

# **Astral Bodies**

## **Elements of Georealism**

Giovanbattista Tusa  
giovannitusa@fesh.unl.pt

This age is characterized by the increasing humanization of a planet more and more subject to representation, visualization and prediction. The future, however, seems to herald the emergence of forces indifferent to this historical process. Our present is thus the time of this contradiction, as new forces affect all strata of our lives like a diffuse but deep trauma. My text calls for a georealism that takes into account this time, a new form of planetary realism that assumes that our time is emptied of all representable content and thus open to its own infinity, open to the encounter with what is not given, either as horizon or as memory.

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Giovanbattista Tusa  
giovannitusa@fesh.unl.pt

If, then, all organic drives are conservative, historically acquired, and predisposed to regression and the restoration of prior states, we must accordingly ascribe the achievements of organic development to external influences and their disruptive and distracting effects [...] it must be the developmental history of our planet and its relationship to the sun that has left its imprint for us to behold in the development of organisms.

Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

1.

In 1758, Gaspar Miguel des Berrío, born in Potosí, Viceroyalty of Peru, in Alto Peru (now Bolivia), painted his famous *El Cerro Rico y la Villa Imperial de Potosi*, an aerial view of the city, considered one of the first world cities of modern times. At that time, from the high mountains of the Andes, silver crossed the Atlantic from South America through the Isthmus of Panama to Spain and Europe, and from Seville and Lisbon eastward to the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid Empire, as well as to India and China. In the city of Potosi, «silver built temples and palaces, monasteries and gambling dens»,<sup>1</sup> and the intensive exploitation of the viscera of its mountain, significantly named Cerro Rico – the rich mountain – «substantially fed the development of Europe»<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> E. Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (1973), transl. by C. Belfrage – 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition, foreword by Isabel Allende, Monthly Review Press, New York 1997, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



Detail from Gaspar Miguel des Berrío, *El Cerro Rico y la Villa Imperial de Potosi* (1758)

The painting shows Potosí as a bustling urban centre, full of commerce, public squares, residential and sacred buildings. It also shows the complex system of aqueducts that served to generate the energy to crush the large rocks in the mines.

In his film *The Silver and the Cross* (2010), Harun Farocki conducts an iconographic analysis of the landscape by intercutting close-ups of the painting with contemporary footage of Potosí. Farocki describes how ‘the Spaniards brought the cross and took the silver’ and exploited Cerro Rico’s rich mineral deposits and local labour force. But as the off-screen commentary explains, nowhere in the picture does the camera find any reference to the exploitation of the indigenous population. Not even the entrances to the mines are visible: the mines that gave rise to the city’s wealth are missing. The camera reveals the complicity of visual representation with colonial forms of exploitation that continue in various forms to this day.



Image from *The Silver and the Cross* (*Das Silber und das Kreuz*, 2010), by Harun Farocki

Since it remains outside the image, the real is what remains outside the representation, what cannot be included in the situation as it is. Every state of things contains something uncountable, a void that never integrates itself into that to which it also somehow belongs. There always remains a surplus over representation, so that the state of things is never transparent, but is, if anything, a violent substitute for what it represents. The real, in this sense, is the *impasse* of every representation, its impossibility, the infinity of what remains surrounding, what cannot be captured in it. The archives that define the boundaries of our history collect only what is important to the archive itself, that is, what somehow anchors the fluctuating possibilities in the present and organizes the experience of time. The real has an alienating effect because it is paradoxically perceived as all that is not collected in the archive, as its unarchivable outside. If we define the impossible as the real, we could say that it resists not only any possible symbolization, as Lacan had argued, but also any appropriation of the imaginary, since the real thus understood emancipates the imagination from both representation and realization.

