations that have occurred both in the academic environment and in religion under the phenomenon of globalisation ("mondialisation") and the technologisation of humanity. Here, the study of religion in universities is a third order simulacrum, the consequence of which is the illusion of knowledge and the unconditional independence of humanity, manipulated by technological evolution. The methodology used is Derridarian deconstruction, Nietzschean nihilism and the Baudrillardian criticism of the postmodern consumerist system.

Key Words: postmodernism, religion, university, hyperreality, simulation, simulacra, cybertechnology, globalisation, mondialisation.

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Introduction

Both religion, as a form of belief or symbolic expression, science or philosophy/theosophy, and the university, as a form of higher education organised into faculties and based on the idea of knowledge, constitute two important elements in the evolution and development of human nature. Without analysing any historical and anthropological details, we can easily note that with the evolution of human nature's forms of communication, there was also an evolution in forms of knowledge; from signs and signals to languages and written texts, followed by the invention of the printing machine and then the internet, these developments led to a revolution in the transmission of knowledge and information. Thus, human nature has evolved from magical, mythical, cosmogonic or ritualist knowledge in prehistory and antiquity, to religious, metaphysical, historical and technological knowledge in modernism and to post-historical and digital knowledge in postmodernism and the contemporary moment. This is why a first general conclusion leads us to the idea that, in order to evolve, mankind (besides the satisfaction of primal, biological needs) also needs knowledge, such as different sciences and religion. Therefore, the point at which religion meets the university can be defined as the existence of faculties and disciplines. However, the first element that should not be neglected in this equation is the use of the university and religion as forms of power. Consequently, if we apply Foucauldian thinking, in modernism the university/religion constitute a panoptic system; for Nietzsche and Derrida they have nihilist and deconstructive implications; and for Baudrillard, they become a third order simulacrum[1]. These are only a few hypotheses for the creation of an image of the religious phenomenon in the contemporary academic environment, which is supplemented by technological and digital evolution.

Technological evolution within postmodernism constitutes the second relevant element. Postmodernism also sits alongside the phenomenon of globalisation, which has long since exceeded the image of the "global village"[2] proposed by Marshall McLuhan (what we have now is an implosion of this theory, in meaning and structure, under the need of a "mondialisation"[3]). The utopian image of a "global village" imagines our omnipresence in time and space, facilitated by an interconnection through an electronic nervous system provided by the virtual world and the media, which transgresses social-cultural and economic-political barriers, and drives towards a single homogenous community[4]. This image has now become a sterile and artificial phenomenon of monoculture and manipulation. This means that, in a simulacrum of cultural identity shaped by the phenomenon of cyberculture[5], together with the universalisation and panoptism of capitalist-media power where both religion as

faith and the university as an environment for knowledge are shattered in the name of an uprooting and dispersion of the Being (*Dasein*[6]) in the direction of technology, as a control mechanism. This aspect requires that we define globalisation and the "global village" (under the current conditions), even more so within the limits of the Derridarian concept of the "mondialisation du monde"[7]. The importance of the concept of the "mondialisation du monde" to the detriment of globalisation can be found in the deconstructivist critique of the spread of globalised cyber-technological capitalism, the repercussions of which can be seen in the new form of humanity shaped by the new techniques of communication, information and production of knowledge and beliefs.

Simulacrum in religion

God is dead![8] Nietzsche states this as part of his characteristically nihilist thinking, in which he foresees the death of Western metaphysics, ontology and traditional values, the disintegration of European Christianity and the end of modernism and historical self-consciousness and the birth of the Overman[9], *the last human being*[10] and postmodernism. However, the death of God and his replacement by the Overman is mirrored today in the phenomenon of cyberculture and the technologisation of human nature in the direction of *the last human being*. Human nature is currently trying to replace this dead God, who has been transformed into an abstract notion in an existential simulacrum through the power that technology and the digital space grant him under the image of *the last human being*. In fact, the new Western postmodern God is constructed by the phenomenon of cybertechnology[11], cyberspace[12] and cyberculture, through which these simulacra of simulation lead to the death of the symbolic order and to the construction of an asymbolic universe. The absence of God, a result of his death, is in fact replaced by technology, where God becomes "hyperreal"[13]. Although this may seem a rather harsh statement, technology is the new Western religion. How? Namely, in that – subversively – technology tends to be granted supernatural, existential or sacred properties and qualities[14]. This means that technology becomes the thing on which contemporary man tends to place his hopes at various positive or negative stages of his life. Technology is the thing that governs man's existence, regardless if he has direct contact with it; it is the thing through which man relates, communicates, coexists, *Is* or manifests or puts his faith in. Regardless of whether we are viewing a sermon or an address given by a priest, archbishop or pope on TV or in the virtual space or whether we look at a prayer on a web page or read the Holy Scripture on a Christian website, we are completing a series of activities stimulating faith. But this activities only places the human nature in a sad simulacrum. This is because the entire series of activities

