



Philosophers and Astronauts

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Abstract:	<p>This paper argues that contemporary space exploration, in producing visual representations of the planetary earth for terrestrial consumption, has engendered a shift in the way the earth - as terra firma - is both experienced and conceived. The paper goes on to suggest that this shift is a key, but still largely tacit presupposition, underlying contemporary discourses on globalisation and cultural cosmopolitanisation. However, a close reading of some of the texts that make up the 'canon' twentieth century European philosophy shows that this idea of a 'deterritorialised' planetary earth challenges some of the basic presuppositions of that canon: especially its use of the pre-reflective experience of terra firma as a tropic site of ontological and normative grounds. The paper examines the way in which contemporary western European philosophy - and intellectual culture generally - has responded to this challenge: and offers Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the earth as a 'surface without territory' as the most intellectually and ethically viable conception of the earth in the age of 'planetary deterritorialisation'.</p>

Worlding the Earth: Philosophy, Deterritorialisation and the Emergence of the Planetary Dimension.

The Ontological Consequences of Copernicus

In the 'parable of the madman' (Nietzsche, 1977; 202-3), Nietzsche addressed what he believed to be the joint consequences of Copernican astronomy and Darwinian evolutionary theory for western culture's most cherished and deeply held moral and metaphysical convictions. In his view, rather than producing cognitive 'Enlightenment' and liberating humanity from the dead hand of religious dogma and superstition - as many modern Enlightenment philosophers had claimed - these theories jointly threatened to undermine the moral and intellectual foundations of life in the West. According to Nietzsche, Copernicanism and Darwinism endangered the ancient, residual, yet still ubiquitous metaphysical idea that the universe has an ultimate foundation or 'ground' capable of cognisance and of 'rationally supporting' judgement in all its forms. Nietzsche encapsulated the perplexing nature of modernity's anti-rationalism in his famous maxim 'God is Dead'; and, as many have pointed out, this was no simple counter-theological statement, but a warning about the bottomless void - what might be termed the 'spatial nihilism' - portended by both these scientific paradigms. For in Nietzsche's view, with the modern quest for greater epistemological self-assuredness, humanity is in danger of not only sacrificing its traditional bases of meaning and significance, but of losing the very idea of a fixed and stable world itself. Thus the madman asks the crowd: '[w]hither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not perpetually falling? Backward forward, sideward in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as if through an infinite nothing?' (Nietzsche, 1977; 203).

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3 Nietzsche's argument is that Copernicanism and Darwinism force modern thinkers to
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5 question the ultimate significance of both the ancient Greek Humanist and the Judeo-
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7 Christian conceptions of humanity and its world (that is, to think beyond the
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9 territorialisation of western philosophy between 'Athens' and 'Jerusalem'). In Nietzsche's
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11 view, these new sciences jointly support a hypermodern cosmology that is both
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13 'groundless' and 'simian', such that after Copernicus and Darwin 'the earth does not stand
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15 fast' (Nietzsche, 1998; 2) and 'man is more of an ape than any ape' (Nietzsche, 1969; 42).
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17 In such a context, Nietzsche's madman is no prophet of lost archaic theological certainties,
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19 but a new voice of sanity; castigating, warning and exhorting his 'metaphysically
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21 sonambulant' audience to wake up to the truly frightening placelessness of modernity's
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23 emergent Copernican and Darwinian forms of life. Many who have followed Nietzsche
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25 have noted that the key to understanding this ontological shift resides within a broader
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27 appreciation of the depth of the changes inflicted upon traditional conceptions of earth and
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29 forms of worldliness (*weltlichkeit*) by the new scientific conceptions of humanity and its
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31 world. As Nietzsche's heir Martin Heidegger famously claimed, when seen in Copernican
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33 planetary-cosmological terms, the earth is no longer the earth in any vital or lived sense,
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35 but simply *an object* comprised of 'purely technological relationships' (Heidegger, 1993;
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37 105-6): an object, moreover, that is subjectivised into a representation, a *vorstellung* that
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39 'stands before us' rather than as something in 'our midst'. Once perceived and conceived a
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41 planet, the earth becomes 'deworlde'd': appearing as just one more casual system within a
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43 much wider cosmological causal order. And this is why for Heidegger - in his much cited
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45 reflections on this matter - the interplanetary images of the earth in space are not simply the
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47 end product of a rather complex and powerful set of technological process that *enframe* the
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49 earth as a mass industrialised object, but are images that radically diminish the meaning of
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51 the earth, rendering humanity without a *world* within which to dwell (a theme that I return
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3 to later). When seen in Heideggerean terms, Copernicanism reduces the earth to mere
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6 'planetary matter'; an absurd and inhuman cosmic accident devoid of any ultimate sense or
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8 significance. In such a context we can no longer speak of a meaningful world at all,
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10 because when the earth is uprooted and rendered representational it ceases to be a context
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12 of significance but stands as something that 'transcends all tacitly shared assumptions'. As
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14 such, it is 'beyond all frameworks – an abyss' (Wood, 2002; 15). As Lyotard claimed, as a
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16 Copernican technologised object the earth 'isn't at all originary', but merely a 'spasmodic
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18 state of energy, an instant of established order, a smile on the surface of matter in a remote
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20 corner of the cosmos' (Lyotard, 1991; 10).
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25 Thus the modern astronaut, like the modern scientist, is seen as one of the primary agents
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27 of modern worldlessness in Heideggerean philosophy (and one is immediately struck by
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29 the phenomenological similarities between the spatial nihilism of Nietzsche's madman and
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31 the free-floating placeless experience of the modern astronaut). For when the earth is seen
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33 from an astronautic point of view, all traditional human concerns are deterritorialised and
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35 strangely diminished - a condition that threatens to sever the connection between humanity
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37 and its traditional ontological groundings. Heideggerean scholars such as Robert
38
39 Romanyshyn have developed this idea and used it as the basis for an existential critique of
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41 'the mad astronaut': the quintessentially modern avatar that stands as the highest
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43 expression of modernity's *unheimlich* rootlessness. Romanyshyn's is a critique of what
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45 might be termed 'the astronautic condition of modernity' (see Romanyshyn, 1989; 200), as
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47 in Romanyshyn's view, the modern astronaut - what so many modern western children
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49 want to 'grow up to be' - is a metaphor for a hypermodern cultural-psychological dream of
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51 distance, departure and escape from matter that reveals a world of pure 'spectacular
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53 wonder' that disguises and perhaps even obliterates those deep and emotional connections
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55 to the earth that maintain a sense of ontological security and lived reality.
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Others have taken their theoretical leave from this Heideggerean insight. For as users of planetary transport and telecommunications technologies in some sense ‘we are all astronauts now’, because the deterritorialising technological forces of global capitalism render the ‘sphere of experience’ as ‘a synthesis of home and non-place, a nowhere place’ (Beck, 2002; 30). However, what Nietzsche and Heidegger - and their followers - could not foresee is the extent to which astronautic perceptions of the earth from space have been mass-produced and redeployed as a symbolic resource that redounds with ethical and political significations. The image of planet earth is now perhaps the most prominent symbol of the contemporary global age; vicariously duplicated at the everyday level via art works and media products - (see Hughes, 2002) - and culturally re-inscribed as a representation of corporate global prowess and/or ecological concern. And when seen from space the earth appears as much more than mere cosmological detritus. As many have commented, it strikes us a rather remarkable planet: redolent with ethical and aesthetic significance and more like a ‘planetary home’ than a sub-stellar geological object. Thus in this paper my aim is to interrogate the Nietzschean-Heideggerean style of philosophical critique of what might be termed ‘cosmological hypermodernity’ and its heliocentric conception of a ‘mobile earth’, and to show the extent to which astronautic representations of the earth, in supporting a notion of the earth as a single ‘planetary home’, demand an alternative, ‘more worlded’, conception of the earth (that in many ways requires western philosophy re-engage with its classical philosophical heritage, as well as strive for new dialogic openings with non-western philosophical traditions). When the earth is transformed from a lived implicit ground to a *percept* redolent with global ethical, aesthetic and political connotations, not only do the sense and significance of modern forms and tropes of spatiality require a radical re-orientation, but the plausibility of western modernity’s treasured philosophical heritage is called into question: something that, in turn,

