

SPHERICAL ENCOUNTERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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Abstract: *The apotheosis of the globe, global and globalized seems to grow ungainly with authoritative grandeur at our every breath.*

With continuous adjustments forced upon this model, under constant tension favored by industrialization, consumerism, political conflicts and anthropocene, the most basic human rights are abused and ignored time and time again, all over the world. Is there an alternative to the global view of the world? The paper aims to demonstrate that opposed to the globe as object, symbol and iconography that mediates globalization, and places our view outside earth, the diverse typologies of immersive media such as virtual reality and 360° video projects, fulldome films designed for dome theatres, followed by online interactive 360° webdocumentaries or virtual tours, function as cultural interfaces for the *spherical worldview*. The research sets out to consider this *spherical* representation of human rights which re-position its 'inhabitants' to perceive the world from within (Ingold) and integrates the multiplicity and diversity of our contemporary societies and cultural representations, sustaining the human rights of the indigenous, marginal and minority. This will be done specifically in relation to Astra Film Festival's new media program entitled *The Future is Now* implemented and curated by Adela M. in 2016 and 2017 in Sibiu city, Romania, through case studies that use the virtual reality and 360° video technology. While the sphere, spherical, spheropoiese is presented as the counterdiscourse of the globe, global and globalized, the paper introduces their detailed historical evolution, building a tension that unfolds through the mythologem of the *orb* and its unconventional dialectical interplay between engagement as a *sphere* and detachment as a *globe*, viewpoints that mutually function as paradoxical concurrent perspectives.

Keywords: spherical worldview; to diverge; decolonize conquest consciousness; world-system; globalization; mythologem; *Unus Non Sufficit Orbis*.

Geometrical metaphors of Life perspectives: the Sphere and the Globe

Globalization can be broadly understood as the “diverse technological, economic, social and cultural processes that have made it possible to imagine the world as a global space.”¹ However, long before a global space, counter to the global view, there seem to have existed “an alternative image of the world which, at least in European thought, is of far more ancient provenance. This is the image of the sphere,”² acknowledge us Tim Ingold. Further on, Carl Schmitt reminds us that: “In all the ages of mankind, the earth has been appropriated, divided, and cultivated. But before the age of the great discoveries, before the 16th century of our system of dating, men had no global concept of the planet on which they lived. Certainly, they had a mythical image of heaven and earth, and of land and sea, but the earth still was not measured as a globe.”³ That is to say, in the words of Elias and Moraru (2015): “while unfolding within the same historical moment as globalization, a counter worldview was always and still is configured—artistically, philosophically, and intellectually—from a different angle and goes in another direction.”⁴ Putting the question following this alternative thread: what other worldview existed prior to the globalized one? “To regard the world as a globe is at once to render conceivable the possibility of its logical inverse, the sphere; and of course vice versa. These views are not irrevocably opposed, and thus mutually exclusive but each view contains the seeds of the other. Both perspectives are caught up in the dialectical interplay between engagement and detachment, between human beings’ involvement in the world and their separation from it, which has been a feature of the entire history of Western thought”⁵, concludes Professor Tim Ingold, anthropologist based at the University of Aberdeen, in the 10 year update to the original book, the 2011 reissue version entitled

1 Shah, Nisha, *Cosmopolitanizing and decosmopolitanizing globalization: metaphorical re-description and transformations of political community*, pp. 393-408.

2 Ingold, Tim, *The Perception of the Environment...*, p. 210.

3 Schmitt, Carl, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum...*, p. 351. See also Sloterdijk, Peter, *Globes: Macrosphereology...*, pp. 765– 959.

4 Elias, Amy J. and Moraru, Christian, *The Planetary Turn*, Introduction, *The Planetary Condition*, xii.

5 Ingold, Tim, *The Perception of the Environment...*, p. 216.

The Perception of the Environment, where we find a collection of essays that fit into the theme of paradoxical concurrent perspectives. As David McConville lists⁶, many different names have been given to systems of logic that acknowledge seemingly contradictory or paradoxical concurrent perspectives, including paraconsistent logic (Weber, 2010), non-Aristotelian logic (Korzybski, 1933), dialetheism (Garfield & Priest, 2003; Pepperell, 2006; Priest, 2002, 2008), maybe logic (Bauscher, 2003), the logic of myth (Lévi-Strauss, 1955), the logic of ambivalence (Pregadio, 2004; Smelser, 1998), the logic of laughter (Koestler, 1964), the logic of the included middle (Nicolescu, 2002), a logic of the ambiguous, of the equivocal, of polarity (Vernant, 1990, p. 260), and the ‘middle way’ (Toulmin, 1982). David McConville further acknowledges that the ability to shift fluidly between multiple perspectives has been assigned an array of designations: he continues with Jean Gebser (1984) who calls this complex unity the integral-aperspectival structure of consciousness, marked by the ability to “assimilate the entirety of our human existence into our awareness”⁷; similarly, Alan Combs’ (2009) integral worldview, Robert Kegan’s (1994) self-transforming mind; Jürgen Habermas’ (1984, 1985) domination free discourse; and Ken Wilber’s (2000) vision-logic all describe variations on trans-paradigmatic, multi-perspectival, and paradoxical thinking. To all these, I add Tim Ingold’s book which culminates in chapter twelve where he constructs a similar as in the above mentioned variations on a theme of paradoxical concurrent perspective within the essay entitled *Globes and Spheres, The topology of environmentalism*. Here, the author uses geometrical metaphors to describe two different perspectives of life, the *Global Perspective* versus the *Spherical Perspective* or better said the transition from the *Spherical worldview* to the *Global* one as “a process in which human beings have gradually risen above, and brought under control, both their own nature, in the process of civilization, and the nature around them, in the domestication of animals and plants.”⁸ The author starts his essay by defining the two geometrical metaphors and describes their specific perspective: The *Global Perspective* on life, “represented most commonly by the Western view, presume a world already constituted, through the action of natural forces,

6 McConville, David, *On the Evolution of the Heavenly Spheres: An Enactive Approach to Cosmography...*, p. 381.

7 Gebser, Jean, *The ever-present origin*, p. 4. Quoted in McConville, David, *On the Evolution of the Heavenly Spheres: An Enactive Approach to Cosmography...*, p. 101.

8 Ingold, Tim, *The Perception of the Environment...*, p. 10.

which then becomes the object of human interest and concern. But it is not a world of which humans themselves are conceived to be a part. To them, it is rather presented as a spectacle. They may observe it, reconstruct it, protect it, tamper with it or destroy it, but they do not dwell in it.”⁹ Ingold describes global as “a solid, opaque surface that separates humans from earth, weakening any possible relationships between the two”¹⁰, and also argue, that in the contemporary discourse, “the image of the earth as a globe, implied in such phrases as ‘global environmental change’ is one that actually expels humanity from the lifeworld, such that rather than the environment surrounding us, it is we who have surrounded it.”¹¹ The author defines this global positioning, which places nature on the inside and humanity on the outside, ecocentric and anthropocircumferential: “Far from reintegrating human society into the world of nature, the idea of the earth as a solid globe of opaque materiality marks their final separation. Thus the biodiversity of locally distributed life-forms presents itself to a universal, globally distributed humanity.”¹² Against this, the *Spherical Perspective* according to Ingold “is one that rests on an altogether different mode of apprehension – one based on practical, perceptual engagement with components of a world that is inhabited or dwelt-in, rather than on the detached, disinterested observation of a world that is merely occupied. This perspective views human life as within and a part of the surroundings. There is a very real relationship between human and environment creating engagement, attachment, and a home-like setting. This image, which is characteristic of the cosmologies of pre-modern societies, is genuinely anthropocentric, but in a way that counter poses neither humanity and nature, nor the local and the global.”¹³ Ingold further on cites Cooper, who distinguishes these two senses of environment by using capital letters for the former and lower case letters for the latter: “Thus ‘The Environment’ is the object of modern scientific and geopolitical discourse, whereas ‘the environment’ comprises my familiar surroundings. The first is something that every living creature is in; the second is something that every creature has.”¹⁴ Ending Ingold’s

9 *Ibidem*, p. 215.

