The Modern Condition of *Anaesthesis*  
Ezra Lee  
 Ever since the Platonic denunciation of sense in favor of the *eidos* in the noetic realm of the Ideal, the problem of sense, insofar as it is convertible to truth, has been a recurring cause of concern, if not outright condemnation, for Europeans given to the Platonic persuasion. We can observe from Aquinas onwards that the character of this debate has wavered between the originary fact of the sensorial basis of abstract knowledge to the complete severing of bodily sense from the articulation of truth, as conceived by the self-certain mind in the manner of Descartes.[[1]](#footnote-1) While it must be admitted that the Neoplatonic principle of emanation from the One that held court over Europe until roughly the crisis of the Enlightenment was inherited from the Near East, the European reception of the quasi-Hellenic principle challenged Christian theology so immensely that by the late-Medieval period the full force of the infinite universe burst forth through the enclosed spheres of the Neoplatonic cosmology that dominated the global doctrine of the Roman Church, ushering the European world into what might be termed modernity, or the destruction of the Neoplatonic – or properly speaking, Aristotelian – cosmos.[[2]](#footnote-2)

When Alexandre Koyré speaks of the destruction of the cosmos beginning in the European late-medieval period, it also entails in a way the liberation of sense from its humiliating internment in the Neoplatonic cosmos. However, the liberation of sense from its old cosmological rank implies a vulnerability. No one afterwards was willing to assert the primacy of sense. In fact, the program of modernity, so long as it was still occupied with the dangerous residues of Platonism, actively sought to eradicate the manifoldness of sense.[[3]](#footnote-3) Thus, I argue that modernity is a generalized condition of *anaesthesia*, or the loss of sense, i.e. non-sense or senselessness. Here, sense is closely associated with responsibility in the sense of responsiveness which implies action or movement. But what exactly is the sense in non-sense? What I propose is that the very possibility of any world, which is to say its significance and which is also more primordial than the possibility of the cosmos itself, lies at the threshold between things. And at these margins, surfaces must be permeable to the other thing without which there can be no sense in the world, which the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy calls the *l’im-monde* or un-world.[[4]](#footnote-4) The threshold that mediates in between things is foremost an open sensorial medium and it is this shared sensitivity that constitutes the access to and disclosure of the world. When we speak of sensorial media, we are speaking about the immediate physiological interface between the individual and its surroundings as well as the supplementary, i.e. technical, means through which the individual accesses the world, doubly mediated by the first senses and the secondary senses of prosthetic enhancement, i.e. technicity. I share with Siegfried Zielinski a similar regard for the senses in this respect. Until relatively recently, little attention, at least within philosophical discourse, has been paid to the sensorial richness of this secondary medium through which the world has been revealed. It is for this reason that I think it is important that we reconsider Heidegger’s *The Question Concerning Technology* in light of the question of the technical medium as a sensorial medium.

For Heidegger, the essence of technology is first of all a mode of revealing. He explains: “Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *alētheia*, truth, happens.”[[5]](#footnote-5) We should briefly note here that Heidegger departs from the Platonic idea of truth as the ‘correctness of the gaze’. For Heidegger, this mode of revealing truth is closely linked to the notion of *poēisis* as a bringing-forth. But he points out that the essence of *modern* technology is characterized not by a mode of revealing that is a bringing-forth to presence in the sense of *poēisis*, but rather by a challenging-forth demanded of nature. This revealing as challenging-forth is the rule of Enframing (*Gestell*), in which the real is revealed to be a standing reserve insofar as nature is conceived only as an orderable and calculable complex of forces. Enframing thus implies a sense of closure insofar as it becomes the only mode of revealing. It is this that Heidegger warns is the extreme danger of the essence of modern technology. We should be careful to read modern technology itself as dangerous. “There is no demonry of technology,” but Heidegger cautions, “there is the mystery of its essence. The essence of technology, as a destining of revealing, is the danger.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Thus, what Heidegger is chiefly concerned with in the *Question* is preserving the open manifoldness of *poēisis* in *technē*, i.e. art, as a mode of revealing truth.[[7]](#footnote-7) This openness entails an openness of sense to the extent that the sensorial medium grants the individual access to the world as revealing.

