

# Cosmopolitics as a Taste for Cunning

## The Plural of the Otherwise and the Principles of Stereoscopy

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### Abstract:

The idea of a cosmopolitics is considered in terms of the many stories that are simultaneously told by this cosmos. Those stories interact in several political ways and often require a taste for cunning to be heard. This stereoscopic feature of cosmopolitics is considered in terms of some of its salient dimensions: it relies on the ecology of practices, on the anthropology of nature, on the history of being, on spectrology and on general economy. As a consequence of this analysis of the cosmopolitical action (or event), this cosmos is persistently open to the otherwise.

**Keywords:** cosmopolitics; ecology of practices; anthropology of nature; history of being; spectrology; general economy

### Introduction

luxer l'oreille philosophique,  
faire travailler le loxôs dans le logos  
– DERRIDA, “Tympan”

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In this cosmos we all share things that rarely happen one by one. It is perhaps the very domain of Garrett Hardin's first law of political ecology: it is impossible to do only one thing.<sup>2</sup> Because of this multiplicity that plagues the event, one needs to look at it with suspicion: it is not quite what it appears, or rather, it is not only what it appears – and, in this cosmos, not even a hyper-argos (Panoptes) can dispense with this suspicion. Suspicion is nonetheless not enough if it doesn't provide an extra-eye that sees what is unseen by the others. This exercise of opticogenesis happens on the fly – that is to say, no one is ever prepared for the engagement in cunning that enables, in this cosmos, the doing of something by the doing something else. The need for a permanent opticogenesis to cope with the cunning in this cosmos evokes what Alfred Whitehead called lure for feelings. Whitehead understood propositions, theories, works of art and discourses as capable to create sensibilities that weren't there before – they forge new capacities to feel and it is through that very process that they affect what there is. The new eye, so to speak, will not replace any other, it will be a supplement, a prosthesis that provides the further stereoscopy needed to handle this cosmos.

A cosmos prone to harbor cunning is not a totality in the sense of a barren tautological absolute, to use a phrase of Whitehead. Rather, as Heraclitus put it, τοὺς καθεύδοντας ἐργάτας εἶναι καὶ συνεργοὺς τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ γινομένων.<sup>3</sup> It follows that this cosmos is not only in process but also that it is in process through other processes. This cosmos is not only happening before our eyes while having our eyes involved in its unfolding, but it demands new eyes to see what could otherwise not be seen and it involves these new eyes accordingly in its very process. This cosmos is a creator of sensoria – and in that sense what takes place in it carries a transversality that systematically escapes the existing resources to look at it. This creation of sensoria, nonetheless, is not an imposition from this cosmos – it is itself a lure, a movement in the space of insinuations. It is as if a renewed opacity made a plea for a prosthesis within perception – like transparency, in this cosmos, is reachable as an achievement. The new eye emerges as a response to this renewed opacity and can now trigger action on what was previously invisible. The expanding sensoria, therefore, provides no transformation, but prepares it. Or rather, the new sensibility is what makes something possible.

The gesture of forging new sensitivities is a salient feature of what I understand as the cosmopolitical effort. Stereoscopy is central to the exercise, as I see it, precisely because there is cunning in this cosmos. To observe and participate in the unfolding of the political in this cosmos one needs to have attention to the polyphony of action. To be sure, the cosmopolitical arena is itself a multi-track space that can perhaps only be described through many simultaneous dimensions. In what

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<sup>2</sup> HARDIN, "Letter to the International Academy for Preventive Medicine."

<sup>3</sup> HERACLITUS, DK B75: "Those who are asleep are co-workers in what goes on in the world" (my translation).

follows, I describe some of the dimensions that illuminate both the cunning in this cosmos and the need for a (continuously) extended sensibility to appreciate its course.