10 *Ibidem*, p. 154.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 209.

12 *Ibidem*, p. 154.

13 *Ibidem*, p. 154.

14 Cooper, D. E., *The idea of environment...*, pp. 167–169. Quoted in Ingold, Tim. *The Perception of the Environment...*, p. 429.

essay, we can conclude that in our world “the tension unfolds through the unconventional dialectical interplay between engagement and detachment of the *Globe* and the *Sphere*, which mutually function as paradoxical concurrent perspectives.”¹⁵ Here, we have arrived at a critical point where we need to ask: first of all, who invented the concept of the world as a *Sphere* and also as a *Globe*? What does the cosmologies of pre-modern societies has to teach us today? How do human rights benefit or suffer from this “dialectical interplay between engagement and detachment”; “involvement and separation” characterized by the constant switch between the *Spherical* and *Global perspectives*?

Mythologem: the *Orb* as the Greek *Sphere* and Roman *Globe*

To find answers to all these questions, we definitely need to turn to an understanding, that arches over a *longue durée* process of the history of globalization as Peter Sloterdijk sees it: “Globalization can only be understood by opening up to the realization that the thought figure of the orb is an ontologically, and thus technologically and politically serious matter.”¹⁶ Sloterdijk argues that all previous statements about globalization have suffered from short-sightedness. For him, globalization begins with the ancient Greeks, who represented the whole world through the shape of the celestial *Sphere(s)*. With the discovery of America and the first circum-navigations of the earth, the celestial *Spheres* were replaced by the *terrestrial globe*. This second stage of globalization called ‘terrestrial globalization’ meant rounding of the world by means of ships and capital and served the base for the third ‘electronic globalization’, one which we are living through today, and that extends into ‘virtual networks’. However, the attitude that historically and metaphysically interests us lies in Sloterdijk’s “recurrence of the world unfolded and exhausted itself in the sign of the geometrically perfect round form, the Greek ‘sphere’ and the Roman ‘globe.’”¹⁷ The *globe* and the *sphere*, both streams of conceptual and technological expression can be traced backward, if sporadically, into the pre-modern societies. Indeed, Ingold’s geometric metaphors that describe our contemporaneity grow its roots from this mythologem, as long before the ‘terrestrial globali-

15 Ingold, Tim, *The Perception of the Environment...*, p. 216.

16 Sloterdijk, Peter, *Globes: Macrosphereology...*, p. 47.

17 *Ibidem*, p. 45.

zation, 'the world turned inside-out' was already established intellectually by the Greeks through the *Sphere*, and then through power and domination by the Romans through the *Globe*.

The Greek Sphere: *inverting the world inside-out*

The metaphor of the *Sphere* was for the first time introduced by the Greek philosophers through the all-encompassing celestial sphere and served as the foundation of Western cosmological thought for nearly two millennia through a series of interpretive transformations: Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and then later Plato, Eudoxus, Callipus, Aristotle and Ptolemy, all developed spherical cinematic planetary theories of the world based on the assumption that 'the kosmos is spherical and moves spherically.' By introducing the theory of the celestial sphere as a model for understanding the celestial phenomena the Greeks caused "a great breakthrough in scientific thinking about the structure of the world"¹⁸ and took a decisive step toward "geometrizing their worldview."¹⁹ Also, mathematically fixing the positions of the stars consolidated the constellations in a single system of 48. The scientific tradition originated with Hipparchus of Nicaea (c. 190-120 B.C.) in the second century B.C., who "developed the highly significant idea of mathematically fixing the positions of the stars."²⁰

People from time immemorial appear to have created pictures by joining the dots that are the stars in the night sky; however the introduction of the moving sphere as a model for understanding the celestial phenomena also provided the momentum for mapping the stars and making celestial globes to represent them according to the moving sphere of the sky. The stars perceived by the observer looking up at the night sky gave the impressions that were attached to the inside of a hollow sphere situating the terrestrial observer at its center. This spherical quality of the firmament emulated observations and theories, that resulted in spherical material culture, as the Greeks also developed the science of constructing models of the heavens and made considerable use of physical models. In the literary text

18 Dekker, Elly, *Illustrating the phenomena : celestial cartography in antiquity and the Middle Ages...*, p. 432.

19 Evans, James, *The History and Practice of Ancient Astronomy...*, p.76.

20 Toomer, G.J., "Hipparchus", in *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, ed. C.C. Gillispie, pp. 207-224.

entitled *Introduction to the Phenomena*, Geminus, a scientific writer of the first century A.D., includes a discussion about *Sphairopoiia*²¹ and defines it as simultaneously meaning a branch of mechanics; a particular mechanical model; a spherical theory of the world, and a spherical arrangement or system of the world itself that actually exists in nature. The tangible models of the cosmos that “reference visual and tangible allusions to the roundness of the firmament”²² offered a concrete framework, both for “accumulated knowledge and for philosophical and metaphysical speculation.”²³

The concept of constructing an actual model of the sky, picturing the location of the constellations and demonstrating how the stars move as a fixed unit around a central axis through miniaturization is defined by Rappenglück (2008) “the process of ‘domesticating’ the macrocosm within the microcosm”; and ‘domesticating’ the unknown world into an orderly home.”²⁴ Rappenglück also argues that “materially embodied cosmovisions are integral parts of human ecosystems, enabling cultures to transmit critical information to anyone sharing the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of communication practiced by a community.”²⁵

Using a globe to represent the geometry of the heavens was essential to Greek astronomy, so “*Sphere making* or *Sphairopoiia*, the art devoted of modeling and building models of the cosmos that included the construction of celestial globes, the making of images of the heavens and mechanical calculating devices that intended to replicate the motions of the Sun, Moon and planets”²⁶ had soon become an established branch of mechanics and was carried to a high level by the time of Archimedes (ca. 250 B.C.). Although their heaven still bared mythological images, it represented a radical break with traditional cosmologies.

The Greek intellectuals not only defined the Spherical kosmos, invented the celestial globe and other planetary models but what really con-

21 Evans, James et.al, *Geminus’s Introduction to the Phenomena: A Translation and Study of a Hellenistic Survey of Astronomy...*, p. 52.

22 McConville, David, *On the Evolution of the Heavenly Spheres: An Enactive Approach to Cosmography...*, p. 97.

23 *Ibidem*.

24 Rappenglück, Michael A., *The Housing of the World: The Significance of Cosmographic Concepts for Habitation...*, p. 21.

25 *Ibidem*, p. 31.

