



De-limitations Of Other Earths

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Abstract:

In my essay I will explore the geophilosophical possibility of rethinking the figure of the earth in twentieth-century Western philosophical thought and suggest new opportunities for thinking that open up with the twenty-first century. On the one hand, “Earth” as a Western concept has been reduced to an exhaustible resource – an endangered planet condemned to its own ending. On the other hand, another continent seems to have emerged in contemporary philosophical thought in reaction to this brutal relationship with the planet – “Earth” as a dark, impenetrable and indestructible reserve, the last resource of thought.

A materialization of an unconditional power, this Earth seems to reproduce the original need for a wild, ultimate refuge for the philosophical thought of the twentieth century. To this archaic Earth of thought, whose survival seems to depend on preserving itself untouched, and untouchable, I confront another possibility, the geo-anarchy of other earths – the material insurrection of planetary energies.

Keywords:

Earth, geophilosophy, mythopoesis,
anarchy, materialism

As of November 1, 2018, there are 3,874 confirmed exo-planets in 2,892 systems, with 638 systems having more than one planet. All were discovered since 1992—a few just before Gilles Deleuze’s suicide in 1995.

*Note 85, Benjamin H. Bratton,
The Terraforming*

1.

In one of the notes from his fragmentary and unfinished work on cultural apocalypse — published posthumously under the title *La fine del mondo* (The end of the world) — Italian anthropologist Ernesto De Martino describes an ancient Roman ritual designated by the expression *mundus patet*: “the world is open” (De Martino 2002: 11).

The *mundus* was a pit that opened three times a year to bring the dead back to Earth. According to De Martino’s reconstruction, the days during which the *mundus* remained open were considered to be calamitous and it was imperative to abstain from any kind of human activity. “Not only was it prohibited to engage in battle during those days,” as Latin grammarian and philosopher Macrobius recounted in his *Saturnalia*, “but also to recruit armies and send them to war, weigh anchor, or take a wife.”¹ Through the *mundus*, the earth of the living was open and permeable to the realm of the dead, exposed to chaos. However, once these nefarious days were over, daily life could resume normally. “The ritual of the *mundus*,” writes the author of *La fine del mondo*, evokes “the risk of an end of the world crisis, exorcising and containing it through the limitation, in time and space, of the return of the dead and the end of all human cultural activity” (Ibid: 11). The “cultural apocalypse” is defined as the “risk of not being able to exist in any possible cultural world.” While “the end of ‘a’ world,” says De Martino in his epilogue, remains “in the order of human cultural history, it is the end of ‘the’ world, as the ultimate experience of the end of any possible world, which constitutes the most radical risk” (Ibid: 630).

From his early research on the magical rituals of southern Italy, De Martino investigated the existence of a “magical world,” wherein

¹ Macrobius (2011: Saturnalia 1, 18).

presence in the world is neither certain nor guaranteed, but rather always exposed to the risk of transience and annihilation, to the danger of losing one's soul and no longer being there. "Being there," as De Martino reflects, becomes a "having to be there" whose horizon is marked by a dynamic and socially constructed limit, in constant need of being recovered. In the magical world, presence is something uncertain that has to be continually restored, for behind the risk of losing the soul lies the other, greater risk of losing the world. In this disintegration of reality, magic is the power to restore to human beings the world that is being lost:

To the representation and experience of a soul that escapes from its proper place, that is endangered, fragilized, subtracted, stolen, etc., corresponds the representation and experience of objects that go beyond their sensitive horizon, withdrawing from their limits, and precipitating into chaos. When a certain sensitive horizon enters into crisis, the risk lies in fact in the collapse of every limit: everything can become everything else, which is to say: nothingness advances. But magic, in a way that reveals the risk, intervenes at the same time to end the insurgent chaos, to redeem it into an order. (De Martino 2010: 123)

Through the ritual of *mundus*, Roman civilization was able to face and exorcise the risk of a chaotic end of the world, that is, of the city, its inhabitants, its culture. It did so by representing this threat with the periodic return of the dead, and by controlling it through a communitarian exorcism. This exorcism fixes spatially and temporally within a symbolic place and an iterative time, both the risk of the end and the cultural response to it — namely its foundation and recommencement. The apocalypse begins when putting things back in order becomes impossible — when not only this world becomes impracticable, but when worldliness itself — what allows humans to make a world — disappears.

