

Article

Vertigos. Climates of Philosophy

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Abstract: In this essay, I suggest that we are currently witnessing a mutation, which disrupts the mythical imaginary that had confined viruses, climate change, and atmospheric turbulences to an immutable background in the all-too-human narrative of the struggle against nature. I argue that the incapacity of translating this mutation in cultural and social terms, and the repression of this traumatic experience, are the cause of the perturbation that haunts our time. Disorientation pervades philosophy when the entire imaginary to which it had anchored its power to change the world seems to dissolve in the air, when what was silent and distant turns out to be vibrant, more familiar to us than any known proximity. Precisely for this reason, philosophy must rediscover its ability to inhabit times and spaces different from those oriented by the hegemony of capitalist progress, with its correlate of regular catastrophic emergencies and calculated risk. In this essay, I aim to present a perspective in which, instead of coming back straightforwardly ‘down to earth’, philosophy accepts inhabiting the fluctuating disorientation of its own time, itself populated by intermittent and uncertain opportunities of experiencing differently the past and the future—to encounter different relationships with the times that change.

Keywords: ecology; climate change; philosophy; elements; disruption



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To Jean-Luc Nancy, who left us on 23 August 2021.

Without him, nothing of what flows in this essay would have been at all possible.

1. Introduction

In “The Climate of History: Four Theses”, Chakrabarty claims that the climate crisis reveals the limits of our forms of historical understanding as it definitively collapses the distinction between human and non-human worlds. The difficulty in understanding what is happening depends on the fact that we can only “experience specific effects of the crisis but not the whole phenomenon” [1]. According to Chakrabarty, the critique that understands humanity as an effect of power is “an effective critical tool in dealing with national and global formations of domination” [1], but it is not adequate in dealing with the climate crisis. A renewed critique should engage a new perspective on the place of humans in the distinct though connected histories of the globe and the planet. In this sense, Chakrabarty uses the notion of *planetary* to designate a condition different from that of globalization, the description of which requires us to acknowledge that “the communicative setup within which humans saw themselves as naturally situated through categories like earth, world, and globe has now broken down” [2].

The planetary condition refers to neither any common ground nor to any belonging to a system of universal values. Instead, as Spivak points out, it urges us to discover a mode of inhabiting with what escapes translation or “acceptance” [3]. ‘Planetary’, then, is that which remains “above and beyond our own reach” and which requires us to “persistently educate ourselves into the peculiar mindset of accepting the untranslatable” [3]. The planet, within this context, instead of being represented as the totalizing interconnectedness of a system of relationship, remains a negative concept, shrouded in what Thacker called the “Clouds of Unknowing” [4].

Not surprisingly, Latour emphasizes how this new condition is characterized by a “vertigo”, a generalized panic that pervades politics today. Uncertainty and risk emerge in the most common forms of inhabiting our time, in the daily habits that have grounded and stabilized our ethical and political dimensions. For Latour, it is important to recognize that at stake is nothing less than the very question “of attachment, of lifestyle, that’s being pulled out from under us [...] The new universality consists in feeling that the ground is in the process of giving way” [5]. At the same time, even if it is a disorienting condition that affects everyone, it only appears in the areas of friction and resistance, and for this reason, we must acknowledge that although a profound change in the human condition has taken place, humanity remains profoundly differentiated and cannot be imagined as a single, meta-historical agent.

The perception of this condition, which turned this crisis into an imperceptible yet common situation in our lives, not only announces the end of a productive system but also an upheaval of the imagination. Not knowing how to process and socialize what we are feeling in these uncertain times makes us victims of an unfathomable anxiety. In this age marked by unthinkable changes, environments that are familiar to us turn into frightening foreign agents, coming from alien dimensions to invade our air-conditioned metropolises. For a long time, Western thought subjected all atmospheric variations to a process of rarefaction and sublimation that confined climate change to the celestial, immutable dimension of return of the identical.

But change is in the air, and the question today is to confront the fluctuations that characterize radical contingency. Contingent is something that happens to us and that escapes “all pre-registered possibilities” [6], because when something happens to us “novelty grabs us by the throat” [6], and all calculation ends. The incalculable nature of the contingent thus reopens us to chance, it de-totalizes a world that “only takes counting techniques seriously” [6].