(the Liturgy, the word of God, the prayer, the reading of the Holy Scripture) are all undertaken through the use of technology, which removes religion and faith from their entire sacred and metaphysical meaning, as well as any activity or feeling related to them. Although the statement might appear to be dystopic, but this was not my intention, which was undermining the rift between the metaphysical dimension of religion – as spiritual substance, belief and legacy of the Judeo-Christian tradition, which involves the question regarding the existence of God Almighty and the concept of seeking and knowing God, whose action mechanism can be found, today, reconfigured by technology, in the entire traditional dimension of religion (as belief, ritual, dogma or spirituality). The old metaphysical-Christian concept – which doesn't place God in the position of a basic category or unit of metaphysics, but in a referential position in relation with the Judeo-Christian faith and theism – is currently undermined by the digital space, as a new manner of religious or spiritual expression or experience. Meaning that, if we are to follow the same line of argument and analogy of the Platonist ideological conflict (between Logos and Writing), we can note that, the situation in this issue (between the digital cybertechnological conflict and the tradition of Western metaphysics) follows the same deconstructivist line of the Logos (as a metaphysical dimension of oral communication and bearing the truths of faith), versus Writing (as a subversive dimension of the textuality of the digital, artificial field and simulacrum of the truth of faith). It follows that the current digital space and virtual communication, generate the same conceptual revolution, generated in the Platonist metaphysics by the conflict between Logos and Writing.[15] This paradigm shift in the concept of God and religion produces not only a revolution at symbolic, cultural or historical level, but also at the level of faith or spirituality.[16] Thus, God, as topic of reference in the Christian metaphysics – and metaphysical question around which the existence of human nature and the Being have been created, and revolving around until the end of modernism – becomes, under the sign of cyberspace and digitalism, an iconic simulacrum of religion as a virtual relation and transmission of information. Basically, this *pharmakon*[17] of the digital space – where religion and God become a sort of mimesis of metaphysics – generates the same perverse game as Writing, by the fact that it has both positive effects (through the possibility of having access anywhere and anytime to religious feelings, debates, ceremonies or Liturgies) and negative effects (since it has an artificial effect, of simulating the religious simulacrum in the process of seeking the metaphysical question regarding the existence and meaning of God). The fear of novelty, especially in technology, has raised many controversies throughout history. Thus, once a sort of wont has settled in for the technological-communicative dimension of the television – through its nature as the *cold medium* of communication[18] – the stakes are now rotating around the digital field, which can be both a

cold medium, and a *hot medium* of communication. This dual structure of the virtual space makes it, according to Young Glen's[19] arguments, necessary to make a distinction between *religion online* and *online religion*. The purpose is seeing the connection between religion and the digital space. Thus, the nuance distinction made by Young places *religion online* more in the position of a hot medium (if we follow McLuhan's position), given that in this case people are provided with information about religion, without being explicitly required to be actively involved. On the other hand, *online religion* is more often in the position of a cold medium, according to the same McLuhan analogy, given that, in this case, there is a freedom of interactive and dialogical manifestation on communication, which involves a higher participation from the people involved, in order to understand the message. However, as argued before, in the virtual space it is almost impossible to make a clear distinction between the two mediums, the hot and the cold one, because, through its dual nature, which involves the death of reality and a simulation of the hyperreal simulacrum, the virtual space becomes a *pharmakon*. But what is the purpose of these analogies that situate religion, communication and technology on the same analysis level? It's showing the interconnection between religion, digital space, communication and metaphysics. Basically, the relation between digital space and communication is pretty clear in communication theories, in the sense that the cybertehnology of the digital space transforms simple, natural and real communication (at human level) to abstract, virtual and hyperreal communication (at digital level). Where the medium is no longer the message (as in McLuhan's theory), but the hyperreality of a simulacrum, where the message is transformed in the tautology and redundancy of codes simulated at hypertextual and (a)symbolic level, resulted from the death of reality. And the relation between religion and metaphysics is significantly changed, in the sense that God's metaphysical dimension (in terms of classical Christian philosophy and theology) pales in front of these new technological environments, which aren't just elements of mediation between the metaphysical concept and question regarding God's existence and faith, but the materialization and immanentization of the concept and of this question. Meaning that, the death of God, Nietzsche talks about and which we now find celebrated under the sign of this technological idolatry, generating an implosion in sense and structure in the tradition of Western metaphysics and which also generates its dimension as simulacrum of religion. The fact that we have the possibility of being connected in time and space with different mystical events, feelings, information or experiences via the gigantic electronic neural networks, as McLuhan calls them, somewhat repositions Nietzsche's Overman in the direction of a "hyperreal" construction of *the last human being*. Thus, through this implosion created by the death of God, the resultant New Overman[20] is endowed by technology and the digital environment with

the omnipresence/omnipotence/omniscience (of God), qualities now accessible to human nature. The presence of this New Overman is a consequence of the *death of reality*[21] and the third order simulacra[22]. The third order simulacra no longer needs representation (like the first order simulacra) or copies or prototypes (like the second order simulacra), only the simulation of reality where there is no more real or imaginary and where there is an implosion of the transcendental models that make both fiction and reality disappear into a hyperreality that dissolves them both.

