CAN WE
OVERCOME
MODENITY’S ACOSMIA?

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2. Can we overcome Modernity’s acosmia?

21. Earth, World, Cosmos, Universe

A recent work by the poet Henri Raynal bears the title, *They’ve decided that the universe doesn’t concern them*. The author chooses to use the term acosmism so as to denounce the “autism” of our species which today considers itself unencumbered from any obligation to reflect on humanity’s place in the universe and to hold itself accountable. So as to re-iterate and reflect through a similar line of thought, I prefer to use the term *acosmia* (acosmie), which in my opinion has the advantage of also referring to the term coined by Emile Durkheim, anomia — i.e. the disappearance of all values and as a result, the disorders that arise from this. Whereas anomia refers to the social sphere, acosmia concerns both the social and the natural spheres. More specifically, acosmia is concerned with the mechanical rigging of human values that have been applied to nature, an application that, in stark contrast to naturalism (such as sociobiology or Callicles in the *Gorgias*), mesology refuses to reduce them to, but also in contrast to the contemporary metaphasism (such as that found in *French theory*, which as we will see, willingly soars into the bluest of skies without any terrestrial grounding or base) which attempts to *construct and establish* these mechanical values.

For mesology, on one hand, indeed one can’t reduce humanity to nature, because every human reality is *trajective*, and the human subject herself being trajective as subject predicate of herself (S/P of herself, i.e. reflexive), this trajectivity necessarily contains the natural foundation of S within the predicative dimension P, which can’t be reduced to S.

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1 Henri Raynal, *Ils ont décidé que l’univers ne les concernait pas*. (Paris: Klincksieck, 2012). Throughout this section, I will re-examine the lecture I gave during the framework of the course I presented at the University of Corsica, June 11, 2013. Some of these passages also found their way into my book, *Poétique de la terre. Histoire naturelle et histoire humaine, essai de la mésologie* (Paris: Belin, 2014).

2 Concerning the question of justice, Callicles was opposed to Socrates, claiming that in the city as in nature, it was the strong who were destined to rule over the weak. Might is right! As far as sociobiology is concerned, it strives to reduce the social to the biological.

3 Trajectory is a fundamental concept of mesology (Umweltlehre, 萃土論). It is defined as the co-creative to and fro between the two theoretical poles of dualism. For more on this theme, see Augustin Berque, *La mésologie, pourquoi et pour quoi faire?* (Nanterre–La Défense: Presses universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2014).
“Reality” is therefore, necessarily, S/P: S qua P, i.e. trajective. However, on the other hand, one can’t reduce this reality S/P to the lone predicate P. The latter can never cut itself away from its foundation in S, in spite of what the trendy metabasism might want to convince us to believe, and before it, the Kyoto School (but certainly not for the same reasons), following Nishida Kitarō for whom the predicate is literally “without base” (mukitei 無基底).

If S is the logical subject, the substance, the substrate, nature, the Earth, then what is P? For the logician, it’s what is said about S. For mesology, this is also indeed the case, but there is something else; it’s first of all what we feel in regard to S, what we do with it, what we think about it, and what we say about it. The reality S/P is therefore the link that is established between S and P through the senses and through action (this concerns all living beings), through thought (this concerns superior forms of animal life⁴) and through speech (this only concerns humans by way of our double articulation of language). Within this relation, S takes on a certain “sense” [sens]⁵, which is simultaneously a physical direction in space-time, a corporeal sensation, and a mental signification, expressed through words. Through this creation of sense, starting from S, arises the reality of our world: but within this relation, the world is indeed in the position of the predicate, P: it’s the daylight in which S appears to us. It is made up of the set of predicates according to which we grasp S, in order to create the reality S/P.

An old image will help to illustrate this relation. In one of the discourses proposed by Isocrates (~436/~338), as we mentioned earlier on, he proposes the following equation: ἡ γῆ ἡ ἄτασις ἡ ὑπὸ τοῦ κόσμου ψηφιά (the expanse of the earth underneath the sky).⁶ Hupo…keimenê: here, the earth is in the position of hupokeimenon (S) in relation to the sky or heavens. Let’s pursue this metaphor while it’s still vivid in our minds: the heavens or sky (ouranos=kosmos=world) is here in the position of the predicate P, and covers the earth—subject as the male covers the female.⁷

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⁴ In superior forms of animal life, in addition to the phylogenetic lineage of a species, there is the ontogenetic formation of the individual and the ethology of the sociogenetic construction susceptible to “making history”. See Michael Tomasello, The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999)

⁵ The author’s use of the term “sens” already carries within it a myriad of connotations in French referring to the variety of meanings inherent in the French term “sens” including directional path, meaning, feeling, sensation, etc. all of which point to what the author refers to in his explanation of the term in relation to the concept of trajectivity. [TN]


⁷ For Medieval Philosophy, the subject will indeed be feminine and the predicate will be masculine. See Alain de Lille (1120–1202 or 1203), La plainte de Natura (De planctu naturae), translated from the Latin with a commentary by Yves Delègue, (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2013) 83: “Among those who apply the grammar of Venus […] there are still those who, taking the form of the subject, ignore the predicate, and others who, in being quite satisfied with the predicate, in no way lend themselves to the legal submission of the term subject”, and ibid., note 2: “[…] the subjectum/praedicatum pair,
But isn’t this nothing more than a mere metaphor? For mesology most certainly not: it indeed includes metaphor (the mental and verbal image), but it’s not limited to just metaphors. It also concerns physics as much as biology. From the very fact of our bipedalism, without first referencing the action of gravity, our feet are firmly planted on the ground, and our head is already fixed toward the sky. It’s not the other way around, nor arbitrarily in one direction [sens] or another. Our feet support us on the earth, which is here in a position of a substrate (hupokeimenon); our head thinks and speaks—it produces utterances as predicates about that substrate—words swept up by the wind in the sky. All of this is articulated to us according to a certain milieu; in other words, this specific milieu: our own, making of us the articulation of the heavens and earth. From this we have the birth of the binding agent [ciment] of human cosmologies.