Philosophy’s beginning—Deleuze claims in a famous lecture on the creative act [7]—is not characterized by intelligence but by an idiotism that resists “the consensual way in which the situation is presented and in which emergencies mobilize thought or action” [8]. Philosophy has always been affected by a vertigo that renders close what is distant and remote what is near. Philosophy traverses realms, like an uninterrupted conversation of spirits, and inundates everything with its fluidity; it draws everything into its abysmal drift. Hence, that which has always appeared to be other turns out to be in some way same, and what has always seemed to originate from one’s own inmost self is suddenly revealed to be other and unknown.

2. Stellar Revolutions

Venice, March 1610. A messenger announces a revolution coming from the stars. Galileo Galilei publishes his *Sidereus Nuncius*, “stravagantissima meraviglia”, a short astronomy treatise in which he discusses the observations of celestial bodies he made from sidereal distances, which were enabled by the technical improvements on the telescope invented a few years earlier in The Netherlands [9]. The birth of modern Western science coincided with the development of optical apparatuses that provoked a decentralization of the human universe and the end of geocentrism. However, this revolution of the center generated at the same time the paradoxical reorientation that gave modernity its specific perspective. What becomes central is the position of the subject and its ability to become an active source and origin of meaning. Enlightenment, Adorno and Horkheimer write, is “totalitarian” [10] in the sense that it requires the totality of vision of a subject who has the power to have an outside view of the world, the power to see the world from another world.

Astronautical expeditions, whose centrifugal impetus is for Hans Blumenberg “a remnant of the special value assigned to the stellar reality by metaphysics” [11], show precisely that humanity could not have an experience of a return to the Earth except by leaving it. The earth in fact had always been for its inhabitants the invisible *par excellence*,

the obvious and imperceptible condition of their existence. Yet, observed for the first time from outer space, it appeared as an island in an ocean of negativity, “as a cosmic oasis on which man lives in the midst of the disappointing celestial desert” [11]. Modernity, which began with the European ships that departed to the Conquest of the New World, was caught in a paradoxical orbit that entails, at the end of its trajectory, an unexpected geotropic inversion, a renewed sacralization of the Terrestrial. The earth has become in this perspective an ark, a vehicle of survival that is also a “de-founding experiment” [12] (p. 238). As Peter Sloterdijk points out, the concept of the ark—from the Latin *arca*, *arcanus*, closed, secret—reveals that “the artificial, sealed inner world can, under certain circumstances, become the only possible environment for its inhabitants” [12] (p. 237). European modernity is distinguished by a specific project that consists in building its own autonomous home, a home independent from any context. An absolute house, which progressively disconnects itself from the ground and the neighborhood, as it only possesses “the quantity of ground that formed part of itself”, based on a navigation system “rather than a foundation” [12] (p. 238).

Thus, the conquest of external spaces had the paradoxical result of shaping a floating interiority, a special biosphere. According to this project, for this biosphere to continue to exist, it is not enough to appropriate the Earth in its entirety, but it is also necessary to conquer every outside. Édouard Glissant writes critically in his *Poetics of relation*:

In your poetic vision a boat has no belly; a boat does not swallow up, does not devour; a boat is steered by open skies. Yet, the belly of this boat dissolves you, precipitates you into a nonworld from which you cry out. This boat is a womb, a womb abyss. [...] This boat is your womb, a matrix, and yet it expels you. This boat: pregnant with as many dead as living under sentence of death [13].

The encompassing view of the earth from the outside, as a wandering ark, suggests the idea of complete interconnection and coexistence. However, it also generates the extreme danger of totalitarian control. Martin Heidegger, in a lecture entitled “Die Zeit des Weltbildes”, argues that the fundamental event of the Modern Age consists mainly in the conquest of the world as picture (*Weltbild*) and that globalization is ultimately a representational or even aesthetic project in which the world no longer appears as the open space of experience but as an object of representation, design, and project [14]. This model represents the planet as a cybernetic organism, an interconnected metabiotic constellation in which it seems no longer possible to circumscribe any separation between the personal and the common. Cause and effect, possibility and potentiality, and past and future are indefinitely integrated and disintegrated.

Globalization is thus the product of a specific political economy of space that generates and mobilizes flows of energy, raw materials, money, workforce, signs, information and knowledge, symbols, people, but it finally coordinates and synchronizes these multiple flows in an asphyxiating unique space. This environment seems to have neither center nor margins, yet it is far from pacified by any shared or common ground: divergent and different values, times and spaces coexist in permanent collision with each other. In the age in which the expansive project of the unification of the earth under the totalizing figure of the globe seems finally accomplished, humanity moves into “a phase of panic terrors, exactly befitting a small world of tribal drums, total interdependence, and superimposed co-existence” [15].