Delimiting the end — giving it a determined meaning as annihilation, solution, liquidation — leads to alienation, which is experienced as a lack of signification. The experience of the *immundus* is felt as the devastating evidence of non-sense. This relationship of separateness indicates a relationship deficit, wherein the bond is only experienced as missing, or meaningless. As Rahel Jaeggi remarks, Marx describes alienation "in terms of the 'double loss of reality' of the world and the human being: having become unreal, the individual fails to experience herself as 'effective,' and the world, having become unreal, is meaningless and indifferent" (Jaeggi 2014: 6). Alienation, Jaeggi concludes, turns out to be a deficient relation-

ship with oneself, with the world, and with others, which generates relationships of impotence, isolation, and instrumentalization.

Reconfiguring the concept of alienation, Anna L. Tsing (2015) reminds us how alienation consists of disconnecting the thing from its general social world—a necessary step for the transformation of natural resources into accumulable commodities. Through alienation, people and things become moving commodities; they can be removed from their living environments and transported in order to be exchanged for other commodities from different worlds. Alienation generates a mutation in the landscape: all that counts is only one commodity, separated from all the rest; everything else becomes wasteland, refuse, desolation (Ibid). Alienation is then a condition of life that is governed by an extractivist model, transforming our living environments into all kinds of plantations on the verge of becoming uninhabitable. “Plantations kill off beings that are not recognized as assets,” writes Tsing, “they also sponsor new ecologies of *proliferation*, the unmanageable spread of plantation-augmented life in the form of disease and pollution” (Tsing 2017: 52).² For Tsing it is evident that capitalism cannot proliferate without this process of continuous expropriation of the conditions of existence of the existent.

As Hannah Arendt emphasizes, it is “world alienation, and not self-alienation as Marx thought [that] has been the hallmark of the modern age” (Arendt 1958: 254). Starting from Descartes—this is Arendt’s idea—we see the development of an exclusive concern with the self “as distinguished from the soul or person or man in general, an attempt to reduce all experiences, with the world as well as with other human beings, to experiences between man and himself” (Arendt 1958: 254). The condition of world deprivation—the *acosmia*—is characterized by a terrifying atrophy of all the organs through which we share a world with others. Hence, according to Arendt, expropriation and world alienation coincide, and “the modern age began by alienating certain strata of the population from the world” (Ibid: 253). This *acosmia*, concludes Arendt, was accompanied by a revolutionary mutation of the capacity to transform our environment that led to alienation from nature as a specific dimension of Earth alienation (Arendt 1958: 264–65).

The conversion of the earth into matter and energy is the basic figure of a transformational project, which has its fundamental *raison d’être* in the fabrication of the separation between a plastic,

² On the logic of the plantation as a monotonous and deadly thought of a unilateral future assigned to a single variety optimized within a predictable growth curve, see *Sowing Empire Landscape and Colonization* by Jill H. Casid (2004), and *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism* by Grada Kilomba (2008).

demiurgic humanity and an earth reduced to an object of demolition and depredation. The fundamental project of this era wherein human beings seem to have become a geomorphic agent — wherein, consequently, the difference between organic and inorganic, as well as between dead and living, seems to have collapsed — was captured by Achille Mbembe (2020) with the architectural term “Brutalism.” Mbembe uses this expression or thought image to describe an epoch “caught in the *pathos* of demolition and production, on a planetary scale, of reserves of darkness. And waste of all kinds, residues, traces of a gigantic demiurgy” (Ibid: 8–9).

2.