While the philosophies that followed the Platonic tradition have treated sense with contempt, differing only by degree, the simple fact is that Plato, too, was condemned to accept the primacy of sense. When Plato refers to the striving towards ideal Form, it could only have been completed in accordance with and appeal to the organ of the eyes.[[8]](#footnote-8) How else can we first begin to conceive the Ideal were it not for this original analogical access?[[9]](#footnote-9) It was only with Descartes that the final blow to sense-perception was dealt, philosophically. Yet, the antinomy between the mind and body effected by Descartes was never entirely accepted even by the Idealists. In fact, for many philosophers writing after Descartes, this split had to be sutured. Philosophers such Kant and Hegel, in their quest to develop a comprehensive, if not finite, philosophy of the mind, still had to harbor in their philosophies the primacy of sense-perception insofar as it was related to the higher faculties of the mind whether in a synthetic or dialectical manner.[[10]](#footnote-10) What these examples prove to us is that Western philosophy following Plato could never completely rid itself of the problem of bodily sense, humiliated as it might have been under the weight of the firmaments.

But before the Neoplatonic cosmos was taken in by Roman curiosity and maligned by the philosophers of late-medieval Europe, it had been a cosmos of the Near East where the manifoldness of sense attained a special privilege in their cosmological order to the extent that it was not merely a philosophical doctrine but a sensorial practice too. The activation of the sensorial medium through techniques of celestial magic was recognized by Neoplatonizing practitioners in the Near East as proof of their access into the higher realms.[[11]](#footnote-11) Among these Arabic esoteric literatures, I will refer in particular to the *Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm*, which offers an exemplary collection of material on Near Eastern magical practices variously related to the Platonic doctrine of the Ideal. It must be noted however that the sources of the *Ghāya* can hardly be ascribed to a purely Hellenic tradition. Aside from its well-known Hellenic and Syriac origins of late antiquity, David Pingree reminds us that we must also reckon with the fact that Neoplatonism was a thoroughly cosmopolitan tradition, drawing its influence from the rich scientific and magical traditions of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Iran, and India, each of which having differing degrees of relation to the Hellenic traditions.[[12]](#footnote-12) The synthesis of these traditions along with the principle of emanation from the One, or the theory of hypostases, which Pingree attributes to the polymath Jābir ibn Hayyān, inaugurates what we now call Neoplatonism.

Esoteric magic is prosthetic, i.e. technical, because it enhances the sensorial access to world by drawing the senses of the practitioner into a higher realm in the Neoplatonic cosmos. How does magic affect this? As is known by now, the Neoplatonic cosmos consists in an elaborate principle of emanation, in which the highest order in the cosmological firmament, God or variably called the One or the Good, emanates into the lower orders. According to the *Ghāya*, the spheres following God are sequentially ordered as intellect, soul, *hyle*, nature, the seven planets, matter, and at its base, the elements. What was important for the practitioners of Neoplatonic magic was that the linkage between these spheres, in particular with the celestial sphere, could be maintained by the technical media of magical practice. The connection between the sublunar realm in which the individual dwelled and the higher orders insisted upon a reciprocal responsibility (in the sense of being responsive) between the celestial entity and the practitioner. The practitioner must not only be open to the ascent into the higher realm but the higher realm must also be open to descending down to them, otherwise any sensorial appeal from the practitioner would be impotent. This implies that celestial magic is a practice of appealing, not mastery. The late-medieval European rejection of Neoplatonic model was essentially a problem of an unanswered call which led Nietzsche to hang up the phone and exclaim through his mad agent in *The Gay Science*, “God is dead!”[[13]](#footnote-13)

While the composition of the Neoplatonic cosmos placed humans at a great distance from God, rendering any direct appeal to the highest firmament ineffectual, the principle of emanation within the cosmological framework meant that despite this separation, the will of God, to the extent that a residue of the will remained imbued in the celestial sphere, could still be summoned through sensorial appeal by the practitioner. According to the *Ghāya* and other Near Eastern accounts on celestial magic, the spiritual emissaries of God that dwell in the astrological realm show a sensitivity and responsiveness to various sublunary inducements. The magical rituals of inducement involved appeals to the immediate senses of these spiritual entities as much as it appealed to the practitioner. In some practices, specific utterances and incantations of inducement were expected to resonate with the entities provided that the practitioner could be heard. It is for this reason that these practices were often only conducted at favorable astrological moments when these appeals were expected to have the greatest sensorial efficacy. Many of these same magical practices also involved the burning of specific incense that correlated to the particular celestial entity whose power the practitioner sought to draw in. And other rituals involved the ingestion of particular substances in kind to the celestial entity so as to absorb and embody the entity itself for the duration of the event. Magic rituals, which gathered together these different modes of sensorial appeal, manifested an experience which enfolded the practitioner within a heightened realm of sensorial experience to the extent that it separated them from the sensorial experience of the sublunary realm.