In Japanese, “milieu” is defined by the term fudô 風土. Within this word, the first sinogram represents the wind, but also the traditional customs or values (mœurs), ways of living, speaking, and acting. The term is here in a position of the determinans. The second term denotes the earth; this second term is in a position of the determined. This means that on planet Earth a milieu is necessarily comprised of a substantial ground (do 土: the hupokeimenon S), but — since we exist— there is no less necessarily a certain way (â 風: the predicate P) of determining this ground by way of our senses, our actions, our thoughts, and our words, basically, our customs: a specific “way” which, through the wind (風) participates from the non-substance of the sky (sora, a word which is written as 空, a sinogram that has also led to the rendering of the Sanskrit term śūnyatā: the Buddhist concept of emptiness). From whence is born the reality of S/P, which is simultaneously substance and non-substance; that is, the simultaneous trajectory of one to the other, and of the one in the other.

The sky shines down on the earth in a certain daylight, that varies from one hour to the next, from one season to the next, and from one hemisphere to the other; but within all of this, there is an invariable order, since the impalpable celestial vault also has the first used by the grammarians, will during the second half of the 12th century come to take the place of the suppositum/appositorum pair[...]. Alain is neither a grammarian nor a logician, and as a poet, he plays with these technical terms in his own manner. The text imposes the notion that the predicate designates the male element of the pair and that subject denotes the female element (i.e. the one who is “placed underneath” in the “legal” position of sexual relations (subjecti termini subjectionem legitimam). See as well …/… p. 105, note 1: “The subject (suppositum) in each sentence has a feminine value because it’s “placed under”, whereas the predicate that is joined to it (the appositorum) bears the value of the masculine. It’s clear that here Alain is alluding to the so-called “natural” position of coitus. The predicate is man because it’s through the sowing of his seed that allows for the feminine substantive to procreate sense”.

8 In logic and grammar, “determinans” = determinans or determinandum; “determiné” = determinatum. The former qualifies the latter.
firmness of the firmament, “that will divide the waters from the waters” (*Genesis*, 1: 6–8), and which invariably will turn around the Southern Cross or the North Star (Polaris) (from the Greek, *polein*—to turn). This cosmic order is the support structure for human milieus. This order guarantees its reality. This is why in Greek as in Latin, these structures bear the same name—*cosmos*, or *mundus*—which means at once the heavens or sky, the world, and an organizing structure, such as with the upkeep of things or the upkeep and care of the human body itself through good hygiene, proper decorum, and the ornamental. In particular, as we have already discussed regarding a woman’s finery: *mundus muliebris*, with the cosmicity of her cosmetics. Mnemotechnically⁹, we could remind ourselves of the fact that finery (P) is in the position of a predicate (P) in relation to our body, *sôma* (S), which here is in the position of the *hupokeimenon* (S), in the same way that the world (P) is in the position of the predicate in relation to the Earth (S). Which is to say that to claim, as the French saying goes, “the habit does not make the monk” is a substantialist position that is ignorant of the trajectivity (S/P) of human realities. This is also why the sovereign whose rule sets in place the order down below, the Son of the Heavens or Sky was denoted by the character *wang* 王 in China, which aligns the earth (±) and the sky (−) by way of a cosmic axis (l); the same way that the French term for king —*roi* or the —*rix* of Vercingétorix are derived from the Indo-European *reg* that we can find in the term regularity [régularité] or in droit [law]; or in the way that in Crete, during the time of Aristotle, the supreme magistrate was indeed named *kosmos*.

The moral of all this resides at the very heart of mesology: the order of humanity need not abstract itself from the natural order: *eppur⁷⁹*, as Galileo might have said, nor must it be reduced to this natural order. For the very reason that the order of humanity is in the position of a predicate in relation to nature: simultaneously free and necessarily founded upon nature by a cosmological link. Why is this? Because it is nature that humanity interprets, not nothingness. This is what one can read in the superlatives gratified by Plato as with the term *kosmos* in the concluding lines of the *Timaeus*. All of these remarks are expressions of human values:

Having received all mortal and immortal creatures and being therewithal replenished, this universe hath thus come into being, living and visible, containing all things that are visible, the image of its maker, a god perceptible formed in the image of an intelligible god, most mighty and good, most fair and perfect (*megistos kai aristos kallistos te kai teledôtitos*), even this one and only—begotten world that is: it’s the sky (*ouranos*) that is the one (*heis*) and only of its race (*monogenês*)."¹¹

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⁹ But only in French, where “*parure*” (finery) begins with a p, like “predicate”.

¹⁰ The author is referencing here Galileo’s famous dictum, *eppur si muove*, “and yet it moves” in reference to the Earth revolving around the Sun.

¹¹ We have chosen to translate from the author’s original French rendering of *The Timaeus* but have also relied on R.N. Hind’s translation as well, see: *The Timaeus of Plato*, Edited with Introduction and Notes by R.N. Hind (New York, NY: Macmillan and Co., 1888) 345.
Here were we have a profession of faith— the faith of a human being in harmony with the Umwelt, with what he is, and vice-versa. We are all present herewithin, all of us humans, but also all of us living beings that we are, from bacteria to each of us humans—the reality surrounding us participates in our very being since it is us, through our senses and our actions, our thoughts and our words, that predicate it into what is our world.