The twentieth century begins with Friedrich Nietzsche and the perspective of a substantial unrepresentability of the world, which establishes a *hiatus*, a difference, a surplus of the represented over its representation, of the real over its images, and sanctions that the real is incalculable, that is, beyond the logic of calculating rationality. One could say, then, that the 20th century was the century in which a different relationship to reality

emerged. In the 20th century, the real was that which exists on the margins of our symbolic order and is in constant tension with it: that which supports our social reality, but at the same time undermines it. Interpreted in this sense, however, the encounter with the real has to do with an awakening of subjectivity, with a transformation of the subject toward enlightenment. In this “passion for the real” there is an obsession with identity, an urge to «unmask copies, to discredit fakes [...] that can only be fulfilled as destruction [...] because purification is a process doomed to incompleteness, a figure of the bad infinite»<sup>3</sup>. The encounter with the real thus intended is the most radical negation of reality, for if everything is realisation, then reality is something insufficient that must be ceaselessly annulled and transcended. The modern subject is the presumption of the failure of the world: it is both the origin and the end of this world.

However, the 21st century begins with a different consciousness: reality is not the consequence of an endless realization or self-realization. For it is obvious that today we cannot act on the world as if the world consisted of things at our disposal. The real today is precisely that which lies outside the territory of all human realization. It draws its energy not from the primacy of the future, but from the imperfection of an unrealized past. The real does not await its realization in historical time, but remains in the present as a lost possibility, as a time that never was and that therefore is yet to come.

This time is interspersed with accomplished facts, with injustice, and yet an unrealizable potentiality hovers within it. The real is not the sum of all that has not yet been represented or realized. Our time is emptied of all representable content and thus open to its own infinity, open to the encounter with that which is not given, either as horizon or as memory.

2.

In recent years, there has been a growing sense that the ground on which Western reason had established its dominion is crumbling beneath our feet, and that every system of orientation that has hitherto governed our actions is breaking down. In fact, it is precisely what “we” are that seems to be collapsing. Precisely this panic, which according to Latour gnaws at everyone equally, «at the former colonizers as well as at the formerly

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<sup>3</sup> A. Badiou, *The Century*, transl. by A. Toscano, Polity Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 56.  
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colonized»<sup>4</sup>, would then be the new condition of our time: the new universality would consist in the common feeling that our ground «is in the process of giving way».<sup>5</sup> The collapse of this unique ground should therefore reveal that far from being unitary and global, today's world is instead a plurihistorical and multidifferentiated series of processes cascading across multidirectional waves of colonial, genocidal, and extractive modernities. Instead, monism has somehow survived despite its failure. It returns precisely when it falters, when the essentially oppositional and hierarchical nature of the *unus mundum* begins to dissolve into a multiplicity of perspectives and worlds.

The modern utopia of progress is distinguished by its universal character: although it was created by a particular group of people, potentially everyone can participate in it. This is because values are always presented as the result of choices that are only apparently dualistic, but in reality antagonistic, since only one of the two poles can prevail. Even if 'we' can only exist by creating legal and theoretical *vacuums*, the constitutive feature of modernity – compared to all other systems of hegemony that have asserted their superiority on the basis of violence and systematic oppression – is the fact that modernity does not allow any alternative. No territory must remain unknown, nothing must oppose the force of this progress. By “force” is ultimately meant «the appropriation of the inappropriable»<sup>6</sup> in the name of an infinite consensus. Any possible deviant becoming is in fact relegated to a savage past or a dystopian future, to a world without “us.”<sup>7</sup> The progress of this force seems to maintain the monistic obsession of metaphysics by other means. If metaphysics is at an end in Western thought today<sup>8</sup>, it is because its obsession has become a reality and has acquired the status of an indisputable fact. It is

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<sup>4</sup> B. Latour, *Down to Earth. Politics in the New Climatic Regime* (2017), transl. by C. Porter, Polity Press, Cambridge 2018, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ivi*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> A. Mbembe, *Brutalisme*, La Découverte, Paris 2020, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> In recent years we have been inundated with cosmofictions predicting the disappearance of humanity from the planet. For example, in his influential book *The World Without Us*, American journalist Alan Weisman urges us to imagine a world without humans, in which the gigantic infrastructures that make our civilization possible would gradually collapse and eventually disappear. Everyday objects would become immortal as fossils. The only echo of human existence will be our memories, that «might surf home aboard a cosmic electromagnetic wave to haunt our beloved Earth». A. Weisman, *The World Without Us*, St. Martin's Press, New York 2007, p. 275.