The textual transmission of the Neoplatonic cosmological framework from the Near East to Europe cannot be grasped as a singular stream or event as if the entirety of the diverse texts on Neoplatonism suddenly arrived on the library shelves of the Latin Christian religious houses. Not only was the propagation of Neoplatonism into Europe an uneven process, it was conveyed with other unique traditions from the Islamic world, which generated vastly divergent religious and ritual practices within Europe. Of course, it is well known that, within the official theological discourse of the Roman Church, the incorporation of the metaphysical claims of the Eastern Neoplatonic model by the Scholastics, chief among them Thomas Aquinas, defined for centuries the main cosmological outlook of the Church of Rome. However, as I suggest in footnote 11, this synthesis was untenable, which led to the dissolution of the Aristotelian-Catholic cosmos in philosophical thinking and the passage into the philosophical-scientific Modern Age, which was even more hostile to a newly pathologized body than its Neoplatonic precursor. But below the higher theological discourses on Neoplatonism, if we continue the tradition of the Neoplatonic humiliation of sense, the popular encounter with Eastern Neoplatonism especially during the Renaissance often manifested itself as magical. Chief among the early adherents to this strain of magical Neoplatonism was the Florentine Platonist Marsilio Ficino, whose interest in magic and divination eventually drew severe condemnation from the Church. In his *De vita libri tres* or Three Books on Life, Ficino’s attitude towards sense and the upper firmaments of the cosmic order was magnanimous. For Ficino, the senses of learned persons were of considerable concern for which he suggested innumerable therapies and remedies. For instance, on the loss of taste common among learned people, Ficino suggests to “use a rose-spice (which means rose-sugar, rose-honey also, mixed with cinnamon) either alone or seasoned with ginger or mint-syrup, but especially use theriac.”[[14]](#footnote-14) Similar to his Arab precursors, the practices of magic, alchemy, and pharmacology were indistinguishable. In the third book, ‘On Obtaining Life from the Heavens’, Ficino mentions images in the form of talismans, alchemical medicines, and songs – correlated to the sense of sight, taste, and hearing – as sensorial media through which to access the cosmos. Ficino’s opinions on the efficacy of these technical mediums are especially colorful. For instance, he agrees with his predecessors to a certain extent that medicine, insofar as its preparation shows the transmutation of matter (fermentation), demonstrates an intimacy with the celestial sphere closer than the unchanging talisman. But Ficino argues above all that the highest of all senses is hearing. On songs, he writes: “When it imitates the celestials, it also wonderfully arouses our spirit upwards to the celestial influence and the celestial influence downwards to our spirit. Now the very matter of song, indeed, is altogether purer and more similar to the heavens than is the matter of medicine.”[[15]](#footnote-15) These are but a few examples of sensorial access through technical media in Ficino’s magic. Unfortunately, the breadth of his coverage on the shared sensitivities between humans, nature, and the celestial are so extensive that I cannot even begin to parse out every aphorism. Moreover, I cannot begin to give a full account about the niceties of the relationship between the seven planets to nature into which the practitioner intercedes that Ficino describes. And while we have devoted much of our attention to Ficino, I think it is prudent for another time to also consider the magical treatises of Cornelius Aggripa’s *De Occulta Philosophia libri III*, Giovanni della Porta’s *Magia Naturalis*, and the various works on magic by Giordano Bruno. We should note as a minor fact that all of these major writings listed above were published during the Renaissance. Additionally, we might also add that Bruno played no small part in challenging the Scholastic-Aristotelian orthodoxy of the Roman Church which both Blumenberg and Koyré assert. Bruno was after all burned at the stake for his views.