26 Evans, James, *The History and Practice of Ancient Astronomy...*, p. 83.

cerns us here is that they expressed probably the most important human capacity, revealing our shifting attitude toward the world we inhabit today by inaugurating a novel, decidedly modern and 'particular way of seeing and looking at the world' - the 'eccentric' view. Their influence in establishing a theoretical perspective *outside* of the world was undoubtedly significant. The terrestrial viewpoint is from the inside of the celestial sphere looking outwards, however when looking at a model of heaven, a miniaturized version of the spherical universe in the shape of a celestial globe, the terrestrial centric view characterized by the *inward-out* perspective is switch by the eccentric one by watching the world *outward-in*.

All of the Greek globes and mechanical devices had in common their representation of the heavens as seen from *outside*, as the view point for a star globe positions the viewer on the *outside looking-in*. Visualizing creation from the *outside* established by the Greeks created a new perspective that radically reconfigured European perceptions of humanity's relationship to the firmament and later with earth. Celestial globes were decorated with images of constellations as if earth were at the center of the globe, with the viewer observing from outside the sphere of the fixed stars, so these star figures were depicted in reverse from their actual appearances in the night sky. In effect, globe-makers drew mirror image of what we see in the sky. The solution decided upon by the earliest star globe makers was to reverse the relative positions of the constellation images east to west, from right to left direction, to match watching them from the outside of the celestial sphere looking inwards.

The order of left and right was reversed at least for human or animal images, so mostly ancient globes displayed the constellations from the rear, that is, as mirror images of the sky. This resulted in the depiction of constellation figures being depicted from the back, not only on star globes but also later on Late Antiquity drawings and later medieval star atlases. Later on, the ancients drew the constellations on globes both in sky-view and in rear view—that is, with the observer inside or outside the globe—and sometimes even on the same globe, and as Elly Dekker concludes in her researches²⁷, the same is true of ancient descriptions of the constellations in texts. Many authors comment this ability to imagine the heavenly sphere(s) from a literal god's eye view within the development of philo-

27 Stamatina, Mastorakou, *Aestimatio: Critical Reviews in the History of Science...*, p. 116.

sophical and spiritual thought: emeritus Professor Rémi Brague, in his book *The Wisdom of the World: The Human Experience of the Universe in Western Thought* explains that the very division of all reality into “heaven” and “earth” prepares the emergence of the concept of the “world”. For there to have been a word meaning “world”, the idea that it expresses would have had to have reached human consciousness.” Brague further explains that: “the “world” cannot appear as such until the time when that criterion is placed in parentheses. This was only to be the case in Greece. It was there, and there alone, that that “distanced” position would appear, that “Archimedes point” from which man would be able, to become conscious of being a subject and submit nature to objective research.” Brague further argues that “the idea of “nature” (physis) it is already the result of a reflection, more precisely a separation between that which has its principle in the human activity of fabrication, the artificial (tekhne) and the conventional (nomos).”²⁸ Exactly this seemingly disembodied vantage point, gave rise to the distancing necessary to view a physical world as separate from human thought.

While Ingold recognizes this very idea similarly through his concept of immersion: “Only because we are thus immersed in the world can we imagine ourselves as existing separately from it,”²⁹ he further comments nuancing between representation and action or attitude toward the world: “the contrast, is not between alternative views of the world; it is rather between two ways of apprehending it, only one of which (the Western) may be characterized as the construction of a view, that is, as a process of mental representation. As for the other, apprehending the world is not a matter of construction but of engagement, not of building but of dwelling, not of making a view of the world but of taking up a view in it.”³⁰ This kind of conscious reflexivity is described in detail in the work of Helmuth Plessner. Scholar Alexander Dobeson in his article entitled *Between openness and closure: Helmuth Plessner and the boundaries of social life*, introduces the basic notions of his widely neglected Philosophical Anthropology, outlining Plessner’s original contribution by defining the *Eccentricity of man*:

28 Brunner-Traut, Eva, *Frühformen des Erkennens : am Beispiel Altägyptens*, pp. 2 and 60. Quoted in Brague, Rémi, *The Wisdom of the World: The Human Experience of the Universe in Western Thought...*, p. 14.

29 Ingold, Tim, *The Perception of the Environment...*, p. 169.

30 *Ibidem*, p. 117.

“According to Plessner³¹, man can be characterized by his eccentric positionality, ‘eccentricity’ in this context means nothing other than man’s ability to relate to his own centre and step outside his own physical boundaries by means of reflection. This ability allows man to gain distance from his subjective body (*Leib*) and perceive it as a separate object (*Körper*). Thus, man is the only living organism that can relate to its double aspectivity in a reflexive manner, making him the only form of being that is simultaneously aware of the inside and of the outside³². They are having a directed relationship with their immediate environment (*Umwelt*) but at the same time also have a view of the world at large (*Welt*). The boundary which envelops us, according to Plessner, is always an interface, which hides certain aspects from the outer world, but which is also a projection surface through which the human being expresses itself to the outer world and is depicted by the outer world and through which it gains identity and individuality.³³ It is the medium through which the person’s topological being in the world is constituted.³⁴ Indeed, the Greeks established the “double aspectivity in a reflexive manner” for the first time supported by material engagement with physical models. Further on, David McConville brings the Greek *Sphere* into our contemporaneity: “This paradoxical tension that arises when envisioning the sphere has remained a continuous feature of Western science and philosophy. It symbolizes the ambivalence of conceptualizing relationships between the finite and the infinite as well as the sensible and intelligible.”³⁵ He further explains that “removing viewers from the inside of the visual field bounded by the spherical horizon, means radically repositioning them within the center-periphery relationship. By dis-

31 Plessner, Helmuth, *The Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch...*, pp. 288–293.

32 Ernste, Huib, *The pragmatism of life in poststructuralist times*, p. 444. Quoted in Ernste, Huib, *The geography of spheres: an introduction and critical assessment of Peter Sloterdijk’s concept of spheres*, p. 278. Retrieved from <https://gh.copernicus.org/articles/73/273/2018/> (accessed 16, May, 2021).

33 Dobeson, Alexander, *Between openness and closure: Helmuth Plessner and the boundaries of social life*, p. 42.

34 Malpas, Jeff, *In the Vicinity of the Human*, pp. 8–9. Quoted in Ernste, Huib, *The geography of spheres: an introduction and critical assessment of Peter Sloterdijk’s concept of spheres*, p. 279. Retrieved from <https://gh.copernicus.org/articles/73/273/2018/> (accessed 16, May, 2021).

35 McConville, David, *On the Evolution of the Heavenly Spheres: An Enactive Approach to Cosmography...*, p. 103.

rupting the most basic aspect of the subjective experience of the lifeworld, the sphairopoia experientially demonstrate the 'distanced' position of the demiurge from which humanity could become. A consequence of imagining the 'world' from the outside would have been a sense of ambivalence towards the relationship between sensory perception and the intellect that has since permeated the mental-rational worldview.³⁶ Interestingly, exactly the distanced position configuring "consciousness of being" should awake an ethical mode of being and project our responsibility toward the world, however unfortunately, historically speaking this attitude was preceded mostly by alienation and dominion over the world.

