Alterhythm and other-journalism in the culture of algorithm

Critique of the hegemony of synthetic languages

Alteritmo y periodismo-otro en la cultura del algoritmo

Crítica a la hegemonía de los lenguajes sintéticos

Alteritmo e jornalismo-outro na cultura do algoritmo

Crítica da hegemonia das linguagens sintéticas

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ABSTRACT

The article proposes a conceptual approach to the term *alterhythm* from the development of a critical discussion of the bibliographic contributions from the

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humanistic tradition, mainly from the philosophy of the technique, philosophical anthropology and literary studies, and observe its scope in the communication field. The *alterhythmic* and the *alterhythm* –category and concept–, designate a type of cognitive activity of a symbolic nature that seems competent to explore the field of human experience related to its indeterminacy and its inevitable ambiguity. Hence, it is proposed as a complement to the aforementioned *operationalist mathematical soul* of the language and the algorithm culture. Given that algorithmic language is based on what has already been determined –centered on what has been recorded–, the alterhythmic does not advocate technophobia, but rather presents an exploration and a reminder that human nature is also based on openness, in the possible, and that this requires polyphonic dictions. In this sense, it is proposed that we can better understand the concept of alterhythm and its implications in communication studies through thematic comparison – typical of the tradition of literary journalistic comparatism studies. As a final result, we expose the characteristics of *other-journalism*, rooted in alterhythmics, which develops a syndetic or silent language as opposed to surface or synthetic languages.

KEYWORDS: *algorithm, alterhythm, artificial intelligence, other-journalism, silent language.*

RESUMEN

El artículo plantea un acercamiento conceptual al término *alteritmo* a partir del desarrollo de una discusión crítica de los aportes bibliográficos provenientes de la tradición humanística, principalmente desde la filosofía de la técnica, la antropología filosófica y los estudios literarios, y observar sus alcances en el campo de la comunicación. Lo *alterítmico* y el *alteritmo* –categoría y concepto, respectivamente– designan un tipo de actividad cognitiva de naturaleza simbólica que resulta competente para explorar el ámbito de la experiencia humana relacionada con su indeterminación y con su inevitable ambigüedad. De allí que sea propuesto como complemento de la referida *alma matemática operacionalista* del lenguaje y de la cultura del algoritmo. Dado que el lenguaje algorítmico se fundamenta en lo ya determinado –a partir de lo registrado–, *lo* alterítmico no propugna la tecnofobia, sino más bien presenta una exploración y un recordatorio de que la naturaleza

humana se fundamenta también en la apertura, en lo posible, y que ello requiere dicciones polifónicas. En tal sentido, se plantea que podemos entender mejor el concepto de alteritmo y sus implicaciones en los estudios de comunicación a través de la comparación tematológica –propia de la tradición de los estudios del comparatismo periodístico literario–. Como resultado final, exponemos las características del *periodismo-otro*, de raíz alterítmica, que desarrolla un lenguaje del silencio o *sindético* opuesto a los lenguajes de la superficie o sintéticos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *algoritmo, alteritmo, inteligencia artificial, periodismo-otro, lenguaje del silencio.*

RESUMO

O artigo propõe uma abordagem conceitual do termo *alterritmo* a partir do desenvolvimento de uma discussão crítica das contribuições bibliográficas da tradição humanística, principalmente da filosofia da técnica, da antropologia filosófica e dos estudos literários, e observa seu alcance no campo da comunicação. A *alterrítmica* e o *alterritmo* –categoria e conceito–, designam um tipo de atividade cognitiva de natureza simbólica competente para explorar o campo da experiência humana relacionado com a sua indeterminação e a sua inevitável ambiguidade. Assim, propõe-se como um complemento à já mencionada *alma matemática operacionalista* da linguagem e cultura do algoritmo. Dado que a linguagem algorítmica é baseada no que já foi determinado – a partir do que foi registrado –, a alterrítmica não defende a tecnofobia, mas apresenta uma exploração e um lembrete de que a natureza humana também é baseada na abertura, no possível e que isso requer dicções polifônicas. Nesse sentido, propõe-se que possamos entender melhor o conceito de alterritmo e suas implicações nos estudos de comunicação por meio da comparação temática – típica da tradição dos estudos de comparatismo jornalístico literário. Como resultado final, expomos as características do *jornalismo-outro*, de raíz alterrítmica, que desenvolve uma linguagem do silêncio ou *sindética* em oposição às linguagens de superfície ou sintéticas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *algoritmo, alterritmo, inteligência artificial, jornalismo-outro, linguagem do silêncio.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Dictions and Humanism in the Age of Exponential Technology

The accelerated advances in both the studies and the most diverse applications of artificial intelligence (AI) generate pressing concerns, especially of an ethical nature. These concerns, as Kate Crawford (2021) explains, arise mainly because machine learning systems are not only a technical object, but rather constitute a tool for reproducing hegemonic power, that is, they do not reflect the world, but rather sculpt it with their algorithmic language (Barranco, 2022)[1]. Ideology governs technology, which can never be neutral. Therefore, algorithms, in the field of communication, have become producers of culture and, therefore, builders of significant structures that condition the experience of *reality* (Finn, 2018; Ventura-Pocino, 2022a, 2022b).

The interactions –ethical, political and professional– between AI as a power infrastructure (Crawford, 2021) and the culture of communication and journalism are numerous. These relationships were woven decades ago and involve delegating to computational procedures the task of human mediation or hosting environments (Duch, 2018), whose function is to order, classify and hierarchize people, places, objects, experiences, dreams and desires. These computational procedures, however, have given rise to a new algorithmic culture (Striphas, 2015; Ventura-Pocino, 2022b); they are a new language –above all a type of language– that generates a new culture in the context of what Garde (2022) calls blob communication, morphologically, a membrane or mesh that contains us within our bubbles (Pariser, 2011).

The social, epistemological and cultural transformations produced by this accelerated expansion of digital technologies, biotechnologies and algorithmic interventions in the different dimensions of life have forced the philosophy of technology to reflect on the ethics of these artifacts –their invention and their application–, insofar as they condition the behavior, values and beliefs of individuals and communities. The *re-mediations* (Bolter & Grusin, 2000) of artifacts and interfaces transform the perceptions and actions of individuals (Garde, 2022; Ventura-Pocino, 2022b) and transform the individuals themselves (Sadin, 2019). In fact, Sadin warns that we generally assume that all technical advances must fulfill the function of reinforcing the human attitude of *caring for others*. However, Sadin argues, it could well be that a technified capitalist society does not care for, but rather *neglects others*, given that its function is, above all, to do business, to optimize market flows.

In short, in this article we ask ourselves not so much whether we are going to treat robots as people, but why we treat people as programmable and fixed robots when we incorporate algorithmic technology into journalism and

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communication in general. In fact, in the context of the emerging Web 3, the determinism and class, gender, race or ideology bias that underlie algorithmic language and determine the form and meaning of our experience as humans should worry us more than the possible self-awareness of the machine, so recurrent among *para-scientific* phobias.

It is precisely because of these biases that, for example, the image of Lena Söderberg, a model for *Playboy*, was used to test visual algorithms and, consequently, imposed a heteropatriarchal model. "In an industry hostile to women, a pornographic image was the model they chose to work with" (Crawford in Barranco, 2022). With the same bias, a few years earlier, the first facial recognition projects, which sought the standard North American face, were carried out with thousands of faces of military bases personnel, giving credibility to the old, deterministic and eugenic ideas of 19th century phrenology developed in the study of police records. "The vision of computers begins with *Playboy*, prisoners and military bases personnel," recalls Crawford –cited in Barranco (2022)–. In this article, we are interested, in fact, in how and for what purpose the gaze that each AI artifact projects on what's human is constructed, in knowing what is the *model of reality* with which its languages have been trained (Rius, 2022).

Firstly, we examine how the predictive can shape and contaminate the practice of journalism through operationalist algorithmic language (Marcuse, 1993) –what is yet to emerge–; how it contains it, determines it and prevents its possible unpredictable growth and its opening towards what is other. And how this controlling tendency must be taken into account in the work of rethinking journalism and recovering its emancipatory function. As Duch (2001) explains, the being is of an epiphanic nature and should never lose its natural disposition to being an *unpredictable event*. Secondly, the objective is also to introduce, define and delimit the concept of *alterhythm*.

