Post-Heideggerian Drifts: From Object-Oriented-Ontology Worldlessness to Post-Nihilist Worldings

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Abstract. This paper rethinks the dynamics of what Heidegger called the modern *Gestell* – i.e. dynamics behind the fulfilment of nihilism – as that of an "unworlding" on whose subsequent "worldlessness" today's Object-Oriented Ontology may be said to build. Also, it questions whether Heidegger's early-Greek-oriented thought on being does not actually solicit an altogether different drift on the horizon of the possible, namely: that of thinking and re-experiencing dwelling in terms of retrieved "worldness." Lastly, it reflects on the conditions of possibility that such dwelling, and its concomitant "worldings," must meet, in dialogue with Heidegger, present-day animism studies, and non-religious Greek views on the sacred and the divine, in connection to which it articulates, and endorses, the concept of post-nihilism in contraposition to today's nihilist philosophical wanderings.

Keywords. Heidegger, Nihilism, Object-Oriented-Ontology, Post-Nihilism, Worlding

> *we have yet to begin to read Heidegger*
> Babette Babich[2]

Heidegger, the Greeks, and the Question of Being

Heidegger's thought (after *Sein und Zeit*, which was, anyway, a preliminary essay from which Heidegger distanced himself as early as 1932) [3] draws on Anaximander's, Heraclitus's, and Parmenides's.[4] According to these (when read through a non-Aristotelian lens, hence too with the back conveniently turned on any Cambridge-oriented history of philosophy) there is something that, being "unbounded" (ἄπειρον) [5] and thereby "apart from everything else" (πάντων κεχωρισμένος), [6] stands as the "ever-living" (αείζωον), [7] "never-submerging" (τὸ μὴ δῦνόν),[8] and "steadfast" (ατρεμές)[9] "primordial disposition" (ἀρχή)[10] that brings forth everything into the region of the unconcealed (ἀλήθεια);[11] something that is the "disclosure" (ἀλήθεια)[12] of

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[2] BABICH, "The 'New' Heidegger," p. 178.
[3] HEIDEGGER, *Ponderings II–VI*, § 49, p. 15.
[4] See e.g. the texts gathered in HEIDEGGER, *The Beginnings of Western Philosophy*; HEIDEGGER, *Basic Concepts*, p. 79-106; HEIDEGGER, *Parmenides*; HEIDEGGER, *Heraclitus*; Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*; HEIDEGGER and FINK, *Heraclitus*.
[5] ANAXIMANDER, DK 12A9, DK 12A10, DK 12A12. Unless otherwise indicated all Greek translations are ours.
[6] HERACLITUS, DK B108.
[7] HERACLITUS, DK B30.
[8] HERACLITUS, DK B16.
[9] PARMENIDES, DK B8.
[10] ANAXIMANDER, DK 12A9, DK 12A10, DK 12A12.
[11] PARMENIDES, DK B1.
[12] PARMENIDES, DK B1.

"all things that were, are, and will be" (τά τ᾽ ἐόντα τά τ᾽ ἐσσόμενα πρὸ τ᾽ ἐόντα),[13] and therefore what brings them forth into "being and/as thought" (τὸ γὰρ αυτὸ νοειν εστίν τε καὶ εἶναι)[14] by allowing them to "raise" (φύω) [15] into the open "now" (νῦν ἔστιν, i.e. as an event) [16] and "altogether" (ὁμοῦ πᾶν, i.e. without making distinctions among them)[17] while it simultaneously "gathers" them as a their "logos" (λόγος), [18] which is "one" (ἕν), [19]" wise" (σοφόν), [20] and "common" (κοινόν)[21] to all things; something that, by bringing all things into the realm of light and making them shine forth like "Zeus's lightening" (κεραυνός) does,[22]" guides" (Heraclitus) them and coffers to them their intrinsic "gleam" (κόσμος). [23] Heidegger elaborated his own concept of "being" (*Sein*), whose latest and probably most-complete conveyance is his 1962 lecture in homage to Jean Beaufret, *Zeit und Sein*,[24] in close dialogue with this fundamental "intuition" (νόησις) that can be said to rely, ultimately, on the iridescent morphological *cum* semantic overlapping of the Greek verbs φύω (*phúō*, "to arise," "to spring up," and consequently "to be," "to become"), φαίνω (*phaínō*, "to shine," "to appear"), and φάναι (*phánai*, to "say," to "speak"), all of which either derive from the same Proto-Indo-European verbal root, or belong, at the very least, in the neighbouring semantic fields of neighbouring roots.[25]

More particularly, Heidegger's texts of the 1930s and the 1940s are essential to understand the decisive role he conferred to the Ancient Greeks in the history not only of philosophy but, more broadly, of Western thought – as well as his own self-assumed position vis-à-vis their essential yet mis-received thinking, on which the concluding lines of *Der Spruch des Anaximander* (1946) provide a perfect clue: thinking, says Heidegger, "brings the dawn of thought into the neighborhood of what is for thinking."[26] Thus it would be a mistake to take Heidegger's interest in early-Greek Pre-Platonic thought as a typical product of German philhellenism, which must be interpreted as a response to the "rise of France as a 'new Rome'