The Roman Globe: mythologem for imperial power and universal ambition

The image of a central Earth surrounded by other rotating spheres carrying the planets and stars persisted from ancient Greece through medieval Islam to Renaissance Europe. However, Ancient Greece eventually was conquered by the Romans, a new and rising world power. In his classic work *Sphaira, Globus, Reichsapfel*, author Percy E. Schramm showed that in antiquity the globe served as a symbol for the universe and was used as an attribute of the gods, especially Zeus. Athena was the daughter of Zeus and goddess of war, wisdom, civilization and science. Athena was sometimes shown holding on her hand goddess *Nike* atop a globe. Together they were unbeatable.³⁷ Through appropriation and adaptation as a mnemonic technique, the Romans took over the Greek celestial sphere and the orb held in a hand had become a symbol of dominion over the earth. The Greek god Zeus became the Roman god Jupiter who was further portrayed holding an orb, symbolizing his authority over the world. The Greek celestial *sphere*, generally signifying the cosmos, was transformed by the Romans into an essential symbol of divine and imperial power, a symbol of victory, universal ambition and dominance over the world through the image of the *globe*. Emperors were depicted with it to express both their worldly power and their divine aspirations. Starting with Augustus, and then later with Hadrian and Constantine, two representations dominated:

36 *Ibidem*, p. 112.

37 The symbolic meaning of globes is discussed by Schramm, Percy Ernst. *Sphaira, Globus, Reichsapfel*. Quoted in Dekker, Elly, *Globes in Renaissance Europe...*, pp. 149 and 157.

the emperor holding the globe in his hand – and therefore the world; and the emperor paired with *Victory*, who, seated or standing atop a globe, legitimizes his power. Alexander the Great had *Victory*'s image on his gold coins and under Julius Cesar, because of his claim to divinity, this symbol took on a universal dimension. Under monarchic rule, the globe became a fixed part of Imperial iconology and was turned into a symbol of absolute power and Imperial sovereignty.

At the end of the 4th century A.D., another change in meaning took place as the globe together with the cross was stylized as a symbol of power for the now Christian emperors. In continuity with its ancient meaning, in the medieval iconography it was taken over by the grace of God as a sign of Christian rulers of the Holy Roman Empire as Karl the Great, the very first Holy Roman Emperor already had an orb of some kind. Today, the so called Orb of the Holy Roman Empire, or the Imperial Orb, one of the most famous orbs of all times is stored in the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. Not only is the *Globe Museum* located there, but Vienna is also the seat of the *International Coronelli Society* for the Study of Globes, founded there in 1952. This society is one of the oldest dedicated to the history of cartography and the only one dedicated to globe research. "Since, for many centuries, German Kings and Roman Emperors took their residence in Vienna, the city contained an impressive number of old and precious globes"³⁸ explain Jan Mokre in his presentation *The Symbolism of the Globe – Past and Present*. He emphasizes that "the function of globes goes beyond being a scientific model, an instrument, or a demonstration object: the globe is and always has been a symbol."³⁹ Expressions of the spirit of their time, the ancient Greek and Roman world conception were further transmitted to the Arab-Muslim world and, from the eleventh century, to the West. From the latter half of the fifteenth through the sixteenth century is generally referred to as the Age of Exploration or "Terrestrial globalization" as Sloterdijk names it, but also the start of modern colonialism. Jan Mokre further explains that "sixteenth-century globe chalices were an expression of the European feeling of triumph about owning the entire earth. Europeans now knew every part of the world and held the entire globe in their

38 Mokre, Jan, *The Symbolism of the Globe – Past and Present...*, p. 1. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/14735863/The_Symbolism_of_the_Globe_Past_and_Present (accessed 16, May, 2021).

39 *Ibidem*, p. 3.

hands as their possession. In the case of Emperor Charles V, with his right hand placed on his sword while his left rests on a globe depicting America and Africa, the globe becomes a symbol of the struggle for world dominance. The English Queen Elizabeth I also knew how to use the globe for depicting the British claim to hegemony overseas.⁴⁰ As examples of these kinds of portraits abound, Lippincott concludes that “the image of the globe-carrying emperor is, perhaps, one of the most consistent of the globe-related topoi and it remained a consistent feature in the personal iconography of any ruler with imperial claims from the fourth to the nineteenth century.”⁴¹ Through travel and exploration, it is said, mankind has conquered the globe. The increasing circulation from the closing years of the fifteenth century in Europe of the terrestrial globe, also coincides with the emergence of “the modern subject who imagines himself as abstracted from the planet whose surface he inhabits and which he begins to see as a whole, as if from a point afar and above,” writes Sumathi Ramaswamy in her *Terrestrial lessons, The conquest of the world as a globe*. She further exemplifies this idea with Jacob de Gelder’s statement in 1803. Gelder was a professor at the University of Leiden, and declared that terrestrial and celestial globes “give us, as it were, wings far away from the limits of our dwelling place, from all the viewpoints we would like, the great earth and immeasurable celestial sphere.”⁴² These words signaling the “synoptic, omniscient, intellectually detached Apollonian gaze”⁴³ is indeed by today exemplified by the dashing figure of the astronaut. Oliver Grau mentions in his book *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion* that Jonathan Crary has shown how, since the seventeenth century, “the view onto reality has been gradually liberated through developments in science. The camera obscura represented a pioneering achievement in the history of cinematographic modes of perception because it introduced a restructuring of possibilities for visual experience through optical techniques. It was an innovation comparable with the discovery of perspective, and an important precondition for its development was a further stage in the process of individualizing the observer. Using it required isolation in a darkened space. This isolated situ-

40 *Ibidem*, p. 5.

41 Lippincott, Kristen, *Power and Politics: The Use of the Globe in Renaissance Portraiture...*, p. 122.

42 Ramaswamy, Sumathi, *Terrestrial lessons, The conquest of the world as a globe...*, p. 20.

43 *Ibidem*, Prologue xviii.

ation of the observer in the camera obscura, as Crary expresses it, “provides a vantage point onto the world analogous to the eye of God.”⁴⁴ However similarly to Ingold’s- Martin Heidegger’s most quoted insistence that “the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture”⁴⁵ does not mean a picture of the world in the sense of being its copy, “but the world conceived and grasped as a picture,” so that it appears as an “enframed” image. Enframing is revelatory of the emergence of the modern subject, who stands abstracted from a world that he can observe, manipulate, and have at his “disposal” explains Sumathi Ramaswamy.⁴⁶ In both cases- the Greek celestial sphere and then the terrestrial globe- a pattern seems to replicate itself: venturing beyond the boundaries of the sky and earth as objects and looking back upon them as outsiders. Neil Turnbull (2006) describes the ontological consequences of these imaginative shifts as reducing Earth (firstly done the same with the Sky) to a cosmological representation, from the “site of dwelling...to an object of possible knowledge for modernity’s technological subject.”⁴⁷ Also, Richard Tarnas (1991) contends that the “subsequent shifts in the Western cosmological imaginary, resulted in a widespread alienation and sense of disconnection from the world.”⁴⁸ Thus a new culture came into being in which the Sphere was slowly switched with the Globe standing out as a symbol on a variety of levels. This very *globe* that was rolled over a *longue durée* period became an epitome, a default form factor, and universal and timeless topoi and represents the core of our Westernized world. The mythologem is defined as being a recurrent pattern, motif, story or theme of a myth “that carries a human heart or mind over time, seas, lands, and peoples”.⁴⁹ In this definition, the deceptively simple form of the Orb as *Sphere* and then the *Globe* was thus established as a mythologem, the very seed of our contemporary

44 Crary, Jonathan, *Techniken des Betrachters*, p. 48. Quoted in Grau, Oliver. *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion...*, p. 54.