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3 will in all likelihood demand a radical reworking - perhaps even a quasi-psychoanalytic
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5 *Durcharbeitung* – of western philosophy's basic concerns and pre-occupations. The earth's
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7 revelation as a deterritorialized 'technologically enhanced/enframed perceptual space'
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9 through modern space exploration, rather than diminishing the existential significance of
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11 the earth, paradoxically reaffirms its significance (albeit sublated onto a higher planetary
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13 level). As the earth is rendered perceptual, so it becomes subject to a different kind of
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15 cathexis and a radically different set of object relations. The earth is brought under the
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17 sway of the - ideal - axis of the pleasure principle (see Silverman 2000) and as consequence
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19 it attains the status of a 'nirvana': a libidinal representation of repressed possibilities for
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21 global kinship and an articulation of a latent political longing in a radically new way. As
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23 the earth is reworlded along the planetary dimension, 'the place we happen to find
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25 ourselves' stands in stark opposition to a new unbounded planetary space that itself
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27 becomes a privileged place for a new *theoria* of 'earth-in-the-cosmos' (Harries, 2001; 328-
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29 30).¹

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32 Thus in what follows I argue that much of twentieth century western philosophy has
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34 assumed a highly territorialized and terrestrial - one might say 'soiled' - notion of the
35
36 'earth', forms of 'worldliness' and the philosophical concepts deployed to articulate them.
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38 My main claim is that when earth is 'unleashed' from its position as a fixed ground and
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40 becomes an iconic percept, contemporary western philosophy is forced to rethink the nature
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42 and scope of its traditional conceptualities. In this context contemporary western
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44 philosophy, I suggest, needs to begin the task of finding a new conceptual lexicon through
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46 which 'deterritorialized planetariness' can be articulated (a new conceptual *a priori* that
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48 'speaks for' this new planetary sense of worldhood). The paper concludes with a
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¹ Moreover, as western philosophy encounters a philosophical Otherness in its migration to around the globe, it is increasingly forced to confront a complex plurality of wisdom and forms of intuitions (as well as revealing that its canonical epistemological and ontological agendas may not be culturally unique to 'the west' but may itself have disguised non-western origins (see Kingsley, 1995)).

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3 discussion of the ‘conceptual innovations’ that are required if contemporary western
4 philosophical discourse is to articulate the wider ontological significance of the ‘earth as
5 pellucid planetary percept’. With this in mind, I argue that Deleuzian attempts to rethink
6 the earth as a ‘open and expansive plane without territory’ offer some important insights
7 into the *a priori* of our post-astronautic planetary condition, and that the astronautic image
8 of the earth has paradoxically undermined the much of the nihilistic force of western
9 Copernicanism through a perlocutionary libidinal iconicity with a globalising force: a force
10 that is beginning to foster not only new planet-aware forms of life but a heightened
11 sensitivity to the importance of the philosophical ‘meaning of the planet’.
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27 **Icon Earth: Instant Stoicism**