But what happens then, when modernity considers the world as a neutral and objectal universe? The in-itself of a pure “environmental given” (Umgebung: S) detached—in form [en droit] if not also as a fact [en fait]—from every human predicate, even from the living?

We see an occurrence of a decosmicization, that tends to deprive our values of any foundation within nature, and as a result, produces an endless number of absurdities; since neither the Good, nor the Beautiful, nor the True can be tautologically founded in and of themselves, they must come into being by way of a reference to something else, as has been demonstrated by Gödel: “We can’t construct a proposition p exclaiming that the consistency of a system S, such that p itself is a part of S.”12 In other words, contrary to the current worldview and its dogmas, we can’t establish a set of values within the values themselves, morality within morality, aesthetics within aesthetics, justice within justice, signs within signs, not even a physics inside physics! Which of course, is not a small problem in the least!...

22. Acosmia

In Fudo, Watsuji makes use of the concept jikohakkensei: self-discovery within the surrounding milieu. In other words, the foundational bearings that ek-sistence toward the world procures for being, assuring us that we are in the world and that we are indeed ourselves. A morbid or pathological version of this discovery was made famous by Guy de Maupassant’s novella, The Horla:

I slept for about forty minutes, then opened my eyes, without making any movement, awakened by some strange, confused emotion. At first, I saw nothing, then all of a sudden it seemed to me that a page of the book had just turned all by itself. No breath of air had come in through the window. I was surprised and I waited. After about four minutes, I saw, I saw, yes, I saw, gentlemen, with my own

12 In this case, I’m referring to the simplified formulation of Gödel’s theorems found in the work of Jean-François Gautier, L’Univers existe-il? (Arles: Actes Sud, 1994) 146.
13 From the viewpoint of a philosophy of sciences, we can measure the enormity of this issue in the work of Pierre Kerzberg, La science dans le monde de la vie (Grenoble: Millon, 2012).
eyes, another page lift itself and fall back on the preceding one as if a finger had turned it. The chair seemed empty, but I realized it was there, it, and that it was reading! ...

The narrator, having become invisible to himself, goes mad in seeing things existing without him. Another way to put it: he no longer possesses his animal body but merely his medial body: his table, his window, his chair... but it’s the narrator who is no longer there: someone else has taken his place: the Horla, a kind of being—there deprived of its own focus.

In Maupassant’s novella, this discovery of the self as Horla is what leads to a fiery madness. We could even read it as the reverse reflection of what happens within the Modern Ontological Topos (MOT), whose lack-of-being is precisely the opposite—having lost its medial body—having lost its own world and thereby destined to wander aimlessly, deprived of any guiding orientations. This specific—outside here, this outside of place of the cogito which can no longer even take solace in having a soul: such is modernity’s acosmia.

Are we therefore the ones who are bathing in a fiery madness?

No. But the world escapes our grasp since the mechanical drive of modernity made a machine out of the world: the Apparatus, and it’s precisely this machine that continues, slowly but surely, to simply follow its own rules: replacing saving the world with the lone working mechanism of its own functioning parts. Fortunately, we’re still here and still have the ability to take back the reins. But we can’t always get them under control or regain control of them in a sufficient amount of time, that is, before it’s too late. A recent example of regaining control of the reins of the machine—world was the rejection of the dictum: “We should adapt Paris to the automobile”, i.e. to a mechanical system. Today, we more soundly consider that a city should rather adapt to human life. But the Apparatus isn’t always so obscenely mechanical: its workings are much more subtle than that since it can hide precisely beneath the slogan of “human life”. Now, “human life” doesn’t simply exist

14 The Horla, Guy de Maupassant, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2005)
15 The MOT (Modernist Ontological Topos) is the result of a modernist dualism, which generates both the modernist subject and object through ontologically dissociating one from the other. It’s precisely the abstraction of both the modernist subject and object from mediance that, within a concrete milieu, indefinitely co-creates [co-susciter] them.
16 We should note that the author here is well aware of the relation in French between the discovery of the self as an awareness of self-existence without, outside himself which Guy du Maupassant speaks of, the phrase Horla is a homophone of the French term taken up by the author in his explanation of the counter version of loss of self in relation to the loss of the world and the arrival of acosmia within modernity. Hors-là literally means, in French, outside—there, [TN]
in and of itself. It will only ever be what we, humanity, as subject predicates of ourselves (S/P) make of it.

In the end, is not the so-called “Apparatus” an expression of ourselves?

It certainly is, since it’s an aspect of our medial body.

The Apparatus is the machinic side found within the medial half of our being, that side which under the guise of facilitating our life, actually devours it in order to aid in its own functioning. It’s the Horla that, in feeding off human energy, lives its machine life, i.e. this “self-propelling life of that which is dead”, sich in sich bewegendes Leben des Toten as Hegel proclaimed in relation to money and the alienation of the world of merchandise.

This is not some mere image, it’s very clearly a case of acosmia. If one considers a recent commercial for the Nissan Pathfinder which was popular around 2006: what was marketed was how this vehicle which was obviously trying to market itself to the adventure of the “great outdoors” also strived to market the fact that on the backside of the headrest, tiny tv screens had been included so the children could play video games during the trip or watch Batman restoring order to Gotham City, while the adults proved their love for nature, since they were driving in nature while simultaneously being inside their SUV.