From his seminars in the 1930s to his latest texts, Heidegger deplored the “worldlessness” and “disorientation” caused by modern technological man, insofar as the latter conceives his relationship with reality first and foremost in terms of calculation, exploitation, and planning. For Heidegger, a new relationship with the earth is established in modernity: one which does not simply consist of a productive system that “intensifies” natural production in order to direct it to human needs or requirements, but which also reduces all natural processes to a pure and simple accumulation of available, usable, and consumable resources. If the Greek *technē* is still connected to *poiesis*, understood as bringing forth (*Hervorbringen*), modern technology could be rather defined as *Gestell*: an “enframing” apparatus, for which all beings become standing reserves (*Bestand*).³

One of the most interesting of Heidegger’s contributions is undoubtedly his speculation that the earth has never been authentically thought of in the history of metaphysics. By exhausting all the determinations of metaphysics, by totalizing and absolutizing them, the *Gestell* produced an earthless world, provided that by “earth” we mean a non-disposable ground, irreducible to calculation, an unobjectifiable limit. If the technological dimension can be destructive for the earth and uprooting for the *Dasein*, it does not occur for essential or structural reasons intrinsic to the “technological”, as such. Rather, *Gestell* “means that way of revealing which holds sway

³ In a letter sent to Kojima Takehiko on September 2, 1963, Heidegger tries to determine the strange, unsettling origin of the overpowering domination of natural elements at the heart of the age of modern technology. In this age, Heidegger explains, “the buried energy is released, what is released is transformed, the transformed is amplified, the amplified is stored and what is stored is distributed”. The correspondence between Heidegger and Kojima is published in the volume *Japan und Heidegger*, edited by Harmut Buchner (1989: 222).

in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological” (Heidegger 1977: 20).

Yet, for Heidegger, this disastrous process of the metaphysical destruction of the earth should not be avoided but brought instead to its end. The end of this age would only come about if its own logic is pushed to the catastrophic point of its reversal. In his short text “Overcoming Metaphysics,” he argues that the devastation of the earth must be carried out to the fullest extent so that its oblivion could no longer remain eclipsed.⁴ Only an unprecedented violence, which can represent the absolute completion of Western civilization, can destroy the self-destruction that is at work in the destructiveness of the Western project. Destruction must be destroyed. This destruction of destructiveness, according to Heidegger, will allow the emergence, under the sedimentary strata and structures of the metaphysical thought, of the unthought.

In 1946, the year after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Heidegger composed “Wozu Dichter?” (2001), a short text in which he proposes — in an intriguing contradiction with what he had written a few years earlier in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1995) — a peculiar reading of Rainer Maria Rilke’s poems which disrupts the idea of the hierarchical order of beings. “Man on the one hand, plant and beast on the other” are delivered to a common dimension which Heidegger calls *das Offene* (the Open), “what is closed up, unlightened, which draws on in boundlessness” (Heidegger 2001: 104): they are thrown in the “worldly” event of an opening. Heidegger distinguishes the “worldly” (*das Weltliche*) as the event of an opening — of the world and to the world — from “the world” as the totality of beings which modern man, as a rational being, confronts. The “worldly” opening of nature — as opposed to the imperialism of the calculating reason applied to all phenomena — supposes that all beings partake in the “venture” of the event of being (Ibid: 99).

Confronted with the outbreak of the overwhelming power of beings, Heidegger meditates on the dimension of withdrawal as the most intimate heart of the *Open*. If reason in “the atomic age” is characterized by the fact that “the power of the mighty Principle, of the *principium reddendae rationis* [...], threatens everything of humans being-at-home and robs them of the roots of their subsistence” (Heidegger 1996: 30), then a new ground is necessary for philosophy: a ground that is not a cause nor a principle.

⁴ “Before Being can occur in its primal truth, Being as the will must be broken, the world must be forced to collapse and the earth must be driven to desolation, and man to mere labour. [...] In the decline, everything, that is, beings in the whole of the truth of metaphysics, approaches its end” (Heidegger 2003: 86).

In the summer seminar of 1943, Heidegger focuses his attention on the remaining fragments from the treatise by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus commonly known as “*Peri Physeos*” (traditionally translated as *On Nature*), which the philosopher of Meßkirch chooses to translate with the expression “On Emerging” (Heidegger 2018: 83). Modern natural science, according to Heidegger, explains how something closed emerges and, as emerging, comes forth as “a chemical process that is interpolated in terms of the grinding gears of the mechanistically viewed interaction between seeds, the condition of the soil, and thermal radiation” (Ibid: 67). Heidegger points out that this understanding of natural processes of germination and inception has nothing to do with the primordial sense of *physis*. *Physis* is not “nature,” but the original Greek name for the blossoming of Being from its withdrawal, which does not occur “in the manner of something that appears: rather, it is the inconspicuous in all appearing things” (Ibid: 109)