Both objectives are addressed through a methodology of discussion and criticism of bibliographic contributions from the framework of the humanistic tradition, mainly from the philosophy of technology, philosophical anthropology and literary studies. Subsequently, in order to better understand the concept of alterhythm and its implications in communication studies, we propose, following literary journalistic comparatism (CPL, by its acronym in Spanish) (Chillón, 1999, 2014; Hernández, 2017), to compare alterhythm with those characteristics attributed to the works of the authors of the so-called *philosophy of Otherness* and the *literature of silence*. As a final result, we propose to describe the characteristics of *other-journalism*, with an alterhythmic root.

Although the mathematical language used by AI through algorithms is often described as neutral, objective, logical and, therefore, univocal, its very use implies a position –implicit but operative– that is neither neutral nor objective, neither logical nor univocal, even if it pretends to be, and that is based

on realism as an epistemological perspective, or on capitalist realism, according to the term coined by Fisher (2018). The rhetoric of the objectivity of mathematical language, as Lladó (2019) laments, hides the overwhelming conformist logic of capitalism –"what is, is; and what is not, cannot be"–, which maintains the status quo of hegemonic power and annihilates our capacity to imagine any alternative possibility, any world in common, as Garcés (2002) suggests. On the contrary, Lladó reminds us that it is the function of journalism to challenge any narrative that does not allow us to imagine other possibilities:

> Lucidity rebels against this affirmation. What is not can always come to be. We can come to know it and therefore express it. This is when journalism, attentive to what has been left out of the official narrative, demolishes the cult of fatality that Camus denounced. The world is being made, always in the gerund. (Lladó, 2019, p. 17)[2]

Neither the present is fixed, nor the future is prescribed, but rather *inscribed*, writes Berardi (2019), which means that "it is necessary to select it, to extract it by means of a process of interpretation" (p. 252). Often, however, this *dominant code* prevents vision and makes the possible inconceivable:

> This inevitability (…) is based on the growing process of computability (…). Computing will gradually absorb all levels of language, subjecting them to automation. (…) computing is a principle of reduction and determination. In recent decades it has grown to encompass a vast spectrum of phenomena, thereby reducing social life and human language to a deterministic strategy based on a format of universal conformity. (Ob. Cit., pp. 252 and 253)

Likewise, Berardi (2019) states that time, death, self-perception, fear or anguish, that is, "existential vibration, escapes computation" and that no computer or algorithmic language will allow us to experience on their own "the totality of the sphere of being" (p. 253).

It is also true that the preference for –or hegemony of– an operationalist or *techno-logical* algorithmic language, which configures a cultural environment far from the openness projected by the humanistic gaze, is not at all a new perspective in the West, which since at least the 18th century has practiced this primacy for the language of *logos*. It is worth insisting, however, at this point, that mathematics goes beyond the drive for the calculable and the predictive, and that it is broader and more complex. Pretending that mathematical language cannot be connoted by hegemonic power, as are the rest of human languages, and using it only to predict and, therefore, to subject everything human to the laws of capitalist economic competitiveness, supposes a perversion of mathematics, as well as of technology and its functions.

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2   Translator's note: All quotes from authors that appear in Spanish in the original version of this text were translated into English by the translator.

In any case, in this monologic context, a journalism rooted in an episte-mologically realist culture was born and grew: a *priesthood of truth* based on facts, which, on the other hand, and today it is more pertinent than ever to remember, was enriched from the very beginning with the contributions of a type of *literary journalism* –a method and a form that, by contrast, as of a true tradition that is often relegated, appeals to the ineffable and completes the *objectivist* and *dataistic* discourse of journalism as a correlation of objective truths (Vidal Castell, 2002).

In this framework, we propose to understand the *alterhythmic* as a connection with this other journalistic tradition, and for that we start from the terms of the debate on AI that are proposed from the philosophy of technology. And we open, from a philosophical and literary perspective, that is, from the register of the humanities, a series of questions that we consider central in the context of the growing implementation, also in communication and journalism, of AI and its algorithm culture, which has underestimated and even ignored the complexity of the human condition. What characterizes –from the linguistic, symbolic and cultural point of view– this type of algorithmic culture? What type of people and communities does it presuppose or construct? How does this affect the field of communication and journalism? What contributions can we propose in this context from a literary and humanistic perspective based on the application of *literary journalistic comparatism*? How do we define the alterhythmic and the alterhythm?

2. ALGORITHM, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

So far, as Judea Pearl (Rius, 2022) assumes, the main limitation of AI is that it cannot conceptualize or understand, in a close sense, as human intelligence does, the problems that algorithms must solve. The reality is that, as humans, we often do not understand how machines work or, at least, this type of algorithmic technology (Ventura-Pocino, 2022b). In his book *New Dark Age*, James Bridle (2020) exemplifies how algorithms have been developed to complement *late-capitalist* business. Bridle explains that certain Amazon warehouses are managed by computer systems and machines, and even completely inhabited by robots (p. 130). In this context, workers are also expected to "behave like robots, to function like machines as long as they remain, for the moment, slightly cheaper than machines" (Ibid.). But is this relationship inhuman, exploitative, reductionist, irreversible, or can other ways of thinking about the link between algorithms and the human realms be developed?

The humanism that runs through this article is neither anti-technological nor anti-mathematical, nor does it draw, as is often mistaken, from enlightened modernity, which in our opinion corrupted the ideas of individual and community –as Illouz (2007) and Zizek (1992) point out– and fostered the current

economy of exploitation. On the contrary, the humanism that we defend calls for appropriating technology and mathematics so that they may serve the human condition again and so that they may recover the fertile links that united them with the *sciences of the spirit* (Dilthey, 1949), and not with the dogmas of neoliberalism that has been imposed on a global scale.

Hence, we must ask ourselves whether the human-machine link that has been built by such capitalism is "inhuman" by definition or whether, perhaps, we can still reprogram its algorithms based on ethics and critical thinking. Hence, we are interested in the reductive hegemony of the human that has generated the preeminence of *logos* over *mythos* and its effect in the field of communication and journalism, although it is evident that predicting and calculating are also traits of human intelligence. In this sense, the relationship between the new *technological re-mediations* with human intelligence and its development presents a fertile field of discussion within the currents of posthumanism and transhumanism –whose labels are perhaps confusing, since their authors seek an improvement or surpassing of human capacities, and not their suppression. Perspectives that inspire this article, although it is worth clarifying that there are concepts, such as *cyborg* (Haraway, 1995) or the idea of *human-machine coupling/agency*, that generate a fascinating debate that is impossible to fully address in these pages[3].

What is, therefore, an algorithm and how does it operate, as language and narrative? These algorithms, explains Ventura-Pocino (2022b), are processes that assign (contextualized) relevance to computer elements of a database through automatic and statistical procedures that have been generated in a decentralized manner. Algorithms, as explained by the reference dictionaries –*Diccioni de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans*; *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*–, are a set of rules to solve a problem in a finite number of steps, a calculation procedure that follows a series of instructions that leads, once the data has been specified, to the solution of the problem. Thus, the discrete elements that constitute the process are of two types: on the one hand, we have the *instructions* (who defines them, from what ideology or cultural perspective they do so, how they interfere in the human areas), and on the other hand, we have the *data* with which they operate (how they are obtained, what operational value they have, how they relate to the nature of the human).

In this framework, the quality of the data, if we start from the fact that the algorithm bases its result on them, is one of the most common risks or concerns in the use of AI (Ventura-Pocino, 2022b). Also the so-called instructions or orders come from value judgments, from stereotypes, from an implicit or explicit cultural discourse. Therefore, one of the central aspects of the functioning of algorithms is that they are based on data that comes from what has already

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3   It is interesting, for example, what Latour (2012) does from the sociology of science, arguing that human beings cannot think of themselves outside of the assemblies with the artificial and that they must use them to their advantage to subvert the intersectional biases imposed by hegemonic power.

happened and from which the most probable solution is inferred, as Casacuberta (2018) writes. An algorithm does not indicate the reasons why it proposes a result: it is based on previous regularities to establish it. This automated *re-mediation* has the potential to influence sensitive decision-making processes that can affect us in many aspects as a society, on sensitive issues that concern us such as equality, justice and freedom.

In the media field, it has been noted that the functioning of the predictive algorithm in the context of platform communication has replaced the conventional *re-mediation* of the instances that Tuchman called *gatekeepers*; that is, the media. Cass Sunstein (2001) developed the theory of *echo chambers* some time ago to explain the phenomenon by which we perceive our own voice and ideology in the media to which we selectively expose ourselves. The hegemony of the platforms and the personalization of content through algorithmic technology have exponentially multiplied this behavior and its risks, with the essential addition of the so-called *bubble filter* (Pariser, 2011). A process in which there is a threat to the construction of a space for debate and encounter with *others* and with *the other*, which is one of the essences of democratic societies (Finn, 2018; Peirano, 2019; Ventura-Pocino, 2022b).