By the Reformation, the European relationship with magic grew increasingly complex. The same charges from the Inquisition that befell magical practitioners like Ficino, della Porta, and Bruno were turned by the Protestant reformers against the Roman Church itself. The ritual practices of the Eucharist and the veneration of saints, while not of the exact kind that was propagated by Ficino, *et. al.*, warranted the same admonition so far as the senses were concerned. Continuing the Scholastic tradition of Neoplatonism, the Reformers argued that transcendental spiritual truth could not be accessed through the technical media of idols and images.[[16]](#footnote-16) While these charges levelled against the Roman Church had for a brief period of time significant ramifications to its official practices, by the Counter Reformation, the Roman Church would double down on its technical position towards the senses, leading art historians to call this special period the Baroque.[[17]](#footnote-17) But it would be entirely unjustified to suggest that Protestants made no attempt to appeal to the senses through technical means. Walsham gives a substantial overview of how different Protestants sacralized their own rituals practices. But more importantly, throughout this turbulent period, the practice of Neoplatonic magic persisted nonetheless. It wasn’t until the destruction of the Aristotelian cosmos that Weber’s notion of ‘the disenchantment of the world’ could gain theoretical purchase.  
  
 Without going too far into the lengthy details of Europe’s philosophical passage into the Modern Age which I defer to the luxurious analyses, which is not to say complete in any sense, by Hans Blumenberg and Koyré, the end of the Neoplatonic-Aristotelian dominance over philosophy gave way to a new way of sensing after it became untethered from the cosmos. While we might expect that the effect of this was the liberation of sense from its cosmological prison, modernity had no shortage of reasons to eradicate the manifoldness of sense in favor of the smooth non-sense of un-differentiated space-time, i.e. *anaesthesis*. It is of course impossible for us to identify who or what the culprit of this violence is; however, thinkers of modernity have nonetheless given us no shortage of suspects: Reason, the state, capital, technoscience, and so forth.[[18]](#footnote-18) I will for the rest of this paper identify the qualities of this senseless globe which we occupy.

Among other things, modernity has been a total campaign of de-sensitization. But we cannot reduce the many technical objects produced during this period to this fact. Modern technicity must be viewed as a potentiality. After all, “there is no demonry of technology,” Heidegger reminds us, but there might be *daemons*. So far, I have circumscribed technicity in the exceptional event as it relates to ritual practice. But we have to admit that while these events involve a great variety of technical media to explore, it would be an error if we did not also recognize the even greater diversity of technical media of the less exceptional, e.g. boots, utensils, spectacles, and all the other unassuming artifacts that exist to reveal worlds and that constitute still more rituals. If media theory had been hitherto a domain established on a logocentric bias inherited from Plato, my goal is to explode it by asserting equally the other modes of sense beyond sight and hearing, or what Hegel calls the ‘theoretical senses’.[[19]](#footnote-19)

We are always-already sensing, i.e. revealing worlds, because we are always in one. Sensing is a primordial condition. But we all sense differently. Every being is enfolded in a saturated infinitum of pre-senses. Pre-sense is not a singular entity like a molecule or photon, but a manifold of unelaborated potentialities. Pre-sense is the un-sensed that only gains sensorial and world-revealing coherence when a sensorial threshold is open to receive it. And the openness of a sensorial threshold is contingent upon a process of selection and attention which is itself related to affectivity. A breeze is pre-sense because immanent within the breeze is an infinitum of potential worlds, but since the breeze only passes by once and so long as our senses do not attend to the pre-sense of the breeze, the pre-sense expires instantly, bringing along with it its world-disclosing potential. For humans, sensing is always in a relationship with memory which is also a process of selection, i.e. attention. Some sense-impressions linger longer than others, and some are immediately forgotten. In any case, sensorial memories that resurface render worlds strangely familiar. Such memories are subversive because they are elusive, contingent, and singular. Expressed in this way, my phenomenology of *aesthesis* shares much in common with Laura Marks’ phenomenology of enfolding-unfolding aesthetics which she derives from the works of Bergson and Deleuze.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The general outline forward is to reveal how the eradication campaign of modernity curtails sense by intervening in the saturated infinitum of pre-sense. Embedded in our idea of modernity is the enormous scale at which it unfolded. The historical techno-scientific systems underlying modernity ultimately converged to constitute the explosive force of the industrial mass. When we speak of mass media, we are referring to the industrialized technical media of the optical and auditory senses. This configuration of meaning reveals to no small extent the logocentric bias embedded in the term ‘mass media’. There is an extensive body of work as far as the modern technical media of the theoretical senses is concerned. To hint at some of their arguments, I will briefly entertain Bernard Stiegler’s analyses in his multi-volume work, *Technics and Time*. Stiegler argues that the intervention of mnemo-technical media such as film and its adjunct technical systems of distribution has essentially rendered the imaginative capacity of the mind subordinate to the market directives. Stiegler advances a similar argument in the *Automatic Society* in which he contends that the automatization of decision-making through digital means has annihilated any possibility of noetic function. The goal for Stiegler – and echoed by like-minded thinkers – is to reclaim these technical media in more subversive ways so far as the market is concerned.[[21]](#footnote-21) Nevertheless, the fundamental premise of all these views is that technical media reveals worlds; on the other hand, the danger is the eradication of other possible worlds through these very same media.