Physis “lights up that on which man bases his dwelling. We call this the *earth*” — Heidegger writes in the “The Origin of the Work of Art” (2002: 21). For philosophy in the age of devastation, “Earth” designates the concealed, nocturnal growth in *physis*: it becomes, in Heidegger’s writings, the unique thought of a non-foundational ground. It is not an archaic element that precedes all others, but that which rather traverses them all, without prevailing over them. When the earth lies in oblivion, the violence of beings is unleashed without measure as pure potential of omnipotence and destruction, in total forgetfulness that there is, as poet Paul Celan says, “earth within them” (1972: 66). The earth in a sense has a paradoxical existence: it shows itself — Heidegger concludes — “only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. Earth shatters every attempt to penetrate it. It turns every merely calculational intrusion into an act of destruction” (Heidegger 2002: 25).

Famously for Heidegger, the global view of Earth from the outside as an errant planet suggests complete interconnectedness and coexistence, but it also generates the extreme danger of totalitarian control. Imagining the earth as one totality is, then, the result of a technological vision that accompanied and fulfilled what he had defined as “metaphysics,” and it neutralizes any dynamics which may start another history. In this sense, he has often presented in his writings the unilateral development of Western globalization by referring to the “planetary” as the final scene of this process, the end of the Western world encountering its own catastrophe. If modernity has been defined by the construction of a multiple outside or exterior, its final colonization of outer space produces an ultimate, self-con-

tained planetary interior. To Heidegger, what appears in the *Gestell* is “the sameness of being, beings, and essence” (Malabou 2011: 168); and in the reign of the Same, the Other is condemned to disappear.

Yuk Hui remarks that Heidegger always assumed that there existed “only a single homogenous *Machenschaft* after the Greek *technē*, one that is calculable, international, even planetary” (Hui 2017). But if the “globe” is an abstraction — the product of a territorial vision that has become a universalizing metaphysical vision — the “planet” could be imagined, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests, “in the species of alterity, belonging to another system” (2014: 1223). From this perspective, planetarity relationalizes “non-interchangeable entities and thus allow[s] for [...] the aesthetically immeasurable” (Moraru 2015: 220), offering a different figure “for the collapse of the totality of globes and globality” (Gabrys 2018). The purpose of thinking in a planetary perspective is not that of abandoning the earth, or evacuating it to return it to its sidereal errancy, but rather to conceive its planetary dimension as an inexhaustible diversity of different cosmotechnics, and epistemes, “to overcome modernity without falling back into war and fascism” (Hui 2017).

3.

In the “Anthropocene,” with all the ambiguity that such a term entails, what was considered separate now appears to be connected in a common temporal destiny, or at least in an inevitable collision. A new narrative is inscribed in the strata of the earth, based on a material evolution that integrates the origin of humanity no longer only in a biological context but also in a geological one.⁵ The collision of human and nonhuman spheres — paradoxically linked by immeasurable relationships, rather than by the regime of equivalence characterizing capitalist exchange — opens thought and action to a scale that escapes any pre-stabilized sense.

Bruno Latour (1993) claims that the planetary environmental crisis is the most striking evidence of the unreality of the regime of separation between nature and politics, which is at the basis of

⁵ It is necessary, however, to underline the contradictions as well as the promises of a new “alliance” between man and earth, bearing in mind that geology enabled and accompanied an imperialist logic, which implemented the mining regime that followed the discovery of the Americas (a regime structurally linked to slavery as its own condition of possibility). In *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, Kathryn Yusoff points out that geology was historically configured as a classificatory science, which made possible the formation of the “inhuman materialism” that empowered the “racializing logics that maps onto and locks into the formation of extractable territories and subjects” (2018: 83).

modernity, and it reveals the failure of the cosmopolitical government (*nomos*) of the Moderns. This failure would thus force us to change our reference system and to abandon the strictly human perspective in favor of an intertwining of ontologically inseparable humans and non-humans. Nevertheless, we have to highlight that in the Anthropocene the increasing threat of the end of the human world is the ultimate consequence of human domination over the world. In this sense, the Anthropocene entails a humanistic approach to man's relationship with nature, illustrated by the linear and autonomous story of a species that evolved from hunter-gatherer tribes to global geological force. Its universalist dimension could be easily recognized, as Anselm Franke wrote recently, in "the permanent invocation of the largest possible frames (the entire world), which refuses to be identified as such because it simply no longer recognizes any outside, any otherness," as it is at once "without alternative and 'open' to any form of otherness. The negation of the frame is the biggest frame" (2013: 16).