Therefore, the paradox of our time is that humanity is becoming simultaneously more unified and more fragmented. The more integrated the world becomes, the more the very ground on which the project of globalization of our multiple existences was founded seems to slip away. As Hannah Arendt emphasizes, it is “world alienation, and not self-alienation as Marx thought [that] has been the hallmark of the modern age” [16] (p. 154). This condition of world deprivation—the *acosmia*—is accompanied by a revolutionary mutation of our capacity to transform our environment. To some extent, the power of modernity consisted in the capacity of putting the world at a distance, and the power of critique consisted in the capacity to separate and dissociate any bond. The Archimedean point

described by Arendt in *The Human Condition* as “a point outside the earth from which to unhinge the world” [16] (p. 262) became synonymous with an eccentric and unique standpoint that enables us to exclude ourselves from any perspective that does not require a single gaze only to read the whole world.

3. The Others’ Insurrections

In the final parts of his *Land and Sea*, Carl Schmitt maintains that “the whole history of mankind is but a voyage through the four elements” [17]. The progressive detachment from an earthly origin that marks the Western decline announces a new “air age”, an enormous destruction of all orientations based on the old *nomos* of the earth [18] (p. 178).¹ This revolution that shifts the horizon from earth to air generates a progressive dissolution of the entire system of individualization, measurement, and localization that makes the earth an inhabitable, political space. In the future portrayed by Schmitt, depoliticization would characterize a world which would no longer be a world, one reduced to a completely dehumanized and pacified globe, without a remainder (*restlos*), without “the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics” [19].² This unpolitical future will re-propose the chaotic condition that precedes and provokes the *nomos*, understood as the ability to make inhabitable the uninhabitable. The aerial dimension marks the failure of the cosmopolitical government (*nomos*) of the Moderns, causing a disruptive effect of disorientation (*Ent-Ortung*) and dislocation that opens an irreversible crisis of every dimension, relationship, and spatial scale.

This elemental mutation transforms the space of every human action, opening unknown possibilities of order and sense. Modern Earth, characterized as a combination of natural resources and territories to occupy, had its own possibility to exist only in its constitutive relationship with the corresponding emergence of multiple *Terrae Nullius*, which designated precisely lands that were not exploited by their inhabitants and that could be therefore appropriated [21]: anomic lands, to which the *nomos* has given a delimitation, an orientation that inscribes them within a universal cosmological horizon, a sense that integrates them into a common world.

The fabrication of empty, separate, anomic spaces waiting for law and order has been the foundational pillar of a planetary order regulated by cosmic, astral laws, based on the earth, depicted as mother of all the rights and *justissima tellus* [18] (p. 42). This order needed legal vacuums and “reserves of darkness” [22] as its condition of existence and perpetuation. However, these zones of darkness rise; they insubordinate. A new planet emerges that no longer permits to be inventoried, torn to pieces, or arranged. The space in which the explorer moved to get from the continent to the distant islands is no longer smooth or empty, but it is open, and haunted by entanglements and frictions. The earth, which embodied the traditional foundation of the right of property exploitation, becomes instead the critical mass of contestation [23]. In our age—Sabu Kohso writes in his *Radiation and Revolution*—impetuses of revolt that do not originate “by heavenly commandment but in earthly struggles; in the convergence of winds with varying temperatures, speeds, and orientations” [24].

The Anthropocene is the age in which the planetary expansion of a universal and abstract form of humanity that binds to its own ends all other-than-human worlds seems to be realized. However, at the same time, this age exposes the failure of anthropocentrism, since it also shows how humanity depends on non-human entities. As an age that presents the possibility of the end of man as its own horizon, it also impels a liberation from this horizon and a proliferation of histories without horizon and without ends. New struggles generate a generalized restless sense of raising that throw us up in the air, a diffused movement that is heaving up the earth, upheaving our very ground [25]. We are at this point, where, deprived of any support, we can finally exceed the orbital movement of a thought that for centuries has gravitated around the same founding nucleus. We can launch ourselves out of the circle of recognition and solicit in thought forces that are not

those of recognition, “the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable *terra incognita*” [26].