A final peculiarity that we want to point out about this language of the algorithm, and based on the purpose of the article and its impact on society and human cultures, is that it is characterized by being a language of *non-ambiguity*. The algorithm explicitly expresses a world that is considered good and complete, and avoids any doubt about what is going to happen or about what has already happened. The language of the algorithm is univocal. On the other hand, as Duch (1995) points out when he talks about mythical language, what we propose here as *the alterhythmic* will be, on the contrary, the appropriate language to put into words and symbolically look at the ambiguity of individual and collective human experience.

In the context of algorithmic culture, *dataism*, that is, the tendency to reduce the approach to complex problems to a mere management of the data collected, has given way to what we call here *datalatry*, that is, a predilection –if not adoration– of "total empiricism" (Marcuse, 1993), as if intelligence, per se, consisted only in the ordering, analysis and projection of gigantic sequences of data; as if people, who also are and manage data, were defined individually and collectively by being *only* data. This reduced idea of intelligence, on the other hand, ignores the complex, yet inevitable, questions about human nature itself: the *mysterious* –who we are, why we are here– challenges a form of human intelligence that is not just a pragmatic-technical eagerness for everyday tasks.

2.1. Thinking is more than Reasoning

When we talk about AI, we usually use a reduced, hyper-rational and practical sense of the concept of human intelligence, as an attribute that allows us to

successfully address the challenges of the environment quickly and effectively. We are concerned that –not by chance– a reduced, diminished idea of what human thought is, and its own capacity to relate and express in diverse languages the ineffable, coincides with an enthusiastic and *datalatric* projection of exponential technology that constructs it as an intelligence close to human intelligence –if not better than human intelligence. Does AI resemble the ways in which human intelligences proceed? Can they be equated?

Authors such as Han or Duch remind us that what we call *thought* starts from a previous, cultural instance, a shaping totality within which the subject is cognitively and emotionally located, which Han (2021) refers to as a "field of experience" and "emotional disposition" (pp. 53 and 54), and which Duch (2001) summarizes by saying that it is "a cultural climate", "the set of concrete *translations* that allows [the being] to locate itself in space and time" (p. 230). This *shaping totality* is, from a perspective that owes much to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, something that precedes concepts, ideas, information. The *previous emotional disposition* fixes man culturally and makes him, paradoxically, capable of facing his ambiguity and his openness, his ontological character of being not determined (Duch, 2001).

In this sense, having described the foundations of human thought in this way, it seems to proceed in a very different way from AI and –not by chance– also differently from how knowledge and realistic thinking are imagined in journalism theory. The *totality* constitutes "the initial framework from which *facts* are formed" (Han, 2021, p. 57). This mental structure that determines us and "fixes us culturally to be able to be human" (Duch, 2001, p. 231) is something that AI lacks. Reduced to probabilistic data management, AI would be incapable of thinking to the extent that it does not have that totality in which thought has its origin.

In fact, the type of thinking that characterizes Big Data is a rather primitive form of knowledge, in which everything becomes calculable, predictable and controllable. The shaping role of that *cultural totality* or *previous emotional disposition* that Han or Duch spoke of is played by the instructions and lines of code that make up the algorithms, which only indicate correlations that can be executed in an unquestionable way. According to Hegel, cited by Han (2021), correlation represents the lowest form of knowledge, since it only indicates probabilities, and does not allow causalities to be established; this is the characteristic –until today– of AI.

Human thought, on the other hand, starts from a cultural context that fixes and determines it, and from where it can go to somewhere *outside*: thinking is going towards something else from that previous emotional disposition. With Duch (2001), we repeatedly state that the being is culturally fixed –that is its nature– and, from that reality, at the same time open and indeterminate, it is inscribed in an endless hermeneutic journey that strains it and always brings it closer to what is other. AI learns from the past in a perpetual present, but

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the future it calculates is blind to what is to come. Whereas, Han (2021, p. 58) would say, "thought has the character of an event," because it puts something completely different into the world and is capable of imagining the *happening* of the event. On the other hand, AI lacks the character that allows the truly new –what is radically other– to break in. Big Data is additive, and the additive does not engender totalities; AI only chooses between options it receives in advance, it does not move from what was previously given to where no one has walked before (Han, 2021). Human thought is more than calculation and risk management. Consciousness is related to the ability to feel the world, to *problematize* it. As Casacuberta (2018) rightly points out, *simulating* is not reproducing.

2.2. Techno-optimism in the Empire of Practical Reason

As part of the process of reduction of human thought described above, and the hegemonic idea that it is –only– *logos* or applied reason, the development of technological transformation and scientific advances are oriented towards the practical, the profitable, the optimal and the economic, something that is exposed in the devices and interfaces of AI. Han (2021) points out this drive of *scientific-technical reason* and alludes to Marcuse (1993), who raised these questions in the mid-twentieth century, in addition to considering recent works such as those of Ordine (2013), Esquirol (2018), Gros (2017) and Duch and Chillón (2012). This scientific-technical reason promotes the practical criterion over the ethical, since it does not have a language to express what Esquirol (2018) calls *the difficulty of existence* and tends to trigger more frustration and discomfort. Duch (2018) also warns about the consequences of this reduction of the various languages that the being, polyglot by nature, requires to *put itself into words*, and its replacement by a kind of *economistic monolingualism*.

The scope –and the threats– of this scientific-practical reason have been demonstrated in recent decades with the global consolidation of inequalities, the almost irreversible climate crisis and the decomposition of community ties and their embracing structures (Duch, 2018). Furthermore, in the field of journalism theory, the idea of objectivity proposed by capitalist realism (Fisher, 2018) has been called into question, something that Marcuse (1993) pointed out decades ago, when he described the ideology of advanced industrial society:

> The union of growing productivity and growing destruction; the brinkmanship of annihilation; the surrender of thought, hope, and fear to the decisions of the powers that be; the preservation of misery in the face of unprecedented wealth constitute the most impartial indictment –even if they are not the raison d'être of this society but only its by-product: its sweeping rationality, which propels efficiency and growth, is itself irrational. (p. 23)

Casacuberta (2021) points out that this *technological solutionism* that confers a supposed objectivity to the data collected automatically –and to what a

certain algorithm extracts from that same data– tends to be thought of as an *objective* result. The danger of this, he writes, is that it is not considered debatable:

> The most problematic thing is the underlying idea of *dataism*: the proposal that meaning and argumentation no longer matter: we must rely only on pure data, which is objective, and eliminate all interpretation. (...) This is the general tendency of *dataism*; we no longer need theories or ethical judgments, which will always be entangled by prejudices and human interests. Establishing correlations between data is more than enough for any human activity. (pp. 130 and 131)

In this sense, a long time ago we argued that the *theodictic* balance of human experience can only be sought in the correct articulation of the mythical word and the logical word, that is, in an anthropology of ambiguity as a framework for "understanding the being and as an antidote to the totalitarianism of reason" (Vidal Castell, 2005, p. 94). In the exercise of communication, Duch (1996) writes, myth is essential as a *praxis of domination of contingency* in order to understand and include *the other* and, therefore, to have an authentic word. Following in the wake of this anthropomorphization of the machine and the parallel reduction of the complex ambiguity of beings, Neil Postman (2018), in the dehumanized society of his dystopian *Technopolis*, warns that we are entering what he calls Descartes' dream of the *mathematization of the world*: "We have devalued the unique human capacity to see things in their psychic, moral and emotional dimensions, and replaced it with faith in technical calculation" (p. 161).

2.3. Algorithmic Coincidence with a Journalism of Stereotypes

The aforementioned Pearl, a philosopher and engineer expert in AI, considers that anyone interested in the social implications of AI should also be interested in the philosophy of science, which is concerned with the nature of knowledge and the status of truth, as well as the paths by which we seek, develop and transmit them. We must not forget that the epistemology implicit in the classic theories of journalism theory, of a positivist nature, privileges the idea of a reality that, once perceived in a more or less objective and common way, generates *a truth* that in turn makes possible an industrial business based on manufacturing that truth (Vidal Castell, 2002, 2020; Chillón, 2014). Beyond, of course, the fact that industrial reality or the *capitalist business of truth* (Vidal Castell, 2021) is by no means the only dimension of journalism. This turns out to be, above all, an instance of symbolic and cultural construction of stories that claim to be hegemonic; we are not far, then, from the function and effects of what AI devices and interfaces achieve with their algorithmic language, as we mentioned at the beginning of the article.