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32 Most of the extant literature on the social and cultural significance of space travel proceeds
33 from an examination of the significance of space travel from within the context of nation-
34 state politics and inter-state rivalries. Thus for some, space technologies and their products
35 are seen as the ultimate expression of the cold-war logic of post-war US and Soviet
36 *Raketen-Staadten* (see Carter, 1988). For others, they are seen as the highest expression of
37 American culture’s obsession with the ‘technological sublime’ (see Tabbi, 1996).
38 However, such studies overlook space exploration’s wider cultural consequences;
39 especially its role in the development of the forms of ‘cosmopolitical consciousness’
40 expressive of a new ‘civilising thrust’ towards a new ‘and more united humankind’ (Elias
41 1995: 36). Fantasies of space exploration, from Kepler to Jules Verne, were always
42 associated with ideas of human perfectability and immortality, especially the desire
43 amongst certain Christian sects to attain redemption through the most perfect and accurate
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3 knowledge of God's creation (to see as God sees). As David Noble has observed in his
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5 reflections on the cultural significance of the US space program, the astronaut was seen as
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7 a moral agent of new cosmic era and 'another Adam, conceived to extend the promise of
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9 redemption across the celestial sea' (Noble, 1999; 134).
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13 In a somewhat similar manner, contemporary 'space technologies' - from Sputnik and the
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15 early Gemini programme, to the Apollo programme and the recent Voyager missions -
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17 have not only made possible the beginnings of human colonisation of interplanetary space,
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19 but have also produced a politically affordant symbol of a new post-national global culture.
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21 One of the first to recognise the iconic power of the images of the earth from space was the
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23 Astronomer Fred Hoyle who, as early as 1948, proposed that once modern states evolved
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25 the technological capabilities to represent the earth in its entirety, a new and powerful
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27 symbol would emerge to rival the religious and political symbols of the past (see also
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29 Blumenberg, 1987)². In Hoyle's view, 'this not so distant development may well be for
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31 good, as it must increasingly have the effect of exposing the futility of nationalistic strife'
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33 (Hoyle, 1960; 19). In the same way that Copernican cosmology came to affect the whole
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35 organisation of society, Hoyle recognised that photographic images of the earth would
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37 eventually become avatars of new global political configuration by undermining some of
38
39 the absolute presuppositions of the modern age. With the emergence of the new icon,
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41 political frontiers are likely to be exposed as fictions and space itself transformed into a
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43 new autonomy of space, 'free from ties to the world' (see Redfield, 1996; 252).
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45 Astronautic space thus becomes a post-cartographic space: a space no longer constrained
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47 by what Donna Haraway has termed the 'fetishism of the map' (see Haraway, 1995; 135).
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49 With space travel, modernity's cartographic imaginary - that had been central to the 'active
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51 writing of the earth by an expanding, centralising imperial state' (Neocleous, 2003; 419)
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3 supporting an imperial ‘navigational subjectivity’ (Counsell 2000) - is radically diminished
4 and replaced by a new cosmological rearticulation of the political geography of the earth.
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6 As humanity reconceives itself through its movement across ‘another sky’, the earth is
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8 shown to have no formal political boundaries, revealing itself as a rhizome of
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10 meteorological, oceanic and technoscientific flows whose indeterminate geometry suggests
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12 an open, perceptual yet fluid and fugacious planetary ontology rather than a fixed and
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14 grounded one. Thus the astronautic earth suggests a complex and vital holism: as one
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16 commentator has put it, the picture of the earth from space has become: ‘[a] spiritual
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18 symbol for our times. It stands for the growing awareness that both we and the planet are
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20 all part of a single system, that we can no longer divorce ourselves from the whole’
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22 (Russell, 1992; 5).
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29 The cultural force of this percept in all probability has its origins in the powerful
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31 phenomenological affects of the astronautic experience itself. Much as been written about
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33 the phenomenological consequences of the astronautic experience. According to Apollo 14
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35 astronaut Edgar Mitchell, space travel’s primary effect was to create a new phenomenology
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37 of earth and earthliness: the earth as ‘a beautiful, harmonious, peaceful looking planet, blue
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39 with white clouds, and on that gave you a deep sense...of home, of being, of identity’
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41 (Mitchell, cited in Russell, 1992; 4). For him, this vision gave rise to what he termed
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43 ‘instant global consciousness’ such that after the experience of space travel ‘[e]ach man
44
45 comes back with a feeling that he is no longer an American citizen – he is a planetary
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47 citizen’ (Mitchell, cited in Russell, 1992; 4). In philosophical terms, such experiences are
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49 indicative of the emergence of a new ‘planetary Stoicism’ that effectively redefines the
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51 political status of the individual from a ‘citizen of the state’ to a ‘citizen of the cosmos’ -
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53 *kosmopolitês*. However, the image of the earth from space does not only open up new and
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² According to Blumenberg, as the world becomes a planet without frontiers it suddenly becomes a radically

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3 wider senses of political identification. A further striking feature of the new percept is its
4 aesthetic and aestheticising aspect. Again it is this feature of the earth stands out in
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6 astronautic observations reports. As we one recent commentator has put it: '[s]omething
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8 about all that blackness, the astronauts have said, gives the earth a sense of fragility. "It's
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10 very delicate" said Apollo 8's Bill Anders, who circled the moon on Christmas Eve 1968.
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12 It reminded me of Christmas tree ornament' (Chaikin, 1999; 23).
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18 Interestingly, it is this experience of the 'aestheticised planet' also lies at the heart of the
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20 emergence of contemporary 'space tourism'. On May 5th 2002, Mark Shuttleworth, a South
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22 African Internet entrepreneur, paid £14,000,000 to the Russian space agency for a 10 day
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24 orbital flight around the earth on the International Space Station. In this case, aestheticised
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26 experiences of the earth were conceived as integral to whole the 'package deal' and
27
28 seemingly the basis of the demand for this new luxury product. In Shuttleworth's view,
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30 what makes the journey into interplanetary space good value for this kind of money was
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32 not the gravity-less experience of space flight and earth-orbit, nor the fetishistic enjoyment
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34 of sophisticated space technology - although, according to him, the experience of 'take off'
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36 is 'exhilarating' - but the a radically new kind of sublime apprehension of the earth 'as
37
38 something whole and beautiful'. Moreover, upon landing, Shuttleworth remarked that his
39
40 interplanetary experiences gave rise to a new, heightened and highly aesthetic perception of
41
42 everyday earthly life. As he put it: 'the joy of looking out through the window and seeing
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44 fresh, green grass, colourful flowers and the smiling *Kazakh* children was unbelievable'
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51 (Aris, 2002; 6).
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54 Thus in post-astronautic contexts, the earth has ceased to be a tacit *background* and a
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56 condition of possibility for action – the material, existential and pre-cognitive 'ground
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58 beneath one's feet' as it were - but has become an object of ethical, aesthetic and political
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different kind of place: a place that fulfils the dreams of Copernicus by allowing humanity to travel across

