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„Affirmation of Ecological Reasonings

What to do with reasonability in the Anthropocene?“

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Abstract (English)

This PhD seeks to examine what can be done with the concept of “Reason” in the contested era of the so-called Anthropocene. This concept, so central to occidental philosophy since its very beginnings, has somewhat fallen from grace in the last decades and even centuries that have been marked by various critiques of Reason. It has been asserted that the occidental notion of Reason is deeply entangled with the patriarchal and imperial exclusions that characterize(d) European Modernity, as well as with the corporeal normalizations and ecological and political consequences that are associated with it.

However, what most critical approaches do not radically rethink is the notion of a unity of Reason (with a capital R). To overcome this potential deadlock of a merely critical stance towards “the” Reason, I propose to pluralize Reason to attain better analytical clarity and tentatively develop a post-anthropocentric concept of fluid and multiple reasonings for a changing planetary ecosystem. Through this, we are enabled to a) critically affirm the values and strengths of a classical concept of occidental reasoning, b) show its limitations and problems in the wake of the Anthropocene and c) detect alternative forms of reasonings that are emerging in several contemporary discourses and were always dormant but suppressed by classical Reason (with a capital R) and its tendency to monopolize reasonability.

In speculatively investigating after contemporary forms of “post-anthropocentric”, “new materialist” and ecosophical reasonings, I want to clarify in how much a pluralization can be regarded as a tool for an *ecologization* of thought. The aim of this PhD is to help us better understand what is at stake in reasoning about the mattering of the precarious matter that composes the chaotic time of the Anthropocene.

Abstract (German)

Diese Dissertation untersucht, was mit dem Konzept der "Vernunft" in der umstrittenen Epoche des sogenannten Anthropozäns gemacht werden kann. Dieser für die abendländische Philosophie seit ihren Anfängen zentrale Begriff ist in den letzten Jahrzehnten und sogar Jahrhunderten, die von verschiedenen Kritiken der Vernunft geprägt waren, etwas in Ungnade gefallen. Es wurde behauptet, dass der abendländische Begriff der Vernunft tief mit den patriarchalen und imperialen Ausschlüssen verstrickt ist, die die europäische Moderne charakterisier(t)en, ebenso wie mit den körperlichen Normalisierungen und den ökologischen und politischen Konsequenzen, die damit einher gingen.

Was die meisten dieser kritischen Ansätze jedoch nicht radikal überdenken, ist die Vorstellung einer Einheit der Vernunft. Um diese potentielle Sackgasse einer lediglich kritischen Haltung gegenüber "der" Vernunft zu überwinden, schlage ich vor, Vernunft zu pluralisieren und so bessere analytische Klarheit zu erlangen und versuchsweise ein post-anthropozentrisches Konzept von fließenden und multiplen Vernünften [Reasonings] für ein sich veränderndes planetarisches Ökosystem zu entwickeln. Durch diesen Schritt werden wir in die Lage versetzt, a) die Werte und Stärken eines klassischen Konzepts der abendländischen Vernunft kritisch zu bejahen, b) seine Grenzen und Probleme im Gefolge des Anthropozäns aufzuzeigen und c) alternative Formen von Vernünften aufzuspüren, die in verschiedenen zeitgenössischen Diskursen auftauchen und / oder von der klassischen Vernunft und ihrer Tendenz, ein Monopol auf Vernünftigkeit zu beanspruchen, in der Vergangenheit unterdrückt wurden.

Indem ich spekulativ nach zeitgenössischen "post-anthropozentrischen", "New Materialist“ und ökosophischen Vernünften forsche, möchte ich klären, inwieweit eine Pluralisierung als ein Werkzeug für eine Ökologisierung des Denkens angesehen werden kann. Das Ziel dieser Doktorarbeit ist es, besser zu verstehen, was auf dem Spiel steht, wenn wir über das *mattering* der prekären Materie nachdenken, die die chaotische Zeit des Anthropozäns zusammensetzt.

Affirmation of Ecological Reasonings

What to do with reasonability in the Anthropocene?

PhD-project by
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Preface

This PhD seeks to examine what can be done with the concept of “Reason” in the contested era of the so-called Anthropocene. This concept, so central to occidental philosophy since its very beginnings, has somewhat fallen from grace in the last decades and even centuries. Today, the term “Reason” primarily evokes – rather dusty – associations of something like schoolmasterly rigor of putting things into neat boxes or idealistic detachment from things of matter alienating us from “Nature”. It reminds us of so called “Men of Reason” that in occidental history legitimized their enslaving, even – in the infamous words of Francis Bacon – “raping” of the planetary “Nature” (which frequently included peoples of other genders, ethnicity and class-belongings) with their self-ascribed proximity to Reason. Since such images are nothing a progressively minded person would like to associate herself with for a philosophy or politics for the 21st century, Reason is much rather evaded as a topic within contemporary “ecosophical” discourses.

As I will argue, this latent evasion of Reason (or latent Irrationalism) within contemporary discourses around the messy ecological situation we find ourselves in is not the most happy / productive one. While many other central concepts of occidental philosophy (such as Nature, Science, Technology, Truth, Human, etc.) are affirmatively reworked, pluralized and discussed, Reason seems much rather to have been dropped like a hot potato. By avoiding the question of what could be regarded as reasonable in the Anthropocene, it is left to more conservative wings of discourse, leading to zombie-like resurgences of the ever-the-same “Calls to Reason” with their implicit body-mind-dualisms, eurocentrisms, phallogocentricisms and other exclusions. I would argue that we are stuck within some exploitative, dead-end conditions (many desperately seek to get beyond) because we do not dare to tackle the concept of “Reason” and re-think it appropriately for a time that productively engages with the condition called the “Anthropocene”.

As Donna Haraway, Isabelle Stengers, Bruno Latour – and many others – emphasize, we badly need new stories to have a chance to get out of the ecological mess we find ourselves in. Since occidental, modern culture played a main role in getting us into this mess in the first place, it would be surprising if this need for new stories would stop short of Reason. Its story is a big one for occidental philosophy and reexamining it bears many dangers, as any too big a story does [, as Donna Haraway reminds us]. However, if we leave such big stories completely untouched and only focus on slowing down and zooming in on details, we might end up in a situation that is still governed by the same big stories that can no longer be reflected in a radical sense. Thus, they will never have a chance to be re-thought and de- as in re-constructed – and end up acting out their malicious, zombie-like influences onto us like ghosts hovering invisibly over and in our heads.

Hence, this research inquiry proposes another way of how to go about with this very messy concept of Reason. It assumes that we would rid ourselves of too much if we were to erase “Reason” from our dictionaries and probes a different way of handling it: *pluralizing Reason*. It is, after all, interesting that we almost exclusively speak of Reason in the singular form (my native tongue German does not even have a plural form for it – “*Vernünfte*” – according to its dictionaries). What if *the* Reason that oriented occidental discourse in such a gigantic – and devastating – magnitude might after all not be *the* Reason, but just *a* Reason? A kind of reason amongst many reasons, a way of reasoning in a multitude of reasonings? What if the problem of occidental, modern philosophy is not its particular (patriarchal, imperial, etc.) relation to Reason, but that it monopolized *one* Reason while suppressing any others? What if we un-focus from the modern, all-too modern occupation of critiquing *this* Reason and instead affirmatively look for other, more suitable reasons *elsewhere*?

In this PhD, I want to probe the consequences of such a speculative shift of perspective. By claiming that the occidental problem with Reason can be understood to be its *Monorationalism* (e.g., its tendency to monopolize one specific Reason and homogenically applying it to every imaginable field while suppressing a possible plurality of *Reasonings*), I want to test the grounds of what it would mean to go beyond a *Critique of (one) Reason* by affirming that there are other *Reasonings* out there. Such a *Pluralization of Reason* I envision to be a more productive way of dealing with our manifold problems in the Anthropocene than only critically pointing out the problems of *this one Reason*. By stressing the point that there are uncountable *Reasonings* on this planet that can and should no longer be understood in an anthro- and androcentric limitation, I want to prepare the nourishing ground for many other voices to be heard & thereby improve ours (and others) chances to survive well in the looming catastrophes of the Anthropocene. I believe a pluralization of Reason is a necessary condition to leave the anthropocentrism fully behind that still looms as a zombie-like reappearance in the so-called Anthropocene.

Such a retelling of the story is a Utopian undertaking – one that doesn’t seem credible or even doable from the very beginning, for it brings many problems, contradictions and difficulties to surface that cannot easily be done away with. It can even be argued that *a* human cannot live without the “necessary illusion” (in Nietzsche’s understanding) of there being just one Reason. It might – at least for some conceptualizations of “the” human – be too much to affirm many, non-human reasonings: to accept that other critters are as reasonable as humanoids on this planet. However, this messiness of reasonability seems to me like a utopian horizon that should be fairly handy for thinking reasonably as life-forms that do slowly begin to understand that their actions have planetary consequences. A reasonability fit for the Anthropocene should embrace and work with its impossibilities, contradictions and problems and, instead of resolving (or absolving from) them, seek to reason and speculate productively with them.

In the vein of pluralization and a subsequent affirmation of *messiness*, I want to suggest that “doing away with” problems might not be the best strategy for any ecological reasoning. Much rather – as I shall at length argue in chapter 4 – I want to regard problems and contradictions as a means of riding and living thought reasonably in a challenging time of ecological turmoil. This is also why I have decided against using one unitary wording for my undertaking: “Reasons”, “Reasonings”, “Reason(s)”, “Reasoning(s)” and other such variations will be used throughout this PhD without the will to homogenize them to one, solid concept (see also chapter 10a). Neither do I want to give one clear-cut definition of what I understand as “Reason” – the usage of this word varies hugely between discourses and I want to regard this ambiguity and unclarity as something that feeds and stimulates thought. That moves the reader and thinker in challenging her own messy relation to the word and how she was “drilled” (in Wittgenstein’s sense) to use and understand it.

As such, new pluralized reasonings pose more questions than answers. In this project, I do not want to answer some “first questions” or lay bare some fundamental truths, as many modern philosophical Reasonings have attempted. Much rather, I think that a vivid culture of many questions, contradictions and openly handled problems is a good sign for a vivid culture of reasoning that is at the height of its time. The aim of this thesis is, thus, not to conjure up a solution or a stance that would make everybody fit for our very “messy” times (characterized by an inflation of crises and disturbances of certainty ranging from ecological to economic, social and cultural domains), but much rather it seeks to rearrange our epistemologies in order to create the conditions of possibility to open-up and stay attentive to learn from what is happening around us. It starts from the assumption that the condition we – somewhat hastily – try to call the “Anthropocene” proves most of our traditional systems of thought and categories of order to be ill-equipped for today’s planetary problems and tries to take hope – rather than despair – from this realization. Our ecologies are changing fast and so should our evaluations of the particular reasoning we hold dear as a culture. Change and Fluctuation should become equivalent to beauty in reasoning. A project of pluralization should be regarded as a first step in this direction.

Throughout the journey of writing this PhD, my outlooks and understandings of the matter changed (as they hopefully will continue to do in an ever becoming reasonable). In the beginning I conceived it to be of two steps: *first* a pluralization of Reason and *second* a subsequent affirmation of another, more ecological *Reason* (that I still – under the spell of *Monorationalism* – thought of as one in the beginning). From within the process of writing this thesis over an eight year period, I have increasingly realized that the first step already necessarily entails the second one: I have come to understand that the movement of *Pluralization* is already one of *Ecologization*. To get beyond this one Reason does enable a speculative thinking of many reasonings that I consider to be epistemologically *ecological*.

In terms of philosophical traditions this transition can be described as such: Starting out with the loud – and often preacher like – provocations of Nietzschean “philosophizing with a hammer”, I have more and more learned to appreciate the nuanced, slowed-down examinations of the Pragmatist tradition of James and Whitehead (and thought to me by Didier Debaise and Isabelle Stengers). I have transitioned from spectacularly dismantling the old idols with Nietzsche’s hammer to patiently examining how the old idols never were what they appeared to be.

Traces of this transition will still be legible in the 300 pages that comprise this PhD – they now form the story I am trying to tell. And as it is with stories, you never only tell them – as an active, conscious being – but they equally tell you, rework you, betray you, confront and seduce you. Sometimes they make you speak in tongues that might be problematic and hurtful, that reproduce forms of languages you say you’d like to overcome. Revealing to you how little active freedom of creation you have over the words and how much they make you speak and think.

This PhD is the Utopian version of such a confrontation with reasonings – one that entailed many dark and despairing moments in its becoming. It is written in the attitude of hope: as the darker and more dystopian versions of the Anthropocene dawn unto us, it is not at all clear if any story of reasonings might be part of the very uncertain future we are facing. But in order to escape the isolationist, racist dystopian future we are heading towards (“Trump” is still the best name for this worst future version), we need a Utopian counterpart to confront it and – as I would argue – the pluralization of Reason is a vital part of it. It is the attempt to overcome apocalyptic defeatism by affirming many vivid, human and non-human reasonings that can inspire us to grow with the problems (as opposed to solve and eradicate them superficially with an old image of “the” Reason). In order to do so, this PhD sets out to reproduce the mess the author found himself in and tries to slowly unwind itself by becoming a voice among the many that are assembled in this thesis.

Today, phrases like “no longer Cartesian / dualist / essentialist”, “multi-species entanglement” or “post-anthropocentric” have almost become a trope. They are endangered to lose much of their force by becoming easily marketable slogans that do not mean much outside of a privileged bubble. To counter this worrying tendency of ghettoization (forming part of the Dystopian version of the future), I propose to go the long way in reexamining the history of Reason in order to show that philosophies that opt for such conceptual shifts are much more than just a short-lived academic trend, but much rather the result *or becoming* aware of a long development within occidental philosophy that I try – for the sake of simplicity – to center around Nietzsche’s impetus to renew philosophy.

In this work, I mostly draw inspiration from discourses such as “New Materialism”, Eco-Feminism, “Ecology without Nature” or “Dark Ecology”, Pragmatism, philosophies of Immanence and other, more speculative approaches. However, while this is not advisable for an academic career, I still try

to not remain within one discursive tradition but try to mingle various, seemingly inconsolable positions. This is because I think that such a strategy of counter-ghettoisation of academic knowledge in a truly transdisciplinary manner is vitally important for the endeavor of affirming pluralities of ecological reasonings.

This sadly means that some of the connections I make between seemingly opposed positions will happen rather fast to the academically (mis)trained reader. While I agree in many instances with the predominant academic reflex to “slow down” and “examine something more closely”, I think it is equally important to bear in mind the words of Michel Serres – who is, in my opinion, one of the most innovative forward thinkers of ecological reasonings. In his conversations with Bruno Latour, entitled *Eclairissements* (1994a, 102-103), he argues that we at times need great speed to connect all the fields to create a reasoning fit for the ecologically precarious time we are inhabiting – speeds of thought we haven’t cultivated yet. The predominant style of analysis (“to read apart”) is surely important for any reasonable undertaking and will find its place frequently in the following pages. However, in order to get beyond “mere” critique and dissembling of one Reason and affirm other Reasonings, I seek to synthesize various positions into one line of argumentation: to show their hidden, sometimes unconscious complacencies that result from their partaking in a similar environment: that of the messy times called the Anthropocene. For these reasons, I politely urge the reader to regard the speed sometimes employed in this PhD with well-meaning rather than with academic and critical scrutiny.

The trouble with reason(s) is that they always escape us, that we can never completely conceptually grasp them, simply because we are using them to conceptually grasp things with – a bit like the impossibility to watch yourself watching yourself in the mirror.

This trouble led, as I will argue, most of the (white, male & privileged) occidental philosophers to make for some kind of universalizing & unifying transcendence, in which completeness could (theoretically, if the body-mind-detachment would work) be attained. In this PhD, I want to propose a different strategy – one that I believe is more productive for the time called the Anthropocene. That of a plurality of Reasonings – in order to stay with the trouble of ever-escaping Reasonings. There are always many Reasons and they are always moving (away) fast. We will make better senses and matterings of the irreducible chaos around us if we accept this by not trying to freeze reasonability into one, unitarian and unchanging concept.

For tracing this magnificent and manifold lines of flight, this PhD is structured into five parts.

The **first and introductory part** is mostly concerned with methodical reflections on how such a pluralization can take place and my role as the author writing / performing it. I will then proceed with an “exemplary case-study” of an ecologically motivated pluralization of Reason that can be traced in the oeuvre of Friedrich Nietzsche.

The **second part** tries to develop a relation to “Reason” by reviewing classical positions of Critique of Reason vis a vis the experimental creation of a “messy archive” of various critical voices. By productively re-reading eco-feminist, post-imperialist and ecological critiques as well as critiques stemming from reflections on corporeality and language, it wants to create a deeper understanding of the problems classical, monorationalist Reason does entail (chapter 3) and gather material to develop a pluralization of reasonings and the voices I selected to do it with. It then (chapter 4) continues by examining how these problems can be productively reasoned with (as opposed to falling into cynical defeatism) and how an affirmative reasoning for the Anthropocene needs to escape some modernist deadlocks of regarding critique as *the* way of reasoning that tries to get rid of problems once and for all.

Part III wants to show that the story with occidental Reason is more complex than merely critical examinations might suggest. By affirmatively reviewing classical positions of occidental philosophy (Plato, Descartes and Spinoza) under the angle of an “anthropology of the moderns” (as proposed by Descola, Latour and others) and “critical masculinity studies” it wants to make tangible how “Reason” is not a unitary concept-in-itself, but that its specific epistemological orientations are contingent, heterogeneous and grew out of a specific patriarchal & capitalist societal order. This further enables me to trace potential emergent pluralized reasonings *inside* the classical canon, thereby nuancing and complexifying the matter – something needed to thoroughly undo this very *resilient* (chapter 6) epistemic regime leading to ecological catastrophe.

Part IV reviews three different fields of contemporary discourses in order to detect rudiments of ecological reasonings in them. By intercultural detours into Chinese philosophy (chapter 7), reflections on the corporeality of reasonings (chapter 8) and examinations of current results and reasonings within sciences (chapter 9), it wants to demonstrate that there is a common trait in these reasonings that can be considered as *ecological*. By examining the epistemological consequences of such endeavors, it tries to draw parallels between discursive niches that have so far not communicated much. In its last chapter (10), these parallels are synthesized and conceptualized in what I call ‘Ecological Reasonings’ which can – by then – also be examined in a critical vein.

Part V will take on this critical vein of ecological reasonings and examine various consequences of such a new outlook of reasonings in the Anthropocene. It will examine how certain misunderstandings in digital culture around A.I. will have to be overcome (chapter 11) and will then investigate certain elements and consequences for political reasoning (chapter 12) as well as reasoning on art (chapter 13).

Additionally, this PhD is accompanied by 8 Excursions on various topics that will become interesting at certain stages of the text. Three so called “Presentiments” will reflect on the state of the investigation and set the way for what is to come.

Part I :

Introduction

1) A Pluralization of Reason to make ecological reasoning(s) thinkable – Methodical Reflections

“C’est qui est sur, c’est qu’on ne peut plus du tout se raconter les memes histoires.”
 (“What's sure is that we can no longer tell each other the same stories”)

Bruno Latour, Où atterrir? (2017a, 60)

At large, one told oneself stories about one Reason¹ in occidental² discourses. These were narrations of a transcendent Reason, the guiding light in an ephemeral world, the lawmaker of our morals, the motor behind our scientific conquest. Its origins were told to be in Ancient Greece. From there, it spread across the Roman empire, got mixed up with Abrahamic monotheism, survived (or caused?) the collapse of the former and got fermented in the cloisters of the latter. In this distillation process, eventually a means to subjugate what was for this very intention labeled “Nature” was produced. A “Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences” (Descartes 2008[1673]) baptized Rationalistic Modernity and took part in a hitherto unseen conquest of the world by occidental culture, that was hastily termed “progress” and then “globalization”.

This monolithic Reason (with an overbearing capital R), together with the occidental tradition of storytelling that carried it, has lost much of its credibility and all its innocence for most academic discourses during the last two centuries. “We do no longer believe in our ideas”³ can be the summary of this epochal sentiment, ranging from thinkers as James, Bergson or Nietzsche around *de fin de siecle* up until today's discourses. In a time called the Anthropocene (a term we will clarify shortly), this occidental culture and its Reason are met with a lot of scrutiny and skepticism in today's reasonings within academic and popular discourses alike. One no longer sees it as the peak of humanity (although, ironically, this newly proposed term for an era is named after it), but more and more as a culprit and producer of manifold problems of unfathomable extent leading to ecological collapse, mass extinction as well as sexist and racist exclusions. Today Reason is suspected of being nothing but an illusion, a trickery unfairly used by the few to rule the many or vice versa. Its continuous application is accused to lead us straight to totalitarianism, to human extinction, imperialist, sexist and racist exclusions, technological annihilation or self- and mass-

¹ This one reason occidental discourse has mono-thematically been obsessed with will be denoted with the capital R as opposed to just one reason among many reasons.

² In this thesis, the term „occidental“ is meant to denote various discourses that regard themselves as in a line of heritage (as well as flight, critique and attempts of escape) with the „European“ culture that regards itself to mainly stem from Greek, Hellenist philosophy, Roman imperial ideas of law and state and Judeo-Christian spirituality. I prefer the (equally not un-problematic) term of „occidental“ to „European“ because neither it's sources are limited to the geographical territory of Europe (Jerusalem or Millet are not in Europe), nor its more recent developments: with the progressing globalization of the world occidental ideas become ever more deterritorialized and form a majoritarian principle of worldly relating – “globalization” could equally be called “occidentalization” (compare chapter 3.Dfg & 5.Ae).

³ I want to thank Didier Debaise for this sentence and summary.

stupefaction, to name only a few of the many – and frequently just – assaults on the humanist, enlightened or rationalistic tradition of Reason with a capital R.

While these critiques loom oppressively over our contemporary understanding of “Reason”, one element of this story remains, for the most part, unchallenged. Although there has been much work committed to undoing the worst deficiencies of occidental storytelling and culture making, no one – to my knowledge – has yet seriously attempted to question the unique status of Reason. Certainly, talk of practical reason as opposed to theoretical reason, instrumental reason against communicative reason, etc. holds space in academic forums. However, in most of the cases, they are much rather considered to be different attributes of *one* reason than serious attempts to reflect the possibility of the existence of various *reasons* or – to use a wording with a higher emphasis on processuality - *reasoning(s)*. In the occidental philosophical discourse, a plurality of *reason(ing)s* has yet been mostly unthought of. This assessment can be further underlined by the linguistic observation that what can be called its main three languages, a plural form of reason does not even grammatically exist. English *reasons* and French *raisons* do not denote various “capacit[ies] of the mind to think, understand, and form judgements” (Oxford Dictionary), but only a plurality of “grounds or causes for something”. In German (= my native tongue that influenced my thinking the most profoundly), since the word does not share the double-meaning with “ground or cause”, there is not even a plural form of *Vernunft*, “*Vernünfte*”, according to its dictionaries (like the *Duden*).

This dissertation is hinged on two experiments. The first is the attempt of breaking with this what I call “*monorationalistic*” tradition so central to occidental culture that it is inscribed in its main languages. It is an attempt to experimentally affirm the existence of various *reasonings* as in *Vernünfte* and examine what shifts of perspectives this conceptual move allows us to perform, and through doing so, which deadlocks we may be able to overcome.

The second experiment consists in the assumption that such a pluralization of reasonings is latently happening in contemporary occidental discourses. I want to show that such a pluralization of reasonings entails the emergence of ecological forms of reasoning in the Anthropocene.

In this first chapter, the move to pluralize Reason in order to attain a conceptual understanding of the emergence of ecological reasonings in the Anthropocene will be explored. Since only text needs to follow a linear structure, while thought tends to jump around rhizomatically, this will already touch various other issues central to this thesis, which will be discussed in greater detail at a later point. Throughout this work I will provide links and references to other chapters in the flow of the text to stay conscious of this plurality of possible approaches to the matter. This intends to permit you, as a reader, to jump around and enjoy the dizziness of breaking with the linearity of *this* text – I want to provide loopholes for the creation of other, more spontaneous (perhaps even unforeseen) orders that could emerge from my text. Although this text is confined to the linearity of textual

form, it explicitly does not need to be read that way. The accumulation of thoughts that compile this thesis is regarded as a chaotic, non-hierarchical, manifoldly structured rhizome in which I, as author (without capital A), see my function as presenting you with *one* comprehensible way through – one of many. I am very aware that many of the rather “grand” gestures I employ in it are somewhat contradictory to my overall project of pluralizing and distinguishing. Upon reflection and discussion with friends and colleagues, I came to realize that through a particular adherence to styles of canonical writing, they are revealing of my white, male and privileged upbringing and conditioning: I frequently bring up “too big” statements and categorizations while exactly criticizing such philosophical mannerisms in what I call “Monorationalism”. This thesis is *also* a project of involving myself in this research as somebody who lives in the privileged position of being easily ascribed to be a “man of Reason” by others and myself. I am not a neutral observer but work with my own conditioning as a condition for the existence and perspective of this text. The contradictions and tensions set in motion by my “too big” critique of the “too big” Reason of occidental reasonings seemed to me – at least at the time of writing – the most effective way to address some of the epistemological problems that seem pressing in the Anthropocene (from at least my perspective). It is what these contradictions set in motion and point towards that I am interested in, from which I both form and nourish my voice that continues to journey towards a pluralization of reasonability.

a) Monorationalism & Pluralization of Reasons

The pluralization of key concepts of occidental culture is in high demand of contemporary discourses that try to go beyond a mere rejection of its premises. By looking closer than a (very modern) universalist tendency of subsuming everything to one homogenic concept would permit, one can complexify a lot of contemporary problems and understand better what is at stake in the specific situation one reflects about⁴. In this sub-chapter, I will elaborate a little further on the three pluralizations that I deem the most central for the undertaking of reasoning in the Anthropocene and will then – through a reflection on the (ontological) pluralization of Being – consider what such a pluralization would mean on the epistemological level of Reasonings.

Modernities

It is, up until today, a widely held belief that Modernity is a) one unitary thing that b) originated from Europe and “modernized” the world from there. However, this Eurocentric perspective fails to consider the many different ways of being modern in all parts of the world that were necessary for a general globalization and modernization of the humanoid worlds to take place over the last couple of centuries. Anything modern required a global interconnectedness of various different ways of

⁴ Some other examples for concepts that are recently being pluralized are: “animalities” (Chrulaw 2019), “masculinities” (Connell 1995), “sexualities”, “ecologies” (Hörl 2013), and “critiques” (Boland 2018).

being modern (some where more exploiters, others more exploited) that is rendered invisible by this unitary approach of *one* Modernity. To counter this invisibilisation, the concept of Modernity has been pluralized from various angles in the last decades (Gaonkar et al. 2001; Eisenstadt 2002) affirming that there is not only one Modernity (with a capital M) that originated from Europe and brought the light of Reason to all other cultures (as would be an extreme inner perspective) / enslaved the rest of the planet (extreme outer perspective). Much rather, there are and have been various *modernities* (the Japanese being distinctly different from the French, Austrian, Californian or Senegalese one) and some – such as Burma’s pre-colonial oil economy or India’s early steam engine production (Ghosh 2016, 93–108) – have been suppressed to a degree of annihilation by the occidental obsession to subsume everything to one reason. A more *ecological* approach of understanding and thinking modernities as a global and intertwined phenomenon with no central, unified agent can only be attained after a thorough deconstruction and pluralization of the monolithic Modernity and undoing of its Eurocentrism. Indeed, Europe itself, is a plural assemblage, comprised of fragments of other’s histories, stories, narratives, and moments. By what Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000 - see chapter 3.Dg) calls “Provincializing Europe” the deeply imperialist notion of Europe’s special access to Reason and Modernity can be deconstructed. Europe’s fetishized Reason – traditionally held as a “totalizing principle” (Ibid. 253) – can from this angle be reviewed as “one among many ways of being in the world” (Ibid. 239), undoing the discriminatory debasement of everything else as “unreasonable”, “pre-modern”, “underdeveloped”, and “to be helped and reformed.” (Ibid. 238-245). In the Anthropocene, such plural perspectives of plural modernities can help us to become more attentive to other ways of being-modern than the European one. By learning from other cultures – within and outside the territory that is called “Europe” – and their ways of dealing with our ecological mess, the Anthropocene can be shortened / thinned (see chapter 1g) and the concept of what is reasonable significantly widened.

Sciences and Technologies

Within this European modernity regarded as a plural assemblage among many, one of its main conceptual driving forces and legitimizations – “Science” – can be productively pluralized (see also chapter 9a-c). Isabelle Stengers, Ilya Prigogine, Bruno Latour and others that will come up in this text have done this by providing a counter-narrative to the modern heroic story of Science as one, unitary “battle of reason against mere opinions” (Stengers and Latour 2008, 61) in which the scientist is “approaching godly wisdom by his knowledge of the laws of nature” (Prigogine 2008, 20). By closely examining scientific practices, they argue that their basic presumptions frequently defer greatly from this idea of a unitary Science (with capital S) and cannot be subsumed under one homogeneous concept (Stengers 1995; Latour 2010; Prigogine and Stengers 2005). Science is comprised of several heterogeneous layers and cannot fulfill its own modernist aspirations (Latour

2002) of bringing the light of Reason to the unknown areas of “Humanity” (itself a homogenized concept). Knowledge within sciences is always a complex patchwork of various culturally inherited layers that never achieve any static and fundamental truth, but much rather produce it as a result of a successful assemblage of various layers of knowledge (Stengers 1995; 1996; 2004; Fleck 2017).

Unsurprisingly, if science is not understood as a unitary entity, this also applies to what is usually considered to be its applied form: Technology, which – as Yuk Hui argues – is “not anthropologically universal; it is enabled and constrained by particular cosmologies, which go beyond mere functionality or utility. Therefore, there is no one single technology, but rather multiple cosmotechnics.” (Hui 2017) As Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro put it very well, “we believe it is necessary to do the same in relation to Technology and technologies that Latour has done in relation to the fateful amalgam of Science and sciences: rejecting the unidirectional, modernist understanding of Technology that regards it as an onto-anthropological essence whose triumphant deployment blossoms across history.” (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017, 98) By deploying an “enlarged and pluralized category of technology” (Ibid.) we can undo the unfortunate connection of mechanist, modern-industrial machinery with the only means of bringing forth technological progress and devise new ideas of technology, progress and utopia (compare Excursion 8) which are no longer linked exclusively to Science with a capital S.

Neither science, nor technology, must be regarded as singular, universal entities in the Anthropocene. Much rather, they can be examined closer and more productively by questioning the ecological implications of *one* specific technology or scientific practice – without having to either condemn or praise Science and Technology (and progress – see Excursion 8) in general and being enabled to differentiate between various usages within various environments.

Natures

The same movement of pluralization is taking place on – in classically modernist construction – the other side of Science and Technology: Nature. Nature – accordingly – is not regarded as mere inert matter that lies at the disposal of the scientific conquest of active Reason. Fundamental dichotomies like Nature/Culture, Human/Non-Human that fueled this rationalistic, modern framework of Science are being deconstructed and require a much more nuanced, pluralistic view on what we can regard as nature (Debaïse 2017a; Descola 2015). This is further supported by inter-cultural examinations demonstrating that anthropology renders itself incapable of justly engaging with other cultures – such as Amazonian indigenous culture – at the same level if it sticks with one universal concept of Nature: what is understood as “natural” is not globally the same – the natural and the cultural mingle in manifold ways on this messy planet and we have to look closer than a simple dualism would permit us. In this light, the pluralization of “natures” is introduced under the term of

“Multi-naturalism” (Viveiros de Castro 2012). Every “culture” produces its own “nature” with hugely different implications and fringes (Descola and Charbonnier 2017).

Underlying such conceptual movements is a general tendency towards pluralism, that – as I would claim – has not been fully understood to its full epistemological extent (Excursion 7). A further venture that can be spotted in various contemporary discourses is an inquiry into the modes of existence that originates from a pluralization of Being. Being might be considered as *the* key concept not only of Modernity, but of occidental mainstream philosophy since Plato (*vulgo* “Platonism” in the Deleuzian and Nietzschean sense) that lies at its base and has been preserved throughout classical Modernity in various declinations and mere quasi-pluralizations which, as Etienne Souriau claims, always left one ontological side of a underlying dualism (between existence and being) untouched (Souriau 2009, 79–111). This stable form of Being – forming one or the other variant of a static transcendence – has been identified as an unjust “adjusting reality [Zurechtmachen der Wirklichkeit]” by Nietzsche with possible consequences of ecological devastation (see next chapter). Ecological modes of reflection have hitherto attempted to investigate into various modes of existence – be it technology (Simondon 2012), digital objects (Hui 2016) or our non-modern world in general (Latour 2013) – and to thereby undo the singularity of one Being.

As briefly outlined, the key concepts of modern occidental philosophy bringing about the so called “Anthropocene” as well as its foundational category of Being have been pluralized. Or so it seems. All except one. Whereas we can now say that there is not only one Modernity, and that even inside this falsely aspired unitarian Modernity neither its defining principle of Science, nor its “Other” Nature or the application of one to the other – Technology –, need to be regarded as one unitary, universal concept, the concept that somewhat unites them – Reason, as the capacity the modern *anthropos* uses to understand and “conquer” nature in science and its technological application – has not been thoroughly pluralized.

Certainly, there have been hints in that direction. For example, it has been ascertained that scientific modernity might not have been characterized by the advancement of Reason, but by a repression of *reasons* under the auspices of the idea of *one* reason (Serres and Latour 1994, 79). By opting for a “surrationalism”, a re-individualisation and multiplication of scientific rationalist culture has been proposed (Bachelard 1972, 9) and – more recently – the modern form of reasoning *per se*, critique, has been suggested to pluralization (Boland 2018, 2–4). Furthermore, there has been talk of a “new rationality” emerging in scientific (Prigogine 2008, 99) or digital practices (Serres 2012) as well as in “ecological thought” (Hörl and Burton 2017), but an exhaustive pluralization of Reason has not been attempted from – at least – within an academic habitus. Whereas there have been discussions about many rationalities as opposed to one reason (Apel and Kettner 1996; Hountondji 2007),

nobody has to my knowledge dared to affirm “multiple reasons” or “many reasons” as has been done with modernities, episemologies, sciences, genders, sexualities and so forth.

However, this to me seems to be a necessary step to further move away from modernist deadlocks and engage progressively and capably with the messy problem called the Anthropocene, because many rationalities can still be reduced to one reason. Merely pluralizing “rationalities” risks to not change anything about the much scrutinized occidental tradition, which was always at its strongest in subsuming all the plural phenomena and noumena to one great guiding principle. So, in order to move on with the various critiques of occidental Reason and its culture, a pluralization of rationalities is not going far enough (Kouba 1994, 171–72). It leaves what I propose to call *Monorationalism* – the occidental obsession with one reason (Latin: *ratio*) in tandem with oppressing, or overseeing every other form – a chance to recreate itself by conceding to the existence of various rationalities while maintaining the singularity of Reason. In this thesis I will argue that the occidental Monorationalism is too resilient (compare chapter 6) to keep Reason unpluralized. I will argue that a pluralization into Reasonings will be necessary to overcome the anthropocentrism so deeply embedded in occidental modern culture. Many Reasonings might be an impossibility for many modes of being that we today consider to be “human” (we will discover in the next chapter that the idea of unity of Reason might be something “the human” needs as a “necessary illusion” in order to stay sane and functioning). But to understand ourselves as embedded and co-evolving becomings (not beings) in a chaosmos, I believe that we need to transcend our established categories of what is “human” and what is reasonable and possible for such a humanoid critter in the Anthropocene. I will try to show that reasoning can only exist in intra-action with its environment and the term “reasonability” can no longer be regarded as a property we can reserve exclusively to humans as the single carriers of one Reason (see chapter 8 & 9).

Aside from the bid for the necessity of thinking reason as a chaosmotic, interspecies intervention, a pluralization seems to me to be the best move to counter the problematic situation touched upon in the Preface of this PhD: that – within and outside the academic landscape – the topic of reason is largely left untouched by progressives and ecologically engaged thinkers. In the domains of cultural, gender, post-colonial or literature studies you can usually find many hopeful impulses of renewing our images of thought, but the word “reason” is mostly to be found in the rather conservative domains of philosophy and other such disciplines, strongholds of conservative Kantianism and analytical philosophy. This leads to the sad situation that when the word “reason” is used in the context of the Anthropocene, it is usually done by – acknowledged or unacknowledged – conservatives whose meager “Calls for Reason” leave a sour aftertaste because they bear too little reflection of the involvement of *this* Reason within our ecological mess and its many other

problems and sometimes even – rather grotesquely – sound like renewed Bacon’ian calls for more modernist “torture of Nature” (see chapter 3.Bc and Excursion 4).

b) Construction & Affirmation

To pluralize Reason is a constructive move. Although its very possibility is based on – among others – deconstruction, it goes beyond its scope and might irritate its more ardent followers. It does not only seek to “multiply the cautionary indicators and put aside all the traditional philosophical concepts” (Bernasconi and Wood 1988, 3), but tries to actively invent other philosophical concepts – in this case *reasonings* – that might further facilitate a promotion of plural modes of thoughts and lifestyles *aside* from our object of deconstruction. Of course, deconstruction also always has a creative element to it insofar as it undermines its object through meticulous and, most of the time, experimental, close study and cross reading of it, thereby new perspectives are opened. However a certain undoing of the glorification of this mole-like mode of existence is required. Deconstruction – as well as critique – undermines and tunnels through its object in order to undo it, but it thereby becomes dependent on its very enemy. It has to somewhat keep alive the object of critique to be able to deconstruct and criticize it (compare chapter 4). With this considered, the constructive move at the base of this PhD-project attempts to go further than undermining the object of interest (which easily can become a fetish itself). It rather tries to un-focus the object and wants to actively invent and construct alternatives with and aside from it. Its indebtedness to deconstruction (as well as other branches of critical thought) lies with the lucid understanding that while undermining is a limited process, we can only depart from from our traditional, occidental commonplaces *because* they have already been so thoroughly undermined.

Though, this fetishization mentioned can in-itself become problematic, for it fails to see – as I would argue – that the occidental tradition has been sufficiently perforated to perceive other metaphysics shine through it. Today, there is much talk about other metaphysics, other ontologies, other structures that sprout in a ground made fertile by deconstruction, requiring other, more affirmative forms of (critical) thinking. A constructive or *productive* move certainly bears much more risk than sticking to the old regime. As we will see in the next chapter, to a degree it requires an *affirmation* of the old regime – to learn from it, to study it closely in order to build an alternative. As deconstruction has shown us, the history of philosophy is a history of constructions. “What we call the world age of metaphysics is substantially the age of a self-denying constructivism” as Sloterdijk (1999, 386⁵) puts it. Plato constructed a sphere of transcendent ideas that separated truth unprecedentedly from earthly reality in order to subjugate it (see chapter 5.A). Descartes constructed an epistemology that internalized this detached truth sphere into every human subject (see chapter 5.B) and thereby made it applicable to modern, scientific conquest (see chapter 5.C).

⁵ German original quote: „Was wir das Weltalter der Metaphysik nennen, ist substantiell die Zeit eines sich selbst verleugnenden Konstruktivismus”

Occidental philosophy consisted in the variation of a particular construction (Souriau 2009; Jullien 2009) that lasted for more than two millennia before it slowly lost momentum and eventually fell apart leading to proclamations such as the “death of god”, the end of philosophy, of metaphysics etc.. This stadium of decay was further accelerated by critique and deconstruction that left none of the centerpieces of the traditional canon untouched: the Subject, Reason, Truth, Nature, the Author, Man, Human, Method, Culture, etc. - all of these became object of thorough critique. This deconstructive momentum made in tangible, as I will try to show through the development of this thesis, that there are other ways of doing philosophy, other forms of metaphysics that do not share the basic assumptions of occidental, “Platonist” philosophy. From a more affirmative perspective, the rejection of philosophy or metaphysics in its entirety appears to be like throwing the baby out with the bathwater: the just debunking of one metaphysics does not require the rejection of all, as much as the deconstruction of one Reason does not require a stance of irrationalism (compare Excursion 3). What can a bit too negatively be called “Non-philosophy” (Laruelle 1999) is not an anti-thesis to philosophy, but much rather like Non-Euclidian Geometry is related to Euclidean Geometry: it shows that there are other ways of doing it than the majoritarian one that our culture monothematically focused on in the last millennia.

This thesis is devoted to the further exploration of other ways of doing philosophy by breaking with one of the central narrations that inhibited us to see them: that there is only one Reason. In order to do so, I have discerned that a denial of this Reason is not helpful for pluralizing our reasonings (Excursion 3). Much rather, an affirmation of it as *one among many* is a necessary tool to assemble others with it, eventually attaining a plurality of reasonings. This endeavor will not even stop short of what was considered as a unitary Reason in the beginning of the undertaking: even Reason is a much more plural assemblage than occidental philosophers made themselves believe (see chapter 5). This perspective furthermore entails the affirmation of one of the key elements of any philosophy: that they always are constructions. Kant’s reading of Descartes is not completely just but a simplification in order to enable the construction of his critical philosophy, Irigaray’s reading of Freud constructs a certain version of the latter in order to reveal the patriarchal structures deep-rooted in occidental tradition, Mengzi constructs a certain Confucius in order to differ from him. This is a vital part of philosophy and the general rejection of which easily leads to a rather pedantic scientificist / critical dogmatism, that dissects everything as insufficient insofar as it is a “mere” construction and / or not “true” to the text. Such a stance of overcautious scrutiny can result in a deadlock that can no longer reflect in how far it is based on historically grown ontological constructions itself, because it insists on a truth that it is not able to speak about in any other mode than a negative one. Thereby, positive reflections on how much one’s own stance is always necessarily footed in a specific metaphysics become impossible.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of traditional occidental metaphysics in order to overcome some key elements that can be identified as problematic from various angles, one needs to affirm its entire history to get acquainted with its inner mechanisms. Subsequently, this thesis will affirm the history of metaphysical philosophy as much as its critique, for they both form the much more complex story of an *ecosophy to come* (Félix Guattari 2008). We will affirm critique, deconstruction and construction – which is sometimes more carefully called speculation (Debaïse and Weber 2017; Stengers and Latour 2008) – leading to an *affirmative critique* (chapter 4) and an affirmation and admission that the story told in this thesis is itself a construction – one, I hope, that is *productive* and *effective* to think reason(ing)(s) in plural and ecological ways.

c) Usefulness & Productivity

That occidental philosophy has been mostly concerned with one Reason, leading to my assessment of *Monorationalism*, is the central prism this experimental pluralization is using to produce its desired effects. From this perspective, Kant, for example, claimed that “pure reason is a perfect unity” (Kant, 1999 [1781]: Axiii) and went as far as to hinge the entire legitimacy of Reason’s faculties on this unity. Although there has been much discussion about the stringency of this claim, this unity seems to be central to his entire metaphysics (Neiman 1997). Similarly, Descartes stated that it is only the *res cogitans* [the thinking matter] in which unity can be found, not Nature (René Descartes 2008), and therefore concluded “that a great deal of confidence should not be placed in what I was taught by nature” since these were “impulses towards many things that reason told me to avoid” (Ibid. 53). This clear inclination towards one single form of reason opposed to “Nature” can be traced back to at least Plato’s Socrates, whose method consisted in subsuming the ephemeral appearances of sensual, worldly perception under one singular transcendent idea (Serres 1994, 111 ff.). Since “the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato” (Whitehead 1979, 39) this monorationalistic trait can be – in various strength – ascribed to almost all the majoritarian history of occidental philosophy.

However, though our object *can* be ascribed does not mean it *has* to be ascribed as such. One does not need to read Kant or Descartes as monorationalists, nor should this analysis of a majoritarian trait of occidental philosophy being Monorationalism entail that that there were no occidental thinkers that were not monorationalist – in fact, there were plenty of them and this thesis does deeply rely on them to make its arguments. As we will see, many alternative positions (and reasons) were (and are) vivid in- and outside the so called “Occident”. But these positions were (and still sometimes are) suppressed as “witchery”, “heresy”, “sophism” or simply “trite” by a majoritarian way of making discourse and its alliances to the (capitalist) powers that formed modernity (see chapter 5.C). A desired pluralization of reasons makes the assessment of an occidental tendency towards monorationalism necessary, while it at the same time also necessarily entails that it *cannot* be the only assessment possible: from the standpoint of a sound and honest epistemological

pluralism, there need to be various perspectives and readings. The contradictions among them are much rather a productive stimulant for reasoning on as something revealing weakness or lack of profundity.

Even those that claimed and formed this majoritarian discourse and its monopoly to a singular Reason cannot be regarded as monorationalist as they might have considered themselves: the unitary Reasons of the Kants, Descartes, Hegels and so on are not mirror images of the other: much rather, they only believed to pursue the same project of one enlightening Reason that could subsume “Nature” in order to help “Humans” proceed. This monorationalist story proved useful for their causes – both the conscious and explicit and perhaps even more the unconscious and implicit ones. They all share basic traits of a common story about Reason that comprise certain *family likenesses* (Wittgenstein 1971, para. 67) allowing us to label them as proponents of “classical occidental reason” – a term lent from Francois Jullien (2009).