45 Heidegger, Martin, *The Age of the World Picture*, p.71.

46 *Ibidem*. See also Arendt 2007; Szerszynski and Urry 2006; W. J. T. Mitchell 2011. Quoted in Ramaswamy, Sumathi, *Terrestrial lessons, The conquest of the world as a globe*, p. xvii.

47 Turnbull, Neil, *The Ontological Consequences of Copernicus...*, p. 131.

48 Tarnas, Richard, *The passion of the Western mind: Understanding the ideas that have shaped our world view...*, p. 419.

49 Maurizio, Lisa. *Story, Myth and Meme, Defining Mythologem*. Retrieved from <http://lisamaurizio.com/mythologem/> (accessed 16, May, 2021).

globalized world. Ever since the Greek winged *Nike* was syncretized with the Roman goddess *Victory*, the personification went further following the historical periods during the long process of the nation formations and the Roman goddess *Victory* evolved subsequently into *Berolina* the personification of Berlin, *Hammonia* of Hamburg, *Britannia* of Britain, *Turrita* of Italy and the French *Marianne*. *Columbia* is the name for the national personification of the United States which originated during the 18th century. She probably is the best well known after *Columbia Pictures* adopted her as their logo in 1924. Monuments of this winged goddess standing atop a globe are found all over Europe and also in many places in North America. While Denis Cosgrove explains that “the competing capitalisms of Western industrial powers effectively annexed global space, leaving no continent free from colonial rule and the competitive reach of commercial, industrial, and finance capital”⁵⁰, Ingold observes the same: “the image of the world as a globe is, I contend, a colonial one. It presents us with the idea of a pre-formed surface waiting to be occupied, to be colonized first by living things and later by human (usually meaning Western) civilization.”⁵¹

Today this attitude is defined by Melissa K. Nelson, professor of Indigenous Sustainability as *conquest consciousness*: “this pattern of historical events gave humans the terminal belief that they were superior to all other life and could dominate and control life for their benefit. The idea that humans, especially male, white humans, were unique, entitled and ultimately, superior, gave justification to conquest consciousness. It also provided the blueprint for structural oppression that has led to untold suffering and injustice still faced by many people and Earthly relatives.”⁵² Their cumulative impact has affected war and other types and forms of violence victims, minorities, Black, Indigenous, and land-based communities, and is still disproportionately affecting their living descendants who are still here today, although not often visible due to ongoing histories of conquest and colonization. Many separated families, incarcerated immigrants, displaced communities, and divided descendants of the communities are facing “conquest

50 Cosgrove, Denis, *Apollo's eye: A cartographic genealogy of the Earth in the western imagination...*, p. 45.

51 Ingold, Tim, *The Perception of the Environment...*, p. 214.

52 Nelson, Melissa K., *Decolonizing Conquest Consciousness*. Retrieved from <https://www.humansandnature.org/decolonizing-conquest-consciousness> (accessed 16, May, 2021).

consciousness” even today. The workers are facing low pay, poor conditions, and zero-hour contracts. “This colonial mindset represents a hierarchical abuse of power that is exhibited in patriarchy, white supremacy, extractivism and the commodification of the sacred, whether that be genetically modified seeds or human trafficking. Most of us have, sadly, been impacted and infected by conquest consciousness and need to decolonize our minds and behaviors to shift toward a new kinship worldview and lifeway.”⁵³ Today, a reinterpretation and personification of the Roman goddess *Victory* embody an African sculpture entitled ‘*Mrs Pinckney and the Emancipated birds of South Carolina*’ made by Yinka Shonibare, a British Nigerian artist. Displaying the encounter between Mrs. Eliza Lucas Pinckney, the owner of a slave plantation in South Carolina, and Princess Augusta in 1753, the sculpture focuses on Mrs. Pinckney, her dress, and her gift of North American birds to Princess Augusta. A female figure stands precariously on top of a globe that depicts the world as it appeared in 1753. Her dress, in the same style of the original garment worn by Mrs. Pinckney, is made with the artist’s signature, brightly colored, Dutch wax-printed cotton textile. The birds represent both the slaves who lived and died under her control as well as Mrs. Pinckney herself, a colonial subject of Princess Augusta, who would only be given her liberty by the War of Independence, in which her sons fought for the American cause. “What does it mean to be an enlightened woman who has the power to enslave, to rule, but whose power can be challenged?” asks Hazel Carby, Professor of African American Studies and American Studies at Yale University.⁵⁴ Today, numerous⁵⁵ statue vandalisations such as Queen Victoria carrying the globe confirm that this kind of world power and dominion imagery is not well tolerated anymore not even as part of cultural memory and heritage of the sculpture itself. These representations function as a former repository for unwanted colonial-era monuments and statues. According to Janet Abu-Lughod, “through the process of globalization, the modern world has reached the

53 *Ibidem.*

54 Carby, Hazel, *Yale Center for British Art Acquires Yinka Shonibare*. Retrieved from <https://www.artfixdaily.com/artwire/release/3303-yale-center-for-british-art-acquires-yinka-shonibare-mbe-%28ra%29-art> (accessed 16, May, 2021).

55 Abrams, Amah-Rose. “*So We’re Bringing down Statues, but What Kind of Monuments Would We like to See Instead?*” *The Art Newspaper*, 24 July 2020. Retrieved from www.theartnewspaper.com/analysis/so-we-re-bringing-down-statues-but-what-kind-of-monuments-would-we-like-to-see-instead (accessed 16, May, 2021).

state of one dominant world-system, but in human history there have been periods where separate world-systems existed simultaneously.”⁵⁶ The most well-known version of the world-system approach has been developed by Immanuel Wallerstein.⁵⁷ In my argument, on one hand, within today’s global dominant world-system, a shift is slowly happening in the idea that the separate-world systems that previously existed are gaining back parts of their lost identities, and also slowly start to receive small spaces to tell and show the view that makes their world; and secondly- through an act of self-separation or exclusion from the dominant world-system, the narratives of the minor or marginal circles are created. What if opposed to the unilateral hegemonical discourse is carried exactly by those who were colonized? In the absence of expressing their world, the globalist worldview exacerbated. Their alternative visions of our world and of the universe in which they existed were delegitimized and dismissed, with the arrival of modern Europe’s ‘useful knowledge.’ To round off, we can conclude that opposed to these unilateral hegemonical discourses mentioned above, today, many counter initiatives debunk one of the most enduring myths of imperialism, environmentalism, civilization, and conquest: in my interpretation, the motto *Unus Non Sufficit Orbis* meaning “One World is Not Enough” and *Orbis non sufficit* “The world is not enough” can be indeed changed to “One kind of worldview is not enough” and “One worldview is never enough” suggesting the necessity of multiplicity and diversity of our contemporary societies and cultural representations. How can we become spherical? What does the spherical thinking imply? Does this spherical worldview have a medium as the globalist view is represented by the globe as object to conquer? Are the types of immersive media serving as mediums for this alternative worldview?

Immersive media as a medium for the spherical worldview

To interrupt this dominant imagination of the global is necessary to introduce a shifting discourse. Grasping the complexities and ambivalences of our being in the world, Professor Melissa K. Nelson further suggests that: “as modern humans we must decolonize conquest consciousness, which

56 Abu-Lughod, Janet, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD. 1250-1350*; and *Discontinuities and persistence. One world system or a succession of systems?*, p. 278.