In any case, and although this epistemological discussion is an issue that we have already dealt with in other works, the assumption that the truth is revealed

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after an objective analysis of what's real –which is given and determined to us– has mostly survived in the common sense of Western culture and, specifically, in journalism, since it legitimizes both its business model and its political function. This is an important issue because it affects journalism's relationship with the unpredictable, the emerging and *the other*.

We know, as Ventura-Pocino (2022) writes, that the automation of processes will cause even more changes in the organization of work teams and that there are many doubts about the mere survival of the traditional media ecosystem, such as we have known it. In newsrooms, technical profiles will proliferate: engineers and algorithm designers will gain clear prominence. One of the areas in which AI technology has made the most progress in the field of journalism has been in personalization, which directly affects the construction of the *user community* experience.

Negroponte (2000) already sensed in 1995 that this type of customization actions would weaken social cohesion because journalistic stories would only confirm our own vision of things. Today, the algorithmic distribution of information exponentially reinforces this echo. Pariser's *filter bubble* (2011) generates an optimized, effective, profitable environment, in an extractivist dynamic of the business based on the individual's constant and connected permanence, living in what we have called, with Garde (2022), a *mercurial mesh or membrane*, which envelops us and connects us while isolating us in this blob communication. This effect of algorithmic language, personalization as a business optimization strategy, contradicts one of the functions that had traditionally been entrusted to the media: providing common spaces to deal with topics of general interest. We no longer have to negotiate our vision of the world with people who do not share it, Peirano (2019) recently warned. Journalists will prefer to write about what generates the most clicks, and minorities will tend to feel marginalized. This is a journalism that degrades the notion of community and is inconsistent with the search for the common good (Ventura-Pocino, 2022b).

Journalism as a linguistic exercise of openness is threatened by these practices of algorithmic culture. Unfortunately, they only develop vices that have been inherent to journalistic practice since its inception. In this sense, Walter Lippman (1964) pointed out a long time ago, in *Public Opinion*, that journalism is also characterized, like all forms of discursive knowledge, by the use of these shared stereotypes, and warned, from a theory that understood journalism as a "guardian of democracy", about when its use could be fallacious and affect the social cohesion of society. Stereotypes are *a priori* forms of knowledge of the world that are absolutely necessary for human beings; an economic, atavistic and, even today, essential cognitive *praxis* that we share culturally and that makes us capable of managing the complexity and chaos of experience to construct meaning (Eagleman, 2017).

This same concern was perpetuated in some of the theories of Mass Communication Research, such as that of Wilbur Schramm and his *two-step flow of communication*, in the theories of *Newsmaking* (Gaye Tuchman, E. Noelle-Neumann) or in those perspectives of thematization (Marletti, Richeri), as Moragas (1995) and Rodrigo (2001) show. In these authors now paraphrased, there is even an assumption –and a concern– that journalism has been, precisely, a discursive space where these stereotypes have proliferated with impunity, however far removed they may have been on some occasions from the shared or intersubjective experience of the world, at the same time that an *objectifying* informative style was available, a rhetoric of information, which appeared to be distant from the previous and the emotional (Núñez Ladevece, 1991; Burguet, 2004).

In light of this, literary journalism completes –and in part refutes– the mechanical epistemology of objectivist journalism; it assumes the complexity of knowledge and problematizes the notion of reality to project a *denser view* (Vidal Castell, 2006) that is more penetrating, breaking the skin of the superficial global. Literary journalism is not the embellishment of the news item, but rather it strengthens and expands the cognitive device of journalism, proposing a view, a method and, finally, a formal strategy that uses the composition and style resources of realism –for the most part, although the contributions of poetry, for example, to journalistic writing are of increasing interest. There is a diversity of journalisms, and literary journalism is one of them; and perhaps all of them are necessary for us.

3. THE LANGUAGE OF ALTERHYTHM

Without, in any case, raising the flag of technophobia, since the human being is a culturally technological being, who has built itself by dominating, materially and symbolically, the uncertainty of the environment with the development of tools, we do consider that in this new revolution that AI is leading, we must claim the importance of humanism. This tradition helps us to construct meaning and value and allows us to complete the collective project that we want to build together (Ventura-Pocino, 2022). In this sense, "the desolate and desolating one-dimensional man or Homo economicus described by Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, Lewis Mumford or Günther Anders can undoubtedly benefit from the advances that new inventions provide, but also find in them a source of renewed alienation," write Duch and Chillón (2012, p. 468). It is not a question of belittling technological advances, of course, but of vindicating "an exercise of rebellious humanity in the face of the ongoing drift" (Ibid.).

3.1. On the Algorithmic as a Threat to the Openness and Unpredictability of the Being

Does human thought have characteristics of a thinking that is not always rational, of a contradictory, ambiguous or paradoxical appearance, in the wake of what Deleuze and Guattari (2010) said, that philosophy begins with a game, with a "*faire l'idiot*" (p. 63)? In this regard, Han (2021) writes that "it is not intelligence, but an idiocy, that characterizes thought" (p. 60), since "AI is incapable of thinking, because it is incapable of *faire l'idiot*. It is too intelligent to be an idiot" (Ob. Cit., p. 61). The strict rationality of AI contrasts with the capacity to surprise of this biological human reason. As Gregory Bateson said, perhaps what most characterizes human beings is their unpredictability.

Despite this, the algorithmic models used in these contexts are fed by databases and technologies based on probabilistic calculation. Predictions based on the past in a perpetual present are limited because they do not contemplate the human capacity to challenge what is impossible and disappoint what is expected (Innerarity, 2022). The history of humanity is a thick compendium of social phenomena, rebellions and unexpected advances that no one predicted, but which burst forth.

The question about the predictive limits of these technologies that "learn from the past" has also been raised by Han (2021) when he says that the future that it calculates is not a future in the proper sense of the word, since "it does not come from what was previously given to where no one has gone before. Thought in the emphatic sense engenders a new world" (p. 73). In this sense, Dardo Scavino (2022) recalls that for Nietzsche life was not "the foreseeable repetition of the past, but the foreseeable irruption of the future" (p. 198). That was freedom for the German philosopher, the irruption of the unforeseen in a foreseeable present. Scavino, in order to think about the effects of this area of exponential technology, also recovers the observations of the epistemologist Thomas S. Kuhn, who defined the future as a *sudden event*, not a structured one. According to Scavino (2022), "there is humanity because some stop reproducing the current instructions like automatons and propose new ones" (Ibid.).

Along the same lines, Zizek (2014) understands the event

> in all its dimension and essence as something shocking, out of joint, that appears to happen all of a sudden and interrupts the usual flow of things: something that emerges seemingly out of nowhere, without discernible causes, an appearance without solid being as its foundation. (p. 16)

There would be, then, according to the philosopher, something miraculous in the very nature of what is really an event, a type of *devastating transformation of reality itself*. And he writes:

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> At first approach, an event is *the effect that seems to exceed its causes* – and the space of an event is that which opens up by the gap that separates an effect from its causes. With this approximate definition, we find ourselves at the very heart of philosophy, since causality is one of the basic problems that philosophy deals with. (p. 17)

Zizek, thinking about the event, comes face to face with the emerging relationship of *the other*, and introduces the theme of the "enigmatic encounter with otherness" (p. 27), as an instance of constitution and revelation of the individual. It is evident that this nature of the event of the being clashes head-on with the culture of the predictable and the probabilistic, reduces the being to a stereotype and demonstrates a great inability to respect the epiphanic nature of the human being, in the words of Duch (2001), always in emergence, in process, incomplete, in an unfinished hermeneutic journey, always being made and never completely done. All symbolic and cultural activity must also be impregnated with this consciousness, or otherwise risks being constructed from the inhuman.

3.2. Journalism as a *Sacrament* for a Community

Despite the critical situation of human diction, there is no doubt that even today man achieves salvation through wording and wording himself, which are inherent to his nature, because they correspond in effect to his intimate constitution of "*being that comes to be*" (Duch, 2001, p. 230). The natural climate of this being is culture, understood as the set of concrete translations that situate him in space and time. In this culture, languages and dictions give him the opportunity to share aesthetic, religious, legal and linguistic canons with others. Sharing these languages that fix us culturally gives us the opportunity to share and live with others and to become subjects and citizens, rather than the individual of the *narcissistic totalism* of which Sadin speaks (2022).