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty expressed the necessity to overcome the “philosophy of the person” whose history is too immediately linked to individual *praxis* and interiority, to finally grasp the “nexus neither ‘historical’ nor ‘geographic’ of history and transcendental geology” [27] (p. 259). Merleau-Ponty evokes the “flesh” as a possible territory for a radical re-foundation of philosophical ground. This term designates something that “has no name in any philosophy”, a formative medium that transits subject and object, which is not at all “the atom of being, the hard in itself that resides in a unique place and moment” [27] (p. 147). It designates something fluctuating in the philosophical tradition, which is neither matter, nor spirit, nor substance, but the fabric into which all bodies are woven, the worldly connection in which every body emerges only as a difference from other bodies. That is why he defines this ground by the pre-Socratic expression “element”:

The flesh is in this sense an “element” of Being. Not a fact or a sum of facts, and yet adherent to location and to the now. Much more: the inauguration of the where and the when, the possibility and exigency for the fact; in a word: facticity, what makes the fact be a fact. And, at the same time, what makes the facts have meaning, makes the fragmentary facts dispose themselves about “something.” For if there is flesh, that is, if the hidden face of the cube radiates forth somewhere as well as does the face I have under my eyes, and coexists with it, and if I who see the cube also belong to the visible, I am visible from elsewhere, and if I and the cube are together caught up in one same “element” [27] (pp. 139–140).

Understanding human thought as a specific, singular emergence from a fluctuating element means to deny that human thought is an original, founding, native instance. We think precisely because thought is nourished by other existences; and this requires us to undertake a difficult process of decolonization of our thought, which “asks us to ‘provincialize’ language in order to make room for another kind of thought [...], more capacious, one that holds and sustains the human” [28]. This is a necessary process to found a new critique of reason on open and uncircumscribed ground.

According to this hypothesis, what holds the world together, its foundation, regains its groundlessness, as it exceeds any established or normative, universalizing value. If the power of critique consisted in the subject’s capacity for alienation from the world, we now perceive that this separation is no longer possible, for critique is forced to be bound to a world that we increasingly perceive as the space of the others. Being in the world means, as Emanuele Coccia wrote in *Métamorphoses*, being in a political relationship, that is, “to live in the space conceived and constructed by others” [29]: others who constantly invade a foreign space, because a world is the volatile and fluctuating situation produced in every moment by a series of aimless encounters driven by unrelated purposes and impulses. World is the transformation of all the environmental conditions, the insurrection of all nature.

4. Remembrances. Of the Air

Meteorology has been excluded from our history because meteors do not coincide with its time. They are accidents, occurrences, “an adventitious environment of the essential, the stance” [30] (p. 67), Michel Serres remarks. They represent a deviation from the ruination or decay that defines the occidental eschatology, an aleatory deviation that only interests “those in whom the learned have no interest: peasants and sailors” [30] (p. 67). In general, Western modernity (in its different forms and extensions) seems to have little capacity to think of anything other than an organism capable of preservation or progress. Of this fossil modernity, whose “petrified relations”, Marx wrote, must be forced “to dance” [31], the errant and transitioning bodies remain the elusive enigma:

Comets are neither ether, nor gas, nor liquid, nor solid, nor in any way akin to any of the substances found in the celestial bodies, but they are made of an indefinable substance, which appears to have none of the properties of known matter and does not exist outside of the sunbeams, which draw them out of nothingness for a minute, before returning them to it. [...] There is no reason to include the comets in a description of the world. They are nothing, they do nothing, and their only role is that of an enigma [32].

The *cosmos* is not at all, as it is usually assumed, a definitive, natural order, but rather, as Democritus intuited, it is a provisional arrangement whose parts integrate and disintegrate due to an aerial motion that disperses them, to an irregular breathing that distributes them randomly. In this unpredictable movement “every nascent object is initially a vortex, as indeed is the world” [30] (p. 50). Yet, we have founded our own way of inhabiting the world on measurable, conquerable, and exploitable grounds, on a *terra firma* disentangled from the sky. Western metaphysics has enclosed the air by using it as an enclosure, so that what eludes limitation became the very limit of the world, its atmosphere.

[It] is stated in Empedocles’ cosmology. The first element to be separated by hatred was air, and it surrounded the world in a circle, or an egg. The exterior circle of air solidified, or froze, and was transformed into a crystalline vault that bounds the world. [...] Thus was the world constituted as a whole closed in upon itself, the most fluid cosmic element serving as its solid crust [33] (p. 16).