57 Wallerstein, Immanuel, *The Modern World-System and Evolution...*, pp. 347-57.

focuses on fragmentation, domination, competition, materialism, arrogance, and black-and-white binary thinking.”⁵⁸ Further on, for French thinker Paul Virilio, to diverge is to take an angle, to critique, to resist, to innovate, all of which rely on the upsurge of a positive energy. He, along with Félix Guattari started a free radio in 1979 and created a social service for the homeless.⁵⁹ In a long interview with Philippe Petit entitled *Politics of the Very Worst*, Virilio points out: “*Faced with any technical object, whatever it may be, it is once again necessary to diverge. It is necessary to become a critic. Impressionism was a critique of photography, and documentary film-making a critique of propaganda. So, today, we have to institute an art criticism of the technosciences in order to make the relation to technology diverge.*”⁶⁰ For Virilio, divergence is the precondition for an ethical mode of being. It marks the difference between freedom and slavery.⁶¹ Today, while clusters of problems are coalescing, *diverging through technology* means becoming our own critics. So how do we switch the global view to the spherical one? To transform the globe into a sphere is to overcome the Greek constellation drawback: “*At the simplest technical level of representation, the forms of the earth and extraterrestrial space themselves present complex historical problems. Disk or sphere, modeled, pictured or mathematically projected, the globe is known through its representations. And representations have agency in shaping understanding and further action in the world itself.*”⁶² Historically, *divergence through technology* was firstly inaugurated when the deterritorialization of the Archimedean perspective was realized by simply re-positioning the ‘centric’ spherical worldview through walk-in hollow globes large enough to admit small audiences inside. This approach, of course was made to overcome the Greek constellation drawback.⁶³ Dr. Felix Lühning (1997), a historian and astronomer explains that the earliest

58 Nelson, Melissa K., *Decolonizing Conquest Consciousness*. Retrieved from <https://www.humansandnature.org/decolonizing-conquest-consciousness> (accessed 16, May, 2021).

59 Virilio, Paul, *Politics of the Very Worst: An Interview by Philippe Petit...*, p. 8

60 *Ibidem*, p. 33.

61 Zhang, Peter, *Media ecology and techno-ethics in Paul Virilio...*, p. 254.

62 Cosgrove, Denis, *Apollo's eye: A cartographic genealogy of the Earth in the western imagination*, Preface X.

63 Marché, Jordan D., *Theaters of Time and Space: American Planetaria, 1930-1970*, p. 10.

hollow walk-in celestial globe, the Gottorf Globe⁶⁴, was among the most spectacular instruments made during the 17th century, around 1650. The science-loving Friedrich III, Duke of Holstein (1587-1659) commissioned his court mathematician Adam Olearius (1599-1671, born Ölschläger) and Andreas Bösch to construct close to his palace, Gottorf, in Northern Germany near Schleswig, a to-date unparalleled globe which connected the depiction of the earth and the sky in a unique manner. As “*Cosmography* became the discourse that brought together celestial and geographic exploration, represented space and scale, and theorized the place of humans within nature,”⁶⁵ this mechanism that combined a planetarium and a terrestrial globe was the largest of its time. With a diameter of 3.11 m, the Gottorf Globe provided within a seating capacity on a circular bench for up to twelve people. While its exterior was painted as a terrestrial globe showing the world map known at that time, on the inside, the spherical surface presented a full night sky from the 17th century. The whole celestial sphere was turned by waterpower once per day showing the course and spherical movement of the celestial bodies over the firmament: “the viewer was surrounded by a spinning set of brightly colored symbols- a crab, bears greater and lesser, bulls, water-carriers, nymphs, a ship, a swan, naked twins, Canis Major and Sirius, Orion forever pursuing the hare- all ordered by their position in the night sky.”⁶⁶ Thus, the representational concept of the Gottorf Globe that combined the cartographies of the earth and sky in one model made it a *Cosmographic Orb*- “a playful object, but its implications are more complex than first appear. The spectator enters the sphere of the world to experience inside what actually is the exterior, the revolving night sky,”⁶⁷ thus realizing the age-old quest of enclosing the universe inside a room.⁶⁸ According to Leo Bagrow, historian of cartography, later on, the globe was given to Tsar Peter the Great of Russia who would often sit in the Gottorf Globe and reflect on the heavens. Once, sitting to-

64 Beyer, Isabella Marzena, *Le Passage - Towards the Concept of a New Knowledge Instrument...*, p. 54.

65 *Ibidem*, 114.

66 Firebrace, William, *Star Theatre: The Story of the Planetarium...*, p 126.

67 *Ibidem*, p. 36.

68 Chartrand, Mark R. III, “The [projection] planetarium... made possible the realization of a two thousand-year-old idea-a perfect representation of the starry sky inside a room. Quoted in Marché, Jordan D., *Theaters of Time and Space: American Planetaria, 1930-1970*, p. 9.

gether with Blumentrost in the globe, Peter said: 'we are now in a great world, this world is in us, and thus worlds are in the world'⁶⁹, anticipating the cosmopoietic, or world-making capacity of these new mediums along with their image-making strategies. Similar efforts were expended in the eighteenth century by Erhard Weigel, professor of mathematics at the University of Jena through his *Pancosmos* (1661); by Roger Long, professor of astronomy at Pembroke College in Cambridge, Great Britain through his *Great Sphere* (1750). Later on, many other particularly significant large hollow walk-in globes were constructed: the *Great Globe* (1851) by James Wyld; the *Globe Terrestre* (1900) for the Paris Exposition Universelle by Élisée Reclus and Louis Bonnier; the *Globe Céleste* beside the Eiffel Tower designed by Napoleon de Tédesco; the *Orbitoscope* (1912) by Professor E. Hindermann in Kingdom of Switzerland, the *Atwood Celestial Sphere* (1913) by Wallace W. Atwood Chicago, the *Perisphere* (1939) in Queens, symbol of the New York World's Fair by Wallace Harrison and J. André Fouilhoux and many others. In 1924, a structure that used radical design- a central multi-lensed projector and a lightweight geodesic dome- introduced a breakthrough cinematographic mode of perception of the cosmos as the simulacrum of the night sky was realized by a visual experience achieved through optical techniques projected onto the spherical screen of the dome. Devised by visionary engineer Walther Bauersfeld and known as the *Sternentheater*, or *Star Theatre*, represented the modern planetarium that we still have today. Improvements in projection technology evolved quickly in the 1980s, altering the nature of the planetarium show. Maryland Science Center was the first to use the All-sky system of six slide projectors, each with customized wide-angle lens and set up to project across 60-degree triangular segments of the dome. The images projected onto the dome were not necessarily astronomical, but could be taken from art or weather conditions, so that the dome could be used to create an illusion of being elsewhere. Images of architecture could be projected using All-sky system, creating for instance the impression of being under the dome of St. Peter's Basilica, or in the starry hall of the Alhambra. The Digistar, the first digital planetarium projector, invented by the digital graphics firm Evans & Sutherland and first installed at the planetarium in Richmond, Virginia, in

69 Bagrow, Leo, *The Gottorp Globe in Russia*, p. 95. Quoted in Lambert, Nick, *Domes and creativity: a historical exploration...*, p. 21.