This categorization and particular story-writing of the history of occidental philosophy is however, not “true” in a naive, pedantic sense, but a construction that seeks to produce a certain outcome. There are various ways to narrate the story of occidental philosophy and some would not detect a Monorationalism. It is not my intention to refute them in a classical sense as logically wrong, because – in the sense of the pluralism advocated in this thesis – there can and should be various ways of making sense of the world. It is necessary, then, to outline that this thesis is based on an assumption that only in a culture as deep-rooted in Monorationalism as ours, such a high emphasis on “truth” (in the sense of something to be uncovered, unchangeable and based on an essentialist dualism of true and false, necessarily excluding contradiction) could have developed. I am committed to regarding truth pragmatically as an eventful outcome of a particular construction or situation, as a methodological and phenomenological consideration. In this light, a construction such as the one presented in this thesis cannot be adequately judged as true or false⁶. Much rather, one must measure it by standards of usefulness and productivity. I want to examine and employ theories not because they could represent a static truth, but because they are – at this very moment and situation – useful to make certain thoughts work and flow that seem necessary for the current geopolitical situation. I use as tools, taking the words from William James, “any idea upon which we can ride” (James 2000, 30).

In a time that finally seems to become aware of its ecologically precarious state, even from within the limited perspectives of mainstream politics, it is no longer so much a question of convincing people that we need to become more ecological as individuals as well as societies. Much rather, we

⁶ I do not, at this point, want to delve more into the subject of relativism, of which some will certainly accuse me, other than quoting Gilles Deleuze’s and Félix Guattari’s now famous definition while examining “Heisenberg’s demon” that “Perspectivism, or scientific relativism, is never relative to a subject: it constitutes not a relativity of truth but, on the contrary, a truth of the relative, that is to say, of variables whose cases it orders according to the values it extracts from them in its system of coordinates.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 130) For a further development of this critical insight see Excursion 4 and chapter 9h and 10e.

need to clarify what actualises the effects that move us to turn that way. Almost everybody seems to get the problem, the question now becomes: how do we think with the problem most effectively in order to move forward? In this sense, I want to ask: is the pluralization of Reason useful for the current eco-political landscape we find ourselves in? Could it contribute with a *productive* intervention to create new ways of thinking and relating to the problems that are at stake?

This *logic of productivity* has been long underrepresented or even ignored by above summarized classical occidental philosophy. One was concerned with the uncovering of eternal truths much rather than productive discursive interventions. This ignorance of the productivity of thought and reasoning has to be overcome in the Anthropocene (Presentiment II etc.) – since the imprints of a culture (that understood its science to be guided by Reason) have become a planetary force. Instead, as I will argue, Reasonings fit for the Anthropocene will have to account for what they willingly as well as unwillingly produce. They can no longer focus merely on truth but must regard production and effectivity as central operators of their rationale. Therefore, the *Affirmation of Ecological Reasoning(s)* and the narrations and categorization it operates with are examined in and chosen because of their effectiveness to produce the desired and tentative pluralization of reasonings.

One can fairly and rightly criticize my selection of authors and sources as being still too Eurocentric and male, but I must admit this was the only way I could make the results emerge with my limited capacity of mind and time and the education I have received from the institutions that formed me: Descartes, Plato and Spinoza are still classics no student of philosophy can really evade, especially when pondering the weighty question of reasonability while living in a place that is a part of Europe (in its geographical sense as well as in its socio-cultural identity). Furthermore – and because of this – they still have the advantage of being generally known to philosophical discourses, while others would require much more mediation and contextualization. I find it important and honest to state that – in my academic training – I was first taught, trained and conditioned to read those classics and only then was allowed and considered worthy to take it up with more contemporary, post-colonial and feminist critiques. It is my desire to change this situation, and I regard a pluralization of reasonings as a helpful step in that direction. But as a single human being made from and dependent of its still quite eurocentric, sexist and racist mechanisms (academic as well as more generally societal), I do not feel able to stay “pure” in that matter and, on the contrary, take seriously into account what privileged made me and what was I made into in the becoming of myself as what can be called a “White man”⁷. In being aware of my all-but-neutral, conditioned position, I seek and wish to reiterate the Eurocentrism of occidental reasoning a little less

⁷ I will make use of the concept of „white men“ in this PhD. Some readers might reproach me of thereby reproducing very timely and fashionable stereotypes that – contrary to the aspiration – counter a gender-emancipatory project by creating new, racialized labels. I do understand this reproach and partly agree that it is a fashionable thing to do. However, I do sufficiently concur with this particular *Zeitgeist* since I believe it is necessary to make the skin-color and gender explicit of what so many occidental philosophers have deemed to be “universal” categories. To render tangible what has been made invisible, a little over-essentialization can help, if handled carefully.

virulently (or at least more consciously) than before – that is all I believe that I can realistically wish for if I do not take my power of autonomy from my environmental context too serious (which would in itself be another, very Cartesian and European mistake).

The affirmation of classical philosophy and Reason does play a central role here, in as much as this project sees itself in line with the tradition of classical philosophy to produce and construct. However, this tradition did not know of its *cogitos*, *aprioris* and *ideas* as productions since it was so obsessed with the notion of truth-uncovering. One of the first steps of an ecological reasoning therefore is to examine the history of classical philosophy under the new focus of productivity, as has been done by Gilles Deleuze and others – this is already an ecological way of doing philosophy, since it seeks to understand its problems and its conditions at the same time (Hörl and Burton 2017, 21).

d) Strategic Dualisms

Another tool to make ecological reasonings in their plurality thinkable in this dissertation is the cautious (re)introduction of certain dualisms, the most prominent of which is a latent one between classical Reason and ecological reasonings that drives the undercurrents of this text.

Dualisms have become the archenemy of some fields of ecological philosophy, philosophies of immanence, affect and other related fields. Epistemo/Ontological separations such as Nature/Culture, Man/Women, Human/Non-Human have been the driving forces of a philosophical tradition many seek to overcome. It seems to make sense to try to get rid of them, however – as much as with the rejection of philosophy, metaphysics and Reason – there are good reasons to consider this as well as an overreaction that spills the poor baby out with the bathwater once more.

Inside these discursive fields there have been recent attempts to reintroduce dualisms *for* the sake of an ecological reasoning to come. As an example, there are very valid claims that with the complete dissolution of “analytical distinctions between subject and object, society and nature, and human and non-human” we are no longer capable “to grasp the predicament of the Anthropocene and to expose the exploitative global power relations underlying the ideology of economic growth and technological progress” (Hornborg 2016b). As Alf Hornborg argues, an ecological understanding of these problems will need to “challenge these power structures” by a thorough eco-marxist critique that partially relies on such dualisms, otherwise it would unwillingly help to reinforce the neoliberal economic power structures it actually wants to fight (see chapter 3.De). A similarly politically motivated field of *Dark Ecology* (Morton 2016) wants to look even deeper in the eye of the enemy by rehabilitating Descartes – “the bugbear of ecological thinking ever since” (Morton 2009, 105) – for the sake of a politically progressive ecology (see chapter 3.B). According to this move, a too romantic mainstream of ecological thinking has always suffered from “beautiful soul syndrome” (Ibid. 109-123) that tried to set itself apart from the vast ecological problems of occidental philosophy by simply ignoring its own material involvement in constituting it, dreaming of a pure

and clean nature (see chapter 4c). To counter this escapist tendency, *Dark Ecology* demands to radically deconstruct the romantic concept of Nature and seeks to find “ways to stick around with the sticky mess that we’re in and that we are, making thinking dirtier, identifying with dirtiness” (Ibid. 188). “Instead of pulling the world out of the mud, we could jump down into the mud.” (Ibid. 205) For this, it consults us to actively engage with the enemies such as Descartes and Kant, to investigate how they feel from the inside (Ibid. 142 – we will do this at greater length in chapter 5) and states that “if we can find ecology even here, there is hope” (Ibid. 203). Dualisms, from this perspective, re-appear as an effective way to think ecology without a romanticist, escapist Nature and in active engagement with the inherited structures it would otherwise unconsciously reproduce. To conclude: abandoning classical schemes such as various dualisms with too much haste proves counterproductive, for it will unwillingly help to reproduce the structures they want to get rid of. There might be a time when dualisms will no longer be required, but this utopia has not been attained yet (leaving open the question as to *if* utopias will ever be attained). If we rid ourselves too fast of dualisms and other problematic conceptual tools, we will unwillingly form the romantic ideology of a *new climatic regime* (Latour 2017b) that renders itself incapable of conceptually grasping the (power) structures underlie the problem we want to tackle.

Following these insights, this thesis will borrow strategies developed by post-colonial (Spivak 2003) and feminist theory (Irigaray 1979; 1980) of so-called *strategic essentialism* (Fuss 2008; Abraham 2009) in order to create a *strategic dualism* that will help us to be able to conceptually grasp long repressed or overseen ecological reasoning(s). As it can be helpful for feminist purposes to create a non-unitary, non-monolithic “female essence” in order to help think a gender that has been long denied representation by occidental culture, it will be helpful for the purpose of this dissertation to construct a speculative & non-unitary essence of ecological reasonings as opposed to classical reason. This strategic dualism does not claim that there are merely two forms of reason opposed to each other. Neither does it understand this dualism as ontologically essential. Much rather, dualisms are used in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari as a means to attain another image of thought: “We invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another. We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models. Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass. Arrive at the magic formula we all seek –PLURALISM = MONISM– via all the dualisms that are the enemy, an entirely necessary enemy, the furniture we are forever rearranging.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 20)

A plurality of reasonings will be attained with such a latent strategic dualism between classical and ecological reasoning.

e) Working definitions: Ecological Reason vs. Classical Reason

To commence the investigation, it may be useful to give some cautious working definitions of both classical Reason and Ecological Reasonings. They do only have provisional function and serve as a means of orienting this ongoing investigation.

Thoughts emerge from all corners and situations of the world. They take on a form of reasonability if they can somehow be generalized or communicated. Classical Reason emerges when it severs the connection to its situated context and claims universal truth and applicability, which can even be *fulfilled and completed in a transcendent, context-independent system of reference*. Classical reason can thus be most easily summarized as relying on some form of transcendence in order to create meaning in *this* world. By requiring such a substantial mode of reference to make concepts work, it creates a characteristic opposition between form and content, transcendence and immanence, thought and body, mind and world, etc. and easily makes itself believe of building on some form of stability or eternity that requires separation.

Ecological reason, to the contrary, does acquire its concepts from perceiving its immediate milieu and/or environment and attempts to stay with the (often contradictory) situations it stems from. It does not refer to some other sphere to resolve conflict or tension but thinks *with, through and inside* the territory it is situated in and can thereby appear much more fragile and *susceptible to change* as classical Reason does. Classical *immanent* sources of concepts subject to ecological reason(s) are the body, but – as we shall see in this thesis – other forms of immanent reasoning(s) become thinkable today.

Ecological reasoning is not regarded as a naive solution and the aim of this thesis is not to promote the abandonment of classical reason in favor of ecological reasonings. The term ecological refers to an *ecological* way of reasoning in as far as it thinks within the relations perceived in an environment (=immanent to it), as opposed to needing to set itself apart from its environment in order to work (as classical reason does). This, however, does not mean that ecological reason would automatically lead to a more *environmentally* friendly lifestyle. Quite the contrary, through being able to better understand ecological interconnectedness and entanglement, one might as well be able to act *more environmentally* harmful.

The aim of this thesis is to show that there is a plurality of reasonings we can decide among under ecological considerations. From within our present socio-ecological conundrum called the Anthropocene ecological reasonings should be put alongside classical Reason in order to move towards reasonings in a truly pluralistic way.

f) Ecology without Nature

In order to avoid misunderstandings and wrong associations, the term ecology will be explained. It was first coined by the zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) in his *General Morphology* from 1866

and defined as “the comprehensive science of the relationships of the organism to its surrounding environment, where we can include, in the broader sense, all ‘conditions of existence’” (Haeckel 2013, 53). Whereas in the beginning phase, this science of ecology was usually limited to the realm of what European modernity labeled as “Nature”, the last century has witnessed what I call the “intrusion of the ecological” in reference to Isabelle Stenger’s *Intrusion of Gaia* (2013a). The environmental catastrophe we are facing today has unhinged our modern constitution based on a neat separation between nature and culture. In a world of messy and newly precarious, multitudinous entanglements, the category of the ecological has left its traditionally associated realm of “Nature” and spread its tentacles into discursive domains as diverse as medias, “the social”, “the political”, the mind, desire, attention, power, technology, values, information, behavior, and many more (Hörl and Burton 2017, 1 ff.). Ecology is “increasingly denaturalized” and became pluralized itself. Today we can witness “a general ecologization of thinking and of theory” resulting in a “great transformation of the politics of concepts and theories” (Ibid. 3). The “Ecological” in Ecological reason(s) has to be understood under this perspective of a rise of a “new, ecological image of thought” (Ibid. 5) within our thinking-cultures. Ecology can be defined as the “general science of relations” (Ibid.) and bears in it a radically different image of thought⁸ when put up against the modern, monorationalist one. As I will show in the next chapter, I regard Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) as the first case example for a truly ecological philosophy or – as Felix Guattari (2008) called it – *ecosophy*. Thus, ecological reasoning(s) are understood as a new paradigm for *reasons* that can help us understand “the ensemble of the problem and its conditions” (Ibid. 22) that are predominant in the Anthropocene. This entails that ecological reasoning(s) are not a solution, but much rather an expression of our current ecological situation to which can be reacted to in various – and contra-dictionary, as we will see in the next chapter – ways. This reactivity, in turn, can channel and produce particular modes of relationality.

g) Anthropocene? Homogenocene? Capitalocene? Androcene? Occidentlocene?

A last term that profits from being clarified in this introductory chapter is the one of the „Anthropocene” - the age that is predominately understood as a new „geological era” in which „men“ (*anthropos*) has become a geological force (Crutzen 2002 and many others). I, however, regard the term much less as a geological one and it seems naive – as well as megalomaniac – to already name a full geological epoch at its very beginning after a species that might not even last in it for a good duration, at least in relative terms. I am, rather, more interested in the great effect this

⁸ For some Deleuzian scholars, the term „image of thought“ is understood as a merely pejorative concept they seek to overcome. I however, in line with the above quoted Erich Hörl and others, understand „image of thought“ as a neutral term that defies any judgments on quality or morality. It is a means to think with a current and majoritarian state of thinking – I do not seek to escape any „image of thought“, but much rather try to understand them in their plurality.

new conceptual innovation has had on various domains of our cultures, ranging from academic discourses to the art world and popular understandings of our predicament. As Mary Louise Pratt put in her contribution to the remarkable collection entitled *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* from 2017:

“What is at stake [...] is not what the Anthropocene is but how it will be lived. Whether the stratigraphic authorities authorize the term will make no difference. In this respect, ‘Anthropocene’ is what Deleuze and Guattari would call a concept. ‘All concepts,’ they say, ‘are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning, and which can themselves only be understood as their solution emerges.’ As Elizabeth Grosz elaborates, this means that concepts are never true; they only enable. ‘Concepts are ways of adding ideality to the world,’ she explains, ‘transforming the givenness of chaos, the pressing problem, into various forms of order, into possibilities for being.’ They ‘enable us to surround ourselves with possibilities of being otherwise.’ The point of “Anthropocene” is to enable reflection in Western academic circuits on what this volume calls “arts for living on a damaged planet.” The concept starts a conversation on ‘what we humans are going to do now, in the midst of an increasingly given fate of ruination and extinction’ (Bubandt).” (Tsing et al. 2017, G170)

Following this already trodden path, the „Anthropocene“ in this PhD is much more understood as a concept within contemporary ecological discourses that are not at all confined to the “hard science” of geology. In line with Donna Haraway, Isabelle Stengers and many others, I regard the Anthropocene as a self-inflicted catastrophic time that should urge us to change as quickly as possible. The relative ecological stability of the approximately 10.700 year long Holocene has ended and we – every critter on this planet – will have to find new ways of making sense, kin, comfort and space in our altering environments.

“Perhaps the outrage meriting a name like Anthropocene is about the destruction of places and times of refuge for people and other critters. I along with others think the Anthropocene is more a boundary event than an epoch, like the K-Pg boundary between the Cretaceous and the Paleogene. The Anthropocene marks severe discontinuities; what comes after will not be like what came before. I think our job is to make the Anthropocene as short/thin as possible and to cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge.” (Haraway 2016, 100)

This boundary event is one in which “messiness” becomes productive as a general characterization of our planetary situation: old, millenia-lasting ecological metastabilities crumble everywhere,

many things of matter that humans could count on as a rather stable background are now beginning to act weirdly and unexpectedly. What is called Global Warming can be very aptly described as a “Global Weirding”.⁹

Many things of matter, which scientific interest tended to restrict to mere passivity in the last century are now demanding to be regarded and recognized as agents, whether we like it or not. In this time of global upheaval and re-arranging, our categories and concepts lose their *affects* that make “us” (=a privileged class) feel certain, stable and centrally located in an ordered cosmos. The world seems more and more like a “chaosmos”, which is, and arguably always has been, full of messier entanglements. Since this situation doesn’t look likely to change within humanly conceivable times (and is already going on for decades¹⁰), a pluralization of reasonings is proposed here as a strategy (among, surely, thousands of others) to embrace and deal with this mess.

This messiness is also mirrored in the many alternative terminologies that are competing for (mostly academic) recognition to most appropriately name this time. As most readers of this PhD will probably know, there have been numerous critiques of the term “Anthropocene” and various propositions for alternative terms in the last years. Concepts like “Capitalocene” (Parenti and Moore 2016), “Occidentalocene” (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2017), “Androcene” (Salleh 1997), “Technoscene” (Hornborg 2016a) and many others have been proposed to overcome the false universality of “the age of humans” by highlighting that it was not all humans to the same degree that caused the precarious state we are in, but a particular form of economy (capitalism), coming from a particular culture (the occidental one) with its specific use of technology (industrial capitalism) and its patriarchal leanings (gendered and racialized discourses). I particularly like the “Homogenocene” (Mann 2012), for it points out poignantly the problematic tendency of homogenizing all worldly elements into one concept (beginning with “the world”), as we also see in what I propose to investigate as *Monorationalism*; our environments, modes of living, dying and reasoning are becoming more and more confined to the narrative of oneness by particular majoritarian powers that hold our planet in a (capitalist) death grip while the actual elements that they are comprised of are giving evidence that the application of this narrative is actually producing the contrary: more uncontrollable, unhomogenizable mess and trouble.

⁹ Thanks to Julia Grillmayr for making me aware of this term.

¹⁰ As Danowski and Viveiros de Castro point out: „for the native people of the Americas, *the end of the world has already happened* – five centuries ago.“ (2017, 104) The temporality of the messiness of the Anthropocene is neither linear, nor universally the same for everyone, everywhere on the planet. For many (human as well as non-human) critters the times of ecological turmoil have already started centuries ago with the first European colonial conquests, for others it is only just starting now – the global awareness seems to be shifting at the moment. This stance of understanding the Anthropocene as a philosophical rather than a geological concept makes the discussions about a precise dating of the Anthropocene fall a little bit into the background. However, to not completely ignore them: the propositions of a starting point of the Anthropocene range from about 50.000 to 70 years ago. While the very vast numbers can be positively identified as being promulgated by anti-climate change campaigners, it seems the most sensible to embrace a timeframe of about 500 to 300 years, whereas it should be noted that a sharp acceleration took place after 1945 which made the Anthropocene obvious (compare Agnus 2015).

While I agree with all of these aforementioned critiques of the term Anthropocene and do in fact build my arguments on them, I continuously use, and will likely keep using, the word “Anthropocene”. This is my working tool for naming the catastrophic contemporary situation we are in as the term “anthropos” is not one that neutrally denotes “all humans”, but *is* already one that stems from Ancient Greek and thus *occidental* culture that – in the course of the European Renaissance – developed the patriarchal capitalist techno-complex that got us into the mess. We do *not* call it the *Ren-ocene* (人 – “rén”, Mandarin for “human”) but the *Anthropocene* and this, for me, entails the exclusions and problems highlighted by the above mentioned critique. To add, in the pragmatist sense of *Story Telling for Earthly Survival* I regard the “Anthropocene” – as Donna Haraway puts it in her biopic of that title – as “a good enough term to work with” (Terranova and Haraway 2018).

f) Writing as Mixing Voices

Lastly, a few words on the understanding of my authorship of this thesis. As I try to understand reasoning as a collective process of manifold human and non-human actants, I cannot (nor do I want to) claim to be the sole author of or genius behind the ideas expressed in this thesis. The act of reasoning can be much more regarded as mixing or re-assembling of what one perceived¹¹ (rationally as well as sensually, which can no longer be discerned qualitatively, as we will see) in the *oikos* around oneself – there is no original birth of concepts or ideas *ex nihilo* in reasoning. Thus, I try to let the sources that formed my thinking speak for themselves as much as I can. In order to present this *not* ego-centered “ecology of thought”, I mostly refrain from indented quotations and other standard forms of academic assignment of “intellectual property” and instead try to mingle their textual voices with mine as much as possible. Of course, all citations will be referenced to fulfill academic standards and permit traceability. But the discernability between my texts and others is not the main objective in this thesis. Other voices will be able to speak at length in “my” PhD and together this will form a mixed portrayal of an ecology of thought that will permit us to affirm ecological reason(s).

This “we” that is emerging repeatedly in this text, does – as “reason” or most other concepts – not have a singularly-defined, universal and context-free definition: sometimes it can be read as “all humans”, sometimes as “all earthly-critters” – and at other times merely as you (the reader), me (the writer) and the authors I use to create something reasonable between us. Frequently, the ambivalence of the “we” is intended as a mode of using text. At other times, the “we” might unfortunately reproduce Eurocentric certainties a bit too casually. The “we” in this text will be colored by my own standpoint, which is one – as should be clear by now – of a male and middle-

¹¹ Whereas English “Reason” and French “Raison” etymologically stem from the grounds and foundations, into which Reason permits us (who is us will be examined at a later point – see chapter 3) to *see*, German “Vernunft” comes from a much more neutral “Vernehmen”, which can be translated with “perceiving”. I must admit that my native language’s etymology is much closer to my aspirations in this thesis.

class, urbanite European from “educated” backgrounds. I found it impossible to completely purify it from its problematic entanglements in a imperialist and sexist culture, but I try to critically move these tendencies in what I hope to be the right direction (pluralization).

2) Nietzsche as an early case example of a thinker of ecological reason(s)¹²

Nietzsche is one of the most distinguished critics of occidental Reason – he can almost be called the “common denominator” of most traditions of critique of Reason that followed. Nevertheless, he succeeds in overcoming its looming nihilism by (critically) affirming Reason as much as other reasonings. With a *constructive* (as outlined in the last chapter 1b) reading of Nietzsche, we can both detect rudiments of a pluralization of Reason as well as frail signs of inherently occidental ecological reason(ings) in the becoming – in all its ambivalence and with all the problems it renders perceivable.

In order to create a better understanding of the subject and directions of this thesis, I will as a first step perform a condensed “case study” of the emergence of ecological reasonings in the writings Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). With this, I will be able to allusively demonstrate the overall process and strategy of this PhD.

Although Nietzsche might be a surprising first pick to some, his life-long obsession with staying true to “the real world” (as opposed to transcendental speculations) can be very well regarded as some very early “metaphysics of Earth” (Montebello 2019) that arise within the occidental canon. Since his oeuvre is much more philosophically varied and complex than that of Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944) or other names which might come to mind sooner when thinking of early ecological thinking, Nietzsche is – in my opinion – best suited to reflect on the role of reasoning in a time called the Anthropocene.

This chapter will first constructively reexamine Nietzsche’s critique of Reason to highlight the presence of a strong ecological motivation and undertone in his work. It will then go on to show that this critique is far from being rejective or even nihilist. Much rather, it renders tangible a perhaps before unfathomed strength and *vital necessity* of Reason while not stopping short to understand its huge problems. This *affirmative critique* (see chapter 4d) enables us to attain a more nuanced position concerning reasonings, in that we can at the same time acknowledge (occidental or classical) Reason while maintaining that in a time called the Anthropocene, other reasonings become important and maybe even more prevalent. In Nietzsche’s oeuvre, we can trace these *ecological reasonings(s)* via early case examples of reasoning(s) in emergence, though not yet concretely conceptualised. From this, we will gain a first insight into the strength, but also the dangers and problems of this new paradigm of reason – something we will touch upon at the very end of this PhD in chapter 9n and Presentiment III.

¹² An earlier version of this chapter has been published at *The Trumpeter – Journal for Ecosophy* (Vol. 35, 22-40) under the title „Nietzsche & ecological reason(s) in the Anthropocene“ (Jörg 2019a)

Methodical Remarks

Nietzsche, though, was no stranger to complicated love. In fact, his entire oeuvre can be characterized as a “Passion of Reason” (Türcke 2017) and his wild attacks on Reason are no expression of irrationalism, but of a deep love towards reason, “namely a deeply wounded and disappointed one that cannot help but uncover the whole inadequacy of Reason” (Ibid. 20). In consequence – and as it is usually the case when one struggles with something one loves – he did not develop one unitary stance towards Reason, but several – at least seemingly – contradictory evaluations of his passion can be traced across his entire works. Nietzsche praises reason as much as he loathingly batters it, he affirms the cunning of Socratic Reason while rejecting it in favor of another, greater reason.

It is impossible to draw a unitary concept of reason out of Nietzsche’s oeuvre, and any attempt to do so would contradict Nietzsche’s entire philosophical approach, affirming that “the wisest human would be the richest in contradictions” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1884,26[119]¹³). However, what is rudimentary possible in Nietzsche’s body of work – which consists of scattered and frequently contradictory aphorisms and rarely pursues one thought or problem for longer than a page – is to draw various types of reason out of this multitude. We can attempt to order them by a variety of family likenesses (chapter 1c) and develop several kinds of reasons following their different characterizations and evaluations¹⁴.

This chapter will focus on two reasons without implying that this is the only way of perceiving Nietzsche’s oeuvre. It will make use of a strategic dualism (chapter 1d) to discern a classical, Socratic Reason from a frail ecological reason that shimmers through on various occasions in Nietzsche’s oeuvre and his wide reception thereafter. This can be easily done by discerning the two by their different evaluations: often Nietzsche writes in a highly dismissive tone of Reason, while in other passages reason is praised in surprising verve. I will first examine the heavily critical passages about Reason and then slowly proceed to why one finds rudiments of a pluralization of Reason in Nietzsche’s oeuvre, and how this opens up space to witness an ecological reason (among possibly several) in the becoming in the Anthropocene. Furthermore, this will allow us to draw first glimpses on why it is equally problematic to one-sidedly affirm this “new”, “great reason” as one.

¹³ All fragments I could not find translated are cited according to the *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe* (eKGWB) and are translated by myself. <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB> [1.2.2021]

¹⁴ Of course, text – which in its linearity and logic has its own problems that will be examined in the chapter 3.A – is not the only and perhaps not the best way of undergoing such a pluralization of Reason in Nietzsche’s oeuvre. In fact, this chapter is an offspring of a 10 meter long artistic map of Nietzsche’s concepts of “Vernunft” titled NIETZSCHE VERNUNFT MAP. In it, all 690 mentions of “Vernunft” in his entire body of work (including the *Nachgelassene Fragmente* and his letters) are mapped according to a similar scheme: vertically according to a “good – bad”-scheme, horizontally following chronology. A documentation of this map can be found here: <http://www.stffwchsl.net/materialien/nietzsche-vernunft-karte-online-dokumentation/> [1.2.2021]

In saying that we will constructively use Nietzsche's oeuvre means that we are using Nietzsche's texts in order to show how his insights can be used productively in discourses around the Anthropocene. This implies that this chapter is not so much an exegesis that always tries to stay 100% true to the author's intention (which are of course marked by its time), but an attempt to make Nietzschean thought productive for our contemporary problems and will thus quite seamlessly merge his own work with some of later authors that were hugely inspired by him to create a greater picture of ecological reasonings in the Anthropocene.

a) Nietzsche's ecological critique of Reason

Sometimes, especially in his earlier phase – that is characterized by occasional resurges of a belief in an almost Kantian form of Reason (HH 265)¹⁵ - Nietzsche cries out in disappointment: “to adhere to reason would be nice, if there was any reason!” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1881,11[109]) The painful impact of the realization that Reason came to existence “poorly, by chance, by accident, in an unreasonable manner” (D 123)¹⁶ is clearly perceivable in his writings of that time. “Reason! Without knowing it is something utterly foolish, even in the greatest philosophers.” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1881,11[132]) To not lose Reason, one must suppress that Reason emerged out of Unreason and coincidence (D 149), that one needs to escape from reality and its events (D 448) to maintain it – a procedure that all the “great philosophers” (of what I call the occidental tradition) have done so far, according to Nietzsche. He maintains that there is much less capacity to reason in humans than we assume (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1882,4[90]) and that clinging to the old ideal that all of reality should indeed correspond this limited capacity is a dangerous practice.

There is a clear trait of an ecological awareness in this critique of Reason: according to Nietzsche, this contingently built Reason has corrupted philosophers in turning them against sensuality, the body, and the permanently becoming earth in which it is located (TI Reason 1+2). Since Socrates, Reason in classical occidental philosophy has been a tyrant, a “deranged” and “crooked” reason (TI Socrates 10 & A 41,52), that was seduced by language (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1886,5[22] & GM-I-13) to create a transcendent “true world”, a “soul” and “spirit” that lead us to despise our bodies and life (EH Destiny 8 & GM:III 28) and was used as a vehicle of power and Christian world-appropriation, thereby morally devaluing reality (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1888,14). His alter-ego Zarathustra is preaching a clearly ecologically motivated turn away from these “mixers of poison” in the following lines of his *Prologue*:

“I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth and do not believe those who speak to you of extraterrestrial hopes! They are mixers of poisons whether they know it

¹⁵ If not mentioned otherwise, all English translations of Nietzsche are taken from the “Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy” Editions that can all be found in the Bibliography. Since Nietzsche is the main reference of this chapter, he is cited after the official abbreviations to be found at: http://www.psupress.org/journals/jnls_Nietzsche.html [1.2.2021]

¹⁶ This is my own translation, which highlights my point better than the Cambridge Edition that translates the original “wie billig, auf eine unvernünftige Weise, durch einen Zufall” with “Irrationally, as might be expected: by a chance accident.”

or not. They are despisers of life, dying off and self-poisoned, of whom the earth is weary: so let them fade away! Once the sacrilege against God was the greatest sacrilege, but God died, and then all these desecrators died. Now to desecrate the earth is the most terrible thing, and to esteem the bowels of the unfathomable higher than the meaning of the earth!” (Z:I “Zarathustra’s Prologue” 3)

Nietzsche reveals the transcendent grounds upon which Reason founds itself, to be illusions and seeks to disperse these foundations as much as the notions of strong truth, the strong subject, human exceptionalism and its wrong morals “into the winds” (Foucault, Caruso, and Seitter 1978, 76–100). He does this, because he perceives an inherent ecological danger in ignoring earthly reality in favor of transcendent foundations. Nietzsche, however, thinks not in absolutes, but only in relation to larger contexts that can be called ecological or, in this case, historical. We will see in the next sections of this chapter that these foundational illusions (such as the unity of Reason) were in fact necessary for human survival so far but have become dangerous in the future world that Nietzsche is addressing.

b) Affirmative Critique

In essence, Nietzsche’s critique of Reason turns against “adjusting reality to transcendent truth [Zurechtmachen der Wirklichkeit unter transzendenter Wahrheit]” (Kouba 1994, 168) He is opposed to the “absolute rule and omnipotence of truth” (D 507) and sees a necessary tension between truth and reality, neither of which can be subsumed under the other.

Despite his occasional, earlier outcries that there is no Reason at all, Nietzsche, however, is far from rejecting Reason in general. In fact, the last five years of his sane life are characterized by the development of something that can be called an *affirmative critique* – a term that will be further developed in chapter 4 – of Reason.

After finishing his self-acclaimed masterpiece *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in 1884, there is a – for Nietzsche’s standards – long, almost two-year pause until his next publication, in which he reexamined the much despised “great philosophers” (like Descartes, Socrates, Kant, Hume, etc.) in detail. This long research phase does not end with a more positive appraisal: “Philosophers, in particular, have the greatest difficulty in freeing themselves from the belief that the basic concepts and categories of reason belong without further ado to the realm of metaphysical certainties: from ancient times they have believed in reason as a piece of the metaphysical world itself - this oldest belief breaks out in them again and again like an overpowering recoil.” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1886,6[13])

But after it, Nietzsche developed a more nuanced understanding of Reason as a “necessary illusion” (Kouba 1994, 169): he now affirms that Reason’s suppression of reality, the body and the becoming earth might have enabled human survival – at least in the form of occidental civilization (which

Nietzsche does not differentiate with enough scrutiny). “[A]ll this violence, arbitrariness, harshness, terror, and anti-reason has shown itself to be the means through which strength, reckless curiosity, and subtle agility have been bred into the European spirit” (BGE 188). In his last phase of activity, Nietzsche proves to develop an ecological understanding of the emergence of Reason: he still affirms that it is a product of coincidence, however, he genealogically traces it back to a certain environment in which the development of Reason might have been the best option:

“If it is necessary to make a tyrant out of reason, as Socrates did, then there must be no little danger that something else might play the tyrant. At that time people sensed in rationality a deliverance', neither Socrates nor his 'invalids' were free to be rational—it was *de rigueur* – it was their last available means. The fanaticism with which the whole of Greek thought throws itself on rationality betrays a crisis: they were in danger, they had just one choice: either perish or—be absurdly rational. . . The moralism of Greek philosophers from Plato onwards is pathologically conditioned: likewise, their appreciation of dialectics. Reason = virtue = happiness means simply: we must imitate Socrates and establish permanent daylight to combat the dark desires—the daylight of reason. We must be clever, clear, bright at all costs: any yielding to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads downwards . . .” (TI Socrates 10)

Although Nietzsche affirms that reason holds civilizational benefits for human survival (without explaining the threats further at this point), he nevertheless remains highly dismissive of it; he classifies this centerpiece of occidental culture as “deranged” and “crooked” (TI Socrates 10 & A 41+52) for it necessarily needs to be unaware of its “human origin” (A 57) and how it builds on lie and deceit. “Reality was made into ‘mere appearance’; a complete lie called ‘the world of being’ was made into reality” (A 10). The main point of Nietzsche’s *affirmative critique* of Reason is that it does not understand or perceive its own productivity: that it is claiming to be an eternal truth and moral ideal, whereas it is, in fact, only a product of certain contingent cultural and ecological factors that started in Ancient Greece. This critique under the angle of productivity is twofold, for it affirms that a) Reason is not able to regard itself as a product of certain (socio-cultural) environments and that b) Reason cannot understand what it produces itself: moral categories and social order, truth, a transcendent, stable category of “Being”, as well as – as some critics of Reason would have it – bodily disciplinarian, discrimination and an unprecedented human power over the planet.

Contemporary eco-philosophical analysis of unreflected productivity

Such analysis of unreflected productivity is, in our times, a central motivation of ecological critique. Accordingly, occidental Modernity is categorized by the fundamental dichotomic opposition of nature and culture. This “separation of powers” allows an unprecedented productivity in techno-scientific application (Latour 2002) and produces what have been called “quasi-objects” (Serres 2013) – objects whose full extent cannot be conceptually grasped inside the modernist constitution

(see also chapter 3.Dc). The most famous example for such phenomena is of course climate change, which is largely a product of techno-scientific industrialization, although its most problematic effects are appearing on the “nature”-side of the dichotomy: ocean acidification, global warming, mass extinction, etc. This problematic productivity cannot be reflected inside the modernist constitution – demonstrating why and how ecological problems could be overlooked for so long (and continues to be overlooked).

As we have just demonstrated with Nietzsche, however, this unreflected productivity is not just a characteristic of occidental modernity, but of Reason in general. In order for it to properly function Reason needs to suppress the material, historical and social (short: ecological) grounds it developed from, thus creating dualist separations such as “culture” as opposed to “nature” (a popular term for the material grounds) that occidental modernity needed to develop from.

With an examination of reasons, we can begin to uncover deeper lying structures of our ecological problems that supersede Modernity. This cannot be attained by a merely rejective stance towards Reason. By simply negating and denouncing the problematic entity, one will not be able to change anything about it but will only reinforce the problematic structures (see chapter 4c and 6b). Much rather, one will have to study closely the ecological determinedness of the problem in order to understand what and how it co-produces environments. This investigation into the productivity of Reason – that Reason, as an integral part of its inner working, was blind to – enables Nietzsche, as we shall see in the next section, to incipiently conceive another reason that reflects its own productive environment including its ecological determinedness.

c) Another reason for the Anthropocene?

As should have become clear by now, Nietzsche is far from being an irrationalist: he acknowledges that Reason has a huge power, maybe even more so than some of what he calls the “great philosophers” would. Still, he remains highly dismissive of this “deranged”, “crooked” Reason, and this despite the fact that he affirms, “the finality of reason is an effect, not a cause: with every other kind of reason, to which there are continuously *rudiments*, life fails, - it becomes too chaotic - too unequal” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1888, 14[152]¹⁷).

Why then, one might ask, is Nietzsche so dismissive of this Reason? Why does he reject Reason with such great verve, if he admits it to be necessary for human survival? We will take several steps to answer these questions.

Insights into the vital nature of Reason & possibilities of its pluralization

Firstly, we need to address a remarkable element of the aforementioned quote about the finality of reason being an effect: *en passant*, as if it would be the most normal thing there is, Nietzsche

¹⁷ Full quote: “Hier hat nicht eine präexistente ‚Idee‘ gearbeitet: sondern die Nützlichkeit, daß nur, wenn wir grob und gleich gemacht die Dinge sehen, sie für uns berechenbar und handlich werden... die Finalität in der Vernunft ist eine Wirkung, keine Ursache: bei jeder anderen Art Vernunft, zu der es fortwährend *Ansätze* giebt, mißrät das Leben, — es wird unübersichtlich — zu ungleich — Die Kategorien sind „Wahrheiten“ nur in dem Sinne, als sie lebenbedingend für uns sind: wie der Euklidische Raum eine solche bedingte ‚Wahrheit‘ ist.”

affirms that there are other kinds of reason(s), of which there exist “continuously *rudiments*”. Although the plural form of *Vernunft* [reason] – “*Vernünfte*” (a word that does not exist according to German dictionaries) – does not appear in Nietzsche’s oeuvre, quotes like the above show that Nietzsche can be thought through an early thinker of a pluralization of Reason. He does, in principle, concede that there are various kinds of reasons and at the same time offers an explanation why occidental culture, in its *Monorationalising* tendency (to always speak of Reason as a single, unitary entity), has suppressed this so far: because it was absolutely necessary for the survival of occidental civilization.

Such an insight into the vital nature of occidental Reason would probably turn most people *conservative*: in the light of the understanding of the vast importance of Reason for human survival, most would turn to the project of *conserving* Reason. One might partly concede to the various critiques of Reason, which were already virulent in Nietzsche’s lifetime, but only to save the core of occidental Reason. I would claim that this frame of mind is still prevalent up until today for it forms a central component of what I call the *Resilience of Reason* that prevents us from perceiving ecological and other reasons (see chapter 6a).

Nietzsche however, who seeks to teach his afterworld “how to philosophize with a hammer” (TI), is not a thinker of the maintenance of the status quo. Quite frequently, Nietzsche affirms its destruction with sometimes uncanny idealizations of violence¹⁸. “Break, break me these old tablets of the pious, my brothers” (Z:III On the old and new Tablets 15) is Zarathustra’s demand to those who have reached the nihilist “hour in which even your happiness turns to nausea and likewise your reason and your virtue.” (Z:I Zarathustra’s Prologue 3) He is preaching to the “last human” whose God has already died, whose morals, virtues and truths have already acquired a foul taste and at a time, when “the earth has become small” and in which the last human “makes everything small (Z:I Zarathustra’s Prologue 5). Nietzsche’s famous proclamation of the death of god is not a demanding postulation, but much rather a sober assessment of his *Zeitgeist*’s status quo: the traditional metaphysics do not work any longer, god *has* died and Reason, although we see its historically vital necessity, no longer convinces us.

“going under...” - Nietzsche’s dark side

There is a somber, dark side in Nietzsche’s thought. He affirms this downfall of occidental humanity, he perceives the decadence of occidental culture as lucid as few others of his time and cannot help to acknowledge it approvingly: “The appearance of *décadence* is as necessary as any rise and advance of life: it is not in our hands to abolish it.” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1888,14[75]) He sees, that there is no neutral, transcendent Reason: “There is no reason of that kind, and without struggle and passion everything becomes weak” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1881,11[193]) – Reason,

¹⁸ Nietzsche’s tendency towards war-like speech must be regarded as giving in to a masculinism prevalent in his times. As we will argue at a later point, to really challenge the Status Quo, war-like opposition is definitely not the best option, but calm and understanding insight and ecological transformation.

although it played a vital part in occidental culture's survival, is understood to be an illusion and we cannot reverse this process: we cannot make ourselves believe in Reason once more.

This, however, does not necessarily mean that Nietzsche sees complete downfall into chaos as the only option. In fact, he – in the name of Zarathustra – loves those “who do not know how to live unless by going under, for they are the ones who cross over” and “the great despisers, because they are the great venerators and arrows of longing for the other shore” (*Z:I Zarathustra's Prologue 4*) The human – understood here in a post-humanist tradition as “occidental white man” (Braidotti 2012) – does need to be overcome. Reason – as in the monorationalistic, Socratic means to subjugate the body, reality and the earth – needs to be superseded. The downfall and contempt of occidental culture becomes a necessary step on the way to transcend occidental culture.

“...to cross over” - Nietzsche's visions of the Anthropocene

This analysis and Zoroastrian call for, what is very problematically termed, the *Übermensch* does not stem from a naive and merely rejective critique of occidental culture. Much rather, in this *affirmative critique*, Nietzsche acknowledges the irreducible strength of Reason and its mutually constituted culture while at the same time seeing that it has come to an end. In a longer, coherent fragment – the *Lenzer Haide Fragment* of 1887, regarded by some as one as the most concise summary of his body of work, he brings this very well to the point. Reason and its moral disciplination as “means of discipline [Zuchtmittel]” served humanity for a long time to survive: “it was a means of preservation [Erhaltungsmittel]” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1886,5[71]).

However, in the time that Nietzsche sees coming, “the power man has achieved now allows a *reduction* of those means of discipline [Zuchtmittel]” (Ibid.). One can interpret this quote as an early observation of what is today called the Anthropocene: a time, that is popularly defined as the geological era in which humanity has acquired so much strength that it has become a geological force. In this time, the monopolization of Reason is no longer necessary: since “humanity” has reached – according to Nietzsche – such a power over the planet, other forms of reason become applicable without posing a threat for survival as such. In fact, occidental Reason and modern culture might have expanded to such a degree that *they* pose a threat for survival for many human and non-human critters on this planet. In this situation, other forms of reasons are needed. Indeed, one is able to find a call for another, qualitatively different form of reason in Nietzsche's oeuvre that he sometimes calls the “great reason” (*Z:I On the Despisers of the Body*) and which seems to be a more important reason for the ecological task that this humanity as geological force is facing.

d) Ecological Reason, a first draft

Having set the way in showing how we can detect the emergence of ecological reasons through Friedrich Nietzsche's oeuvre, we can now investigate what this specific ecological reasoning might be. We will first examine some of its basic parameters and will then go on to examine how this ecological reason also bears very problematic traits. This, in turn, will set the way for a more

nuanced (and less naively enthusiastic than Nietzsche) understanding of ecological reasonings, which we will continue to develop throughout this thesis.

Setting free new potential of thought

As we have seen, Nietzsche affirms the history of occidental Reason with its tendency of Monorationalism in conceding that it was necessary for the survival and favorable development of occidental culture (problematically called – and in line with the spirit of his time – “humanity”). However, in the future time he sees coming and that we can identify as the Anthropocene, this strength of Reason turns into a weakness. Its disciplinary mechanisms that helped to conquer and despise the body and the earth turn into a fatal threat. The good news is that this disciplination is no longer necessary. The quote from above illustrating that “all this violence, arbitrariness, harshness, terror, and anti-reason has shown itself to be the means through which strength, reckless curiosity, and subtle agility have been bred into the European spirit” continues like this: “[a]dmittedly, this also entailed an irreplaceable loss of force and spirit, which have had to be crushed, stifled, and ruined” (BGE 188). Nietzsche sees that “[n]othing has been purchased more dearly than that little bit of human reason” (D 18) – that all the suppression it needed in order to function has left so much potential of a pluralistic culture of reasonings untouched. Zarathustra ensures us that this potential can now be set free without having to risk that life will go wrong.