With a Western "hyperreal" God, killed at the first stage by Nietzsche's nihilism action (which, in postmodernism transformed God into his own simulacrum, for which the truth of faith and (Christian) teachings no longer exist, as everything is already dead and resurrected, in Baudrillard's view), religion is also the sign of a simulacrum of divinity and faith. Currently, religion no longer represents a mystical feeling or experience in the name of a faith that requires the concept of the soul. Instead, it is more a phenomenon outside theological faiths and traditions, oriented towards the body, the power of discourse and panoptic supervisions, politics and culture. This is if we position ourselves within the limits of a Foucauldian position. The transition from religion as a form of madness or power and control of human nature[23] to religion as a form of alienation in the direction of a "hyperreality"[24], where dogmatic fanaticism or mystical melancholy are the political ingredients of a religious war that occurs in cyberspace, constitutes another perspective of the implosion of meaning in religion. Faith (as a simulacrum) is not at stake here; rather, what is at stake is cultural, existential and axiological uniformity at its entire media, at the digital and globalised level. Influenced by Nietzsche's writings, Foucault sees the religious phenomenon more as a form of discursive power, a battle that occurs on multiple levels – at the theological, dogmatic level in knowledge and at the individual level – for the purpose of supremacy, dominance and control over the *body as a machine*[25]. The panoptic supervision mechanism developed by the religious system for the purpose of shaping and submitting the *body as a machine* and the *species body*[26] opens up, from the Foucauldian perspective, a criticism of religion oriented, on the one hand, towards politics (religion as a confessional authority represented by dogmas and the Church) and, on the other hand, towards the body/corporality (the discipline and obedience of the body through the power of discourse). This means that religion becomes a form of *knowledge-power*[27], where the human body is used to develop an immanent position of religion. Thus, the martyr/martyred body from the Middle Ages, which is then submitted to psychoanalytical analysis in modernism and then offered to consumption within postmodernism, is for the current religious system an artifact of redemption, a hologram of the soul. This antagonism of religion that currently exists descends from the human

body to the power of the discourse of knowledge and stops at what John Caputo calls a "religion without religion"[28]. Where for Caputo this 'religion without religion' does not exclude the religious truths, position which doesn't however involve a truth through knowledge (as found with Foucault), but a truth outside rational, cognitive or epistemic knowledge, namely a knowledge resulting from faith.[29] A faith which doesn't raise questions regarding: What is that you love about God? Or What in God's name do you love? It however raises the following question: How do you love God?[30] Fact which, in Caputo's opinion, means seeking and loving God through actions. Actions which entail a transformation of the Self, aspect which no longer includes the need of knowing God through senses, dogmas, rituals or religions. Argument which for Caputo designates a love which cannot be defined or contained by religion.[31] Caputo's position, which goes toward God's absolute love, is the element which traces the conceptual barrier between faith and religion in the current context. From his perspective, faith is seen as the supreme love, unconditional and outside the power system of knowledge. From here we can conclude that the element Caputo strongly criticizes – supported by the argument of unconditional love, through the concept of 'religion without religion' – is in fact the element of religion. Nevertheless, Caputo doesn't condemn religion, but the fundamentalist, despotic, dogmatic, secularized and non-tolerant nature all major monotheist religions tend to have and which, in his opinion, constitutes the source of religious conflicts. For this reason, one of his main theses is about how to learn to love God through a series of multiple factice movements. This aspect is somewhat outside a verbal semiosis, because Caputo calls for a love of God, first through actions and not through words. However, regardless of how idealistic and consummate Caputo's position might seem, it opens up the perverse possibility of a derisory interpretation, which makes this position of tolerance and of religion cancellation facilitate the manifestation of the New Overman in the digital space. In the sense that the New Overman has the possibility to manipulate and control the digital space and cyberspace, as he is, in fact, their product. In the same time, cyberspace can fuel (as Caputo also argues) the wars fought in the name of religion and God. Thus, the cybertechnological cyberspace is not only a weapon in favor of power, in regard to religious fanaticism, but also a weapon of the perverse tolerance use by the New Overman, which abuses this unconditional freedom and love for God. This makes the presence of the New Overman in cybertechnology reconfigure the structure of the cultural-historical and metaphysical tradition of the concepts of Religion and God in a post-nihilist direction. This is a simulacrum of religion, where the faith in God Almighty has died and is replaced with a simulation of faith in a weak God. This lack of power and authority, accompanied by God's weakness and lack of determination[32], is complemented by a "weak theology", which is non-