There’s also the car commercial for the Mitsubishi Pajero SUV from 2004 which claims, “You love nature, prove it!” But it’s the same idea. It’s loving nature inside the Apparatus, and this first consists of inserting a machine between our body and the Earth, or between our body and the world, since it’s as a world (P) that the Earth (S) appears to us. And here, what is at work is most certainly a decosmication—“a deprivation of world”, as Franck Fischbach claims, an Entweltlichung as Heidegger would say. For Fischbach, this loss of world is the normal state of the modern subject:

I claim that the subject is actually made to be thought of as separate from the world; that the separation of the subject in relation to the world is not a pathological state of the subject that one must try to heal or alleviate, that the world’s absence is not an accident that occurred to an unfortunate subject, but the subject’s normal state. […] The deprivation of world is constitutive of the subject. […] Today our problem is not that the existence of subject is denied, but the complete opposite: that the subject must affirm its existence in a completely extravagant manner and scale.

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It’s clear, the deep logic of modernity is to replace the cosmicizing trajectory S/P (S qua P, the Earth qua world) with that of two subjects, which, having nothing in common with each other, are both separately made into absolutes: the one being the cogito and the other being the object (i.e. the logical subject: that which is in question [ce dont il s’agit]). The former is now only under jurisdiction of its own partial arbitrariness, the latter falls merely under that of chance or mechanical necessity. There no longer remains a place for the contingency of a common history, which would unite them under a common milieu.

This acosmia, by way of the absolutization of the subject (i.e. the me–I on the one hand, and the extension or connected object on the other) through the negation of a milieu, creates what Rem Koolhaas had a field day deliriously diagnosing in his writings as “junkspace”\textsuperscript{19}— negating any connection with place, following no rules accept furthering this inattention to the milieu. All one has to do is open one’s eyes to the landscape around them, or take the time to glance through notebooks of our modernist architects. For example, the high-rise blocks that Le Corbusier had dreamed of building, one on the hills of Algiers and the other replacing the Orsay train station in Paris (today the site of the Musée d’Orsay): these pure metaphors of Le Corbusier’s ego (S), and \textit{ipso facto}, these pure objects (S) are mechanically repeated at a distance of thousand miles as the crow flies, i.e. with no concern with the milieu or its history. Totally acosmic and devastatingly decosmicizing for history as well as the milieu itself, where, in practice, they nevertheless had to be installed. Fortunately these two projects ended up not becoming reality. But today, we see a variety of these sorts of architectural constructions all across the planet.

Acosmia being by definition without any precise order, it thus becomes impossible to grasp it in any orderly fashion. We can merely provide examples, which in any case all refer back to the same principle: the obstinate \textit{ek-sistence} of the MOT outside of its milieu and the history that produced it therein (since the MOT does in fact exist there). To provide an example:

1: The end of urban composition, that was a co-creation \textit{[co-susciter]}, a \textit{crianza mutua}\textsuperscript{20}, the composition of forms with other forms and the composition of people with other people. From this point forward, to each his or her own gesture, be it architectural or otherwise!

\textsuperscript{19} Rem Koolhaas first came to prominence speaking about the remnants and residue of consumerist culture that had infiltrated architectural planning and creation in the early 2000s, for a more recent synopsis of these thoughts, see Rem Koolhaas and Hal Foster \textit{Junkspace with Running Room} (Notting Hill Editions, 2016) [TN]

\textsuperscript{20} See further along section 31.
2. An exaltation of rupture, like that found in the "petits papiers"\textsuperscript{21} of the surrealists or the cacomorphy of the contemporary city.\textsuperscript{22} We can find the exact opposite of this in Japanese linked–poems, \textit{renga} 連歌, or the traditional garden–promenades, which in both cases strived to uphold the ideal, according to Watsuji, of “maintaining a harmony within change.”\textsuperscript{23}

3. The standardization within globalization, which is the exact opposite of the composition and harmony within difference. This standardization is not only a kind of landscape–killing, what Li Shangyin (813–859) called \textit{shafengjing} 杀风景, but also a milieu–killing, a \textit{sappûdo} 殺風土, as Watsuji would have no doubt written if he were still alive today.

4. From this point forward, the Brownian Movement of “friends” within social networks, their shared aleatory dance, can only truly result in a stochastic process rather than in any sort of truly livable milieu.

5. The progressive transformation of the suburb into a juxtaposition of private malls and gated communities which end up replacing the street or neighborhood. As the Japanese sociologist, Miura Atsushi jeers at, the Modernist Ontological Topos is “no longer a citizen (\textit{shimin} 市民) but a private individual (\textit{shimin} 私民).”

6. The rising gap of inequality can now be seen in the wealthier countries, as well as between countries: If the Modernist Ontological Topos has historically proclaimed and successfully defended an equality of rights, which would thereby symbolically liberate itself from any medial body whatsoever, it displays in fact a marvelous aptitude to put up with real inequalities. Without a medial body, no need to worry about other people!

7. The ideal situation that the managerial techniques have come up with: atomize the collectives, divide, individualize, in–secure or secure flexibility, systematically precarize the salaried labor force\textsuperscript{24}. While it’s true that divide \textit{ut regnes}, “divide and conquer” is a rather old principle, it gains its most efficiency within the MOT.

8. While we wait for the arrival of transhumanism—the dream of cloning: an iteration of oneself without having to deal with anyone else at all, how wonderful it would be! An ideal situation for the MOT!

9. What would be even better: to render the Modernist Ontological Topos eternal, a project which can be seen at work in the research done by the Gerontologist and Bio–engineer at Cambridge, Aubrey de Grey, for whom, “the two most fundamental instincts of

\textsuperscript{21} A parlor game with folded papers, in which only the last words of the preceding sentence are left visible, entailing an absurd connection with the following one, and so on.