Such potential can be mainly found in the body, whom he refers to as the “great reason” of which “our small reason, what you call ‘spirit’ [Geist] is also a tool of your body, my brother, a small work- and plaything of your great reason.” (Z:I On the Despisers of the Body). The classical hierarchy is turned upside down (“Reversal of Platonism”): it is no longer the *Geist*, the spirit or mind who has a privileged access to the stable truth of the world of being. The latter has been exposed as a wrong and ecologically catastrophic idol. The *Geist*, in turn, is now seen as a tool of bodily immanent interaction with the world. “All our categories of reason are of sensualistic origin: read [abgelesen] from the empirical world” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1887,9[63]). Sensing, Thinking and Willing are now seen as one part of multiple expressions of relating sensually and bodily in the immanence of reality, without any qualitative priority of thought. “Thought considered in the general frame of life does not have a specific status, it accompanies in fact every vital process, any categorization operated by living beings.” (Montebello 2019, 235) The intentionality of the active, secluded subject is downgraded in favor of a general and manifold express- and reasonability or “will to power” of all lifeforms, which can take the form of thoughts, actions, wills, etc.

Truth vs. “new possibilities of life”

In the opening paragraphs of *Beyond Good and Evil* from 1886, Nietzsche denounces and deconstructs what he perceives as a dogmatic obsession with truth and asks what it is that makes us will the truth as the single goal of thought. Provocatively he asks: “Granted, we will truth: why not untruth instead? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?” (BGE 1)

As Deleuze puts it, with Nietzsche, a new “image of thought” is attained; one that no longer incorporates truth as the central element of thought (Deleuze 2006, 104), but much rather sees it in the larger picture of relationality to “necessary lies” and as a product of the specific milieu in which thought is taking place. In his last, auto-biographical piece *Ecce Homo* from 1889, Nietzsche, a physically frail and hyper-sensitive persona, expresses gratitude that his condition was forcing him “to think hard about reason in reality”. He realized how much “the effects of climatic and meteorological factors” (EH Clever 2) and of the right nutrition imposed on his entire reasoning, and how, in turn, reason is dependent on the milieus it takes place in (EH Clever 8). Thus, he could overcome Reason’s monothematic obsession with truth and speculate on a more ecological image of thought.

An ecological reason, as the one we can find rudiments of in Nietzsche’s oeuvre, does not refer to a transcendent sphere of eternal truths (compare also Excursion 4), but interacts with the immanence of its environment and draws its concepts from its permanent becoming processuality, making concepts themselves fluid and prone to their historical, social, environmental, etc. milieu. It is with this kind of reason that thought no longer tries to attain a permanent, unchangeable order of concepts, but much rather actively invents concepts to make life easier in a particular context: “*Thinking would then mean discovering, inventing, new possibilities of life*”, as Gilles Deleuze (2006, 109 – highlighted in the original) summarizes the consequences of this Nietzschean image of thought. What today is called the Anthropocene, is marked by gigantic ecological devastations such as the Sixth Mass Extinction and confronts us with various new and frequently toxic environments. From within this process such capacities of inventing new life forms will become central, as they enable us to open new fields of possibilities to explore new forms of co-inhabiting and making kin on an already damaged planet. Eternal truths and rigid conceptual outlets, on the other hand, are critically re-evaluated under their ecological productivity, not by standards of truth, but by effectivity.

Consequently, what is today called a “new ecological image of thought” (Hörl and Burton 2017, 7) no longer refers to big schemes, “grand claims concerning solutions or the precise conditions for long term ‘ecological sustainability’”. Indeed, terms such as these should be subjected to rigorous interrogation and perhaps ultimately effaced from the lexicon of environmental struggle.” (Halsey 2005, 34) Much rather, such grand schemes that try “to constitute various portions of earth as a unity in spite of its being a multiplicity” (Ibid. 51) are being recognized as ecologically problematic in themselves by many people who consider themselves ecologically reasonable today.

Another modernity

Nietzsche can light us the way out of modernity and its ecological dead-ends. With him, what some people call “*another modernity*” (Schmid 1998, 459) becomes thinkable – not one, that is blindly obsessed by human dominion over the planet – but with an emphasis on coexistence and taking

delight in life (Schmid 1998, 460). One can discern a “new planetary consciousness”, which transcends the old schemes of abstraction and their suppressive dualisms, and by help of which “our old earth would be more comfortable to inhabit than before” (Ibid. 463). Such a Zoroastrian new reason would no longer have a one-sided emphasis on action – as did Reason especially in its modern version – but will be a reason of “reasonable letting-it-happen [vernünftiges Geschehenlassen]” (Sloterdijk 1986, 184). One that can reflect on how and when to act and not-act, no longer being forced by an exterior and abstract scheme seeking to be applied in reality, but rather, taking active pleasure in making sense *within* reality and enjoying its manipulation as much as its free-flowing untouched-ness. “Knowing something of ecological problems, therefore, means to become cognizant of the flows, speeds and intensities of matter (organic and inorganic) and energy (kinetic and potential) which pass through and across particular kinds of bodies (atmospheric, aquatic, terrestrial).” (Halsey 2005, 51) An ecological reason of “reasonable letting-it-happen” plays with these flows, speeds and intensities while regarding itself as part of them and understanding that observation already alters the processes (see chapter 7g and 8j). Ecological reasoning can be understood as a never-ending balancing and adequate mixing of various intensities, truths, concepts, matters, world views etc., rather than sorting out once and for all which philosophy is the right one for all situations.

Immanence of nature

Since such ecological reasonings hold the potential to transcend Reason’s dualisms (such as nature/culture, human/non-human, man/woman, active/passive) by being able to understand their becoming within a particular culture and image of thought, matter can be conceived differently. It does no longer need to be suppressed in a “necessary lie” as the unthinkable of Reason but can be regarded as the matter thoughts are made of. In such a shift of perspective, reasoning is no longer regarded as the oppositional counterpart of matter it thinks about and acts upon (as did Reason), but – much rather – reasoning(s) think and act through matter. *Reasons are matter* – thinking, vibrant matter that think and act with and as an exchange flow of other matters, which necessarily include human as well as inhuman bodies (Bennett 2010). “Of equal importance are the bodies of experts, forest blocks, endangered species, logging coupes, heritage rivers, national parks and so forth. In all instances, the task would be to dislodge the image of thought currently investing those assemblages deemed responsible for ‘managing’ nature.” (Halsey 2005, 51)

Ecological reasoning does not reflect upon “Nature” externally but sees itself as an immanent part of this nature, making the term somewhat obsolete¹⁹. Nietzsche provides a highly effective toolset to dismantle Reason and its modern constitution, by showing how they are interlinked by an ignorance of their own productivity. He reveals human exceptionalism and its separation from “Nature” to be a motor of modernity and its moral framework (Maurer 1998, 467). The problem is

¹⁹ Which consequently lead to calls for an “End of Nature” (Latour 2002; 2010; Cavazza 2014; Nordquist 2006) and designs of an “Ecology without nature” (Morton 2009).

that these morals and their Reason (which was formed in Socratic times) were more and more monopolized, positioning themselves as the only virtuous option throughout the course of modernity. Whereas this positioning of thought and development enabled a more comfortable and longer life for many humanoid individuals, on a planetary level it also had extreme consequences which brought forth the Anthropocene (Ibid. 475). Blindly applied, these modern individuals who follow a singular reason will devastate the planet and transform its application in techno-science into a business of “world annihilation” (Ibid. 470). But this, Nietzsche insists, is not the only option: another reason, another science and another modernity is possible! If taken seriously, it can be observed that Reason (in its monopolized form) worked on its own dissolution for a long historical time – and now, in this time of decadence and catastrophe, the time has come “to push humans from the heightening pedestal onto which their religious-metaphysical-moral self-interpretation has placed them” (Ibid. 477). With such a form of “second enlightenment” such humans can finally try to attain a “cosmic justice towards all things” (Ibid.) by no longer seeing “man as the measure of all things” (as our hellenic, protagorian heritage does):

“The wanting-to-know things as they are - that alone is the good hang: not the looking out for others and seeing with other’s eyes - that would merely be a change of place of selfish seeing! We want to heal ourselves of the great basic insanity, which requires us to measure everything after us: [...] Increasing the indifference! And exercising to see with other eyes: exercising to see without human relations, meaning: objectively! Cure the human megalomania!” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1881,11[10])

As we have seen, Nietzsche examined the inner workings of occidental reason and sees how they have been necessary for a long time but can now be joined by another, more ecological form of reasoning. His oeuvre, as we have seen, provides effective tools to undo the problems of Reason as much as it opens up a not so distant view of new forms of reasonings, that can help us deal with our ecological entanglement and help us become “what we not yet are: good neighbors of the nearest things.” (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1879,41[31])

e) A more nuanced, sober outlook on ecological reason(ing)s

However, Nietzsche, a philosopher that has found approval from Nazis and Marxists, feminists and misogynists, racists, internationalists and everybody in between, cannot be read purely positively. As we will see, there are highly problematic traits in his appraisal of an ecological reason that we cannot leave unaddressed. In fact, the final examinations of these more problematic traits will enable us to attain a more nuanced, less enthusiastic understanding of ecological reasoning(s). In the last sub-chapter and first draft of what ecological reasoning(s) may well be, I could not help to partly reproduce the mode of euphoric preaching of this new kind of reason Zarathustra sees in the becoming. This tonality is well understandable if one considers how old and resilient occidental

tradition is and how much effort it takes to undo it: the mode of preaching might have been the best possible way for Nietzsche to make it perceivable. However, one and a half centuries have passed and the emergence of ecological reasoning(s) has progressed since Nietzsche's time, allowing us to acquire a more sober evaluation of ecological reasoning(s).

Problematic traits in Nietzsche's oeuvre...

In an early aphorism called "Reason and the tree of humanity" (HH II/2 189) Nietzsche is writing: "mankind shall one day become a tree that overshadows the whole earth bearing many millions of blossoms that shall all become fruit one beside the other, and the earth itself shall be prepared for the nourishment of this tree. That the still small beginnings of this shall increase in strength and sap, that the sap shall flow around for the nourishment of the whole and the individual parts through numberless canals - it is from this and similar tasks that the standard is to be derived as to whether a man of the present is useful or useless. The task is unspeakably great and bold: let us all see to it that the tree does not untimely rot away! [...] What we must do, rather, is to look in the face our great task of preparing the earth for the production of the greatest and most joyful fruitfulness - a task for reason on behalf of reason!" A few years later, Zarathustra is preaching about this great reason: "And what you called world, that should first be created by you: your reason, your image, your will, your love itself it should become!" (Z:II On the Blessed Isles).

As will be difficult to ignore for politically sensitized readers, elements of the two citations above are highly problematic. We read that humanity will acquire a level of dominion over the planet, which sounds startling and anthropocentric in its highest megalomania. On top of which we learn that in this world to come, humans will be selected by their usefulness [Nützlichkeit], echoing the justification of eugenic practices of "social hygiene"²⁰ which, in part, characterized our move into the 20th century.

"In the new century, mankind may already have gained more power by mastery of nature than it can consume, and then something luxurious will come to humanity [...] Instead of creating works of art, one will greatly enhance nature [...] for example, elevating the Alps from their rudiments [...] of beauty to perfection [...] fire and surplus of power will result from the healthy way of living." (Nietzsche via Maurer 1998, 468)

One finds quotes in Nietzsche's body of work that any progressive minded person of the 21st century will have a hard time to ethically, morally or intellectually agree with. However, whether we agree or not – they exist in Nietzsche's oeuvre as well as in the 21st century. So, from this pragmatic starting point, we are brought to mull over some critical questions for ourselves: how is one supposed to deal with them? Should we solemnly ignore them and focus on the good things,

²⁰ Although it should never be ignored, we will not further elaborate on the fact that Nietzsche has been used to justify eugenic practices in the past such as the biggest crime against humanity in history: the Holocaust. For such critical examinations see among others Hicks 2010; Stone 2002

hoping that the more negative things will go away? Or is there a deeper wisdom that can be drawn from these dark realities?

...resounding in contemporary interpretations of the Anthropocene

Nietzsche's ideas of a humanity that rebuilds the entire planet according to its needs and reason(s) remind us of the predominant, neoliberal interpretations of the Anthropocene. In them, we are confronted with "the human" who is naively (and analogous to Reason) regarded as a universal unity, and not as a specific cultural product with strong andro- and eurocentric leanings. With such a lack of differentiation, "the human" is regarded as a super-powerful being whose only option it to use *his* power more wisely than *he* has so far done. In their shortsightedness, these voices call for geo-engineering and other massive increases of human intervention, sometimes even with undertones of a new kind of eugenics (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2017), just as we have found them in the quotations of Nietzsche above. This politically predominant wing of proponents of the Anthropocene fails to take into consideration how such interpretations reproduce some commonplaces of occidental Reason that got us into the Anthropocene in the first place. They fail to see that the Anthropocene is not brought forth by all of humanity *de facto*, but by "the human" in its modern, occidental construction – the name-giving "anthropos", who is of course predominantly a white, occidental man (Theriault 2015). Additionally, they fail to take into account the role of capitalism (Parenti and Moore 2016), technology (Hornborg 2016a) and the predominance of occidental culture (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2017) in the emergence of this time of ecological catastrophe. These theoretical shortcomings make such interpretations prone to call for a further increase of the problematic structures that brought us there in the first place: more capitalism, more human exceptionalism and the call for 'culture' to protect 'nature', and, thereby become a part of the problem themselves²¹.

Against the "will to system" to sketch "the ensemble of the problem and its condition"

We can see how Nietzsche's ecological reasoning can inspire in us new "images of thought" in all their ambivalence and contradictoriness. Nietzsche affirms that "the wisest human would be the richest in contradictions" (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1884,26[119]) and this is not a random remark but a consequent stance central to his philosophy, which is opposed to any systematization that would allow purity and non-contradiction. "I mistrust all systematists and avoid them. The will to system is a lack of integrity" (Ibid., TI Maxims 63]. Since Nietzsche is deeply concerned with an ecological reason that is no longer dependent on abstraction from nature but tries to think within the immanence of reality, the body and its sensual, affective realm, he consequently rejects systematization and affirms contradiction.

Such an ecological reasoning does not see consciousness as a higher, separate form of awareness, but as a the 'tip of the iceberg' of unconscious, instinctual behavior. "Traditionally, conscious

²¹ I try to acquire a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon I propose to call the "Resilience of Modernity" in my upcoming book: *Backlash – Essays zur Resilienz der Moderne*. Textem, Hamburg 2020.

thought is valued more highly than unconscious [...], but Nietzsche associates it with error and treats it like the new kid on the block. Eventually, it will be incorporated.” (Oliver and Pearsall 1998, 205) This understanding of immanent consciousness tries to stay true to reality by reproducing the errors, contradictions and regions of vagueness it absorbs by its bodily partaking in the world. There is no higher order, no stable, eternal truth-sphere of Being one can relate to. Much rather, wisdom is to incorporate the contradictions of one’s ecology and express them as distinctly as possible. Ecological reason is not a method or capacity of creating unity and order in the world, but much rather a mode of understanding “the ensemble of the problem and its conditions” (Hörl and Burton 2017, 22) that are predominant in the Anthropocene. This entails that ecological reasonings are not a solution, but much rather an expression of our current ecological situation, to which can be reacted in various ways – some of which one cannot and should not agree to. With ecological reasoning, one can even be able to act *more* harmful than with classical Reason, because one can reflect the ecological interrelation of one’s action, and, therefore, act according to a maximization of harm, should one desire it. This means, in line with a pluralization of reasons, that ecological reason is not adequate as the new paradigm or idol that we will have to try to unitarily adjust ourselves to as quickly as possible. Much rather, we should understand it as a form of reason that necessarily needs to be placed next to our classical mode of Reason (this will be developed further in chapter 9n and Presentiment III). Ecological reasons allow us to “sketch general-ecological plateaus [of the Anthropocene]” (Ibid.), but we should never idolize it as our definite unitary model to move forward with, because this would reproduce problematic structures of our occidental heritage (Monorationalism) that will render us incapable of leaving dead-end modernity and its ecological devastation behind.

Excursion 1: Question of Style: argumentative rigor, logical stringency, poetic subtlety, aphoristic intuition

„Wittgenstein was not one to debate his most fundamental convictions. Dialogue with him was possible only if one shared those convictions. (Thus, dialogue with Russell on ethical questions was soon to become impossible.) To one who did not share his fundamental outlook, his utterances – whether on logic or on ethics – would, as likely as not, remain unintelligible. It was a tendency that began to worry Russell. ‘I am seriously afraid’, he told Ottoline, ‘that no one will see the point of what he writes, because he won’t recommend it by arguments addressed to a different point of view. When Russell told him he ought not simply to state what he thought, but should also provide arguments for it, he replied that arguments would spoil its beauty. He would feel as if he were dirtying a flower with muddy hands. Russell replied to this: ‘I told him I hadn’t the heart to say anything against that, and that he had better acquire a slave to state the arguments.’“ (Monk 2012, 70)

Similarly, Nietzsche was not a fan of arguments: “Anything which needs first to have itself proved is of little value.” (Nietzsche 2009a, GD-Sokrates-5²²) ““Why still underpin apt sentences argumentatively? On the credit of their self-evidence, Nietzsche, in the last year of his conscious life, tends more and more to pass concise final judgements on religion, morality, cognition, world politics or art [...]. He longs for a completely sovereign reason that is above all argumentation, that only names and says what is or should be.” (Türcke 2017, 21²³)

Two philosophers that this PhD project frequently makes use of flat out reject argumentation – something what most people would call a necessary condition for rational discourse. What do we make of this? And how can we understand it?

A devaluation of argumentation is in line with Nietzsche’s problematisation of a “will to system”, as discussed in the last chapter. Logical arguments only make sense if one can agree on a common underlying system that brings order into chaos. If one rejects systems in general, there is no room for argumentation as such. One will have to scream, shout, find the most poignant expression to convey one’s message.

Nietzsche, as Wittgenstein, tends to reject the history of occidental philosophy in general – they are both driven by Schopenhauer’ian insights and the subsequent collapse of classical metaphysics as

²² Original quote: „Was sich erst beweisen lassen muß, ist wenig werth.“

²³ Original quote: „Warum treffende Sätze noch argumentativ unterfüttern? Auf den Kredit ihrer Selbstevidenz neigt Nietzsche im letzten Jahr seines bewussten Lebens mehr und mehr dazu, über Religion, Moral, Erkenntnis, Weltpolitik oder Kunst knappe finale Urteile zu fällen wie ein jüngstes Gericht. Es verlangt ihn nach einer über alles Argumentieren erhabenen, vollkommen souveränen Vernunft, die nur noch benennt und sagt, was ist oder sein soll.“

such. For Nietzsche, the entire mode of arguments, dialectics and proofs is not a neutral vehicle to acquire universal truth and understanding. As we have seen, he reveals the notion of universal truth to be motivated by a hidden desire for power and world dominion that takes cover under this pretended neutrality. In earlier times, glorified by Nietzsche, Socrates would have been regarded as a “buffoon [Hanswurst]” (Nietzsche 2009a, GD-Sokrates-5), but the occidental philosophical culture that stems from him managed to take over, according to Nietzsche, and establish this dialectic form of argumentation, monopolizing it as the only acceptable model of serious discourse. For philosophers who want to undo this millenia-old tradition, it seems consequent to reject this logical form of argumentation in general: it is, after all, based on an essentialisation of the forms of language that are (mis)understood to directly represent the entire world. This can lead to an oversimplification of specific, localised environments and can thereby sanction ecological damaging (compare chapter 3.A). In taking seriously the business of dismantling the ecologically catastrophic occidental tradition, one cannot stop short of its mode of discourse: rigorous arguments. This is why Nietzsche is preaching rather than arguing for the future world to come and Wittgenstein— quite literally – feels as though he is “dirtying a flower” when being asked to provide arguments.

This PhD, concerned with an investigation of the emergence of ecological reasonings, takes these warnings and intuitions of Nietzsche and Wittgenstein to heart and *problematizes* what is way too often regarded as a neutral medium: logical, rigorous argumentation. But does one need to abandon logical argumentation in general, only because it has problems? Are we – taking those two white men by heart – only to shout THERE ARE ECOLOGICAL REASONINGS in refraining from any argumentative explanation?

Surely, such an undertaking would not comply to the so called “scientific requirements” of a PhD-thesis, nor would it convince many people. One is once more spilling the baby out with the bathwater if one refrains from argumentation in general. To *problematize* does not mean to absolutely reject (although the majoritarian idea of critique in occidental culture tends to confuse the two, as I will – quite ironically – argue in chapter 4).

In taking the approach of an *affirmative critique* (chapter 2b) seriously, we must also affirm logical argumentation *with its problems*. Nietzsche is right in claiming that logical argumentation is not what, for a fairly long period of time at least in the realms of occidental philosophy, it was believed to be: a neutral medium for attaining truth. It is a means of acquiring power and *as such* we can still affirm it – make use of its power – this time *with* an ecological awareness of what it produces. In turn, I suggest that this may lead to no longer believing in the erroneous pretenses that the occidental discursive tradition developed around it.

Accordingly, this thesis does not refrain from argumentation and systematization in general. In fact, it goes in line with the project of ecological reasoning to understand rational structures and

systematizations as *not* unique to humans, but as a general trait of the organic as well as inorganic mattering of the world. To follow Didier Debaïse's Whiteheadian guideline: "theories should be treated like all other events of nature" (Debaïse 2017a, 34) – and the same is true for arguments.

Thus, rejecting systemization, rational arguments and theories in general (as Wittgenstein tends to do) falls into the trap of rejecting our entanglement with the process of mattering (making-matter). Despite the nihilism inherent to it, this rejection has had and will have active and catastrophic consequences (as will be investigated further in Excursion 3).

All the above considered, within this project we will indeed have to be wary of the temptation of a closure and unification of a system (see chapter 6 and 9f) because any structure is always necessarily open and provisional (Souriau 2009, 161). The project of this dissertation is not to efface all contradictions, but – as did Nietzsche and Wittgenstein – make them shine in the best possible way to highlight the ecological milieu they and their concepts stem from. In Isabelle Stengers' sense I want to attempt to bring into existence "problematic landscapes, [...] attempts at creating the possibility of consistency where there is currently only confrontation." (Stengers 2010, Vii)

Indeed, in the time of Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, the monorational culture and its tendency towards a closed, unified system might have been too strong for any other system to not be over-coded by tradition and misunderstood in their vein. The apodictic, expressive, sometimes annoyingly hysteric style of their writings might have been the best option for making themselves heard in their specific, intellectual environments. Time, thankfully, has passed and today we are (evidentially) more and more able to think of systems without closure, of order within chaos (compare chapter 9), of sympoetic regeneration and other forms of immanent emergence.

This thesis then, in antithesis to an opposition to argumentation, does not refrain from argumentation and systematization. We do, however, keep in mind how any system is always necessarily open and to some extent contingent. This thesis is making use of the power of systematization and argumentation, but kindly warns the reader to not fall into the trap of expecting a closed system (see chapter 6). It is not a systematic or historical analysis, but much rather a performative intervention that makes use and mixes the powers of various forms of discourses to make ecological reasonings appear.

This entails that this thesis will be comprised of many different forms of text and writing, I will be quoting from many sources and have tried my best to let my own writing be colored by these various styles that do – each in turn – carry forth their particular problems, lines of flight, contradictions, shortcomings, as well as clarities, strengths and ways of persuasions.

There are various ways of being heard and an order is always auto-poetically establishing itself: as I have tried to show in the last chapter, Nietzsche's scattered, non-coherent and sometimes

contradictory body of work forms in its entirety a good “sketch [of the] the general-ecological plateaus that remain to be elaborated and completed in a collective effort.” (Hörl and Burton 2017, 21) In Nietzsche’s work, we can see “the ensemble of the problem and its conditions” that form an ecological image of thought, exactly because he restrained himself from effacing contradiction from his thought.

Similarly, Wittgenstein was never really interested in a thinking of “den Weg wissen” (“knowing the way”). Much rather, his aspiration was “sich auskennen” (that can be translated in many ways as “being street-smart” / “being well versed” / “knowing what one is doing” / “being home in a subject”) in a conceptual landscape (Hosseini 2007, 50ff.).

The first mode of thinking – knowing the way – seeks to find the fastest way of getting from A to B: from a problem to a solution, from premises to a conclusion, from plural phenomena to one idea, effacing all contradiction and obstacles for a free flow of thought.

But the second mode – *sich auskennen* – requires a much slower, attentive engagement: to attain a state of “sich auskennen”, one equally needs to know the dead ends, the contradictions, the mistakes and *cul de sacs* of a (conceptual) landscape. One needs to not only know what the best and most convincing argument is, one also needs to *feel* into the environment that makes solutions appear.

This thesis is written with the following intention: enabling us to find a way, “sich auskennen” in the Anthropocene and find ways out of these catastrophic times. For this reason, the long third chapter on Critiques of Reason, that will now be embarked on, is a space of setting up a sort of messy “archive” of various, pluralistic voices that reason about certain critical problems of Reason. These might very well appear to be a bit scattered on first glance, however, by creating such a archival pool of sources I want to think with, I have attempted to make the process transparent of what sources I selected (or selected me) in my journey of becoming “well versed” in the epistemological mess of the Anthropocene- both as a conscious and unconscious pursuit of understanding.

From this attempt, I hope to show the a retracing of how I myself have undergone a certain process of journeying to different levels of understanding – a “process of becoming a voice”²⁴ that has managed to synthesize a better “sich auskennen” from the messy academic landscapes of today. Part of this process is shown in the later points of this thesis, where I draw together the voices, materials, matterings and stances to emerge into a form of feeling-writing which is closer to what I consider today as my own voice about the topic.

²⁴ I want to thank Demi Denise Spriggs for making me aware and discussing this with me.

Part II :

Problems & Critiques

Introduction

Concepts of “Reason”, “*Raison*” or “*Vernunft*” in one unitary terminology are relatively young in that they only emerged in occidental modernity. In classical antiquity, there was not one single word for what today could be translated as “Reason”, but several that partly covered a comparable semantic field such as νοῦς (nous), νόησις (noeisis), λόγος (logos), φρήν (phren), διάνοια (dianoia), σοφία (ousia) and others in Ancient Greek; *ratio*, *sanitas*, *intellectus*, *mens*, *animus*, *spiritus* in Latin and so forth (Rapp et al. 2017).

A first quick analysis of the very *concept* of Reason shows that it seems to be a distinctly modern and occidental one. Of course, much of its key traits (a detailed examination of what they precisely are is the subject of this long chapter and will be summarized in Presentiment Ia) can be genealogically traced back to the influences of the philosophies of Ancient Greece or Rome as much as early Abrahamic monotheism. But the very process of conceptually bringing together these traits in one concept – and subsequently making it a moral, political, as much as epistemological and scientific fetish of the era – is one of occidental modernity. I will argue that a “Call to Reason!” with all its connotations is a distinctly modern phenomenon and needs to be understood as such.

This emergence of such a distinct terminology for our “power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments logically” (Oxford Dictionary) is closely related to that of *Critique*. Critique allowed us to *analyze* – that is to distinctly separate and thus understand, catalogize and evaluate – our intellectual capacities into clear terminological functions such as *intellect*, *wisdom*, *understanding*, *intuition*, *reason* and so forth. The modern idea of critique can be understood in relation to the hitherto unprecedented rise of dominion over what is labeled as “Nature” in the wake of Modernity (Merchant 2007) and can be tentatively described as “the art of not being governed quite so much” (Foucault 1997, 29). That is, not being governed quite so much by nature, by instinct, by lust, by power, by governments, by demagogues, by churches, by dogmas, by traditions, by heritage, by class, by elites, by habitus, by mass-medias and so forth into a seemingly infinite list that will turn – as we shall see – against Reason and its guiding principle, “Truth” itself.

As Tom Boland argues, critique is a mode of thought whose origins can be traced back to Zoroastrianism in Ancient Mesopotamia, Old Testament Prophetism and the Ancient Greek practice of *pharrhesia* (Boland 2018, 52–76). Throughout the course of Modernity this practice developed a hitherto unprecedented proliferation, slowly making it – as we shall later see (chapter 4b) – *the* modern form of reasoning. Although it is today often understood as a secularist practice, its modern origins have to be understood to be the dialectical counterpart of developments of “Christian pastoral, or the Christian church inasmuch as it acted in a precisely and specifically pastoral way, [that] developed this idea – singular and, I believe, quite foreign to ancient culture – that each individual, whatever his age or status, from the beginning to the end of his life and in his every

action, had to be governed and had to let himself be governed, that is to say directed towards his salvation, by someone to whom he was bound by a total, meticulous, detailed relationship of obedience.” (Foucault 1997, 29) This idea of government for the sake of salvation so central to early Modernity set a dialectical machinery into action that – once started – could not be stopped. Since it was individual salvation what one was after, one had to at the same time question one’s governors as one submitted to them. Putting-into-question the authority and authenticity of the biblical scriptures (Ibid. 30), led to a questioning of Church authority (as the hitherto monopoly in offering means to salvation) during the Reformation and continued to question every exterior influence and authority that was not “immanent to Reason” – as should then be the project of the epoch-making *Critique of Pure Reason* from 1781/7 by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

“Kant’s genius, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, was to conceive of an immanent critique. Critique must not be a critique of reason by feeling, by experiencing or by any kind of external instance. And what is criticised is no longer external to reason: we should not seek, in reason, errors which have come from elsewhere — from body, senses or passions — but illusions coming from reason as such” (Deleuze 2006, 91). With Kant, the modern instinct of not wanting *to be governed quite so much* turns from outside to inside: to the critical instance of reasoning itself. The “great achievement of Kantian enlightenment” consisted in showing that reason is necessary interlinked with experience and “[w]ith anything that goes beyond experience, it necessarily overreaches its basic capacities.” (Sloterdijk 2012a, 34) This led Kant – in his postulation of the *Antinomies of Reason* (Kant 1999a, B 432) – to state that questions about god, soul, destiny, eternity or the universe are revealed to be unanswerable by Reason.

However, whereas Kant believed after such a critique that Reason, philosophy and metaphysics will “strike into the sure path of science” (Kant 1999a, B ix), history, though, has proved quite the opposite: in direct response to Kant’s project, Schopenhauer formulated the perhaps first modern appraisal of Irrationalism – the pure negation of Reason – and the following centuries have been described and characterized by the “End” or “Death” of Philosophy and Metaphysics. From a certain perspective, one might even be able to tell that a *transcendental* and *critical* approach has become the main trait of occidental philosophy after Kant, in as much as philosophy from then on always had to critically question its own standpoint and *conditions of possibility*²⁵.

Kant’s mistake, as Deleuze argues, consisted in the conclusion “that critique must be a critique of reason by reason itself [...], making reason both the tribunal and the accused; constituting it as judge and plaintiff, judging and judged”. He “lacked a method which permitted reason to be judged from the inside without giving it the task of being its own judge. And, in fact, Kant does not realise his project of immanent critique. Transcendental philosophy discovers conditions which still remain external to the conditioned. Transcendental principles are principles of conditioning and not of

²⁵ Thanks to Eckhardt Lindner for making this point in my presence.

internal genesis. We require a genesis of reason itself, and also a genesis of the understanding and its categories: what are the forces of reason and of the understanding? What is the will which hides and expresses itself in reason? What stands behind reason, in reason itself?” (Deleuze 2006, 91)

Whereas Kant believed that by disclosing and affirming the interior mechanisms and categories of Reason the business of critique will be finished, this intervention was only the first necessary step for a thorough critique of Reason to come. Kant – as a large group of canonical occidental white male philosophers before him – *believed* in Reason as a fundamental and first principle, making it a safe ground to depart from. The strength of Kant’s critique is the vast detail and openness in the expression of this belief. Yet, it didn’t take long for his successors to see this as a shortcoming and start with a detailed genealogy (in the sense of tracing back its genesis) of Reason and its aprioris.

In making reason the judge and the judged, Kant’s philosophy was unable to see that its “laws of Reason” were nothing fundamental, but only a – in Nietzschean terms – “means of survival” for a certain form of modern bourgeois humanoid lifestyle. Kant failed to see that the very categories and inner operations of Reason are dependent on a certain (social, cultural, natural, etc.) environment which brought forth its genesis – they were “necessary illusions”. By merely criticising these categories *by itself*, he could only reproduce them and serve those “who are content to make inventories of current values” (Ibid. 92) without reflecting on how and why they came into existence. Thus, he reproduced occidental modern anthropocentrism by setting these laws of reason as universal and failing to see that every earthly lifeform has its own form of “vital perspectives” or necessary illusions – what Uexküll would then call “*Umwelt*” (Montebello 2019, 18–20).

However, only such a genealogy of Reason could eventually make reflecting on why Reason is conceived in certain ways and not others possible: why certain logical operations are sanctioned, others dismissed, why certain orientations are considered as central (truth, morality, etc.) to Reason, while others remain its blind spots (power, productivity, etc.), why certain genders, races and senses are prioritized by Reason and others aren’t – to only name a few.

Consequently, much of the history of philosophy after Kant was devoted to exactly such a genealogical critique of Reason. By progressively understanding Reason as not the only, fundamental and central register of thought, but as a product of contingent ecological factors, a distancing necessary for an eventual pluralization of Reason became possible. Only after seeing that *this* Reason is *so and so* because of certain contingent factors does it become possible to conceive that another reason could also be *so and so*, if certain perspectives / environments / conditions / etc. shift.

The second part of this thesis is therefore devoted to *critiques*²⁶ of Reason. In the next and third chapter we will examine the most important critiques and genealogies of Reason that make the

²⁶ In order to understand various critiques as culturally and ecologically specific practices and not as *the* form of modern thought, it is important to understand critiques in the plural, as opposed to the modern monopolization and fetishisation of critical thinking as “Critique” with capital C. (compare Boland 2018)

emergence of ecological reasonings understandable. After this, in the fourth chapter, there will be meditations about the value and limits of critique in relation to these new ecological reasonings: we will reflect on how the problems that various critiques revealed to us can be used as *food for thought*, rather than as things that paralyze us into a cynical form of detachment from an all-too problematic world.

At the risk of repeating myself, it is important once more to stress that the perspective I am taking towards the authors quoted above and below does not claim to be the only viable one. Much rather, the stance I am taking (towards Kant in the pages above for example) is already hugely inscribed in one specific tradition of critical reading: of course, there are other lines of tradition as those influenced by Deleuze, Foucault, Sloterdijk and Co that would come to different results and would largely disagree with mine. However, my research interest is not to sort out which reading is the most correct (in the sense of the author's intention), but how a certain critical tradition I am building on can be *used* to be turned towards an affirmation and pluralization of ecological reasonings. I am thus not discussing exegetically how to read and understand (to stick with the example) Kant (or if Deleuze did a correct reading of his work), but how to employ such an already defined reading and interpretation in such a way as to move on in and through the Anthropocene.

3) Critiques of Reason

In Post-Kantian times – namely, and especially since Nietzsche – much occidental philosophical attention has shifted from centering and re-centering itself onto Reason to investigations into its conditions and origins. To understand how occidental Reason came to be is a first landmark in my project of developing an understanding of how other reasonings might emerge from different conditions, perspectives and focuses.

In what follows, a selection of various critiques of Reason will be used to help us gain a little distance from the cultural narratives that make us prone to maintain Monorationalism. The long chapter 3 that awaits us will refrain from a *critique of critique* – it will not reflect on where these critiques become problematic in themselves, what stances they – consciously and unconsciously – reproduce and the kinds of entanglements with Monorationalism that they maintain. This will eventually follow in Chapter 4. In this affirmative reading of various critiques, I want to shed a torch light on this vast and fuzzy complex called “Reason” in order to understand its *conditions of production*.

The next 60 pages are at risk of being a little redundant, for they examine the same thing from different perspectives – and logically come to at least partially identical results. As it is the case with the usage of torch lights (as well as visual metaphors), they distort shapes: flat corners might appear like sharp spikes and other shapes might not find themselves reflected in the shadows we are examining at all. Yet this felt necessary since in this affirmative reading of various critiques, I want to shed a torch light on this vast and fuzzy complex called “Reason” in order to understand its *conditions of production* from a multitude of angles.

This chapter will, then, start (A) with reflections on how occidental Reason was shaped by a certain relationship and (miss-)understanding of the role and function of language and text. Reason was not able to understand what it produced because it saw language as a mere neutral means of transporting ideas and neglected its productive forces. The second sub-chapter (B) will re-read Feminist and Eco-Feminist critiques to deepen an understanding of this specific relationship towards language and its – sexist and environmentally catastrophic – consequences. In the third sub-chapter (C), the hostile relationship towards the body and bodies in general will be reiterated and nuanced with an understanding of a latent “order of the senses” within Reason’s concepts. Finally, in the last and fourth sub-chapter (D), some political consequences of these traits of Reason will be explored by a *tour de force* through political philosophy from Marx to Spivak.

In all these chapters, my intention is not one of exegesis that seeks to do justice to the full intentions of the many, cited authors, but much rather to *use them* in order to produce the results I describe above. This long chapter is going through the process of creating/reproducing a mess: it revisits

many, seemingly insoluble critical stories that have to do with “Reason” in some way or another. I try to let the sources speak as much as possible in their own words, which, as previously mentioned, causes them to reproduce their problematics (like a certain essentialism in Eco-Feminism or an androcentrism or eurocentrism in early Marxist theory) and appear as contradictory and “edgy”. In doing so, the following four sub-chapters create a rather loose assemblage of critical perspectives that are chaotic and, for lack of a better word, plain weird at times. They are indeed a mess of more and less contemporary stories about reasoning that try, in their telling of things, to meet each other at a constructed focal point called *Monorationalism*. Of course, this one Reason never existed as such in all the recounted stories from their various – and sometimes insoluble – critical backgrounds. However, by filling up a “pool of mess” of stories that tell and show about the problems of occidental reasonings, I gather the material that will be required to synthesize the more affirmative storytelling of a pluralization of reasonings in the later parts of this thesis. I want to synthesize a story of pluralization from what I perceive as a critical mess of the now. What follows is thus an assortment of materials that can be used to think further *with* them – even if their sources would never strictly reason that way.

A) Language- and Media-philosophical critiques

In order to tell a different story(ies) about reasoning, one might do best to start with reflecting the usage of language and words. As insights that have been summarized under the name “linguistic turn” in the last century have demonstrated, the genesis of the particular form of reasoning that has been monopolized as “Reason” in occidental philosophical discourse could only come into existence because of its very peculiar relationship towards written words and sentences.

In this first of four sub-chapters about critiques of Reason, I will provide flashlights of this language- and media-philosophical reflections that will help us to understand the entanglement of Reason with a particular form of writing text. I do not, however, intend to create a comprehensive overview of what has been called “linguistic turn,” but rather seek to gather materials that will help us to disentangle ourselves from this problematic relationship with language. In later chapters (particularly Excursion 7) more affirmative reflections on how to use language differently will build on the critical archive gathered here. In order to start these reflections, I will provide a very quick overview of historical context of the so-called linguistic turn and will then slow down the pace to deepen our focus with readings of first Nietzsche and Wittgenstein and then media philosophies of the Greek alphabet.

a) Early modern reflections of the effects of language on our reasoning

Having been ignored as epiphenomenal for most of occidental philosophy’s history, language became one of its main fields of interest in the 20th century. While – in classical “Platonist” understanding – language was regarded as a neutral means of finding concepts in the world, in the

19th century the realization dawned that language is neither abstract nor static, but actually and constitutively operates as an element that shapes our conceptualization of the world. It was seen that the world is not merely represented in words, but that those words and their grammatical and logical connections shape and produce the world via talking and thinking about it. In a sense, we have lost what we have (wrongly) believed to be a direct access to the world by rational understanding and its means of conceptual, linguistic, *logical* partaking.

The roots of this dawning of the importance of language for our reasoning, according to Flatscher and Posstelt (2016), can be traced back to the works of John Locke (1632-1704) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), who both saw that our notions of truth and cognition are influenced by language (something that most of the traditional canon ignored). Although they both kept a skeptical attitude towards language and rather saw it as an obstacle in the way of cognition, they both had to develop means of dealing with the constitutive factors of language. Their two respective solutions became important landmarks for the subsequent development of the two main philosophical streams of occidental Modernity: whereas the empiricist Locke proposed a critique of everyday language and its common sense, Leibniz opted for the design of an ideal or universal language free of the irregularities and obstacles in our mundane reasoning (Flatscher and Posselt 2016, 40–61).

The triad of German philosophers and polymaths Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) further radicalized these insights that will become so central to the 20th century linguistic turn (Ibid. 63-80). For them, language was no longer an obstacle to cognition, but the medium of it – and, without language, human cognition would not even be thinkable, for our thoughts are – according to them – always constituted within language.

This short – and admittedly, fast – excursion of early modern developments of an occidental philosophy of language will serve as a contextualization and orientation for what now will follow: a more thorough examination of a media-philosophical critique of Reason and its linguistic constitution for the sake of *ex negativo* understanding possibilities and openings for other, ecological reasonings. In the following, we will see how the immanent categories of Reason can be genealogically traced to a certain relation to text, signs, and language. We will start this excursion with a few scattered remarks on the nature of language in relation to our reasoning by Nietzsche and will then continue to understand such intuitions more thoroughly by ways of thinkers such as Wittgenstein, Vilem Flusser and Derrick de Kerckhove.

b) Reading disharmonies into the world (Nietzsche)

In his critique of Reason, Nietzsche makes out a “seduction of language” that occidental Reason is cast under and claims that “the fundamental errors of reason [...] are petrified in” language (GM-1-13). As we can draw from the conclusions of last chapter, Nietzsche sees humanity and its world undergoing a huge turn that can be identified as a turn of the Anthropocene. In this radically changed world, the conceptual grasping of the world by Reason is no longer adequate but is only reproducing mistakes that were conserved in our language. “We believe in reason, but this is the philosophy of grey concepts; language is built in terms of the naivest prejudices, now we read disharmonies and problems into things because we think only in the form of language - thus believing in the 'eternal truth' of 'reason' (e.g., subject, predicate, etc.)” (NF-1886,5[22]).

Nietzsche sees that our language and its grammatical structure seduces us to see the world in a certain way: for example: as epiphenomenal to transcendent, eternal truths, as a relation between (human) subjects and objects, etc. This language-induced perspective creates problems and disharmonies in the world – for example, the problems of a failed account of the productivity of this Reason: how this *reading* into things, in turn, (co)produces those very things. The ecological harmfulness of occidental Reason can (at least partly) be understood as a product of this seduction of our language’s grammatical structures.

This insight would require us *logically* to think outside of language or to change language in order to attain a more ecological reason. However, as Nietzsche continues: “*we cease thinking when we no longer want to think within the constraints of language*, we just manage to reach the suspicion that there might be a boundary here. *Thinking rationally is interpreting according to a scheme we cannot cast away.*” (NF-1886,5[22]) Rational thought seems to be necessarily dependent on (as in constituted by) its scheme and so a thinking outside of its scheme seems paradoxical. This would lead us to the interim conclusion that we would need to change the entire scheme within which we are reasoning in order to change that very reason. An ecological reason would, therefore, need to be attentive to its *place, milieu, context* and *embedding scheme* (all of which can be subsumed under the term “ecology”) and predicate that it is indeed part of its reflection: how it is made by it and in how far the ecology of reason can be altered following rational reflection.

c) Mistaking the frame for Nature (Wittgenstein)

We will return to the question of the medial constitutions of such a scheme towards a more ecological reason repeatedly during this chapter. The examination of language-philosophical critiques of Reason will now continue with Ludwig Wittgenstein. Whereas Nietzsche’s insight in the conditioning aspects of language on Reason are only short remarks scattered throughout his oeuvre, Wittgenstein’s philosophy is centered around – and even obsessed with – the problems of

language in relation to thinking²⁷. One could even say that Wittgenstein tries to give a systematical account of how language influences our thinking, but only in adding that this analysis goes as far as to prove how the very approach of “systematization” (in its strong sense of achieving a closed & complete system) is necessarily bound to fail. He tries to show us how the very conception (and subsequent desire for) such a system is only the product of a certain misunderstanding of language characteristic of the entire field of “philosophy” - by which he means the occidental mainstream canon and its *logocentric* obsession with Reason. “The results of philosophy are the discovery of some piece of plain nonsense and the bumps that the understanding [der Verstand] has got by running up against the limits of language. They – these bumps – make us see the value of that discovery.” (Wittgenstein 2010, para. 119)

We will return to this concept of philosophy, its limits and how it can be used for the sake of mapping territories and schemes of more ecological reasonings in chapter 6d. In this chapter, I will focus on his analysis of the constitutive role of language to our reasoning.