1983, projected any sequence of images produced by the computer software onto the dome through a single fish-eye lens. In recent years, increasingly more creative teams are harnessing the huge potential of new technologies to create immersive spaces. While keeping some of the classical themes in their repertoire, today the cupola of planetariums and domes are used like a dynamical, evocative and immersive scenography filled with specially designed media content: cinematic or theatrical, experimental or scientific, the possibilities are constantly expanding. Today immersion in a dome relies upon diverse and emerging technologies such as real-time (interactive) or pre-rendered (linear) computer animations, live capture images, or composited environments to create unexpected environments, opening new possibilities to filmmakers, media artists, musicians and performers to create new cultural communities and experiment with this media language. Audiences also benefit by these advances as they are transported toward new realities in between the physical space and the virtual scenes projected.

Contemporary projects realized in these immersive digital environments are created using virtual reality and 360° video technology, fulldome projects designed for dome theatres, followed by online interactive 360° web-documentaries or virtual tours. These diverse typologies of immersive media manifest a major shift in the evolution of media, and the new sensory spaces opened by technology will reposition ethical and artistic questions while presenting the possibilities, complexities and the ways these new technologies will revolutionize the evolution of media. Trying to escape the single flat screen, immersive media is taking a step forward into the all-around view as the spectators are wrapped in a cocoon of images and sounds. On one side, immersion as a technique builds an embodied connection with the projected environment, while immersion also means an increased potential in creating empathy, since the users feel closer to tridimensional characters and have an almost real experience of places, life stories and ideas related to them. One of the goals of these projects is to add the empathic element to abstract understanding. The new era of immersive cinema is inviting the audiences not only to look at, but to experience and become part of the reality in question. Immersive media thus comes with an approach which is entirely different, as it aspires through different modalities to create a space for new media experiences: *the spherical worldview experience*.

The Future is Now: spherical encounters of human rights at Astra Film Festival

2016 was a year when major film festivals worldwide have proclaimed an interest in immersive media. It is also the year of a turning point in the evolution of new media technologies, with a variety of consumer devices launched on the market and made accessible for the public: virtual reality headsets, 360° video cameras, open-source software, mobile phone applications, live motion capture and other photogrammetry gadgets. On the same year, Astra Film Festival established a brand new program showcasing the various typologies of immersive media, made with the use of up to date technologies for various platforms: online interactive 360° web-documentaries, VR and 360° video projects for individual viewing, and full-dome films designed for dome cinema theatres. The program entitled *The Future is Now*⁷⁰ was conceptualized, implemented and curated by media designer Adela Muntean.⁷¹ The new media program runs ever since⁷², with specific disruptions emerging from the Covid19 situation. The innovation of the department was defined by the diversity through which immersive media today can be used as an inspirational tool for social change by addressing common human ethical projects. This specific mission represented a contemporary strategy for Virilio's *divergence through technology*. The immersive media projects showcased at Astra Film Festival reflected the variety of applications these innovative technologies have in the real world. Through case studies that use the virtual reality and 360° video technology, the projects were grouped into categories which exemplified their directions of development. A sub-category presented the outcome of *VR for Good* program conducted by *Creators Lab*, where filmmakers were paired with nonprofits to create stories that address human rights topics bringing greater awareness to challenges people face globally. The subjects tackled involved environmental protection (*Out of the blue*); social inclusion (*A grandmother's love*); women's rights (*Women on the move*). *Out of the Blue*⁷³

70 The Future is Now 2016, Astra Film Festival. Retrieved from <http://old.astrafilm.ro/the-future-is-now-1.aspx?year=2016> (accessed 16, May, 2021).

71 Adela Muntean. Retrieved from <https://spam-index.com/artists/adela-muntean/>

72 The Future is Now 2017, Astra Film Festival. Retrieved from <http://old.astrafilm.ro/the-future-is-now-1-2-3.aspx?year=2017> (accessed 16, May, 2021).

73 "Out of the Blue / Din Adâncul Albastrului." The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival,

presented Cabo Pulmo's fishermen's family, where Castro took a revolutionary decision to save the reef on the brink of extinction because of over-fishing: the family sacrificed their income and food, forbidding fishing on their own island to encourage sea plants and animals to come back to life. In the project *A Grandmother's Love*⁷⁴ viewers were invited into the homes and lives of two children – one who reaps the benefits of solar power and one who doesn't. Narrated by a Guatemalan grandmother, the film shared insight into a life without light, to raise awareness on the fact that one in seven people worldwide is living without access to electricity. In *Woman on the Move*⁷⁵ spectators could follow a grandmother's life in rural Niger. Her life changed when she entered a women's savings group. The film left the viewer with an open ended question: will her granddaughter take the next step out of poverty? Another set of works presented „*New Dimensions – Virtual Reality Africa*“, a selection of VR productions from Kenya, Senegal and Ghana, that provided a picture of the vibrant, varied and ever changing cultural landscape of contemporary Africa through the films *Nairobi Berries*⁷⁶; *Let This Be A Warning*⁷⁷; *Spirit Robot*⁷⁸, and *The Other Dakar*⁷⁹. The collaboration between Goethe-Institut and Cape Town based non-profit organization *Electric South* aimed to provide funding support and mentorship to African storytellers and artists in the development and production of their own VR ideas. Another selection of projects showcased the modes 360° video technology is employed in journalism by agencies for broadcasting news, reports or live streams as it provides a more objective perspective on the events and attracts young audiences. Three films were included in this subcategory: *Bashir's dream*; *The displaced*, and *Inside Auschwitz*. The

2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10966&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

74 “A Grandmother's Love / Dragostea Bunicii.” The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10959&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

75 “Women on the Move / Femei În Mișcare.” The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10970&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

76 “Nairobi Berries / Fructele Din Nairobi.” The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10974&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

77 “Let This Be A Warning / O Avertizare.” The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10973&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

78 “Spirit Robot / Spirit Robot.” The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10972&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

79 “The Other Dakar / Celălalt Dakar.” The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10971&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

animation film *Bashir's Dream*⁸⁰ presented Qusai, who at the age of 14 was shot by a sniper. Confined to a wheelchair he dreamed of playing basketball and traveling abroad for better care. Filmed entirely in Jordan, the project explored a childish attitude towards a reality torn by war. *The Displaced*⁸¹ presented the homelessness of children from war zones. Even if the children were from different geographic locations – South Sudan, Syria and Ukraine – the common elements found in their stories were their limited options but also their extraordinary resilience. *Inside Auschwitz*⁸² gave voice to three Holocaust survivors. Despite that more than 70 years have passed since their liberation from Auschwitz, they feel relevant to transmit their personal experiences to the young generations with the aid of VR technology. The selection included also local productions, putting Romania on the map of VR experiments: *The massacre at Jilava*⁸³ surrounded the spectator with an artificial space generated by the computer. There, Rabbi Guttman's testimony about the loss of his sons and his miraculous survival is mediated by the voice of an actor. Guttman is one of the few survivors of the massive execution led by the Iron Guard members in Jilava Forest during the Pogrom in Bucharest. *The AI Comrade*⁸⁴ is the first robot spy created in the Communist Era, Romania 1979. Trained to listen and to record, he is discovered after 50 years and challenged by the citizens of the "Brave New World". What would you ask The AI Comrade? These spaces invite audiences inside a re-created scenario of the story where they can access virtual versions of the place, and can participate as witnesses or even as actors in the events, having access to images, sounds and emotions in an unprecedented way through the switch of roles between spectators and characters through first, second, or third person perspectives. The Point of view (POV) is what the character or narrator telling the story can see (his or her