confessional, non-dogmatic, pluralist and tolerant[33]. However, even if Caputo's theological-religious position involves peace and love through an openness for tolerance and religious universality, this only strengthens the effects of the third order simulacrum. Because the image of this weak God (born in a post-metaphysical era during the desacralisation of the world that lacks absolute truths and faith, as interpretation and reason within the limits of the transcendental questions) resulted from the "death of God", this leads not only to the utopian image of a postmodern religion of desecularisation, the non-conditional and a lack of religious or laic categories. Nevertheless, Caputo leaves some room for interpretation in the sense that this 'religion without religion' means for him the utopist endeavor of return to the Medieval concept of *vera religio*, based only on the sentiment of love for God, and not on the concept of religion as a form of practicing one's faith.[34] Beside this aspect, Caputo's dictum – the love for God – is one opposed to the Judeo-Christian concept of God Almighty, angry and vengeful, the source of religious wars and violence. Thus, the death of the "death of reality", generated by the third order simulacra, goes beyond the anti-religious precepts specific to postmodernism and directs them towards a negative theology of the apophatic. There is no more place for the sacred or mystical or spiritual manifestations of religion or faith but only space for a spectral virtuality opening towards a digitised panoptic system where religion and faith are a series of concepts devoid of meaning in this globalisation movement. This moves us towards a monoculture of religion. This perverse game started by postmodernism cannot manifest itself outside technology. As noted above, the phenomena of cybertechnology, cyberspace and cyberculture (basic elements of the third order simulacra) represent the new environment for the propagation, manifestation and short-circuiting of the traditional religious phenomenon. As Derrida also states, the new religious phenomenon is more a (cyber)religious war of supervision and control of all confessions through the new network of cyberspace[35] where, in the presence of cybertechnology, we no longer have the possibility to speak of religious manifestations as they only exist as a simulation of the religious simulacrum. There exists a visible religious war, with military implications and interventions borne by the Western Judeo-Christian religion for centuries that have been carried out in the name of international law, democracy, the sovereignty of peoples, nations and states and humanitarian imperatives[36]. We have also produced an invisible war, fought by the New Overman, in the virtual world. This (in)visible war, although a product of the third order simulacrum, has repercussions in postmodern (hyper)reality. This causes that which we call religion to be dissolved into a set of automatisms and performances that are meant to create a set of individuals easily manipulated and controlled by the postmodern capitalist consumerist system where religion represents a political product of the simulacrum of faith. It is a war fought beyond the

transparent effects, causes, information, dogmas, beliefs or policies of cyberspace or cybertechnology. It is a war that brings to the fore the perverse spectrality of the digital space, where what matters is not the "hyperreality" of individual or collective religious events, feelings, ecstasies or fanaticisms but an artificial and sterile dialectic of the New Overman in the name of a religious monoculture. The tendency to level religious beliefs and manifestations under the pretext of the weak God grants the New Overman the power of sovereignty over his own facts, feelings, events and choices. This schizophrenic state of free will, given as a gift from the weak God (of unconditional sovereignty) raises technology behind the New Overman to the rank of religion. This becomes a religion of events, which removes religion from the historical world, from historicity and from worldliness, and places it under the sign of the order of conditions, which precede and deconstruct the world. This "religion without religion", given by technology and located outside the historical and secularised confessional traditions, constitutes the New Overman's manner of action on knowledge. I do not mean Foucauldian *knowledge-power* but a Derridarian form of knowledge involving technique, the digital, cyberspace and tele-techno-scientific capitalism where, after the death of God and the birth of globalisation, Christianity made an alliance with technique and science in the name of tele-techno-scientific performance[37]. Thus, technique and science represent the necessary conditions for this new religion where the abstractisation of faith and the subversion of God Almighty in favor of a weak God are the result of globalisation, which not only transformed us into a "global village" but also directs rational knowledge in an archaic, primitive and instinctive direction. This ensures that faith and knowledge, on the one hand, and religion and reason, on the other hand, are manipulated by the spectrality of a false and instinctual artificial mimicry, which leads us, as with the ravings of a blind follower, into the invisible war. But beyond these aspects, which affect a general state of facts – of religion, of faith or of knowledge, transformed into a perverse automatism to ontologically dissolve the Being – there is also a particular state of facts. This concerns religions, faith or knowledge inside universities, where these are a simulacrum of the decomposition of values in a consumerist technical-capitalism system, as analysed below.

Globalisation vs. mondialisation of religion in universities

The world is dominated by technology, as it is imposed on any phenomenon, being (human and non-human), beliefs or realities though domination and control, thus reducing everything to objectivity. In turn, a void of values is created, where their (religion, faith, reality) axiological simulation strikes hard at knowledge and faith, namely the academic system and religion for the purposes of this paper. How is this mechanism

achieved? First, according to Heidegger, technology precedes science and facts. This causes the distinctive attribute of the sciences to disappear and the relationship between subject and object *becomes a reserve* where technology holds dominance and control over the Being and self-consciousness[38]. Secondly, Nietzsche's "will to power" undermines technology's instrumental position and opens it towards the authority of the New Overman, who directs technology towards an *incomplete nihilism*[39], which is a simulacrum of the re-valorisation of previous values with new values. This theory influences Baudrillard in his "cultural recycling" theory about the background of consumerism. For Baudrillard, this "cultural recycling" makes that which currently defines a university field represent a mere simulacrum of knowledge and research, supported by the capital of degrees[40]. But how is this mechanism of religion applied in the field of universities? The starting point is the phenomenon of "mondialisation" in the Derridarian view, which transgresses the limits of humanity and heads towards a destruction of identity and a global and economic system of governance without preserving the values of humanism, transforming into what we call globalisation. Unlike globalisation, the phenomenon of "mondialisation" still preserves the memory of the human world, the onto-theological charge of the human spirit born in the humanist era, which emphasised the human being and humanity in its entire uniqueness. These aspects cannot be found in the phenomenon of globalisation, which is guided by the free movement of the market and by cyber-techno-capitalist sovereignty and the uniformisation of humanity. The risk is that this "mondialisation" (undermined by globalisation) is reduced to a series of events and a series of global sequences of the human world, unable to relate to that ancestral memory of the Cosmos or Mundus. Basically, globalisation is destroying the *aura* of the humanity of the world through hyper-industrialisation, consumerism and the hybridisation of the spirit, caused by postmodernism and the death of God and history. That is why, in order to recover this human factor where it exists in both religious and academic fields, there is need for a "mondialisation du monde" and not a *worldwideisation of the world* (globalisation). However, the concept of "mondialisation du monde" meets, from the point of view of the signifier, the signified characteristics of the signifier of globalisation. But this does not make the two concepts identical. There is, in fact, a nuanced structuralist and semiological difference between the two concepts. That which distinguishes the Derridarian French concept ("mondialisation du monde") from the signifier of globalisation (*worldwideisation of the world*) is the postmodern and deconstructivist wordplay that, in the case of the Derridarian concept, refers to a signifier without signified within cyberspace and the digital world. The mechanism occurs through the process of the *de-worldwideisation of the world,* which short-circuits the signifier of *world*. In this mechanism, Mundus becomes a signifier of de-