Wittgenstein is famous for holding a stance that we can liken to Nietzsche when it comes to the issue of thinking outside of language. His position can be summarized, in all its complexity, by the following quote: “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.” (Wittgenstein 2014, para. 5.6) For Wittgenstein – at least at this stage – there is no constitutive *outside* of language that can somehow logically be attained by Reason. His *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (written partly in the war trenches of WWI and first published in 1922) is a somewhat desperate attempt to establish a rationally grounded relation between our words and the world they purport to be naming. With this attempt, he is handling one of the oldest and most central problems of occidental philosophy in its modern variation: what used to be the problem of spirit and matter, ideas and reality or body and mind became – by way of Locke, Leibniz and others – the problem of words and world.

Wittgenstein’s mentor, Bertrand Russell, was deeply concerned with the Leibnizian project of establishing one ideal language to solve this philosophical problem by means of establishing a secure cognitive connection between world and words. Contrary to his mentor’s hopes Wittgenstein demonstrated that this very attempt (and the underlying dualistic problem) is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of language: that it never directly refers to *things in the world out there*, but its words and concepts are only defined by and in relation to each other, within language, implying that they – as single words – do not ever touch anything one could call a concrete reality. The word – to give an easy example – “dog” does not directly refer to *a real dog outside language*, but only makes sense within a system of reference and difference. We only know what a dog is because we have been “drilled” (Ibid. §5) to differentiate it from other words such as “cat” or “horse”. “[T]he meaning of a word is its use in the language” (Ibid. §43) means that we only know what words mean by being introduced into the web of a language as a whole and are only slowly

²⁷ For a good article on why Nietzsche can be understood as a philosopher of language and can thereby be read in alliance with “post-modern”, Wittgenstein’ian thought, compare Manschot 1987

learning their meaning by repetition and slow, progressive differentiation. This insight draws much inspiration from examining how children acquire language (Ibid. § 6 ff.): how at the early stage almost everything is comprised under only a few words and only slowly gets differentiated into a more complex and distinguished vocabulary (for example “dog” could at an early stage imply everything with four legs and only slowly get differentiated into “cat”, “cow”, “horse”, “lion”, etc.). Wittgenstein concludes, in this early work, that language is a somehow self-sufficient (but not closed or close-able) system of reference and its relation to a reality outside of it must remain within the realms of the mystical and the unspeakable, leading to the famous conclusion “Whereof one cannot speak, one has to remain silent.” (Wittgenstein 2014, para. 7) The world occidental Reason thought to be making logical conclusions about is thereby revealed to be a product of a certain misunderstanding of language. Reason never directly concluded about the world but did so in a self-sufficient system. “Philosophy”, for Wittgenstein, is thereby revealed to be fundamentally flawed in what it believed for millennia to be a rational connection and insight to the world.

The question how these conclusions affected an – within this system unnamable – outside (call it Earth, Gaia, Nature, or still “the world”, etc.) could never be taken into consideration, for it completely misunderstood and oversaw its constitutive relatedness within language. This blind spot – that is not explicitly stated in the work of Wittgenstein but can be, in my opinion, deduced from it – lends one explanation as to why occidental Reason was/is so incapable of seeing its own. What occidental Reason produced could never be reflected, for it necessarily needed to stay outside a thus understood logical system of reference with direct access to the world – “One thinks that one is tracing nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.” (Wittgenstein 2010, para. 114) In understanding Wittgenstein that way, I would argue that the ecological harmfulness of occidental Reason can be understood as – among others – a product of failing to take into consideration how it’s very functioning (including, centrally, the problems that motorize it) is constituted by language. Occidental Reason could, therefore, only be what it is today for overseeing language and believing to (be able to) think about reality without (being distorted / influenced by) the medium of language.

d) What language breeds... (De Kerckhove)

I will return to Wittgenstein in a later chapter (6d) on the Resilience of Reason where we will encounter him as a self-acclaimed therapist who tries to heal us from this culturally deeply embedded misconception of language and its consequences. An excursion into media-philosophical reflections will now help us to more profoundly understand what exactly *language* does to *philosophy* and *our* thinking, since all three terms italicized in this sentence are rather unspecific and vague. Although Wittgenstein declares an end to occidental philosophy, he still shares a lot of the bad habits that are usually associated with it: an utter deficit in localizing and provincialising

(see chapter 3.Dg) one's own reflections and thereby universalizing one's own conclusion to be about "language", "thought" or "philosophy" in general.

However, with media-philosophical reflections by Derrick de Kerckhove and Vilem Flusser, we will be able to *regionalize* Wittgenstein's insights to a specific language – and much more prominently still: to a specific textual coding system. This can help *us* understand why the negative exploitations of Reason were not equally distributed among all humans on the globe but seem to be a – mainly – occidental (and subsequently globalized) affair. It will also prevent us from totalizing these tendencies, thereby opening up possibilities for 1) other forms of language, which might not – at least as much – bewitch us in the above aforementioned ways, and 2) other ways of philosophy, that are not like the occidental mainstream logocentrically obsessed with one Reason (and its unreflected entanglement within the Grammar of certain languages).

Derrick de Kerckhove (born 1944), scholar and successor of Marshall McLuhan, is exactly concerned with such questions in his work *La civilization vidéo-chrétienne* (1990). In asking what it is that *makes* (or produces) the ontological traits characteristic for occidental thinking, such as a strong subject-object opposition leading to strong autonomy from the environment or a logocentric worldview obsessed with (Socratic) definition and logical analysis, de Kerckhove turns – in succession of McLuhan – to a very detailed study of the Greek alphabet. He examines the Greek alphabet as a "psychotechnology" in media-philosophical tradition, concerned with the question of how certain technologies and mediums have modulated our psychic and conscious taking-part in the world.

De Kerckhove departs from the fact that the Greek alphabet was the first known "phonetic alphabet" in human history. Whereas the Phoenician alphabet (out of which the Greek one developed) only had – like every other semitic language – signs for consonants, the historical novelty about the Ancient Greek writing system is that it added signs for vowels. This – perhaps at first sight – minor change bore huge consequences, for it – according to de Kerckhove – made it thinkable to conceive text as independent from its local interpreter and vocalizer. Whereas consonantal alphabets (also called abjads) require a reader to know the exact meaning and sound of a word, a full or phonetic alphabet such as the Greek, the Cyrillic or the Latin alphabet can be read correctly by any reader who doesn't know the meaning of the words or even the language. Therefore, sense and logical relation become an independent sphere, whereas it can only be conceived as a product of a symbiosis between text and interpreter in abjads.

In his analysis, De Kerckhove goes far beyond the widely accepted fact that writing systems have accelerated evolution, by much more fundamentally affirming "that writing fundamentally changes the way of thinking" (De Kerckhove 1995, 22). Particularly the Greek and subsequently the Latin alphabet with their huge global distribution have had an immense influence on the genesis of occidental Reason and its world appropriation in the Anthropocene.

De Kerckhove identifies five cognitive tendencies of Greek writing, of which the following three are the most important for our exploration:

1. since the smallest elements (=letters) are very few in phonetic writings (contrary to syllabary, for example), the cognitive consequence for users of such a writing system is tendency for systematic dissolution into the smallest parts (atomization).
2. since meaning results from variation and combination of these basic building blocks, their users tend to think in "logical connections as well as cause and effect relationships" (Ibid. 28). This promotes an emancipation from social contexts to in-text, logical reasoning.
3. This transition from social context to logical stringency shifts the focus of communication "from the oral to the written, that is from the interpersonal to the silence of private thought" (Ibid. 29).

Such parameters cognitively drill users of phonetic alphabets in "fundamental, but utterly unconscious structures" to a tendency and prioritization of linear analysis, that is, "to dissect the visible world into its smallest and finest structures and proportions, just like it is dictated by alphabetical reading." (Ibid. 29)

This tendency towards abstraction causes a desensitization of language. As the main focus is increasingly shifted towards logical stringency, (rhetorical) factors such as intonation, gestures, melody and the like became secondary. The senses have been exchanged for sense: various sensory components that are central to oral communication are thus neglected in favor of abstract formations, promoting the emergence of an Information society.

Such a complete separation from the sensory content of language made it possible for users to emancipate themselves from the immediacy of sensory impressions and thus take control of the self by means of abstract, rational self-governance. Since the Greek alphabet was the first to produce a complete separation from the signified, it became possible "to work on the meaning itself, rather than merely represent it." This, in turn, enabled the Western subject to become an "eternal inventor of everyday life." (Ibid. 34) The occidental subject and its strong tendency towards individual autonomy and detachment from environmental factors can be, at least in part, understood as a product of the Greek and other subsequent full alphabets.

Furthermore, de Kerckhove – using a conceptual scheme by neurobiologist Jean-Pierre Changeux – argues that the Greek alphabet promotes thinking as a "circulation of concepts" like no other. In this context, concepts mean mental objects that barely trigger sensory activities but associate with other concepts in an associative way. The conceptual thinking of occidental thought can thus "organize itself according to a formal logic that is relatively independent of empirical values." (Ibid. 37) "The birth of grammar and logic in antiquity necessarily results from the technological constitution of the alphabet, through which language was no longer a play of meanings that could be recorded and interpreted. Rather, language became a code intended to express statements correctly." (Ibid. 41)

It is Derrick de Kerckhove's point that only because of such a radical detachment of *logos* from the sensory perceivable world, concepts like the strong transcendence of Platonist ideas, Cartesian method and their utter independence of (and superiority to) ephemeral, becoming reality become conceivable. "Only at the moment when the name of an object is completely separated from the meaning of an object can it contain both a definition and an idea and at the same time be completely cut off from the reader's opinion. This is the prerequisite for creating a universe in which the ideal forms or the essence of things are assembled." (Ibid. 39) By such a genealogical and critical analysis, the traits and categories of occidental Reason prove to be anything else but eternal universalities. Much rather, we can understand their conditions of possibility as that of a certain milieu within a certain writing system and a certain culture that emerged in direct relation to it.

e) Modernity + Text

A more profound analysis of the genesis of modern occidental Reason can help us to understand the emergence of occidental civilization in its constructedness (*Gemachtheit*) and thereby relativize its characteristics that were, for way too long, believed to be "universally human". The era of modern enlightenment, with its ideas of the universal rights of "the human" etc., has to be, according to Vilem Flusser, understood as – among others – a consequence of the popular distribution of printed text for wider masses – "Gutenberg's revolution". "As writers of the Gutenberg era became aware that they were manipulating types, that they were 'informaticians', they unfurled the typifying mode of thought in all areas of culture. This consists in finding types suited to distinctive features of the world, in continually improving them, and in then impressing them on the world. This way of thinking took rough form about the middle of the second millennium B.C. in the eastern Mediterranean. It pressed into consciousness clearly with print, and in modern times conquered the world." (Flusser 2011, 52). Whereas the Greek alphabet is more than three millennia old, its ecological (including social, political and cultural) consequences continue to spread. The dawning of the importance of language on our minds is a relatively young phenomenon, being produced by a massive increase of accessibility and dissemination of text by the modern invention of the printing press. The modern philosophical ventures in this direction by Leibniz, Locke and their successors should be understood in relation to this socio-technological environment, as well as the emergence of enlightenment and critique as modern phenomena (Ibid. 91 ff.).

It is because of this millennia old entanglement with a specific form of relating to language and writing, that for thinkers of the occidental enlightenment, reasoning and critique had to happen in textual – and, one might precise, alphabetical – form. To give one example for this strong leaning towards the written word as opposed to material action, in *Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784), Kant clearly states that critique shall only be uttered in the form of text and *not* be put into practice (Kant 1999b). What was considered reasonable had to appear in publishable, textual form. For most of the time in European Modernity, it was only *men of Reason*, who had the right gender, skin-color and

class-background to be educated enough to fulfill these implicit standards to count as fully reasonable “humans” in an enlightened society (see also chapter 8e).

Such a specific (and too little reflected) entanglement with the power and influences of language, sanctioned, and brought forth – very modern – attempts of taking control over human and non-human bodies and spirits developed an unprecedented scope, ranging from codifications of human conduct and sexuality through sciences and jurisdiction to taxonomic attempts in biology to put every species on this planet into a neatly named and static box. As we shall see in the next subchapter, this modern approach towards language (re)produced gendered and racist exclusions that constitute Modernity and whose specters still haunt us in today’s political problems and fights.

De Kerckhove goes as far as to claim that the Greek alphabet was the first computer program, for only within such writing systems a self-sufficient code independently working from any human user became conceivable. If we follow such an analysis and consider all the algorithms and server landscapes that today control our world, text is continuing to emancipate itself from us and is more than ever shaping the world we live in²⁸.

f) Ways out of Modernity and its problematic entanglement with text

As we have seen in the beginning of this chapter, the last century brought forth a decisive *turn* (one spoke of the linguistic turn before it became unfashionable) in as far as occidental mainstream philosophy started to reflect on how its very own Reason was affected and made by language. If one stops short at such insights and declares – as was the shock reaction of Wittgenstein, Derrida and many others – everything to be text (and everything else either non-existent, mystical or not-worth-speaking), this can easily lead to end up with two wrong alternatives: 1) either declaring the end of philosophy in general with “no possible occupation left other than that of rifling through the dustbins of philosophy to get of them the meager nourishment that the tradition had not managed to swallow” or 2) to continue the sad project of occidental Reason with full knowledge of its being made and thereby devising “no more than a complicated strategy to be able to do philosophy (idealist philosophy, what’s more) in a fundamentally conservative fashion.” (Bennington and Derrida 1999, 285+291)

But by differentiating and *regionalizing* these insights to a certain form of using and coding language, one can get out of this two-sided deadlock and becomes able to reflect on ways of partaking and communicating with the world and each other in different and hopefully more ecological ways. In understanding the constructedness of Reason as a result of specific uses of language, we can try to “outsmart the cognitive strategies of text-thinking in order to rediscover our senses and our mind so that we can prevent a catastrophe.” (De Kerckhove 1995, 103)

²⁸ Reflections such as these about the digital (and its relation to ecological reason) will be continued in Chapter 11.

Within current streams of ecologically concerned philosophy, such as *New Materialism* or *Speculative Realism*, there is a growing awareness for the need to interact with the world in other forms and with other senses, unrestrained by the limits of occidental Reason and its unreflected entanglement with language. For example, Karen Barad ascertains that “language has been granted too much power” and argues for going beyond the realms of signification and cultural representation in order to think about matter as a vibrant actor (Barad 2003). Similarly, Jane Bennett argues “to devise new procedures, technologies, and regimes of perception that enable us to consult nonhumans more closely, or to listen and respond more carefully to their outbreaks, objections, testimonies, and propositions” which are most of the time “‘propositions’ not expressed in words” and of which “many members are nonlinguistic” (Bennett 2010, 107+104). We are witnessing the emergence of philosophies that clearly differentiate between thought and language, thereby undoing one of the fundamental (and unconscious) blind-spots of occidental philosophy²⁹.

Contributing to such an undoing – and preceding these contemporary formulations of extra-lingual thinking – are modern forms of therapeutically oriented practices that emerged in the 20th century such as, most prominently³⁰, Feldenkrais, who conceives thought as inequivalent to language and tries to develop means of freeing us from this millennia old entanglement of thought and language (we will touch upon Feldenkrais later in chapter 8i and 13d). Feldenkrais affirms that “much of our trouble lies in the fact that we confuse speaking with thinking. Thinking is a much wider function which contains many forms of possible expression. Speech is a serial event, as words come one after the other in time and by their nature cannot communicate the thought which may contain an immense number of aspects.” To summarise, “[i]n self-knowledge one cannot get at fundamentals without undoing the link between thought and speech. We were not born with thought and speech being indistinguishable. As we spend much time in learning to speak, unnoticed to ourselves, we have acquired the erroneous notion that speaking and thinking are synonymous.” (Feldenkrais 1981, 147+146)

If we manage to undo this unhappy liaison between thinking and writing we will, as Jussi Parikka argues, do much better in conceptually grasping the long-durational ecological problems of geological scale we are facing in the Anthropocene. “The stories we tell imply more than just their words; they tell stories of media and mediation, of materiality and the earth. The stories are themselves of a scale of geological durations that are at first too slow to comprehend. This demands a story that is radically different from the usual meaning of storytelling with which we usually engage in the humanities. This story is more likely to contain fewer words and more a-signifying semiotic matter that impose a presence especially in the current era of crisis” (Parikka 2015, 20)

²⁹ As an early thinker of such a differentiated metaphysics, Alfred North Whitehead, clearly states “that language is not the essence of thought.” (Whitehead 2010, 35)

³⁰ Even Freudian psychoanalysis (as opposed to its Lacan’ian reformation) considered thought to be not of purely textual form.

But, of course, we will not have to abandon language as such, “for it beyond question [...] is the most important of all the ways of expressing thought” (Whitehead 2010, 34) and “has played a part of inestimable importance in our development as a species.” (Feldenkrais 1981, 146) Much rather, new and perhaps more poetic forms of language and narration should be developed (compare Excursion 6) – ways of using language that do no longer suggest that they directly refer to worldly matter, but narrations that are conscious about their impact on a world they are creating within its system. As Donna Haraway almost mantra-like states: “It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.” (Haraway 2016, 12)

Since the occidental, monorationalist story of one Reason shining down from transcendent heavens is revealed to be both conceptually flawed as well as ecologically problematic, we “need to change the story, to learn somehow to narrate – to think – outside the prick tale of Humans in History [...] we *must* change the story, the story *must* change.” (Ibid. 40)

For this project, ecosopher David Abram advises us to regard text as “magic”, “an especially profound form of animism” (Abram 2017, 279) that actively interacts and changes our environments and our relation to them. “For it is only by recognizing it as such – only by acknowledging that the written word’s *not entirely rational*, world-altering power – that we have a chance of wielding this power responsibly, rather than simply falling under its remarkable spell. If, however, we simply take the alphabet for granted, regarding it as a purely neutral technology for recording thoughts or spoken utterances, then we readily fall prey to a host of delusions -- such as the assumption that meaningful speech is an exclusively human property; or a belief that the reflective mind is a wholly autonomous power, independent of the body and the earth; or the related faith that modern science will someday achieve a completely objective comprehension of ‘reality’” (Ibid.)

Along with many others, this PhD-project is concerned with changing *the* story to many *stories*: in order to affirm more ecological reasonings, it is necessary to invent as well as rediscover other, less anthropocentric and less eurocentric stories of reasoning. There won’t be one other story that will fit all purposes, for this would fall into the trap of a renewed Monorationalism (see chapter 9n and Presentiment III).

The attempts cited above are some of many contemporary strategies that do not 1) claim a universal truth about a pre-given world and 2) aspire unambiguous arguments that escape contradiction. In doing so, they celebrate the multitudinousness and ambiguity of language and explore its folds and corners to *productively think* with the irreducible plurality of a mattering world.

B) (Eco-)Feminist Critiques

Reason has, for most of its life, been considered a manly business. It was the “men of Reason” in Science, Business and Politics who are told to have brought forth the long-awaited gift of Modernity. Even today, the stereotype that men are the guardians of Reason, whilst women’s emotionality tarnishes the ability to be rational subjects, continues to legitimise and reproduce heteronormative patriarchy.

While it surely isn’t necessary to discuss the validity of such a sexist stereotype, in this chapter I want to examine some of the effects and consequences of such an androcentric distortion / reduction of human reasonability. I want to propose a deeper look at what exclusions and mechanisms are rooted in this classical notion of Reason and want to open questions such as: What kind of reasonability do those pursue that are usually denied access to a communally understood reasonability? Could this repressed part of human reasonability even have an important role in order to develop a more ecological form of reasoning? As we shall see, the *oikos*, the etymological root of ‘ecology’, can mean “household” - a domain classically considered to be that of females ...

To approach such *ecofeminist* questions, I will first draw a connection to the last sub-chapter by recounting calls for an *écriture féminine* and examine what huge share feminism can play in developing such new or other forms of language needed for engaging productively with the Anthropocene. By this, I try to develop an understanding of how our current ecological problems are entangled with the repression of the female and other genders that needs to be overcome.

In my selection of sources, one could surely reproach me of being somewhat *old-fashioned*. Most of them stem from what some call “Second Wave Feminism” which is by now a couple of decades old and is – by more recent feminisms – accused of being (among others) too gender-binary and too white. In fact, almost all the sources of this chapter would identify as female on a binary set of parameters and queerness only becomes a subject at its very end. I am aware of the danger that in mostly letting white and female sources (that do not have too much trouble with their identification as “female”) tell their story, it might appear as if I would take these binary gender order, “female” and “male” as a given and not as a product of the modern capitalist regime in-itself. This, however, is not the intention. In this chapter, I am trying to let forms of reasoning speak from inside a regime that has mostly repressed them (those that have been stigmatized as “female” and thus made invisible). Therefore, I am not taking in a meta-level of reflection of how both of these constructed genders have (and to what degree) been hitherto produced by the very same regime, but am much rather curious of how these feminisms can undo a Monorationalism from within by revealing its inner mechanism of suppression and marginalization as a culturally contingent form. In my opinion, this slow and patient work of undoing the still hegemonial gender binary is a prerequisite for queering gender perspectives without falling prey to modern forms of capitalizations of the “queer” that tend

to remain a phenomenon of privileged urbanites while (continuing to) ignoring other, less privileged forms of queerness that have always existed in the margins of any culture (be it European Baroque eunuchs, South Asians Hijras or Hawaiian and Tahitian Mahus).

a) Language and the feminine (Cixous + Woolf)

As I have shown in the last chapter, many of last century's discourses have begun to understand language to carry cultural weight. Language is not – as has been ascertained by occidental philosophy for its longest time – a neutral medium that provides direct, undistorted access to the world. But it produces the world as much as it is produced by its worldly cultural and environmental context. Thereby it carries forth or even amplifies the epistemological as well as social exclusions that are inherent in our culture. Feminist critique has been and still is particularly aware of this.

“Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of the privileged alibis. It has been one with the phallogocentric tradition. It is, indeed that same self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallogocentrism.” (Cixous 1976, 879) Since Reason is revealed to mainly be a (productive) misunderstanding of the constitutive role of language, it becomes logical to examine who have been the main proponents of texts in the occidental tradition. It will immediately strike the eye, that – within its three millennia old tradition – the vast, staggering majority have been men, white privileged men mostly. As Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) puts it in her famous essay *A Room of One's Own* (1928), when sighting the canon of occidental intelligentsia “one blushes [...] as if one had been caught eavesdropping at some purely masculine orgy” for one almost exclusively finds texts “celebrat[ing] male virtues, enforc[ing] male values and describ[ing] the world of men.” (Woolf 2012, 100+99)

It isn't, therefore, surprising to find the *not-at-all-neutral*, immanent categories of Reason to be an expression of male views and values, or – as Hélène Cixous (born 1937) puts it – *phallogocentric* (highlighting the phallic aspects of *logos*). In her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1974), Cixous continues to deplore what Virginia Woolf stated about fifty years earlier, “that, until now, far more extensively and repressively than is ever suspected and admitted, writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural – hence political, typically masculine – economy; that this is a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously, and in a manner that's frightening since it's often hidden or adorned with the mystifying charms of fiction; that this locus has grossly exaggerated all the signs of sexual opposition (and not sexual difference), where woman has never *her* turn to speak.” (Cixous 1976, 879) If a woman wants to write in the language given to her, Virginia Woolf similarly affirms, “[p]erhaps the first thing she would find, setting pen to paper, [is] that there was no common sentence ready for her use”, since there were almost exclusively “men's sentences” “unsuited for a women's use.” (Woolf 2012, 82)

Thus, both depart in the project of reinventing language for a truly female writing – an *écriture féminine* – that can undo the phallogocentric textual constitution of Reason by including perceptions, values and virtues of other sexes and genders.

Such an invention of different modes of writing and thereby reasoning will – according to Cixous – bear huge consequences, for “[t]hanks to their history, women today know (how to do and want) what men will be able to conceive much later.” “She knows far more about living and about the relation between the economy of the drives and the management of the ego than any man. Unlike man, who holds so dearly to his title and titles, his pouches of value, his cap, crown, and everything connected with his head, woman couldn’t care less about the fear of decapitation (or castration), adventuring, without the masculine temerity, into anonymity, which she can merge with without annihilating herself: because she’s a giver.” (Cixous 1976, 888) Through their history of oppression, they have long been impeded to express their own *reasonings*, their own ways of life, thinking and feeling that can – once liberated – completely alter our ways of societal organization. “When the ‘repressed’ of their culture and society returns, it’s an explosive, *utterly* destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed and equal to the most forbidding of oppressions.” (Ibid. 886)

A fetishised unity and homogeneity in culture will fall apart, for “she is the erotogeneity of the heterogeneous.” (Ibid. 889). There will no longer be one truth or one Reason, she will “smash everything, [...] shatter the framework of institutions, [...] blow up the law, [...] break up the ‘truth’ with laughter” (888) and invent her own – multitudinous – ways. Reason(s) that incorporated female values will no longer be obsessed with unity and stringency, but much rather will devise and cultivate ways of living *with* contradiction, (self-)alienation and an awareness that there are no universal solutions that can be transcendently applied to a flat, monochrome universe.

The invention of an *écriture féminine* is of course not detached from material, basic needs. In fact, they go hand in hand with each other. Virginia Woolf’s central demand is that every woman should have a room of her own – with a lock – and 500 Pounds a year. The very possibility for a strong separation between material and spiritual needs is been revealed as a phallogocentric topos, only possible by outsourcing material (re)productive work to oppressed women and thereby overseeing the material conditions and interrelations of anything called “mind”. Men could only detach their concept of reason (universalizing and monopolizing it to the one and only Reason) from its material constraints, causes and grounds by ascribing cultural categories like the body, nature and matter to the female. Hence the occidental dualist constitution of mind – body, man – woman, culture – nature etc. in their relatedness.

By taking on this feminist viewpoint, genius and great works of Reason become understandable as the products of a certain patriarchal environment of oppression, work-division and world-load outsourcing, and not of an outstanding gift (of god) of a secluded subject. Men developed a

bodyless, transcendental concept of Reason only because they pushed the domain of its material grounds to other sexes. Woolf analyses why all the people considered, rightly, in her opinion geniuses – such as Shakespeare, Keats or Flaubert – were all men, concluding that the material conditions – though they might have been hard for many men – made it impossible to achieve such a status as a woman. “The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not indifference but hostility. The world did not say to her as it said to them, write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with guffaw, Write? What’s the good of your writing?” (Woolf 2012, 65) Because of the roles she was expected to perform in society, because of her (lack of) education and her conditioning, “[a]ll the conditions of her life, all her own instincts, were hostile to the state of mind which is needed to set free whatever is in the brain.” (Ibid. 63) Therefore, “it is unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare’s day should have had Shakespeare’s genius. For genius like Shakespeare’s is not born among laboring, uneducated, servile people.” (62) “Any woman born with great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half-witch, half-wizard, feared and mocked at.” (62) She concludes: “when, however, one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a remarkable man having a mother, then, I think, we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet.” (62)

Genius, Reason and great minds are therefore revealed to be a product of certain patriarchal environments specific to occidental society. A feminist reflection enables us to understand Reason as a product of its material conditions, based on a patriarchal model that oppresses and silences women. “Masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people so that the experience of mass is behind every single voice.” (74) For an ecological as well as feminist society, our forms of community, culture and social organization will have to change drastically (or: are already starting to do so). Only then will the outcoming masterpieces (leaving the question open, if they will then still be pieces from the “master”) of such a society no longer reproduce the traits of patriarchy. Such a different – and much needed – reality will also have to be created by a different use of language³¹.

³¹ Kelly Oliver and Marilyn Pearsall about the possibilities of a (Nietzschean) reflection about language for the sake of feminism: „Nietzsche challenges the hierarchy of reason over irrationality by claiming that our preference for reason, or specifically the logic of association cause and effect, is a product of the grammar of language. He calls reason in language a ‚deceptive old witch‘ The way that we talk about the world is not just a reflection of the world, but actually creates our sense of the reality of the world.“ In his early essay, ‘On Truth and Lie in the Ultramoral Sense,’ Nietzsche argues that words are not just reflections of things; rather they pick out, even create, some things at the expense of others. The notion that language creates rather than merely reflects reality holds out the promise to feminists that we can not only diagnose sexism, patriarchy, and women’s ‘inferiority’ as creations rather than natural facts but also use language differently in order to create a new nonsexist reality.” (Oliver and Pearsall 1998, 3–4)

b) *Inside the Phallogos* (Wolf + Irigaray)

“Do you know what they are looking for, Medea? she asked me. They are looking for a woman who will tell them that they are guilty of nothing; that the gods they happen to worship drive them into their undertakings. That the trail of blood they drag behind them belongs to their manhood ordained by the gods. Large, horrible children, Medea. This is increasing, believe me. It’s spreading. Even that boy there you took a liking of, soon he will cling to you. The evil is already inside him. But they all can’t stand despair, so they have trained us to despair, someone has to mourn, someone female. If the earth were filled only with the noise of battle and the howling and wailing of the defeated, then it would simply stand still, this earth, don’t you think.” (Circe to Medea, in Wolf 1996, 109³²)

Christa Wolf (1929-2011) – perhaps the most famous writer of the former GDR who is still too little known in the so called “West” – undertook some breathtaking ventures in creating female perspectives within the patriarchal myths of Ancient Greece that will help us gain more insights about the dynamics of female reasonings and their oppression and / or incorporation in a male-dominated society. Finding that the classical histories of occidental culture only follow the “lines of masculine action [Linien des männlichen Handelns]” (Wolf 2011, 170), which she confesses to find rather boring (Ibid. 173), she undertook the task of rewriting the histories of classical female figures such as Cassandra, Medea, or – as in the quote above – Circe. While within the classical, phallogocentric narration they all have a negatively connoted, marginalized and morally reprehensible role (Cassandra being an unheard seer, condemned by a god she refused to let rape her; Medea the murderer of her own child and Circe a witch that confuses male travelers), in giving them their own voice, she allows us to imagine how female ways of seeing and living are in a patriarchal society. With this perspective, Circe is no longer an evil sorceress that transforms men into wild beasts, but an emancipated woman refusing to submit to a growing patriarchal norm which results in her being barred from society. In the novel *Medea* from 1996, men are said to practice a form of thought than creates its trajectories and categories “in an unreal space, as if no one were affected by our play. This is a particularly useful method for thinking freely and effectively at the same time.” (Wolf 1996, 88³³) They believe that they alone are capable of performing such abstract thoughts, however, women – such as Agamedea – are as just as well capable to do so, however, given the patriarchal conditions they are submitted to, they have to do it in secret, hiding it from men.

³² Original quote: „Weißt du, was sie suchen, Medea? fragte sie mich. Sie suchen eine Frau, die ihnen sagt, dass sie an nichts schuldig sind; dass die Götter, die sie zufällig anbeten, sie in ihre Unternehmungen hineintreiben. Dass die Spur von Blut, die sie hinter sich herziehen, zu ihrem von den Göttern bestimmten Mannsein gehört. Große schreckliche Kinder, Medea. Das nimmt zu, glaub mir. Das greift um sich. Auch dieser Junge da, an den du dich gehängt hast, bald wird er sich an dich klammern. Das Übel sitzt schon in ihm. Aber Verzweiflung ertragen sie alle nicht, zum Verzweifeln haben sie uns abgerichtet, einer muss ja trauern, oder eine. Wenn sie nur von Schlachtenlärm und Geheul und dem Wimmern der Niedergeschlagenen erfüllt sein würde, dann bliebe sie einfach stehen, die Erde, meinst du nicht.“

³³ Original quote: „in einem unwirklichen Raum, als werde niemand durch unser Spiel betroffen. Das ist eine sehr nützliche Methode, wenn man frei und zugleich wirksam denken will.“

But female characters, such as Medea, do also know other, more direct forms of thought, which men consider outdated and idiotic: “She was, how should I put it, too much of a woman, that also colored her thinking. She believed, but why am I speaking in the past tense, she believes that thoughts developed out of feelings and should not lose the connection with them. Outdated, of course, outmoded. Creaturely stupidity, I said to that. Creative source, she called it.” (Ibid. 123³⁴)

In such a narrative of an epistemological rift we can fictionally feel after an emergence of a majoritarian – “Platonist” – Reason, that see itself as completely detached from sensual, earthly perception in order to gain access to universal truths. Such a reasoning, which slowly emerged on the verge of pre-history and history of Ancient Greece, is revealed to be in line with the installment of patriarchal order and the suppression of ways of reasoning that were stigmatized to be outdated, female ways. The separation of feeling from reasoning is a distinct trait of a phallogocentric regime of monorationalist Reason.

As the introducing quote of this sub-chapter suggests, this breakdown of things goes hand in hand with outsourcing emotional work out of sight of the now rationally obsessed men and forcing women to do it for them: to despair for their men’s horrible deeds and listen to the frailties men are expected to hide from public in a male dominated society. Thus, Women become expelled from public life and are submitted as emotional servants and caretakers in the private realm. In a decisive conversation between Cassandra and her father King Priam she realizes “for the first time the thought came to me that the confidentiality between us was based, as so often between men and women, on the fact that I knew him, and he did not know me. He knew my ideal image [Wunschbild] of me, which had to remain unchanged.” (Wolf 2008, 67³⁵)

In the emerging patriarchal society, women become mere mirrors of male desires (Irigaray 1985) without room to express their intelligence themselves. The novel *Cassandra* from 1983 brilliantly recounts the story of what happens to a woman that tries to do so anyways. As daughter of the King of Troy she first believes that she is one of the governors of Troy and only slowly realizes that “hers are not really hers [die ihren nicht die ihren sind]” (Wolf 2011, 180), which results in her solidarization with other oppressed classes and people. Driven by a deep desire to express her wisdom, she becomes – half pushed, half voluntarily – the official high priest of Troy, being one of the few remaining posts for women to express their knowledge. However, when she does, she encounters “Closed and disturbed faces, a ring of rejection, even disgust. [verschlossene und verstörte Mienen, ein Ring von Ablehnung, ja Abscheu.]” (Wolf 2008, 68) She realizes that she is not expected to say something men do not want to hear, but only to cater to their egos as warriors,

³⁴ Original quote: „Sie war, wie soll ich das ausdrücken, zu sehr Weib, das färbte auch ihr Denken. Sie fand, aber warum spreche ich eigentlich in der Vergangenheitsform,] sie glaubt, die Gedanken hätten sich aus den Gefühlen heraus entwickelt und sollten den Zusammenhang mit ihnen nicht verlieren. Veraltet natürlich, überholt. Kreatürliche Dummheit, sagte ich dazu. Schöpferische Quelle sie.”

³⁵ Original quote: „zum ersten Mal kam mir der Gedanke, die Vertraulichkeit zwischen uns beruhe, wie so oft zwischen Männern und Frau, darauf, dass ich ihn kannte und er mich nicht. Er kannte mein Wunschbild von mir, das hatte stillzuhalten.”

heroes and superior holders of Reason. Men want to have their egos flattered by magical, sacralized women and do not want to be reminded that their hero-ism is footed on the emotional work-load displacement to others. So, when Cassandra – rightly – understands that the war against the Greeks will be a disaster for the people of Troy and openly says so, she is considered a traitor and is subsequently expelled from society (Ibid. 99). Her realism and her insights are not wanted. She even warns “her” men about the dangers of the Trojan horse, but is being ignored, leaving her laughing madly at the ongoing, foreseeable destruction of her hometown (Ibid. 12). “O that they do not know how to live. That this is the real misfortune, the real mortal danger – only very gradually I came to understand that.” (Ibid. 16³⁶) Shortly before her execution she realizes that in this war and its new society, men do not really (or only) fight against other men. “If you looked at it right – but no one dared to see it that way – the men on both sides seemed to be allied against our women.” (Ibid. 136³⁷)

As I have just tried to recount by delving into Christa Wolf’s rich work of storytelling, such new forms of rewriting history and fiction allow us to gain other perspectives on our patriarchal societies, to gaze behind the phallogocentric monopoly of occidental tradition and understand how women were treated and repressed. Wolf’s retelling of *Cassandra* makes in tangible how female forms of insight and reason, which transcend male causality and its fixation on one uniform truth, were romantically transfigured into a divine, superhuman power and glorified as such, on the condition that they confirmed what men wanted to hear about themselves. If women did express something different, they were stigmatized as witches and evil traitors, leaving them to perform a balancing act between “bitch or saint” in front of male views for centuries.

As Luce Irigaray (born 1930), one of the main proponents of French *second wave feminism*, puts it: “any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the ‘masculine.’ When she submits to (such a) theory, woman fails to realize that she is renouncing the specificity of her own relationship with the imaginary. Subjecting herself to objectivization in discourse – by being female. Re-objectivizing her own self whenever she claims to identify herself ‘as’ a masculine subject.” (Irigaray 1985, 133) By re-reading and re-telling Plato’s classical cave analogy in a similar vein as Christa Wolf, she can reveal the deeply sexist, patriarchal topoi of what “not only is a silent prescription for Western metaphysics but also, more explicitly, proclaims (itself as) everything publicly designated as metaphysics, its fulfillment, and its interpretation.” (Ibid. 243) It is shown how this Platonism that sets itself as the only possible metaphysics is based on a “preexistence of the truth that *decides* in advance” (Ibid. 261) what is worth taking into consideration and what not. It is truth based on sameness as reference to an ideal, pre-established sphere, thereby oppressing

³⁶ Original quote: „O dass sie nicht zu leben verstehen. Dass dies das wirkliche Unglück, die eigentliche tödliche Gefahr ist – nur ganz allmählich habe ich es verstanden.”

³⁷ Original quote: „Wenn man es recht betrachtete – nur traute niemand sich, es so zu sehn –, schienen die Männer beider Seiten verbündet gegen unsre Frauen.”

difference and things that do not fall into the expected scheme. “[M]an only asks (himself) questions that he can already answer” (Ibid. 137). Such a truth is a men’s game, which “always already ha[s] covered over, erased (or sublimated?) the scene of another, forgotten, ‘truth’ or ‘reality’, whose fate is secured and sealed by the discourse of Socrates.” (Ibid. 267) This other truth(s?) and reality(/ies?) are that of the sensible, the becoming, the earthly, that was classically associated with the female (Mother Earth) and now – with the emergence of Platonism – became invisible and oppressed by “Being, store of non-birth. Completeness of what has not been engendered in an empirical matrix. *Unity, totality, entity of one who or that abstains from any conjunction whatever.* That claims to take the place of all conjunctions, but has (had), for its own part, nothing in common with any relationship(s) that can be enumerated. Immatriculated. Perfection in a copula that defies modes, times, ways of intercourse. Of conceptions.” (Ibid. 312 – highlighted in the original) By this epistemological exclusion of becoming and (re)productivity in favor of ONE, now monorationalistically conceived Reason, nature becomes “frozen” (Ibid. 289) into entities of Being without any dynamic of life in-itself. The ideas that are then assumed to represent nature are only “more and more copies of the same, of the *autos* whose term is eclipsed by the domination of the Idea.” They are “[a]utogamous offspring of the Truth” (Ibid. 291) by way of with “nature is shut off in order to direct men to the spectacle above.” (Ibid. 289)

In this game that set itself as the only metaphysics, the only Reason and the only Truth, men become “blind except for the contemplation of ideas” (Ibid. 321). The abstract form of thinking is centrally based on the oppression of female modes of perception, of becoming and sensibility. “Such thoughts on divine truth are available to man only when he has left behind everything that still linked him to this sensible world, that the earth, the mother, represents.” (Ibid. 339) Reasoning “in an unreal space, as if no one were affected by our play” (Wolf 1996, 88), as Agamedea does it secretly to not scare men by showing them that this reason is not exclusive to them, has been a product of the oppression of females. What Kant will consider to be neutral categories of Reason are – from a genealogical perspective – devices of men’s dominating power over women and nature.

c) Modernity & the Death of Nature (Merchant + Federici)

Within Occidental Modernity, this tendency to suppress “female” ways of reasoning and relating to the world inherent to Ancient Greek culture, accelerated and spread in unprecedented ways. Whereas the phallogocentric, “Platonist” way of reasoning used to be a thing of secluded, minoritarian elites, folkloric world views closer to “Mother Earth” held by most remained relatively untouched in earlier times. This changed with the rise of capitalism and technological innovations that characterize Modernity such as the printing press (compare last sub-chapter) by which phallogocentric Reason was transformed into a new majoritarian world view (see also chapter 5.C) that became one of the fundamentals of the great acceleration that lead us into the Anthropocene.

Carolyn Merchant (born 1936) shows in her rich historical study *The Death of Nature* (1980) how the so called “scientific revolution” of early European Modernity is centrally characterized by a transformation from an organic / organicist to a mechanist worldview, in which the (understanding of the) earth was transformed into an atomistic machine of dead matter. According to her, the earth used to be regarded as a “nurturing mother”, an organism of vivid material connections and plentiful souls that had to be honored and well-treated. This bore normative constraints against – for example – the mining of “Mother Earth” – considered as a sin or even rape of the female life-giving principle, who wisely hid metals (that were sometimes even understood as a lower form of life) and other resources from “men” (Merchant 1989, 20–41). However, at the beginning of European Modernity, this image changed drastically, and the earth first became the figure of an evil stepmother hiding away precious goods from their rightful proprietors and later a mere conundrum of dead matter. Whereas nature was a harmonious, benevolent mother for most times and cultures, in European Modernity it was more and more regarded as disorderly and sinful³⁸. This transformation of the concept of “nature” and the emergence of a hard dichotomic counterpart called “culture” (as a (male-dominated) institution to tame fierce, uncontrollable and evil nature) sanctioned behavior towards hitherto “female” connoted discursive formations which would not have been thinkable before. It sanctioned ideas of scientific conquest and control of nature that would have been morally disdained before. “The constraints against the penetration associated with the earth-mother image were transformed into sanctions for denudations. After the Scientific Revolution, *Natura* no longer complains that her garments of modesty are being torn by the wrongful thrusts of man. She is portrayed in statues by the French sculptor Louis-Ernest Barrias (1841-1905) coyly removing her own veil and exposing herself to science. From an active teacher and parent, she has become a mindless, submissive body.” (189-190)

Witch-hunts and trials are not – as is often popularly assumed – a phenomenon of the “dark” medieval ages³⁹, but culminated as a result of such a transformation of the female / nature into a wild, malicious beast to be tamed by male virtues. Female power was rendered dubious by “objective”, scientific standards and was silenced because it had to fit the image of passivity and servility. If women / nature didn’t submit to this role by themselves, they were declared as wild animals and sorceresses and subsequently were tortured and burned (140 ff.).

³⁸ Which was – to a degree not to be neglected – caused by the ecological catastrophes and changes early modern landscapes of Europe have already witnessed. We will come back to this point at greater detail in Excursion 5: Crisis.

³⁹ For decades we are witnessing a transformation of our image of the “medieval ages” as a not-so-dark age and even not one coherent temporal unity in historical studies. The fact that many of the dark parts of history that indeed took place in early European Modernity (such as witch hunts (Federici 2004, 165)) are still associated with the so-called “Middle Ages” should be understood as what I have elsewhere called “The Resilience of Modernity” (Jörg 2020a) – a functional part of what makes Occidental Modernity so resilient and appear as “without any alternative”. The crimes and atrocities that necessarily formed the ugly underside of the “bright” and “illustrious” advances of this modernity are dislocated to a dark, “pre-modern” time in order to make Modernity appear uniquely as a fabulous time of unambivalent progress.

Silvia Federici (born 1942), an Italian-American feminist-workerist, showed in her much celebrated study *Caliban and the Witch – Women, the Body and primitive accumulation* from 2004 that this Femicide of the Witch-hunts which lasted over two centuries (16th and 17th mostly) and killed – in conservative estimates – at least 200.000 women (Federici 2004, 208) was perhaps the most central cornerstone of the *primitive accumulation* that Capitalism developed from (and is completely missing in classical Marxist analysis). “The expropriation of European workers from their means of subsistence, and the enslavement of Native Americans and Africans to the mines and plantations of the “New World” were not the only means by which a world proletariat was formed and ‘accumulated.’ [...] This process required the transformation of the body into a work-machine, and the subjugation of women to the reproduction of the workforce. Most of all, it required the destruction of the power of women which, in Europe as in America, was achieved through the extermination of the ‘witches’.” (Ibid. 63) By devaluing “female” work and progressively excluding women from wage labor (thus making them more dependent from men than in medieval times), the nullification of their (re)productive work became the primitive capital emerging capitalism required to develop from. “While in the Middle Ages women had been able to use various forms of contraceptives and had exercised an undisputed control over the birthing process, from now on their wombs became public territory, controlled by men and the state and procreation was directly placed at the service of capitalist accumulation.” (Ibid 89) “With their expulsion from the crafts and the devaluation of reproductive labor poverty became feminized, and to enforce men’s ‘primary appropriation of women’s labor, a new patriarchal order was constructed, reducing women to a double dependence: on employers and on men. [...] In the new capitalist regime women themselves became the commodity, as their work was defined as a natural resource, laying outside the sphere of market relations.” (Ibid. 97)

This capitalist expulsion and subjugation of women was sanctioned by contemporary bourgeois philosophy (Ibid. 138) and their ideas of Reason. Francis Bacon (1561 - 1626), a “father of modern science”, is a particularly gross (and now notorious) example for this combination of misogyny and mechanist world views that formed the roots of Modern Science and Capitalism. The wording of his proposed “scientific” and “objective” methods, that were hugely influential for the formation of Science (with a capital S), leaves no doubt about their roots and motivations. Directly inspired by trials against “witches”, he advises that – for the “disclosing of the secrets of nature” - “a man make [no] scruple of entering and penetrating into these holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is his whole object.”⁴⁰ “Bacon presses this idea further with an analogy to the torture chamber: ‘For like as a man’s disposition is never well known or proved till he be crossed, nor Proteus ever changed shapes till he was *straitened* and *held fast*, so nature exhibits herself more clearly under the

⁴⁰ As is Bacon’s original wording in “De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum” (1623), *Works*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, Douglas Davon Heath, 14 vols (London: Longman’s Green 1870) – quoted via Merchant 1989, 168+317.

trails and vexations of art [mechanical devices] than when let to herself” (Merchant 1989, 169) Nature is thereby transformed into a passive entity whose maliciously withheld secrets one has to violently elicit from *her*⁴¹.