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3 contemplation that has significantly impacted upon and shaped both first-person
4 phenomenologies of the earth and contemporary forms of political awareness. This has led
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6 some to claim that ‘the most valuable spin-off from the moon expeditions may not have
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8 been in the fields of science economics and politics or the military, but in the field of
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10 consciousness’ (Russell, 1982; 5) - see also Lovelock (Lovelock, 1995), for whom the
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12 image of the earth from space symbolises the emergent eco-cosmological reality of *Gaia*
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14 where the earth itself in some ‘pan-vitalistic’ sense ‘alive’. However, questions
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16 immediately arise here: how is this new percept, and its associated forms of cosmopolitical
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18 consciousness, to be understood philosophically? What philosophy/theory can make sense
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20 of the ethical, political and metaphysical implications of a groundless earth: of an earth that
21
22 is an open and fluid perceptual space? For with the astronaut’s technological representation
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24 of the earth *sub speciae techne*, and its emergence as a new quasi-spiritual and highly
25
26 aesthetic percept, the earth has moved back to centre of political consciousness, not in the
27
28 traditional sense of the ‘earth as Garden’, but as new technologically worlded and neo-stoic
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30 cosmopolitical percept of the ‘earth-as-planet’ (see Ihde 1990). Might this new
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32 configuration of the earth imply a more ‘worlded’ conception of the earth and a more
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34 ‘planetary’ conception of the world: a conception that allows us to view the earth not as a
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36 ground but as a vital space and a cultural universal that now stands as a basic quotidian
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38 commonality shared by many different cultural traditions.
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50 **World and Earth in Modern Western Philosophy**

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55 The philosophical problematic of worldhood has been something of perennial concern for
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57 the modern philosopher, and the idea of ‘a world’ – defined as a bounded space of meaning
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‘another sky’.

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3 and significance - possesses a distinctive conceptual history within the philosophical
4 discourse of modernity. In general, the modern western philosophical tradition has viewed
5 the world as something constructed by the subject; that is, by *thought*. It was with Kant that
6 this modern *subjectivisation* of worldhood first emerged in earnest. In Kantian philosophy
7 the primary world was conceived as world limited by human understanding: constructed
8 via the imaginative synthesis of sensory intuitions by the 'the transcendental ego'. With
9 the Kantian Idealist Enlightenment, the unified pre-modern world - the 'cosmic egg' of the
10 'Deleuzian primitive' - was bifurcated into 'empirically real' and 'transcendentally ideal'
11 realms (where the world *an sich* was rendered radically unknowable). With the romantic
12 philosophers of culture at the beginning of the 19th century, this 'trascendentalist' way of
13 conceiving 'the world' was given a new twist and some additional sociological vitality with
14 the emergence of *weltanschauung* as a philosophical concern (and idea that was eventually
15 to give rise to the relativist idea, now a postmodern staple, that people who speak different
16 languages and different cultures live in 'different worlds').

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Marx and Hegel however tried to unite Kant's duality of worldhood through the dialectical
promise of an absolute world reunified by a rational teleology in history (the rational
coming together of the fractured cosmic egg; the return of the pre-modern through
modernity's self-reversal). With Schopenhauer and the early Heidegger, however, the
dialectical conception of 'world' is rendered more practical; being conceived as primarily a
'work-world'. But the world continues to remain a largely transcendental affair in the
writings of both these philosophers, as it did in the philosophy of the early Wittgenstein, for
whom the world is seen as identical with the transcendental subject as well as being a
logical space of pure facticity - 'the world is all that is the case' (Wittgenstein, 1922; 1) -
that in a mystical way gives shape and significance to ultimate questions of value. Clearly,

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3 this is another variation on the Kantian theme of the world as a 'limited whole', only this
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5 time conceived as identical with life itself (see Stokhof, 2001).
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10 However, what is often overlooked is that in both Heidegger and Wittgenstein's early
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12 writings, there is something of a shift away from the ontological primacy of the subject
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14 towards a philosophy that gives ontological primacy of the world itself (and it is in this
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16 sense that both these philosophers must be seen as resolutely *pre-modern*). For both the
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18 early Heidegger and the early Wittgenstein, the world is not something constructed by the
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20 subject/thought/language but something 'given'; such that, for the early Heidegger in
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22 particular, we must not simply speak of 'the world', but of the 'it' that 'worlds' (see Bearn,
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24 1994; 64; Kisiel, 2002; 130). In both cases, worlds are understood as *spaces of appearance*
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26 where 'things' emerge out of the unknowable noumenal horizon and synthetically
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28 apprehended by the practice/logic respectively.
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34 Following Heidegger and Wittgenstein, in late twentieth century western philosophy there
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36 has been a wholesale rejection of the transcendental-subjectivist conception of the world.
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38 In some cases, this has involved an anti-realist rejection of the usefulness of the very idea
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40 of 'the world' - for example Richard Rorty's *The World Well Lost* (see Rorty, 1982) - and
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42 its fragmentation and replacement by 'culture'. One reason for this stems from the
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44 epistemological position of science in the twentieth century. As subjectivist ideas of the
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46 world were slowly eroded by modern science's 'objective' mathematical worlds, the very
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48 idea *the world*, as Heidegger observed, was rendered problematic - in his scheme, the world
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50 is reduced to the status of a 'picture', and as such, something 'set before' humanity as
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52 a series of objects for calculation and manipulation (see Heidegger, 1977). In Heidegger's
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54 view, as modern science increasingly defines the meaning and limits of the modern world,
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60 philosophers are forced to give up their traditional concern with the articulation of