humanisation (and not dehumanisation), which makes it an element of the *de-worldwideisation of the world* due to its being a signifier without signified. This *de-worldwideisation of the world* of the signified takes place when the element representing human universal significance – the Mundus – is reduced to a signifier. This makes it the element that places human significance within parentheses by reducing humanity (and not the human) as a signified to an empty signifier. The consequence is that what we call the humanist sciences (*humanities*[41] in the Derridarian view) undergoes a crisis in values and a systematic disintegration. The utopian value of an unconditional, independent and sovereign university as a form of institutional power where there is free movement of thoughts, ideas, opinions, writing, discourse, cultural values or beliefs[42] is submitted to a process of deconstruction and is finally reduced to a series of fictions and simulacra. Under the sign of postmodern techno-capitalist globalisation, the university is devoid of power and autonomy, both of itself as an institution and of knowledge. This, in Derrida's view, places it in a dysfunctional position on the social playing field of market and labour as a consequence of an implosion of meaning in culture and knowledge (if we work within the bounds of Baudrillardian criticism[43]). Religion gets the same treatment (under the incidence of globalisation). It is taken as a living organism of the humanist sciences and of academic knowledge and stuck in the global political-economic niche of a monoculture where the game of "cultural recycling" is a simulacrum of knowledge and its propagation, which is a consequence of the death of history and the puzzle of events that construct the hologram of the ahistorical simulacrum. Thus, if for Immanuel Kant the essence of religion is represented by the arguments regarding the existence of God, of the immortality of the soul or the existence of evil and moral theories (constructed as a conflict between the principles, ideologies and theories of the faculties of philosophy and theology), for Baudrillard these main conflicts at spiritual or intellectual level are dissolved by the game of the university simulacrum. The metaphysical dispute between the faculties of philosophy and theology regarding the existence or non-existence of God is based for Kant by the conflict of the nature of the two universities.[44] The faculty of philosophy, which was based on *a priori* arguments regarding God, and the faculty of theology which was based on the empirical arguments of divine revelations. However, not even in Kant's case we cannot speak of an autonomy regarding the subject of religion and the academic field. As proof, we have his paper, *The Conflict of the Philosophy Faculty with the Theology Faculty*, where Kant makes a clear structural, curricular and administrative distinction between the faculty of theology and the faculty of philosophy. This, the faculty of theology is advised not to get involved in the rational arguments regarding the existence of God, nor in the ones regarding the Bible as the Logos of God, because such endeavor requires a historical-philosophical argumentative approach which exceeds the theo-

logical curricula.[45] However, the lack of autonomy in universities is not a new subject, specific to postmodernism, as we might be inclined to believe. In the preface of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant speaks of the conflict between the faculty of theology and the faculty of philosophy regarding the approach of religion.[46] That is why religion at university level is not only a subject trying to discover God and to answer the metaphysical question regarding his existence or non-existence, but also a bureaucratic field which disputes its supremacy and curricular authority under the sign of the theology faculty, in Kant's opinion. And this Kantian argument determines us to regard this lack of autonomy in faculties as a subject pertaining to cultural-historical tradition and which, in postmodernism, went from the position of power to the position of simulacrum. In his 1933 manifesto, *The Self-Assertion of the German University*[47], Martin Heidegger calls for a renewed university, which would be anchored to the spirituality of the essence of knowledge and the autonomy and rebirth of the authentic scientific consciousness, which would represent the path for a return to the authentic origins of the spirit and for the salvation of the *Dasein*. For the new postmodern academic system, this renewal is diluted in the direction of globalisation (and not "mondialisation"). In turn, this loses the essence of the ontic-existential Mundus specific to the "mondialisation du monde" mechanism. *Dasein's* fact-of-being-in-the-world, for knowledge, is no longer exercised within the parameters of the given world but within the parameters of a virtual world governed by cyberspace, digital culture and cyberculture, which fills characteristic of the Mundus – of being a signifier without signified – with the significance of the *World Wide Web*. This is a consequence of global cybercapitalism imposed by the image of the "global village". Thus, this new process of "mondialisation du monde" exercises its influence on human nature, which opens up a possibility for the manifestation of the humanities, submitted to and dominated by a different kind of technology. However, under the sign of the third order simulacrum and hyperreality, religion in the university is no different than the rest of the subjects that are taught, as it is a simple field of information, devoid of meaning, content, spirit and the Divine revelation – namely, all that we call metaphysics. However, what is left of the metaphysical nature of religion is a certain symbol of morality that is also undermined by technology and the virtual space through an abuse of power over faith. That is why this tendency to leave humanity behind, in this uncertain process of the "mondialisation du monde" ends up as more likely to occur in globalisation. So, what is the difference between the *worldwideisation of the world* and the "mondialisation du monde"? The difference lies somewhere at the edge of a phenomenological interpretation, in the sense that the *worldwideisation of the world* is located somewhere in indetermination, given the fact that it exceeds the simple existential given whereas the "mondialisation du monde" is found in determination and historicity and is related to the