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[13] HOMER, *Iliad*, 1.70. Cf. HERACLITUS, DK B30; PARMENIDES, DK B8.
[14] PARMENIDES, DK B3.
[15] HERACLITUS, DK B1.
[16] PARMENIDES, DK B8.
[17] PARMENIDES, DK B8.
[18] HERACLITUS, DK B1, DK B2, DK B50, DK B72.
[19] HERACLITUS DK B30, DK B32, DK B41; PARMENIDES DK B8.
[20] HERACLITUS, DK B41, DK B50, DK B108.
[21] HERACLITUS, DK B2, DK B41, DK B50, DK B72, DK B89, DK B114.
[22] HERACLITUS, DK B32, DK B64.
[23] HERACLITUS, DK B30, DK B89.
[24] HEIDEGGER, "Zeit un Sein."
[25] POKORNY (*Proto-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary*, p. 326, 436) assigns two different Proto-Indo-European roots to φύω: *bha-*[1], and φαίνω: *bhu-*, but assigns the same root to φαίνω and φάναι: *bha-*, although he reports two variants of it and derives each Greek verb from one of them: φαίνω from "*bha-*[1]" and φάναι from "*bha-*[2]" (p. 329). Be that as it may, following VON HUMBOLDT's view (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7, p. 90) that languages reflect specific conceptual perceptions of the world, it is safe to deduce that the Proto-Indo-European consonantal phonemes *bha-* and *bhu-* are close enough (in fact they are almost identical) so as not to suggest a common conceptual perception behind them; a common conceptual perception we propose to render as *bhø-*, with the empty position ø being thereby susceptible of being filled by any auxiliary (i.e. vocalic) sound. Furthermore, *bhø-* can be easily "heard" as what it obviously is: an ideophone (or onomatopoeia) expressing the springing up and the shining forth of things. Thus it is not but absurd to presume a certain semantic overlap between φύω and φαίνω; and if one realises that to speak originally means to bring forth into consideration what would otherwise remain hidden, then it is also quite easy to extend that semantic overlap to φάναι.
[26] HEIDEGGER, *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 58 (trans. D. F. Krell and F. Capuzzi).

apparently capable of absorbing all Europe"[27] between 1660 and the 1815. The Ancient Greeks are crucial for Heidegger because they are those whom Roman-, Christian-, and modern-Europe alike have no longer listened to, but from whose thinking they have nonetheless reclaimed themselves to one extent or another. And for this reason, argues Heidegger, it is necessary to make clear what they truly thought by freeing their thought from later distortions. This, in turn, entails that we try to think with them again by allowing ourselves the possibility of thinking otherwise, that is to say, along the path of a true "overcoming" of "nihilism,"[28] which constitutes, writes Heidegger, the essence of "metaphysics," the latter understood as the thought for which, in contrast to Parmenides's τὸ γὰρ αυτὸ νοειν εστίν τε καὶ εἶναι,[29] "that which is not in any way a being (namely, being)," i.e. the originally-thought as τὸ ἄπειρον (Anaximander), φύσις (Heraclitus), and ἀλήθεια (Parmenides), "can present itself only as nothing."[30] Thinking, adds Heidegger, "must [thus] return to where, in a certain way, [it] has always already been but [has] never yet built."[31]

For only through re-entering into, and building in, the pre-, in the sense of not-yet- or extra-, nihilist province in which early-Greek thinking still belonged, but never built, and in which, therefore, we too belong, despite all, as long as we continue to think in/with Greek terms, "only through building [therein] can we prepare a dwelling in that locality."[32] Even if such building "can scarcely think of establishing" self-evident and clear-cult "dwelling sites for [us] mortals,"[33] as we may first need to recover the "flashing insight" (*Einblitz*, *Einblick*)[34] of our "mortality," i.e. the awareness that it is only "poetically"[35] and before the "immortal(s)" that we can "dwell" on the "earth" and under the "sky."[36] Even if such (provisional) building must initially[37] "content itself with building the *path* that leads back into the locality of a recovery of metaphysics and thereby let us journey through what is destined in an overcoming of nihilism";[38] "destined" because, again, whether we like it or not, we remain heirs to the early-Greek "opening," wherein we may be also said to stand albeit carefree and uncommitted, therefore, since the very moment in which we use words like "being," "idea," "reason," "truth," etc., and their corresponding opposites.

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[27] BERNAL, "Black Athena Denied," p. 14.
[28] HERACLITUS, *Pathmarks*, p. 320 (trans. W. McNeill).
[29] PARMENIDES, DK B3.
[30] HERACLITUS, *Pathmarks*, p. 316 (trans. W. McNeill).
[31] HERACLITUS, *Pathmarks*, p. 319 (trans. W. McNeill).
[32] HEIDEGGER, *Pathmarks*, p. 319 (trans. W. McNeill).
[33] HEIDEGGER, *Pathmarks*, p. 319-320 (trans. W. McNeill).
[34] HEIDEGGER, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 70.
[35] HEIDEGGER, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 209-227.
[36] HEIDEGGER, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 141-159. See further section 4 below. For any reader of Lévi-Strauss, Heidegger's two intersecting set of binaries cannot but present a somewhat-*savage* coloration, which we will explore at length in an upcoming book provisionally titled "Dionysos and Apollo in the Anthropocene: Post-Nihilist Meanderings."
[37] *Pace* VATTIMO (*Introduzione a Heidegger*, p. 93-97), who, in order to stress the difference between Heidegger's *Schritt zurück* ("step back") and Hegel's *Aufhebung* ("supersession"), seems to lose sight of that building's horizon. Thus his well-known translation of Heidegger's expressions *Überwindung* ("overcoming") *des Nihilismus* and *Verwindung* ("acknowledged assumption") *des Nihilismus* as, indistinctly, "convalescence" and "resignation" to it (VATTIMO, *The End of Modernity*, p. 172-173).
[38] HEIDEGGER, *Pathmarks*, p. 320 (trans. W. McNeill).