<sup>8</sup> This is obviously Heidegger's idea in many of his lectures and texts, from *Overcoming Metaphysics to The End of Philosophy and the Task for Thinking*. But the end of philosophy, for Heidegger, is the place where the whole history of philosophy is gathered in its utmost possibility. This end proclaims that philosophy has reached a limit, a limit from which it can only return upon itself. See Tusa, G. *Infinity of Truths. A Very Short Essay on the End of the Ends*, in A. Badiou – G. Tusa, *The End*, transl. by R. Mackay, Polity Press, Cambridge 2019, pp. 105-31, p. 109.

striking, however, that this progress has no finality, for it reproduces itself only in relation to its own internal dynamics. Its only limit seems to be the extinction of the sun, which is the only stellar threat to the infinite increase of its reproduction. It is as if the limitlessness of progress no longer had a biological state as its horizon, but the cosmic horizon that Freud had assigned to organic life as part of a planetary system. In this planetary economy, change is accepted and preserved by conservative instincts only to maintain an equilibrium temporarily protected from external forces, and certainly not a new state never before achieved, emancipated from regressive forces<sup>9</sup>.

European modernity has established a new relationship with the earth that does not consist simply in the organization of a productive system that accumulates resources. In this epoch, Heidegger wrote in a 1963 letter to Kojima Takehiko, «the buried energy is released, what is released is transformed, what is transformed is amplified, what is amplified is stored, and what is stored is distributed»<sup>10</sup>. For Heidegger, man in modernity conceives of his relationship to reality primarily as calculation, exploitation, and planning, reducing the world to a “fixed idea” that is permanently before him «within the scope of human information and dispositions and in being solely so»<sup>11</sup>. At the origin of modernity, then, there is a specific relationship to the world that is linked to the altered ability to occupy a particular position, to appropriate an eccentric, unique, and alien point of view. From this alien standpoint, we have found «a way to act on the earth and within terrestrial nature as though we dispose of it from outside»<sup>12</sup>.

But today thought is burdened with a gravity that makes impossible the traditional levitating force that characterized metaphysics and its critical capacity for distancing<sup>13</sup>. This impossibility reveals that there is no longer a separation between the human and non-human worlds, for the real is now interwoven with technical and cognitive operations whose scale and purpose elude us. It is becoming increasingly clear to us that we cannot

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<sup>9</sup> S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), transl. by J. Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XVIII, (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Works*, Hogarth Press, London 1955, pp. 1-64.

<sup>10</sup> The correspondence between Heidegger and Kojima is published in the volume *Japan und Heidegger. Gedenkschrift der Stadt Meßkirch zum hundertsten Geburtstag Martin Heideggers*, ed. Harmut Buchner, Jan Theorbecke Verlag, Sigmaringen 1989. The quoted passage is at page 222.

<sup>11</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Age of the World Picture* (1938), in *Off the Beaten Track*, transl. by J. Young, K. Haynes, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, pp. 57-85, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958), University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1998, p. 262.

<sup>13</sup> Nancy, J.-L. “The Impossible”. *Planetary Conversation #01 with Giovanbattista Tusa*, 1 January 2021, available at *The Philosophical Salon*, <https://thephilosophicalsalon.com/planetary-conversations>

encounter the world in terms of representation. In fact, the polarization between “us” and the “world” can only take place when a world is represented as a *datum* to which meaning must be given, by an “us” that is somehow always already outside the world. Such a world necessarily lacks any sense «or has its sense beyond itself»<sup>14</sup>.

3.