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3 worldviews, as worldview has become 'freezing, finality, end, system' and as such
4 philosophically impenetrable (Heidegger, 2000; 188). As such the world, as traditionally
5 conceived, disappears; and this is what Heidegger understands by the 'nihilism' of the
6 modern.
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12 However, Heideggerean apocalyptic philosophical discourse has been offset by a new non-
13 transcendental concern for the world and worldliness. In particular, and as I discuss below,
14 there has also been a corresponding move towards developing a different idea of
15 'worldliness' in both late-Heideggerean and late-Wittgensteinian philosophies. This
16 conception of world where explicitly recognises its relationship the earth; and in the later
17 writings of both these philosophers we can see an attempt interrogate the meaning of
18 worldhood via a philosophical problematics of terrestriality. Both these philosophers
19 follow Nietzsche in this regard, and in Nietzschean philosophy we can see a nascent
20 moment in modern philosophy's attempt to construct the corollary of its former conceptual
21 mainstay in a new ontology earth and earthliness.
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36 In *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche has Zarathustra plead with the crowd in the market
37 place to '*remain true to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of
38 superterrestrial hopes! They are poisoners whether they know it or not. They are despisers
39 of life, atrophying and self-poisoned men, of whom the earth is weary: so let them be gone'
40 (Nietzsche, 1969; 42; original emphasis). What Nietzsche is suggesting here is that after the
41 collapse of the idea of a subjective world with transcendental 'grounds', the earth is the
42 only viable idea of grounds and value available to the modern philosopher (and the answer
43 to the nihilist who denies the possibility of both grounds and value). In Nietzschean
44 philosophy, the figure of the earth is used as metaphor of Dionysian vitality and a
45 philosophical term of art that provides the basis for Nietzsche's much celebrated cyclical
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3 conception of temporality - daybreak, morning and 'the great noon' and the 'eternal return'
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5 - that stands in stark opposition to modernity's linear history.
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8 Heidegger and Wittgenstein also conceived the earth as an ontological ground in their later
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10 philosophies (the earth being seen as a counter-modern philosophical force in their
11
12 philosophies as well). However, they went beyond Nietzsche in many respects, in that their
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14 philosophical conceptions of the earth were more alive to the ontological shocks emerging
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16 from the forms of spatiality carried forward by modern space and transport technologies in
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18 the middle of the last century. Both recognised that space technologies open the possibility
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20 for a less earth-bound ontology; and as such pose a fundamental challenge to the terrestrial
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22 and territorial horizon projected by traditional European *weltanschauungen*. For them,
23
24 modern technology threatens to uproot authentic thought and speech from its 'true *heimat*'
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26 - the *terra firma* of European soil - threatening to bring about, respectively, new and
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28 heightened forms of nihilism and scepticism. In their view, the role of philosopher is to
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30 'think against' the deterritorialising dynamics of (space) technology by demonstrating that
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32 meaningful thinking and speaking are only possible when thinkers and speakers are rooted
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34 and immersed in particular earthly forms of life and/or ways of Being.
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43 **Late Heidegger – Dwelling-on-the-Earth**

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46 As is well known, in *Being and Time*, the early Heidegger conceived of the world as a
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48 phenomenological space that conditions 'the totality of our involvement with things'
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50 (Heidegger, 1961; 415). For him, the world itself is constituted by a tacit set of basic
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52 existential attitudes to the world - care, understanding, mood and so on - and is related to
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54 'what lies before' in the sense of being handy or readily available. In later works such as
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56 *The Origin of the Work of Art*, the world continues to be viewed in a similar way as the
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58 'governing expanse', which 'gives things their measure', 'an open space' within which
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3 things 'receive protection' (Heidegger, 1978b; 160). Thus in the early Heidegger's view, it
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5 is the world that provides the conditions of possibility for the basic shape and character of
6
7 phenomenological experience as such. As one commentator has put it: 'the world... gives
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9 its rule or law to things as that which directs the way they come to stand such that the
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11 opening of a world measures the relations between existent things, giving them proximity
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13 or distance, their peculiar temporal status and their scope and limits' (Fynsk, 1993; 141).
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19 The question of the significance of the earth - and its relationship to both technology and
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21 world in the context of 'dwelling' - is also a prominent feature of his later work and a key
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23 element of the 'fourfold' of Earth, Sky, Gods and Mortals (and it is for this reason that
24
25 many Heideggereans read him as a proto-ecological philosopher (see Zimmerman 1994,
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27 Foltz 1995)). Some Heidegger scholars recognise that the new emphasis given to earth in
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29 Heidegger's later philosophy is an 'attempt to think the essence of things in a new way'
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31 (Mulhall 1990, 169). More specifically, for the late Heidegger, 'authentic dwelling' is no
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33 longer a matter of a temporalised 'being-in-the-world' as it was in *Being and Time* - but is,
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35 reconceived as a dwelling 'poetically on the earth' and 'under the sky' (Heidegger 1978a,
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37 351). Thus for the later Heidegger, authentic ways of living stand radically opposed to
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39 what might be termed 'Copernican modes of existence', for to live authentically on the
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41 earth is to 'receive the sky as sky' and to 'leave the sun and moon to their journey, the stars
42
43 to their courses' (Heidegger 1978a, 352). In Heidegger's view, the earth is what he terms
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45 'the serving bearer' an idea related to the pagan conception of the earth as the giver of life,
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47 'blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up in plant and animal'
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49 (Heidegger 1971, 149-50).
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58 For the later Heidegger, worlds are only conceivable as such - such that the world is
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60 attained *as world* - only when it is framed as the sky above and the earth beneath (see

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3 Malpas 2000, 227). Clearly for the later Heidegger the idea of ‘the world’ is conceptually
4 inseparable from that of ‘the earth’. The close relationship between earth and world for
5 Heidegger can again be seen in the *Origins of the Work of Art*, where Heidegger recognises
6 that one cannot make sense of the nature of world and worldhood in isolation from
7 questions of the nature of the earth and earthliness; as for him, ‘[w]orld and earth are
8 essentially different from one another and yet never separated.’³ The world grounds itself in
9 the earth and the earth juts through the world’ (Heidegger 1978b, 174). When seen in this
10 way, the earth is viewed as the ‘self-secluding’ ground of phenomenological appearance
11 that rises up - as ‘self-closing’ – forming the ontological basis for both ‘the work’ and its
12 corollary the ‘thingly character of the world’ (Heidegger 1978b, 180). Heidegger
13 conceives the earth as the ground of all appearance and the *physis* out of which the world
14 emerges (that supports the *nomos* of the world). For in Heidegger’s view, only a world
15 supported by the earth can give things their proper measure: and without this relation,
16 things have no ‘true’ measure (and in such a case, the measurement the world in terms of
17 an abstract mathematicised facticity - required for the efficient maintenance of purely
18 technological relationships - becomes the anthropocentric measure of all things).

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42 The later Heidegger thus strives to defend an earthbound notion of the world and this, in his
43 view, requires that we reject Copernican ideas of the primacy of space, in that for him
44 ‘spaces receive their essential being from locales and not from “space”’ (Heidegger, 1978a;
45 356). As the earth is transformed into a cosmological representation, the earth loses its
46 ontological possibilities as a site of dwelling; reduced to an object of possible knowledge
47 for modernity’s technological subject. As such, the earth is technologically enframed as a
48 global interplanetary techno and ecosphere and ceases to be the implicit ‘ground of the
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³ However, it important to note that Heidegger’s conception of the earth in the *Origin of the Work of Art* is not quite the same as that in later works such as building dwelling thinking as Julian Young notes (see Young , 2002; 93). In later works, the concealed mystery of the earth is diffused among four elements.