Thus, the coexistence of diverse languages is fundamental for this cultural and personal climate of openness. Human beings are always and everywhere potential polyglots because their humanity, "in order to express itself adequately, needs various forms of communication which, like a kind of *revelation*, expose the different levels that shape it and give life to it" (Duch, 2001, p. 233). Any social and cultural language, such as algorithmic language, should therefore contemplate and include this reality in its symbolic practices. On the contrary, the degradation of human languages constitutes an unequivocal sign that, in Western culture, as Steiner (2013) says, there has been a certain exhaustion of words (Duch, 2001; Vidal Castell, 2005).

Within this diversity of languages that human beings need, we often forget the contributions that, in a symbolic environment conducive to explicit, synthetic and superficial grammars, are provided to us by the language of the

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sacred, neighbouring the languages of the *sciences of the spirit*, as Dilthey (1949) called them. Duch (2001) and Hagglund (2022) recall that the religious sphere and its languages, characteristically human since it is so, originates etymologically from the word *re-ligare*, to unite, to put in relation, which designates, in the words of Hagglund, "an evolutionary response to the need for an intimate connection with other humans (…), a commitment to one's own that extends to other humans" (Hagglund in Amiguet, 2022). The religious has a natural link with the transcendent, yes, but it also develops, says Hagglund, a horizontal dimension that leads him to think about the meaning and nature of the community.

Thus, we can indeed think, and even wish, that *sacred* language is not limited only to religious experience, even if it were as a counterweight to the way in which economic or war language has gone beyond the designation of its limited areas of experience, and is frequently used to *word* matters, conflicts and all kinds of events, perhaps initially incommensurable and which, as humans, we must appropriate symbolically. We use, writes Duch (2001), those languages that are at our disposal to address the meaning of experience, and in doing so we place it in a symbolic universe, since every linguistic act is also a social and political act.

The language of humanism and the language of the sacred force us to establish a relationship with the languages of the spiritual sciences, those that should be claimed and philosophically founded in the face of the hegemony of the natural sciences, and which suppose a new push –and almost the beginning– "of the historical school and the work of the particular sciences of society" (Dilthey, 1949, p. 4). Dilthey establishes the maxim according to which "all science is the science of experience" (p. 5) and experience is an interconnected, holistic reality. Not adopting this perspective, also in the algorithmic context and in journalistic culture, would be "mutilating historical reality to fit it to the concepts and methods of the natural sciences" (Ibid.).

To accommodate these other heteroglossic dictions, we believe that in the moment of linguistic crisis that *homo loquens* is going through, we can find some interesting clues in the languages of the sacred or the spiritual. The anthropologist Bateson asked his students, on their first day of class, what a sacrament was –he also asked them what entropy was. For Bateson, his students, who could be doctors as well as artists, had to reflect on what is the "pattern that connects the living" (Bateson, 1989, pp. 18-19). The sacrament is, in fact, as Bateson pointed out, a symbolic activity that is established between the individual and the community, and that connects this individual with himself, with the community, with the environment and with the species, that is, with the rest of humanity. The sacrament is a visible sign of an existing yet invisible reality.

The language of the sacrament is not possible without a community, understood as an organization that interlaces or articulates the individual, the

subject, with the collective or group. The community –not only the religious one– shares common objectives and languages, but for it to function correctly it requires that its components maintain their autonomy and idiosyncrasy, which enrich and expand the possibilities of action –and success– of the community, renew it and make it evolve, while all these members also grow and evolve.

In this sense, Garde (2022) has noted how relevant it is, at the present time, for journalism to act within communities, collaborate to form them and transmit to them the possibility of emancipation from a committed, open journalism, practiced by *ignorant journalists*, and that it does so from assumptions different from the dying models of conventional industrial journalism. Also the concepts of *mystery* or *prayer*, in the wake of this *connecting pattern*, are suggestive invitations to think about journalism from the approach of the sacred.

3.3. Alterhythm and its Contributions from the Literary and Humanistic Perspective

Starting from this conviction about the necessary articulation –and balance– between *mythos* and *logos*, established in philosophical anthropology, and from the threatening hegemony of what Postman (2018) called the *mathematical soul* in the culture of exponential technology in which we live, we propose here a reflection on what we call *alterhythm*, being aware that what has been presented does not exhaust the problem at all.

By alterhythm we understand the opposite of what we can call the *surface languages* that characterize our era: the alterhythmic represents what we called in other work the *dense gaze* (Vidal Castell, 2006), the symbolic exercise of elucidating what is *de profundis* before and within us. It is a type of cognitive activity of a symbolic nature that is competent to explore the field of experience related to the indeterminate and the constitutive ambiguity of the human being, in the face of the languages of non-ambiguity that fix the Being, determine it and close it, with the consequences that this entails for the processes of individual and community emancipation.

Alterhythm and its qualities are thus opposed to the algorithm and the algorithmic. All the so-called disciplines of the spirit always summon in their doing and in their thinking these alterhythms, tools and at the same time results, attempts to explore, sometimes from the shadows and the uncertain, the other world, a technology of thought that is only activated, as Garde (2022) writes, with the political discourse of mediations, which cannot be other than human discourse, at the same time *lexis* and *praxis* –as Arendt (2005) defended–. Alterhythm refers to both the term *alter* –other– and *altero* –alteration– and seeks to name that which has no apparent order.

Etymologically, while the term algorithm –or logarithm– comes from the Latin *algorithmus* and the Greek word *arithmos*, which means number, due to the influence exerted by the Persian mathematician Al-Juarismi –whose name

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was latinized as *Algorithmi*–, and which, as we have seen in previous sections, is defined as the logical or numerical sequence that gives orders to solve a problem, the alterhythm, says Garde (2022), refers us precisely to the opposite, to everything that exceeds calculation, that is implicit and must be interpreted, that operates from deep within but emerges –or can emerge.

In this sense, the word alterhythm, in classical Latin, was used to designate the alteration of an order, be it the rhythm of the heart or, for example, an engine, and even today *altero* continues to be used in Mexico as a synonym for heap, accumulation. We cannot forget either that etymologically *alter* means that *something becomes another thing*, that it is transformed. Thus, Garde (2022) points out, if the algorithm allows programmers to order chaos so as to predict it, on the other hand, alterhythm is any action that allows us to grasp chaos through chaos, as Samuel Beckett proposed in literature.

> Resseguir els alteritmes, per tant, és descriure els canvis que es donen quan pensem en el nosaltres, un nosaltres anònim i radicalment divers, però que, paradoxalment, no altera els efectes del caos, sinó que assimila les alteracions com a part de la labor de viure. (Garde, 2022, p. 454)[4]

This exploratory and symbolic activity should be especially dear to a new praxis of journalism, a journalism that cannot be reenvisioned without attending to this new hegemony of the technological and the *datalatric*, as we will propose in the conclusions section.

We find ourselves in the position of seeking –in this threatening context– both a possible *praxis* of a symbolic nature and adequate examples that help us understand the alterhythmic, this nature open to *the other*, which respects that which emerges. As we have pointed out above, in this article we propose to do so, inspired by the long tradition of literary journalistic comparatism (CPL) proposed by Chillón (1991), and followed by others such as Vidal Castell (2000), Fleta (2015) and Hernández (2017).

When we refer to *literature* or *the literary*, as a field and a practice from which to obtain examples of *praxis* of alterhythmic knowledge, we are aware that we are referring to a polysemic concept that designates very broad and diverse practices, which have been the object of analysis and criticism from different and, often, opposing schools. In short, and although there is a crematistic, canonical sense of the term *literary* –applicable only to those works that deserve to be part of a tradition sanctioned by the instances of hegemonic taste, perspective from which, for example, Harold Bloom (2006) or Gerard Gennette (1993) have written–, here, following the tradition of philosophical

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4 The quote appears in Catalan in the original. We offer a possible translation: "To follow alterhythms, therefore, is to describe the changes that are made when we think about ourselves, an anonymous and radically different ourselves, but which, paradoxically, does not alter the effects of chaos, but rather assimilates the alterations as part of the work of living". (Garde, 2022, p. 454)

anthropology, we consider literature as a form of knowledge of an aesthetic nature that seeks to grasp and linguistically express the quality of experience (Chillón, 2014; Chillón & Duch, 2012). We have also considered journalism in similar terms, a few pages ago, as an area and narrative forms in which one operates at a symbolic level to structure discursively and politically the experience of the common world.