Nihilism and the *bestellt* Unworlding of the World as Its Fulfilment

Plato's identification of the "being" of something with its εἶδος or "visible aspect" may be said to already represent a first excursion from the region of early-Greek thinking, provided, that is, that εἶδος be interpreted as "form" rather than as the "appearance" or shining forth of something into the domain of what "is," which might well be, though, how Plato himself interpreted it.[39] Yet to our mind Plato's treatment of τὸ ἀγαθόν in *Republic* VI, 508e-509b, where he makes the much-discussed analogy between the "good" and the light of the sun that allows us to see everything but cannot be seen since it is no thing – for which reason, says Socrates, it must be put "apart from the (delimited) being-ness (of what is)" (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας) – still fits within that region.[40]

It is with Aristotle that all changes. Certainly, Aristotle, like Plato, is aware that the question concerning "being as being" (ὄν ᾗ ὄν) is the question of philosophy.[41] Therefore he asks: "what is being?" (τὶ τὸ ὄν).[42] But, when he does, he had already answered the question as follows: "being is said in many ways" (τὸ ὄν λεγεται πολλαχῶς).[43] It is said first and foremost of the substance,[44] but also of its accidents; it is said of that which is actual and of that which is potential; and it is said of that which is true and of that which is false. In short, with Aristotle being becomes this and that according to all its possible "determinations." Hence it can only be viewed as a universal and empty concept, or as too abstract a notion (as Hegel says). This is the reason why Aristotle proceeds to the study of the different types of being that can be found in the different regions of the world: physical beings like this flower, metaphysical beings like the "prime unmoved mover" which he identifies with Plato's idea of the "good," logical beings like such or such proposition, ethical beings like those intangible things called virtues, etc. Aristotle's regional ontology thus lays the foundations of an authentic encyclopaedia of being, understood as that which is "at hand" (*zuhanden*).

We may call this a first episode in the "forgetting of being" (a.k.a. "nihilism") that constitutes the essence of metaphysics, as defined by Heidegger.[45] A second episode rapidly followed. When the first Muslim philosophers came across Aristotles's writings, and found in them the term "being" (τὸ ὄν), they could not render it into Arabic, which, like all Semitic languages, lacks the verb "to be." So they translated εἶναι ("to be") as الوجود, the "presence" or "thereness" characteristic of what is, and τὸ ὄν as الموجود," that which lies at-hand" before us. Later, the medieval Christian philosophers came across this adventurous correspondence and

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[39] Cf. howerer HEIDEGGER, *Pathmarks*, p. 176-177.
[40] Cf. HEIDEGGER, *Pathmarks*, p. 175-176.
[41] ARISTOTLE, *Met.*, Γ 1, 1003a.
[42] ARISTOTLE, *Met.*, H 1, 1028b.
[43] ARISTOTLE, *Met.*, H 1, 1028a.
[44] ARISTOTLE, *Met.*, H 1, 1028b: καὶ δὴ καὶ τὸ πάλαι τε καὶ νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ ζητούμενον καὶ ἀεὶ ἀπορούμενον, τὶ τὸ ὄν, τοῦτό ἐστι τὶς ἡ οὐσία.
[45] See section 1 above.

translated وجوداً as "existence" (*existentia*, or *esse*) and موجوداً as "existent" (*existens*, or *ens*). In this way, being came to be banalised and transformed into the "readiness-to-hand" (*Zuhandenheit*) of things, which, furthermore, the Muslim and Christian philosophers, more often than not, took to be a mere "accident" of a thing's *quiditas* (Arabic ماهِيّة, i.e. of "what" each thing is), a sort of contingent existential surplus granted to them by God.

Throughout these two consecutive episodes, then, "being" becomes everything and nothing: everything because it names all there is, nothing because the word loses its former (early-Greek) meaning and relevance. And so the game changes – the philosophical game, that is. To put it bluntly: the new (post-Greek) game will be about choosing which particular being (God?, Man?), or which particular aspect of a given being (God's rationality?, God's will?, human rationality?, human desire?), must be said to prevail over all the others. Consequently, the question of being will be replaced by the search of a ground: the Christian God, Descartes's cogito, Spinoza's Substance, Kant's transcendental subject, Fichte's self-positioning I, Hegel's Absolute Spirit, Marx's class struggle, Nietzsche's will to power, Freud's unconscious, or Sartre's humankind. It matters little, as a matter of fact. The "forgetting of being" opened – opens – innumerable possibilities. Alternatively, the new game may be declared all-too boring. And the search of a ground (*Grund*) be replaced by that of an un-ground (*Abgrund*). Deleuze's Ἓν καὶ Πᾶν, which amounts not so much to an all-encompassing being as to the unbounded totality of all possible becomings, responds to that counter-quest (despite Deleuze's complexity, on which we cannot extend ourselves here). Derrida's deconstructionism (his own complexity notwithstanding) is another option in the contemporary search for an *Abgrund*, in this case a sceptic rather than materialist option.

