

**F R O M P R E T O
P O S T H I S T O R Y , T H E
E M E R G E N C E
O F A T R A N S C U L T U R E**

emanuel

dimas

de

melo

pimenta

1

9

9

6

MBONE Virtual Lecture

De la préhistoire à la post-histoire, émergence d'une transculture

Emanuel Dimas de Melo Pimenta

Fundação para a Computação Científica Nacional, Lisbon, Portugal

École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland

l'Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, Paris, France

Berkeley University, California, United States

title: From pre to post-history, the emergence of a transculture

author: Emanuel Dimas de Melo Pimenta

year: 1996

Architecture, aesthetics, cognition

publisher: ASA Art and Technology UK Limited

photographs © Emanuel Dimas de Melo Pimenta

© ASA Art and Technology

www.asa-art.com

www.emanuelpimenta.net

All Rights Reserved. No, text, picture, image or part of this publication may be used for commercial purposes or related to any commercial use, by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, any kind of print, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher. In case of permitted use, the name of the author and photographer must be always included.

History, as the fundamental technology for understanding the West, certainly had its first sign of disintegration with Karl Popper, when he published the classic *The Poverty of Historicism* in 1957.

Packed as a furious criticism on his teleological partners, scientists of aristocratic form and character, not matter their political colour, the text unveiled the impact that the first wave of thermodynamics caused – principally with Werner Heisenberg’s ideas and his celebrated *Theory of Incertitude*. But, it also unveiled what would emerge as the second wave of thermodynamics, a little later.

In general, because they are too involved in the *illusion of contiguity* – produced by the intensive use of vision, a use that was well represented by the phonetic alphabet and Gutemberg’s press – people didn’t understand what really had happened and, including Popper, they let themselves be deluded by the idea of a political challenge.

In that year, the Sputnik was launched – the first telecommunication satellite. Only five years later Licklider would constitute for the American Army what would be the basis of what would be called the Internet.

Popper asked himself about the real reason for scientific investigation: the desire for knowledge or the fight for survival, that is to say: systematic knowledge or Natural Selection?

Ten years later, Gerald Edelman established the model according to which our immune systems, and also probably our cognitive complexes, don't work through *instructionist* functions, but by *self-regulation*, *selection* and *chance*.

The majority of historians, like Georges Duby, consider that the most important indicator that distinguishes the West is what we call *history*: a chain of discrete elements, polar, and diachronically interconnected. Not a hierarchy, because there are different histories, but the structure of the acoustic universe.

It seems that when we greatly intensify the sense of vision, in the auditory complex we reclaim an efficient principle for the elaboration of a model to understanding the very last structure of things.

Napoleon Bonaparte affirmed that «the politics of a State» was «in its geography».

But, certainly, it will be an essential link between *politics*, in the sense of *polis*, *history* and *geography*!

The institution of the *polis* in Greece coincides with the idea of *isonomy*, with the appearance of the *book* – as an accumulator of ideas by a single person – with the intensification of vision through reading, with the start of history by Herodotus – as a kind of *religion* – and with a less tribal idea of territory.

The Greek miracle!

The *end of history* is then announced by the excess of information through the huge development of resources for data storage.

That is to say: if *Pre-History* was characterised by the limited storage of long term information, *Post-History* will be the maximum in terms of *real time* informational stock.

So, facing to an enormous contingent of information nothing could remain *history*, because there would be *a priori* a great variety of *truth*.

But, showed by the model established by *cyberspatial* navigation, the *end of history* also coincides with the end of the classical idea of territory, and with the start of a new geography.

This image of the *end of history* has almost nothing to do with Professor Fukuyama's who, still a prisoner of old technologies, considers that the post-historical world would remain divided into Nation-States.

Quickly, the frontiers disintegrate: to the horror of controlling authorities, which still need to contain migratory fluxes of everything that means capital, including people.

To the panic of politicians – still familiar with the old idea of territory but, in general, not familiar with the enterprise environment, as if they still had their feet in the pre-industrial era – the old rule of state starts to be quickly dislocated to multinational enterprises, which should adopt the term *transnational*.

Otherwise, one of the only and strongest links that still make the relationship between politicians and enterprises seems to be taxes, which are – in last instance – generators of benefits for the enterprises themselves, as if we definitively had inverted the rules.

Cultures are all mixed, producing an interesting and turbulent *bricolage* – for the despair of nationalists, who still believe in the idea of the *nation*, and for the confusion of artists, who still believe in and defend a *literally* uniform concept of art.

The old, local *ethos* transforms itself into a planetary and global one, projecting a new type of *ethics*, turbulent and non-linear, which we still are not used to.

The same *overcommunication* and *overpopulation* system produces the phenomenon of megacities, which will soon number over fifty! – huge social colonies with more than ten million inhabitants that work as true City-States.

Without telecommunications networks of networks, megacities would be simply impossible.

Neither would a *megacomplex of nanodecisions* be possible.

Megacities unveil an interesting process of organisation *without order*, in the sense of *literary order*. Because of this, practically all megacities in the next ten years will be located in so-called Third World countries, that is to say, countries with a low degree of literacy.

But, those same nets produce *mafias* in all their colours, borrowing the name used by Southern Italian families which created networks of power through the control of information dedicated to criminal activities.

Curiously, the word *crime* has its most distant etymological root in the Indo European **krei*, which meant *judgement*.

There is no *judgement* without a determined *ethos*!

There certainly, will be a key to the question of why our planet seems to be permanently plunged into waves of crime and corruption, principally when we consider the case of megacities: free of a standard *ethos*, precise and uniform, any *order* of values became questionable.

Nets also make possible – and inside this universe of a deep metamorphosis of ethics – the instant generation of non formal groups of people.

It is about interest groups that constitute practically all institutions of this end of the millennium. Because of this, in several languages and in different countries people refer to these *defence of privileges* groups – for the mainly part *closed groups* – as *mafias* or small *churches*.

The fact is that only in this century agriculture is no longer the principal planetary activity, that the Middle Age lasted for practically 75% of the last two thousand years and that the *white world* seems to have lost very quickly the privileged position, which it held at least since the 15th century.

Today, January 18, 1996, in the *World Wide Web* more than two million sites will be active, which represents almost three thousand people per *site*, of the almost thirty three million Internet *inhabitants*.

Predictions say that, in the year 2000 – that is to say, in only five years – there will be more than a billion Internet users, meaning almost 17% of the world population.

This new virtual geography reveals two human characters that seem to exist in permanent conflict: the ignorance and the wise. The latter, in the image of *teleanthropos* – an idea brilliantly created by Rene Berger: the human being constituted at a distance, made by enchainment of different cultures, open and nomad, a species of contemporary *Frankenstein*, certainly horrible to the mediocre eye.

And the former, the ignorance, which appears powerful in the image of *secondary illiterate* people: who, however with school and university diplomas, have lost the habit and pleasure of books, music, theatre, art in general. People who despise education, even looking their own offspring, defending a world detained by *the smart* and the benefits of taking *advantage* on the next.

As Plato showed in *Theaetetus*, they are both characters that were already present at the time of Socrates. Characters that dominated the *scene* of the Greek miracle and that seem to be being resurrected in the middle of a new metamorphosis.