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3 world': becoming instead an extra-terrestrial inter-planetary visual representation. In this
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5 way the earth loses its meaning and becomes instead an expression of the nihilism of
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7 modernity: symbolising a radically inauthentic form of dwelling in a 'worldless world' of
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9 pure instrumentality and blind and efficient causality. When worldhood is understood in
10
11 planetary terms the sky is no longer visible and the earth no longer felt; and hence the
12
13 world loses its phenomenological character – its 'thereness' and 'nowness' – that
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15 Heidegger believed is tantamount to loss of the world *per se*.
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19 20 21 **Wittgenstein – The Certain Earth**

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24 Interestingly, in *On Certainty* - Wittgenstein's last work, written shortly before his death in
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26 1953 - Wittgenstein makes somewhat similar claims: again suggesting the importance of
27
28 the earth for the mid twentieth century European philosopher. In many places in this work,
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30 Wittgenstein offers a philosophical defence of what might be termed the 'necessity of
31
32 earthly grounds'. Here, Wittgenstein argues that the earthliness of thought and action is not
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34 something that could be reasonably doubted and represents 'the bedrock' of the form of life
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36 upon which 'we' - mid twentieth century western Europeans – think, judge and act. More
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38 specifically, Wittgenstein views the earth as a primal 'ontological ground' - something that
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40 exists outside of the categories of 'true' and 'false' - that silences the doubts of the sceptic
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42 who claims that 'we cannot know'. Thus in his view, the earth functions philosophically in
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44 the same way as the *cogito* in Cartesian rationalism: as an *unshakeable conviction* about a
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46 key feature of the world capable of providing 'ontological support' to human judgement.
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53 In Wittgenstein's view, statements about the earthliness of human life occupy the nodal
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55 point of what Wittgenstein terms the 'framework propositions' – the weakly *a priori*
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57 cultural assumptions that make up what Wittgenstein termed 'our world picture' – *Weltbild*.
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59 These are the deep grammars that express the historical particularity of 'our form of life';
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3 giving shape and significance to ordinary acts of judgement (again suggesting a new unity
4 of earth and world in Wittgenstein's later work). As such, in Wittgenstein's view, they are
5 immune from doubt. As he states: '[e]verything that I have seen or heard gives me the
6 conviction that no man has ever been far from the earth. Nothing in my world speaks in
7 favour of the opposite' (Wittgenstein, 1967; 93). Thus for Wittgenstein, 'my not having
8 been to the moon is as sure a thing for me as any grounds that I could give for it'
9 (Wittgenstein, 1969; 111). In response to the sceptic who might respond with 'how do you
10 know?' Wittgenstein answers simply: that 'this would not fit into the rest of my
11 convictions' (Wittgenstein, 1969; 102). So for Wittgenstein - in 1953 - deterritorialised
12 'planetary' experiences are ruled out as *a priori* impossible; the terrestriality and
13 territoriality of experience and judgment taking on the status of a necessary truth
14 (Wittgenstein also claimed that he is *a priori* certain that he has never been to China
15 (Wittgenstein 1969, 333)). The sceptic's question here is simply not a 'real question' for
16 Wittgenstein because grounds for doubt are lacking in this case – there are no grounds here
17 for doubting our habitual grounds. In 1953, the technical and cultural conditions of
18 possibility for space travel were absent and thus, when conceived in Wittgensteinian way,
19 one cannot *realistically imagine* this state of affairs as possible and so it provides no
20 grounds for doubt.
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47 Like Heidegger's, Wittgenstein's later philosophy views the grounded earth as axiomatic of
48 a particular - western European – grounded ontology. For according to Wittgenstein, 'only
49 in such-and-such a circumstances' does a 'reasonable person' doubt that they have ever
50 been far away from the earth (Wittgenstein, 1969; 333). But in a technological hypermobile
51 and globalised world, these 'such and such a circumstances' have become more generalised
52 and commonplace (requiring, in part, subtle yet pervasive amendments to the
53 Enlightenment ideal of the 'reasonable person'). Hence in such contexts the sceptical
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3 question no longer strikes as fundamentally odd and its sceptical point no longer 'purely
4 philosophical'. Although the earth might be a source of *a priori* certainty in 1953, this is
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7 no guarantee that it will retain this epistemological status given radically different historical
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10 circumstances, as 'the earth', as we have seen, also experiences historical variation in its
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12 sense and significance (see Furley 1989). Although the idea of 'the earth' as 'the ground
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14 beneath' possessed an intuitive self-evidence in 1953, and was the nodal point of
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16
17 *Mitteleuropean consciousness* and the centripetal force of its cognitive frameworks, the
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19 earth appears differently and has a different sense to those who, at beginning of the twenty-
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21 first century, have – albeit often only vicariously – have imbibed the many varieties of
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23
24 astronautic experience as a new cultural *a priori* and repository of framework propositions.
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27 For later and increasingly globalised moderns, the earth no longer 'grounds' as the tacit
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29 condition of possibility for thinking and judging, but has become more like a Heideggerian
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31 world: an open expanse that lies in front of us, increasingly giving things a new 'planetary'
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34 measure. When seen, say, from an aircraft in flight, the earth no longer juts up from below,
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37 'opens out' as vast visible space revealing hitherto unknown human/ecological threads and
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40 patterns/flows of social and cultural connectivity.

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42 In effect, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein offer what might be termed a
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45 'philosophical anti-Copernicanism' that attempts to make the earth the 'foundation of
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47 judgement' and the still and fixed point around which human life turns. The symbolic
48
49 consequences of recent explorations of interplanetary space have, in one sense, and
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52 somewhat paradoxically, redoubled the force of these kinds of anti-Copernican moves in
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55 heightening the conceptual importance of the earth, whilst at the same time weakening the
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58 self-evidence of traditional pre-modern anti-Copernicanism by undermining the
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61 'unshakeable conviction' that the earth is a fixed and supporting solid ground. But what
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63 happens to western philosophy when its traditional 'grounded' notion of the earth is

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supplemented, possibly in the end replaced, by a more dynamic, open, perceptual, aesthetic and technologically produced and conception of the earth? How can we make sense of the idea of the return of ‘the earth’ to its former pre-modern position at the hub of western conceptuality, whilst at the same time acknowledging that this earth is not the fixed earth of the past, but a symbolically significant and more worlded earth?⁴ As the earth is technologically revealed as a planetary space that is simultaneously a cultural, political, ecological and perhaps, in some yet to defined way, spiritual, the earth ceases to be something that, as it were, lies ‘beneath our feet’, but becomes something ‘beneath our deterritorialising technologies’ and no longer the ontological basis for worldly ‘firm-footedness’ but a set of human and ecological patterns, flows and interconnections. A question needs to be asked here however, is can there be a philosophical articulation of ‘a world’ without recourse to an idea of terrestrial grounds? If, as Luce Irigaray observes, modern philosophy has ‘always supposes in some manner, a solid crust from which to raise a construction’, and its *‘ek-sistence is founded on the solid’* (Irigaray 1998, 2), then any attempt to make philosophical sense of a world without fixed earthly grounds will require a different way of doing/conceiving philosophy. How can philosophy make sense of the earth, when the earth no longer appears as grounds?