This symbolic practice aims to address what's mysterious in life from everyday life, to discover the elusive and hidden in what is evident to us, as Magris (2010) expresses. They are *praxis of domination of contingency* (Duch, 1996). The inevitable effort of literature is for the human being like learning to dance with chains, wrote Nietzsche (1996): how can we free ourselves, with words, from the determination that *appeases* us and *fixes* us in a language made up of those same words?

3.3.1. Contribution to Alterhythm from the Philosophy of Otherness

Otherness in the culture of digital narcissism is often perceived as a threat, but it is, even today, from the perspective of humanism, also a desire, an opening, a fascination, a possibility that opens up both before and inside us, because within us, when we experience it, we discover many other ways and possibilities of continuing to be ourselves. The culture of humanism, which not by chance flourished proudly in the centuries in which human beings were fascinated to discover so many other ways of *being* human, offers us some interesting keys to rethinking the current context.

In our *late-capitalist societies*, triumphs the story of success achieved without owing anything to anyone, of the *self-made man*, a fundamental myth of neoliberal individualism (Sadin, 2022). Each person is the center of this new world, in the advent of this new condition of the contemporary individual, writes Sadin (2022, p. 27 and 28), whose root would be the doctrine of liberal individualism, which modulated from the 18th century. This rapturous insistence on the self that Sadin speaks of leads to a renunciation or discrediting of spaces for community construction. The algorithm and the algorithmic intensify this devaluation of the idea of otherness and reduce the presence and complexity of the idea of the *other*.

But this context is not radically new; throughout the last century philosophers such as Emmanuel Lévinas and Martin Buber denounced the reductionism into which much of modern Western thought had fallen, consisting of blurring the characteristics of the *other* and explaining it from the categories of the self.

For this reason, after the Second World War, in a world that was morally uninhabitable after the two global tragedies experienced in just thirty years, Lévinas (1986) contrasts *being for death* with *being for another*. If Heidegger had considered that philosophy had fallen into the oblivion of being

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(*Seinsvergessenheit*), Lévinas denounces, on the other hand, the *oblivion of the Other*, the oblivion of the you, because modern Western philosophy remains enclosed, he considers, in the isolated consciousness of the Cartesian *cogito* and the Kantian *Ich Denke*, and explains *the other* in categories of *the same*, when instead the experience of otherness must manifest a *presence*, which cannot be subordinated or domesticated or enslaved, because it is revelation and it is questioning.

The axial idea that underpins a good part of his texts is the idea of *face*, and it seems to us a revealing coincidence that the exponential technologies of AI have as one of the most prolific areas of work that of facial recognition, and that these engines are fed with databases that exemplify what face a good citizen, a good taxpayer or a criminal should have, depending on their appearance or race. We are, therefore, before a gross simplification of the concept of face: the facial in AI are spatial coordinates, barely the surface of what we should consider the face of a *person*. The determinate, the reduction of what is *other* to the categories of the same, in the words of Lévinas, is flagrant.

For Lévinas, in fact, the concept of face does not refer to the sensible form that this term usually presents, but rather it is the resistance that the other opposes to us in its own manifestation. The face is the irreducible and epiphanic way in which the other makes itself present. We have written before, following Duch (2001), that the human being is an epiphanic being, who must manifest himself and does so in the use of all those languages and symbolic resources to which he has access. With these characteristics, it is understandable that Lévinas (1986) considers the emergence of the face as an elusive experience, which constantly escapes, irreducible. What most defines a face, he writes, is this irreducible, open character, always in manifestation; it is the way in which the other surpasses the idea that I have of it.

In this context, the mask means in Lévinas the reduction of the complexity of *the other*, what we place on this epiphany to prevent it, what reduces *the other* to the categories of what is the same. The stereotype is a mask. Is it a mask what the AI algorithms that work in facial recognition construct? Without a doubt, insofar as they recognize what is already known, they do not foresee the emergence of the epiphanic, nor do they have that intention at all. Once again, they are tools designed for the pragmatic, the useful, the profitable, based on a solipsistic and individualistic idea of the individual that denies him as a person.

In this sense, the Jewish existentialist philosopher Martin Buber (1977, 1973) pointed out reflections very similar to those of Lévinas: the basic aspect of his thought is the *I-Thou* relationship, understood as the relationship between two subjects with language as its centre. This dialogical relationship is opposed to the *I-It* relationship, which only puts a subject in contact with an object, and in which there is no interaction but appropriation. To exist is for Buber to enter into a relationship of interaction with others, in a way similar

to that proposed by Lévinas. For him, it makes no sense to speak of an isolated self because the being, in order to define itself, needs to oppose itself to other individuals and to a world.

Buber (1923), who comes from the tradition of philosophical anarchism, although he does not reject –on the contrary– the philosophical matrix of the Hebrew tradition, is known for his philosophy of dialogue. His work *I and Thou* was a contribution to the dawn of a new humanism based on solidarity, respect for others and tolerance.

This is the responsibility of quality journalism today. The algorithmic becomes a closed circle in itself, recurrent, which is always the same, the circular process but open to the growth of the communicative spiral (Garde, 2022), the helical structure that will occupy community time and space. In the algorithm, on the other hand, the data of the *past* determine and fix a *present* that is denied the emergence and opening of the *future*. Journalism has traditionally done so, and is capable of continuing to do so. "It only needs –writes Lladó (2019)– that lucid gaze that listens to the silences, sometimes so deafening. This is what have achieved the likes of Manuel Chaves Nogales or John Steinbeck, Joseph Kessel or Gay Talese, Elena Poniatowska or Svetlana Alexievich, Juan Villoro or Leila Guerriero" (p. 28).

3.3.2. Literature and Alterhythm

Within the tradition of humanism, literature explores an inevitable tension between the known and the unknown, between the self and its power, between what is and what could be. The narration of the adventures of the heroes and antiheroes of the literary tradition is always a form of journey, as Auerbach (2016) explains, from the adventures of Homer's *Ulysses* to what happened to Leopold Bloom in Joyce's book *Ulysses*. The first, which practically inaugurates this tradition, in a journey full of monsters, capricious gods, sirens and faithful loves; the second, in a sad everyday epic in Dublin at the beginning of the century, full of false friendships and unfaithful loves. Is there a more precise way to evoke the hermeneutic journey of the human being than to encode it in the narration of a journey? A journey that's whether only inner, as occurs not only with the grey Leopold Bloom, but with so many thousands of protagonists such as the legion of Bartlebys, Wakefields, Oblomovs, or also external, as occurs with Orpheus, Aeneas, Achilles, Ulysses, Ishmael, Holden Caulfield, Salgari's buccaneers, Conrad's sailors and explorers and so many others.

That is why Joseph Campbell (2013) speaks of this *hero's journey* as the fundamental narrative structure of narration in the Western literary tradition, and it is so because the journey is the epitome of the opening towards what is other, towards what is different, towards what is not part of the same. Campbell summarizes in a well-known diagram this journey, both internal and external, of a traveler who undertakes a journey from which he *returns* transformed, that

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is, being himself in a different way. Campbell divides his diagram between what is known about the departure and what is unknown, highlighting the abyss that the protagonist faces before his return. As a result, he attends (and leads) a revelation that transforms him (Campbell, 2013). The epiphany, explains Duch (2018), is an encounter with what is both expected and unexpected, it happens suddenly and, when it happens, we realize that we expected it.

Similarly, although from different premises than those of Campbell's literary anthropology, the formalist Vladimir Propp (1958) established in *Morphology of the Short Story*, after analyzing hundreds of examples, the recurrent functions that arose in all popular stories. In this series of thirty-one recurrent points, the protagonist's distancing from his own environment stands out –that instance of leaving what's known that we talked about above–, the transgression, the departure, the journey and various forms of return. The starting point of the literary story is always when the impossible, the unforeseen or the improbable completely breaks the boundaries of everyday life.

Thus, while we are aware that these movements of openness, otherness, epiphany and transformation are both, on the one hand, constitutive characteristics of the knowledge and practice of literature and, on the other, fundamental elements of what we have called here *the alterhythmic*, we propose as a input that functions both as an example and illustration, to present the critical contributions on two emblematic authors of the twentieth century, Robert Musil and Samuel Beckett.