world. It is this exact aspect that, regardless of the efforts for keeping afloat an ontology of the world, makes this whole process almost impossible in the ahistorical postmodernism of events. The indeterminate nature of the *worldwideisation of the world* process leads to the decline of *Dasein* and to the loss of its authenticity. Where once technology became the new religion and the new God, the process levelling knowledge, faith or culture is achieved in the light of this new Overman and we can no longer speak of an existential pre-ontology of the *Dasein* and of the world. This is because we are no longer dealing with the world – in the sense of ontic concept (the totality of those entities that can be present-at-hand within the world) nor ontological (as a Being-in-the-world) nor pre-ontological existential (of the *Dasein*) nor ontological-existential (of worldhood)[48] – but with a virtual, digitalised and technologised world of cyberspace submitted to the simulacrum. In fact, this process that tries to annul the *Dasein* and replace him with the New Overman – a product of technology and consumerist cyber-capitalism for which there is no Being and no Being-in-the-world, only a simulacrum of the avatar spectrality of the digital space – leads to a disavowal of humanity. This also influences the manner in which religion appears as a field of knowledge in universities. Within these parameters we can no longer speak of religions of the world since in the absence of Mundus (which in fact concerns the Being of the world), the ontological concept of the world also disappears. What remains is nothing more than a post-nihilism of faith. The utopian Derridarian image of an unconditioned university, which opposes any state, economic-political, mediatic or ideological power and that enables the expression of religious beliefs in the freest manner possible as a duty to this freedom and autonomy before all powers, is not possible in a system of cybertechnological globalisation that produces a blockage and panoptism of knowledge. Under its incidence, the humanist sciences (therefore religion also) are being pushed to the outskirts of all these interests of power, governed by the cybertechnological-capitalist progress of the New Overman. This chips away at the university's power and autonomy for complete freedom, forcing it to surrender before capital support and territorial safety. That is why, Derrida suggests, the war is no longer fought by us, human nature; instead, the war is an ex-nihilo product of cybertechnology. This cyber-religious war invading the media resets the conceptual-theological order of religion. Thus, religion represents only an instrumental part of a cybernetic mechanism, led by the New Overman, whose purpose is to disqualify and undermine faith, the spirit and the *Dasein*. In a context where the transcendental and metaphysical *aura* of religion has disappeared, we can only speak in a manner devoid of meaning and significance about religion in a powerless university simulacrum. Here we can easily observe the action mechanism of the third order simulacrum, for which religion and the university are only another category of the cybernetic "hyperreality" where the exchange of

information, beliefs, studies or teaching subjects is only a simulation of the actual world and where the ontic/ontological is dissolved.

Conclusion

The simulacrum of religion in the Western space, both at the universal level (religion in the Western world) and at the particular level (religion at the university level as a form of knowledge and a teaching subject), represents a phenomenon of postmodernism and globalisation. The technological immersion in the individual's area of incidence has also invaded the spiritual space, which has caused religion and faith to be undermined by technology and reduced to a simple simulacrum through the effect of death and the "death of God". The New Overman is the product of technological cyber-capitalism (under the attributes of a weak God and a weak theology) and is produced by the simulacrum of a "religion without religion" where faith in God Almighty has died (in the name of a loving and merciful God, complemented by a non-confessional, non-dogmatic and tolerant theology), which is the same as the Baudrillardian reality (in the name of a hyperreality). In turn, the New Overman governs both the cybertechnological war and the nullification of the Being (*Dasein*). In this subversive mechanism, guided by an *incomplete nihilism,* there is an implosion and crisis of values, which has repercussions on the humanist sciences to which religion belongs. The illusion of the university as unconditional in this equation of globalisation requires a deconstruction of this phenomenon via "mondialisation du monde", which would restore the pre-ontological existential position of the *Dasein* and its authenticity. But this is not possible, given the fact that, in the postmodern era, we are in a situation that places us somewhere outside history, death, the "death of reality" and God, which in turn positions globalisation in indetermination and not in the determination specific to human nature ("mondialisation").