Rather, according to Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2017), what we need to undermine is the very concept of *anthropos* as a universal subject, capable of acting as one species. If the world appears to be on the edge of extinction, it is because we are facing an unimaginable future from the perspective of our present. Until now, philosophy seemed to know not only what kind of entity *anthropos* is, but also who is talking when one says "we." But for the two Brazilian authors the expression "end of the world" has a certain meaning only if it is established for whom this ending world is a world, that is "who is the worldly or 'worlded' being who defines the end" (Ibid: 20). If there is not only one single end of the world, then the origins of humanity are also multiple: the end of the human world questions where the "human" begins. Danowski and Viveiros de Castro propose a "fractal" understanding of the end, whereby they mean the fracturing of the myth of a unique end, as well as of a shared origin of the human being (Ibid: 105).

The earth, from this perspective, cannot be placed before us as an object of knowledge or appropriation, it is instead the irreplaceable event that we would not know how to create or construct, whose extension cannot be calculated, because it is not determinable. In this sense, the earth is neither a body or a cosmomorphic entity, nor a domain or a home, but rather a contingent multitude of relationships, an unconstructable historical trajectory that "traverses the living and the non-living, the non-conscious mineral and the diverse levels of the consciousness of the living [...] [and which] bears and carries within itself the multiplicity of forms of human and nonhu-

man existence that have appeared not *on* Earth but *with* the Earth” (Neyrat 2018: 171–72). Humans might leave some traces of their passage on it, but ultimately, the earth would always remain distinct from its inhabitants. No longer stabilized in the reassuring image of the mother-house favorable to life (the habitat, described by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*, wherein earthly human beings can move and breathe without effort and without artifice), it emerges instead as a vast, unlimited set of limitations and bonds, as a sort of unconditional chain of constraints between beings and realms.

The idea of the transformation of the earth understood as extraction of energy or ravaging and manipulation of brute matter collapses when existence itself is seen as the ongoing metamorphosis of impersonal material conditions, as an effect of contingent influences that cannot be reduced to the idea of design in a constructivist sense. In *The Life of Plants*, Emanuele Coccia mentions Darwin’s last book, pointing out how the action of worms is decisive “for the disaggregation of rocks, the erosion of the soil, the conservation of ancient ruins, and the soil’s preparation for the growth of plants” (Coccia 2019: 42). Worms, although incapable of grasping the other strata outside their world, generate structural transformations on the earth’s level that go far beyond any possible construction, intention, or project. In this sense, as the author of *The Life of Plants* writes, the world is the space that “never lets itself be reduced to a house, to what is one’s own, to one’s digs, to the immediate” (Ibid: 43). Far from being our space, the world is ultimately always the space of others, a space of negotiations—in brief: a space of political relations, provided we assume that “political” (in its irreducible multiplicity or *politeia*) refers to what collapses the sensible configuration in which the positions between the one who exercises power and the one subjected to it are already configured, and the roles already defined and assigned (Rancière 2004).

Reconsidering the relational and non-substantial nature of action, we must assume the fundamental distributedness of thinking and of its capacity for transformation. In his *Métaphysiques cosmorphes* (2015), Pierre Montebello sustains that cognition is not an extraterrestrial event; it rather reflects passages, transformations, deformations, captures, participations, possessions, colonizations. The real is relational for Montebello, cognition can thus only be a relation within relations. Rethinking the earth opens up a dimension in philosophy that is irreducibly material but never substantial: it gives to philosophy a site for thinking of a plurality that does not multiply the singular, but individualizes instead a common dispersion.

4.