Thus far, we have only encountered mass media as it relates to the optical and auditory senses. But we must broaden the scope of its meaning to include the more ‘corporeal’ senses. In so doing, we must also take care to not negate one sense over another. The world is revealed not by one sense, but rather by the manifold of all the senses which Bissera Pentcheva calls *synesthesis*.[[22]](#footnote-22) Thus, when I refer to the early public health campaigns in modern England as an effort to contain the olfactory sense, we must also consider how this campaign also sought to contain the other senses.

In the Neoplatonic cosmos, scent also emanates from the One as much as the noetic light. Incense in Neoplatonic magical rituals exemplified a fundamental quality of a celestial entity, and it is for this reason that the burning of incense had a special role in inducing these entities downward into the sublunary realm. But as Peter Sloterdijk suggests, the emanating principle of scent also finds itself active in forms of communality.[[23]](#footnote-23) Particular scents and the sense thereof reveal an odoratic world that is shared horizontally with other community members, as opposed to vertically with celestial entities of the Neoplatonic cosmos. But the early forms of the biopolitical regime that emerged during modernity sought to actively eradicate the manifoldness of olfaction based on the miasma theory that disease travelled through the air. On the public health crisis in Victorian England, the social reformer, Edwin Chadwick, remarked to a parliamentary committee in 1846: “All smell is, if it be intense, immediate acute disease; and eventually we may say that, by depressing the system and rendering it susceptible to the action of other causes, all smell is disease.”[[24]](#footnote-24) Biopolitically, the deodorization of space implied a healthy and therefore productive population. In response to this miasmatic crisis festering in the cities, public health authorities enacted policies that installed better ventilation, drainage, and waste removal systems. The efficacy of ventilation and air filtration are functions of both speed and the quantity of odors that could pass through the technical medium without our attention. The dispersion of the pre-sense of odors in favor of a smooth and rapid stream of desaturated air seeks to constitute a deodorized world of the non-odor generated by the ventilation and filtration media. But as we know, such a campaign against olfaction is doomed to fail in two respects. One, the campaign of deodorization is merely a campaign based on displacing as far away as possible the pre-sense of odors so long as the odors do not linger in a specific space. This meant that the odors are merely displaced elsewhere, occasionally aggregating in polluted rivers and peripheral trash heaps for closer noses to constitute their own world. Second, the emanation of odors in our surroundings is in fact an infinite reservoir of pre-sense — if not the malodors associated with ‘disease’, then the technical media of perfumes, detergents, unwashed pans, *et cetera*.[[25]](#footnote-25)

If that was an example of the domestic olfactory policy of modernity, then the foreign olfactory policies of war required new methods of removing sense by ways of the automatization of war. It is in the case of war in which the full force of the eradication of sense first comes to be perfected. On the sensorial world of a hunting trip in Alaska, Norman Mailer colorfully wrote:

Next step, in they’re plunged into some rot, some stump of dwarf birch, bark rubbed ass of raw by tail of bear or moose of caribou antlers eight years ago! … Into the open mouth of that remaining stump came the years of snow, sun, little jewels of bird shit, cries of sap from the long dying roots, the monomaniacal yodeling of insects, and wood rotting into rotting wood … D.J. could smell the break, gangrene in the wood, electric rot cleaner than meat and shit sick smell and red hot blood of your blood in putrefaction, but a confirmed wood gangrene nonetheless …[[26]](#footnote-26)