“The new man of science must not think that the ‘inquisition of nature is in any part interdicted or forbidden.’ Nature must be ‘bound into service’ and made a ‘slave,’ put ‘in constraint’ and ‘molded’ by the mechanical arts. The ‘searchers and spies of nature’ are to discover her plots and secrets.

This method, so readily applicable when nature is denoted by the female gender, degraded and made possible the exploitation of the natural environment⁴². As woman’s womb had symbolically yielded to the forceps, so nature’s womb harbored secrets that through technology could be wrestled from her grasp for use in the improvement of the [so assumed] human condition.” (Ibid.)

Such imaginary lies at the core of Modern Science and was inherited and further developed by successors like Descartes, whose method aimed to “render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature” (188), Newton and Leibniz, who completed the “death of nature” by regarding it as an inanimate mechanism moved by a (male) outside force (called god) (275-289).

Of course, the mechanist world view was not the only one in Modernity, as Merchant points out by alluding to – among others – the mostly repressed vitalist philosophy of Anne Conway (1631-1679), the organic utopianism of Tomasso Campanella (1568-1639) and Valentin Andreä (1586-1650) or Gnosticism⁴³. But a mechanist worldview and its idea of linear progress was the ideology that suited the mercantile, bourgeois class in rising capitalism best, for it allowed a reductionist view of the earth as a dead conglomeration of things that can be shipped and marketed around the globe without any ethical constraints (compare further chapter 5.C). The mechanist world of Modern Science served as the ideology for imperialist conquest and the suppression of women, workers and non-white peoples by the rising capitalist class. “Living animate nature died, while dead inanimate money was endowed with life. Increasingly capital and markets would assume the organic attributes of growth, strength, activity, pregnancy, weakness, decay, and collapse obscuring and mystifying the new underlying social relations of production and reproduction that make economic growth and progress possible. Nature, women, blacks, and wage laborers were set on a path towards a new

⁴¹ It is interesting to observe that Bacon is still conscious about this *productive* element of modern Reason – an insight that will disappear over the next decades being replaced by the modern concept of insights into the fundamental principles of nature.

⁴² All quotes in quote are by Francis Bacon himself, from the following sources – in order of appearance - “De Dignitate”, *Works*, vol. 4, p. 298; “The Great Instauration” (1620), *Works*, vol. 4, p. 20; “The Masculine Birth of Time” ed. and transl. by Benjamin Farrington, in *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon* (Liverpool University Press 1964), p. 62; “De Gignatate”, *works*, vol. 4, p. 298. Via Merchant 1989, 169+317

⁴³ Another example is Margaret Cavendish to whom we will shortly allude in chapter 5.Cb.

status as ‘natural’ and human resources for the modern world system. Perhaps the ultimate irony on these transformations was the new name given them: rationality.” (288)

d) Eco-Feminism

By way of such Feminist critiques recounted in this sub-chapter, occidental Modernity (regarding itself as *the* Modernity, bringing Reason by means of Science to the world) can be understood in its ecologically catastrophic undersides, that would not have been *visible* by further pursuing (classically associated as “male”) rational ways of world-seeing *and making*. By suppressing what has been associated as “female” for millennia, Modern Monorationalism intensified a tendency already dormant in Ancient Greek culture (as well as many other cultures) to new levels of world appropriation. “The [modern] ideology of nature, reason, and civilization made it possible to deny kinship and see the natural world as an inferior realm open to merciless exploitation. [...] The inferiorization and denial of th[e] sphere of reproduction involves the inferiorization and denial of women’s labor, including reproductive labor. The real heart of the problem of sustainability lies in the kind of consciousness with respect to the reproductive economy, a consciousness which is the product of an alienated and masculinized account of human identity.” (Plumwood 2001, 229) “Patriarchal categories which understand destruction as ‘production’ and regeneration of life as ‘passivity’ have generated a crisis of survival.” (Shiva 2007, 295)

Such insights lead classical Eco-feminist authors to ascertain that a turn to a more ecological society must be essentially *female*. As activist and author Françoise D’Eaubonne (1920-2005) puts it in her book *Le féminisme ou la mort* (1974) “we have to tear the planet away from the male today to restore it for humanity of tomorrow. That is the only alternative, for if the male society persists, there will be no tomorrow for humanity.” Women are to be understood “in the purest Marxist fashion” as the true “producing class frustrated from its production by male distribution, since this source of collective wealth (procreation) is possessed by a minority, males, the feminine species being the human majority.” (d’Eaubonne 2007, 212)

This perspective leads d’Eaubonne to the conclusion that the ecological consciousness we are looking for in and beyond the Anthropocene is already there: “if women’s lived experiences were recognized as meaningful and were given legitimation in our culture, it could provide an immediate ‘living’ social basis for the alternative consciousness, which the deep ecologist is trying to formulate and introduce as an abstract ethical construct.” (Ibid. 2007, 216) Women’s writing has, as we have seen, an important role in establishing this recognition and validation. As “keeper of the *oikos*” women are said to be “in a good position to put around-the-clock ecological consciousness into practice.” (Ibid. 218) This would entail a more environmentally sustainable control of human population. “In a world, or simply a county, in which women (and not, as could be the case, a woman) found themselves truly in power, the first act would be to limit and space out births.” (d’Eaubonne 2007, 210) A rise of female power, when women are no longer regarded as the mere

productive forces for men, does and will (as we already see in contemporary states) decelerate the growth of human population needed for a more sustainable relation with the planet and our (non-human) co-inhabitants (Clarke and Haraway 2018). Ecological Reasonings fit for speculating about life and death beyond the Anthropocene must essentially be feminist, can be the takeaway of early eco-feminist critiques.

e) Queering Eco-Feminism

Yet, it is as important to steer away from essentialist presumptions in these classical Eco-feminist arguments⁴⁴, which would assume that bodies-considered-female are somehow *naturally* or *essentially* closer to ecological awareness. The specific sensitivities of the two majoritarian genders, as well as their gendered performances, bodies and respective affective economies are the product of a millennia year old culture that forced both “men” and “women” into their respective roles. There is nothing inherently ecological about any form of genital. Both men and women are stuck in their respective, forcefully binary roles and a true ecological movement would have to liberate both from the exact same binary. “The dominant, European, white imperial voice has got us where we are and it’s not a good place to be right now” (LeGuin 2015, 10:20) and it therefore becomes vital to make other, hitherto repressed narrations and voices heard.

Since men have been the self-ascribed leaders of this ecologically catastrophic civilization, they might have to change the most. “[T]he masculine sense of self-worth in our culture has become so entrenched in scientific habits of thought, that it is very hard for men to argue persuasively without resource to terms like these for validation. Women, on the other hand, socialized as they are for a multiplicity of contingent tasks and practical labor functions in the home and out, do not experience the inhibiting constraints of status validation to the same extent. The traditional feminine role runs counter to the exploitative technological rationality, which is currently the requisite masculine norm. [...M]en should try out roles which are not highly valued in society [...] for herein lies the basis of a genuinely grounded and nurturant environmentalism.” (Salleh 2007, 216)

Contrary to a now majoritarian, neoliberal feminism that tries to turn all humans of privileged classes into “men” (Hirsch 2016, 139 ff.) (and thereby outsourcing (re)productive work to people of lower income, leaving the problematic norm underneath completely untouched), the aim of an ecological reasoning should be to *queer* both gender norms, especially the male one, making them – in the end – somewhat obsolete. For this was already Virginia Woolf’s vision nearly a century ago: “it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly.” (Woolf 2012, 101) Men will equally have to

⁴⁴ Essentialism was always a problem of Eco-Feminism (compare Sturgeon 2007, 242; Merchant 2007, 27), making it somewhat unfashionable today (although there is a certain Renaissance happening right now, considering Hache, Collectif, and Larrère 2016; Code 2006 and others). However, in the vein of the methodology of this thesis, I regard Eco-Feminist Essentialism as a *Strategic Essentialism* necessary to make visible what has been suppressed and rendered invisible for so long. Even calls for the “abolition of men” (Solanas and Ronell 2016) should be regarded as a useful, healthy counter-narrative to a decade long normalization and scientification of misogyny that still hasn’t been completely dismantled.

learn how to be female as women to be male. And – it is true – women, being held a minority, are far ahead in this transgression of modern key categories, for they always fell outside them anyways. Gender binarity and the scientification and rationalization of sex are in-itself a modern phenomenon (Foucault 2014). A non-modern utopia needed for ecological forms of reason will have to be queer – to be set free of gender norms and binarity – and will have to tell itself queer stories, thus reconciling itself with a universe that was – despite the norms of modern scientific conquest – queer all along (see chapter 9). Man – the traditional holder of Reason – will have to be deconstructed⁴⁵ thoroughly to make reasonings thinkable that operate outside the classically modern dichotomies of men and women, culture and nature, humanity and animality, activity and passivity, etc. And of “course it’s not just the women’s voice that is missing, Women are simply a very large part, probably the largest part of the voices that have not been heard. And genderly speaking that’s not only women but all kinds of other genders...” (LeGuin 2015, 9:00)]

⁴⁵ The good news is, that this is – with an enormous delay – starting to take up pace in contemporary discourses. See among other, “the Second Sex of masculinity studies” (Connell 1995), who is – very much in line with the project of this thesis – proposing to pluralize “masculinity” into “masculinities”, and the growing discussion about “Toxic Masculinity”

Excursion 2: Isms

Isms seem to be a conceptual tool that have undergone an inflation of usage over the last decades. It is indeed enticing to place everything into neat boxes – we can identify Descartes' favoring of mind as idealISM, put it into a sub-family of CartesianISM, opposed to materialISM, and securing itself from a looming relativISM. The advantage of such thinking with Isms is an effective means for comparison which allows quick categorization and orientation. However, an overabundant use of these "ISMS" commits to the danger of doing nothing but repeating some pre-conceived – and completely safe – crash tests, in which the results will hardly ever be surprising. A blue-print idealism will always have the same advantages and disadvantages opposed to a blueprint materialism. Following the schoolbook definitions will only reproduce the status quo of philosophical knowledge.

If we stay on this shallow level of conceptual thought, we will prevent ourselves from looking at the details which make the difference. We will, for example, never meet the looming vibrant materialism in Descartes' oeuvre that – exactly by its suppression – serves as the very possibility for *his characteristic* idealism (see chapter 5.B). We will never meet the – frequently hidden – springs and triggers that bring about conceptual decisions. By rendering ourselves insensitive to conceptual details and minoritarian streams by the abundant use of ISMS, no real change will ever occur, for – as Nietzsche puts it – the big changes are “not our loudest, but our stillest hours. Not around the inventors of new noise does the world revolve, but around the inventors of new values; inaudibly it revolves.” (Nietzsche 2009a, ZA-Grosse Ereignisse) Big changes emerge almost unwitnessed, by carefully changing the conceptual plane that many will have to eventually share. ISMS form the macro-level of Being, but new thoughts, new reasons will first become visible on more subtle levels, on the microscopical, almost-invisible plains of frail but perpetual becoming.

This work is not free from the virtues and vices of the usage of Isms. In fact, in the last two and the next two sub-chapters, we will frequently meet some blueprint CartesianISMS, PlatonISMS as well as CapitalISMS and SexISMS that serve as the easy enemies and scapegoats of the critiques of Reason we are revisiting. By focusing somehow one-sidedly on their negative effects of being patriarchal, racist, imperialist, ... , these chapters acquire a certain redundancy of conjuring up an enemy which might not exist in the blueprint-simplicity the critique evokes.

This dynamic will be problematized more thoroughly in chapter 4. Suffice it to say, for now, that there should be an awareness for what Isms do. They can very well make us understand some general dynamics and traits, but will, at the very same time, render us insensitive for smaller aspects we would need to understand to really change them. Perhaps an ideal for thought could be to

achieve a philosophy without ISMS. However, this work is not there yet (and ideals might always remain a mere virtuality if they want to retain their trans-formative power).

ISMS are used in this work. It is important to note that when I write “Cartesianism”, “Platonism” or “Kantianism” I am writing specifically about a canonical reduction of the oeuvres of those thinkers summarized in such ISMS – and not so much about the authors true intentions, which are (except in chapter 5) secondary to my work.

This excursion serves as a reminder that the conceptual regions ISMS denote are always messier than our reading habits might make us expect. An ISM is as much an approximation as the word “nature” for something we might have to find a different relationship towards. ISMS never denote a unity, even if they frequently pretend to do so (– as can be best examined when considering Feminism, which always comprises several contradictory positions.) So, bear in mind, dear reader, that things are always fuzzier and more differentiated than these chapters want to make you believe. The contradictory tension inside the concepts make them valuable and interesting. Messiness is life – and text and especially Isms can easily turn people away from both.

C) Bodily & Aesthetic Critique

Man does not have a body. At least, that's how most of them behave. Shoulders tight and immobile, they rush like numbers through the narrow business-lanes to their workplaces. Their bodies are machines, serving the mere function of transporting their all-navigating heads to logically operating interfaces. They all wear the same suits, the same expressions, their limbs and organs do not express anything but the will to serve. On their desks they still govern *the* world by mere mindfulness expressed in binary numeric constellations roaming the planet in almost infinite speed. Their heaven of ideas is moving fast through invisible fiberglass-cables.

The philosophical tradition of occidental men (for there was hardly any woman who made it into the canon prior to the 20th century) confirms their body-alienated behavior, build their world views for centuries until they could – in the great acceleration we have been calling Modernity – build *their* world according to these views. Now the world they inhabit resembles the idealistic landscapes Plato made out in the heavens two and a half millennia ago (Jörg 2020a). From early on, form and mind were considered as a male principle, matter and bodies as female. “The classical association of femininity with materiality can be traced back to a set of etymologies which link matter with *mater* [Latin for “mother”] and *matrix* [“womb”] and, hence, with a problematic of reproduction.” (J. Butler 1993, 31) For Aristotle, in sexual reproduction women entirely contributed the necessary matter, men the noble form. Since – as we have seen – the feminine, reproduction and becoming have been more and more successfully suppressed by occidental philosophy, it is no wonder that the body is a blind spot, a *terra incognita* of Reason. For Plato, the immaterial and eternal ideas that Reason reflects are ontologically separated from the body and the material world – *Man* is advised to liberate *himself* from the supremacy of the senses and bodily pleasures in order to become *reasonable* (Giuliani and Waldenfels 2000). The same is true for Descartes, who famously declared the *res extensa* and the *res cogitans* to be completely separate realms and demonstrated that *with certainty* man was mere mind: “I think therefore I am”. Men's scornful attitudes towards the body and his invisibilisation of women therefore are intrinsically linked with each other (Spelman 1982).

Neither should anybody wonder that a thinker who has been trained by *his* entire philosophical tradition to ignore (*his*) matter is not well equipped to deal with the messiness of matter that ecology requires us to reflect on. By excluding bodies from reflection in order to allow thought to be wholly abstract (Latin *abstrahere* = “to drag away, detach, pull away, divert”), environmental relations or ecology became the unthinkable of occidental Reason. Obsessed with the writing systems its language had formed, it had only followed the logical relations between signifiers, loosing grips with the world and its bodies. By progressively detaching thought from its materiality

(e.g. the brain and other body parts), it could not reflect what material consequences (in form of ecological impacts etc.) thoughts bore and produced.

An ecological reasoning will therefore be required to build on a different relationship with bodies, texts and matters than the canonized ISMS of Platonism and Cartesianism that make out the two centerpieces of occidental mainstream philosophy. In chapter 5 we will look closely at the works of Descartes and Plato to find an emerging (but suppressed) ecological reasoning (and its body) even there⁴⁶, beyond the ISMS and their canonized forms of bodily and matterly suppression. For this reason, this sub-chapter will not revisit the classical positions of occidental philosophy concerning the body too much. Much of them are well known anyways, others will be reviewed later. Rather, it will revisit some critiques of Reason that highlight the absence of the body and deepen these insights by reexamining our order of the senses and their relationship to classical occidental Reason. Finally, chapter 8 will attempt some more positive approaches of a thinking with our and others corporeality.

a) The body entering the stage

“For indeed, no one has yet determined what the body can do, that is, experience has not yet taught anyone what the body can do from the laws of Nature alone, insofar as Nature is only considered to be corporeal, and what the body can do only if it is determined by the mind. For no one has yet come to know the structure of the body so accurately that he could explain all its functions - not to mention that many things are observed in the lower animals which far surpass human ingenuity, and that sleepwalkers do a great many things in their sleep which they would not dare to awake. This shows well enough that the body itself, simply from the laws of its own nature, can do many things which its mind wonders at.

Again, no one knows how, or by what means, the mind moves the body, nor how many degrees of motion it can give the body, nor with what speed it can move it. It follows that when men say that this or that action of the body arises from the mind, which has dominion over the body, they do not know what they are saying, and they do nothing but confess, in fine-sounding words, that they are ignorant of the true cause of that action, and that they do not wonder at it.” (Spinoza 1994, 155 ff.)

This quote, taken from Baruch de Spinoza’s *Ethics – Proved in Geometrical Order* (1677) and written in direct reaction to Descartes’ radical body-mind-separation, reveals the confusion “the” body is stirring in occidentally trained philosophers when it eventually intrudes. Perhaps exactly by its hitherto radical exclusion, the body intrudes as *something* that has huge consequences for us and

⁴⁶ “If we can find ecology even here, there is hope.” - Timothy Morton about working with Kant and Descartes, “who, most of all, helped thinking to maintain its distance toward the animal and the environment.” (Morton 2009, 203)

our worldview, whose abilities and capacities have not yet been chartered in an ontology based on a degradation of matter and nature. In Modernity, a long time suppressed, minoritarian stream of modern occidental philosophy, that can be identified as “philosophies of immanence” (Böhler, Kruschkova, and Granzer 2014; Böhler 2012; Deleuze 1988), becomes hugely aware of this *problem*⁴⁷. By slowly liberating itself from the occidental mainstream tradition of thinking of transcendence (regarding the realm of thought and Reason as something detached and transcendent from concrete matterly reality), such questions become central and bare controversy and inspiration up until today.

In the time of Spinoza, these thoughts were considered heretic and resulted in expulsion, exiling and even attempted assassination. Almost a century later, similar philosophies still lead to the same consequences, as can be exemplified with Julien Offray de la Mettrie (1709-1751), who polemically questions the body-mind-separation with “why should we regard as double what is manifestly one being” (La Mettrie 1912, 133), praises sensual lust and enjoyment (La Mettrie 1985) and preaches “break the chain of your prejudices, arm yourselves with the torch of experience, and you will render to nature the honor she deserves, instead of inferring anything to her disadvantage, from the ignorance in which she has left you.” (La Mettrie 1912, 146) His proto-ecological praise of monism and the body lead him to repeated expatriation (from France, to Holland, to the court of Friedrich II. in Potsdam, who could only hold him as court jester) and is even supposed to be the cause of his untimely death, rumored to be an assassination (a poisoned truffle pate he had bet, in line with his philosophy of voluptuousness, to eat in one go).

As we see, the suppression of a nature-body-female complex did not only affect women, but also cost the lives of insurgent monist philosophers of immanence of white skin-color (whose genitals were primarily penises). However, such European philosophies of immanence seem to be on the rise throughout the course of Modernity and an open question of this thesis is, if they are on the verge of becoming a new majoritarian worldview and what consequences such an *ecological* reason would bear.

The next philosopher central to this thesis who – unsurprisingly – can be considered as one of the big proponents of philosophies of “the body” is Friedrich Nietzsche. In his chapter against the *Despisers of the Body* in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883) he teaches “Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stands a powerful commander, an unknown wise man – he is called self. He lives in your body, he is your body. There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom.” As we have already learned (Chapter 2), for Nietzsche “the body is a great reason” and what philosophers and priests taught us to “call ‘spirit’ is also a tool of your body, my brother, a small work- and plaything of your great reason.” An ecological reason, therefore, will have to undo the mind-body-dualism and think *with* the body. It will have to include the bodily lusts, movements and

⁴⁷ As everywhere in this thesis, I understand “problem” in the Stenger’ian or Deleuzian sense as a field of tension and interests – see chapter 4 for a further elaboration of this.

conditionings occidental mainstream philosophy has pushed into the *southern* to attain “objective”, “scientific” reasoning (Böhler 2017). For even the most idealist philosophers were never able to free themselves of their bodies, they just made their bodies invisible for their reasoning. Their body postures were often in line with their philosophies⁴⁸, but only slowly – if at all – became a subject of their reflection. Thus, one other condition that Kant was unable to see in his attempted outline of a complete *a priori* of Reason (chapter 3 – Introduction) was his own body, the one of a privileged, white, heterosexual men, whose conditioning and cultural imprints made it much more likely to attain the clarities of *this* pure reason. An ecological reasoning will have to take account of its bodily incorporation and placing – and not, as has been done by the majoritarian canon – suppress it in favor of a universal truth sphere.

With Nietzsche, who clearly sees this interrelation of thoughts and their bodily conditions of possibility, a more serious study of the incorporation of reasonings became possible⁴⁹. Bodies that hitherto were structurally excluded could become the subject of reflection (Schäfer 2013) and their reasonings studied. We will return to an investigation on ecological reasonings & corporeality in Chapter 8, in which we will draw in more detail and affirmation from some “body philosophies” developed in the last two centuries and their relation to the rise of ecological reasonings. Furthermore, we will investigate the political consequences of these insights in the fourth and last sub-chapter on Critiques of Reason.

b) Note on the Body-Mind-Dualism

Much work has been spent on argumentatively rebuking the Cartesian body-mind-dualism⁵⁰. It was attempted in several ways to counter Descartes’ arguments for *I think, therefore I am* in referring to – for example – the primacy of sensory perception, bodily presence, the weird role of god, the logo- and ocularcentrism of the Descartes’ argument, etc. However, as much as I *felt* the correctness of these arguments, I always knew that logically they are not 100% waterproof. I always could imagine René Descartes whispering this or that objection the contender could never fully and coherently *defeat*. Resulting in a never-ending fight of arguments and counter arguments that could never be decisively won by any side. Such a situation of (argumentative) warfare might not be the desirable solution (see chapter 12b-d for a political reading of this state of argumentative warfare).

⁴⁸ For a good study on the interrelation between body posture and philosophy in four examples (Fichte, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer) compare Waibel 2014

⁴⁹ Of course, “the body” is not a solution to every metaphysical problem of occidental Reason and in fact, several problems of occidental Reason managed to translate themselves into early phenomenological body-philosophies such as those of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) or – to a lesser degree – Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). By reifying “the Body” to a singular, pseudo-metaphysical entity that all humans share, it reproduced exclusions of other genders, races or physical abilities and typical sensory regimes under a new name (Morton 2009, 104–9). However, we shouldn’t regard such shortcomings of early systematic body philosophies as a reason to exclude the body from reflection at all (but much rather as still too much entangled with the Resilience of Reason (chapter 6). We will return to a more affirmative part on body philosophy in Chapter 8 and will also continue the problematization of the concept of „the body“ in chapter 8b, leading me to propose to replace it – in most contexts – with „corporealities“.

⁵⁰ For example, I would regard Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* as the most elaborate attempt in that direction.

As I have tried to show in this chapter, the attempt to logically disprove key elements of occidental Reason such as the Body-Mind-Dualism (as much as its most recent manifestations as the “brain in the vet”-argument⁵¹) is structurally flawed, or – to be more precise – is buying into too many preconceived assumptions before even starting. For it already buys into the logocentric constitution of Reason in confirming and sharing its core assumption that everything can be attained *logically* within language. It seems to me that – within the particularly modern environment we are still (partly?) inhabiting – the Cartesian argument is *logically* perfect. It is one of the strongest narrative strategies that were invented in Europe’s last 500 years – otherwise it would be hard to account for the still existing, ghostly prevalence of the specter of Descartes in contemporary discourses. *Ghosts are spooking our language* and Descartes certainly is one of them.

It is a central maneuver of the *more affirmative than critical* (see next Chapters) strategy of this thesis to step outside this realm of dialectical argumentation that results in languages and logical situations of warfare (Serres 2008; Serres and Latour 1994). Much rather than argumentatively defeat the Cartesian argument, it wants to affirmatively honor it as a hugely successful form of narration, while at the same time seeing its hugely problematic exclusions and immanent, unreflected mechanisms. By informing ourselves with critiques of Reason (that are already inherent in its very foundation), we want to equip ourselves well enough to be capable of inventing other narrations that – in the future beyond the Anthropocene – might be as successful as Descartes’ *cogito* argument for Modernity. For, despite our monorationalistic blindness, *we have never been modern* (Latour 2002), we have always had a body, and the ecological problems we are facing today certainly do require other ways of sense- and world-making (see chapter 8c+k). Descartes might have contributed the best epistemological narration for the massive gain in comfort and human dominion over the planet during modernity. However, in the sense of *Story Telling for Earthly Survival* (Terranova and Haraway 2018) and at the end of Modernity, we will have to devise other stories that – at some point – will hopefully convince more people⁵² than the Cartesian argument. We can affirmatively historicize Descartes’ story as a *success story* of Modernity, that – unfortunately but characteristically – was blind to all its downsides. Thereby we do no longer need

⁵¹ For a media-philosophical analysis on discursive figures like the brain in the vet-argument as a child of the occidental logocentrism, compare Flusser 2011, 145 ff.

⁵² The paper *The mind is willing, but the flesh is weak: the effects of mind-body-dualism on health behavior* (Forstmann M, Burgmer P, and Mussweiler T 2012) can serve as another string for narratively convincing more people of monist ontologies. In this psychological field study, they were able to show that people who – in their world views expressed in everyday language – are mind-body dualists, tend to regard their bodies as mere “shells” and neglect it, leading them to eat and behave less healthy. Monists on the other hand tend to be healthier and caretaking of their bodies. The argument resulting from such studies could be that not only on a “global” ecological level dualism is dangerous and unhealthy, but also on a very personal, bodily health level. This beautifully enables everybody to *feel* (and not just “rationally” understand) the interconnectedness of the global and the very local, resulting in more ecological awareness on a somatic level. From my own experience (with the white, privileged, male body I was born with), there are many psychosomatic traces of a mind-body dualism in my “great reason” e.g., bodily behavior, although I would argumentatively always take on a monist standpoint. To slowly and carefully (one holds strongly unto which one is *build!*) undo these traces of an ecologically hazardous posture requires patience and mutual care. I would encourage everybody to build on a peer group that allows them to undertake such an anti-dualist (or let’s rather put it positively: pro-monist!) excursion.

to logically refute it, for it would attune too much with the unreflected conditions of Reason that made it work (see Excursion 5). Another story is needed for another environment to come (see Excursion 6).

c) Fear of the Senses (& Somatophobia)

Occidental Reason has erected itself as a pure, abstract transcendence. By methodically – and in the course of occidental history – progressively excluding entities (such as bodies, matter, Nature and the female) it produced a highly effective “objectivity”, that allowed unprecedented scientific progress and conquest. However, what has been methodically suppressed were its material (e.g., environmental) effects as well as its inherent exclusions.

The occidental “Somatophobia” (fear of the body) (Spelman 1982, 119) served as a justification for a claim of superiority of “rational” man over beings that were associated as closer to their bodies (females, slaves, children, homo- and transsexuals, foreigners). This exclusion included a devaluation of sensory stimuli in favor of what was considered as pure, rational thought.

Starting in Ancient Greece, according to Silvio Vietta, abstract mathematical thinking was pushed forward and prioritized over modes of reflection that were closer to aesthetical perception. Pythagoras (ca. 570-510 BC), who probably acquired his mathematical knowledge in Ancient Egypt and Babylon, founded a school that believed that the fundamentals of the world were expressed in numbers. Even more radical, the Pythagoreans believed that only numbers enable to pursue any thought and attain any cognition, thereby seeding a Monorationalism that will characterize occidental Reason in the next millennia (Vietta 2012, 72 ff.). This belief enabled Plato – who identified as a Pythagorean – to formulate his transcendent, somatophobic metaphysics that grounded certainty in un-sensuous numbers and their logical correlation, leading to a devaluation of sensuous perception in favor of rational, logical thinking (Ibid. 55-8).

In Modernity, Vietta argues, this transcendent metaphysics were applied into a scientific method. Inspired by the discoveries in astronomy – who probably are the most sharply detached from any sensuous perceiving (Ibid. 64) and thus sanctioned behaviors that mistrusted the senses as means to knowledge – the belief that the universe was *written* in the language of mathematics was canonized, as Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) or Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) expressed it (Ibid. 95). This, according to Vietta, inspired Descartes’ *first philosophy* that put everything into doubt that was not provable with abstract, rational thought (Ibid. 65).

Throughout the course of the continual emergence of Modern science, these elements of mathematical fetishism and rejection of sensory input was methodized into a regime of primary and secondary qualities. Nature – as a modern construct and passive counterpart of active Science and Reason – was bifurcated into two different realms. This regime of primary and secondary qualities was most influentially spelled out by John Locke (1632-1704) in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* of 1689. Primary qualities, according to Locke, “we may observe to produce simple

ideas in us, viz. solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest, and number. Secondly, such qualities which are nothing in the objects themselves but power to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities, i.e., by the bulk, figure, texture, and motion of their insensible parts, as colors, sounds, tastes, etc. These I call secondary qualities.” (Locke 2004, 135) By this hierarchization whose “legacy can still be found in contemporary science” (Debaise 2017b, 155), the qualities that can be sensually perceived by human bodies become subordinated to qualities of the “physico-mathematical order”, that were only a result of sensual perceptions in the first place. “Starting with immediate experience, bifurcation operates by splitting such experience into two regimes of existence. In doing so, it takes that which makes up the primary experience and places it in a derivate, phenomenal realm. Once this bifurcation is established, once the two regimes are stabilized and subjective experience is rendered epiphenomenal, it is possible to state that even if a fundamental knowledge of primary qualities is permanently postponed, *in fact*, it is possible, *by right*, bypassing both secondary qualities and the need for an exploration of the perception of such bodies.” (Ibid. 156) By such a maneuver the situated sensory perception of (an organic, living, smelling, sounding, etc.) “Nature” becomes unimportant to Modern Science, since it was transformed into a purely rational, abstract thought experiment about a mechanist universe of dead, un-sensuous matter.

This ontology of the moderns did not only have effects on scientific practices but extended itself in its political theories. For Thomas Hobbes, author of perhaps the most influential book of modern political theory – the *Leviathan* of 1651 –, all sensations “were not in the objects but purely subjective” (Merchant 1989, 207). Closely influenced by the inauguration of modern science by his contemporaries (he had been a secretary and friend of Francis Bacon from 1621-1626 and met Galileo in 1634) he developed a political philosophy based on the mechanist world view. The “state of nature” was, for Hobbes, “a state of chaos, anarchy, and fear brought about by the material appetites of each individual for competition, domination, and glory. Like disorderly nature, disorderly humans were basically hostile, unfriendly, and violent.” (Ibid. 209) The material (e.g., sensuous, bodily) appetites of each human were considered as a danger to society and had to be locked away by a totalitarian social order. Society was understood as a machine and *rational* humans were understood to have to decide themselves to subordinate to a sovereign, who is “the external embodiment of contracted unity and dispenser of these rules, operated from outside the machine like a technician.” (Ibid. 210) The Reason fit for such a task is one devoid of sensory deflections, one that can only focus on inaugurated “primary qualities” while ignoring the situated sensually perceivable qualities debased as “secondary”. The mind, for Hobbes, “is a special kind of machine – a calculating machine” and to “reason it but to add and subtract or to calculate.” (Ibid. 232-3)

This modern hostility towards sensuous perception has been criticized and fought because its political consequences. As the early materialist philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) – who became one of the main inspirators of Karl Marx – already noted, occidental Reason is idealized as a formless, colorless and nameless entity and is centrally build on an exclusion of all sensuality (Feuerbach 1843, §6-10+50). A philosophy of the future liberated of religion and cultural prejudice – as taken on by Marx – would have to be a Reason of “universal sensuality” that comes to term with human reality [Wirklichkeit] and will be “a reason that is of the very blood of man” (Ibid. §50). In this philosophy of the future, it will be seen that “sensuousness is the truth of the Idea” (Ibid. §33).

This “philosophy of the future” that, in Feuerbach’s sense, “*joyfully and consciously recognizes the truth of sensuousness*” (Feuerbach 1843, §36) will have to undo the ontology of the moderns and be based on a different metaphysics than that of dualism and bifurcation of nature. Far from being a purely epistemological matter, this shift bears significant political consequences, and it is no wonder that Karl Marx has built his critique of capitalist society on Feuerbach’s designs for a *philosophy to come*. Ecological reasonings to come will therefore entail “the restauration of immediate experience of all its rights” (Debaise 2017a, 161) and will have to think with sensuality, will have to regard its concepts to be stemming *from* sensuality all along. “The old philosophy had its point of departure in the proposition: I am an abstract, a merely thinking being to which the body does not belong. The new philosophy proceeds from the principle: I am a real and sensuous being. Indeed, the whole of my body is my ego, my being itself. [...] the new philosopher thinks in peace and harmony with the senses. The old philosophy conceded the truth of sensuousness only in a concealed way, only in terms of the concept, only unconsciously and unwillingly, only because it had to.” (Feuerbach 1843, §36)

d) Order of the Senses

As Feuerbach hints in the above cited paragraph, no Reason that ever existed could liberate itself from sensuality and the body. The only thing occidental mainstream philosophy could do was to repress the sensory stimuli and embodiments of Reason and thereby make it one of the *unthinkables* of Reason. God – the image of an ultimate rational being, completely free from sensuality and bodily situatedness on a sinful, dirty and lustful earth – served as an ideological legitimization of this stance of rejecting the body and its senses. However, if we undo this ideological blind spot⁵³, we can examine what order of the senses produces occidental reason. A certain prevalence of one sense over the other must be detectable and from such information we might be able to gather

⁵³ In a later chapter on Descartes (5.Cb) we will examine how this rejection or *killing* of the body (=transforming him to dead matter) was in fact a necessary precondition for the erection of a certain relationship towards the body required for capitalist labor conditions. In chapter 8e we will further investigate what kind of bodily drill was put into action by the installment of this monorationalist epistemological regime.

understanding of what other sensory order might be more charitable for an ecologically oriented reasoning.

By examining occidental everyday languages, what immediately *strikes the eye* is the prevalence of visual metaphors and expressions (Jay 1993, 1 ff.). French *savoir* (=“knowledge“) and *pouvoir* (=“power“) both contain the word for seeing *voir*. In German one holds an *Anschauung* or experiences an *Augenblick*. In English, one begins to *see* a point or has a point of *view*, keeps an *eye* on certain foreseeable problems, is a *visionary* by *imagining* things, *speculates* [Latin *specere* = “to look or observe”] on the *scope* [Latin *scopium* = “to look or examine”] of the *spectacle*, *demonstrates* [Latin *monstrare* = “to show”] how reason is supposed to be or is *blind* to reason, is *vigilant* [Latin *vigilare* = “to watch”] to *seemingly* endless sentences and loses an *aspect* because it was definitely too long.

Our scientific instruments are largely based on visual information. Be it telescopes or microscopes, magnifying glasses, cameras, graphs, maps, compasses or text itself, they all convey their information on the visual spectrum. Such is the same of most of our arts – be it theater, painting, cinema, literature or dance, they all rely heavily on a strong emphasis on the visual sense. Many religions are marked by seers, visionaries and bringers of light, working with a lot of visual metaphor. Even in it’s negative – the strong iconophobias of Islam, Judaism or Protestantism mark the primacy of the eye by forbidding to make yourself a *picture* (and not a sound or smell) of the highest-most. And finally, also our modern everyday life is primarily navigable through visual information (street signs, advertisements, city lights, texts everywhere, etc.).

In occidental mainstream philosophy, sight was understood as the noblest of senses (Jonas 1953). Plato’s cave as well as sun analogy work with visual metaphors. In his *Timaeus*, Plato distinguishes “between the creation of the sense of sight, which he grouped with the creation of human intelligence, and that of the other senses, which he placed with man’s material being.” (Jay 1993, 26) The intellect is understood to be “the eye of the mind” and the ideas he is *regarding* (not smelling, feeling or hearing) are “like a visible form bleached of its color” (Ibid.).

This understanding of the visual sense as part of the intellect (as opposed to the rest of the senses) is very revealing about the constitution of occidental Reason. It reveals a clear bias towards visual information and vocabulary. Descartes is picking up the exact same prioritization of visual information in his “gesture of refusing to listen to the voices of the past and trusting instead only to what one could ‘see with one’s eyes’.” (Ibid. 82) Reason, for occidentals, seems to be a matter of sight. And if we *smell*⁵⁴ what is behind their self-acclaimed suppression of the senses it becomes apparent that the eye has severely marked our occidental understanding of Reason. In the so called “age of Reason”, the EnLIGHTenment period and more generally: Modernity, vision was the

⁵⁴ For, as we shall see, smell might be much better equipped to undo some of the most prominent features of the modern constitution than sight.

dominant sense (Ibid. 44, 83 ff.). Modernity would have taken a completely different shape if it were not as ocularcentric as it was.

As Hans Jonas (1953, 507) influential paper *The nobility of sight* summarizes, vision can be described to have three main characteristics:

1. Sight “is preeminently the sense of simultaneity, capable of surveying a wide visual field at one moment. Intrinsically less temporal than other senses such as hearing or touch, it thus tends to elevate static *Being* over dynamic *Becoming*, fixed essences over ephemeral appearances. Greek philosophy from Parmenides through Plato accordingly emphasized an unchanging and eternal presence.” (Jay 1993, 24) “The very contrast between eternity and temporality rests upon an idealization of 'present' experienced visually as the holder of stable contents as against the fleeting succession of nonvisual sensation.” (Jonas 1953, 513-4)
2. “The externality of sight allows the observer to avoid direct engagement with the object of his gaze. Thus, the very distinction between subject and object and the belief in the neutral apprehension of the latter by the former, a distinction so crucial for much later thought, was abetted by the ocularcentrism of Greek thought.” (Jay 1993, 24) “The gain is the concept of objectivity, of the thing as it is in-itself as distinct from the thing as it affects me, and from this distinction arises the whole idea of *theoria* and theoretical truth.” (Jonas 1953, 515) “Perhaps lost by this ‘dynamic neutralization,’ as Jonas calls it, is a clear sense of causality, because the constitutive link between subject and object is suppressed or forgotten.” (Jay 1993, 24)
3. Sight “is the ideal distance-sense. Light travels farther than sound and smell and does not suffer distortion on its way over any distance. Indeed, sight is the only sense in which the advantage lies not in proximity but in distance: the best view is by no means the closest view; to get the proper view we take the proper distance, which may vary for different objects and different purposes, but which is always realized as a positive and not a defective feature in the phenomenal presence of the object.” (Jonas 1953, 517) This inherent inclination towards distancing in vision lead to a development of abstract thoughts and eventually the idea of infinity (as a eternal and so on of distantly perceived visual objects). “Once the battle against Sophism, which defended rhetoric and the ear, was won, Greek philosophy could elevate a visually defined notion of disinterested, monologic, epistemic truth over mere opinion or *doxa*” (Jay 1993, 26)

It should have become clear by now that the prominent features of occidental Reason could only come into existence by a prioritization of the visual sense data. In fact, discourses which have (more or less consciously) been occupied with undoing the modern constitution and the shortcomings of occidental Reason have been criticizing this *ocularcentrism* for more than a century. For example, Henri Bergson (1859-1941) has pointed out that modern science and its fixation on stable and solid objects is a result of a favoritism of visual information. He accuses the modern scientific method to be *cinematographic* by nature: of producing static, subsequent images of stable statuses of Being

that thereby cancel out every perception of living, becoming experience (Bergson 1959, 305–16). Luce Irigaray has pointed out how this regime of visibilisation has always favored men's perceptions and worlds, thereby being inherently sexist (Irigaray 1985, 321).

Attempts have been made to characterize the – mostly French – “post-modern” or “post-structuralist” discourses as anti-visual philosophies (Jay 1993). At the end of discursive Modernity, beginning with Impressionism and – in the latest – Surrealism, the neutrality and nobility of sight was more and more radically put into question. These critical impetuses, in turn, were appropriated by ecological philosophies. For example, Michel Serres (born 1930), who can probably be regarded as the most obvious link between “post-structuralist” and ecosophical philosophy, devoted an entire book to *The Five Senses* (1985), in which he is arguing for a completely different metaphysics in order to attain a more ecological understanding. “Without the experience of mingled bodies, without these tangible riots of colour and mitigated multiplicities, we had long failed to distinguish life from death. The misunderstanding wherein death resembles glory, where life is only happy in the tomb, had turned metaphysics into a preparation for murder.” (Serres 2016, 29) Similar to Bergson's critique, Serres claims that a visually oriented metaphysics cannot understand life as a process of becoming. In order to attain an ecologically aware philosophy, Serres speculates on a metaphysics that is equally inspired by smell, sound and taste, thereby calling for a “democratization of the senses” long due after such a long and absolute reign of the eye over metaphysical order.

Similarly, Neil Evernden, points out “that our cherished achievement, objectivity, may not be a discovery or consequence of logical thought so much as the outcome of our reliance on one mode of access to the world” - sight. “It is only because of this distortion in the ratio of sensory influence that we find ourselves in the world that we do. Vision permits us with the luxurious delusion of being neutral observers with the ability to manipulate a distant environment. The gain is objectivity, but the loss is any notion of interrelation between the elements of the visual fields.” (Evernden 1985, 84) To overcome such an environmentally problematic objectification, he calls for other forms of seeing and – as Serres – a more just “balance of senses”. To put it into the words of another ecosopher, David Abram: “Only as we come close to our senses, and begin to trust, once again, the nuanced intelligence of our sensing bodies, do we begin to notice and respond to the subtle logos of the land.” (Abram 2017, 268)

e) Smells like danger

Whereas the most privileged sense in occidental culture is sight, the most repressed one is the one of smell. When roaming the busiest streets of our cities, it can easily appear that, equally as one can hardly survive without visual information (cars coming from every direction, streetlamps and signs, etc.), one couldn't really stay sane *with* olfactorial information. The smells of exhaust fumes, overapplied perfume, human waste and all kinds of aggressive bodily and food odors might just paralyze us if we weren't to automatically suppress them on an everyday basis. Our society, one

could spontaneously conclude, might collapse if we were to focus ourselves too much on its olfactorial emanations.

Interestingly, such seemingly *impromptu* accusations have a long tradition in occidental discourses, thereby revealing a deeper truth of our occidental epistemic norm and its implicit order of the senses. For example, Kant envisions the perfect society as one without smells and considers the nose to be an “anti-social sense” (Guérer 2002, 185–89). Hegel’s aesthetics do not even recognize the sensual dimension of smell that is regarded as invasive and subverting the necessary distance between autonomous political subjects, it reveals an inherent danger in the frail order of the senses of occidental political order. This aversion to smell dates back to Aristotle and Plato (who both saw smell as the lowest of senses due to its uninformative ambiguity) and was galvanized a devaluation of smell during the modern scientific revolution that did operate with assumptions of a smell-less, purely visual universe of dead matter. In the 20th century, psychoanalysts saw a direct connection between the organic repression of the olfactorial sense and the formation of human culture, leading Lacan to conclude: “The organic regression in man of his sense of smell is an important factor in his access to the dimension of the other. [La régression organique chez l’homme de son odorat est pour beaucoup dans son accès à la dimension de l’autre.]”⁵⁵ (Ibid. 252).