### 1 / The stereoscopy of preparation

Anna Tsing studies the Japanese satoyama landscapes of forests affected by urbanization and with important human presence to show how emerging agents – like matsutake mushrooms – can make them into their place of dwelling.<sup>4</sup> These agents can see transversally in the sense that what is degraded to some other species is enticing and appropriate to them. Similarly, the bacteria *Ideonella sakaiensis*, first identified in 2016 by a team of researchers led by Kohei Oda and Kenji Miyamoto, was shown capable to assimilate and mineralize into carbon dioxide a great amount of PET bottles.<sup>5</sup> More recently, Morgan Vague isolated *Pseudomonas morganensis*, a bacteria that has evolved to eat certain types of plastic in areas where carbon-based nutrients are scarce.<sup>6</sup> Tsing's attention to the ruins provoked by capitalist destruction invoke a cosmopolitical concern: degradation itself is not doing only one thing. The human capacity to degrade previously dynamically balanced environments both modify the alternatives for humans to live on this planet and open opportunities for other agents to thrive by adapting the surroundings their (often newly acquired) needs. It is not that degradation of an environment is intended by any agent as a way to make matsutake or some pseudomonas thrive – neither these species nor the humans and not even this cosmos itself intended this way. However, by degrading the environment, something is being prepared. It is in order to be able to cope with this preparation that sensibility is challenged to be (continuously) expanded. Preparation itself cannot be seen as geared towards any landscape nor towards favoring any agent – yet while something else is being done, like expanding urban environments, a preparation takes place. The cunning of this cosmos is perhaps the very idea that it is not possible not to prepare anything.

Stereoscopy is not alien to the history of philosophy. An important thrust of Aristotle in the books of his *Metaphysics* was to introduce the idea of  $\eta$  – the idea that *ousia* or numbers could be seen in more than one way because they were themselves more than one thing. Hence, numbers can be seen as abstract items while they can also be seen as a quantity *in rebus* – and this is because they have more than one mode of existence.<sup>7</sup> They are themselves multiple and polyphonic – and this is a crucial tool for Aristotle to counter the idea he ascribed to Plato that forms were thoroughly separated

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<sup>4</sup> TSING, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

<sup>5</sup> YOSHIDA et al., "A bacterium that degrades and assimilates poly(ethylene terephthalate)".

<sup>6</sup> VAGUE et al., "Pseudomonas isolates degrade and form biofilms on polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic."

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, book M.

from matter. The idea of multiple modes of existence has been more recently developed by Etienne Souriau who advocated the intrinsic polyphonic character of existence.<sup>8</sup> Souriau argues that what he calls existential pluralism – that is to be distinguished from ontological pluralism, the thesis that different things exist – has been considered and adopted in many corners of philosophy. Aristotle puts forward the plurality of modes of existence to oppose the ontological pluralism according to which numbers exist as much as objects. To be sure, often ontological pluralism is entwined with existential pluralism for different existing items are postulated as existing in different modes. Still, Souriau sees Spinoza as someone who brings together an ontological monism and an existential pluralism – and this is the role attributes play by predicating the only substance. Souriau himself is interested in the way the different modes of existence converge – and he crafts the term *surexistence* to think through what he posits as the crossroad of modes of existence. What interests me here is to think how a mode of existence prepares others – how what takes place in one mode of existence prepares what could take place in others.

The connection between modes of existence falls short of a full causal or otherwise integrative one. Preparation is rather an enabling process that paves the way for what also exists but in another mode – another scale, another arena, *qua* something else. We could say that to prepare is to fuel cunning dynamics. It is fruitful here to look into how storage in memory works – how things are archived. To entrust something to an archive is to prepare future narratives that can be fully transversal to what was intended to be stored. Archives are like written texts: what can be read in them depends on all sorts of adjacent elements. Jacques Derrida's reading of the association that Socrates does of the written text with an orphan in Plato's *Phaedrus* is enough to suggest that whatever is confided to text is hostage to the future readers.<sup>9</sup> This stereoscopy of the archive is what gives it a history of what was done with it through time – enough to consider, with Derrida again, the multiple receptions of *Phaedrus*. The written text – and any form of archive that is subject to future curating – prepares the scene for readings that are not only not intended but also alien to whatever could be postulated as its inner meaning. It is perhaps possible to understand Derrida's deconstruction as an exercise in the spectrology of the archive. Memory is itself spectroscopic – it is, in some sense, like a letter addressed to what is different from its actual destination. It is not clear what is being prepared because cosmopolitical preparation is not always addressed to its destination. Deconstruction itself is inscribed in what Derrida sometimes calls the logic of the supplement – first announced while discussing what Jean-Jacques Rousseau meant by the word: “Either writing was

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<sup>8</sup> SOURIAU, *Les différents modes d'existence*.