3.3.2.1. Musil: The Possible Before the Real

Robert Musil is one of the greatest representatives of the Central European literary tradition, with culturally Jewish roots and recurrent concerns about how human inclemency is expressed in linguistic discomfort, to which Valverde, in the prologue to Josep Casals' monumental *Afinidades vienesas* (2006), refers with the famous sentence: "Those Viennese did not know they were so modern." His diagnosis of the social and spiritual crisis of culture, in the midst of the decline of bourgeois values, expresses the social and spiritual disintegration of European civilization, gained great centrality in the first decades of the 20th century in the literary field, and was the protagonist of the works of authors such as Stefan Zweig, Elias Canetti, Franz Kafka, Robert Walser, Joseph Roth, Hugo von Hofmannsthal or Karl Kraus, among many others. Outside of Central Europe, we could detect a similar sense in the literary work of Joyce (*Ulysses*, 1922), Woolf (*The Waves*, 1931) or Faulkner (*The Sound and the Fury*, 1927). Musil, specifically, dedicated a large part of his life to his magnum opus, *The Man Without Qualities* (*Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften*, 1930/32), a colossal creation.

Musil seeks to reflect a new, emerging reality, one that is at the same time a still splendorous decadence, in which the individual feels like a foreigner. Musil

himself wrote that Thomas Mann and others write "for what is already here, I do not write for the people who are here" (Monton, 1993, p. 6). What interests Musil is not so much the occurrence of realism, made up of facts, objects and people that he considers interchangeable, but rather the possibilities. Musil, therefore, proposes the superiority of the exploration of the possible over the real, in literary creation, insofar as when the possible exists at the same time its opposite also exists. This tendency between opposites that do not yet exist, truly, should be the preferred area of exploration of literary activity, according to the writer. This duality, between which a non-linear plot fluctuates, is the tool to explain the ambiguity and interchangeability of everything that is real *in what is here*: in unstable things there is more future than in stable ones, and the present is nothing more than a hypothesis that has not yet been overcome, writes Musil (1993) in one of the famous digressions of the narrator's voice, which occupy hundreds of pages. And he concludes that we must seize hold of unreality because reality no longer makes sense.

Who is this man *without attributes* or qualities that the author presents to us? First of all, it should be noted that this is not a pejorative expression at all, as it might be understood today, in the heart of our productivist society. The *man without attributes* is an indeterminate being, stupefied by his own quality of *being unfixed, open*. While society criticizes his "lack of character," the protagonist, a lawyer, asks his friend at various times: "Do I really seem like a lawyer to you?" and strives to acquire *a professional character* while his appearance reminds us, successively, of Jesus Christ, a painter or a sailor on vacation (Monton, 1993).

In the fourth chapter, Musil establishes the distinction between the sense of reality, proper to men with attributes and qualities –such as the protagonist's father– and the sense of possibility, proper to the man without attributes. For Musil, this man without attributes is someone between thought and action, a contemplative, an appetitive, an indecisive character who proclaims that "reality must be suppressed" (Musil, 2001, p. 185). As Musil explains through Ulrich, the morality of humanity is permanently divided into two components: mathematics and mysticism, or, in other words, "precision and soul." Musil takes sides and definitively assaults the fortress of nineteenth-century realism and dynamites it, as they did in those years also from the field of art.

In the context of an alterhythmic reflection, Musil's contribution presents us above all the axis in opposition *possibility-reality* as preferable for the work of narrative creation, but also in the context of journalistic work. Reality must be suppressed in order to work with possibility. The algorithmic is the predicted real that cancels the possible real, and the alterhythmic is the possibility that emerges in an overture. In what's possible opposites survive, and this uncertainty forces us to be attentive to what emerges and to keep our minds open to the unexpected and the epiphanic.

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3.3.2.2. Beckett and Guerriero. Writing in Silence to Avoid any Language

Many authors and critics have noted, from the theory of narration, that the transmission of meaning in any story rests on the selective, focused observation and reproduction of everyday life and the apparently small or casual, which the literary work *configures*, in a term used by Lukács (1989), to construct the so-called *narrative motifs*. Nabokov summarized his novelistic technique in the mastery of dialogue and details, and like him many others, in the field of literary journalism, have stressed the importance of *showing* rather than *telling*, among them Truman Capote (seeking in the details what he calls *fragments of reality*, in *Ghosts in Sunlight*, within *The Dogs Bark*) or Gay Talese (invoking in *A Writer's Life* the example of Carson McCullers), to allow a silent language to evoke and transmit the hidden.

In narratology, the points of view from which a narrative voice tells the story can be, according to Henry James's now distant distinction, those of *telling* – which actually tell– and those of *showing*, the scenic points of view, which make the reader attend the story, apparently without the mediation of a narrative voice (Lodge, 2010; Marchese & Forradellas, 2013). An example of this last case would be the Platonic dialogues –as dear as it was to the oral teaching of Socrates, whose voice evoked in each of the more than eighty dialogues, without any narrative voice to contain them–, the dramatic convention in theatrical genres –origin of Beckett's interest in them, as we will see below– or the experimentation of selective or multiple selective omniscience in the works of the avant-garde currents, as we see in Joyce, Faulkner or Woolf.

Recently, Leila Guerriero, one of the outstanding names in the tradition of literary journalism, within the so-called *Latin American chronicle*, of the last twenty years, declared in an interview with *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* (Alvárez, 2022) that, in her work, she is always looking for those things "that are not in sight." That means not looking for the predictable, the obvious, what everyone sees or expects, and "trying not to go down the predictable path," but being "flexible and imaginative, staying very attentive to the discourse of the other." In the end, as we pointed out above, this proposal is a subversion against capitalist realism:

> it is the small being, the human subject, fighting in a way against the system that tells him: No, you will not be able to, you are not made to dream, you do not belong in the world of ambitions. Resign yourself, be a bricklayer, be something you do not want to be, screw you, you are a rat. You were born where the lightning of bad luck struck. Your destiny is misfortune. (Guerreiro in Álvarez, 2022)

Those who practice this journalism of openness to the unforeseen and *the other*, on the other hand, "are emancipated against that," warns Guerriero, since they practice a gaze that is a revolt against the fixed and against the

closed, against the realism of *things as they are* and *the objective*, the numerical and the probabilistic against the possible. To navigate these shifting terrains, the influence of literary technique, of poetic experience, is indisputable, since "everything also comes from understanding or wanting to reach with prose what is seen and what is not seen".

In this sense, we advocate in this article the alterhythmic as a language of silence, which complements and compensates for the explicitly noisy nature of surface languages. By surface languages we mean those characteristic of hegemonic discourses and of the different symbolic and communicative practices in the society of containment capitalism, especially in its digital dimension, that is, *synthetic*, although not only –rather in a hybrid sphere that has a tendency to annul the physical to establish a single *phygital* sphere, such as Rosalía's concerts. Precisely Guerriero –interviewed by Álvarez (2022) – explains her work from literary journalism as a cultivation of the language of silence in the face of these languages of the obvious and the superficial:

> I understand silence as working with what is not said, which for me is as important as working with what is said in an obvious way. When I write, I don't seek to make the text scream, shriek or howl all the time, or to make it reveal a supposed truth every three sentences. I like to work with literal silence, that is, for the text, despite being written, to sound like silence, to sound like a desert. And I like to work with that other silence that does not have to be obvious, that says things without saying them. (Guerreiro in Álvarez, 2022)

This saying things without saying them is, properly speaking, the main occupation of literary work, as we have pointed out above, this unveiling in the struggle against language itself, too obvious and visible, which tormented Samuel Beckett in an exemplary way throughout his life. The Irish writer and Nobel Prize winner, one of the three authors that George Steiner considers emblematic of the 20th century for their extraterritoriality (Steiner, 2002), along with Borges and Nabokov, experienced from an avant-garde prose far removed from all convention these difficulties to fight against a language that, according to a perspective of suspicion about language that dates back to the end of the 19th century, with Nietzsche at the forefront, constrains and determines.

Thus, Beckett could be considered one of the main cultivators of this language of silence, a *verbal muteness* that expresses a fragmented subject, in tension with his identity and with a world of meaningless objects. This fragmentation and instability of the individual that we have seen in Musil's work, appears again from the literary work that, now, if possible, adopts a more radical postulate, since Beckett is aware of the privative nature of all language, and that, therefore, *saying hides*.

The program of Beckett's work, which made silence its language, is summarized by Taléns (Beckett, 2001) as *fleeing* from a gaze that orders the world. "The only means of renewal –writes the Irish author– is to open one's eyes and

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contemplate disorder. It is not a disorder that can be understood. I have proposed that we let it in because it is the truth." This struggle with words makes his writing "the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express it, nothing from which to express it, not wanting to express it, together with the obligation to express it" (p. 16). And it leads him to the pretension of communicating through silence.