Metaphysical elevation took us away from any place, in direction of its celestial *stellae fixae*, throwing us in an intemporal time of total dislocation. However, at the same time, it generated a radical delimitation of the human world towards any outside, producing an asphyxiating world, without margins or remainder, synchronized with the inanimate skies of metaphysics. This philosophical destruction of the sky has made it an inhuman space, metaphysically empty and anthropologically indifferent. Humans have nothing to experience up there “but much to lose—namely themselves” [12] (p. 75). The terror of losing ourselves derives precisely from the fact that metaphysical thought always presupposes a solid core, from which it elevates a construction. Aerial fluctuations appear as a loss of references, as a dissolving dispersion into the evanescent fragility of a world in which only a permanent transition is inescapable.

Atmospheric time, as Tim Ingold writes, cannot be perceived chronologically, but only kairologically, because it does not consist in a succession of events. Being exposed to atmospheric elements means to be exposed to a formative process of continuous metamorphosis whose “unending deterioration is also perpetual beginning” [34]. Yet, the atmosphere is used by meteorologists to define a gaseous shell that surrounds the planet. It belongs to an image of the world that necessarily presupposes a point outside the world, an eccentric position that confers to our epoch its special climate. Through this separation, environments in which we are entangled turn into unsettling situations that are perceived only in the form of molecular upheavals that are difficult to comprehend. It is the apprehension of this disorienting failure of modernity and its sciences to experience “the virus inside me and the starless sky above me” that generates in us “a breathtaking effect of uncanny proportions” [35].

But all repressed relations reappear as interferences in our political spaces, which had confined the sky in an alien and remote dimension subject to measurements, forecasts, and calculations. This epoch, which has developed a new sensitivity and a new consciousness of the temporalities of inhuman forces within human historicity, is marked by a paradoxical situation: the more powerful and real the capacity of the human species to transform all organic and inorganic spheres, the less individuals living in this time feel empowered to influence the reality around them. This progressive erosion of the sensible has also eroded what we are, making us forget that individuation is always a collective process whose composition depends on daily ordinary relationships with extra-ordinary processes. Evolution unfolds as my genome mutates, combining itself with the worlds that breathe

in my cells—which are not mine, since they do not exist if not in constitutive relationship with bacterial, archaeal, and fungal multitudes.

Being, if it is, is exploded in all directions. It is shared, but it is also divided, fragmented, shattered. This being shattered has haunted the philosophical tradition since Aristotle. Being, as the Stagirite writes, is said in many ways, and so is the earth that he describes in his *Metereologica*, which is distributed into different climes [36]. Within this model, based on Parmenides' *klimata*, the Greek definition of *Klima* is plural because climates are unique inclinations, dynamic relations between sky and earth. The emancipation of these climatic inclinations from the earth has marked Western modernity, along with the obsession with radicality, with a blind determination to settle down, animated by the furious desire to fix every contingency, to reintegrate every deviation, to regulate every fluctuation.

However, in the 21st century, an incommensurable acceleration marks our age as an “age of disruption” which radicalizes innovation to such an extent that it “prevents any meta-stabilization with the other systems that constitute the social body” [37] (p. 105). An acceleration that is experienced “like a storm carrying populations along with it, as if borne along in rudderless vessels” [37] (p. 117). Confronting the progressive destruction of bio-diversity that characterizes this age, Bernard Stiegler calls for an intensification of the “negentropic” potentialities of new forms of life and knowledge to transform and disorientate the entropic tendency of the Anthropocene. What is necessary for Stiegler is to generate spaces that, within the disruptive world order driven by entropic tanatopolitics, give room for actively making the difference “by creating worlds in the befouled unworld [*immonde*] [...] by proliferating acts of taking place in a thousand places” [38]. The constitution of a common world is never simply the result of the accumulation of interconnected acts, but it is instead configured as the conflicting distribution of modes of existence that occupy different parts.³ It does not imply a shared terrain, but it establishes grounds for political negotiations of our common divergences.

The present appears as a disintegration of all places, as an errant, disastrous disorientation that ruins everything. This is, in fact, what disaster literally means: a separation that causes damage of uncircumscribable proportions, a disorientation that makes our world uninhabitable. Nevertheless, it is this disorientation that today connects us again, as it is a disaster that touches everything and everyone, it is that “which disrupts solitude” [40].

Resisting this present then also implies recognizing that this disorientation makes the uninhabitable our very commonplace. Experiencing this disorientation means letting spaces and times arise that cannot be reintegrated or localized. It means accepting the perturbations that interfere with our consciousness, to cultivate and practice that which drags thinking to its very borders, where thinking is upturned within itself by an unsettling philosophy's vertigo that infects and transfigures both proximity and distance.