<sup>9</sup> DERRIDA, “Plato's Pharmacy,” in *Dissemination*, p. 61-119.

never a simple ‘supplement’, or it is urgently necessary to construct a new logic of the ‘supplement’.<sup>10</sup> The stereoscopy of a text is not the many dimensions that constitute it and that would add up to what it is, but rather it is a consequence of what the supplement elicit from it no matter what was hidden in its guts. Memory – and that involves the very layers of the Earth that store what is stored for the cunning of the future – is a white check handed to its future users and it is in this sense that it prepared their coming. Preparation is a movement in the space of possibilities and, as such, a foray into the otherwise. It is in there that we can find the cunning of memory: it enables what is coming; if this cosmos is a book, it is inscribed by its many successive readings.

### 2 / The stereoscopic ecology of practices

The stereoscopy of memory reveals not only the transversal preparations that take place in this cosmos, but also how cosmopolitics is shaped by an ecological network of practices. Among these practices some make possible to some groups to be entitled to assert things about others – and, in some cases, about anything else. When a book is reread in a different context – consider, for instance, feminist or anti-racist reading of the conventional canonical texts of Western thought – not only they expose the practices that rendered possible the writing as it happened but also place the text among a different environment of practices to assess its capacity to speak to the current days. These practices belong in a network of other, independent but associated practices, that enables the text to subsist being capable to store anything. Every context in which a text is read requires a negotiation with the surrounding practices – it is enough to think of the task of the missionaries taking the same Bible to different languages, forms of life and dispositions concerning the human and non-human surroundings.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, similar efforts to revive and restore extinct animals like the mammoth face the difficulties reconstructing enough of a similar environment for the extinct species, both in terms of its epigenetics and the microbial as in terms of an outside surroundings.<sup>12</sup> These elements of the internal and external environment enable practices without which de-extinction understood as retrieving the organism from its genes is impossible. Without the surrounding practices, the inner structures have no effect.

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<sup>10</sup> DERRIDA, *Of Grammatology*, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> In Barbara KINGSOLVER’s novel *The Poisonwood Bible*, the missionary Nathan Price finds out through his efforts to convert natives in Congo how much is presupposed in order for the basic messages of the Bible to be even heard.

<sup>12</sup> See WRAY, *Rise of the Necrofauna*.

Isabelle Stengers has connected the cosmopolitical proposition to this idea of an underlying ecology of practices.<sup>13</sup> Modern practices of knowledge, in their capacity to alter what is around and therefore act as a cosmic force, depend on stabilization not only of the ways to retrieve information in the archives but also of the status of everything as transparent. Epistemic practices are crucial to articulate other practices in a way that reinforces both parts – academic practices, publication liturgies, teaching dynamics and the economy of reputation both mingle and offer ground to certain forms of quest for knowledge. Stengers understands that a broader, non-Modern alliance of practices – including different epistemic endeavors – can reshape the current cosmopolitical constitution. This reshaping would promote a new ecology where prevailing practices would have to adapt to a new milieu where other, subaltern practices are also reinforced. The cosmopolitical fabric, in any case, is an ecological articulation of practices that include not only those that attempt to explain, predict and control what is around but also what enables these goals to be pursued systematically. The ecology of practices is, therefore, a blueprint for the dynamics of cosmopolitics and therefore how conflict, accommodation, integration and coupling take place in an arena where processes intersect. Crafting alliances in this scenario requires spotting the cunning of practices – seeing how they have effects that escape their declared or explicit ones. Practices are themselves stereoscopic for they belong in an ecological realm where it is impossible to do only one thing.