Western philosophy has understood itself as the realization of a reason, a principle or *Grund* which somehow persists, as an immemorial and untimely *raison d'être*, both at the beginning and at the end of its history. Bernard Stiegler pursued the ambitious perspective of a “de-Europeanization” of philosophy, starting from radical contingency and accident, rather than from essence or origin. According to Stiegler, there is a necessity to open philosophy to its own original absence of reason, because the accidental or historical nature of European philosophy must be thought of as «*techno-logical*. Which is to say, hypomnesic [...] the future of philosophy *comes to pass through this*»<sup>15</sup>. If *anamnesis* is philosophy’s ability to repeatedly fall back on a principle that guides action, then *hypomnesis*, the failure of memory, is the necessary default for the transformation of thought. Indeed, as Stiegler writes «what is at stake is not so much philosophy and Europe: at stake is philosophy and the world, that is, philosophy and *the real*. [...] The real, apprehended *as a process of psychological and collective individuation*»<sup>16</sup>.

Philosophy has a constitutive difficulty in conceiving of a change that is not a deviation from an original principle, and therefore it conceives the present as a terminal point: the point of crisis where the catastrophe of the past world and the beginning of a new era touch and coincide. But this end brings nothing to completion, since the realization of its principle returns philosophy to the anarchy of beginnings, revealing that every principle is «counteracted, both in its history and in its essence, by a force of dislocation, of plurification», which turns philosophical *logos* into «“archipelagic speech”, “pulverized poem” [...] discourse of transition»<sup>17</sup>. This end goes beyond any conclusion or

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<sup>14</sup> J.-L. Nancy, *The sense of the world* (1993), transl. by J. Librett, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1993, p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> B. Stiegler, *The Magic Skin; or, The Franco-European Accident of Philosophy after Jacques Derrida*, in “Qui Parle”, XVIII, 2009, pp. 97-110, p. 99.

<sup>16</sup> *Ivi*, p. 101.

<sup>17</sup> R. Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1987, p. 6. (translated and enlarged from *Le Principe d'anarchie: Heidegger et la question de l'agir*, Editions de Seuil, Paris 1982).



completion, it exhausts any exhaustion, since it reveals the end of any possibility of a truth understood in terms of presentable contents, as the final re-presentation of a presence. The necessity of thinking beyond philosophy consists in the overcoming of thinking based on knowledge and recognition, in a subversion of philosophy – a subversion that arises from thinking itself.

For Meillassoux, the ancestrality of the “beyond” holds a temporal diachrony that breaks through the wall «which separated thought from the great outdoors»<sup>18</sup>. Ancestrality stands outside any chronological measure that can guarantee continuity between the dimensions of the past, the present, and the future, for it refers precisely to the temporality in which the manifestation itself first emerged. In other words, “ancestral” does not denote an ancient event, but refers to an event that is alien to terrestrial life, to its very possibility. What Meillassoux calls the *archifossil*, is «the material support on the basis of which the experiments that yield estimates of ancestral phenomena proceed»<sup>19</sup>: it opens the way to the «narrow passage (*le passage dérobé*)» through which thinking «is able to exit from itself»<sup>20</sup>. The unthought, in this sense, is no longer the index of our inability to determine the first or last reason of things, the “not yet” that installs thought in the premonition of a mysterious beyond; rather, it is the movement that emancipates thought from the power of the human.

There is a *terra incognita* not waiting to be colonized, an unexplored planet composed of matter independent of our thought. This alien matter remains in the imagination as a stratified trauma, a foreign body that does not relate to the layers of tissue that surround it, but irreversibly alters them. In *The Undercommons*, Harney and Moten problematize precisely the relationship of the centre to that which is supposed to surround it from the outside, and they invoke the possibility of dwelling in the “beyond of the beyond”. Indeed, if we take the point of view of the surrounding, it is precisely the fortified, insular spaces of the colonizer, surrounded by an environment that refuses to submit, that occupy a vulnerable position:

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<sup>18</sup> Q. Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (2006), transl. by R. Brassier, Continuum, London 2008, p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> *Ivi*, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Ivi*, p. 63.

The hard materiality of the unreal convinces us that we are surrounded, that we must take possession of ourselves, correct ourselves, remain in the emergency, on a permanent footing, settled, determined, protecting nothing but an illusory right to what we do not have, which the settler takes for and as the commons. [...] We're in a trance that's under and around us. We move through it and it moves with us, out beyond the settlements, out beyond the redevelopment, where black night is falling, where we hate to be alone<sup>21</sup>.