Yet while the game goes on and is played and re-played with different cards, a major metaphysic configuration happens to have taken shape at its very heart: an extreme configuration, by all means. And it is such extreme metaphysic configuration that Heidegger's philosophy – or, rather, remembrance – of being opposes; for its unprecedented danger derives from the fact that it represents nothing short of the "fulfilment of nihilism." But what, exactly, does the latter consist in? It consists, suggests Heidegger, in the "total mobilisation" (*totale Mobilmachung*) – as Jünger, whose work Heidegger himself read very attentively in the 1930s, calls it[46] – of the world by modern science-technology, which entails the world's "enframing" (*Gestell*) as a" standing reserve" (*Bestand*) in which everything is placed at-the-ready to be appropriated, investigated, classified, experimented-with, manipulated, modified, exchanged, destroyed, and replaced by something else – and, therefore, we would like to add, the dark unworlding of the world that results from the uncareful erasure of its intrinsic brightness.

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[46] JÜNGER, *Sämtliche Werke*, Band 7, p. 119-142. See further Blok, *Ernst Jünger's Philosophy of Technology*.

Heidegger develops his concept of *Gestell* – together with those of a parallel "positioning" (*Gestellen*), "requisitioning" (*Bestellen*) and "conscription" (*Gestellung*) – in a text from 1955 titled *The Question Concerning Technology*.[47] Yet it is the earlier, slightly-longer, 1949 version of it contained in his *Bremen and Freiburg lectures*[48] that we should like to briefly consider here. Heidegger defines in it the "standing reserve" (*Bestand*) as the uniforming "positionality" (*Gestell*)[49] within which all things are placed, brought forward, and dealt with, without being possible for us to "dwell" among them anymore. Thus, for example, he writes:

> The hydroelectric plant is placed in the river. It imposes upon it for water pressure, which sets the turbines turning, the turning of which drives the machines, the gearing of which imposes upon the electrical current through which the long-distance power centers and their electrical grid are positioned for the conducting of electricity. The power station in the Rhine river, the dam, the turbines, the generators, the switchboards, the electrical grid—all this and more is there only insofar as it stands in place and at the ready, not in order to presence, but to be positioned […]. [So that it can said that] [t]he hydroelectric plant is not built in the Rhine river, but rather the river is built into the power plant and is what it is there due to the power plant's essence.[50]

Furthermore, adds Heidegger, "only what is so ordered that it stands in place and at the ready persists as standing reserve and, in the sense of standing reserve, is constant. The constant consists of continuous orderability within such a conscription."[51] In this sense, too, the fulfilment of nihilism amounts to the unrestricted extension of the will to power, which must be seen as the true figure behind such ceaseless "ordering" (*bestellen*).

It is possible to ask, though, what is it that such *bestellen* suppresses. It suppresses, or erases, what things are, but not as self-standing "things-in-themselves" (as Kant would have had it) prior to their scientific-technological appropriation. Put differently, what the *bestellen* in which the modern *Gestell* consists suppresses is not the pre-*bestellt* self-referential autonomy of all things, upon which a supposed "democracy of [equally-valuable-self-standing] objects" (to borrow and nuance Bryant's expression)[52] could otherwise be established. What, viewed from a Heideggerian and early-Greek standpoint, it suppresses, is, in the case of all non-human-made things, what we are willing to call their "translucent phenomenality," i.e. their translucent-ness to "being" – their auto-poietic shining forth into the region of the unconcealed. Yet such *bestellen* does not only suppress the ontological translucent-ness of all non-human made things. It also suppresses, if we may call it so, their "worldness" in the sense of their forming part of a web of

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[47] HEIDEGGER, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 3-49.
[48] HEIDEGGER, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 1-73.
[49] In A. J. Mitchell's translation.
[50] HEIDEGGER, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 27-28.
[51] HEIDEGGER, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 27.
[52] BRYANT, *The Democracy of Objects*.

relations (and interfering perspectives!),[53] as there can be no world in the absence of these.[54] For non-human-made things are anything but autonomous self-standing things: they form webs of relations to compose worlds. Therefore, when they are forced into the modern *Gestell* they do not lose their autonomy to enter a world: they lose their world to enter an unworld. Lastly, what about those things that are human made instead, but are not technologically made, or not produced in the context of the modern "enframing," like, for instance, a jug (which is Heidegger's own example in the first of his Bremen lectures)?[55] These, says Heidegger, witness in their beautiful simplicity to the intersection of "four" cardinal *cum* ontological components: "earth" (the generous earth on which we, mortals, live and which gives us all we have while we live), "sky" (the sky whose light warms the earth and whose water nurtures it making it alive), "mortals" (ourselves in our quality of poetic dwellers of the earth who live on it under the sky), and "immortals" (those whose presence ultimately shapes us, for they are the ever-living forces or the world that sustain us, but before whose life we are nothing); [56] components whose "nearness" (*Nähe*) they bring about. However, this" nearness" has nothing to do with the "uniforming distanceless-ness" implemented by modern technology. Contrary to the latter's intrusiveness, which eliminates all distance and proximity at the same time (for there can only be proximity if there is distance, and vice versa), it allows the "Four" to "approach one other" and "shine together" in the "unity" of a "mirroring reciprocity," thus forming a circling "Fourfold" or "Quaternity" (*Geviert*). In this sense, non-technologically human-made things prove ontologically translucent in their own way, by means of being relational.[57]

Object-Oriented Ontology as a Post-Political Worldless Playground

This ontological translucent-ness and relationality of all things has absolutely nothing to do with the ontological and relational "opaqueness" that today's Object-Oriented Ontology (henceforth OOO) attributes to them by default, when it thinks them as self-contained ungraspable "objects." As though it would be possible to free a thing from the correlationist/utilitarian *bestellen* that makes of it an "ob-ject" (*Gegenstand*), susceptible of being represented and/or used, by making of it, instead, a non-representational and/or non-usable "self-standing object" (*Selbstand*). And again: as though, by being forced into the modern *Gestell*, things would come to lose their

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[53] See VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism."