Notes:

[1] Baudrillard is the founder of the theory of the *Three Orders of the Simulacra*, where the third order of simulacra represents contemporary postmodern society. In this *procession of simulacra,* Baudrillard begins with the symbolic order, where reality exists but under the sign of the symbolic and the Divine. Then, there is the first order of simulacra specific to early modernism, where the simulacrum first starts to intervene, destabilising the order of the symbolic and questioning reality, a fact which makes way, for the first time, for romantic reveries and copies of works of art. The second order of simulacra is characterised by the second industrial revolution and the entire modern age. It brings forth the serial creation of (mechanical) reproduction and SF literature, which pushes reality to the edge of utopia, making it almost unidentifiable. The third order of simulacra characterises

the postmodern and contemporary ages. Here we can no longer speak of reality because *reality is dead*. Instead, it is replaced by a *hyperreality* where we no longer have copies nor originals, only a simulacrum of the simulation of reality, produced by the world of virtual reality, cyberspace, cyberculture and cybertechnology. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

[2] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Eextensions of Man* (London & New York: MIT Press, 1994), 85-115.

[3] Derrida uses the concept of "mondialisation" while preserving the terminology in French for a deconstructivist purpose. He uses it in *The Future of the Profession or the University without Condition* (Tom Cohen, *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities, A Critical Reader*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 24-58) to make a conceptual and linguistic difference between the French word "mondialisation" and "globalisation" for the purpose of maintaining a certain reference to the concept of the world (Monde, Welt, Mundus) that does not refer to the globe or the Cosmos but to humanity. This is a humanity that bears the charge of Greek Christianity, which in fact designates the onto-theological concept of the human world. The French version preserves a certain semantic and historical charge of the world, which brings it closed to the intrinsic and significant values of humanity. Thus, Derrida focuses his attention on the transformation that occurs at the human level, which directly affects the man (the Being), human rights, knowledge or faith (monotheist). This is also the direction I sometimes take with this study and the reason for which I choose to use, where necessary, the Derridarian concept of *mondialisation* and not that of *globalisation*. See Cohen, *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities*, 25.

[4] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 3-7.

[5] Cyberculture is a social and cultural phenomenon that raises a question regarding the concepts of the "real"/"virtual" created by cyberspace where, according to Pierre Levy, we are dealing with a "universal without totality". That is, with a universal resulting from anyone's (and anywhere's) possibility of accessing different communities, information and virtual communication; where it is not enough for interconnectivity to be global but it has to also be compatible and interoperable in order to create a homogenous network of virtual communities. The lack of totality results from the differences and multiplicities of global systems, which are subject to constant transformations and renewals. See Pierre Levy, *Cyberculture* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2001), 103-115.

[6] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Cornwall: Blackwell Publisher Ltd., 1978).

[7] *Mondialisation du monde,* the authentic Derridarian concept transposed by Derrida (in English) in terms of the *worldwideisation of the world,* meaning the humanisation of the world (a process that occurs in the humanist sciences and religion). See Cohen, *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities*, 44-56.

[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 120.

[9] The Overman is a concept that Nietzsche uses to illustrate the difference between the morality of the weak man (guided by the feeling of mercy, faith and Christian conduct, kindness, altruism, humility, etc.) and the morality of the powerful man, concentrated in the image of the aristocrat (guided by feelings of power, superiority, pride, etc.), against the background of an axiological crisis in

Western space and culture. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Virginia: Richer Resources Publications, 2009). Nietzsche also uses this concept to create the image of a subversive system of cultural, scientific, moral, human and historical values in the name of a nihilism aimed at dissolving Christian life and the precepts of good and evil. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[10] The concept of the *the last human being* shapes the image of the self-sufficient, mediocre, jaded man, guided by the instinct for his own immediate and reachable pleasures, who simulates a simulacrum of human nature and comes into opposition with the Overman's "will to power". See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 9-16.

[11] Cybertechnology is a field of research involving the study of the internet, the security issues of networks and virtual communities, together with technological and research studies of how human society is influenced by the digital space.

[12] Cyberspace is a postmodern cultural product comprising three main fields: the material field (hardware); the symbolic field (software); and the experiential field (manners of information, communication and individual entertainment), where the mediation of the material world with the symbolic field results in the production of a simultaneous hypertext culture and communication. See David Bell, *An Introduction To Cybercultures* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[13] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 104.

[14] With this statement I do not seek to condemn technological or scientific progress (in favor of a religious or mystic dogmatism) but I do want to emphasise the increasingly diversified, prevalent and immediate involvement and impact technology has on the existence of the contemporary individual.

[15] Platon, *Phaidros*, Translated by Gabriel Liiceanu. (București: Humanitas, 2011).

[16] Stephen D. O'Lery, "Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks" in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, ed. Lorne Dawson & Douglas Cowan (New York: Routledge, 2004) 37-59.

[17] Derrida analyzes the Platonist concept of 'pharmakon' in *Dissemination* (Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, 1st ed.; UK, London: The Athlone Press, 1981). In his research, he applies the deconstructivist method on this Platonist concept, which, in Plato's works, (Phaidros, Philebos, Protagoras or Timaios) is attributed toWriting. The ambiguous and perverse nature of Writing results from the fact that, although in Philebos and Protagoras the pharmakon seems to be a harmful element (being something outside memory, incapable of producing knowledge but only recollections), it is presented at the same time as a beneficial element, because it prevents oblivion. In Timaios and Phaidros, on the other hand, the pharmakon is presented as something beneficial (a cure against forgetting) which in reality is something harmful through its artificial nature, as a poison and simulacrum of truth, knowledge or memory. (Derrida, *Dissemination*) 95-117.