Generally, it can be stated that occidental philosophies which privilege the spirit and Reason tend to hold a depreciative judgement towards the olfactory, while thinkers of life and corporeality usually expressed favorable positions towards smell (Ibid. 198). Ironically, smell-positive thinkers such as Feuerbach and Nietzsche hold the nose in high esteem for precisely the same reasons for which idealist and modern philosophers rejected it. Nietzsche sees in olfactory stimuli the chance to reconnect with our long repressed animality and thereby free the potential of the suppressed body and its “great reason”. In fact, it is no coincidence that Nietzsche often expresses his thoughts in metaphors of smell. When he speaks about how much our culture of reason and moral is based on suppression, blood and torture, he is using olfactory language, stating that even Kant’s categorical imperative *smells* like cruelty (JGB II-6). Nietzsche praises himself for “being the first to *discover* the truth by being the first to experience lies as lies – smelling them out.– My genius is in my nostrils.” (EH, Destiny, I)

To discover and charter the ecological impacts occidental Reason has for the longest time suppressed, the nose might contain the most promising fragrances and scent marks. Contrary to vision, it is a sense of constant intermingling and fuzziness, out of which no clear-cut objects can ever be discerned. It is a sense of constant becoming and interchangeability, allowing no distancing or ideal of eternal order. We are always *in* smells, as much as in our ecologies. Smelling is breathing in, taking in our environment and olfactorial stimuli can only take place if we accept to mingle with

⁵⁵ The quote from Lacan – re-quoted from Guérer – comes from his Seminaire IX „L’identification“ from 1961-62.

that environment. By training our thoughts and modes of being to be more smell-oriented, we might develop a more profound ecological awareness.

To become sensible of smells, we have to undo most of our occidental common places. We cannot actively smell in the same way as we could examine a visually construed object. First, in smelling, one has to submit to the passivity of mingling with the fuzzy surroundings. Since there is no clear object, the inner sense of smell will only then reveal its manifold wisdom: in the smell of olive oil, we can detect olfactory remains of Mediterranean coasts, sunshine and blue waves, reminding us of elements that can also be found in thyme or other Mediterranean herbs. Nutmeg smells like uncountable layers of earth and culture at the same time. Good sommeliers can smell on which stone and on which hillside the grape has been growing. As much as we can smell the producing environment in food, we can develop to smell the environmental consequences and unacknowledged *aprioris* of philosophies, as Nietzsche claims to do. By experimentally orienting ourselves to how thoughts *smell* (and not look like), we might be able to attain more ecologically aware reasonings.

D) Political & Post-Imperial Critique of Reason

As we have seen, bodies were long alien to occidental reasoning. Because of this negation of reflection on the corporeal conditions of Reason, many exclusions were rendered invisible by a seemingly “universal” Reason that produced a certain “mechanization of the body” constitutive of modern capitalism (see also chapter 5.Cb). By a certain order of senses, some foci and some omissions were produced. We have already seen that feminism contributed a large role in undoing these political exclusions by reaffirming bodies and sensualities that were hitherto repressed in mainstream philosophy. We also saw how the mere practice of smell might trigger the basis for a new order, on the socio-political as well as on the epistemological realm.

In this, final, sub-chapter on politically oriented critiques of Reason, we will begin our exploration by revisiting what sociology and political philosophy can contribute with insights into corporeal inscriptions and conditionings of reasonings. With this groundwork set, we will continue with a broader revision of political critique of Reason, passing some of the “grand authors” to attain a better understanding of how *outsourcing* is a key element of occidental Reason. After having done so, we will briefly revisit some post-colonial insights to eventually argue that the only way out of a Monorationalismus is not the negation of European Reason (see also Excursion 3), but – in Dipesh Chakrabarty’s words – the *Provincialization* of Reason to a specific socio-cultural environment. After we have located the *oikos* which occidental Reason sprung from, we can slowly begin our task to detect other Reasonings elsewhere. Thus, a *Provincialization* leads – in my understanding & as we will see at the end of this chapter – directly to a *Pluralization* of Reason.

The work of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) departs from philosophies of the body and tries to work out how bodily orders are inscribed and stratified into every individual body, thereby revealing the material human basis of political order and their conditions of change. In accordance with philosophies of language reiterated above (chapter 3.A), Bourdieu observes that science and philosophy have long misunderstood the constitutive role of language to thought and have thereby neglected their own involvement in the studied matter. A certain “intellectualist” core to occidental Reason derives from such false assumptions. “The status of an observer who withdraws from the situation to observe implies an epistemological, but also a social break, which most subtly governs scientific activity when it ceases to be seen as such, leading to an implicit theory of practices that is linked to forgetfulness of the social conditions of scientific activity.” (Bourdieu 1990, 33) This forgetfulness – and repression – of the social and bodily conditions of Reason is materialized in what Bourdieu calls the *habitus* – a set of not- or only semi-reflected postures that, in a society, mark the territory for certain ways of *practicing* Reason (or not). According to him, every *theoretical stance* is already a priori based on manners, conducts and tastes that “engage a

corporeal knowledge that provides a practical comprehension of the world different from the intentional act of conscious decoding that is normally designated by the idea of comprehension.” (Bourdieu 2000, 135) This corporeal *base* of reason will indeed vary to a great deal from their politically assigned place in society mediated by such external factors as skin colour, gender, race, class and other social determinants. Therefore, Reason, as one universal, monorationalist category and its practice in Science (both with capital letters) cannot be universally accessible institutions, but their access is based and conditioned by a socio-political order and a hegemony of power relations, as expressed in (and reproduced by) sexist and racialized categorizations. Certain bodily norms and behaviors allow for partaking in scientific communities, and others not. The idea of a universal Reason equal to all is therefore deceitful because it fails to account for the material basis and socio-political accessibility of certain sanctioned forms of reasoning. Power structures are expressed and imprinted in every body of a society (Ibid. 168. ff). It manifests itself in dispositions and tastes that lead to a certain *automatisation* of power: incorporated tastes and comprehensions lead some people to rather desire a scientific or political career (and to assign themselves closer to “Reason”), while it leads others to rather wish to stay at home, care for reproduction, and let others do the “serious work”. This “legitimizes a relationship of domination by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction.” (Bourdieu 2002, 23) The dominion of white privileged men over women, other classes and races is therefore also enabled by the suppression of the corporeal aspect of Reason. As we can understand from reading Bourdieu’s work, this bourgeois power complex is not only enforced by abstract laws, but is inscribed into every body (both the powerful and the powerless, with endless variations in between) that forms the political.

a) Political Critique (Marx + Engels)

However, we will now take a step back by revisiting a *tour de force* of political critique under the aspect of what can be used for an understanding of the ecological problems of classical Reason and the emergence of ecological reasonings.

In the mid of the 19th century, critiques were put into political practice. Whereas it was – by Kant and his immediate successors – regarded as a writing desk activity of (white privileged) men of Reason (let us remember Kant’s statement in *Was ist Aufklärung?* that political critique should only be uttered in written form while leaving the social order concretely untouched), Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) – among others – formulated the necessity to go beyond theory. This sentiment is galvanized in the famous last of eleven *Theses on Feuerbach* from 1845 saying: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.” By taking on and radicalizing Feuerbach’s philosophy, they opt for a change of the material conditions that will impact thought as much as socio-political conditions. Consciousness, consequently, is thereby regarded as a product of material conditions and “[t]he dispute over the

reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question.” (2 thesis on Feuerbach) From such statements we can derive that Marx and Engels already *sensed* – though incomplete – an ecology of Reason in the making. They realized that Reason is nothing detached from material reality but its product. And a change of material reality would as much effect reason as a change of Reason would indicate a change of material conditions.

For Marx and Engels, Nature and humanity are regarded as intrinsically one: “Nature is man’s *inorganic* body- nature, that is, in so far as it is not itself the human body. Man *lives* on nature means that nature is his *body*, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man’s physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.” (Marx 1964, 112)⁵⁶ The analytic distinction between humans and nature emerges only at a certain level of labor division and cultural development, “as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, as step which is conditioned by their physical organization.” (Marx and Engels 1947, 7) With such a productive shift *he* rendered *himself* capable of impressing *his* “stamp on nature through hand and brain” (Engels 1954, 306) leading them to remark how much the industrial capitalist ways of production have left their mark: “There is devilishly little left of ‘nature’ as it was in Germany at the time when the Germanic peoples immigrated into it. The earth’s surface, climate, vegetation, fauna, and the human being themselves have infinitely changed, and all this owing to human activity, while the changes of nature in Germany which have occurred in this period of time without human interference are incalculably small.” (Ibid.)

While Marx and Engels have been repeatedly accused⁵⁷ of regarding matter as mere material and nature as passive and ready for human usage without any consequences, a closer look can reveal quite the difference: “Marx was by no means blind to environmental issues. Influenced by the reflections of the German chemist Justus von Liebig, he developed a systematic critique of capitalist ‘exploitation’ of the earth around 1860, focusing primarily on two issues: the theft of its nutrients and the inability of humans to ensure their regeneration. His analysis of capitalist agriculture culminated in an account of the ways in which industry and large-scale agriculture work together to suck the soil and the workers dry.” (Foster 2018⁵⁸)

Their analysis of capitalism is in fact deeply inspired by ecological reflections. The majoritarian work division that brought forth capitalism, according to Marx and Engels, equally exploits other

⁵⁶ All citations from Marx and Engels are found in Parsons 2007.

⁵⁷ It should be added that the interpretations of Marxism are almost as manifold as that of the bible and the very brief interpretation of Marx and Engels in this sub-chapter is a very affirmative perspective of how they can be *used* productively for ecological purposes.

⁵⁸ Original quote: “Marx war keineswegs blind für Umweltfragen. Beeinflusst von den Überlegungen des deutschen Chemikers Justus von Liebig, entwickelte er um 1860 eine systematische Kritik der kapitalistischen ‘Ausbeutung’ der Erde, die vor allem auf zwei Punkte abhob: den Diebstahl ihrer Nährstoffe und die Unfähigkeit der Menschen, deren Regeneration zu gewährleisten. Seine Analyse der kapitalistischen Landwirtschaft mündete in die Darstellung der Art und Weise, wie Industrie und großformatige Landwirtschaft zusammenwirken, um die Böden und die Arbeiter auszusaugen.”

peoples and genders⁵⁹, ruin's the worker's health as much as the soil's fertility. "Capitalist production [...] disturbs the circulation of matter between men and the soil, i.e., prevents the return to the soil of its elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; it therefore violates the conditions necessary to lasting fertility of the soil." (Marx 1967, 505) This – what we call today – "unsustainable" relation towards "nature" produces unforeseen and harmful consequences. Although the single actions within this capitalist division of labor might mostly be moved by good intentions – improving health conditions, accelerating food production or exchange, scientific progress and conquest, etc. – they might end up in a more destructive environment. "Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch an account of our human conquest over nature. For each conquest takes its revenge on us. Each of us, it is true, has in the first-place consequences on which we counted, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel out the first." (Engels 1954, 239)

Consequently, there seems to be a certain blindness to ecological and longer-lasting effects of our actions connected to our capitalist mode of production. Friedrich Engels is very clear in identifying this ecologically deficient mode of reasoning with Modern Science and its tendency towards a mechanistic, dead universe: "The analysis of Nature into its individual parts, the grouping of the different natural processes and natural objects in definite classes, the study of the internal anatomy of organized bodies in their manifold forms — these were the fundamental conditions of the gigantic strides in our knowledge of Nature that have been made during the last 400 years. But this method of work has also left us as legacy the habit of observing natural objects and processes in isolation, apart from their connection with the vast whole; of observing them in repose, not in motion; as constraints, not as essentially variables; in their death, not in their life. And when this way of looking at things was transferred by Bacon and Locke from natural science to philosophy, it begot the narrow, metaphysical mode of thought peculiar to the last century." (Engels 1966, 29) This narrow-minded occidental reason, which – as Engels claims – is directly inherited from the Ancient Greek philosophies of Aristotle and Plato – "has hitherto entirely neglected the influence of men's activity on their thought; both know only nature on the one hand and thought on the other. But it is precisely *the alteration of nature by men*, not solely nature as such, which is the most essential and immediate basis of human thought" (Engels 1954, 306). *Nature* is understood to be the real basis of thought and produces consequences as much as reason itself is built by interaction with nature. In the capitalist mode of production (including knowledge production), this ecologically fatal distinction will be maintained, according to Marx and Engels. Only a change of our political and social systems will alter this blind spot. Marx and Engels are optimistic in this matter. They

⁵⁹ To show how much Marx' and Engel's political critique can be read in accordance with the eco-feminist critique above, see the following quote: "the first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male." (Engels 2010, 69) - The labor division of capitalism, according to Engels, finds its origin in the dichotomic, heteronormativ and patriarchal subsumation of women under man.

consider Reason and progress on their side and believe in a utopian society in which humans will no longer base their economy and politics on an unequal exploitation of workers, women, other peoples and the earth is *logically* coming. “And, in fact, with every day that passes we are learning to understand these laws more correctly, and getting to know both the more immediate and the more remote consequences of our interference with the traditional course of nature...” (Ibid. 246)

b) Critical Theory (Adorno + Horkheimer)

This optimism that Marx and Engels still upheld was scattered by events such as the Holocaust and the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs in the 20th century. “While Marx and Engels displayed an extraordinary understanding of and sensitivity toward the ‘ecological’ costs of capitalism, [...] they nevertheless bought into the enlightenment myth of progress via the domination of nature.” (Merchant 2007, 16) This myth of progress through Reason was most famously put into doubt by theorists of the Frankfurt school such as Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895-1973). Deeply influenced by the unprecedented destruction of the two World Wars they witnessed, human (=occidental) Reason and its tendency to seclude the subject from its environment became their main focal point. They argued that in “the ancient world the emergence of a sense of self as distinct from the external world entailed a denial of internal nature in the human being” (Ibid. 17) This denial of internal nature, brought forth by an emerging class society, was initiated “for the sake of domination over non-human nature and other men.” (Ibid.) The power over nature and other people therefore was based on an alienated relationship to oneself(‘s nature). “Through the emergence of his own identity as an individual self, he is able to break the hold of the mythic past and to control his animal instincts, his men, his wife, and other women. He becomes alienated from his own emotions, bodily pleasures, other human beings, and nature itself.” (Merchant 2007, 17)

This dispositive of self-alienation for the sake of dominion, that Adorno and Horkheimer see emerging in Ancient Greece, was methodized in Scientific Modernity and the reign of the bourgeois class in capitalism modernity. According to them, the *smelly* (to not say “dark” and thereby stay with visual metaphors) underside of enlightenment is the disenchantment of nature that allows to remove the magic from nature and turn it from subject into an object. This results into class oppression as well as the unreflected destruction of both internal as external nature. Since it cannot see this, enlightenment is itself what it tried to emancipate itself from by means of the logos: it is the myth of modernity and the excessive use of logos as “instrumental reason”. Modern capitalist society, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, is a mythical society with an unacknowledged fetish for Reason. “Bourgeois society lived according to quantification, calculation, profits, exchange, and the logic of identity. But so deeply embedded does this way of thinking become that it is presumed to be reality by mainstream society. So powerful is the mystique of reason as instrument in the control of nature and human bodies that it banishes other modes of participation in the world to the

periphery of society.” (Ibid 18) So whereas Marx and Engels can be said to still identify with this instrumental reason and thereby were still enchanted by the myths of modernity, Adorno and Horkheimer point out that the problem is Reason itself – in the occidental, instrumental fashion it was monopolized in, we might add. From this foundation, a thorough reviewing of this so called “Reason” and its relation to concepts such as “nature” and “labor” is a necessary step to disentangle ourselves from Monorationalism and its problematic consequences.

c) Politics of Nature

Particularly the conceptual dichotomy of nature and matter on one side, “human”, “reason” and “politics” on the other have become an object of scrutiny in the last decades. It has been pointed out that the contemporary idea of “Nature” – as something external to human culture – is a relatively young concept that only emerged in Modernity, which, conceptually, continues with a separation of humans from their environment. The romanticism of “Nature” as something pristine, sublime and to be preserved came about at the same time of human industrialization and its accelerated alienation from the environment through the capitalist labor division (Morton 2009). The “Modern constitution”, as described by Bruno Latour (born 1947), relies on an ontological separation of politics and nature (Latour 2002). Whereas politics were considered solely responsible for matters of human society, science was expected to occupy itself objectively with nature. Consequentially, no human impact on “Nature” could ever have been politically discussed and tackled, for the authority of this domain was completely left to the “objective sciences” (and its progressive conquest and destruction of nature). Additionally, the market that drove capitalism was paradoxically considered to be “natural” (compare chapter 3.Bc, as well as Mirowski 2013; Latour 2004a) and therefore rendered unattainable for political action. Thus, with this dichotomic concept of “Nature” as ontologically severed from human society and its politics, the driving forces behind capitalist modernity and its environmental destruction came out of reach for any political action that could alter the modern status quo in its destructiveness. This shift led to the unconscious production of so called “Quasi-objects” (Serres 2014; Latour 2002) – problematic objects that are mingled between nature and society and thereby become invisible for the modern constitution, such as “climate warming”, the atmospheric ozone depletion or BSE.

In order to devise a politics that could alter this catastrophic ontological separation, a “politics of nature” (Latour 2004a) will have to be devised that can reinclude what has been labeled as “natural” – and thereby apolitical – into politics. Recent protest movements originating in the fights for the ZAD in Notre-Dame-de-Landes near Nantes have invented a political slogan that leads the way: “Nous ne defendons la nature, nous sommes la nature qui se defend.” - “We are not defending nature, we are nature defending itself.” A Politics of Nature will have to identify itself as nature. Humans should no longer consider themselves as fighting or preserving nature, but as being nature themselves. By listening and sensing after our “inner nature” in all its alienation that has been

repressed to make the capitalist world appropriation possible, we might find the potential to overthrow the modern constitution. By reintegrating ourselves within what the moderns used to call “nature” – something that has been so massively troubled and interwoven with our modification that the term became somewhat obsolete – we might find the ambivalent power to overthrow the catastrophic status quo (Stengers 2013a).

d) Normalization + Inscription (Foucault, Taylan, Fressoz)

In the present time called the Anthropocene we become more and more aware of the destructive consequences of the modern monorationalist obsession with Reason. “The domination of external nature by internal nature exacts a cost. The unrestrained use of nature destroys its own conditions for continuation, as the inexorable expansion of capital undercuts its own natural resource base. Similarly, the repression of human emotions and animal pleasures leads not to human happiness, but to anguish. But the tighter the rein, the greater the potential for rebellion. The revolt of nature is thus contained within the enlightenment project. Internal nature rebels psychically, spiritually, and bodily. External nature revolts ecologically.” (Merchant 2007, 18) However, the epistemic regime of modernity devised ways of rendering this rebellion of internal as well as external nature invisible or even productive for its own means. Instead of revisiting Reason and its constitutive role towards Nature, an essential part of the modern constitution consisted in *naturalizing* the human condition under capitalism (with all its internal and external revolts) and thereby postulating them as politically unalterable (as opposed to what was called Nature itself, which was modified more and more intensely).

As Michel Foucault (1926-1984) shows, the rise of psychiatry, criminal law and punishment systems is connected with the normalization and standardization of the deviations produced by the modern rationalist norm. Whereas reason and unreason were considered in a dialogue in earlier times, within the modern dispositive, Reason was set to dominate over unreason, eradicating its consequences and drawbacks of this monorationalistic regime (Foucault 2015). By pathologizing certain behaviors in modern society (such as women’s hysteria, homosexuality, female self-empowerment, etc.) as “mad” and erecting systems of punishment and seclusion for such cases, the revolts of “internal nature” were controlled to not interfere with the modern norm of Monorationalism.

Similarly, the strategic modification of human environment allowed for a control of certain unwanted behaviors in modernity such as revolts, upheavals, strikes, separatism etc. Ferhat Taylan (born 1982) insists that an ecological awareness did not only emerge at the end of the 19th century with the rise of environmental problems, but marks discourses of political control and power throughout modernity. “Simultaneously with the growth of freedom of circulation and exchange in the 18th century, a way of governing men was formed in Europe, which aimed not at prescribing behavior, but at regulating reality, in particular through the organization of the

environments where these freedoms are exercised.” Modern governmentality is marked by a “unprecedented political technology that relies on a vitalist knowledge that seeks to let men do what they want by intervening in their living environment rather than acting by coercion on their bodies.” (Taylan 2018, 11⁶⁰) By modification of streets, quarters, dams and forests certain behaviors were sanctioned, while others were rendered impossible or at least invisible – thereby controlling (to a certain degree) the rebellions of external as well as internal human nature produced by occidental Reason. (Such environmental control is still largely put into place by neoliberal and other “Social designers” (Taylan 2013).)

A similar tendency can be analyzed in the field of risk-management in the domains of public health and technology that accompanied the rise of liberalism. Jean-Baptiste Fressoz shows that the awareness of ecological damage was slowly transformed into a rationalistic, probabilistic regime of the management of hazards and risks within the modern norm of growth and production. “The new liberal power was based on the government of humans through the administration of things. [Le nouveau pouvoir liberal se fondait sur le gouvernement des humains par l’administration de choses.]” (Fressoz 2012, 291) By calculating the risk of – for example – infections (in the wake of the introduction of the smallpox-vaccination in the late 18th century) or the extinction of certain seaweeds (in the context of the introduction of large chemical factories on the Northern coast of France), environmental relating was more and more exercised by a probabilistic reason that calculated risks in order to maximize profits. It was no longer a question of *if* a factory should be built (regional parliaments were suppressed when it came to the decision of building huge, environmentally damaging industrial sites), but much more *how* the ecological damage could be regulated in order to maintain the underlying capitalist societal norm (Ibid. 142-50)⁶¹. Frontal opposition to industrial capitalism was suppressed and exchanged by a numeric, rationalistic practice of how to keep its environmentally damaging practices supportable, *if we all follow Reason*. As a post-revolutionary call for order of 1793 in France expressed: “When a revolution comes to an end [...] it is necessary to chain men to reason for the precision of ideas and the rigor of proof. [Lorsqu’une révolution se termine [...] on a besoin d’enchaîner les hommes à la raison pour la précision des idées et par la rigueur des preuves.]”⁶² (via Ibid. 289) Thus, as modern capitalist societies transformed the environment in hitherto unprecedented scales, the political ideal of the majoritarian, liberal philosophies and sciences saw their task neither in convincing people of their norms and transformation nor in asking their judgments and opinions. Much rather, the probabilistic standard was out of discussion and their task was much rather to guide the people to what they

⁶⁰ Original quotes: „[S]imultanément à la croissance des libertés de circulation et d’échange au 18^{ème} siècle, s’était formée en Europe une manière de gouverner les hommes, qui visait non pas à leur prescrire des comportements, mais à réguler la réalité notamment par l’aménagement des milieux où ces libertés s’exercent.” and “technologie politique inédite qui s’appuie sur les savoirs du vivant, pour laisser faire les hommes en intervenant sur leur milieu de vie plutôt que d’agir par coercition sur leur corps.”

⁶¹ This practice continues to be cultivated in neoliberal, „eco-capitalist“ ventures I will outline in chapter 12f.

⁶² The quote is from Marie Jean Antoine de Condorcet, “Tableau général de la science qui a pour objet l’application du calcul aux sciences politiques et morales”, *Journal d’instruction sociale*, 1793, vol. 1, n. 4, p. 109.

established as the good relation towards the environment, which permitted the maintenance of the catastrophic status quo.

Thus, modified environments easily create feelings of “leaving no alternatives” (Pignarre and Stengers 2004). Since occidental Reason is built into our heavily anthropogenically modified environments and their regimes of managing them, we are put into certain “feedback loops” (Jörg 2020a) that make Reason appear like the only option and way of coping with the world (see also chapter 6 on the “Resilience of Reason”). A normalization and inscription of Reason into our inner as well as outer natures makes the liberation of the environmentally destructive forces of Reason a work for everybody on one’s own *body* as well as on one’s surroundings.

e) Machine Fetishism (Hornborg)

The belief in scientific progress and the bettering of lives by means of technology is another central fetish of modernity. Even if some faults and exclusions of occidental Reason are admitted, it might still frequently be justified by its capability to better the lives of “all humans”. Reason might very well be admitted to entail some nasty exclusions, but even if it is the business of white privileged men, does the success of its application not justify their hegemony?

Arguments like that can be – as we will show – identified as *technofetishism* and are deep-rooted in our societies. Technologies are still mostly considered as neutral, and their ecological embeddedness in a specific milieu of productive forces, social hegemony and environmental accessibility is hardly ever included in the reflection about the nature of technology. This can be best exemplified with the example of the steam engine.

The dawn of the steam engine is commonly considered to have triggered a chain reaction of technological development and expansion that was later called the “Industrial Revolution”. According to the modern view of technology, it was the genius of “men of Reason” such as James Watt, who – by the mere power of their cognitive abstraction – invented these technological devices and thereby enabled a hitherto unprecedented expansion of human dominion on the planet. From Great Britain, accordingly, a wave of innovation set forth that changed the world. The light of Reason was ignited in Europe and subsequently brought to the rest of the world.

What this way of telling the story of Reason as a modern success story completely disregards, however, is the fact that the steam engine was already known in Ancient Greece as well as – at least as some suggest – 14th century China. “Steam engines of a sort had been developed in various societies before the eighteenth century, though without ever becoming much more than a curiosity.” (Pomeranz 2000, 61) So it cannot possibly have been mere rational abstraction and the pursuit of science that triggered the European expansion in the wake of industrial modernity.

By revisiting the histories of modernity without its monorationalist bias, we can establish that what discerns 18th century Great Britain from other highly developed areas (in time and space) is not the prevalence of great minds, but a particularly advantageous economic and ecological situation. “The

British shift to steam power was a response to the world market demand for great volumes of inexpensive cotton cloth. Much of this demand came from slave traders in West Africa and slave owners in America, and these very slaves supplied the British cotton textile industry with inexpensive raw material.” (Hornborg 2016a, 17) This particular entanglement of economical dependencies and racist exclusions made the large-scale use of the steam engine economically profitable for the British Empire. This means that the massive increase of machine use in industrialized Great Britain is not a result of mere proximity to Reason of its brightest men, but is due to a complex global ecological web of exploitation of people and resources that became dependent in direct or indirect ways to what was euphemistically called the *Commonwealth*.

Whereas the level of cultural development was comparable in the developed areas of what is today called Europe, China and India until the 18th century (Pomeranz 2000, 17), in the 19th century parts of Western Europe accelerated in ways that left every other cultural region behind. In the eighteenth century, the Yangzi Delta, the Bengal region and England faced similar problems of environmental exhaust. Their immediate neighboring regions were exploited to a critical degree, deforestation reached its peak and the declining availability of other natural resources would not allow any more growth in population and wealth (Ibid. 211 ff.). What made the difference for England – and subsequently Western Europe – was not primarily its geniuses and their modern technology, but the more favorable position in terms of access to ecological windfalls. With its greater proximity to the newly discovered continents of the Americas and the already established colonial hegemony, it could outsource its environmental damage, stabilize its own ecologies and obtain the additional resources necessary for more growth. “These global conjunctures allowed western Europeans access to amounts of additional land-intensive resources. Moreover, they could obtain these resources without needing to further strain a European ecology that was already hard-pressed *before* the great nineteenth-century boom in population and per capita resource use, and without having to reallocate vast amounts of their own labor to the various labor-intensive activities that would have been necessary to manage their own land for higher yield and greater ecological sustainability. Without these ‘external’ factors, Europe’s inventions alone might have been not much more revolutionary in their impact on economy and society than the marginal technological improvements that continued to occur in eighteenth-century China, India, and elsewhere” (Ibid. 32) These “external factors” are concealed in the modern understanding of technology. Analogous to its understanding of Reason, that excludes a reflection of the ecology that made it, technology is fetishized as a mere result of geniuses applying Reason without taking into account its ecological prerequisites and costs. The ontologies of the Moderns – be it Cartesian dualism or Locke’ian bifurcation into primary and secondary qualities – helped to render the “external factors” that constitute industrial technology invisible (Hornborg 2011, 28 ff.). Unfortunately, many of the contemporary attempts of establishing a “Green capitalism” remain blind to this inherently

exploitative nature of modern technology when they put their hopes into new technologies that could solve our ecological problems: capitalism and its technology are ontologically based on unequal exchange and environmental load displacement. “The very existence of industrial technology has thus from the very start been a global phenomenon, which has intertwined political, socio-economic, and environmental histories in complex and inequitable ways. Technological rationality is never disconnected from issues of global resource distribution. [...] We need to understand that technology is not simply a relation between humans and their natural environment, but more fundamentally a way of organizing global human society.” (Ibid. 4) By way of this reorganization we are “physically establishing social inequalities”, anchoring our social relation into various artifacts such as machines (Hornborg 2018, 5+10).

Our orthodox economic theories, including that of Karl Marx, have been blind to this essential asymmetry of Industrial Capitalism (Hornborg 2011, 102 ff.). Marx’ belief in the progress attainable by Reason included a Promethean understanding of technology “as innocent ‘in itself’” (Hornborg 2018, 4) Although he saw and massively criticized particularly the British inequalities that arose after the so called Industrial Revolution, he did not see how much the modern occidental notions of Reason and progress are inherently entangled with those inequalities. Through this unseeing he merely proposed a different way of organizing society without tackling industrial technology as embodiment of a particular social and economic situation as such.

A deeper understanding of the modern entanglement of reason, nature and labor will therefore require “a rethinking of industrialization in terms of the appropriation of land and labor from elsewhere.” (Hornborg 2011, 85) Occidental reason managed to hide the exploitative asymmetric flows constitutive to modern capitalism. “Thus the world’s first ‘modern’ core and its first ‘modern’ periphery were created in tandem” (Pomeranz 2000, 25) Neither occidental reason, nor its modern form of technology are innocent vehicles that could reflect and thereby *progressively* tackle the current capitalist inequalities. Their very possibility is based on such inequalities, confirming the already earlier assumed intuition that occidental reason is ontologically based on the outsourcing of labor essential to its very existence. As much as white men, in order to pursue “pure reason”, needed women and other genders to outsource reproductive and material labor to, occidental technology (as the applied form of modern scientific reasoning) requires the outsourcing of ecological devastation, human and non-human labor as well as resource extraction to other parts of the world.

Up until today “global patterns of asymmetric resource exchange established in the early phases of industrialization have continued to reinforce themselves through the continuing of technological superiority (i.e. the accumulation of capital) that they engendered in north-western Europe (Hornborg 2011, 84). Although the wealthiest countries of the world (USA, Canada, greater Western Europe and Japan) are characterized by the most intense use of Industrial technologies, the

consequences of this use are shifted to the exploited areas. Although India's or China's *per capita* ecological footprint today is much lower, you can see the myriad of devastation, t pollution and dirt & downsides of industrialization much clearer than if you roam the streets of Amsterdam, Tokyo or Boston. The outsourcing of ecological catastrophe is a central foundation of capitalist exploitation allowing for 'technological advancement'.⁶³

f) Post-Colonial Critique (Spivak + Acheraiou)

This outsourcing of ecological exhaust is connected to and partially resulting from an internalized stance of European racial supremacy deeply in-bedded in occidental Reason. As we have seen, occidental Reason is based on a disavowal of the ecological grounds it stands on. By rejecting its bodily situatedness that created it in the first place and replacing it with a stable transcendence, it sets itself as universally applicable. Thereby it erases its local, as well as economic, ecological, cultural, social or political specificities and claims universal applicability. By hiding the local it set itself as a false global unity. "Already in the thinking of unity [Einheitsdenken] there is an expansionist moment, insofar as rationality from its Greek beginnings aims at grasping the totality of being; in this sense, it is itself an 'expansive' [ausgreifendes] thinking." (Vieta 2012, 230⁶⁴) In the times of European imperialism this dispositive – a liaison of religious mission, scientific exploration and economic interests – spreads itself over the world and overrides every other way of conceiving the world as not reasonable, *not yet* fully reasonable, a site for development, for education, for reformation, for white men to show the way...

This suppression of the ecological and geo-political conditions of Reason creates an abyss ["Abgrund"], that the occidental male philosopher is turning into the ground ["Grund"] or foundation of his reasoning. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (born 1942), one of the most famous thinkers of the imperialist and post-imperialist condition, notes "it is the [Western] philosopher's duty to help men turn the fearful abyss of Nature the mother into the sublime, through reason, with the use of the assumption of God the Father" (Spivak 2003, 30) This, Spivak notes, is exemplified in the work of Kant. The subject of this kind of reason thus replaces *his* ecological origin with a patriarchal order of abstract, transcendent and "sublime" schemes. *He* constructs *himself* an epistemology of stable foundations through which nobody – who isn't *himself* a subject – can penetrate. Although this functionality of a subject that stabilizes itself through the sound foundations of reason "operates in terms of an implicit cultural difference" (Ibid 32), it sets itself as neutrally "human", that – on paper – everybody could equally perform. Being initially construed on concepts as racial supremacy and male hegemony, it still presents itself as a universally accessible Reason – rendering the exclusions it essentially requires for its working invisible. This patriarchal,

⁶³ The last sentences are taken from my article "Ecological Art and the Resilience of Modernism" (Jörg 2017) in which I discuss how ecological art that takes this *technofetishism* into account could look like.

⁶⁴ Original quote: „Bereits im Einheitsdenken liegt ein expansionistisches Moment, insofern Rationalität von ihren griechischen Anfängen an interndiert, die *Gesamtheit* des Seienden zu begreifen, sie ist in diesem Sinne selbst ein 'ausgreifendes' Denken."

Eurocentric concept of Reason makes “man” “an end purpose to which the whole of nature is teleologically subordinated.” (Kant quoted by Spivak 2003, 33) Thus, by suppressing its origins and oppressing the Others it outsources necessary capacities to, the Subject of Reason becomes particularly active and autonomous, subordinating the world, nature and other peoples (which were often considered – like women - to be a part of nature that has to tamed and civilized by “man”) to *his* will.

Whereas this form of the reasonable subject became particularly virulent in the era of European colonialism, the epistemological determinants have been dormant in the occidental concept of Reason since Ancient Greek times. “Modern construction of otherness, which posits Western subjectivity as the human norm, derives much of its substance from classical representations of the barbarians. The Greek and Roman racist depictions of non-Europeans provided a useful reservoir of ideas for modern colonial writers and supporters of empire.” (Acheraïou 2008, 6) Already in the works of Lysias (440-380 BC), Isocrates (436-338 BC), Plato (427-327 BC), Aristotle (384-322 BC), Cicero (106-43 BC) and Sallust (86-34 BC) can we find tropes and depictions of lesser peoples that were incapable of exercising Reason due to their linguistic as well as racial inferiority that served as blueprints for modern concepts of Reason and their inherent, unacknowledged exclusions (Ibid. 5-7)⁶⁵. Every form of empire learns from its predecessors, and those of European modernity took a lot of its concepts, stereotypes and distinctions from the Roman and Greek empires it saw itself an inheritor of. The lands that were colonized in European modernity were considered as “*terrae incognitae*” or “*terrae nullis*” – countries that had no status and where nobody lives, nobody that was considered as a full legal subject and could therefore easily be enslaved, subordinated or mass-slaughtered (Vietta 2012, 157). Thus, the entire globe was transformed according to “rational” standards that originated from an occidental conception of Reason, including, and globally distributing its exclusions. Accordingly, it is pointed out that what is today called the Anthropocene can also be called the “Occidentocene” (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2017). The “Anthropos” – the Greek and thus occidental model of a – human encountered some particularly fortunate ecological settings in its Modernity that made it spread over the globe and enslave and subjugate most human and non-human actors on this planet⁶⁶.

These dormant exclusions of Reason and subjectivity can, when considered to be the only valid form of subjectivity in a globalized world, “at best produce alienated, schizophrenic subjects, and at worst turn the colonised into a sub-humanised, commodified mass” (Acheraïou 2008, 3). Although

⁶⁵ Of course, Europe – and later what is commonly called the “West” - is not the only socio-political empire that exercised such power on other peoples and areas of the world. To ascribe this form of power solely to Europeans would be – in its Christian, all-too Christian form of self-abasement – “a legitimization-by-reversal of the colonial attitude itself.” (Spivak 2003, 39)

⁶⁶ As Danowski and Viveiros de Castro (2017) point out, the “genocide of Amerindian peoples – the end of the world for them – was the beginning of the modern world for Europe: without the despoiling of the Americas, Europe would have never become a backyard of Eurasia, the home continent of civilizations that were much richer than the Europeans during ‘our’ Middle Ages (Byzantium, China, India, the Arab polities). No pillage of the Americas, no capitalism, no Industrial Revolution, thus perhaps no Anthropocene either.” (107)

the situation has changed in so called “post-colonial” times, these structural exclusions are as active as ever, in spite of their becoming more fuzzy. With the rise of economic powers such as China, Brazil, India or Saudi-Arabia the imperial mindset of our times has become asymmetric. It is no longer by definition the “white man” that is in the privileged subject position⁶⁷ (although he still in way too many cases is). Privileged classes around the world are living such an “imperial lifeform” (Brand and Wissen 2017) that structurally relies on the submission of others near and far.

g) Provinzializing and Pluralizing Reason (Chakrabarty)

Since most of the Universities worldwide are based on models of education than stem from the era of European Enlightenment, it has become virtually impossible to think politically or philosophically without referring to notions of the Western subject and its critiques (Chakrabarty 2000, 4). The simple negation of the Western subject and his Reason will, therefore, not be helpful to our project (see Excursion 3 on “Unreason”), for it renders invisible the exclusions that still characterize a “post-colonialist” capitalism. Today, we predominantly encounter a “concealed subject [that] pretends it has ‘no-geopolitical determinations’” (Spivak 1993, 66) but presides as a Subject by disavowal (Ibid. 87). “This S/subject, curiously sewn together into a transparency by denegations, belongs to the exploiters’ side of the international division of labor” (Ibid. 75) and ignores the very fact how it is based on this asymmetry. As much as our still prevalent idea of technology is actively ignoring the global inequalities it ontologically requires, our notion of the free, emancipated and reasonable subject is based on the same disavowed labor division (Ibid. 85). The freedom promised to privileged classes on all continents today is still built on the expenses of others – the “imperial lifeform” has become a globalized consumer good for a privileged bourgeoisie.

In order to engage in this project of rethinking and effectively tackling this “post-imperialist” subjectivity and its reason, one isn’t well advised to completely negate the European heritage and the ways of critique inherent to it. As Dipesh Chakrabarty puts it in his *affirmative* stance towards the deeply problematic tradition of occidental philosophy: “[A]t the end of European imperialism, European thought is a gift to us all. We can talk of provincializing it only in an anticolonial spirit of gratitude.” (Chakrabarty 2000, 255) According to him, the elements of what made European reason have to be re-examined and re-configured, to render their hidden mechanisms of exclusion visible and using its critical potential more wisely thereafter. This requires, as a first step, a *Provincialization* of Europe: showing, how its self-ascribed unity of the only one Reason, the only one subject, the only one history and the only one tradition is internally flawed. The form of unity that was considered as universal by occidental Reason is just one of many ways of *producing* and establishing unity. Even Europe and its intellectual tradition is not one monolithic block, but it is a

⁶⁷ This loss of the *per se* privileged subject position for white men is considered – rightly, in my opinion – to be one of the causes for the current socio-cultural backlash.

fuzzy conglomerate marked by discontinuities, rivalries, and sub-streams. There are many Europes, and many forms of colonialism. Inside as well as outside, many form of reason have been suppressed.

By rendering the repressed margins which “are as plural and diverse as the centers” visible, “Europe appears different when seen from within the experiences of colonialization and inferiorization in specific parts of the world.” “[P]rovincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought – which is now everybody’s heritage and which affects us all – may be renewed from and for the margins⁶⁸” (Ibid. 16). In order to do this, we have to undo Reason’s inclination to become a “totalizing principle” (Ibid. 253) and “see it as one among many ways of being in the world.” (Ibid. 239) When considered monorationalistically as the one and only form of reason, it can only objectify and devalue all other forms of being and reasoning. It will set itself as free from history and its ecological predeterminants and set all other forms as “unreasonable”, “pre-modern”, “underdeveloped”, and “to be helped and reformed.” (Ibid. 238-245) Disavowing it won’t help, for its exclusions are deeply inscribed in our anthropogenically modified world. In order to undo an unproductive resentment against reason, we have to give it another place (Ibid. 249-254) and consider occidental Reason as one among many reasons. This, exactly, will be the aim in the project of Affirmation of Ecological Reasonings.

⁶⁸ Chapter 7 will follow the work of Francois Jullien to investigate this potential for renewal from the margins.

Excursion 3: Unreason

An abundance of critiques can easily lead to negation. It is seductive and seems – at first and second sight – logical to endorse a position of irrationalism after seeing all the shortcomings and horrible side effects of Reason – to embrace Unreason as a consequence of being deceived by Reason. In fact, the Post-Kantian times of critiques of Reason that revealed so many hitherto unreflected dark spots and smelly undersides of Reason saw and see an inflation of all sorts of nihilisms and irrationalisms. The mess resulting from various, ambivalent critiques (of what once appeared so indisputable and clear-cut) makes many withdraw into undifferentiated negation. It seems as though – after having been deceived by a wrong idea of Reason for decades – the occidentals threw Reason overboard with verve and disgust to newly embrace the non-existence of any form of reason-ability, of celebrating the utter nothingness of everything with loud and often destructive noise.

In fact, the era of post-Kantian nihilism many of us still seem to adhere to is not the first historical epoch of metaphysical irrationalism: Epicureans of late antiquity and Voluntarists of the late Medieval can also be identified with such a neglect of Reason (Schnädelbach 2007, 98). For our still partially ongoing modern version of irrationalism, I will examine the work of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) as an exemplar of certain tendencies that are problematic in an all-too-easy stance of “Unreason”.

Schopenhauer saw himself as a direct descendant of Immanuel Kant, whose work he estimated to be “the most important phenomenon which has appeared in philosophy for two thousand years” but nonetheless contained “grave errors” which he had to distill in order to “presuppose and apply what is true and excellent in his doctrine.” While he compared the effect on the mind of Kant’s work to “an operation for cataract on a blind man” he saw that “to put into the hands of those on whom that operation has been successful a pair of cataract spectacles, for the use of which that operation itself is the most necessary condition.” (Schopenhauer 1966, XV) Remaining in the realm of ocularcentric vocabulary, he meant to fulfill the critical work of Kant and thereby stating the thought expressed in his work to be what “has been sought for a very long time under the name of philosophy” (Ibid. XII)

In examining this now famous position of Schopenhauerian nihilism, I will try to reveal some general tendencies of what can happen if a philosophy and its society are in a “critical state” (meaning that most approaches of thought have to be regarded as critical of their own position and seeing their task in criticizing – as opposed to affirming – reality as it is – see next chapter) and thus remain under the spell of Monorationalism.

Schopenhauer found that reasonable thought can be regarded as “nothing more than the physiological function of an internal organ, the brain. In fact, we are justified in asserting that the whole of the objective world, so boundless in space, so infinite in time, so unfathomable in its

perfection, is really only a certain movement or affection of the pulpy mass in the skull.” (Ibid. II – 273) According to Schopenhauer, Kant avoided the tricky questions of the materiality (and hence constructed-ness) of Reason that are revealed by the discovery of the brain, which led Kant hypostasize a transcendent, immaterial soul, “which merely dwelt in the brain”. (Ibid. II – 199 & 273) Consequently, for Kant the world (what Schopenhauer calls in the fashion of his time “will”) is structured as reasonable in its foundations and is hence cognitively accessible to the transcendent Reason of the eternal soul that only temporarily resides in the corporeal realm. Schopenhauer breaks with this millennia old prejudice of the prevalence of Reason in the world by affirming that the logical-analytical means of accessing and processing the world are just one of many and do not deserve any qualitative differentiation. There is no true essence that can be rationally attained – the *Ding an sich*, that already Kant rejected us direct access to, is turned into a humanly unfathomable will that can never be acquired by *men*.

This critique leads Schopenhauer to certain insights that we have already encountered in the previous chapter. He ascertains that the obsession with logical rigidity of Reason is flawed and a result of certain misconceptions of logic (Schopenhauer 2016). He affirms a hitherto unseen importance of the body and its materiality for the constitutedness of Reason (Ibid. §17) and seeks refuge in the arts – and especially music – for other ways of expressing the *will*⁶⁹.

However, Schopenhauer stays attached to Monorationalism and, in doing so, remains a purely critical philosopher in direct – but more pessimistic – heritage of Kant. For these insights into the material and environmentally specific constitutedness of Reason do not lead Schopenhauer to perceive a possible pluralization of Reason. He instead remains attached to this one – very tendenciously conceived – idea of Reason – and – in the *light* of his insights – decides that it is necessary to neglect it.

Schopenhauer’s reaction to the insights of critiques is irrationalism and nihilism. He sees the will as essentially ground-, purpose- and worthless – an ever-throbbing, ever-moving, ever-becoming process that can never sufficiently be contained by any human capacity (be it Reason, Musicality or any other form). But he is not yet capable of accepting being part of this greater, unfathomable

⁶⁹ “Thus music is as immediate an objectification and copy of the whole will as the world itself is, indeed as the Ideas are, the multiplied phenomenon of which constitutes the world of individual things. Therefore music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a copy of the will itself, the objectivity of which are the Ideas. For this reason the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence.” (Ibid. I - 257)

chaosmos⁷⁰, but yearns for a more stable, static status: a position of control and human – male, Eurocentric – supremacy of an orderly cosmos.