The ecology of practices illuminates how the Modern cosmopolitical constitution couple together the dynamics of capital and that of pursuing a universalizable knowledge of what is around. This coupling of classes of practices enabled a specific way in which the automation of processes and the consequent control of effects is taking place. The mechanization of production – and its subsequent growth in scale and impact – is crucial for the increase of the sphere of influence of capital that spreads through the very threads of the social tissue. The alliance between understanding human and non-human processes – much of what takes place in the domains of science – became of great importance for the saga of capital in this cosmos. The very idea that production is a consequence of unveiling the underlying forces that give rise to what appears fueled the engagement of human labor as a component of the industrial practice. The pull that capital promotes on production and its forces – and of the social relations transformations that they trigger – can be seen as preparing, nonetheless, more than the continuity of capitalism. An important thrust of Karl Marx's thought was the idea we can see through the current tendencies of capital and predict a different form of life being gestated by its forces – the cosmopolitical power of capital lies in its capacity to prepare something different through the stereoscopy of the very archive which is this planet which had its surface shifted

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<sup>13</sup> STENGERS, *Cosmopolitics I*.

by the unfolding of its forces.<sup>14</sup> The fertility of the notion of practices – and the ecological model of how they interact – lies in showing how a supplement, that could be technical or otherwise, can show how much else can be affected by the actions that seem circumscribed to a known domain. The forces of production that capital promotes in its unfolding can be preparing something very different from the stabilized environment that capital currently requires and enforces.

### 3 / The stereoscopic anthropology of nature

A figure of the distinction between the political and the cosmopolitical is that between differences in culture (or in *Weltanschauung*) and differences in the dispositions towards the others. We can call those the subject matter of traditional ethnographies on the one side and the subject matter of a *xenography* on the other (although some would rather call the latter an *ontography*).<sup>15</sup> An ethnographical endeavor takes the ethnographer's (that is, the Modern's) approach to the non-human for granted and places differences among people merely in their culture, in their beliefs or in their ways of dealing with the common nature. It is like politics that takes for granted an approach to everything that is deemed non-human in this cosmos (including not only the domains of physics and biology but also what relates to domains like management and economics). A politics that eludes its cosmic aspect by taking what has not been decided in a strict human *agora* to be a stable realm out of reach is an exercise of indifference to this cosmos. As Fabián Ludueña argues, the project of a politics that tries not to consider this cosmos is blind.<sup>16</sup> A cosmopolitics is what ends up then being studied by the endeavor that can be called xenography. An attempt to do that is what Philippe Descola calls “anthropology of nature.”<sup>17</sup> The idea is to consider not how we culturally differ, but to look into how the non-human other is dealt with in different human groups.

Descola compares different approaches to the divide between nature and culture – or, rather, physicality, the domain of bodies, and interiority, the domain of what takes place within these bodies. If a naturalist disposition – that of the Moderns – takes physicality to be universal and interiority to be exclusive of humans, its complete opposite – that of the animists – understands interiority as spread among humans and non-humans and the domain of the bodies as the place where distinctions are to be drawn. According to Descola, the animist locates in the body dissimilarities between human and non-human groups and, instead of relying on a common nature, they rely on a

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<sup>14</sup> See MARX, *Capital I*. See also BENSUSAN, “Cosmopolitical parties in the post-human age”.

<sup>15</sup> See VALENTIM, “Antropologia e xenologia”.

<sup>16</sup> LUDUEÑA, *La comunidad de los espectros I and IV*.

<sup>17</sup> DESCOLA, *Par delà nature et culture*.

common culture to negotiate differences. This is what makes them capable to see their bodily particularities in the way they behave in the common space of shared interiorities. The cunning of the bodies somehow expresses itself in the way the negotiation between different interiorities takes place. In contrast, the naturalists are capable to see how cultural differences shape the physicality of the world – by seeing how different foods, different architectures or different procedures to hunt, gather and plant show differing beliefs among different groups. The animists are prone to see the stereoscopy of the physical ingredients of the world in the demands and needs that different groups – including non-human groups – place during the contact they have with them. This is because demands and needs are shared while bodies differ. As a consequence, the animists see non-humans not as something that can simply be put in a standing reserve if humans have the (technical) means to do so. It is not only the limitations of human capacities to control the non-human that makes them fall short of turning them into resources, but the active resistance offered from the common interiority of these non-humans also stops the enterprise, if it is ever postulated. The relation between humans and non-humans is the very kernel of the extension of politics beyond the limits of the first pole. Anthropology of nature, as a domain, offers thus to the non-human a cosmopolitical citizenship.