A necessary form of realism today requires a new sense of presence that precedes any representation, and at the same time the ability to perceive a world «peopled not with things but with forces, not with subjects but with powers, not with bodies but with bonds»<sup>22</sup>. A context surrounds and embraces, yet remains imperceptible. The environment is thus an uninterrupted presence, it's never in front of us but it is always all around. It coexists with the actual present, is here now, but in the mode of inactuality.

4.

The transition from potentiality to act, from common form to singularity is not a punctual fact, but an incessant expressive emergence, a «*linea generationis substantiae* that varies in every direction according to a continual gradation of growth and remission»<sup>23</sup>. This process exposes us to a default of essence that is older than any origin. The *thus* (il *così*), writes Agamben in *The Coming Community*, is a resurgent instance that has nothing original or native, for «the coming being is whatever being»<sup>24</sup> that presupposes no hidden essence but «exposes itself in its qualifications, is its *thus* without remainder»<sup>25</sup>. The *thus* is neither accidental nor necessary, but is continually engendered and it has therefore the potential to recompose again what has always been a process of trans-formation to which singular forms of life are exposed by their condition of origin, which is change, *metamorphosis* – the becoming plural of a life which is inseparable from its own forms. The dis-organizing endurance of matter is not simply resistance to form: its capacity for decomposition arises entirely in its every state. We always start from the end, that is, from

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<sup>21</sup> F. Moten – S. Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Minor Compositions, Wivenhoe-New York 2013, pp. 18-19.

<sup>22</sup> The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends* (2014), transl. by R. Hurley, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 2015, p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> G. Agamben, *The Coming Community* (1990), transl. by M. Hardt, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1993, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> *Ivi*, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ivi*, p. 27.

the *compost* in which every *haecceity* is not separable from the relations of which it is every time the last point, the finite emergence of an actual infinity.

If philosophy is constantly in search of its own prehistoric beginning, its Orient, it is because history is always history of its own interiority. But “becoming”, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, is a *milieu* rather than an origin. It cannot be the subject of a history but of a geography:

Geography is not confined to providing historical form with a substance and variable places [...] Geography wrests history from the cult of necessity in order to stress the irreducibility of contingency. It wrests it from the cult of origins in order to affirm the power of a “milieu” (what philosophy finds in the Greeks, said Nietzsche, is not an origin but a milieu, an ambiance, an ambient atmosphere: the philosopher ceases to be a comet). [...] “Becoming” does not belong to history. History today still designates only the set of conditions, however recent they may be, from which one turns away in order to become, that is to say, in order to create something new.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, a philosophy of place becomes necessary today as philosophy of limits, situated philosophy. To think at the limit and from the limit already means to transgress any point of origin, to be at the point of transition that makes the inside pass into the outside and vice versa, and the one through the other. A connection that presupposes both proximity and detachment, because the limit is the site of a constant topological inversion that dissolves the contours between subject and environment, the place where everything comes into contact with everything without becoming indifferent.

Rethinking the contingent inseparability of planetary relations cannot therefore be reduced to a radical organicism, to a poetic fusion with the earth<sup>27</sup>, because the earth does not have the integrity of the organic, it is of matter that «merges with the movement of those who leave their territory *en masse*, with crayfish that set off walking in file at the bottom of the water, with pilgrims or knights who ride a celestial line of flight»<sup>28</sup>. To see the earth as non-organic, as a force of disorganization of life, is to integrate transient

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<sup>26</sup> G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (1991), transl. by H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell, Columbia University Press, New York 1994, p. 96.

<sup>27</sup> See G. Tusa, *De-Limitations. Of Other Earths*, in “Stasis”, IX/1, 2020, pp. 166-183.

<sup>28</sup> G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, cit., p. 85.

cosmic contingencies into thought, to mobilize the internalized temporality of terrestrial life.

5.

