

Introduction

Cosmoaesthetica in nuce

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A neo-cosmological sensibility seems to pervade many of today's philosophical debates. But what does it mean to conceive of a cosmic totality after Kant and after the entrance of cosmology into the circle of sciences? What does this new sensibility entail and what are its consequences on our thought, sensibility, representations, and artistic practices?

This issue aims to address these and other questions from different viewpoints and traditions, with particular attention to the aesthetic implications of the new philosophical cosmologies.

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The term “cosmology” was first coined in 1731 by Christian Wolff as a synonym for philosophy of nature, during the century when Western knowledge banished the discourse on nature as a totality from the circle of sciences – as famously ratified by Kant some decades later. The “Kantian banishment” lasted more than a century¹; until some theoretical achievements (beginning with Albert Einstein’s efforts to apply his theory of relativity to the cosmos) and empirical evidences (such as the revolutionary observations made by Edwin Hubble) granted cosmology a triumphal entry in the domain of scientific knowledge during the 20th century. In retrospect, the modern history of cosmology takes the reassuring shape of a transition from pre-science to science, and the Kantian critique appears as the timeliest and most beneficial medicine.

Philosophy has had a troubled relationship with scientific cosmology, to the point of an almost complete detachment from its findings. 20th-century cosmology has been a scientific discourse on the infinite, on the source of matter and spacetime, on the reality of the Universe; but 20th-century philosophy failed to grasp its speculative relevance, and preferred to start talking again about the totality of nature independently, with little attention to the latest scientific advances and directions. In this sense, then, philosophical cosmology has always been an anti-modern spasm at the heart of modernity. Let us think of post-metaphysical

¹ See F. De Gandt, *The Problematic Status of Cosmology*, “Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal”, 18/1 (2005), pp. 55ff.

philosophies like those of Alfred North Whitehead and Gilbert Simondon; of the more recent speculations on the Earth, from Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy to certain trends in ecology; or of the phenomenological sub-discourse that goes from Eugène Minkowski's essay *Vers une cosmologie* to Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's work, passing through the late reflections by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In the first decades of the present century, the philosophical discourse is teeming with geo-philosophical, cosmo-transcendental, eco-critic, cosmomorphic, worldbuilding, and Earth-bound hypotheses. We are in front of the multifaceted and yet conspicuous frontier of a neo-cosmological sensibility.

The subject of this new regime of discourse – what we mean now by “cosmos” – is a protean, open-ended totality that can pertain indifferently to a form, a process, a surface, a planet, an interstellar ark, a haunted house, or the Universe itself as the mutating matter of creation. The wholeness in question can be attributed to an ecological niche, an open-world game, a habitable planet, a deserted ruin of capitalism... not ordered nor closed, not transcendental, and yet autonomously genetic, not isolated as a body but dispersed as a fabric of intensive vectors. A cosmos is not a «world» separated from and bonded with an «Earth», as Heidegger would have it; it is not even a worlding gesture, intended as the extension of the human ego (or even of «life as a whole»²) over reality. It is rather a trans-ontological operation of un-settlement, or the elicitation of a processual, contingent, and hyper-material confluence. An Earth, on the other hand, is not simply a native planet or a firm ground for our existences and experiences: it is the unceasing concrescence of a plane of communication that acts also as a sensory surface for an outer space. In this sense, there is neither one world nor one Earth, but infinite worlds and earths, infinite multitudes in the making, always proliferating and decaying.

Reforming the substantialist view of the earth and the cosmos holds many implications. Human sensibility, for example, is cast beyond the horizon of individual experience and has to be fundamentally enhanced to gain a sensory supplement, that is a sense of the terrestrial and cosmic fluxes, a way to graft with the material and immaterial fluctuations of a non-pristine nature. The experiential coordinates of space and time are returned to the

² G. Figal, *The Meaning of the Earth*, “Research in Phenomenology”, 32 (2002), p. 217.

cosmogenetic fields from whence they sprang. If sensibility becomes more and more plastic, representation instead takes the opposite direction: rewired and anchored to a shared unconscious, it becomes more and more “real”. Art, as a cosmic operation, becomes capable of building relations with the universe, of setting a planetary ark in motion and making us «soar into the cosmos»³; and might finally come to life as a cosmic fracture planted in the earthlings, an alien message that humans carry in themselves and struggle to decode. Philosophy itself seems ready to take the path of «cosmography», intended as a «sympoietic dimensional thinking» independent from Western logos⁴.