By considering the way materiality is conceived and relations to it established, Descola shows how different dispositions towards the non-human entail different cosmopolitical choices. Naturalists devoid the non-humans of anything but materiality that is then taken as incapable to negotiate – and therefore as marginals of the cosmopolitical regime. That entails an incapacity to see the body as making peculiar demands and having peculiar needs or an insistence that the cunning of the body that makes it act through something else is to be considered contemptible and susceptible to be mastered and controlled – it is a matter of strength of the interiority to be able to suppress them. The actions of the non-human, as a consequence, tend to be unnoticed and their voices unheard. This is what makes them cosmopolitical subalterns while making cosmopolitics itself collapse into variations of the project of human politics – and therefore a domain of human sovereignty.

In contrast, the animist perspective enables a stereoscopic view where actions of the non-human can be seen as expressed through human actions although at speeds that can be very different from those of monoscopic human agency. From this animist perspective, the very adventure of the Moderns, the naturalist project of taking the common physicality as an invitation to make the world available and ultimately a standing reserve available not necessarily to humans is an action that expresses the cunning of non-humans. The events that guide this invention of the Modern knowledge practices leading to the artificialization of processes can be seen as a cosmic event directed or



prompted by a different agent altogether, and certainly a non-human one.<sup>18</sup> The capacity to see that through this adventure something else was being prepared requires non-naturalist perspectives – and, in general, attention to Descola’s anthropology of nature. This stereoscopic vision is the same that enables the impact of capital on the ecology of practices to be seen. Without it, the more-than-human action remains unseen.

#### 4. The stereoscopic history of *beyng*

The project that Martin Heidegger called *history of beyng* is directed by a reflection on the saga of (Western) metaphysics.<sup>19</sup> From within metaphysics, there is no history either of its inception or its consummation and exhaustion; from within it, only the beings and how they affect each other can be in view. By moving towards the borders of the metaphysical saga themselves, Heidegger achieves a stereoscopic view that enables him to see metaphysics itself as an event (in a broader history of *beyng*). He then concentrates on the inception of metaphysics that he names the first beginning of thought – the first (Western) human approach to its surroundings. Heidegger claims that there is a more initial and therefore ancient starting point that is expressed with the word *beyng* (*Seyn*) instead of *being* (*sein*). That second beginning is not a foundation as the first was purported to be, rather it underlies a foundation and therefore is an abyss, an *an-arché*, an un-grounding non-ground.<sup>20</sup> Heidegger’s tale of the two beginnings provides a standpoint from which the consequences of the first beginning is seen from outside it. In order to see metaphysics from without it, he sees the first beginning that drifts thought into metaphysics from the viewpoint of the second. While being focuses on *φύσις* – and therefore on the concealed and unconcealed as an account of the very process through which things exist – *beyng* is associated with the very event – the abyssal *Ereignis*. Now, importantly, the first beginning – its arrival and the subsequent consequences – is itself an *Ereignis*<sup>21</sup> and therefore is part of the history of *beyng*.<sup>22</sup> That the era commanded by and commenced with *φύσις* was itself an event grounded nowhere but in an event exemplifies the more original character of the second beginning, which comes from outside the very realm where metaphysics takes place. *Beyng* is the precursor of being, what underlies it; similarly, an event is a precursor for something showing itself, unveiling. To see the long saga of metaphysics as an event is to see beyond its domain, to see that the

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<sup>18</sup> In “La cosmopolítica es un animal,” I examine some of the dimensions of cosmopolitics – that greatly coincide with those described here – as parts of an animal.

<sup>19</sup> HEIDEGGER, *Contributions to Philosophy; History of Beyng; Mindfulness*.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, HEIDEGGER, *History of Beyng*, V, 37; VI, 52; VII, 82.