Schopenhauer's position is characterized by what can be called a *nostalgia* for Reason. Critique made him see the arbitrariness of occidental Monorationalism, but he still can not really imagine living in the messy chaos that remains when occidental Reason and its promise of an orderly cosmos is rightfully deconstructed.

This leads him to a very pessimistic stance: "The in-itself of life, the will, existence itself, is a constant suffering, and is partly woeful, partly fearful" (Ibid. I – 267)⁷¹ By having lost the promise of order (and subsequent dominance) over the universe (including nature, other genders and people), white men like Schopenhauer get sulky, woe- and fearful.

This constant state of dissatisfaction and horror Schopenhauer found himself in contains toxic and destructive forces that – I would argue – still haunt us. It required him to stage himself as the true artist genius for he finds that the "pleasure of everything beautiful, the consolation afforded by art, the enthusiasm of the artist which enables him to forget the cares of life, this one advantage of the genius over other men alone [is] compensating him for the suffering that is heightened in proportion to the clearness of consciousness, and for the desert loneliness among a different race of men" (Ibid.) But such discontented, frustrated men like Schopenhauer only find momentary relief in the arts for "it does not deliver him from life for ever, but only for a few moments. For him it is not the way out of life, but only an occasional consolation in it, until his power, enhanced by this contemplation, finally becomes tired of the spectacle, and seizes the serious side of things." (Ibid.)

This seriousness of things – *men have to stay serious, hard and smart* – leads him to a radical ethics: what he calls the "denial of the will to live" (Ibid. II - 603 ff.). Since every form of life for this men is only conceivable as mere suffering, it has to be denied, neglected and destroyed. Whereas the genitals are seen as the key drive behind an affirmative position towards the will to live, the brain is said to adhere to its denial (Ibid. II-335). Such men do not lower themselves to the animality of their sexuality and material affections, they rather destroy what is affecting them in a way they cannot cope with without the – lost – guidance of unearthly, unbodily Reason. A world without Reason's order seems unsupportable to such men, it leads them to a desire of destroying every will to live and becoming (in them and the world) – to efface the world with Reason

⁷⁰ The neologism „chaosmos“ introduced here is – to my knowledge – a very apt invention of Fèlix Guattari I will be using frequently in the rest of this thesis. Whereas the term „cosmos“ stems from the Ancient Greek meanings of „order, good order, orderly arrangement“ - and thus expresses the Platonist heritage of expecting the universe to be a well-ordered entity that can be thoroughly seen through by Reason (compare chapter 5.A) -, „chaosmos“ expresses the dawning modern insight that the universe is much more a matter of chaos that – in its unfathomable, uncentred vastness can never be fully understood by human reasoning. However, this does not mean that in such a chaosmos every attempt of understanding and reasoning is futile. As we will see in chapter 9, contemporary scientific studies manage to find a certain „order within chaos“ and see „chaos“ as a vital necessity for anything living on this planet.

⁷¹ For more on the relationship of fear, suffering and occidental fundamentalism, compare chapter "Angst" in my book *Backlash – Essays zur Resilienz der Moderne*. Textem: Hamburg 2020.

altogether. If there is no cosmos privileged men like Schopenhauer can metaphysically dominate, they want to do away with it for good.

In the words of Nietzsche – the perhaps sharpest critic of nihilism and direct follower of Schopenhauer –: “Nihilism as a symptom of the badly off⁷² having lost all consolation: that they destroy in order to be destroyed, that once separated from morality they no longer have any reason to 'submit'”. “One interpretation has perished; but because it was regarded as the interpretation, there now seems to be no meaning at all in existence, everything seems to be in vain.” (§12 & §4 of Nietzsche’s *Lenzer Heide* Fragment, see Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1886,5[71]) This “most paralyzing thought” (Ibid. §5) is highly destructive to oneself and the environment⁷³ and won’t change much about the status quo of things: „It does not make sense simply to be in opposition to modern ontologies, as the operations from which they are derived remain implicit, and find their efficacy in their effacement“ (Debaise 2017a, 26) Unreason and Reason are part of one image of thought, and the position of irrationalism allows the prolonged efficiency of Reason exactly in its effacement. The Schopenhauer’ian solution is therefore one of mere stultifying escapism: his strategy is – in Timothy Morton’s words – to “emerge from the heavy atmosphere of the earth” and ignore the ongoing destruction of Reason with a decadent aesthetic “that soothes the mind to a state of tranquil dissolution.” (Morton 2009, 118)

In order to really overcome this ongoing destructiveness which comes to terms with itself through embracing Unreason, there is much more work to do than to sulkily withdraw oneself from the scene. Whereas the old, modernist constitution always needed to “set up an opposition between the rational and the irrational in order to make reason triumph”, a first step to find our way out of this predicament that brought us into the Anthropocene will consist in “abstaining from making a distinction between the rational and the irrational, by rejecting the distinction as a drug that paralyzes politics” (Latour 2004a, 94). By pluralizing Reason and drawing manifold maps of what can be regarded reasonable from which perspective, both Reason and Unreason lose their touch of essential categories but become variable in themselves. Calls such as “too much Reason is unreasonable” (Vietta 2016; Wuketits 2013) – as they are quite frequently heard in the more bourgeois areas of societal and ecological criticism – do not help a ecologically progressive politics since they to reproduce a *light version* of Irrationalism that – as we have seen – maintains the Status

⁷² Nietzsche’ analysis is accompanied by his separation of people into nobler and the lesser people. Being himself a deceived and frail man not able to cope and reconsolidate himself with his sensitivity and frailty, Nietzsche has found a cynical – and equally dangerous! – excuse in his idolization of the warrior-like heroes he himself definitely was not a part of. His philosophical insights become, as I would argue, much stronger without these heroic, masculinist flight strategies.

⁷³ Albert Camus has an identical analysis of the destructive force of nihilism, when he writes in *Men in Revolt*: “But nihilism, if it does not exist, tries to do so; and that is enough to make the world a desert. This particular form of madness is what has given our times their forbidding aspect. The land of humanism has become the Europe of today, the land of inhumanity. But the times are ours and how can we disown them? If our history is our hell, still we cannot avert our faces. This horror cannot be escaped, but is assumed in order to be ignored, by the very people who accepted it with lucidity and not by those who, having provoked it, think that they have a right to pronounce judgment.” (Camus 1956, 248)

Quo of Monorationalism. Neither does it help to merely denunciatively criticise the proliferation of irrationality and nihilism in modern and post-modern life, since they usually end up in conservative calls to “bring us back to Reason” without any differentiation on what Reason and – if, as usual, the talk is about the same old occidental monorationalist Reason – how that same Reason that brought us into this very problematic times in the first place should now help us to keep its catastrophic consequences in check.

To attain a more productive and flexible stance, we will have to develop another culture of critiques beyond the modern one, in order to affirm what has been criticised and find manifold ecological reasonings within and without it. This will be the task of the next chapter and the part that follows it.

Presentiment I: First Notes on an Affirmation of Ecological Reason(s)

a) What is (=makes) classical Reason?

After having gone through four narrative stages of various interlacing but at the same time “messy” critiques, I have sharpened the focus on what I understand as “classical occidental Reason” in this first “Presentiment”. In the polyphony of critiques that formed chapter 3, some common traits have been recurring in several stages, which can now be drawn together to a more conclusive image of this Reason⁷⁴ that this thesis seeks to pluralize in its later parts:

1) Reason originates in Ancient Greece but only accelerated and became ecologically problematic in its hitherto unseen dissemination in occidental Modernity: be it the special relationship towards language and text, a certain phallogentric order excluding women, a “somatophobia” or racist stereotypes, all of these traits can be found – in more or less explicit form – in Classical sources of Ancient Greece, be it in Plato, Aristotle or others. In Occidental Modernity – which was inaugurated by a so understood “Renaissance / rebirth” of Ancient Greek culture –, these traits intensified because of their larger dissemination and application through scientific conquest, medial (e.g. the “Gutenberg revolution” and the growing literacy and dissemination of alphabetic text) or colonial spread as well as capitalist institutionalization of social and gendered elites. In turn, a form of reasoning that hitherto was a thing of small, secluded elites (compare chapter 5.C) became the majoritarian way of relating to the world by so called “humans” or “anthropoi” - meaning, firstly, white men in hitherto unseen power over what they deemed “Nature” (including females, non-white and lower-class people, etc.). This majoritarization was so successful that it expressed itself in what I call Monorationalism: claiming that this reason is the only Reason and thereby structurally invisibilizing other reasonings.

2) in order to work it's mechanisms of reproduction, Reason needs to outsource various elements to an exterior: Reason prides itself of a *de facto* very effective limitation to logical, analytical thinking as *the* way of reasonably relating to the world as things expressible in textually construed concepts. In order to achieve this, it requires others to perform the work that Reason itself falls short of. This work is considered inferior and excluded from reasonability – excluded from being socially, culturally and epistemologically accepted to be counted as a reasonable form of partaking in what is widely articulated as “the world”. Thus, women need to do the emotional and (re)productive work rational men do not perform and bodies are forced to certain aesthetic and behavioral norms that cannot be self-reflected. Generally, the “Other” (be it other non-white peoples, non-heteronormative genders, animals, plants or other forms of living and thinking) are expelled from Reason to form its *ground* in the sense of foundation (compare page 109). Reason is, though not acknowledged as so,

⁷⁴ For the sake of brevity, I will retain the capital R and simply write of “Reason” when we mean “classical occidental Reason” as opposed to the plural and more active / processual forms „reasoning“, „Reasoning“ and „Reasonings“.

based (and relying) on what it represses. In its applied form, this heavy reliance on outsourcing makes Science and Technology reliant on the outsourcing of ecological exhaust as well as human- and non-human labor.

3) Reason is blind to production, be it what it produces or how it is produced: seeing itself as free from its material conditions (2), it can neither account for its own reliance, nor its imprint, on them. Reason cannot constitutively comprehend itself as the product of a certain environment including social, cultural, ecological and historical factors and thus wrongly sets itself as universal. The toxic universalism⁷⁵ that characterises Reason is thus badly equipped to include into its reflection the normative as well as social and material production and conditioning it forces onto various exterior ecologies. This framework guarantees its excessive form of power it developed in Modernity. By creating a transcendence with pseudo-participatory universality, Reason established a hegemonic order that is hugely destructive to the “outside” (the environment and other social groups), without rendering them capable of conceiving an alternative to the one and only Reason.

To these three points important for reflecting on a possible Affirmation of Ecological Reasoning(s) we might additionally include Reason’s particular relation to text, making *logos* and Reason synonymous (as presented in chapter 3.1). An ecological reasoning will need to establish a new relation to text, making Reason’s almost inseparable relation to *logic* questionable. We will take on this threat next in the chapters 6.d, 8 and 10.

b) Speculations on Ecological Reason(s) to come

We can use this first summary of Classical Occidental Reason to undertake some interim reflections on the Affirmation of Ecological Reasonings that is the aim of this thesis.

One of the many mechanisms by which Reason defines itself is by limiting itself to a certain mental, sensory and corporeal regime. As we have seen in the last chapter, critiques have shown how this epistemic order appears as more and more problematic from various emerging angles in the dawning of the Anthropocene. This – as a first reaction – lead and still leads to manifold endorsements of Irrationalism and Unreason, which are themselves highly problematic (see Excursion 3). “There is no Reason in the Anthropocene” is a sentence I have heard frequently on conferences around such topics. Such a stance seems to me to result from a deepened understanding and feeling of the mess the “boundary event” and ecological time of turmoil entails (chapter 1g)

⁷⁵ I want to note at this point that the occidental philosophical tradition (in its modern form) is of course not the only tradition that developed a claim of universality. In fact, it can be argued that most religions (be it Christianity, Islam or Judaism) developed even stronger universality-claims and that much of modern occidental philosophy can be – at least partially – regarded as a counter-reaction to delimit such religious claims towards transcendent universalism by countering them with a *more rational* universality. However, this universality that undoubtedly (see also chapter 5) characterizes the story of modern, occidental Reason has acquired a hegemonic status of explaining and structuring the world to a degree that no religion has (or had) ever attained. It is for this reason – and its ecological consequences in the Anthropocene – that I believe that a critical focus on modern Reason’s universalism is justified.

combined with an unwillingness or inability to think reasonability outside of the “traditional” box of Monorationalism.

Since I hope to have shown that a stance of “Unreason” is in-itself problematic for reproducing similar traits of exclusion as Reason itself, the narrative impetus of this thesis tries to invent a different reaction that somewhat mirrors the messy problems that we face today. By experimentally undoing Monorationalism, it wants to consider reasonings that fall outside of the majoritarian criteria for monorationalist reasonability. These pluralized reasonings will hopefully present a more apt way to deal with the so called “Anthropocene” than a mere negation of reasonability. To start by showing that this “Reason” is indeed a product from its own specific environmental, social, and cultural entanglements, I have committed to the position that such other reasonings which operate outside of that criteria of “Reason” will have to follow *and* be produced by different epistemological and environmental regimes. This also includes a different relation to critique and the problems it denotes, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Whereas we could identify the suppression and blind spots of occidental Reason highlighted above as problematic, it might be unrealistic to consider the possibility of a form of reasoning which does not filter at all – which does not prioritize certain aspects and neglect others. Every context, epistemology, environment, and atmosphere has, within it, a differentiating rubric.

Ecological reasonings, for example, will tend to entail a devaluation of truth, static models and stable logical relations (see Excursion 4 etc.). Classical Occidental Reason will retain certain advantages in comparison with Ecological Reason and the project of affirming the later does not entail fully rejecting Occidental Reason (see Presentiment III) – as already argued (Chapter 1+2), it much rather is an invitation towards Multirationalism: the affirmation of various reasonings to get out of our catastrophic narrow mindedness of Monorationalism (and its negative copy of “Unreason”).

While a certain environment and socio-cultural order produced Occidental Reason, another one produces – in this case the Anthropocene – a mess from and in which other, more ecological reasonings can be traced and narratively synthesized. By understanding this – and countering the tendency to negate the existence of any reasonability in the Anthropocene –, we can include the affirmation of our environments into the realm of reasonability. By understanding the becoming of any reason in relation to its ecological context, one can carefully attempt an affirmation of certain *productive conditions* in order to create other ways of thoughtfully relating to a time called the Anthropocene. *Seize the means of production!* - the classical Marxist slogan can be extended to the epistemic realm. We have to reflect on what sensory, gendered, social, cultural, etc. order produces what kind of reasoning and which one – in a certain field, milieu, ecology, school, moment, etc. we might best be suited with. The development of our environments sanctions the development and production of our reasonings – but all of this is only possible if we dare to pluralize Reason and

overcome Monorationalism. If we still adhere to Monorationalism, I don't see much other option than negating reasonability in general, which would be – as I have tried to argue – a death-sentence.

Deciding which reasoning should rather be applied to which field, is, in itself, becoming ecological: in various domains (logic, certain scientific practices, certain forms of politics, etc.) the regime of Occidental Reason could remain regarded as the most effective for certain ends. Such a meta-reflection on the multiple applicability of reasonings, however, is already a part of an affirmative and pluralized ecological reasoning, for it necessarily entails the inclusion of the reflection of the fuzzy environment that stands in a productive (e.g. is produced by and produces in) relation to a certain reasoning. In this, we might already be touching what form of critique an ecological reasoning might be able to perform: delimiting its ecological productive realm by means of affirmation.

An anthropocentric, megalomaniac relation to the environment produces modern occidental Reason: one in which man (sic!) distinguishes *himself* critically from all other earthbound beings. This form of critically setting himself apart necessarily results in an exclusion of ecology from reasonability. Nevertheless, the excluded makes itself noticeable in the “Anthropocene” and it demands to find different forms of relating to the world. If one casts aside the spectacles of occidental reason in all its anthropocentric megalomania, we can detect that such forms of ecological reasonings have always been operative below the radars of canonical philosophers (see chapter 5) and became more and more developed in the course of the last centuries. We are part of this world and (re)act in (not to!) it accordingly. The anthropocentric megalomania is in fact one possible mode of re-action: completely ignoring it and pretending to be the ones in power did – and does still – work for the hegemonic occidental powerful and their Reason. Yet, as we reach the limits of our planetary meta-stability, a reflection on productive conditions without any exceptionalist voluntarism becomes a necessary reasonability to be developed to get beyond the Anthropocene and develop manifold – and more-than-human – new and old forms of “living-with and dying-with each other potently” (Haraway 2016, 2).

The archive of critiques in modernity that have already significantly developed this reflexive instance about productivity lets us assume that modern critiques can already be regarded as a signifier for the emergence of ecological reasoning(s) from a negative angle (we will elaborate on what this means, how this defines critique's limits and calls for an affirmation in the next chapter).

Lastly, it has to be added that there never was one Reason. Even in Ancient Athens or 16th century Amsterdam (see chapter 5) other reasonings were detectable but repressed by hegemonic Monorationalism. Everywhere and every-when various reasonings are and were latent and potential – different angles, class-belongings as situations in a milieu will sanction the stronger development

and prevalence of certain reasonings as opposed to others. Therefore, an eco-feminist, anti-imperialist agenda with a focus on more bodily, less textually mediated sense/uality should be beneficial for the further emergence and rising awareness of ecological reasonings, whereas neo-fascist tendencies that embrace ethnicism, separatism, patriarchy and sexism will hinder its becoming aware, while at the same time being a reaction to its emergence (see Excursion 4). Critique can inform us how notions of “truth”, “subject”, “action”, etc. are produced, to embrace and formulate an alternative requires the addition of affirmative impulses (within and aside critique).

So much about these first interim reflections on a production and affirmation of ecological reasonings. In the next chapter I will return to its subject of Critique, its limits, dangers and possibilities. The part (III) after that will then occupy itself with the topic of Emergence and Pluralization and fuel some of the arguments already dropped here. After that, the affirmative part (IV) of this PhD will eventually start and we will continue to develop what has been condensed here.

4) How does critique matter?

In contemporary discourses around critical thinking, one witnesses a strong obsession with purity and pure positions (Shotwell 2016). For example, the dawning of environmental insights leads many (mostly richer people) to only want to consume organic, toxic-free produce and live a lifestyle that is pure from the toxicity that makes and is our biosphere in the Anthropocene. Similarly, anti-racist discourses frequently want to free themselves completely from an entanglement with a still deeply racist world, which sometimes leads to invisibilizing the inherent racism within their structures. And some feminist critiques tend to strive for spaces that are free of any sexual tension at all, thereby negating sexuality altogether and outsourcing the problems of sexism to others with less economic privilege.

While this desire for a world free of problematic structures is understandable, its realization through critical thinking is impossible. Critical thinking simply needs problems: as we have seen in the last chapter, by means of critique we could describe in more detail some of the problematic traits of a Reason fetishized in canonical occidental discourses. These problems were only rendered visible by critical thinking, and critical thinking is required to navigate reasonably within and against (which counter-intuitively is not contradictory) them. There is no outside of the problematic for critical thinking, simply because critical thinking is a means to distinguish, identify and condemn problems in a discursive manner. Without problems, there would be no critical thinking.

In this chapter, we will review a genealogy of Critique that will help us understand how it came to this curious and yet so predominant trait of contemporary critical thinking to want to stay free of the problematic. This will lead us to reflect on how a critical thinking that affirms its essential and necessary impurity as well as its strange alliance with the problematic could look like.

In the last chapter, I have tried to delimit and inform myself what can be called „classical occidental Reason” by means of various critiques. This *tour de force* allowed me to describe in more detail what are some general traits and properties of *this* particular-Reason, that considers itself as the only (possible) one. Critiques of Reason do reveal to us various problems of Reason. However, if Critique remains to be a practice of denunciation, these problems might just as well lead to paralysis or even resentful irrationalism. I believe, with this in mind, that it is necessary to develop a different relationship towards critiques and the problems it can reveal to us – by regarding problems as *food for thought* I will speculate about a no longer modern form of critique in which critiques can matter in a time that is no longer modern.

This chapter will inform itself about the nature, preconditions, possibilities and limits of critique, as well as its liaison with *this* particular Reason in Modernity. At least since the times of Kant, Critique

(with a capital C) is the business of *delimiting* Reason: of showing what can be described by Reason in showing where the just application of Reason does end. In Modern European Philosophy, this form of critical distinction and differentiation seems to have become regarded as *the* mode of Reason. However, such a work of delimitation will have difficulties in affirming other modes of reasonability. Critique necessarily stays bound to the object it criticizes, as has been argued in earlier sub-chapters. Thereby, the speculative investigation of other forms of reason will – at least partially – lie outside the delimiting work of critique. Beyond occidental Modernity, critiques will again be regarded as *one* mode of being reasonable – and not as the only one. As we have seen, critiques can delimit what occidental reason constitutes (in the double sense of what constitutes Reason and what this Reason then constitutes) and thereby lead us the way, give us all the necessary information we need to sense alternatives elsewhere. But for eventually embracing these alternatives, a more affirmative, speculative and pluralistic attitude will have to be added (as well as be set free within the operation of critiques itself).

This chapter will examine critiques under such angles. It will investigate the specific liaison of Critique (with a capital C) with Modernity and will – by listening to “post” or late modern voices of doubt in critique – inform itself about certain dangers and limits of certain forms of critique prevalent in modernity: critique can turn against itself, fetishize its object and become an obstacle to develop ways beyond its scope. By understanding these dangers in critiques, this chapter will be able to in the end describe how critiques can become affirmative and effective for a philosophical endeavor beyond an anthropocentric Modernity that reassures as well as reinforces itself by means of Critique.

a) The limits of critique

After being itself criticized and declared to have reached its limits or even end in the last few decades, the current socio-political Backlash (associated with names such as “Trump”, “Bolsonaro” or “LePen”) brought forth a certain Renaissance of Critique. This development can be regarded as a productive exit-strategy out of too much post-modern “anything goes”-attitudes, that created a state of polar inertia or “raging deadlock” (Virilio 2000) in which no optimism seemed to be *realistic*. However, we are still well advised to take the downgrading of Critique (that characterized our most recent discursive past) serious to not end up in a reproduction of two seemingly opponent dialectical positions that in their joint dynamic fuel the current backlash by upholding the modern constitution (Jörg 2020a). In this sub-chapter, we will first briefly reflect on some of the conditions of possibility of critique and will then go on to investigate the special relationship of modernity and Critique. This will lead us to measure some of the dangers of the modern relation to Critique and a concluding survey how to criticize in the context of the emergence of ecological reasonings in the Anthropocene.

„After all, critique only exists in relation to something other than itself: it is an instrument, a means for a future or a truth that it will not know nor happen to be, it oversees a domain it would want to police and is unable to regulate.” (Foucault 1997, 25) This quote taken from Foucault’s lecture *What is critique?* held in 1978 poignantly illustrates the limits of critique. Since critique always has to be critique of something, it remains dependent on its object (Boland 2018, 44). In our case: critique of Reason can inform us about the (problematic) nature of Reason by means of delimitation, but it cannot device another reason. As we have seen in Excursion 3, the mere problematization of Reason does not automatically lead to its overcoming. Much rather, it can lead to nihilistic tendencies of Unreason, in which the problems become regarded as something to be avoided and thus “find their efficacy in their effacement” (Debaise 2017a, 26).

This dynamic appears in various discursive fields of the so called “post-modern” - which, like Unreason, remains inextricably linked to what it tries to overcome by its prefix – it is “a symptom, not a solution (Latour 2002, 76). For example (and as we have seen), the mere negation of the (white, heterosexual, male) Subject does not efface it, but much rather leads to „a Subject that presides by disavowal”(Spivak 1993, 87). Similarly, the declarations of the end of philosophy and /or metaphysics frequently led to a reproduction of their basic traits devoid of the capability to reflect on them. To escape these nihilistic tendencies, an affirmative side has to be added to critique. The problem has to be affirmed and embraced as something we need to think with. This can already be expressed in what I will be calling an “affirmative critique” at the end of this chapter.

But even an affirmative critique will only be the first step to cross over to the other side that Foucault describes critique to be longing for, but it is inherently and, by definition, ill-equipped to do so. For this crossing over, a more speculative audacity to invent new – and easily criticized – narrations about reasonings and the world will be developed (See Excursion 6 and beyond).

b) Critique and Modernity

“Our age is properly the age of critique, and to critique everything must submit.” This quote taken from Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (A Xi) from 1781⁷⁶ illustrates well how much critique must be examined as a specifically modern practice, since it “is with Kantianism that our [= the modern] Constitution receives its truly canonical formulation.” (Latour 2002, 56) In an era that increasingly describes itself as beyond modernity, the relationship of this age of modernity with Kant’s age of critique can be revised. This will help us to distill more knowledge about Critique necessary for an affirmative speculation about other reasonings aside from the one that has been criticized (and fueled by this very critique) during the entire later modernity.

Whereas critique seemed to have *uncritically* been assumed as an end in-itself during modernity, recent philosophical and sociological ventures try to understand Critique as “a thing of this world”

⁷⁶ I am taking this translation from Bolland 2013b, which stays truer to the original “Unser Zeitalter ist das eigentliche Zeitalter der Kritik, der sich alles unterwerfen muß” than most English translations (such as the Cambridge edition) which somehow compulsively have to bring an ISM into the game by translating it with “age of criticism”.

(Boland 2014) and are thereby enabled to reflect on its historical, material and sociological preconditions. An anthropology and sociology of Critique – as carried forth by Tom Boland – tries to understand what makes modern societies particularly critical in taking into account its specific socio-cultural ecologies that tailored towards a prevalence of critique.

Such an *ecological* understanding of critiques does of course not entail its complete abandonment, but much rather its defetishization as a singular access point to truth. By seeing critique in relation to its socio-ecological matrix, it can be made – as we shall see – more effective and less prone to certain unreflected reactionary tendencies many modern critiques have unknowingly or at least unwillingly reproduced. An eco-historical placing of Critique within the realm of modernity⁷⁷ will allow us to distill its important impetuses while laying off its reactionary side-effects that align it to the resilience of classical Reason (see chapter 6) and the Resilience of Modernity (Jörg 2020a).

Such ventures of a “sociology” and “anthropology of critique” (Boland 2013a; 2013b) depart from a Foucauldian impetus towards a genealogy of critique (compare chapter 3.0) and investigate “‘critique’ itself as a historically contingent practice” as well as the “the conditions under which critical subjects emerge and critical discourse circulates” (Boland 2014 109). Such perspectives can relate the emergence of critique to multiple historical factors, such as – as we have seen – “the attempt to read scripture differently from pastoral powers, in terms with struggles over science and truth and, of course, around the limits of sovereignty and individual rights amid an expanding governmentality.” (Ibid. 110) Throughout modernity, criticality seemed to have witnessed an inflation towards almost all domains. “To unmask, that was our sacred task. The task of us moderns” is Latour’s (2002, 44) sloganization of this key modern spirit. “If we take Kant’s quote out of the realm of philosophy and recall his remarks about enlightenment as the release from ‘self-incurred tutelage’ and having the ‘courage to use one’s own reason’, modernity appears animated by critique.” (Boland 2014, 222) “Thus, from the Enlightenment to the contemporary landscape of critique, there is an extraordinary proliferation of critiques, which become more and more strident, but simultaneously [...] more desperate and fragile.” (Boland 2013b, 112) Suspending the questions of the *effectiveness* or even *necessity* of critique, such sociological endeavors can state neutrally that “critique is one of the constitutive forces of modern society, and forms an integral part of modern culture, and the exercise of critique even constitutes the modern self.” (Boland 2013a, 9) This does not mean that every critique is consequentially carried through (if that were at all possible or the aim of critique), but much rather that a critical attitude is characteristic and constitutive to what Latour calls “the Modern Constitution” (Latour 2002). To give a few examples: Schools with their humanist heritage aspire to convey a critical and independent spirit to their students. Capitalist

⁷⁷ Coming from a very different theoretical background, the main proponent of systems-theory, Niklas Luhmann, shares the categorization of critique as a modern phenomenon, while claiming that systems-theory isn’t any longer modern. Compare Luhmann 2008, 249 ff.

marketing strategies have today incorporated gestures of criticality⁷⁸ into their very mode of value production. Contemporary politics appear to gain more and more of their popular enthusiasm from the critique of the so perceived “enemy” (be it the right-wing populists, the mainstream media, the bureaucrats in Washington/Brussels/..., the “Gutmenschen”, the LGBTQI-liberals, etc.). Pop-Culture and Avantgardist artistic strategies almost always rely on a critical stance towards what is seen as the norm, thereby stating their necessary individuality. More generally, a critical attitude seems to become universally regarded as a centrally important humanist trait during European Modernity, which is today even in the educative agendas of many OECD-states and international business schools (Boland 2018, 78). This can be linked to the defining core of Modernity’s self-understanding which must critically differentiate itself from a so perceived “primitive”, “pre-modern” past in order to reproduce its teleologism. The “Men of Reason” of Modernity set themselves apart by means of Critique. Delimiting their territory by critical reflection, they came to see themselves as the centers of the universe with the only access point to Reason⁷⁹.

Whereas, in classical anthropological understanding, societies can be regarded as bound together by certain – mostly or partly unconscious – collective beliefs, an anthropology of the moderns states that their societies are – to a certain degree – bound together by a shared common ground of a *belief* in criticality: meaning – however paradoxically that may sound – that modern societies are characterized by the individuals’ possibility *to set themselves apart* (Boland 2013a, 5–6). However, this is still a social gesture depending on a societal organization allowing it. The specific placing of critique within modern society allows the emancipation / alienation from socio-ecological constraints to a hegemonic majority. “Critique is generally rare or greatly circumscribed, except in modern times. Critique is a social phenomenon, even though it is manifestly anti-social in that it disrupts and exposes existing truth-claims which hold societies together.” (Ibid.) Such a dynamic, that is a constitutive force of modernity, marks the innovative and expansive force of modernity, which has to be understood in its constitutive relationship with critique and crisis (see Excursion 5) – perpetually prolonged crises. The state of polar inertia or “raging deadlock” mentioned above can be regarded as a phenomenon of late and “hyper-modernity”, marked by a severe proliferation of critique as well as the modern normalisations that go along with it, including the ecological, social and cultural crises it creates. The end of modernity is accompanied with the excess of modernity.

⁷⁸ “Consumerism itself is a machine propelled madly onward by no less plentiful a fuel than popular disgust with consumerism” T. Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, p. 257 via Boland 2014, p. 120

⁷⁹ “If critique is just a human undertaking, is this not exactly the problem?” - Arno Böhler after the presentation of this chapter in his PhD-colloquium in March 2019. While in contemporary discourses it is more and more shown how acts of cognition and even reasonability can not be restrained to the realm of the “human”, it has – to my knowledge – nowhere been affirmed that critique can also be performed by non-humans. Can the sparrow, the tree, or even the rock be critical? Since – as we have now seen – critique has been the preferred method of the moderns to set themselves apart from all the rest, these questions seem at first counter-intuitive. If seen as the mere destructive act of setting themselves apart critically, perhaps no other animal might have been as deranged as the “insane animal, the laughing animal, the weeping animal, the miserable animal” that the “animals as critics” “consider man” to be: “a being like themselves that has lost in a most dangerous way its sound animal common sense” (Nietzsche 2009a, FW 224)

Today it can easily seem that everything is the subject of critique, and still – or exactly because of this? – nothing significantly changes. Understanding critique as a modern social phenomenon might explain to us why: critique is in-itself incorporated to be an essential element of modernity and doesn't necessarily mean that things will alter accordingly to critique's content. Another relation to critique than the modern one will be necessary to overcome this raging deadlock. One that sees critique as necessary dependent on its object (see above) and leads the way to an affirmative stance (see affirmative critique) as well as an ecological reasoning that has yet to be affirmed.

c) The dangers of critique

At the end of modernity – announcing itself with “post-”suffixes and beyond – the believe in the unrestrained utility of critique is faltering. To develop a more affirmative stance, we will recount three prominent voices of *post-critical* doubt that can help us to survey certain *dangers of critique* that relate it to the raging deadlock of an – seemingly – unending modernity.

Enlightened false consciousness

Peter Sloterdijk (born 1947) saw a relationship of a predominant feeling of cynicism and post-modern realism with the abundance and excess of critique. In the *post-critical times* he – his *Critique of Cynical Reason* appeared in 1981 – wrote for, he saw a relationship between abundant critiques on the one hand and “polar inertia” of a hypermodernity that won't end on the other.

“If it is discontent in our culture that provokes criticism, there would be no age quite so disposed to criticism as ours. Yet the critical impulse has never been more strongly inclined to let itself be overpowered by a sour temperament. The tension between what wants to ‘criticize’ and what should be ‘criticized’ is so taut that our thinking is becoming much more morose than precise. No capacity of thought keeps pace with what is problematic. Hence the self-abdication of critique. [...] Because everything has become problematic, everything is also somehow a matter of indifference.” (Sloterdijk 2012a, XXXii) This indifference resulting from an over-abundance of critiques results in what Sloterdijk calls the prevalence of “enlightened false consciousness” (Ibid. 3 ff.), a consciousness that identifies with the object of its critiques and has lost all hope in actually changing it. Since critique is limited to its object and seems to be everywhere, so the objects of critique are incorporated as a cynical point of establishing realism through critique. This “cynical reason” sees only as real what is criticized, since critique is regarded as the only reasonable form of relating to the world. It remains safely on the side of critique by making it its reality principle. This leads to an avoidance of all forms of utopian horizons or ideals, because they could all too easily be undermined by critique– thus shake the already unstable (“critical”) reality it grounds itself upon.

The postmodern attitude *per se* – according to Sloterdijk – is therefore that of cynical coolness, that tries to stay untouched by the messiness of a world that can always be criticized. By staying on the side of Critique and staging oneself as the cool cynic (who cannot be surprised by anything), reality

becomes critically problematic. In a time of overabundance of the particularly modern form of critique, it is very likely that defeatist inertia hiding behind detached coolness will spread and nothing much will change according to critique's designs.

A similar feeling of overabundance of Critique is expressed in Bruno Latour's (born 1947) paper *Why has critique run out of steam?* from 2004. In a problematically war-like language⁸⁰, Latour expresses his doubt that the "critical spirit [...] might not be aiming at the right target." "Would it not be rather terrible if we were still training young kids—yes, young recruits, young cadets—for wars that are no longer possible, fighting enemies long gone, conquering territories that no longer exist, leaving them ill-equipped in the face of threats we had not anticipated, for which we are so thoroughly unprepared?" (225) After identifying with the critique of scientific practices of fact production for his entire career, he is very self-critically asking himself what the hidden agenda behind his motivation was. "There is no sure ground even for criticism. Isn't this what criticism intended to say: that there is no sure ground anywhere? But what does it mean when this lack of sure ground is taken away from us by the worst possible fellows as an argument against the things we cherish?" (227) Critique seemed to have swallowed itself by being disseminated into every realm of modern societies. Since it has become a principle of reality rather than a means of changing reality, Latour's own critical verve falters.

The will to power behind critique

In post-modern times, modernity seemed to have expanded to such a degree that critique is everywhere and became some kind of a "people's sport" (Edlinger 2015, 1) – it is even used by those who were once considered to be its objects and enemies: the conservatives, the defenders of the patriarchal status quo etc. (Boland 2018, 101 ff.). Latour's motivation for writing *Why has Critique run out of steam?* was a very personal one. He was shocked by the insight that what he considered to be the very enemies were now using critical arguments very similar to his own: deconstructing the notion of science as a universal access to truth and showing its inherent "constructivism", climate change denialists and other conservatives now dismantled the ecological insinuations Latour fought for during his entire career. "Do you see why I am worried? I myself have spent some time in the past trying to show 'the lack of scientific certainty' inherent in the construction of facts. I too made it a 'primary issue'. But I did not exactly aim at fooling the public by obscuring the certainty of closed arguments – or did I? After all, I have been accused of exactly that sin." (Latour 2004b, 227)

This shocking insight – that critique might not always be on your side – made Latour question the hidden motivations that are operative in his and other's critiques more thoroughly. Aside from the deconstructive idea of revealing flaws in certain discourses, he describes something that looks like a

⁸⁰ For a problematization of Latour's war-inspired language see Haraway 2016, 42

side effect, but might in fact be the key motivator in these late modern times of abundant critiques: “Do you see now why it feels so good to be a critical mind? Why critique, this most ambiguous pharmakon, has become such a potent euphoric drug? You are always right! When naïve believers are clinging forcefully to their objects, claiming that they are made to do things because of their gods, their poetry, their cherished objects, you can turn all of those attachments into so many fetishes and humiliate all the believers by showing that it is nothing but their own projection, that you, yes you alone, can see. But as soon as naïve believers are thus inflated by some belief in their own importance, in their own projective capacity, you strike them by a second uppercut and humiliate them again, this time by showing that, whatever they think, their behavior is entirely determined by the action of powerful causalities coming from objective reality they don’t see, but that you, yes you, the never sleeping critic, alone can see. Isn’t this fabulous? Isn’t it really worth going to graduate school to study critique? ‘Enter here, you poor folks. After arduous years of reading turgid prose, you will be always right, you will never be taken in anymore; no one, no matter how powerful, will be able to accuse you of naïveté, that supreme sin, any longer? Better equipped than Zeus himself you rule alone, striking from above with the salvo of anti-fetishism in one hand and the solid causality of objectivity in the other.’” (Ibid. 238-9)

What Latour describes here could be called a hidden *will to power* in critique, and seems to form a motivational underside of Sloterdijk’s cynical coolness and “enlightened false consciousness”: people can tend to exert a critical spirit because it gives them a feeling of power over an all too shaky world of permanent crisis, raging deadlock and others. Who, after all, can be more powerful than the one who pitifully grins at your naïveté of not knowing the hidden truths? Of course, this might not be the only motivation behind critique (Latour: “Still, I’d like to make myself believe, that, on the contrary, I intended to *emancipate* the public from prematurely naturalized, objectified facts.” (Latour 2004b, 227)) But in a time where critique seems to be distributed everywhere in society, it can easily become a weapon of war between two (or more) oppositional fronts. The contemporary abundance of conspiracy theories and their use in politics highlights blatantly how much the *will to power* can be the main motivation for critique⁸¹: imaginaries of deep states, chemtrails, hidden elites controlling everything and liberal feminists destroying civilization etc. put their proponents in the position of jaded knowers towards those innocent idiots not *daring* to be critical enough.

Thus, it seems that being critical aligns you with a very modern form of power insinuation. By way of this, various “conservative” formations today hijack critical works of their opponents for their own means.⁸² What such a *will to power* in critique reveals, is that “Critique as a discourse

⁸¹ Of course, most good critiques would actually affirm that they are motivated by a *will to power*: every good Marxist or Anarchist would agree that s/he is exercising critique to actually transform society. When they claim to exercise this critique because of a higher (usually historical) truth, they do use forms of critique that are modern.

⁸² Aside from Latour’s example of climate-change denialism, consider examples such as a) post-colonial critique, which is now also used by right-wing populists such as India’s BJP, b) critique of neoliberal bureaucracy and globalization being heavily used by populist and far-right proponents such as Trump, FPÖ, Rassemblement National etc. and c) calls for the creation of counter-hegemonies in a Gramscian fashion used by Identitarians or Steven Bannon’s right-wing think tanks.

produces rather than reveals truth in historically specific ways.” (Boland 2014, 110) Thus, it does not matter too much if the critical impetuses behind many contemporary demagogues refer to some already existent truth: as we shall see in the next excursion, their *alternative facts* produce realities and truths according to their conservative desires, although they might claim to actually uncover them. To put this into a very contemporary example: It does not matter if Trump⁸³ really built that wall, the wall is already a truth in the separatist discourse, growing bi-partisanship and paranoid global mind-frame it created.

What is historically specific about the modern form of critique is that it makes itself believe that it *uncovers* much rather than *produces* truth⁸⁴ - and thereby masks its will to power by transcendent truth claims. Moderns exercise power by claiming universal truth acquired by means of critique. This specific *critical* will to power is crucial to a general *modus operandi* of modernity, that – as we have seen – necessarily requires an “archaic”, “primitive” past and/or people to distinguish itself from (Latour 2002). The moderns exert their power over the planet and other peoples and genders by way of distinguishing themselves *critically* in claiming to thereby discover a higher form of truth. This claimed truth (uncovered by Critique as the only form of reasonably relating to the world) covers up the power relations that make critique possible in the first place – and thereby transform it from a critical tool of transformation into a reality principle of modern hegemony.

Beautiful soul sets itself apart...

As we have seen, the particularly modern and over-abundant form of critique is characterized by the desire of the critic to see him/herself as outside of the world and realm of critique (Boland 2013a), thus enabling him/her to regard as a *discovery* what is actually a *product* of critique. The modern autonomous genius believes to – by the mere power of critical observation – discover problems s/he is authorized to lead us away from to a state of imagined purity. By transcendent truth claims, the will to power that drives critique (and forms its ecological entanglement) is hidden and exercised through the specifically modern epistemic regime.

This typically modern mode of *setting themselves apart by way of critique* can be (partially) explained by what Timothy Morton (born 1968) calls the “beautiful soul syndrome”. He observes that throughout Modernity, a certain sense of revulsion or even disgust about modern life has been distinctive and progressively growing⁸⁵ – particularly in the centuries after the rise of Romanticism

⁸³ I am not interested in the person Donald J. Trump nor the country he was considered to be heading. When using the T-word in this thesis, I use him as a conceptual persona in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s (1994) sense – as a representative signifier for certain very strong right-wing tendencies within the current socio-political Backlash that reoccur in very similar patterns all over the planet, from Bolsonaro’s Brazil to Modi’s India, crossing most of the extreme right wing parties of Europe, such as FPÖ, RN, AfD, etc.

⁸⁴ Following the Nietzschean impetus of an image of thought that is no longer centered around truth (compare chapter 2.3), the question of Truth has been suspended so far from the investigations of this thesis. We will slowly approach the question of what truth could be from an ecological perspective in the following Excursion 4 and then more elaborately in chapters 7-11.

⁸⁵ The chapter “Landnahme” in my book “Backlash – Essays on the Resilience of Modernity” (2020a) departs from these observations to show how this dynamic feeds into a self-reinforcing feedback loop that strengthens the

at the end of the 18th century. This is due to the critical impetus central to modern subjectivity to set itself apart from the reality it is produced by and it (re-)produces. The “unhappy consciousness” (Hegel) of modernity has to see itself apart from its world.

Industrial landscapes and heavily anthropogenically modified landscapes are not considered aesthetically or ethically acceptable by most modern beings, however depended they might be on them. Thus, they long for a beautiful, unspoiled “Nature” and a clear, tidy consciousness by which they try to set themselves apart from the nasty reality they as well as their consciousnesses rely on. This “beautiful soul syndrome” is not just operative on an aesthetic, but as well on the ethical and moral level: it is a way of dealing with critique that is prevalent in later modernity. According to Morton, it affects both quietism as well as activism, appears in Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean variations and can lead to both fascism as well as hippiedom. What connects them all, according to Morton, is that the beautiful soul itself is the “ultimate hypocrite”, “which cannot see that the evil it condemns is intrinsic to its existence – indeed, its very form as pure subjectivity is this evil. The chasm cannot be fully bridged; not, at any rate, without compromising the beauty of the soul itself.” (Morton 2009, 118) Thus, critique is massively exercised without ever being consequently carried through. It is only performed for the sake of the creation of a beautifully powerful subjectivity. The “enlightened false consciousness” thus found itself a way of dealing with the abundance of Critique by incorporating it into a certain “consumerist” lifestyle, be it that of the cool cynic (140), the “conscious consumer” or the “jaded knower”. “Boycotting and protesting are ironical, reflexive forms of consumerism. By refusing to buy certain products, by questioning oppressive social forms such as corporations or globalization, they point toward possibilities of changing the current state of affairs, without actually changing it.” (117) Nothing changes, because with this particular form of dealing with critique, one of the key features of modernity – a *Cartesian separation* of the self from the world – is prolonged and reproduced. “The beautiful soul maintains a split between self and world, an irrevocable chasm created by the call of conscience - ‘consciousness raising’ as the activist might call it.” (118) By this separation it “maintains a critical position about everything except for its own position.” (121) Critique can thereby be transformed into a hyper-modern form of Kitsch (Lemieux 2013) that is used as a life-style accessory and prolongs the modern constitution. Critique in Modernity is therefore regarded as necessary in all domains of life since it constitutes the very principle of modern reality. However, this particular exercise of modern critique requires each subject of Critique to retain a “beautiful soul”, an enlightened consciousness that – by making universal, transcendent truth-claims – sets itself out of the power relation that created it and the epistemic regime it is a part and product of.

d) How to criticize

By examining three “post-critical” voices of doubt in critique of late modernity, we can now much better distinguish what traits make certain critiques particularly modern. By seeing Critique as the preferred or even singular access point to truth (thereby neglecting its own inner plurality), an anthropocentric, Eurocentric image of thought is retained. The modern form of power insinuation claims to uncover transcendent truths – and sees itself (called Reason) as much as Critique (with a capital C) as not a thing of this world. From this transcendent outside it makes itself believe that it is judging the world by universal standards while overseeing its hidden will to power. An overabundance of such a form of modern critique can be said have created a raging deadlock characteristic for late modernity: a state in which everything can be criticized and nothing changes, exactly because Critique makes out the more and more singular reality principle and requires each modern to regard him/herself as not a part of this worldly mess that is the object of critique.