[54] In fact there cannot even be things without them, since all things are knots of relations. See HENARE, HOLBRAAD, and WASTELL (eds.), *Thinking Through Things*.

[55] As well as in the 1950 lecture that adapts it: "The Thing," in HEIDEGGER, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 161-184.

[56] HERACLITUS, DK B62: ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάντατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες.

[57] Pretending that all human-made things are technologically-made things obliterates the ontological difference brought about by the modern technological *Gestell* vis-à-vis former artisanal production. Pretending that everything is technological, including non-human-made-things – and hence that there is no difference whatsoever between the human and the other-than-human – amounts to a conceptual oversimplification based on a syllogism of the type: (1) technology = relation, (2) everything is relational, (3) therefore everything is technological; and, again, obviates the ontological difference introduced by the modern *Gestell* in relation, this time, with everything else, e.g. a tropical rainforest or a coral reef. See further section 4 below.

autonomy in order to enter a world rather than be compelled to lose their world in order to enter an unworld.

Therefore, we think it absurd to reading Heidegger as if one could extract from any of him "a cryptic manifesto for an object-oriented philosophy," as Graham Harman contends.[58]

Harman seems to argue as follows:

(1) Heidegger criticises the enframing of all things in an attempt to recover their pre-enframed being.

(2) The positioning of all things makes them being-at-the-ready for us.

(3) Being-at-the-ready for us, things withdraw from themselves and become part of our own world.[59]

(4) In other words, they unbecome "Type-A" (= autonomous) objects to become instead "Type-B" (= relational) objects, according to Rorty's distinction of thing-types.[60]

(5) Therefore, even if, like Rorty himself, Heidegger underestimates "Type-A" things in favour of "Type-B" things (as the aforementioned example of the "jug" and the "Fourfold" illustrates), he nevertheless offers something like a conceptual ground for the development of an OOO that would enable us to go back, *contra* Kant, to the things themselves.

(6) In this way, we will able to recover all "objects" as "objects."

1 and 2 are correct. Yet 3 forgets that, by being at-hand for us, things do not enter into any "world," but rather lose it to enter an "unworld," as we have remarked. First big error, then. 4, in turn, wrongly projects onto Heidegger's philosophy a concern that is entirely foreign to it, unfairly simplifying it as a result. For Heidegger does not distinguish between relational and non-relational objects, but between: (*a*) the things themselves, to which he applies a phenomenological rather than Kantian lens: not the things "self-standing" on their own before being swallowed into/by the *Gestell*, but capable, instead, either of "shining-forth" in their being or of "bringing to nearness" the "Fourfold"; and (*b*) those same things violently transformed by the *Gestell* into, we could say," ordered resources," or "resources" *tout court*. Second big mistake, then. 5 simply makes no sense, therefore. As for 6…

In his 2002 book, Harman states that the goal of his "object-oriented philosophy" is to re-invigorate the "concealed actuality"[61] of all objects, i.e. their "reality *in vacuo*,"[62] "apart from any accidental collision with other objects"[63] and, thereby, apart from their "relational

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[58] HARMAN, *Tool-Being*, p. 175. See further p. 164-180. Without knowing it, Harman thus joins AGAMBEN's early (Adornian) misinterpretation of Heidegger's thought as fetishist in *La comunità che viene* (1990), albeit positively in his case. On Hidegger, Adorno, and Agamben, see VATTER, *The Republic of the Living*, p. 106-114.

[59] I.e. they become captured in as dissymmetric "correlation," to borrow this time Meillassoux's term, that subordinates them to our representation of them as being otherwise-meaningless, or, better, real-less.

[60] RORTY, "Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Reification of Language."

[61] HARMAN, *Tool-Being*, p. 224.

[62] HARMAN, *Tool-Being*, p. 228.

[63] HARMAN, *Tool-Being*, p. 228.

potentiality." [64] Harman's recourse to Aristotelian terminology (actuality vs. potentiality) is anything but casual. In a later paper, he declares Aristotle "the permanent ally of all brands of realism; [for] whatever the flaws of Aristotelian substance may be," says Harman, "lack of reality outside the human mind is not one of them."[65] In the end, therefore, Harman invites us to go back to Aristotle's "realism" – via Heidegger!