‘The People to Come and the New Earth’: The Planetary Dimension as The New Horizon of Western Philosophy

For some commentators, representations of the earth as planet are integral to what has become known as ‘banal globalism’. According Szerszynski and Urry for example ‘[c]entral to banal globalism are representations of the earth or globe’ (Szerszynski and Urry, 2002; 467); and in their account, it is the satellite representation of the earth as the

⁴ The premodern idea of the earth as ‘the centre’ of the cosmos did not, contrary to popular belief, suggest

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3 'blue globe' that is most suggestive of a new cosmopolitan ontology – a kind of global
4 cosmopolitan being-in-the-world – and a new 'ready-to-hand' globalism of worldly co-
5 presence (Szerzynski and Urry, 2002; 467). The tacit political *a priori* of this globalism has
6 been conceived by one influential commentator as a fledgling 'extra-terrestrial planetary
7 humanism', and an expression of 'heterological, postanthropological, cosmopolitan' world
8 'yet-to-come' (Gilroy, 2000; 334). However the philosophical consequences of this
9 cultural shift are yet to be fully articulated. And a growing number of social theorists have
10 started to suggest that the philosophical implications of 'banal globalism' may be much
11 more unsettling and challenging for the western intellectual tradition. For Ulrich Beck in
12 particular, contemporary processes of cosmopolitanisation, in refiguring the very sense of
13 who and especially *where* we are, demand that western philosophy revise its basic
14 philosophical outlook in order to articulate the new ontological terrains of globalised
15 experience. This may, perhaps, eventually annul the Greek moment of philosophy itself
16 because in a globalised world, one 'cannot take for granted any particular Western
17 philosophical system' (Patomaki, 2002; 90; see also Maffie, 2001; Hall, 2001). Thus what
18 is needed, is a thoroughgoing re-examination of the traditional conceptual hierarchies that
19 have traditionally been the source of modern philosophy's 'lexical core', typically those
20 inherent within the panoply of spatial tropes – from classical ideas of *form* to modern ideas
21 of *world* - through which western philosophy has defined its programmatic aims. Henri
22 Lefèbvre was one of the first thinkers to acknowledge this problem in recognising that in an
23 age of planetary technology, the modern philosopher is forced to think beyond traditional
24 ideas of both world and worldhood. In his view, 'the conflation of the terms 'planet',
25 'earth', 'worldwide' and 'universe' is still rather ridiculous. Mounting a critique of the
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that 'the earth' was an important concept, either spiritually or politically. In mediaeval cosmology, the earth was given this position, not because it was the most, but because it was the least significant entity.

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confusions surrounding the term 'world' may increasingly be a key issue for reflective thought' (Lefebvre, 1995; 254).

However, if, as Paul Virilio has written, planetary technologies are bringing about 'an exotic reorganisation of sight enabling perception to escape from the 'real space of our planet' into what he terms 'a horizonless perception under a vanished sky' (see Virilio, 1997; 2), then planetary technologies inaugurate a new 'horizonless horizon' of deterritorialised experience. In this case traditional modes of western philosophising seem to be of little use and peculiarly out of step. In an age when, as Derrida has noted, the philosophical imagination 'has no horizon, if the horizon is, as its name indicates, a limit, if horizon means a line that encircles or delimits a perspective' (Derrida, 2002; 16), then grounded forms of perception and cognition can no longer function as the modern philosopher's earth, and thus modern philosophy requires a new 'Archimedian point' from which to needs to begin its reflections and raise its constructions. However, any new axiomatic can longer be a fixed 'point' or a 'ground' but something open and more fluid and capable of bearing not only individual/communal values but wider planetary significances. What kind of ethical and political values - ideas of the Good and of Social Justice - will emerge out of a 'regrounding' of the philosophical along a planetary dimension? What becomes of the philosophical notion of grounds - the cognitive self-assuredness of the modern philosopher's earth - when grounds are reconceived in planetary terms; that is, when grounds support multiple and open-ended ideas of worldhood? One way to approach this issue is to follow Irigaray and chide Heidegger - and Wittgenstein - for their pre-occupation with conceiving earth as a source of fixed grounds for the world. However, it may be that that these philosophers did not, to any great extent, overestimate the ontological significance of the earth in the age of cosmological hyermodernity; but that they simply assumed too narrow - and too culturally and historically parochial - an account