\textsuperscript{22} A term created from cacophony where \textit{morphy} (form) replaces \textit{phony} (voice) after \textit{kako} (bad).

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Utsuri–kawari tsutsu chowa wo tamotsu 移り変わりつつ調和を保つ} p. 260

\textsuperscript{24} Danielle Linhart, \textit{Travailler sans les autres}, (Paris: Seuil, 2009) The author’s thesis is that the call for a re–claiming of autonomy against the tide of Taylorism has become a trap, the ruling class has simply re–appropriated this ideal from the May ‘68 generation so as to de–stabilize the salaried labor–force and render them more precarious, a sort of blackmail so as to procure more of a profit from their labor.
living beings are survival and the transmission of DNA”\textsuperscript{25}, but the former obviously takes primacy over the latter, which led him, along with his wife Adeline, to decide to not have any children. Surely we’re much better in tune with the MOT if we don’t have a brood, i.e., choosing to not share our DNA, and carefully, selfishly holding onto it for ourselves!

10. In a similar fashion, the program Snowflakes, which works for the crypto-conservation of supernumerary embryos within \textit{in vitro} fertilization, the MOT is itself already within the very first cells of life: “An embryo has 46 chromosomes, it’s already a complete human being”, confirms Mrs. Meredith, mother of the child Ella, “composed of eight cells and was not yet three days old when she was frozen”. There is no doubt as far as this ipseity is concerned, since “it’s God that has placed us on this path”\textsuperscript{26}!

11. A ludic inversion of the marks, tattoos, and piercings denoting diverse forms of belonging, which, throughout traditional societies, were a \textit{kosmos} to the letter: with the MOT, these forms of belonging have become the distinction of the individual animal body outside the values of the medial body (it’s true that they manifest, ipso facto, their belonging to Maffesolian “tribes”).\textsuperscript{27}

12. The inflation, in ordinary speech, of “\textit{un peu} (a little)”, or “\textit{un petit peu} (a little bit)”, and of quotations marks in one’s writing (including the Anglo-Saxon gesture when speaking): the MOT must mark its lack of concern, its \textit{Teilnahmlosigkeit} [lack of participation] as Honneth would say. It’s the time of the zing, the zap, the time of swiping [glisse], we no longer take part in the world, aloof in \textit{Kontemplation} to the second degree…

Acosmia: we can see quite clearly what it is: the end of all cosmicity. From the viewpoint of architecture, the cityscape, or the territory, it implies the rule of junkspace. This being the case, is there still a possibility for recovering a cosmicity?


All human societies necessarily interpret the world in order to make it their world. This interpretation is a cosmology: a speech act (\textit{logos}) regarding the world (\textit{kosmos}), in which, trajectively the object of the topic (S) and the topic itself (P) become one and the same reality (S/P): \textit{the reality of the world and not something else. Anthropology and

\textsuperscript{25} From an interview in \textit{Courrier international} N\textsuperscript{o} 806, April 13–19, 2006, p. 41 regarding the SENS project (Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence, in other words, immortality.)

\textsuperscript{26} Cited by Emmanuelle Eyles, “États-Unis. Nous avons adopté un embryon congelé”, \textit{Marie-Claire}, N\textsuperscript{o} 641, January, 2006, p. 64 and p. 68

\textsuperscript{27} Michel Maffesoli, \textit{Le temps des tribus} (Paris: Méridiens-Klincksiek, 1988). The subtitle of the book can be translated as “the decline of individualism in postmodern societies”, which at first glance, would seem to contradict my thesis, but from the viewpoint of mesology, the MOT can only ek-sist-outside. In practice, it is necessarily always ek-sisting-toward a certain world (P’, in this case a certain “tribe”), that it creates to the extent that it rejects another world (P, here “society” that the May 68 generation vomited up and rejected), within the process of ourouboros that is trajectio.
History provides us with a myriad of diverse examples of this, but they are merely modern sciences and as such participate in the objectification of the *Umwelt* as *Umgebung* or postmodern, which, in this light, deconstructs every *Umgebung* in order to consider that, in the end, everything is nothing more than the construction of reality, in other words, everything is nothing more than an *Umwelt*, even, according to Nishida, a pure predicate. In this sense, cosmo-*logies*: simple speech acts [*dires*] each different and at bottom equivalent.

This seems to be, for example, the vision held by Philippe Descola in *Beyond Nature and Culture*, who, in his “ontological square”\(^{28}\), places “naturalism”, where he classifies modernity, on the same plane as totemism, animism, and analogism. However, from the mesological point of view, modernism contains a distinguishing characteristic apart from the three other ontologies: modernism deprives the human subject (S) of having a world, whereas these other ontologies are precisely integrated within a world, and vice-versa. Correlatively, modernity has grasped the in-itself (the other S, but in principle detached from the initial S) of the object to a degree of cognitive and material mastery incommensurable with the other ontologies: but modernity does this at the price of a foreclosure that makes of the MOT, via its lack-of-being, ontologically handicapped, an exceptional case in relation to humanity— and *a fortiori* just as much in its relation to non-humans.

That is to say, for mesology, the modernist vision is not “equivalent” with the other ontological visions. We cannot place it onto the same atemporal plane since the Modernist Ontological Topos is considered as a phase of human evolution that *succeeds* these other ontologies and imposes itself in their place, but which, by its very historicity, is destined to be overcome by further visions.