<sup>21</sup> See HEIDEGGER, *Mindfulness*, III, 14.

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, HEIDEGGER, *History of Beyng*, V, 37; VI, 52; VII, 82.

efforts of metaphysics were simultaneously doing something else – there was a cunning of beyng that becomes explicit in the very project of uncovering its history which is itself an exercise in stereoscopy.

The idea that the history of metaphysics is at the same time the unfolding of the history of beyng shows how a concentration in a single thread of events is blind to the transversality that ensures that something else is happening through what happens. The crucial moment of the history of metaphysics was the step from cherishing of how things unveil and withdraw to the notion that they ought to be fully present somewhere, and their appearances and disappearances can be explained by an underlying intelligibility that could be disclosed. That step, according to Heidegger, points at the difference between Heraclitus, Anaximander and the other Pre-Platonic philosophers on the one hand and Plato and Aristotle on the other. After this step is taken, the claim that what is concealed behind appearances can be eventually exposed – and should be so to the (technical) limits of our capacities and abilities – became the guide to an enterprise of knowledge that gradually turned things that would concernfully approach the human eyes into objects available to be examined and understood. The step gave rise to technology and the aim at automating processes to extract from them the control that would enable anyone – and, clearly, that includes non-humans such as computerized devices, chemical concoctions and genetic engines – to manage them.

The rise of metaphysics makes it possible for the world to be a more controllable place where things can be predicted and planned; it turned human life away from a complete dependence on natural events bringing about unchangeable states of affairs. At the same time, it is a blueprint for an artificial environment where nothing can appear or withdraw of its own accord and every force in this cosmos becomes exposed and available. The right to expose anything – and theorize about its inner parts, reveals what has been previously opaque and trespasses any concern in the name of rendering things unconcealed and available – is taken as the guiding line of an age that puts any object of knowledge in danger. To be sure, again, human forces – including, relevantly, human sovereignty - are also under this danger as they are also being extracted from them and handed to impersonal, artificial controlling devices. Only our own (technical) limitations can bound the drive to make everything into controllable objects. The effects of the metaphysical way of thinking have reshaped the surface of the planet and made it possible to view this cosmos as equally available to be turned into a standing reserve; the most daring and hypocritical minute in the history of the universe, as Nietzsche describes the invention of knowledge,<sup>23</sup> can last for much longer. That it is a minute in a

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<sup>23</sup> NIETZSCHE, *True and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, p. XXX.

cosmic history – in Heidegger’s history of *beyng* – is what makes it conceivable as a cunning of *beyng*.

The history around metaphysics presents two important instances of preparation – that where *φύσις* somehow gestates metaphysics and that where the dismissal of metaphysical thinking appears in the horizon as a leap (*Sprung*) or a turn (*Kehre*). Heidegger understands preparation along the lines of the characterization above: neither a decision nor a lack of action. A preparation cannot be a device to control the process of departing from metaphysical thinking for that would be an instance of that same metaphysical thinking. It cannot be an indifference because something has to prompt the extinction of the age of metaphysics – and that event of extinction can be indefinitely long. What is needed in preparation, and ultimately to pursue a history of *beyng*, is to have the capacity to act stereoscopically. The turn or the leap that is prepared is a response to metaphysical thinking through cunning. If metaphysics has a cosmopolitical import even if it cannot contemplate that it does something else through doing what it does, history of *beyng* is more explicitly cosmopolitical because it is about the dispensations of *beyng* that prompt the relations between thinking and what is thought. When Heidegger faces the challenge of conceiving thought outside the metaphysical guidelines – and indeed independently of its pre-history which grounded thought in *φύσις* – he faces a cosmopolitical challenge. It can be put in simple terms as: what else can we do with this cosmos but attempt by all means necessary (and technically possible) to expose it, to make it transparent, to make it explained, predicated and controlled? The issue is whether there is thought beyond the quest for command. To his question he responds with a second beginning. More importantly, he takes this more primordial beginning to be in need of a preparation – and if this is the time in which we are, it is a time of hearing signals that had become difficult for us to hear in the metaphysical age. There would be a cosmopolitical urge for stereoscopy.