If the twentieth century has long explored the possibility of a *tabula rasa*, a purifying epitome (Badiou 2007), the twenty-first century seems to open with a sense of exhaustion, of depletion of resources, of decrease in the forces. This interpretation of actuality as a progressive attenuation of an initial, primal, uncontaminated energy is accompanied by a specific idea of limit and consequently of rationality and “world.” As Michael Marder observes in his *Energy Dreams* (2017), the concept of “end” as an achievable objective or a sudden cessation “foreign to the consummation of movement and the satisfaction of rest” should be ascribed to an impoverished and arbitrary sense of limit, conceived as “a razor-sharp edge where a spatial surface or a temporal line abruptly drops, rather than a boundary or a border, for instance, between motley worlds” (Ibid: 116). Furthermore, the figure of the “end” as exhaustion of a given energy, mechanically doomed to extinction, has generated a consequent ideology of sustainability, which resulted in an image of the planet as a closed system, “a laboratory of checks and balance, birth and decay, predator and prey, creation and destruction” (Boetzkes 2019: 8).

Bernard Stiegler describes our age as an “age of disruption,” which radicalizes innovation to such an extent that it “prevents any metastabilization with the other systems that constitute the social body” through the “creation of legal and theoretical vacuums” (2018: 105). Be that as it may, it is evident that the orientation of contemporary economic reason is to suppress some of the arbitrary excesses of the capitalist system by turning it into an adaptive process that is constantly updated on the basis of data concerning the allocation of specific resources. This development model seems to reproduce the natural cycles of activity and stoppages of an organism, whereby exploitation would become, so to speak, “natural,” working according to a rhythm of scarcity and abundance. The general determination of the energy circulating in the planet would therefore be determined by ends, requiring a concurrent accumulation to guarantee a “sustainable” future, economically defined.

Georges Bataille’s *The Notion of Expenditure* (1997) is a proposal for the liberation from capitalistic accumulation as the underlying foundation of the planetary order, an attempt to mobilize the emancipatory momentum of a thought that seeks to recuperate the notion of “energy” from the notions of economy and economic stock. Identifying the crucial disconnection between economics — the production and use of wealth — and the circulation and exchange of energy that

constantly ex-orbits earthly human activities, Bataille remarks that life cannot in any way be limited to the closed systems assigned to it by economically organized, sustainable systems. Rather, in his view, “the immense travail of recklessness, discharge and upheaval that constitutes life could be expressed by stating that life starts only with the deficit of these systems” (Ibid: 180). It is only through insubordination to the logic of utility, “when the ordered and reserved forces liberate and lose themselves for ends that cannot be subordinated to anything one can account,” that human beings cease “to be isolated in the unconditional splendor of material things” (Ibid: 180). Only then are they able to regain “an intimacy that was always strangely lost (Bataille 1988: 129). The intimacy of which Bataille is speaking has nothing authentic about it — it is not a “self-sufficient” sphere of autonomy; on the contrary, it opens up the possibility of a political relationship that goes beyond intersubjective exchange, beyond the capitalist preservation of forces in view of a foreseeable future. It opens up the multiple truth of an energetical *ethos* that does not produce any know-how and cannot be constructed as a knowledge based on the thought of means and ends, of instruments and productions, of principles and consequences — hence exposed to the streams of energies that come and go, with no other consistency than the insistence of this coming and going.

However, the model proposed by Bataille seems to imply a vital need for every organism to receive, process, and accumulate energy from the outside. It assumes economic structures as much as natural givens in a state of equilibrium or imbalance, which discharge at a certain point a radically heterogeneous energy against said economic structures in the inassimilable form of destructive events. Hence, it somehow naturalizes the creation of surplus value, assimilating it to a cosmic phenomenon rather than to a product of specific forms of exploitation. A modern form of heliocentrism, this exogenous vitalism maintains, according to Reza Negarestani, the monogamous model of the relation between terrestrial life and the sun, it is a “solar” capitalism in “line with the vitalistically pluralist and thanatropically monist regime of solar economy.” According to this model, the earth “can be reinvented and recomposed only as a new planet or slave of the Sun whose life and death are emphatically determined by its star or exorbitant source of energy” (Negarestani 2010: 6). To emancipate from this “heliocentric slavery,” Negarestani proposes to embrace “perishability” and the erratic temporality of cosmic energies into terrestrial thought, for “terrestrial thought and creativity must essentially be associated with ecology, but an ecology that is based on the unilateral powers of cosmic contingencies such as

climate changes, singularity drives, chemical eruptions and material disintegration” (Ibid: 8). Cosmic contingencies are immanent more to the inside of the system than to its outside: they actively mobilize the interiorized horizon of life. Assuming plurality in modes of life beyond the conservative and economical nature of the organism does not deny the role of living creatures in planetary existence, but it rather expresses “an agnostic attitude towards the organic/inorganic status of the entities inhabiting the planet” (Likavčan 2019).