80 "Bashir's Dream / Visul Lui Bashir." The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10961&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

81 "Displaced / Cei Strămutați." The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10977&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

82 "Inside Auschwitz / La Auschwitz." The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10976&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

83 "Jilava Massacre / Masacrul de La Jilava." The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10975&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

84 "The AI Comrade / Tovarășul A.I." The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2017, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=10968&year=2017 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

perspective). The author chooses “who” is to tell the story by determining the point of view. Depending on who the narrator is, he/she will be standing at one point and seeing the action. This viewpoint will give the narrator a partial or whole view of events as they happen. Many stories have the protagonist telling the story, while in others, the narrator may be another character or an outside viewer, a narrator who is not in the story at all.⁸⁵ When choosing their POV, the following VR projects presented within *The Future is Now* program at Astra Film Festival, put the spectators into a first person narrative, thus the spectators become the characters of the projects: *Assent*⁸⁶ places the viewer into the reconstructed memory of the filmmaker’s father, who witnessed the execution of a group of prisoners captured by the *Caravan of Death* during the Chilean civil war; while *The Unknown Photographer*⁸⁷ creates a reality based on fragments of memories of a hypothetical WW1 photographer. *Notes on Blindness: A Journey Into a World Beyond Sight*⁸⁸ provides first-hand experience on how it is to be blind; and “6x9” *A Virtual Experience of Solitary Confinement*⁸⁹ gives the taste of life in a confinement cell as experienced by seven ex-inmates. The project *Across the line*⁹⁰ takes the viewer to a, every-day American reality, the anti-abortion groups who shout slogans and shame the patients in front of perfectly legal abortion clinics. When talking about video 360°, things are a little different. This technique is based on the capacity to view everything around oneself from a fixed point. The relationship between the created reality and the role of the user differs from one project to the other. Either the spectator enters the story as a character, or he becomes a wit-

85 Defining Point of View (POV). Retrieved from <https://literaryterms.net/point-of-view/> (accessed 16, May, 2021).

86 “Assent / Acceptare.” *The Future is Now*, Astra Film Festival, 2016, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=9529&year=2016 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

87 “Unknown Photographer / Fotograful Necunoscut.” *The Future is Now*, Astra Film Festival, 2016, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=9539&year=2016 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

88 “Notes on Blindness - A Journey Into a World Beyond Sight / Despre Orbire - Călătorie Într-o Lume Lipsită de Vedere.” *The Future is Now*, Astra Film Festival, 2016, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=9531&year=2016 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

89 “‘6x9’ A Virtual Experience of Solitary Confinement / ‘6x9’ O Experiență Virtuală a Captivității Solitare.” *The Future is Now*, Astra Film Festival, 2016, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=9533&year=2016 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

90 “Across the Line / Dincolo de Linie.” *The Future is Now*, Astra Film Festival, 2016, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=9530&year=2016 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

ness. The 360° videos situate the spectators between contemplative observers and witnesses: *Witness 360: 7/7*⁹¹ tells the story of one of the survivors. The film combines her personal account with reconstructed sequences and abstract images. As a result, the viewer is invited to embark on a multi-sensorial trip and live an event the witness will never forget. What would it be like to travel with the London tube seconds before the terror attacks on July 7th, 2005? In *Kiya*⁹², the viewer becomes the awkward witness of an episode of domestic violence, when two sisters try to save the third one from being killed by her ex. Two distinctive 911 calls put the viewer right in the middle of the unfolding events. *Giant*⁹³ is based on the real story of a family who must find ways to survive physically and mentally in a war zone. No matter what design, style, technique or POV, in all these projects, as Ingold states, the spectators are: “not making a view of the world but taking up a view in it.”⁹⁴

Conclusions:

The projects aim to cast light on realities of our contemporary world, to reach into the intimacy of the human condition, to increase awareness on human rights issues, to challenge the viewers’ prejudice and to make them think outside their comfort zone, through its *spherical worldview experience* that requires the ‘centric’, earth-bound positionality of the spectators. The concept draws on Atticus Finch’s philosophy which says that “you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”⁹⁵ An increasing number of virtual worlds are designed to help people around the world to

91 “Witness 360: 7/7 / Martor 360: 7/7.” The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2016, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=9544&year=2016 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

92 “Kiya / Kiya.” The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2016, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=9554&year=2016 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

93 “Giant / Uriașul.” The Future is Now, Astra Film Festival, 2016, old.astrafilm.ro/film.aspx?id=9542&year=2016 (accessed 16, May, 2021).

94 Ingold, Tim, *The Perception of Environment*, p.117.

95 In *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, when Atticus says, “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it,” he means that Scout can develop empathy, respect, and understanding for others by considering situations from their perspectives. Retrieved from <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-does-atticus-mean-when-he-says-you-never-146111> (accessed 16, May, 2021).

better understand each other with the aim to change attitudes to the better and to prompt the user to be more compassionate, more empathic. The projects made using virtual reality take us into a tridimensional world, a computer-generated fictional universe similar to those in computer games, waiting to be explored. With a headset on, the real space vanishes and the user can step into the virtual world, surrounded 360° by its images and people, making empathic communication possible. By putting the viewer into the action and giving him the role of an active witness, virtual reality can facilitate life-changing experiences for an audience no longer passive, but actively involved. With this new technology, the user can move into a tridimensional space and interact with the objects. He is able to act and interact, and therefore feel part of the action. Often the 3D computer-generated space is a replica of real spaces in the real world. Scenes and dialogues are captured from the physical world and used in the virtual one, emphasizing the concept that the spectators participate in a documentary story. For example, there are video sequences placed in key-points in the virtual landscape, to remind the user that the space might be computer-generated, but it is based on a real story. The sum of these experiences makes the line between re-enactment and cinema verité less distinct. While immersive video 360° and VR projects are still in search for an artistic language of their own, from the technical point of view they have to develop better systems for following the movements, and find more natural ways for the users to interact with the artificial universe. As Hulme write, “the ‘globalising instinct in the contemporary making of knowledge creates objects that are ‘psychologically sterile’ because they lie well beyond our horizon of personal experience. Only substantial efforts of imagination allow for these global environmental objects to be eventually acquired in everyday living.”⁹⁶ No other technology has managed so far such a dramatic turn, from receiving information about something that has happened to actually live it. The illusion is so powerful that all his senses will tell the user he is present in that particular place, with those particular people. Today, the new stage of immersive media marks the shift from representation to experience, from analog to digital, inviting the audience not only to look at the reality presented but to join the three-dimensional characters and interact with the narrative, functioning as cultural interfaces for the *spherical worldview*. In

96 Hulme, Mike, *Problems with making and governing global kinds of knowledge...*, p. 560.

Totality and Infinity, Levinas writes that “the curvature of intersubjective space expresses the relation between human beings.” Sharing the stories of the *Others* and having the *Others* at the basis of these immersive mediums mark our intersubjective experience and indeed transform them into curved intersubjective mediums diverging toward the necessity of respecting human rights.

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