Only that, in the 21st century, Aristotle, too, must be redressed. For "objects are ghostly objects," writes Harman elsewhere, "withdrawing from all human and inhuman access, accessible only by allusion and seducing us by means of allure. Whatever we capture, whatever table we sit at or destroy, is not the real table." [66] Not only ontological and relational "opaqueness" – in which one is inclined to suspect the combined influence of the modern scientific disenchantment of the world[67] and modern individualism, in addition to an anti-pragmatist stance given Harman's confrontation with Rorty – but also "ghostliness" characterises, now, all things. Yet perhaps this is just normal, or expectable. For what else but "worldlessness" could finally provoke the "unworlding" of the world brought about by the fulfilment of nihilism in which the darkening *bestellen* of all things consists? If the modern *Gestell* (which is a pleonastic expression, anyway, since modernity and "enframing" are one and the same thing) can be said to have obscured and usurped the ontological and relational brightness that things once had, if it does no longer allow them but shine forth but as commodified materials, objects, and/or data in the actual and virtual showcases of Post-Fordist capitalism, it can be tempting to turn the light off to see what happens next on behalf of the anyway-cool experiences we might collect thus, from feeling the styrofoam carpet with our naked feet to breathing atmospheric sulphur-dioxide nearby, say, the Norilsk Nickel plant.[68] And this so as to better reconcile ourselves (in a Buddhist way?)[69] with the fact that we must coexist with toxicity without the need to question anymore, let alone to philosophically keep meditating, with Heidegger and after Heidegger, on what has brought us here and on whether we may still be capable of drifting in a different direction. Plus one wonders if the OOO slogan: "the alien is everywhere"[70] is not – unlike Brassier's extremely-coherent nihilist position[71] – a self-refuting slogan after all, insofar as the modern *Gestell* offers itself as as a "playground" where we can have "fun" with the alien – and with our own debris:

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[64] HARMAN, *Tool-Being*, p. 228. MEILLASSOUX's "anti-correlationism" does not go as far as this when it pleads for "the discovery that the world possesses a power of persistence and permanence that is completely unaffected by our existence or inexistence" (*After Finitude*, p. 116).

[65] HARMAN, "On the Undermining of Objects," p. 27.

[66] HARMAN, *The Third Table*, p. 12.

[67] Notice the aforementioned references to the apprehension of all objects "*in vacuo*" or "apart from any accidental collision with other objects" (HARMAN, *Tool-Being*, p. 228), which are reminiscent to the experiments of modern science. Does this not place Harman's "object-oriented-philosophy," moreover, within the *Gestell* paradigm itself?

[68] See e.g. MORTON, "What is Dark ecology?"

[69] See MORTON, "Buddhaphobia."

[70] BOGOST, *Alien Phenomenology*, p. 133.

[71] *In nuce*: if it is about disenchantment, then it is also about disengagement; see BRASSIER, *Nihil Unbound*.

> The Arctic Russian town of Nikel looks horrifying at first, like something out of Tarkovsky's Stalker, only on bad acid. A forest devastated by a nickel smelting factory. Soviet buildings stark and bleak. Mounds of garbage sitting on hills of slag. A solitary tree, last of the pines destroyed by the sulphur dioxide. We were a small group of musicians, artists and writers. We had travelled there in late 2014 to start a three-year art and research project called Dark Ecology.
> Then Nikel becomes rather sad and melancholic. A collection of broken things. Past things. Garages repurposed as homes. Broken metal structures in which people are living. Holding on to things for no reason. Peeling paint tells stories of decisions and indecisions and non-decisions. And then for some strange reason it becomes warm. There is a Palace of Culture, full of wonderful kitschy communist art, Terry Gilliam sculpture-like lampshades, hauntingly luminous pale blues, pinks and yellows, the building grooving as hard as a Tibetan stupa. And on the outskirts the reality of death is so explicit. It's a charnel ground almost identical to the one on Mount Kailash, another very friendly place where offerings (or are they huge piles of garbage?) litter the space at the top and nuns meditate in a land strewn with bits of corpses like an emergency room. People are dying, or are they going to live, or are they already dead? There is a lot of blood, severing and severed limbs. A lot of care.
> It's even a little bit funny. A drag queen poses for a photographer outside a metallic building. Some kind of joy is here.[72]

Paraphrasing Proudhon, then, we are tempted to re-label OOO as today's post-political "philosophy of misery,"[73] albeit with due respect to some of its undeniably-suggestive conceptual proposals. "Hyperobjects,"[74] for example, looks to us like a very-fine term for a number of new *realia* that were not here till quite recently, e.g. the plutonium now accumulated on the seabed. And the same can be said, consequently, about the term "mesh."[75] For, to give but one example, closed-cell extruded polystyrene foam, or Styrofoam™, must, if paradoxically, be incorporated to the catalogue of the earth's "natural" ecosystems for those bacteria capable of transforming it into degradable plastic. And it we must live with this new *realia* – that is to say, we must live and "stay with the trouble," as Haraway aptly underlines.[76] Yet one should not overlook that in production of StyrofoamTM, or any other synthetic-aromatic-hydrocarbon polymer for that matter, is one that the earth can hardly support anymore, as simple as this.[77] Thus living in "capitalist ruins," as Tsing has it,[78] does not preclude that we try to do something different than

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[72] MORTON, "What is Dark ecology?"
[73] One in which art, understood as the exploration of the aesthetic pleasure caused by whatever there is or any new emergent reality, plays a key role of course. On art, OOO, and post-politics – which is a tricky term anyway, since there is a politics to post-politics: a politics of surrender to dominant politics – see e.g. BIEMANN's ("Geochemistry & Other Planetary Perspectives," p. 122) testimony of Harman's reaction to the Arab Spring.
[74] MORTON, *Hyperobjects*.
[75] MORTON, *Hyperobjects*, *passim*.
[76] HARAWAY, *Staying with the Trouble*.
[77] See NELSON and BRAUN, "Autonomia in the Anthropocene."
[78] TSING, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

self-satisfy ourselves with what there is, be it at hand or beyond our reach. In what follows we would like to explore, then, the transition from "worldlessness" to "worldness," or, even better, to "(re)worldings."