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As we have just seen, modernity is characterized by a de-cosmicization, that is, a loss of cosmicity. In order to go back and glimpse some beautiful forms of cosmicity, one must take a separate path that leads one back prior to the foundation of the CMWP (Classical Modernist Western Paradigm). We shall begin by setting out on this path, and then ask the question of whether or not perhaps a new form of cosmicity is in the midst of replacing the ascomia of modernity, and then conclude by referencing the specific case of the Peruvian world.

From a mesological point of view, a cosmology places into relation (*logos*) the world (*kosmos*) with our own existence. Thereby becoming, either implicitly or explicitly, an *onto-cosmo-logy*. To give an example, the contemporary cosmology is an astrophysics where the Universe is in principle a pure object comprised of voids, waves, atoms, and biological cycles, which not simply reflects the dualism of modernity, (in other words, our contemporary ontology) but regularly spackles together theories which re-center this *Umgebung* in relation to our own existence thereby constructing— but without being aware of it, and thus irrationally— an *Umwelt*: hence "the anthropic principle" (where the effect becomes the cause), and its partner in somersault, “intelligent design” (which is nothing more than a disguised creationism).

These are the contemporary versions of wonder that Plato already made manifest in his *Timaeus*, when confronted with the harmonizing of the *kosmos* with his own conception of being, which makes of Plato’s text an explicit ontocosmology. We are familiar with its principle: the absolute being (*eidos, idea*), outside of time and space, projecting its reflection into the milieu (*chôra*) and into history, where this image would become a relative being (*genesis*). This projection of being is also, at the same time, the organization of the world (*kosmos*); hence the inevitable reciprocal harmonization of *genesis* and *kosmos*.

Make no mistake, it’s true that this summary still, in my opinion, roughs up a text that we haven’t stopped striving to interpret for over two millennia; but without going into the details here, we should emphasize that this setting into relation of being and the world makes of the *Timaeus* the paragon of every cosmology. And, as is the case with every cosmology, this one is culturally archetypal (*typé*): the transcendence of the *idea*, that is distinguished from the sensible world through a “separation or abyss” (*chôrismos*), would go perfectly well with the absolute Being of Christianity, before generating the cogito.

All traditional cosmologies being culturally archetypal (*typées*), it will be out of the question to attempt to sketch a table of them all here. In mixing up the ontological perimeters of “physicality” and “interiority” with those of “continuity” and “discontinuity” between humans and non-humans, Descola’s work which we cited earlier, provides us with one of the best possible. Rather let’s take from this work, merely one of its principles. From the point of view of mesology, in one way or another, every cosmology incarnates the movement of trajection; That is to say, to summarize, within the trajeactive chain (((S/P)/P’)/P”…, the assumption of S as P, and the hypostasis of P as S’ (which is the preceding S/P, but in the position of S in relation to P’). To be more precise, it becomes a question of the circular correspondence between the microcosm (the human body) and the

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macrocosm (the world): the world (S) as body (P), and the body (S) as world (P). Which is nothing more than the double movement of existence: ek-sistence—toward (of a specific body toward the world) and ek-sistence—outside (of the world toward the specific body). In other words, trajectory is a to and fro, simultaneously the cosmicization of the body and the somatization of the world\textsuperscript{30}.

Our languages have retained a trace of this simultaneous cosmic and corporeal dimension of human existence. The French word for woman, femme, is derived from the Indo-European root of dhe (to suckle), which, among others, led to the creation of terms such as the Greek tithêné, nursemaid (and this is how Plato was able to specify the chôra as the milieu of relative being), from which we see the creation of the English term tit, the French terms fœtus (fetus), fils/fille (son/daughter), foin (hay), fenouil (fennel), and felicity... Basically, like a woman, the milieu (chôra) shares its breast with the relative being (genesis) who feels well at ease in this relation! As for the French term for man, Homme — like the Castilian Spanish terms for man and female, hombre and hembra\textsuperscript{31} — comes from the root khem, which led to the Greek term chthôn (earth, hence the term “autochthoné”, i.e. born from the earth itself), the Latin word humus (soil, earth, country), hence the creation of other terms such as humble, humiliare, to inhume, human, humanity... We are Earthbound—bound to this Earth—and we will end up being buried in it, after having spent some time standing up toward the heavens!

According to the Bible, the first man, Adam, incarnates this cosmicity. His name signifies “earth” in Hebrew (‘adamah), the clay out of which God sculpted him, and it’s the divine breath which granted him life and a soul (in Latin, the term anima, a word related to the Greek term for wind, anemos). Prior to the animation of humus into human, the “breath”, (in Hebrew, ru’ah, in Greek, pneuma, in Latin, spiritus), had no specific goal: “the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (Genesis, 1–2). The human is therefore the embodiment of a goal: the cosmic alliance between the earth and the heavens through the wind, by way of the breath, voice, and speech... From that point forward, we’re not too far from the Johannine Prologue: En archê en ho logos — In principio erat Verbum.

The anthropic principle and intelligent design, are nothing more than contemporary formulations of this same Biblical version: the final node of a human cosmos is nothing else than the human. Put simply, Adam is a monotheistic and anthropocentric\textsuperscript{32} version of what

\textsuperscript{30} From the Greek word sôma, body. This term also obviously includes somatic effects of which ethnology provides a myriad of examples (sorcery, etc.).

\textsuperscript{31} Mujer (woman) comes from the Latin mulier (woman) whose origins are not very clear. Popular etymologies have linked it to the Indo-European root mel (soft).

\textsuperscript{32} And, it goes without saying, androcentric (at the very least in the second Creation story). As far as Eve is concerned, she is “the Living”, in Hebrew, Hawwa(h): from the word hayah, to live: cf. the feminine Arabic first name, Hayat, “Life”.