### 5 / The stereoscopy of spectrology

As we have seen, this cosmos is also an equipment of archive. There is a path from the stereoscopy of memory to the requirement to see this cosmos from a stereoscopic perspective. Because memory plays a cosmopolitical role, the stereoscopy required to approach it extends to time; the past of this cosmos, as much as its future, cannot be immune to the actions that often have myriads of unintended consequences. As the past is at stake, its vestiges and their capacity to haunt agency cannot be a contemptible ingredient. Haunting, or the insistence of the specters, is the form through which the past doesn’t lapse into oblivion and carries on impacting the way things take shape. In this cosmos, there is no place to bury the past anywhere that would prevent what stays overground to be under its

influence. Still, politics is sometimes understood as an autonomous sphere: there is an image of politics according to which it is an affair concerned with living and surviving – concerned with living beings and their efforts to preserve their life. Often the idea is that a proper circumscription of the political in a sphere that concerns the agendas of the living beings is what makes it possible for humans to entertain a measure of sovereignty. Hannah Arendt claimed that this measure is in slow decline as Western societies gradually increase their capacity to manage the factors that surround life and death.<sup>24</sup> The rise of management over politics makes what is alien to human sovereignty make a growing impact in political decisions. The idea could be read as that of a past where sovereignty had an independence that didn't have to be constantly negotiated with the pressures coming from all sorts of cosmic forces – including those coming from the past. The sphere of the political can then appear as that of a present (and a presence) that is self-sufficient and, as such, immune from the haunting past. That sphere can hardly be expanded to the cosmopolitical.

Fabián Ludueña claims that politics has always been impacted by specters.<sup>25</sup> The struggle, far from taking place in an arena reserved for the living, is haunted by all sorts of figures of the vaguely memorized past – whether or not it has ever been present. Ludueña portrays this cosmos as the domain of a *disjunctology* where the never completely present that presupposes a continuity in time even if hardly understood as a line is haunted by a para-ontological domain where continuity is replaced by intermittence. This second, para-ontological domain is one where immortality is neither a resurrection of what has been engulfed by the past nor a new combination of what perishes and what is preserved (like the continuity of the soul after the death of the body) but rather the domain of intermittence – the very regime through which memories haunt. Spectrology reveals a dimension of time that is hidden from a standard picture of politics as an arena of decisions for the living – as a consequence, it places the force of remembrances and the pressure from the past in the very kernel of any political issue. It is as if specters become (intermittent) protagonists in the political arena to show that there hardly is any corner in this cosmos immune to their haunting. To be sure, this cosmos is itself a place where revealing and becoming exposed by the noon light without shades is itself as intermittent as a haunting – sudden apparitions are as political as they are cosmic. Conjuring and exorcising specters are ways to affect the decisions of the living bodies that are political agents open to be haunted but they are also strategies to prepare what could come. Specters are ingredients of both decisions and preparations – no decision is oblivious to memory, no preparation can be held without a care for what and how things are going to be consigned to memory.

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<sup>24</sup> ARENDT, *The Human Condition*.

<sup>25</sup> LUDUEÑA, *La comunidad de los espectros*, I-V.

Conjuring specters (and exercises of exorcism) is as stereoscopic as memory itself is. To be sure, memories are never fully present because the effects of anything require persistence in memory that ensures presence is insufficient. It is not an accidental feature of biological memory that things can be forgotten and resurface intermittently and occasionally without notice and that anything that is stored will be affected by what else is stored with it. The struggles to preserve a history – a national history, the memories of events in a museum, the achievements of someone's past – is never immune to curating; which is itself a spectrologic and stereoscopic activity. Saidiya Hartman's efforts to revive the Black slaves' memories effaced from the Transatlantic human labor trade and their actions both during the crossing and after their emancipation shows how conjuring specters to change the political landscape requires looking at all sorts of (cosmic) archives.<sup>26</sup> Hartman's efforts are to find elements about the lives of Black women in the past in all sorts of unintentionally gathered archives. The idea is that if there are traces, vestiges or any kind of left-over of what happened in this cosmos, the specters can be conjured. Memory is an ultimately cosmopolitical arena – to revive something from its ashes, as Hartman often shows, one needs a taste for cunning.