Post-Nihilist (Re)worldings and the Question of the Sacred

Regaining "worldness" entails (or, rather, presupposes as its condition of possibility) thinking and re-practicing "dwelling."[79] But what is to "dwell?"

Dwelling is not exactly living. Living is the characteristic of all what lives, whose boundaries do not necessarily coincide of course with those fixed upon it by the modern "World Picture."[80] Against the latter's removal – in the image of Christianity – of all auto-poietic life from what Hallowell famously called "other-than-human persons,"[81] either declaring these lifeless or else minimising their life by circumscribing it into the category of blind necessity (be it in terms of biological instinct or mechanical concatenation), the recovery of the complex, intelligent, multi-centred, and hyper-relational forms of living distinctive of all what lives, is a crucial conceptual need in our times that recent reutilisations of the term "animism" tellingly attest to.[82] Dwelling, instead, is what defines us, "mortals." For we are unwilling to speak of "humans" any longer, due to the anthropocentric overtones inherent in such term. [83] "Mortals" are those who, throughout, at least, their adult lifetime, are aware that they die, and because of it they can dwell, or live "poetically" among the living.[84] For not all those who die are "mortals"; not even those who may present they are about to die, or, more precisely, that they are about to what we, mortals, "call" to die. This, indeed, is our second distinctive trait: a highly-developed "symbolic" language thus capable of naming, and hence, too, a "meditative" language capable of reflecting. Notice that we do not say language alone, since all living beings have language, and indeed intelligent language, both iconic and indexical.[85] Nor do we say symbolic language alone, inasmuch as it is possibly shared by others.[86] Only we, mortals, due to our (distinctively-assumed) "mortal-ness," and to our (likewise-distinctive) "meditative-ness," are capable of "dwelling," that is to say, of living "poetically" among the living knowing that we now are, but one day we will no longer be, living among them. And this can leads us, mortals, to project on life itself an attitude of "awe" or "amazement" that, in fact, most mortals share.[87] We shall

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[79] Dwelling is an important theme for Heidegger, as well (see e.g. HEIDEGGER, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 141-159). Interestingly, over the past few decades architects have become all the more receptive to Heidegger's philosophy of dwelling; see e.g. TILLEY, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*.

[80] The Term is HEIDEGGER's (*Off the Beaten Track*, p. 57-85).

[81] The expression "other-than-human" is HALLOWELL's ("Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View").

[82] See BENSUSAN, *Linhas de animismo futuro* and SEGOVIA, "El nuevo animismo," as well as the references in them. A thorough and extensive presentation of this conceptual phenomenon is forthcoming in SEGOVIA, *Animism Redux*.

[83] See BRAIDOTTI, *The Posthuman*.

[84] See further HEIDEGGER, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

[85] See e.g. KOHN, *How Forests Think*.

[86] BOESCH, "Symbolic Communication in Wild Chimpanzees?," p. 81-82: in the Tai forest "wild chimpanzees seem to use drumming or buttressed trees to convey information and changes of travel direction."

[87] In contrast to our alleged "humanity," which we also take to be a problematic notion, therefore. We are indebted here to the current "ontological turn" in anthropology, with its emphasis on the correlation between "multinaturalism" and

immediately return to it. First, though, we ought to make an important qualification regarding language and the forgetting of our "mortal-ness."

Paradoxically, it is language that often makes us forget that we are "mortals" capable of "dwelling." Heidegger writes:

> Language is […] the house of Being. The nature of language does not exhaust itself in signifying, nor is it merely something that has the character of sign or cipher. It is because language is the house of Being, that we reach what is by constantly going through this house. When we go to the well, when we go through the woods, we are always already going through the word "well," through the word "woods," even if we do not speak the words and do not think of anything relating to language.[88]

Yet for this reason, too, language presents the risk of substituting reality.[89] It is, in effect, easy to appropriate intelligibly X and Y, declare them to only be "wood," and end up making of all wood "firewood." Furthermore, the modern "requisition" (*Bestellen*), "positioning" (*Stellen*), "conscription" (*Gestellung*), and "enframing" (*Gestell*) of all things would not be possible, in the first place, were it not for the prior transformation of language into a tool for domination, control, management, and distribution of all there is; or, in other words, for its transformation into a "nihilising" device, radically different, then, from the "ontologising" and "worlding" language of the true dweller, the poet, the singer (*Dichter*): "The singer's saying says the sound whole of worldly existence, which invisibly offers its space within the world's inner space of the heart. […] The song itself is a 'wind.'"[90] It is a wind that passes through the mortal's heart. The singer, then, is open to being, and open to the world. But this means s/he is open, as a mortal, to the presence of the gods, who thereby sing through the singer's saying.