As many critics have surmised from Mailer’s *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, the vivid and sensorial obscenities in the book reflected his own damning attitude towards the American imperial war in Vietnam. The lucid and violent details of the hunting trip were merely a slip away from an account of the war itself. But the devastation that the war wrought had already been reckoned with in the American military establishment even during the war. The solution was the automated battlefield. In 1969, the Chief of Staff of the US Army, General Westmoreland, opined that “on the battlefield of the future, enemy forces will be located, tracked, and targeted almost instantaneously through the use of data-links, computer assisted intelligence evaluation, and automated fire control.” Westmoreland continues: “The need for large forces … will be less important.”[[27]](#footnote-27) But what does war mean without humans but automatized by machines? The absence of humans from the battlefield would be erroneous, for war still requires that human lives be exacted in one form or another. What Harun Farocki’s *Eye/Machine* trilogy reveals is the asymmetric loss of sense in war. While the enemy is expected to respond to the full sense of their world at war, its violence, and its sensorial minutiae, we ourselves are completely removed in every aspect from the sense of war despite being politically implicated. This constitutes what I mean by the non-sense and irresponsibility of modernity. In *Eye/Machine III*, Farocki shows footage from a camera installed in a missile head which we expect to not exist anymore, aside from its ghost in the recovered footage. The footage is arduous to see and frustrates our attention. It reveals nothing particularly significant about the space it traverses. We couldn’t care less. But herein lies the danger. These images are what Farocki call *operative images*. They are not meant for human eyes, which explains our sensorial distance from them. They are procedural images for and by the automated machine. And we can live without these images so long as these machines operate elsewhere without our attention. While we ourselves are non-sensorially implicated in its operation, the machine sensorially reveals worlds elsewhere on our behest, through death notwithstanding. What the film, as its own technical medium, articulates is our desensitized relation to war. We cannot sensorially access the war that is supposedly behind the image, not that it requires our attention anyway. The rotting bodies, the rubble, the chemicals insofar as they issue odors of pre-sense into the surroundings at war are unable to be sensed by us. Our own world is in fact not at war despite being told that it is. And at best, we might have access to the footage that Farocki shows. At worst, we simply don’t care about it. Between these two is not much difference insofar as the senses are concerned.

Modernity, with its technical mediums, Platonic residues, and global dimensionality, has been a monumental effort in desensitization. The smooth and efficient operation of modern economic exchange also required that the globe be desensitized. We are reminded by Marx that commodities can be exchanged so long as there is equivalency between them. The emergence of industrial agriculture plays neatly into this economic rule. The global propagation of genetically similar crops and livestock, so long as they are or become the standard bearer of quality in the global commodities market, had the ruinous effect of diminishing our gustatory sense. The mass media of images and sounds, too, have been driven by standardization and market directives. And olfaction has been condemned to the standardized odor that emanates from the ventilation and air conditioning machines in the modern building. But this outlook is too pessimistic. This is merely the essence of modernity, not the fact of it. The minor and habitual details of the everyday, ritualized, or not, are colored with sense. Practices of celestial magic offer one way out of modernity. Subversive sensorial encounters with modern technical media are another.