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3 of the earth's ontological significance. For as the above discussion has shown, in the age
4
5 of planetary globalism the philosophical problem of the meaning of the earth remains a
6
7 pivotal issue: only in this case the idea and the experience of the earth seems much larger,
8
9 more 'vital', more complex and more redolent with political significance than the early-
10
11 modern Copernican earth. As 'planetary technology' - to use Heidegger's phrase -
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13 provides practical conditions of possibility for a new convergence of 'earth' and 'world'
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15 upon wider sets of planetary concerns, so the philosopher is forced to concede that the earth
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17 is no longer a certain existential ground linked to primal kinaesthetic experience - the
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19 ontological first principle of saying and doing - but has become an affordant sign of
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21 cosmopolitan cultural reality: the aestheticised and cosmological planetary 'blue globe' that
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23 extends the perceptual horizon and thus opens the world: revealing the planetary dimension
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25 as the ultimate source of authority in judgement. But how is the philosopher to make
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27 ontological sense of this planetary ground and the idea of planet-as-world?
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35 Deleuze and Guattari stand out as the two philosophers who have provided the most
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37 systematic attempt to philosophise in a 'post-Copernican' mode for an age when the old
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39 earth has become what they term 'desert earth' and the sense of a 'new earth' - the
40
41 cosmopolitical earth - has yet to be philosophically articulated. For them, the issue of the
42
43 nature and significance of the earth remains one of the central concerns of philosophy: but
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45 only when the idea of the earth is sharply differentiated from that of territory.
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47 Copernicanism, in their view, instilled a new awareness that the earth as a centrally
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49 significant ontological and political category.
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55 However, the Copernican earth, for Deleuze and Guattari, is the earth of 'English'
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57 capitalistic expansion: the old Greek earth 'broken, fractalised and extended to the entire
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59 universe' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; 104). But any attempt to radicalise
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3 Copernicanism by resituating the earth at the centre of the philosophical universe, requires,
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5 in their view, a rejection of the basic assumptions of 'subjectivist' modern philosophy - for
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7 when rendered 'earthly', thinking is neither a line drawn between subject and object nor a
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9 revolving of one around the other, but something that takes place in a deterritorialised
10
11 space between territory and earth' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; 85). The implication of
12
13 this claim, is that the major issue facing contemporary western philosophy today is how to
14
15 'devise' a philosophy that interrogates and gives 'ontological sense' to the
16
17 deterritorialisation concomitant with globalisation (of how to think through the basis of a
18
19 globalised philosophy, when, as Deleuze points out, philosophy itself is still territorialised
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21 on Greek soil, such that Greece - and *ipso facto* Europe - is still 'the philosopher's earth'
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23 (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; 86)). Clearly, this will demand a different set of
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25 'philosophical ideals and vocabularies' - ones less 'grounded' in narrowly defined ideas of
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27 earth as both *terra* and its political corollary and *territory*.
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35 Thus, for them it is not subjectivity but geography - and also for them geology (see De
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37 Landa, 2001) - that provides a lexical resource with which to launch a philosophical
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39 interrogation of the most pressing problems of the age. In their view, Heidegger made the
40
41 mistake of conflating earth and territory, for now the earth has become something other
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43 than territory in its cosmopolitical separation from cartographic control. This for Deleuze
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45 and Guattari, the earth is '[t]he Deterritorialised, the Glacial, the giant Molecule - 'a body
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47 without organs' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; 40). The earth is thus not 'one element
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49 among other elements' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; 85) fixed in specific place in time
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51 under a 'specific sky', but a fluidity 'that brings all elements within a single embrace'
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53 (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; 85). The earth is a space permeated by flows in all directions,
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55 free intensities and nomadic singularities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; 40). When
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57 conceived in this manner, the earth is no longer conceived as a background but a
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destratified *plane* upon which all minds and bodies can be situated. According to them, the plane of the earth, 'knows nothing of differences in level, orders of magnitude, or distances' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; 68); such codings can only come from the social technological 'machinic assemblages' that straddle and 'cartographise' the earth. In opposition to the idea of the 'coded' earth, they offer an idea of the earth a decoded and unengendered, an 'immobile motor', '[s]uffering and dangerous, unique, universal' it is the 'full body' and an 'enchanted surface of inscription' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983; 154). It is the 'single plane' that escapes the territorial codings of the modern nation state, and is the extraterritorial grounds for thinking and acting beyond its remit.

Deleuze and Guattari note that at the birth of the modern period modern philosophy 'turns back against itself so as to summon forth a new earth and a new people' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; 99). This new earth was the Copernican earth: the earth removed from its nodal position as the ultimate ground of the Aristotelian universe and 'exploded' as 'the universe' whilst at the same time redefined and repositioned as one element of a wider heliocentric interplanetary system (the 'third stone from the sun'). Its continual movement and dependence upon much larger and scientifically more significant interplanetary forces made it a poor candidate for certainty and necessity. Grounds were thus located elsewhere by modern philosophers - in more anthropological locations such as subjectivity, language and/or the hidden teleologies of history. It is only in the last century that such moves were exposed by the late-Wittgenstein and late-Heidegger as metaphysical illusions as existentially pernicious as the Aristotelian metaphysics that they replaced. But in turn, technological innovation and cultural globalisation undermined their territorialised conceptions of the nature and significance of human life; creating a hiatus in the history of philosophy (that some have mistaken for the end of philosophy itself). However, when this issue is conceived in a Deleuzian manner, philosophy's task is again to summon forth a

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3 new conception of the earth appropriate to the global cosmopolitan age. This conception of
4 the earth can longer function as an *a priori* cognitive self-justifying principle; for the global
5 earth is a dynamic and fluid – largely ‘oceanic’ – earth where ground, sky and water
6 converge to form a new planetary idea of the world (where the earth, as world, is
7 understood, in an Irigarayan manner, as largely ‘air’). But this does not – *pace* Gilroy –
8 necessarily imply another worldly vision that is simply ‘another imperialistic particular
9 dressed up in universal garb’ (Gilroy, 2003; 261). For the new universal is not political as
10 such, but in modernist terms, resolutely transpolitical as it expresses a new political
11 imaginary outside of the ideological strictures of the modern nation state. It is the
12 condition of possibility of for a planetary ideal of a new humanity - the non-human basis
13 and destiny of every human - that brings together the planet’s cultural and ecological
14 elements in a singular cosmological embrace (suggesting that both forms of natural and
15 cultural life are holisitically related as vibrant multiplicities). This is earth is not the
16 hypermodern Copernican earth, where human values and vitalities are rendered diminutive
17 by the ‘vast sea of darkness surrounding a blue and green point of unified, singular human
18 space’ (Redfield 1996: 258), but a dynamic and open earth that is an expansive plane that
19 brings all elements with a single plane of composition. This idea of the earth is also found
20 in Indian Philosophy - especially its Vedic traditions where the earth is conceived as ‘the
21 far spreading one’ and a ‘great wide abode’ (see Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1989; 11-12).
22 This new earth requires a different articulation by a new kind of philosopher – for Deleuze
23 and Guattari ‘[t]he philosopher must become non-philosopher’- in order to accomplish this
24 task But this does not imply an end to philosophy in the age of globalism, for only *via*
25 *philosophia* can one speak for ‘the people to come and the new earth’ (Deleuze and
26 Guattari, 1994; 109) and make ultimate sense and significance of what might be the ‘last
27 universal’: the planetary world that is shared by all.
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