In the famous tumultuous image that opens Walter Benjamin's Thesis IX on the concept of history, he assimilates progress to a storm that leaves behind a “pile of debris” [41] (p. 392). This storm is the time of infinite progress as incessant consummation of finite resources. It is this progress that is barring our future [42], for its time is that of the exhaustion of every resource of the possible.

That things are “status quo”, that things continue as they are, that the past is accomplished, that its injustice is complete: this is for Benjamin the catastrophe. The disaster consists precisely in the catastrophic continuity that anchors the Occident to this progress, precisely because this progress is grounded in a catastrophe that turns the past into ruins. This disastrous continuity foresees the progress of future generations as the end of politics. It is enchanted by the ideal of “liberated grandchildren.”, instead of being nourished by “the image of enslaved ancestors”, instead of striving for liberation “in the name of generations of the downtrodden” [41] (p. 394).

The unfinished struggle that comes from the past propels the present into a vertiginous “leap in the open air of history” [41] (p. 395), as it reinvests its continuity with inconsistent temporalities and disjunctive historicity. “In the voices we hear”, Benjamin writes, there is “an echo of now silent ones” [41] (p. 390) that introduces cuts and discontinuities into

the air we breathe, breaching the asphyxiating atmosphere in which global capitalism has enveloped all the divergent times and spaces of the planet. A new community of respiration seals a “secret agreement between past generations and the present one” [41] (p. 390).

In his *Arcades Project*, Benjamin describes a “Copernican turn of remembrance (*Wendung des Eingedenkens*)” [43], a new dialectical method of doing history that “teaches us to pass in spirit—with the rapidity and intensity of dreams—through what has been, in order to experience the present as waking world” [43]. Through this method, it will become possible to resist the inexorable ending of our future, and to produce counter-memories committed to “the dead, and the forgotten” [44] that enable us to elaborate conceptual tools for assembling “counter-futures” [44]. We need a praxis that “through a kind of anachronistic justice” can disseminate “a truth erased by the chrono-masters” [45].

Our evolution not only contains in embryo what will be in the future but also has memory of other, ancestral existences. This does not mean that the destiny of what exists is determined by primordial laws, but rather that different parts of the same embryo can evolve in different and divergent directions, shooting concurrent polarizations. The past is never finished once and for all, it is not an unchangeable fixed point, and the future is not the progress of this present; rather, as Karen Barad argues, “the past and the future are enfolded participants in matter’s iterative becoming” [46].

In front of the catastrophic and progressive continuity that characterizes the narrative of Anthropocene, which presents the linear and autonomous story of a species that evolved from hunter-gatherer tribes to global geological force, critique can today only oppose a speculative notion of progress, “a becoming of continuity, but no continuity of becoming” [47]. This requires assuming the intermittent inconstancy that can suddenly explode in the very kernel of any power, thus interrupting the linear, cumulative, entropic tendency of this time. This is to disrupt the circular economy based on energy conservation, which turns all fuel into “the most conservative, closed figure” [48] and thus reopen the always already closed circle of metaphysics in which in each point “beginning and end coincide, but at the cost of an abyss” [33] (p. 2).

Other relations radiate within the abstract hegemony of Capital’s global logistics, haunting its dreams to be capable of adapting to every possible condition, eternally floating like a specter in a pneumatic vacuum, in the absence of air resistance; because all appropriation and colonization are always disoriented by extraneous influences and forces, and every acclimatization is perturbed by the time of the oppressed, which is neither the plastic time of the possible nor the geological time of foundations, but the perturbed and uncertain time of the impossible.

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Notes

- ¹ Interestingly, Schmitt adopts the same catastrophic tone about the word “Utopia” used by Thomas More in his book published in 1516, arguing that “such a word would have been unthinkable in the mouth of anyone in antiquity. Utopia did not mean any simple and general nowhere (or *erewhon*), but a *U-topos*, which, by comparison even with its negation, *A-topos*, has a stronger negation in relation to *topos* [18]”.
- ² On this passage, Derrida comments that “losing the enemy would not necessarily be progress, reconciliation, or the opening of an era of peace and human fraternity. It would be worse: an unheard-of violence, the evil of a malice knowing neither measure nor ground, an unleashing incommensurable in its unprecedented—therefore monstrous—forms; a violence in the face of which what is called hostility, war, conflict, enmity, cruelty, even hatred, would regain reassuring and ultimately appeasing contours, because they would be identifiable [20]”.
- ³ For Jacques Rancière this distribution (*partage*) of the sensible discloses at the same time “the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it [39]”.

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