1. On the sensorial basis of abstract knowledge, I am referring to the Peripatetic influence of Aristotle over Thomas Aquinas in the phrase: “Nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses.” As for Descartes, it is well-known that the idea of *cogito* surfaced in a period of significant theological crisis over the certainty of divine occupation over the affairs of man. In one radical move, the privileging of the certain *cogito* side-stepped this theological crisis over the sensing of God. See Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Heidegger argues that Plato marks a turning point in the thinking of *alētheia*, inaugurating Western metaphysics which consummates in the modern science. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Jean-Luc Nancy, The Sense of the World, trans. Jeffrey S. Librett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) p.13 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. It must be noted here that before the objection from Paul Friedländer, Heidegger had claimed that the Pre-Socratics, e.g. Heraclitus, Parmenides, understood *alētheia* as a mode of unconcealment. In *Plato’s Doctrine of Truth*, Heidegger points out that the turning point in Western metaphysics concerning the question of Being began with Plato’s allegory of the cave in which the meaning of *alētheia* morphed into the ‘correctness of the gaze’, *orthotes*. Friedländer disputes this fact by demonstrating that the Pre-Socratics in fact conceived truth in the same way as Plato had. Nevertheless, Heidegger insists upon his definition as ontologically primordial. We will adopt this idea despite its hermeneutical inaccuracy. See Paul Friedländer, *Plato: An Introduction*, trans. Hans Meyerhoff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In both Book VI, the *analogy of the Sun* and the *allegory of the cave*, Plato employs the eyes as the main sensory organ to receive light. See Plato, *Republic*. Book VI-VII Light is also, of course, a recurring motif in Western metaphysics. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. In *Disseminations*, Derrida also identified the logocentric paradox immanent within Platonic philosophy. In *Phaedrus*, Plato resorts to writing to assert the primacy of self-present speech by denouncing writing as the mere appearance of wisdom as opposed to speech which is its true expression. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Hegel is particularly intriguing here. Departing from the Platonic privilege of vision, Hegel instead proposes that the sense of hearing is more Ideal than sight in a similar vein to Ficino. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The meaning of magic has always been given to ambiguity. Depending on the circumstances of its use, the meaning of magic has at times taken on pejorative guises and at other times its meaning is casted in negative relief against religion and science. For the purposes of this paper, I suggest that magic is a form of technicity through which the immediate senses have access to the cosmos. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. David Pingree*,* “Some of the Sources of the Ghāyat al-hakīm,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).

    Blumenberg argues that the inability of early Christian theologians, e.g. Augustine, to sufficiently overcome the Gnostic dualism between good and evil was one of the many unresolved controversies that led to the possibility of the modern age. For Blumenberg, the essence of the problem lay in the responsibility of God to the affairs of mankind after Creation. For an idea like Neoplatonism to take hold, the Scholastics required the evacuation of God from terrestrial affairs since Aristotle conceived God as the unmoved mover. Thus, the condition of order that composed the Neoplatonic cosmology required that humans be humiliated, which Augustinian theodicy defines as guilt. But such a position also implied human freedom insofar as it is possible to be guilty, a problem which was noted in the disputation theses of 1517 which Luther levelled against the Aristotelian-Catholic order. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, trans. Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark (Tempe: MRTS, 1998), 142 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. ibid., 359 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Alexandra Walsham, “The Reformation and ‘the Disenchantment of the World’ Reassessed” *The Historical Journal* 51 (2008), 506 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid., 502. Also, it would be an error if I did not include in the footnotes that the globe-spanning project of the Church of Rome was predicated on globalizing the Aristotelian-Roman cosmology through technical media. In a previous essay, I argued that the quasi-indigenous Marian cult of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* in Mexico is exemplary of this global sense-transforming project. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. At least three of these culprits are also entertained in the debates on the Anthropocene, leading some thinkers to recast the Anthropocene as the capitalocene, technocene. The State, on the other hand, seems to have an important role in mitigating the crisis of the Anthropocene as much as it is also a significant culprit so long as it remains connected to capital and/or technoscience. These culprits cannot be [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Georg W.H. Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. trans. T.M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975),137 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See Laura U. Marks, “A Noisy Brush with the Infinite: Noise in Enfolding-Unfolding Aesthetics” in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Image in Digital Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 101-114. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. For more, I suggest Hito Steyerl “In Defense of the Poor Image” *e-flux* *journal* 10 (Nov. 2009) and the aforementioned article by Laura U. Marks, “A Noisy Brush with the Infinite: Noise in Enfolding-Unfolding Aesthetics.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See Bissera V. Pentcheva “The Performative Icon” *The Art Bulletin* 88 (Dec. 2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Peter Sloterdijk, “Merdocracy: The Immune Paradox of Settled Cultures” in *Globes: Macrospherology* trans. Wieland Hoban (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2014) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Edwin Chadwick quoted in Stephen Halliday, “Death and miasma in Victorian London: an obstinate belief” in *British Medical Journal* 323 (Dec. 2001) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Note the origins, including alchemical ones, of perfumery in the Near East. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Norman Mailer quoted in Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell, 1991). 197 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Allan M. Din, *Arms and Artificial Intelligence: Weapon and Arms Control Applications of Advanced* Computing, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)