The gods? Read: the world's ever-living forces present in the woods, the wind, the ocean, etc.; and present too in our lives as clear vision, temperance, rage, etc. The "gods," therefore, understood in a Greek manner as the earth's "worlding" forces,[91] opposed to the "unworling" process of nihilism. It should be recalled here, first, that in Ancient Greece the gods were less beings than "events," as Kerényy observed some time ago upon noticing that, before the arrival of Christianity, the term θεός was mostly used in Greece as an exclamation before the apparition (i.e. before the shining forth) of something.[92] Heidegger makes a similar point when he inquires into the meaning of the term ἀείζωον in Heraclitus in light of other similar terms in Homer and

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"embodiment" (on which see once more VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism"). Thus, for example, ontological difference must be, we think, extended to whom, somewhat naively, modern science would call biological humans variously adorned as per their respective cultural habits (e.g. the "jaguar-people" from Amazonia and the "crocodile-people" from Papua New Guinea). See further SEGOVIA, "Spinoza as Savage Thought."
[88] HEIDEGGER, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 129.
[89] Cf. HEIDEGGER study on "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry."
[90] HEIDEGGER, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 137.
[91] Re-coined recently by Haraway, the term "worlding" is, originally, a Heideggerian term (see HEIDEGGER, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 20).
[92] KERÉNYI, "Theos und Mythos."

Pindar.[93] Secondly, it should be stressed, as Walter Otto did long ago, that the Greeks never "believed" in their gods: they "experienced" them.[94] Now, to "experience" has nothing to do here with an intense believe and the self-persuasion (or self-delusion) about its supposed objectivity. We have alluded to it elsewhere: when, in *Iliad* 22.224-5, Achilles tells Hector that he will die because, he says, Athena will kill Hector by means of his (i.e. Achilles's own) spear, the name "Athena" on Achilles's lips signifies the "clear vision" that must assist anyone – and, therefore, that one must experience – in order to win a combat.[95] Therefore, the Greek gods must not be seen as supernatural beings. Even in they are mentioned by their names, they can also be called ὁ θεός in the singular, i.e. the "god" in the sense of the "godly" or "divine," and ἀθάνατοι, i.e. the "immortal" ones. But since θεός also means "shining," it is important to realise that the gods were in Greece, above all, the "shining ones": θεοί. Needless to say, the gods thus understood – once again: the earth's "worlding forces" – shine forth in different ways in each culture, and, therefore, receive different names within their different "conceptual worlds"; for whereas the earth is "sensible," the sensible *par excellence*, all worlds are conceptual: the earth, diversely "thought."[96]

So we are not just talking of the Greek gods, but of any earthly affective forces perceived in the way the Greek gods were (hence about most non-monotheist gods, spirits, ancestors, etc.). By the same token, we are not proposing any religion either. There is only one "religion": Christianity. To think about religion as the" belief" in "supernatural beings," or in a single supernatural (in the sense of extra-cosmic or extra-terrestrial) being, makes only sense in the case of Christianity (and, to some extent, its monotheist siblings). Which, by the way, makes all the more ridiculous recent attempts, like Pascal Boyer's, to explain religion (in line with other evolutionary psychologists) as a universal psychological phenomenon. [97] Ancient Greece mythology falls outside the mainstream notion of religion.[98] To begin with, the term "religion" (*religio*) is a Latin term without any Greek equivalent. Furthermore, it was only in the 5th century CE that *religio* took its current meaning. In Julius Cæsar (100–44 BCE), in whom we find its earliest occurrence, it names "commitment to a vow." Later, in Julian (331/2-363 CE), it designates "culture." Only in the 5th century Christian authors began to use it to denote a system of beliefs and its corresponding practices, institutions, traditions, etc. On their own interest, of course, as Christianity turns, basically, around a belief (the belief that Christ is God's only Son sent by the Father to redeem humanity from its sins).

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[93] HEIDEGGER, *Heraclitus*, p. 71.
[94] OTTO, *Theophanie*, p. 8-9. Similarly, Claxton (*Heidegger's Gods*, p. 59) speaks of the "divinities" as "affective aspects of being."
[95] SEGOVIA, *La inmanencia y lo sagrado*, p. 21-22.
[96] We are combining here CLAXTON's (*Heidegger's Gods*, p. 19) distinction between "earth" and "world" after WARNEK ("Translating *Innigkeit*") and THOMSON ("Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy") with VIVEIROS DE CASTRO's notion of "conceptual worlds" in *The Relative Native*, after LÉVI-STRAUSS (*The Savage Mind*).
[97] BOYER, *Religion Explained*.
[98] We draw here and in what follows on BARTON and BOYARIN, *Imagine no Religion*.

Yet among the various names that could be eventually assigned to the attitude of "awe" or "amazement" before the earth's "worlding forces" on which, as we have seen, all dwelling depends, there is the Greek εὐσέβεια, which literally means "due (εὐ) awe (σέβας)" vis-à-vis the gods. That such attitude may imply putting something apart in the sense of caring for it, and thereby some form of "dedication" (ἱεροῖς), is as natural as it is the fact that the Greek term for the latter is also the term for the "sacred" (ἱεροῖς). However, dedication to the sacred does not obligatorily entail "ritual observation" (θρησκεία), although it does not preclude it either. Εὐσέβεια, then, is what is needed to dwell as mortals on a "re-worlded earth" – or, better, on a diversely-worlded earth. For unworlded and worldless worlds cannot be dwelled in, one can only wander through them wonder-less and homeless. Dwelling, then, is the only possible alternative to today's fulfilled nihilism, and to nihilism in any of its possible forms: those that want to accelerate modernity even more, those willing to persuade us that life is merely contingent or malignantly useless, and those that cling to the Nietzschean will to power as an anarchic experiential intensifier. To nihilism's homeless-ness, it opposes "tenderness" (*Zärtlichkeit*), "intimacy" (*Innigkeit*), and "care" (*Sorge*).

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