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in Japanese, through the elision–implication of human subjectivity, is called “wind-earth”: ふど 風土, a human milieu.

Furthermore, the great cosmic breath played a much larger role in the East than in the West. Particularly, in China, with the notion of qi 氣. The origin of this sinogram was a pictogram imitating the swirling mist of respiration or other similar natural phenomena. It implies life, specifically the life of the body and the natural environment surrounding it. The qi is therefore both the vital and cosmic breath. From physics to medicine, to metaphysics, without forgetting to mention aesthetics, this notion of a cosmic and vital breath traverses the history of Chinese civilization which ends up making a sui generis concept out of it, comprised of material energy, spiritual energy and vitality: In other words, the concept of qi integrates matter, life, and spirit. While nevertheless being an extremely Eastern notion, we could even claim that the concept of qi is homological with what the logos has become for the West. Is speech not precisely a breath?

This structuring of the world by the qi is cosmological by essence. What’s more: this structuring is cosmophanical, since it can be viewed directly within the landscape through feng shui, which we can define as an ecomancy, cosmicizing the expanse of the earth as the circulation of the qi and in accordance with human existence. The best introduction to feng shui written in the French language is without a doubt, the short book by Frédéric Obringer, Fengshui. L’art d’habiter la terre. Obringer writes in the first lines of the book:

To grasp the respiration of the mountains, to seek out indications of the proper marriage of water and wind so that the living and the dead can inhabit the earth with contentment, or at the least without too much disharmony, such is the aim of the art of geomancy (feng shui) in China. The idea is both simple and powerful, its realization complex and uncertain. Since the time of Antiquity, Chinese cities and

33 It’s perhaps important to recall that, for the Stoics, logos took on the meaning of breath (pneuma) animating the world, a conception of the term which was most certainly an equivalent of qi, and which greatly influenced the Fathers of the Church (pneuma=spiritus).
34 For more on this subject, see Denis Vasse, L’arbre de la voix. La Chair, les mots, et le souffle: le sujet naissant (Paris: Fayard, 2010).
35 The word feng shui is written as [風水]“wind” (feng) – “water” (shui). The origins of feng shui are very ancient, but it’s during the era of Wei–Jin (220–589) that the notion gains some formal consistency. What can be considered as the first treatise on feng shui, “The Book of Burial”, written by Guo Pu (276–324) proclaims: “The rising breath onto the wind became diffuse, blocked by the water it stops. The ancients gathered together in such a way so as to keep themselves from moving, and stopped the flow of the water. And so they called it feng shui. The method of feng shui consisting first of all obtaining water, and then sheltering oneself from the wind.” Cited in Maebayashi Kiyokazu, et. al, Ki no hikaku bunka. Chûgoku, Kankoku, Nippon (Compared cultures of qi. China, Korea, Japan), Kyôto, Shônandô, (2000) 97.
its countryside villages have pondered, shaped, and re-shaped the land so as to enable the souls of the dead to find a proper resting place in order for these souls to fully manifest their goodwill to those who continue to carry on living: at the same time this land becomes beneficial for the men and women who have strived to construct their homes, temples, and palaces, in a specific manner so as to be in harmony with the organization of the universe:[…]

At a superficial glance, particularly if one thinks of a myriad of caricatures found in the media, one can be persuaded that feng shui is some sort of ridiculous old-fashioned practice without any rational basis that one would be better off leaving to the amateurs of a dubious exoticism. But to do this would be to forget to what extent the Chinese people are completely steeped in this art, which for centuries if not millennia, provides them a means for valuing the world, appreciating fortune and weathering misfortune, despite the critical spirit the people can sometimes cast toward this practice.36

After having been repressed as a superstition under Maoism, feng shui has once again become a force, and has even garnered popular favor in the West.37 And indeed, the conjuncture readily lends itself to this phenomenon, given the current ecological impasse of civilization. A recent comparative study regarding the trendiness of feng shui notes that its resurgent popularity in China, since the 1970s, ended up leading to an entire wave of research whose central problematic was targeted at the dualism and materialism of modernity. Indeed the qi hinges precisely on what dualism and materialism have separated:

In the present conjuncture, the demand continues to grow for the overcoming of Western dualism, this thought which up until now has considered the human as an all-powerful being, so as to replace this dualism with a monism pleading for harmony, a balance between nature and humanity, through a reconsideration of the Oriental worldview which binds together the spirit and the body. Hence the attention garnered by the qi, which is this worldview’s central concept.38

And here, we can see exactly where the problem resides. Without going into all the myriad examples of charlantism and chicanery prevalent in the practice of feng shui, we cannot content ourselves with simply repudiating modern dualism with its opposite: a monism, which, in the end, merely leads to some kind of New Age mysticism: to sum it up—an absolutization of P instead of S. This tendency can be seen in the tradition of feng shui where, we can sometimes uncover strange resonances with Christianity: such as in the

38 Maebayashi Kiyokazu, et. al. op. cit p. iii,
expression: “drink the forms, take the species”!\[boire les formes, prendre les espèces]. Of course, this surely has nothing at all to do with Da Vinci’s *La Cena*. The geomancy of feng shui consists in assimilating the relief with recognizable types, as more or less quotidian scenes of life: “a lion playing with a ball”, “an old fisherman casting out his net”, “a spider spinning her web”, “an immortal reflected in a mirror”, “five tigers pouncing on a lamb”, etc.\[ This is how the relief becomes truly a legend (*legenda*: that which one must read). Confronted with the environment, the predicative *as* [*l’en-tant-que*] here substitutes for the physicist’s approach (with its sights set on *S*). This equates to overthrowing the Aristotelian logic of the subject by way of the Nishidian logic of the predicate. Of course, in feng shui, there is not only “the method of form\[Xingfa*, which is visible, but also, “the method of principle\[Lifa*, which is invisible; but in spite of the clockwork of these magnificent compasses, which are veritable *cosmologes*— cosmos-dictating apparatuses—, feng shui is not a physics: it’s a radical humanization of natural phenomena. Just look closely at this excerpt from a treatise on feng shui from the Tang dynasty regarding terrestrial magnetism:

> Magnetic force is an imprint of the maternal principle, and the compass needle was created from out of the iron which initially wounded this principle. As they are both of a maternal and filial nature, they communicate by responding to each other, and tend to regain their initial completeness through healing this initial wound.\[Quoted by He Xiaoxin, *Fûsui tangen. Chûgoku fûsui no rekeshi to jissai (In search of the origins of fengshui. History and realities of fengshui in China)*, (Kyôto: Jimbun shain, 1995) 76.

Of course, this was written during the time of Charlemagne; but since that time, feng shui has in no way experienced a Copernican revolution. Outside of minute changes in its composition, feng shui has remained the same. And in this sense, it is essentially pre-modern. And it’s precisely this pre-modern essence that we can’t seem to be satisfied with. In terms of cosmology, we must overcome modernity and not simply ignore it.

### 24. Recosmizing. Beyond Acosmia

Given that each thing arises out of what it is not—and vice-versa—it follows that this also applies for the cosmos: tradition teaches us that it arises out of chaos. Namely, we must seek to uncover in what way a new cosmicity could be created from out of this acosmia. Such a view presupposes that there resides some sort of transitional state, a

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39 *He xing qu lei* 喝形取類, which makes one think of the Eucharist. If we read 喝 to the fourth tone instead of the second, the meaning becomes “call out forms with loud cries” but this doesn’t change the general meaning of the expression.

40 Huang Yongzhong *Fûsui toshi (The cities of feng shui)*, (Kyôto, Gakugei shuppan, 1999) p. 200, where one will find the corresponding images.

41 *Xingfa* 形法.

42 *Lifa* 理法.

43 Quoted by He Xiaoxin, *Fûsui tangen. Chûgoku fûsui no rekeshi to jissai (In search of the origins of fengshui. History and realities of fengshui in China)*, (Kyôto: Jimbun shain, 1995) 76.
threshold, or a phase—a limit point, falling short of or beyond the rule of order or chaos. History and anthropology have shown us that in fact human worlds have been structured by such limit points. Without reverting too far into the past or an exoticism, this limit or point of demarcation was generally what distinguished wild space from cultivated space—initially cultivated by agriculture, the cosmogenetic limit then became the border or edge of the forest, next this border was cultivated by writing, the generative limit point or border becoming the edge of the city, its walls. More generally—and this is precisely from where our notion of world is derived (mundus, kosmos)—it will have been the distinction between that which is considered world—monde—and that which is not, that is, the unworldly or impure—immonde. But where exactly does this distinction come from?

Shall we recall the first human, Adam? He is made of the earth, and to the earth he will return, but throughout his life, he is animated by way of a divine breath, and his sights and actions are turned toward the sky or heavens. By way of this old image, let’s now turn our attention to a comment made by one of the greatest contemporary thinkers of landscape, Michel Corajoud: landscape is the place where the earth and the sky come into contact; we should add to this two sinograms: 開闢, which are pronounced as kaipi and which have the dual meaning of the clearing of an uncultivated piece of land or that of the initial opening of the world by way of a separation of the heavens and the earth, the earth and the sky; and without forgetting everything that we just discussed, we will end by way of the last lines of the Timaeus: the world (kosmos) is the sky (ouranos). Next, like these sieves (plokana) that Plato compares to the χώρα, let us shake this chaotic heap in order to sift through the sieve the beginnings of the following schema:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World</th>
<th>Human</th>
<th>Unworldly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the heavens or sky</td>
<td>landscape</td>
<td>earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>animate spirit</td>
<td>living flesh</td>
<td>inert matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pure</td>
<td>purifiable</td>
<td>impure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insubstance</td>
<td>reality</td>
<td>substance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on high</td>
<td>here</td>
<td>down below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that toward which</td>
<td>now</td>
<td>that beginning from which</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46 Timée, 52e and 53a.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>opening</th>
<th>threshold</th>
<th>enclosure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>liberation</td>
<td>existence</td>
<td>attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assumption</td>
<td>trajectivity</td>
<td>hypostase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P  
S/P  
S

Of course, the schema I have presented here is nothing more than a certain perspective, but let’s elaborate it a bit more. Other perspectives would also be possible, namely, through the meaning and direction [sens] one grants to the term “world”. For example, some might speak of the “subterranean world”, what the Romans called *inferni*, “infernal hells”, (from the term *inter* meaning, “that which resides underneath or below”) or others will speak of “the lower world”, low since it’s the world of the Fall. These same people or others will also envision a “superior world”, celestial even. Here, I find reassurance in the *coincidentia oppositorum* between Plato—the champion of the transcendence of the absolute being, for whom *kosmos* (world)= *ouranos* (sky), and Nishida, champion of the immanence of absolute nothingness, for whom, *sekai* 世界 (world) = *mu* 無 (nothingness), also known as the Buddhist emptiness, *ku* 空, sinogram which read as *sora* means heavens or sky. Thus, for these two master thinkers, the world is the sky.

Translated by Drew S. Burk