Modern ontology is fundamentally projective, in the sense that the human subject constitutes itself in relation to an Absolute and establishes an arbitrary projection onto the environment. Such an ontological dynamic has at its core a centre from which every relation depends: the environment then seems to be nothing but an extension of this original core<sup>29</sup>. But in the twentieth century a new dynamic marks the end of this endless projection and perhaps the end of the project of modernity itself – a project that aims to extend a particular way of life to all kinds of living beings in the spectral form of progress. If the Modern is a paradoxical kind of terrestrial who tries to deny his condition (a kind of deterritorialized terrestrial), earth is what reveals finitude as a way of life: to be a terrestrial means to be confined together, in a situation where we are forced to put the remains together with other terrestrials<sup>30</sup>. But this new planet, far from being a unitary body, appears as a contingent multiplicity of relations that cannot be placed in front of us as an object of knowledge or appropriation. No longer domesticated in the reassuring image of the mother-house favourable to life – the habitat, «quintessence of the human condition» in which human beings «can move and breathe without effort»<sup>31</sup> described by Hannah Arendt – the earth emerges as an unconditional chain of constraints between all terrestrial and extraterrestrial beings and realms.

My hypothesis in this short text, however, is that the earth represents the limit of the unlimited projection of the Modern, not because it embodies the inviolable equilibrium of a finite, mysterious totality, but because ‘being terrestrial’ takes the form of an active praxis that is nonetheless also passive, since it presupposes an inherence that is irreducible to our action. A passivity that invests our projection by transforming its active moment into a responsive moment, through which our world expands and metamorphoses into other, without reducing itself to this other in an indifferent unity.

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<sup>29</sup> On this idea of modern ontology as “projective”, see the reflections of Augustin Berque in *Écoumène. Introduction à l'étude des milieux humains*, Belin éditeur, Paris 2009.

<sup>30</sup> See B. Latour, *After Lockdown: A Metamorphosis*, transl. by J. Rose, Polity Press, Cambridge 2021.

<sup>31</sup> H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, cit., p. 2.

At this point it becomes clear that a new realism is needed today: a georealism that assumes its own terms as something other than the limit understood as the static result of a separation with the outside of something. The limit in this context should rather be seen as an exit from indifference. An exit that excavates the subsoil of identity and undermines the terminal power of death, because this liminal moment is the porous and contaminated place that questions the wholeness of any being. Since “earth” denotes not a representation but a praxis, a new pragmatics emerges. In his famous 11<sup>th</sup> thesis on Feuerbach<sup>32</sup>, Marx formulates the hypothesis that the only purpose of philosophy is to transform the world, since it is no longer possible to understand it. Indeed, the world as a unilateral projection already seems to have come to an end, and the end of this world calls thought to a transformation that draws it into a new, more open terrain: for every limit is precisely an opening onto a greater non-being. The transformation of the world beyond all interpretation invoked by Marx is perhaps to be understood literally, namely as *verändern*, “to alter”, “or “to do something else”. It is an intransitive doing that «makes itself»<sup>33</sup> and not the production of something, for the real is neither a text that can be interpreted nor a reality that can be accomplished or realized. The “real” is precisely that which «is nothing given, produced, or producible»<sup>34</sup>.

Now, if the world is still a constructive figure of self-projection, it seems somehow obvious that twentieth-century philosophy is permeated by a vertiginous sense of “worldlessness” – that is, by the impossibility of accessing any world, which, according to Heidegger, characterizes modern objectification. Worldlessness, which leads to the «frantic abolition of all distances»<sup>35</sup> and condemns the modern world to uniformity, «in which everything is neither far nor near», and man to an «unearthly»<sup>36</sup> condition. And yet a realism that accepts the possibility of the end of a world as the end of itself opens up the possibility of other worlds that intertwine in a different way the possible and the actual, a world that is neither destined to its own realization nor condemned to its own unreality.

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<sup>32</sup> K. Marx, *Thesen über Feuerbach* (1845), in K. Marx – F. Engels, *Werke Band 3*, Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1958, pp. 5-7.

<sup>33</sup> J.-L. Nancy, *What is to be done*, in “Diacritics”, transl. by I. Goh, XLII/2, 2014, pp. 100-117, p. 113.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Thing* (1950), in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. by A. Hofstadter, Harper Perennial, New York 2001, pp. 163-185, p. 163.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

6.