Karen Barad proposes an “Agential Realism,” which negates the existence of previously existing isolated entities, and defines phenomena as “relations without pre-existing *relata*.” Barad contends that the “boundaries and properties of the components of phenomena become determinate” and “material articulations of the world become meaningful” through “specific agential intra-actions” (2007: 139). These occur *within* phenomena, and not through interaction, which occurs *between* phenomena, and assumes that entities are already clearly defined and separated. Drawing on Niels Bohr’s interpretation of quantum physics, Barad claims that the foundational reductionist essentialism of particles needs to be radically deconstructed:

Ontological indeterminacy, a radical openness, an infinity of possibilities, is at the core of mattering [...] Closure can’t be secured when the conditions of im/possibilities and lived indeterminacies are integral, not supplementary, to what matter is. Nothingness is not absence, but the infinite plenitude of openness. Infinity and nothingness are not the termination points defining a line. Infinity and nothingness are infinitely threaded through one another so that every infinitesimal bit of one always already contains the other. The possibilities for justice-to-come reside in every morsel of finitude (Barad 2012: 16–17).

Ontological indeterminacy extends the possibility of birth and death beyond the animate world and living beings. To see the earth as non-organic, as a force for the disorganization of life, is to recognize that planetary dynamics emerge from contingent agencies where life could be seen as a moment in the greater dynamic unfolding of what is not life. “Nonlife,” Elisabeth Povinelli claims in *Geontologies*, “is what holds, or should hold for us, the more radical potential. For Nonlife created what it is radically not, Life” (2016: 176).

The multitude of planetary compositions shows that life always has the possibility of organizing itself without confining itself. Rather than being driven by an internal force, life then seems to be energized by a sensible experience of alteration, by an elemental *aesthesis* that surpasses any organic organization. Rethinking the contingent inseparable

arability of planetary relations cannot therefore be reduced to a radical organicism, to a poetic fusion with the earth. Thought, together with the relation to external circumstances, must also cultivate its capacity for detachment, for making the difference. Being a radical discontinuity, and at the same time a persistent force, thought requires the embracement of foreign materials: it is not the resource of a substance, rather it is enhanced from further alienation. Its actualization does not exhaust its potential but rather increases it.

The prefix “geo-“ in “geophilosophy,” wrote Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, indicates the “constitutive relationship of philosophy with nonphilosophy,” the necessity for nonphilosophy to “become the earth and people of philosophy” (1994: 110). The prefix does not indicate any precedence, or antecedence, but rather an immanent resistance to the exhaustion of philosophy, it reveals “that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder” (Adorno 1973: 5), that nonidentity is a presence that acts upon us. “Geo-“ calls philosophy to a revolution “that entails a mode of thinking capable of germinating its viewpoints along lines of complicity between antagonistic or incommensurable fronts” (Negarestani 2011:52).

5.

Modern Earth, characterized as a combination of natural resources, fertile soils, building materials, territories to occupy, has had its own possibility to exist only in its constitutive relationship with the corresponding emergence of multiple *Terrae Nullius*. These were specifically designated lands, which were not exploited by their inhabitants, and which could be therefore appropriated by colonizers and invaders from foreign worlds. The earth became in this way the traditional foundation of the right of property exploitation. But at the same time, as a complementary response to the abstract violence of this movement of territorialization, the earth has become the figure that embodies an extreme point, the innermost part, that which constitutes the ultimate background, that which stands behind or underneath, the *fundus* of thought itself. Consequently, geological dynamism, morphogenesis, and glaciology have become a poetic reserve capable of altering the perception of time, space, and human actions, allowing a new Earth to emerge, untouched by the abstract logics of economic trans-actions. Because of its dense superficiality, in interactive contact with other states of matter, this new Earth becomes the privileged threshold to reach, the shock point between different conditions of knowledge.