### 6 / The cunning of excess

I close this list of dimensions of the cosmopolitical by briefly mentioning the idea of general economy put forward by Bataille in *La part maudite*.<sup>27</sup> His picture is that anything under the Sun is struggling to accommodate the excess that is thrown into it at all times. Excess is not anything that completes what was missing or satisfies a previous need or a lack. It rather disturbs what was previously organized because it is unfitting and comes with an urge to be somehow managed. Roughly, one can spend it or keep it – expenditure or accumulation could be seen as a protocol for determining a restricted economy that is an answer to the general economy of the excess which is the question. Bataille endeavors to show how several different things on Earth are the product of strategies to manage excess – he claims that death, sex, large mammals, religious wars and capitalism, among other things, are responses to the pressing issue of an uninterrupted exposure to (some sort of) excess. Not only relative lack emerges as a consequence of general and continuous excess, but every strategy to manage the continuous input of non-demanded excess is fragile as it cannot envisage what further form of excess will be coming. Stereoscopy is impinged on us by the need to see what we have with different eyes given the excessive energy, excessive time, excessive force or excessive intensity that is continuously brought in. A restricted economy – for example, capitalism with its drive towards

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<sup>26</sup> HARTMAN, *Lose Your Mother and Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*.

<sup>27</sup> BATAILLE, *The Accursed Share*.

turning every excess into capital to store it and accumulate it – is a preparation for the excess to come; and a preparation, clearly, is not an action itself for that depends on the form of the excess coming. To be sure, there are often several possible paths being prepared; to spend or to accumulate is a decision concerning whether or not to entrust something to a particular archive. The management of excess is also a management of archives - an exercise in spectrology. Bataille thought the outpouring of excess everywhere makes everything vulnerable and brings to the fore the transversality of any (general) economic determination: to manage excess is a preparation, but one that needs to be reexamined and curated again whenever a new episode of excess comes to the picture. The stereoscopic nature of excess is made explicit by the very urge for management that accompanies its appearance. (It is interesting to look into how much the general economics dimension of cosmopolitics illuminates other dimensions by looking at how episodes in the history of being – like metaphysics – or configurations of the ecology of practices can be seen as being themselves specific strategies to manage excess.)

Cosmopolitics requires multiple eyes. The required plurality is that of a capacity to view possibilities coming by engaging with a transversal looking glass. This stereoscopy is what makes it possible for the plural of the otherwise to be in view. A central ingredient of this exercise is that this cosmos is a place of multi-track preparation and not only what is stored in memory but also what is projected to the future are non-contemptible ingredients. This is an anastrophic cosmos: its future days irrupt in our current ones in ways that can be invisible without stereoscopy.<sup>28</sup> The challenge to spot the cunning of this cosmos is such that attention has to be given to what is prepared by one's action. One way of formulating Bataille's intuition that excess is always looming in the horizon is to say that stereoscopy is a consequence of a persistent incompleteness. There is something else always being concocted and this is what makes the cosmopolitical *agora* a place where the far away, the remote past and the deep future encounter.

The image of an *opticogenesis* stresses too much the visual element of sensibilia. Perhaps this is balanced by the Derrida's opening quote above from his text on the tympanus:<sup>29</sup> listening is always an exercise in the oblique (*loxôs*) as any message needs a margin. What is heard is subject to what is in the margins; the outside of a message shapes the way it is listened. Stereoscopy is about the transversal and the oblique. The possible cunning of any event is that it comes as a past that has never become fully present and is hostage to what it will be made of it in the future. The

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<sup>28</sup> Concerning anastrophe, see CCRU, *CCRU 1997-2003*; see also BENSUSAN, "Cosmopolitical parties in the post-human age".

<sup>29</sup> DERRIDA, "Tympan."

cosmopolitical *agora* is indeed polyphonic – the task is to turn the ear in an angle such that something contemporary is heard.

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