Beckett (2001) experiences language as a form of reduction of the individual, of capitulation to the collective: "This is what they think they have reduced me to. What a cunning thing to have adapted me to a language that they imagine I will never be able to use without recognizing myself as part of their tribe" (p. 19). This is why the writer works in inferior conditions to visual artists or musicians, he laments, since he has to use *words that mean* as the only means of his work to say the unsaid, to say the unsayable. Beckett chose, in order to develop this language of silence that evokes the unsaid, the performing arts, to avoid the omniscience and omnipotence from which some authors such as the aforementioned Joyce, Woolf or Faulkner faced this crisis. Beckett does not intend to word chaos, but to show it, either from pure dramatic action or "transforming words into a meaningless murmur" (Beckett, 2001, p. 18). To the extent that saying does not show, but rather hides, chaos can only be made visible, but not said. Beckett seeks "the silence of what is represented as a way of saying itself without the traps or domination of language" (p. 20).

In the considerations of Beckett's work and his literary postulates, necessarily brief in this context, we recognize some of the main questions that concern us when we think about human diction, specifically in the field of communication. The epistemological, we would almost say ontological, concern in Beckett challenges the realistic security of the made and fixed world and of the unitary and determined subject. His language of silence is presented as the symbolic and alterhythmic work of a dense gaze on a world always in endemic disorder.

4. ALTERHYTHM AND THE ALTERHYTHMIC: CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSAL

In this article we have presented the alterhythmic as an ecology of humanism in a technolatric environment, and we have claimed its necessary inclusion in a journalism besieged by various crises, but, fundamentally, burdened by a *datalatric* fascination that is hostage to the inertia of the stereotype that has survived in its professional gaze.

We can therefore advocate that journalism, like so many other disciplines of culture, should reveal anomalies by means of alterhythm, should refollow them and reveal them. Journalism should always be *alterhythmic*, since when it refollows what has been altered through alterhythm it guesses what is to come, it foresees more than it predicts. Thus, while predicting means noticing changes and transformations based on what is perceived and its vibration, with

which we connect, in the work of predicting there is only the announcement of what is supposed and, therefore, the inevitability of the closed destiny of the algorithmic. The work of journalism, like that of all the sciences of the spirit, is to detect these vibrations and narrate them. For this reason we advocate that journalism should be especially concerned with recounting the advent, that is, recounting the *occurrence* of the event.

As we have seen, the work of predicting, which we have illustrated here with the work of literature, entails the ability to observe the indicative, the detail, the hidden, the possibility of the contingent and the possibility of change. As Garde (2022) points out, to foresee implies, on the one hand, to sustain the community, to take care of it, and on the other, to crack the false syllogism that says that "everything is and has become possible" and that Garcés (2002) claims annihilates all possibilities against the possible. Garde (2022) writes that only if we invoke the alterhythmic can we cross the darkness "de la gàbia mercurial que ens conté"[5] (p. 454).

Faced with the non-evident or the non-visible, which often underlies the immediate and the urgent, we need a time of contemplation before this darkness. In the shadows that we inhabit, understanding what is before us requires a gigantic effort. In this darkness, traces of otherness, like ghosts, reveal and are revealed.

As we display in this table, against the algorithm, which is expressed with surface languages, mainly of a synthetic type, which determines an essence and includes us in a univocal and inevitable capitalist realism, we demand an alterhythm that promotes a language of silence, *syndetic*, that is, that seeks a connection with the other world, that demands that we *go on doing*, in openness and in gerund, in the face of the uncertainty and ambiguity that emerges and manifests itself in the experience of alterity.

Table 1. Characteristics of alterhythm

Algorithm	Alterhythm
Non-ambiguous language	Language of ambiguity
Surface language (synthetic)	Language of silence (syndetic)
Fixed being (that is)	Unfixed being (that does)
Mask	Face
Destiny (closed)	Future (open)
Determines	Transforms
Real (univocal)	Possible (polysemic)
Participle	Gerund
Dominates (neglects)	Welcomes (cares for)
Announces/Simulates (presence/explicit)	Hides/Dissimulates (absence/implicit)
Predicts	Foresees

Source: Own elaboration.

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[5]   The quote appears in Catalan in the original. We offer a possible translation: "of the mercurial cage that I told you about".

According to what we have understood here by alterhythm, the experience of *the other* must be welcomed and allowed to manifest itself in its *unmasked face* (Lévinas), both in the processes of symbolic construction originating in all types of narration and above all in the field of journalistic communication, today more threatened than ever by a *totalism* of probabilistic languages. The illogical character, which contravenes probabilistic calculation, or the apparently or paradoxically stupid, is what makes us human, as we have seen following Han or Deleuze.

Until now, AI, which was supposed to be decisive in so many facets of our society and in its progress, not only technological, has developed what some have considered to be a *mathematical or operationalist soul*. But this can be understood as a reduction of the mathematical to the simply calculable, and forgets that also within the so-called formal sciences and their technological development there are remnants of the mystical. Quantum computing, for example, is an amendment to deterministic scientism, and in fact develops the so-called indeterminacy principle, which is opposed to algorithmic computing, because nothing exists by probability, everything is unpredictable and in fact does not really exist until it is perceived. Will the development of quantum computing help to bridge this gap? That is why we appeal here to fuse the mystical with the mathematical, its language being filled with philosophy and pure ontology. This also supports the urgent call of Berardi, Innerarity, Peirano and others to programmers, to speakers of this algorithmic language, not to renounce the humanistic, to work for emancipation and not for the merely industrial.

In this proposal we connect with what was written by Lladó (2019), when he refers to lucidity, following Camus, as one of the fundamental attitudes, as a form of subversion and disobedience, of fighting against stereotypes and robotics, against the empire of data and metrics, of SEO. The lucid gaze that he advocates combats the automaton that we are all about to become. Is there anything sadder, he asks, than the fact that readers know exactly what we are going to explain to them and how we are going to do it before they even start reading or listening to the news? One of the reasons for the lack of interest of audiences in conventional journalistic discourse comes from the fact that it *always talks about the same thing*. Adjusting to the profile of the audiences, to their tastes and preferences collected and stored, means that they are not exposed to anything unforeseen or unknown. What if what is happening, writes Lladó (2019), is that people have grown tired of so-called facts being just data that do not result in anything close to their life experience? (pp. 26-27).

Technologists with a non-operationalist *mathematical soul* must be involved in the mystical perspective, not abandoning the technological or assuming that nothing can change. The culture of algorithmic automation has been dominated until now by two unrefuted implicit premises: on the one hand, that everything that optimizes the business and *makes it immediate* must be applied, which is typical of exponential capitalist culture; on the other, that scientific-technical language is the most complete expression of the human, although in reality, by itself

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it is incapable of accounting for what Berardi calls the *totality of the sphere of being* and establishes, as we have developed in this text, a limited and limiting episte-mology and anthropology. That is why Berardi (2019) makes a call, to which we join, for the cognitive workers of what he calls the *Global Silicon Valley* –that is, the semiosphere of scattered global production– to build "a common consciousness that spreads the awareness of a possible social solidarity among neuroworkers", and that this provokes "the ethical awakening of millions of engineers, artists and scientists", because it is the only possibility of stopping what he announces as "a terrible regression" (p. 255).

Can there be today, in the context of algorithmic culture, an *alter-native* jour-nalism, an alterhythmic journalism? Do we have examples, has it ever existed before in the history of journalism? To the first question we answer yes, although it should be a journalism of *the other*, based on the languages of silence, on the forms of literary measurement, well meshed with the community. To the second, we also answer yes: perhaps in our imagination the long tradition of journalists who have abandoned their world to try to understand and explain what was other to them –Nelly Bly and the working women, Steinbeck and his harvest vagabonds, John Hersey's hibakusha– seems to conjure up a genealogy of lone wolves, individuals on the fringes of everything. They were, more properly, *ignorant journalists*, in the sense defended by Garde (2022), who worked with the methods of ethnography (Gayà, Garde & Seró, 2021) and who, integrated into these communities, allowed the face of *the other* to emerge (and they recognized themselves in it). This is a journalism that, from the magazines in which Lincoln Steffens or Theodor Dreiser worked until today, forms a kind of parallel tradition, often relegated before the industrial nature of journalism. We must recover their work and their intuition, today more necessary than ever.

Determining the limitations of each of the applications of algorithms in the practice of journalism and in its workflows is essential. As long as computing is understood as just processing data and intelligence is correlated only with mathe-matical rationality, with what is quantifiable, it will continue to ignore a fundamen-tal dimension of human experience that must be a central concern in a new jour-nalism that must emerge, sacramental, communal, alterhythmic. Emancipatory.

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