[18] Marshall McLuhan distinguishes the communication mediums depending on the participants degree of participation and the amount of transmitted data. Thus, according to this criterion, he classifies the communication mediums into *cold* and *hot*. According to the degree of participation and amount of transmitted data, television is a cold medium, because it doesn't transmit enough data and it requires a higher degree of involvement, and the hot mediums are the ones providing enough data and consequently requiring a lower degree of participation, such as: radio, film, lecture or photography. (McLuhan,

Understanding Media) 3-45.
[19] Young Glenn, "Reading and Praying Online: The Continuity of Religion Online and Online Religion in Internet Christianity" in *Religion Online*, 93-106.
[20] I propose that the concept of the New Overman is one that tries to define the new image of the contemporary individual who is dissolved, from a pre-ontological existential point of view, by cybertechnology. Also, this concept is a fusion of the concept of the *Overman* (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) with the concept of *the last human being* (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp. 9-16). This creates a hybrid, a simulacrum created by contemporary technological society, which retains the Overman's "will to power" and *the last human being's* failure in the evolution of the human being and self-sufficiency. However, this New Overman is a product of technology, where the "will to power" is a requirement of technological progress and the failure in the evolution of the human being (in its self-sufficiency) is a consequence of the loss of will and capacity for Being-in-the-world as a result of the technologisation of human nature and the loss of ontological meaning.
[21] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*.
[22] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation,* 3-31; 81-84.
[23] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 1988), 215-220.
[24] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 4-7.
[25] The concept of "body as a machine" represents the exercise of power through anatomic-political mechanisms of discipline, optimisation, extortion, docilisation and the economic integration of the human body in a *biopower* system. This control mechanism appeared, according to Foucault, in the illuminist era. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 135-140.
[26] The concept of "species body" – the body endowed with the mechanics of life and biological processes – is used by Foucault to shape his theory on *biopolitics*, where power is used as control over the biological processes of the population. This form of control also emerged in the illuminist era. See Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* 135-140.
[27] The concept of "knowledge-power" is used by Foucault to show the manner in which connecting a set of practices (of confession, the direction of consciousness, the medical or psychoanalytical report) with a veridictional system creates a device that submits a series of realities, such as religion, madness, sexuality, disease, violence, politics and the economy, into divisions of true and false. See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics, Lectures at the College de France 1978-79* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[28] John D. Caputo takes the concept of "religion without religion" from Derrida's deconstructivist philosophy, which he uses to create the image of a religion outside Judeo-Christian dogmas, beliefs or doctrines in search of a new discourse of transcendence that brings religion closer to the illuminist Kantian position of a "religion within the limits of pure reason". See John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 69-77; 181-212.
[29] John D. Caputo, *On Religion*, (New York & London: Routledge, 2001), 111.
[30] Caputo, *On Religion*, 134.
[31] Caputo, *On Religion*, 137.

[32] Caputo takes the concept of "God's Weakness" from the Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, where the weakness of God is, however, stronger than the power of men. This concept is complemented by the deconstructivist philosophy and the negative theology in Derrida's philosophy in order to provide a theological opening towards an ethics of love, forgiveness and a postmodern free will linked to the relations between men, events and their actions. This weakness of God is, however, intentional and assumed, not ontological; a choice that doesn't make him responsible for intervening in events and in human wickedness, nor does it make him responsible for not assuming his omnipotence. See John D. Caputo and Gianni Vattimo, *After the Death of God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 47-89.

[33] Caputo takes the concept of "weak theology" from Vattimo's philosophy regarding the concept of "weak thought". See Gianni Vattimo, *Weak Thought* (New York: State University of New York, 2012), pp. 39-53. This concept questions reason, value judgments and the moral axiological system in favour of relativism, compromise and personal and reachable options. Caputo applies this to religion and theology to undermine Western metaphysics and reject traditional theological dogmas in favour of an abstract and non-dogmatic theology. A weak theology is a theology of events, a theology of facts and the expression of God's non-sovereignty. The purpose is to accede through a weak theological system to the peace, justice, love and tolerance that cannot exist under the conditions of a strong theology (based on fundamentalism, power, submission and violence). See John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 1-23.

[34] Caputo, *On Religion*, 112-115.

[35] Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, *Religion* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 1-78.

[36] Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion* (New York & London: Routledge, 2002), 30-35.

[37] Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 40-100.

[38] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology* (New York & London: Garland Publishing Ink, 1977), 3-53.

[39] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 69-71.

[40] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 102-103.

[41] Cohen, *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities*, 24-58.

[42] Cohen, *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities,* 27.

[43] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 98-102.

[44] Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Translated by Mary J. Gregor, (New York: Abaris Books, 1979) 59-61.

[45] Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, 59-61.

[46] Mary J. Gregor, Foreword to *The Conflict of the Faculties*, by Immanuel Kant, Translated from German by Gregor, Mary J. (New York: Abaris Books, 1979), vii.

[47] Gunther Neske and Emil Kettering, *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 5-13.

[48] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 93-102.

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