This philosophical Earth, which represents what exceeds all possessions, in its unfathomable dimension of depth, density and impenetrability, seems to reproduce—*via negative*—what we have witnessed as the trend of modernity: to make the implicit explicit, to illuminate what remained in the dark, to reveal what was hidden, to bring the latent out of its retreat, to display the background. Similarly, we could say that Western philosophy during the last century attempted to conceive the unrepresentable, to think a catastrophe that the reason of the epoch was unable to understand, and to maintain this unrepresentable at the heart of thought. “After Auschwitz,” philosophy derives its power to think from the unthinkable, from that which resists any dialectical assimilation. It was able to convert, wrote Jacques Rancière, “the ‘impossibility’ of art after Auschwitz into an art of the unrepresentable” (2007: 134). Thus, philosophy feeds on the expectation that the earth could be the figure of the inexpressible itself—the perennially neglected part, which is never expressed in form, the obscure reserve of the sayable and the visible. Earth is, in this sense, the undiscovered continent, which, nonetheless, does not permit itself to be colonized—the final and unique limit of all philosophical knowledge.

The manifestation of this Earth, a testimony to the absolute Other that haunts thought, is still bound to a theophanic horizon: to a unique Earth corresponds a unique, catastrophic revelation, without remains, that will transform every earthling into an inhabitant of an age where any distinction between near and far, neighbors and foreigners, has become invalid. An age, to say it in the words of Günther Anders, wherein “we are all *proximi*” (1962: 495). Just as the Western imagery of the “ecological crisis” has erased the colonial reality, there seems to be a persistent colonial arrogance on the part of the current generation of “collapsonauts”⁶ in referring to a unique world catastrophe, without borders, without differences.

If conceived as an ultimate and unique limit, Earth can only be *archaic*. This *archaic*, monumental Earth emerges from the moment when there is no longer any orientation for what is materially possible, thus, in the disorientation with respect to a unique abstract horizon for human *praxis*. However, this collapse of a given world can also give rise, instead, to what Badiou called an *inexistent*, something that is not possible within the world—where “world” designates the logic of its own appearing. This *inexistent* is not a hidden reserve of the existent for it cannot exist in one world; rather, it exposes us,

⁶ For Yves Citton, we are part of the “Génération collapsonautes,” living in an epoch where everything tells us that our lifestyles are doomed to a coming collapse (Citton and Rasmi 2020).

against the catastrophic finitude imposed by “democratic materialism” (Badiou 2009: 511), to the infinity of worlds.⁷

We are therefore summoned to think an-archically, of other earths. The earth has never existed, for the conditions of its existence are undefinable, though not unthinkable. As we argued, the unthinkable has been represented by twentieth-century philosophy – in the most diverse possible forms – as the domain that could no longer be thought by thought, as the hidden or even absent ground that paradoxically constitutes the *arché* of any reality. In this way, the traditional Platonic figure of *anamnesis* has been revitalized in the paradoxical form of an endless remembrance of this forgetfulness. But the fact that the earth’s materiality is resistant to our intelligible faculties seems to suggest that the immaterial is precisely what is untouchable, unavailable (as well as *immundus*), while matter is the impenetrable limit that marks the point at which there is no longer anything to penetrate. It is the depth of something that does not refer to anything else, but interrupts the series of references, the chain of meanings and information. Within this perspective, materialist thought is a long history of encounters and dispossessions.⁸ It is not a question of recovering any foundation, nor of expecting any other, future beginnings: we have to assume that thought is, as Nietzsche realized, heterogenous, nourished by many sources, dis-integrated beyond recognition by the past and its victims.

Deleuze writes in his *Desert Islands* that “in the ideal of beginning anew there is something that precedes the beginning itself, that takes it up to deepen it and delay it in the passage of time” (2003: 14). Even the Occident, faithful to its own beginning and stable in its own decline, is not a uniform territory. Innumerable are the paths of the earth that have never been taken.

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⁷ On this topic, see Tusa (2019).

⁸ Recently the art collective Claire Fontaine worked on a materialistic method “referring to the marvel, thaumazein, of the early Greek philosophers who observed nature with an emotional scientific approach, looking for resemblances and connection between every form of life but keeping close to the phenomena that they studied” (2019: 587).

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