The articles included in this issue represent different viewpoints related to the same neo-cosmological sensibility. They also mark a convergence towards a *cosmoaesthetics* to come, meant as inseparable from a general cosmophilosophy.

Giovanbattista Tusa’s contribution, titled *Astral Bodies. Elements of Georealism*, is a brilliant study echoing the author’s long-lasting research on planetarity. Tusa claims that, to overcome the problematic relationship with the Earth that has characterized Western Modernity, a «planetary realism» is needed that understands the Earth as a radical «limit» and evokes a praxis of responsivity and metamorphosis. Only a pragmatics of the Earth that goes beyond its representation, totalization and humanization, argues Tusa, enables to transform the present and realize other worlds without fixating on their permanence, stability, or habitability.

The second article of the issue, *Earth Collective. Natural Conditions for a Transindividual Politics* by Gus Hewlett, is an original attempt to apply the notion of transindividuality to the theory of the Earth. The hypothesis of a «natural transindividuality», representing one meaningful way to rethink the terrestrial collectives, is explored with a focus on Lovelock’s and Margulis’ Gaia theory and in light of the destabilizing vectors gathered under the name of Anthropocene.

³ I. Xenakis, *Arts/Science: Alloys*, Thesis defended before Olivier Messiaen, Michel Ragon, Olivier Revault d’Allonnes, Michel Serres and Bernard Teyssedre, Pendragon Press, New York 1985, p. 5.

⁴ S. Baranzoni, P. Vignola, J. McKenzie, *Doing Things with Worlds: Philosophy Becomes Cosmography*, “Performance Paradigm”, 17 (2022), p. 149.

De la chose sensible à la chose esthétique. Le passage de l'instrumentalisation à la configuration du monde by Jessica Lombard retraces a decisive passage in the 20th-century philosophy of the Earth, namely Heidegger's conception of «worldliness», and conceptualizes the aesthetic access to the world as a way of learning to inhabit it. In the Heideggerian paradigm, attributing meaning to the world entails a fundamental proximity to the active presences that manifest the world itself as such.

The two following articles, *Ri-posare. Per un'ermeneutica dell'appartenenza in Merleau-Ponty, Dardel e Berque* by Riccardo Valenti and *Fare Terra. Istituzione ed espressione in Maurice Merleau-Ponty* by Alessandra Scotti, move within the same philosophical tradition in order to analyze the pre-reflexive nature of the inherence to the terrestrial basis of our experience and existence. Whereas Valenti hints towards a philosophy of the human "rest", Scotti indicates the idea of «transcendental geology» as the key and final outcome of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of nature.

The oscillation between the concepts of world and Earth, connotated differently each time, runs through the whole issue, and finds its conclusion in Latour's conception of the Earth, as investigated by Tommaso Morawski in *Estetica della Terra Forma. Quali strumenti per l'immaginazione terrestre? La lezione di Bruno Latour*. By retracing Latour's work, Morawski highlights the necessity of amending our ontological and political categories along with our imaginative postures in order to repopulate the planet of functioning symbols and collectives.

This heterogeneous and yet cohesive framework is completed by an extraordinary gift from two Italian writers, Giuseppe Genna and Pino Tripodi, in the form of an interview on the state of the planet. In 2022, Genna and Tripodi set up a literary platform called *Pianetica*, an experiment in the planetary capacity of language. The issue hosts a little offshoot of this experiment; a text that is already a cosmos in itself, reminding us that philosophy, as well as literature, are there to «push our species to overflow on other planets [spingere la specie a esondare su altri pianeti]» and finally into reality itself.