

**“In the beginning was the word”. Narratives, words and silences implied in the relationship between humans and nanotechnologies**

*Sara HEJAZI - Center for Religious Studies (ISR), Bruno Kessler Foundation*

Materiality is a key aspect of all human cultures. Most of what we know about human civilizations stems from material tools and objects witnessing the existence, knowledge, beliefs, lifestyles and words of human diversity in time and space. The creation and use of objects has always been accompanied by words, which determine a story, which determine a narrative, which is a source of sense making. This is reflected in the entanglement between language and religion. Neither one can exist without the other.

Words and stories related to objects passed on through generations implied a continuity, a variation or a rupture in sense making: in other words, humans react to narratives and fantasies made by previous humans.

But, as technologies grow smaller, more powerful, complex and sophisticated, our civilization strives to find the words and the stories to fit them in a coherent sense making narrative. Most of the words related to sophisticated technology are restricted to specialists, while end users find their everyday lives determined by almost invisible objects, with no words to name them and no stories out of which to make sense out of their use.

Does the lack of words reflect a lack of awareness about technology? Can cultural narratives about who we are be separated from what we do and the objects that we use?

Is technology itself going to provide us with the missing words, the stories and the narratives we need? Are we thus going to draw our need to sense making reacting, for the first time, to the narratives and fantasies of non human intelligence?