To designate the epoch in which man is reflected on the ice banks, in the sea, and in the atmosphere, the name “Anthropocene” has been proposed: a term which, on the one hand, designates the becoming geological force of man, but which, at the same time, exposes human dominion over the earth to the fear of losing its power. The “Anthropocene” seems to be the age in which the annihilation of any world not exclusively understood as a human habitat is completed; however, we can observe how a new form of materiality is emerging in it. The collision of human and non-human spheres, linked by incommensurable relations rather than by the regime of equivalence that characterizes capitalist exchange, opens thought and action to a scale that defies any already stabilized sense, thus shaking the world that has reflected our image back to us for centuries.

In his *Shōbōgenzō*, the thirteenth-century Sōtō Zen monk Eihei Dōgen repeatedly meditates on the metaphor of the mirror. In the sermon *Gyōbutsu-yuigi* (*The Dignified Behavior of Acting Buddha*), Dōgen points out that practice separated from life is the opposite of practice without effort and separation. Such wholeness characterizes the fullness of the acting Buddha, which is enlightenment, an action that has nothing to realize<sup>37</sup>. But in the famous sermon *Kokyō* (*On the Ancient Mirror*), Dōgen imagines a presence that no mirror can reflect, no memory can preserve or support, and that breaks the mirror. The time in which all reflection is shattered and destroyed – Dōgen explains – is the *now*.

What he calls “the moment when suddenly a clear mirror comes along,” is “smashed into hundreds of bits and pieces!” That which is able to experience the state of “smashed into hundreds of bits and pieces” may be the clear mirror. When the clear mirror is made to express itself, [the expression] may be “smashed into hundreds of bits and pieces”. Therefore, the place where smashed bits and pieces are dangling is the clear mirror. Do not take the narrow view that formerly there was a moment of not yet being smashed to bits and pieces and that latterly there may be a moment of no longer being smashed to bits and pieces<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō. The True Dharma-Eye Treasury, Vol. II*, transl. by Gudo Wafu Nishijima and Chodo Cross, Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley 2008, p. 43.

<sup>38</sup> Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō. The True Dharma-Eye Treasury, Vol. I*, trad. Gudo Wafu Nishijima and Chodo Cross, Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley 2007, p. 323.

One cannot restore what was never whole, what was never a totality. Therefore, a georealistic materialism cannot be a realised, complete thought. Its unfolding is not provisional, but absolute and definitive, because the internalising and appropriating movement of reason encounters in the earth the enigma of a resistance that is intimate, but also exposed to all the elements through cracking, crystallisation and fusion. These petrified resistances form in our imagination a planetary unconscious composed of debris that can neither be included in our history nor recovered by human memory. They remain as foreign bodies, blocking the way of knowledge and explanation. They are the sensual matter of our incomprehension, embodying the inertia and vacillation that have always accompanied the vigilance and activity of our modern reason, and its relentless desire to reveal all things, leaving no fold hidden and no cavity unexplored.

Perhaps this intimate yet resistant materiality helps us to enter into a different order of reason, less solipsistic, less voracious, that can imagine a different future through new relationships with materials that are foreign to our memory. The ancestral future imagined by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss at the end of *Tristes Tropiques*, a time when life can live «beyond thought and beneath society: an essence that may be vouchsafed to us in a mineral more beautiful than any work of Man»<sup>39</sup>.

The earth reveals the intimate as tumult. It exposes a being undermined from within by an external force of decay, but it preserves this tumult as its own constituent matter, its own form of existence. The states of the earth coincide with the endogenous and exogenous processes that volcanic, mineral, and cosmic forces exert in each of its strata. The earth, like our thought, is nothing original, for the changes that take place on it come from a distance and at the same time from a proximity that cannot be separated or distinguished from its own matter. It continues, like our thinking, not by memory or preservation of itself, but by a constant opening of new ways.

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<sup>39</sup> C. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (1955), transl. by J. Russell. Criterion Books, New York 1961, p. 398. 379