Be part of the problem, not the solution

Since the time called the Anthropocene urgently reminds us that the matter the moderns tried to critically differentiate themselves from actual matters, a different form of relating to critiques is required. For emergent ecological reasonings that seek to undo their entanglement with the modern constitution and its particular form of critique (as worked out in sub-chapter b), the modern split between subject and object, critic and criticized is attempted to be overcome. Whereas a modern form of critique as sketched above rejects any relation to its object, “a more engaged criticism would acknowledge *this* environment – one we are caught in even as we judge it.” (Morton 2009, 126) This form of critique, that can be called an *affirmative critique*, consists firstly in an affirmation of the ecological relation it was produced by. Instead of taking refuge in a critical stance that desperately tries to see itself apart from the problem, an affirmative critique will regard itself as part of the problem, not the solution.

As we have seen, the separation inherent to the predominantly modern form of critique tends to prolong the very condition it addresses through Critique. Therefore, a more affirmative critique that seeks to bridge the gap between the critic and the criticized needs to learn to accept the fact that it is a part and product of the very conditions it regards as problematic. In Donna Haraway’s words: it needs to become a critique that is ready to *stay with the trouble*. It needs to understand that it is a part of the problem and it can only think and act with it.

By affirming the critical messiness of the world and our complicity with its manifold problems, we can find creative – as well as critical – ways of dealing with it and cultivate response-ability to the problem. In such an affirmative understanding of critique, it is helpful to regard a problem identified by critique like mathematics regard a problem (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Stengers 2004): as something that feeds thought, nourishes it to invent new forms of responsive-ness, that

adds, much rather than substracts from reality (Latour 2004, 248). By critically embracing the problem as necessary material for responding to the criticized mess while at the same time staying true to it, critique's transformational potential can be activated⁸⁶.

Such a form of affirmative critique is not so much focused on loudly denouncing the culprits and problematic actors that critical thinking revealed. This way of easy truth revelation and denunciation of "those in power", "backward primitives" or "naive believers" can easily be used by conservative powers and conspiracy theorists for backwards causes, as we found out with Latour above. A more effective – and perhaps "progressive" – critique should rather tend to look inward then outward – it should much rather search for its own entanglement with the problem and find force to change things from there. To tie this up in an example: Much rather than denouncing the easily identifiable culprits of climate change denialism (who most of the time have explicit economic interests in defending what they themselves know to be a lie), we should rather tend to seek the common ground in which we are all entangled with the problem: where do we find climate change denialism in our very own form of lifestyle? Living a modern life form, we can almost be sure to find traces of it in our choices of transportation, food, hardware devices etc. We might be critical *on paper* about it but will still require it for the maintenance of our life form. There is no purity in such matter⁸⁷ and a critical thinking for the Anthropocene should depart from this constitutive impurity and complacency with the problem⁸⁸.

Respect established sentiments

To further nuance the consequences of such a rethinking of critiques, I shall employ Isabelle Stengers (born 1949) affirmation of the Leibnizian demand that philosophy "should not have as its

⁸⁶ In spite of the "no longer modern"-verve of the narrative strategy of this chapter, it is not at all my intention to claim that no critique in the time we call European Modernity acted and worked like this. On the contrary, there have been so many effective, affirmative critiques in the last decades and centuries! However, our theoretical understanding of critique (developed mostly in and around academic spaces in the form of modern institutions called Universities) rather tends to have this blind spot of affirmation. This might also be due to the huge influence of "critical theory" in the tradition of Adorno / Horkheimer, who might be called the picture-book proponents of "beautiful soul syndrome" and withdrawal from any worldly relation (remember that Negative Dialectics rejects the very possibility to any "access" to reality (Bennett 2010, 13)). My verve is written with the purpose of reminding ourselves how critique has always worked - when it worked. Since, as Latour puts it, we have never been modern, we also have to undo our modern idea of critique to actually understand its effective, productive and affirmative working.

⁸⁷ I would argue the same is true for racism and sexism. For both it is always a dangerous position to claim oneself to be completely free of it. Much rather, we should be critically attentive towards our own entanglement with the racist and sexist normality we need to – at least some degree – be complacent with in our every day life.

⁸⁸ A classical reproach protesters (such as Fridays For Future activists and others) hear from conservative voices is that they should first lead the true lifestyle (e.g. a more ecological or egalitarian life) they demand for all themselves, before doing loud and noisy protests. This Critique is infested by the modern beautiful soul syndrome that maintains a strong emphasis on individual change. In the times of the Anthropocene, we can no longer detach ourselves from the objects of critique: we are all *in* the ecological catastrophe, there is *no* outside. Thus the only chance is protesting *for* a particular lifestyle *exactly* because we can not live it: in order to become more ecological and egalitarian, the entire society and its modes of relating and reasoning in the environment have to change. Thus, it is in fact vital to understand ourselves as part of the problem and still find the affirmative power and will to change this! Imagining ourselves as already on the right side of the track is in fact the environmentally dangerous position.

ideal the ‘reversal of established sentiments’” (Stengers 2000, 14). Stengers, an adherent of the pragmatist tradition, insists on the need to respect the established in order to transform anything. This is in line with other pragmatist thinkers such as William James who states that a “theory that will *work* [...] must derange common sense and previous belief as little as possible” (James 2000, 95)

Such a call to respect, and not break with the “established sentiments” indeed sounds counter-intuitive to the modern critically trained mind. But, wasn’t critique always exactly about breaking the established, “reactionary” sentiments blocking the way to utopia? How could “respecting the established” be a productive part of a critique with transformative aspiration?

For Stengers, a reflection of this *pragmatist* wisdom is a necessity to overcome the modern dangers and deadlocks of critique I have tried to address above. She clarifies that the undertaking of questioning particular forms of critique “is not in the slightest one of contesting the utility, and even the necessity, of what is always an ingredient of thinking anyway, but rather [contesting] the identification of critique as a remedy, that is to say also its transformation into an end in itself – an end in itself that would singularize we inheritors of the Enlightenment, amongst all other peoples. It is this transformation that generated the great epic genre in which Man becomes adult, takes his own destiny in hand and shakes off the yoke of illusory transcendences. The adventure of the Enlightenment then became a mission: at one and the same time a merciless combating of the monsters that incite us to regression, and a mandate to have to bring light to anywhere obscurity is said to reign.” (Stengers 2015, 109)

In order to overcome this problematically modern mind set, she insists that the “respecting of established sentiments” is vital for any critical thinking to *work* in a productive and transformative way. This is because a denunciatory, war-like attack does tend to create opposition and hardened fronts, rather than an alteration in the minds one seeks to criticize. It “is easy to ‘speak the truth’ against established sentiments, and then to be proud of the effects of hatred, resentment, and panicked rigidity one has aroused” (Stengers 2000, 14). To put it in a popular example: It’s not necessarily the case that if you call someone who is showing racist tendencies a Nazi they will become so absolutely annoyed that they fully commit to identifying as a Nazi – but nevertheless preemption does bring about the ghastly risk of it.

Modern critics, in Stengers reading, “celebrate as the progress of reason the destruction of what people are attached to, without accepting that what they are attached to might be what causes people to think.” (Stengers 2015, 113)

Such a form of detached, world-less critique will rarely have a chance to alter anything in the ones subject to the same critique. Much rather, they will have fortified themselves in their opposition because they feel misunderstood and endangered in what they are attached to in this world.

Contrary to opening people up to transformation, one creates a closure in minds by denouncing the messy problematic trouble they are situated in and a part of.

Stengers reminds us that this modern form of critique does much rather give in to the will to power behind critique. It might honor the warrior-critic in its heroic aspiration to “reveal the beast” in the reactionaries he so brilliantly denounced. But if the critics aspiration was to really change the criticized, the results are more than meager⁸⁹.

For Stengers’ interpretation of the mathematician philosopher Leibnitz, “respecting the established sentiments” means to – like a mathematician - accept “the constraints that give meaning and interest to [the] problem.” (Stengers 2000, 14) It means to accept where any position comes from, which constraints and environmental influences form it and try to take it *from there*. This affirmative posture of critique “ties together truth and becoming and assigns to the statement of what one believes to be true the responsibility not to hinder becoming: not to collide with established sentiments, so as to try to open them to what their established identity led them to refuse, combat, misunderstand.” (Ibid.)

In regarding critique ecologically as “a thing of the world” (Boland 2014), we are required to be much more case- and environment-sensitive in uttering critique. We will first need to understand (and therefore respect) where an “established sentiment” comes from in order to then show how it could become something else. By doing so, any critical mind essentially needs to become impure, to first feel into the entanglements that create a certain position one seeks to effectively criticize and transform.

If critique isn’t about being the more *jaded knower* or the smarter person, it needs to affirm the current being of a person or sentiment in order to understand how they could be influenced in their future becoming. If critique only spectacularly denounces what already *is* in the world, it can easily impede something that *is* to *become* something different. The critical ascription of something to be like this and that (and be bad) might force people much rather to fortify and defend themselves in their being this and that. Contrary, by respecting the established Being as something that *became to be like it now is*, critiques can facilitate its transformation to become something different. For this reason, an identification with the criticized (/object of critique) is more effective than a rejection that seeks purity from anything problematic: only by understanding the *becoming* of the problem, the problem can promote stimuli and ideas for a further *becoming something different*.

Apologies that matter

⁸⁹ After my presentation of “Nietzsche & ökologische Vernunft. Nietzsche nutzen im Anthropozän” (basically chapter 2) at the Berliner Nietzsche Colloquium in January 2019, Rainer Adolphi reproached my work of being “harmless”. I must admit, that I am much rather flattered than offended by this judgment, for – as much as I love Nietzsche – I do not believe the hammer to be the most effective tool for critique. My hope is that my speculative re-reading of Nietzsche’s oeuvre will cause silent transformations below the surface of already established opinions, much rather than make them clash. This will create less sound and fury, but might effect more sustainable change.

The environmental problems that are aggravating by the minute are a particularly poignant example for the limits of modern Critique and the task to think and reason differently. Everybody seems to have heard about the vast ecological problems we are facing. The abundance of ecological critiques of our modern, “carbon-intensive” life-styles seem to be widely known and even integrated as a new bourgeois moral and marketing strategy for the wealthier (“buy organic”, “buy a Tesla”, “pay an abdication fee for the carbon footprint of your latest unnecessary long-distance flight to some yet unspoiled holiday refuge”, etc.). But still, our ecologically disastrous modern way of life seems only to be accelerating.

So how to address something that everybody *knows*, but nobody *believes*? The direct denunciatory model of addressing the problem won’t help. Hearing about our ecological devastation and the “need to change” for the billionths of times is only redundant and boring: yes, we know it, *but what does it change to know it*? The still prevalent enlightened false consciousness is much too ready to accept the critique that forms its reality. It will either become even more “conscious” (in its eco-capitalist consumer behavior) or shut itself off in cynical resentment. It will readily join you in furiously despising “those in power” and the “responsibles”. But it will content itself with this performative act of denunciation and won’t change a thing about it. Setting itself apart from the problem by means of Critique is enough for the modern beautiful soul.

To break with this all-too-easy way of coping with what is problematic and despicable, Isabelle Stengers proposes a feeling of pity rather than denunciation towards those who are considered to be “our responsables”: “I won’t go so far as to feel sorry for our responsables, but I am convinced that if we succeeded in addressing them in the mode of compassion [apitoiement] and not denunciation – as if they were indeed effectively ‘responsible’ for the situation – that address could have a certain efficacy.”⁹⁰ (Stengers 2015, 33)

We inhabit an era marked by a prelate of skepticism: critique and doubt appear more complex and “intellectual” than hopes and dreams. It is a “critical phase” we inhabit: the task of most intellectual enterprises is the accusation, the display of grievances, the criticism. To feel compassion, hope or respect for those sentiments you do not agree with seems naive and “uncritical” to many.

However, at the end of this chapter I want to pose the seemingly naive, Utopian questions: Would it be conceivable to want a time when the intellectual could be mainly affirmative? In which the task of philosophy would be to write apologies for the world - in which it explains as good as possible why the world is as it is? In which it tries to put together the best of the possible worlds and refrains from dismembering them analytically?

A wholehearted apology expresses the will to change, while a critique only describes a problem. In order to find effective ways of reasoning in the Anthropocene, we have to develop a more plural

⁹⁰ Translation slightly altered to stay truer to the original.

culture of approaching a problem and not seek refuge in mere critical denunciation of it. We will have to apologetically attempt to put together a world in all its complexity and ambiguity and try to make sense out of it's becoming – with all its horrible problems. Critique will serve as a vital tool for such an undertaking – but not as the only one (as the moderns tended to be reason) and not as one that is believed to be the one and only way to one form of static truth. Much rather, critiques can help to understand structures as problematic – by affirming them, we can draw “problematic landscapes, [...] attempts at creating the possibility of consistency where there is currently only confrontation.” (Stengers 2010, Vii) In such constantly redrawn and messy landscapes, we can devise other and more ecological forms of reasonings that do take on the plurality and complexity of the world. In such an understanding of a complex world with which we are vitally entangled, critique will serve as a means to *pluralize* perspectives. It will be a tool that can always add more and other truths to the irreducible and highly problematic complexity of the matter and help us to reason well with our complacency in it.

Excursion 4: Post-Truth?

*“Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions”
Nietzsche (2009a, WL-1⁹¹)*

*“Thought is creation, not will to truth”
Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 54)*

Let us approach what has been circumvented in this thesis so far: the notion of truth.

Classical Reason can be described – as Nietzsche did – as teleologically centered around and oriented towards truth (chapter 2.c). Socrates reasons the way he does in order to attain a higher truth (and thereby differentiate himself from the so-called Sophists). Descartes reasons in a similar vein to save truth from bodily, worldly change and thereby acquire scientific certainty. Classical Reason has erected a certain, effective regime by claiming and monopolizing truth as the only legit outlet and aim of reasonability.

As we have seen (chapter 2.d), with Nietzsche we witness the emergence of a new occidental “image of thought” that is no longer mono-thematically obsessed with attaining truth (Deleuze 1985, 114). Nietzsche is opposed to the “absolute rule and omnipotence of truth” (Nietzsche 2009a, D 507) and argues for a radical plurality of thinking about thought: joking, lying, imagining, speculating, storytelling, mocking, exaggerating, marking and excising power and various other ways become equally understood as central aspects of a sound, ecological reasoning as does the attaining and establishing of truth. In this “post-Nietzschean” image of thought, there is no essential priority of truth(fulness) for reasonable thought any longer, nor is it centered around it.

With this ecological widening of the notion of reasonability, a radically different understanding of truth is entailed. Truth is no longer regarded as a discovery attained through the erectile business of men penetrating some transcendent truth sphere. This truth sphere is genealogically understood as the contingent result of certain socio-cultural leanings, preferences and power-relations. However, such an insight does not result in a complete abandonment of the notion of truth (“There is no truth” would be the desperate cry of those clinging to Monorationalism in its irrationalist implementation of worshipping the negative: Unreason (see Excursion 3)). Much rather, with this new ecological image of thought we can begin to understand the *production conditions* of truths. Undoing the modernist & occidental prejudices entails the realization: Truth has always been produced. The modern monothematic obsession with centering thought around truth as its *telos* has blinded many to this. By naively assuming that truth is solely the discovery of potent thinkers, the (re)productive

⁹¹ Original quote: „die Wahrheiten sind *Illusionen*, von denen man vergessen hat, dass sie welche sind.“

ecology and corporeal situatedness that enabled it was, in tandem, made invisible. Furthermore, this reduced so called “freedom of thought” to a very limited regime of incorporeal reasoning (see chapter 12.g) dominated by truth and a logic that caters towards it as its teleological goal.

This new placing of truth within a new & still emergent ecological image of thought hunts occidental discourses ever since. To give an early example from the field of philosophy of science⁹²: Ludwik Fleck (1896-1961) already demonstrated in the 30ies that scientific facts are not independent of their ecology but can only come into existence as the productive result of a certain style and collective of thought (see chapter 9k). Since these thought-collectives have at that time been almost exclusively dominated by white men, it resulted in an “adjusting [of] reality to transcendent truth” (Kouba 1994, 168) which could not be reflected in its socio-ecological harm by classical occidental Reason. It matters who thinks themselves reasonable. It matters what matters to thought, to use a Haraway’ian phrasing. A very homogeneous group can center itself around one focal point (as it was truth for the scientific business of white modern men of Reason). A more plural thought collective will find it harder to center itself around one fixed entity (recall Archimedes saying: give me one fixed point and I shall move the world). The plural ecologies of thought and its productive milieus will come into focus in a more pluralized thought-collective – we could say that this is happening more and more today.

Truth is so central to (what the hegemonic truth-regime used to call) “our” occidental Reasoning, that its slow disappearance as the sole teleological target caused and still causes great political and social upheaval. Already in the 1930ies there was talk of an “epistemological crisis” and truth was becoming problematic (in the Stenger’ian sense: truth was no longer the goal of thought, but its drive). In the 60ies, philosophers of the spectacle, the hyper-real and the hyper-modern mourned the disappearance of truth and reality. Guy Debord (1931-1994) famously declared that the essence of our modern, capitalist societies to be mere feigned appearance and its only truth to be the “negation of life.” (Debord 2013, I §10) Similarly, and a bit earlier (on the other side of the Rhine) Adorno rejected the possibility of establishing any truthful relation to reality as well (“negative dialectics”). This led the next generation of spectacular philosophers – such as Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) – to declare the *death of the real* and feed their careers through such slogans. The sentiment of loss of reality – since the means of establishing truthful connections in the classical sense of discoveries was deconstructed – characterized what we called, in the last chapter, a “post-modern” age of “anything goes”. In the negative, they were capable of critically delimiting one of the most fatal traits of occidental Reason’s truth-regime: that – in the time of the Anthropocene – it became so

⁹² Being regarded as the central or sole mode of applying Reason, Science plays a crucial role within the Modern Constitution. Therefore it is not surprising that some of the most innovative and profound impetuses of undoing this Constitution come from a new reflection of what sciences were all along. We will explore this at depth in chapter 9.

potent, that it became harmful to “life as we know it” and did in fact destroy our stable, *uncritical* reality. Guy Debord and others of that generation saw how capitalism “inherits the weakness of the Western philosophical project” by “reducing everyone's concrete life to a universe of speculation” (Debord 2013, I § 19) on that particular truth-telos. But by simply stating that reality has died (which in fact is still dying, always will be), they expressed one of the most popular philosophies behind post-modern anything goes, namely: that truth and reality were gone for good and there was no hope in retrieving it – thus giving way to the feeling of polar inertia and raging deadlock, as Paul Virilio (2000) characteristically expressed it for to that era.

So much about one mainstream of postmodern philosophy and its relation to a disappeared truth. At the same time, genders and messengers from other universes approached the matter quite differently:

“From the Archives of Hain. Transcript of Ansible Document 01-01101-934-2-Gethen: To the Stabile on Ollul: Report from Genly Ai, First Mobile on Gethen/Winter, Hainish Cycle 93, Ekumenical Year 1490-97.

I'll make my report as if I told a story, for I was taught as a child on my homeworld that Truth is a matter of the imagination. The soundest fact may fail or prevail in the style of its telling: like that singular organic jewel of our seas, which grows brighter as one woman wears it and, worn by another, dulls and goes to dust. Facts are no more solid, coherent, round, and real than pearls are. But both are sensitive.

The story is not all mine, nor told by me alone. Indeed, I am not sure whose story it is; you can judge better. But it is all one, and if at moments the facts seem to alter with an altered voice, why then you can choose the fact you like best; yet none of them are false, and it is all one story.”

This quote, taken from the first lines of Ursula LeGuin's speculative sci-fi novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* from 1969 comes from another world. One, in which modernity has been long gone (“post-moderns” are still having a hard time in seeing their difference from the modern project⁹³) and its short/one-sighted notions of truth almost forgotten. Her speculative narration – which appears at the same time in which men declared reality to be dead – allows us to grasp a completely different notion of truth: as a function of a story, a narration. By negating truth one does in fact reproduce occidental Monorationalism from the negative: one still adheres to the belief that there is only one form of truth-production – the one monopolized by occidental Reason (which, now, just

⁹³ “I have said and will say again, that ‘postmodern’ signifies not the end of modernism; it is a type of new thinking in relation to modernism” (Lyotard 1988, 277).

happens to no longer be possible under specific conditions of capitalism). Thereby, any other setting of mattering that might produce other realities and truths is rendered impossible to think with.

“It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories” (Haraway 2016, 12) Truth is always a function of a certain narrative ecology. The anthropocentric, eurocentric, androcentric modern story in its extreme homogeneity produced the Anthropocene by being hinged on a monothematical obsession with truth. This was, as we have seen, very productive but also harmful to our environments. To get out of this wasted and wasteful truth-regime, “we *must* change the story; the story *must* change.” (Ibid. 40) An ecological image of thought will use truth as one among many tools of reasoning, but it will no longer be centered around it. Much rather, it will develop an ecological awareness of the milieu where (incorporated) thought is taking place and understand truth as a function of a means of narratively relating to the world. Contrary to the homogenic illusions of the anthropoi, this truth is never the object or telos of a sole, secluded subject, but always the result of a thought-collective – a narrative culture that shares certain basic premises while at the same time (and exactly because of this shared common) varying them, thus making the “story [...] not all mine, nor told by me alone.” (LeGuin 1987)

Truth is never under the control of one single subject, but the result of a crafted mixing and relating with a certain milieu. Moderns – at least the philosophers, scientists and other “men of Reason” – in their blindness to the productive ecology of thought saw truth as something that can be uncompromisingly torn from its ecology, no matter what consequences and without reflecting them. As Isabelle Stengers would put it: “Naming is for me a pragmatic operation, the truth of which holds to its effects” (Stengers 2013b, 115) With a new ecological image of thought, truth is not the ideal and sole standard of reasonability, truth is produced and can be judged by the effects it creates with and within an ecology. With this kind of ecological reasoning, thought no longer tries to attain a permanent, unchangeable order of concepts, but much rather actively invents concepts to make life easier in a particular context: “Thinking would then mean discovering, inventing, new possibilities of life” (Deleuze 1985, 101). In the time called the Anthropocene, which is marked by gigantic ecological devastation such as the Sixth Mass Extinction and which confronts us with various new and frequently toxic environments, such capacities of inventing new life forms are becoming central. Eternal truths and rigid conceptual outlets will have to be critically reevaluated under their ecological productivity, not by context-ridden standards of truth, but by effectivity. Consequently, this “new ecological image of thought” (Hörl and Burton 2017) will no longer refer to big schemes, “grand claims concerning solutions or the precise conditions for-long term ‘ecological sustainability’”. Indeed, terms such as these should be subjected to rigorous interrogation and perhaps ultimately effaced from the lexicon of environmental struggle” (Halsey 2005, p. 34). Much rather, such grand schemes that try “to constitute various portions of earth as a unity in spite

of its being a multiplicity” (Ibid. 51) will be recognized as ecologically problematic in themselves. Ambiguity and vagueness will have to be reviewed as – perhaps – sometimes more sustainable ways of relating to the environments that we are facing. Analytical clarity and logical rigidity might not always be the most helpful. Truth is a function of a narrative about a certain ecology. By daring to think – in Nietzsche’s sense – without a monolithic “will to truth”, we will cater to the development of new narratives which will then – in turn – produce new truths without fixing themselves on them, thus avoiding a rigidity that would turn out to be harmful for life in its ambiguous, messy becoming.

What is Post-Truth? The conceptual shadow that looms over hysterically lead media & intellectual debates, the elephant in this excursive room, could mean two things:

- 1) the complete disappearance of truth as a possibility of discourses (usually called “relativism”)
- 2) an era in which truth is no longer the sole center and telos of reasonable thought

This excursion is strongly in favor of the 2nd option, since the first one can be identified as a premature reaction to the intrusion of the second insight.

In the more and more plural societies we live in, a monorationalist truth-regime of Reason became and is still becoming less and less plausible. By more and more voices becoming heard, an awareness of the ecologies of thought is emerging. Considering this, we can see how narrow-minded Reason’s obsession with truth-finding was, since those who suffered from its exclusion become heard and can relate to their other truths that have been oppressed as unreasonable chatter so far.

This insight can come as a shock to many. I myself – a white man from privileged background – recall myself crying when I realized that there was no truth in the occidental strong sense of the word when I was first discovering Nietzsche with the age of 15. In this shock-reaction, truth can be thrown overboard entirely: “it seems like the occidental form of truth is not as universally valid as we believed it to be for two millennia? – so there cannot be any truth after all!” This rather premature reaction seems characteristic to a post-modern time of “anything goes”: what is truth? - Truth no longer matters at all – Truth does not exist.

But why abandon some very central element of thought all-of-a-sudden, only because it becomes apparent that it is not the only element there is? In fact, exactly out of this so called “post-modern” times, the necessary conceptual tools originate to grasp this new relation to truth(s):

As Deleuze / Guattari put it in their famous quote from *What is Philosophy?* (1991), this new image of thought does not lead to “a relativity of truth but, on the contrary, a truth of the relative” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 129). Truth becomes relative to its embedded system or environment (see chapter 9h for a further elaboration). Or, to put it much stronger: truth could not at all exist apart

from its ecology (as was the illusion entertained by Reason). In times of the emergence of ecological reasonings, truth cannot be thought differently than as a function of its (narrative) ecology: it is a certain form of embodying thought and reasoning for specific socio-cultural purposes and circles (remember Bourdieu's habitus from chapter 3.Da), limited and at the same time enabled by this restrictions and exclusions.

This means everything *but* “anything goes”. In fact, only those things “go” that emerge out of their respective ecology (only occidental Reason could oversee this by completely ignoring the productive relations to its majoritarian ecologies⁹⁴). This requires much more ecological awareness in epistemology as we are used to: the environment of thought will produce certain truth possibilities and thus (as we shall see in the 4th and 5th part of this thesis) we have to cultivate ways of reasoning *within* environments to stand a chance to foretell what truths will come out of the messy ecologies we identify as the Anthropocene.

With the emergence of ecological reasonings, truth becomes relative to its embedded system or environment. In a universe gone queer these “truth environments” (as one might call them) frequently overlap. Unresolveable contradictions arise and fuel the hectic discourses around “Post-Truth”. Since today (thanks to the so called “digital revolution” and the death of the anthropos as the sole standard of truth) there are so many voices demanding their truth to be heard, it seems to Monorationalists that we have lost all sense of truth. Latour calls this phenomenon one of a “loss of a common world” (Latour 2017a, 201): we do not all share the same presumptions and living conditions, thus our judgments and truths about the world will vary gigantically. The last Hegelians alive despair over the abundance of contradictions mediated through their facebook feeds. In their despair, they blame the post-moderns: they are held responsible for the destruction of truth because they happened to note that the occidental truth-regime does not work the way it used to any longer. Thus, the conservative voices in so called, self-ascribed progressive circles abound: they call for a re-installment for some form of Kantian truth-regime and demand that “we have to be more aggressive on the facts”⁹⁵. Their mode of speaking sometimes resembles a Bacon'ian call for the torture of Nature to dissect facts from her in alarming ways. As a reaction to the emergence of the ecological in our thought, they contribute to what I call the resilience of Modernity and Reason (see chapter 6): they demand the further tightening of Reason's truth regime and its ecologically catastrophic dualistic ontologies.

⁹⁴ This means, that Reason is much more prone to an “anything goes” than relational, ecological reasons we see emerging, since it cannot understand where it comes from.

⁹⁵ Such voices abound and it is not worth making a larger overview of their very similar arguments for the purpose of this excursion. Suffice it to say that I am personally thinking of three voices (although there are many more): Susan Neiman's *Widerstand der Vernunft* (2017), Kurt Anderson's *Fantasyland* (2017) and Pascal Engel's newspaper-articles against “the pragmatists”. If the post-factual means: thinking beyond a Bacon'ian truth-regime inspired directly by the witch hunts and torture (see chapter 3.2), let's embrace that post-factual! Let's not let ourselves be turned conservative by Trump!

Everybody who worked on undoing them – or, much rather, just noted the circumstance that they were undoing themselves (since at least Nietzsche *within* occidental Reason) – is considered to be aligned with the worst demagogues of our time. In such logic, “Post-Truth” is no longer seen as a rather neutral epistemological assessment (as it was intended by most), but as a sign for being a supporter of “the other side” of the dualist opposition between “progressives” and “conservatives”. As Bruno Latour observed in *Ou atterrir?* from 2017, this dualist political thinking of “progressive vs. conservative” is a very modern project that becomes blurry in the mess of the so called Anthropocene. He warns us that this should not entice us to fight for a re-actualization for this old regime by deepening the trenches between the two oppositional camps, but much rather to invent another axis of understanding the political. He even goes as far as to affirm that Trump set the standard for such a new axis, although he did everything wrong: in Latour’s opinion we have to invent exactly the opposite of what Trump and others do to invent a new politics fit for the Anthropocene that doesn’t lead to a dystopian regime of neo-patriarchal xenophobia.

So let’s not mourn the circumstance that Trump was in fact very effectively producing (as his press secretary Kellyanne Conway put it) “alternative facts” and insist on the validity of our old facts and truths. Trump seems to be able to tell a story that produced enough truth to his followers to become president of the United States of America (and remain so, in their minds, even after the loss of the 2020 presidential election). He seems to have understood what William James already remarked as early as 1907: “The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events.” (James 2000, 88) Trump and many other rightwing demagogues are currently very successfully producing the events for their isolationist, denialist, racist and sexist hounding to become the political truth of nation states in the Anthropocene.

The problem that Trump’s stories contradict so many of the facts we thought as ineluctable for civil life and an orderly progression doesn’t make them less effective in what their productive effect. It only demonstrates how ruinous our modern truth regime and its underlying Monorationalism was anyways (as the post-moderns have shown us). By demanding for the restoration of the ruin, we will only prolong the catastrophic times of late modernity and will never get out of the Anthropocene to cultivate new ways of sustainably living and dying with each other.

What we will need to do is to invent other stories. One that produces more and better truth to more earthly critters than the Trump’ian one.

“Speculative propositions require a milieu that gives them their consistency. They do not make decisions for the world; they articulate events differently. In order for the idea of another course of history to acquire any consistency, it must lure, or capture, the real worries, the effective feelings, that partially preexist them.” (Debaise 2017a, 85) The project of making it possible to create a narration about a pluralization of reasons and the emergence of ecological reasons does see itself as

part of this undertaking. By affirming the political condition of the state of “Post-Truth”, it tries to steal away it’s negative connotations linked to Trump’ian demagoguery. It more soberly wants to state: we are in an era of Post-Truth since at least Nietzsche anyways, it seems like finally even the most conservative have realized that⁹⁶. Let’s not be shocked by this fact to a degree of suddenly backslashing right into modern, all-too-modern common places of truth and (disavowed) fact-production. Let us say: yes, this world is Post-Truth – and luckily so! This gives us the chance to develop more plural and ecological ways of relating to a world we have devastated because of our short-sighted obsession with truth. Let us find and develop narrative ecologies for many new truths (and “we”s) to prosper!

⁹⁶ According to Ezra Klein in his conversation with Leon Neyfakh (“The Ezra Klein Show” from 8.11.18, ca. Min 55 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PUUWSZuhuw> [1.2.2021]) the feeling among US-conservatives prevails that the Democrats have started with the lies, the amoral and “Post-Truth” in the era of the Clinton scandal. „They have set the standards and now we also have to play along them“ seems to be the feeling among conservatives now. Back then, they claim, they wanted to draw a red line of morality. But now, this line has been crossed by the progressives and the conservatives have to play this game as well in order to stand a chance to defend their desired political agendas.

Part III :

Emergence & Pluralization

5) Reexamining classics – Making do in the ruins of Reason

Ecological reasoning(s) are a construct, as much as classical occidental Reason is one. The fatal thing about classical Reason was that it could not affirm itself as a (productive) construct but had to see itself as a universal transcendent sphere permitting exceptional access to truth to certain (male, white, ...) humans. Only in the later phase of Modernity, critiques of Reason deconstructed this image and revealed it to be a construct – just like any other concept. To recall a citation of Peter Sloterdijk from chapter 1b: “What we call the world age of metaphysics is substantially the age of a self-denying constructivism”, as (Sloterdijk 1999, 386)

This insight provoked – as we have seen – outbursts and reactions of Irrationalism, Unreason, etc. That Reason was recognized to not be what it purported to be, led many to reject the possibility of any reasonability in general. The time after such a monorationalist epistemic regime could be described to be marked by the ruins of Reason, as much as the ruins of Modernity: the worlds we inhabit as much as the planet as a whole are severely marked (/damaged...) by the projects of Reason and Modernity – and (as we have hinted before with the use of Nietzsche – see chapter 2) exactly because of this, nobody can really take pride in them any longer. Their damaging effects and ruinous results are all too visible, their imprints are too deep to be reversed in any humanly conceivable time. Thus, we have to develop new life forms of living on this damaged planet (Tsing et al. 2017) and coping with the ruins of our occidental project of Reason and Modernity.

This chapter is devoted to those ruins of occidental Reason. Before this thesis will speculate about emerging forms of ecological reasonings in the next and fourth part, this third part will rummage through the debris and carcasses of our occidental heritage to find possibilities of life even there. This is inspired by the critical approach of “seeing oneself as part of the problem, not the solution”, as discussed in the last chapter. Timothy Morton, one of its proponents, states that it is all too easy to find ecological inspiration and reasonings in romanticism, philosophies of nature, immanence or new materialisms. If we only stick to those all too accommodating discourses, we run the risk of prolonging a dualist separation that marks and fuels Modernity: on the one hand we’ll have romantic ecological visions, easily marketable and integrable commodities in an – on the other hand – unchanged capitalist machine, sustained by the unaltered idealisms, dualisms and transcendences that drive the occidental project of Reason and Modernity and leave the Status quo untouched.

To really find a way out of this mess we call the Anthropocene, we would have to seek ecology even in the main antagonists of ecological thought: in Plato – the canonical founding father of occidental Reason – and in Descartes – who “has been the bugbear of ecological thinking ever since” (Morton 2009, 105) – among many other white men that prominently formulated and

promulgated the devastating project of occidental Reason that led us in to the Anthropocene in Modernity. “If we can find ecology even here, there is hope.” (Ibid. 203)

This chapter is mainly inspired by two contemporary streams of discourse: that of an (1) *anthropology of the moderns* and that of (2) *critical masculinity studies*.

1: Since the Moderns tended to set themselves as *the* standard (due to their privileged access to Reason) of which everything else is nothing but a curious deviation, their anthropologies and ethnologies have long focused their *scientific* interest on the *Other(s)* of Reason and Modernity: Nature, Women, other Peoples, etc. This impeded them to examine themselves and their specific drives as ecologically contingent products, leading to the various blindspots of occidental Reason summarized in the beginning of the last chapter. However, since Modernity is crumbling, an *anthropology of the moderns* – their specific relations to the environment and others is becoming more and more a main subject of anthropology⁹⁷ (that has, hitherto and from its origin occupied itself with “exotic peoples” from “strange and far lands”). In this vein, this chapter wants to read three main proponents of the classical occidental canon *anthropologically* in context of their ecological conditions: it wants to understand what lead thinkers such as Plato, Descartes and Spinoza to formulate their specifically occidental concept of Reason.

2: Since a staggering majority of this occidental canon is written by white, privileged men, the perspective of *critical masculinity studies* has to come into place. *Critical masculinity studies* is a relatively new field of research and its emergence runs somewhat parallel to that of an *anthropology of the moderns*. Since it was almost always men who set the (modern) standards, they never really got the idea of reflecting their own gender identities, its placing in a greater social and ecological matrix and their roles that create certain hegemonic structures (Connell 1995) that enabled the modern epistemic regime. Strongly influenced by feminism(s), critical masculinity studies seek to understand what ecological, cultural, historical and social factors created the privileged roles of white men that led them to define, suppress and exploit other genders and – through modern science – their construct of “Nature”.

What follows are three readings of white, male proponents of the occidental canon: Plato, Descartes and Spinoza. I regard the category “white men” I ascribe to them as a problem in the sense developed in the last chapter: as something that should fuel our thought to get elsewhere and productively think: what could be the place of this particular gender and skin-color in and beyond the Anthropocene. By this it seeks to get beyond both the strong patriarchal heritage of occidental culture as well as an all too easily ascribed essentialism behind the more and more pejoratively used term “white man”.

⁹⁷ Compare among others Latour 2002, 2018; Descola and Charbonnier 2017; Augé 1995

The readings are speculative and eclectic in nature: they do not intend to create a wholesome, well-balanced image of the respective authors – this would require way too much space (and space is something that men already took and conquered more than enough.) Much rather, these readings want to shed a speculative light on what drove those authors to their specifically occidental image of thought. In doing this, it tries to feel into the authors more closely than only a textual reading would permit: it wants to narratively invent ways of ecologically apprehending the bodily, ecological situatedness of their thought (something they – and the canon that made them canonical – have tended to ignore). This chapter wants to speculate about the ecologies of Platonisms, Cartesianisms and Spinozisms. Therefore, it looks deeper than the ISMS that have been canonically forged out of these three masterly thinkers and writers – it wants to show that there is much more in Plato, Descartes and Spinoza than all too easy *Isms* that make them scapegoats (in the case of the first two) and role models (in the case of Spinoza) for ecological thinking.

In creating such a nuanced image of some of Reason's forgers and fathers, occidental Monorationalism can be undone from the inside: by closely following and taking serious their narrative impulses and lines of flight it can be revealed how occidental Monorationalism was created out of a certain, fuzzy environment as a strategy of reterritorialisation and coping with. Under this perspective, Occidental Monorationalism can be understood to be – as we have already learned from Nietzsche – a “means of discipline” [Zuchtmittel] and “preservation” [Erhaltungsmittel] necessary for the survival of a certain culture composed of *anthropoi* which claimed universal humanity. To neglect every possibility of reasonability except the occidental one therefore becomes revealed to be a *decision* (though most likely not a conscious, intentional one) with certain productive (which also includes a lot of *destructive*) consequences. The very fact that we can see this – as I will try to show – clearly in the following examined texts, should make us consider that their authors had much more intent of portraying the ecology of their thoughts than the canonical reception would grant them. Surely, we can find a classical Platonism in the *Phaedrus* and the consequential *cogito ergo sum* argument in the *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* – but if we move focus away from their canonical interpretation and take serious all the contradictions, artful detours, deviations and humorous absurdities that make the texts as strong as they are, we can understand much better why they become such “great philosophers” that formed central nexuses of our culture: because they managed to artfully put together the fuzziness of their situation into a conceptual creation that helped orient a culture. This means that we will have to regard philosophers at least as much as artists as we do regard them as scientists – Plato, Descartes and Spinoza are artist-philosophers (Böhler and Granzer 2018; Böhler 2019): they created certain magnificent conceptual plains through the medium of texts that are far from any contemporary – and so called – “scientific academic standards”. In order to be able to read them justly in this vein, I will also have to – to a degree – leave the realms and impediments of scientific writing. In the first part of this

chapter I will embed the beginning of Plato's famous Phaedrus in a narrative prose, to show – and imagine! – the environment in which this decisive moment of occidental thought took place. The results obtained from this excursion to antique Attica will lead us the way to re-read Descartes' description of his path to *radical doubt* in the *Meditationes* anew. By doing so, we will encounter strange forms of bodily reasonings that one would not expect from *the* thinker of body-mind-dualism. Furthermore, we will see how there is – from our perspective – much more that unites and connects Plato and Descartes than separates them (as has been assumed for a long time). In the last part about Spinoza we will deepen our understanding of an anthropology of the moderns and their variable ontologies, as much as the genesis and emergence of other reasonings that then become suppressed or rendered invisible. We will be able to see that even the reasons of canonical Plato, Descartes and Spinoza are not the same – much rather, they share certain family likenesses which makes the label “classical occidental reason” productive, while never forgetting the internal plurality within the concept. By this re-examination as much as de-construction (in the productive understanding of de-constructing in order to re-construct) of Reason (which will no longer merit the capital R after this chapter), we will be able to see and understand where and how to look, to discover thousands of ecological reasons everywhere – including places we would have never suspected them to be.

A) Phaedrus

The sun has left the atmospheric angles of deep redness and is patiently on its way to the zenith. Slowly, the long shadows shrink towards the size of their provenance. The gurgling of the river that the literate mammals of the area call “Ἰλισός [Ilisos]” prattles steady on. The riverbank is adorned by plane trees, on which many birds have made themselves comfortable. Their joyous morning chants fill the tonal middle layers between the bass of the river noise and the pointed heights of crickets. In between, a few smaller mammals – a pair of squirrels leaping from tree to tree, some timid rabbits nibbling trefoil in the wet grasses – and occasionally a couple of crows tear apart the otherwise harmonious soundscape with their mournful croaks, telling of more northern climes. Then a new element enters the cacophony of that mild summer morning, making the others pause for a short while. They adjust themselves to the pitches of the auditory newcomers and continue their chants in the ever-changing acoustic ecology⁹⁸ of the Attica river valley that fine morning. The new sounds are that of two human voices enmeshed in a heated dialogue.

The spell of conversation makes the two blind, deaf – unconscious of their immediate environment. Their eyes only see what is needed to navigate along the stream, their bare soles send information about the nature of the forest – but just like the impressions of smell and hearing, they do not enter

⁹⁸ This paragraph is inspired by Bernie Krause's (2012) work on acoustic ecology, which explains in stunning detail the acoustic interconnectedness of earthly dwellers and the effects of human sound pollution on our larger ecologies.

the sphere of consciousness. Because it is an invisible, intangible, colorless, odorless, tasteless world they are discussing in⁹⁹. So-called “Nature adapts” to the newcomers, who do not notice it. Their brains are enthralled by the *logical* codes of the Greek alphabet¹⁰⁰. *True - false - premise A and B logically implies conclusion C, which in turn contradicts statement D, showing that proposition E, which is logically dependent on D, is necessarily false if A and B are correct.*

They move through what they perceive as “*the given*”. Since every brain capacity is taken by *logic*, non-sensual apprehension, “Nature” is reified into a passive commodity through which these active human subjects move and are sovereign. *Nature* does not talk to them because they reduced it to mere passive thing-ness in order to focus better on the non-worldly spheres of transcendent truth-finding.

Suddenly there is silence among the two humanoids. Their brains rattle on from the dialogical input. Then the older steps forward, spreads his arms and declares: "Upon my word, a delightful resting-place, with this tall, spreading plane, and a lovely shade from the high branches of the agnus: now that it's in full flower, it will make the place ever so fragrant. And what a lovely stream under the plane-tree, and how cool to the feet! Judging by the statuettes and images I should say it's consecrated to Achelous and some of the Nymphs. And then too, isn't the freshness of the air most welcome and pleasant: and the shrill summery of the music of the cicada-choir! And as crowning delight the grass, thick enough on a gentle slope to rest your head on most comfortably. In fact, my dear Phaedrus, you have been the stranger's perfect guide."¹⁰¹

Although Socrates, wrapped in an orange toga, is facing the river, it is clear that the words are not addressed to it. The extraterrestrial distance in his eyes – and some subtle hardening of the forehead – reveals the true addressee of that eulogy to be behind him. Soon he turns back close to the beautiful youngling – so close, that Phaedrus can feel the warm breath transporting Socrates' cleverly crafted speech on his cheek, the sound waves of the linguistic pirouettes on his upturned neck hairs. The almost thirty years older man does in fact come very near to the boy. His breath is warm and smells a bit of age.

Phaedrus takes a step back and replies with regained distance: “Whereas you, my excellent friend, strike me as the oddest of men. Anyone would take you, as you say, for a stranger being shown to the country by a guide instead of a native: never leaving town to cross the frontier nor even, I believe, so much as setting foot outside the walls.”

Socrates: “You must forgive me, dear friend; I'm a lover of learning, and trees and open country won't teach me anything, whereas men in town do. Yet you seem to have discovered a recipe for

⁹⁹ "Crito, Phaedo, Cebes, Simmias, Echecrates, Socrates: they all speak, screech, argue, exclaim, admire, call out to each other, advise each other, exhibit themselves, point things out, describe a world they do not see - invisible, intangible, colourless, odourless, tasteless - promise each other a better future in Hades. The prison of speech only leads to hell, or to the ideal heaven" – Serres 2016, 92

¹⁰⁰ Compare De Kerckhove's (1995) work as discussed in Chapter 3.Ad.

¹⁰¹ All quotes from Plato's Phaedrus – if not otherwise noted – are taken from Reginald Hackforth's (1972) translation, Page 24-5, 27, 29, 35, 36, 43, 47, 50

getting me out. A hungry animal can be driven by dangling a carrot or a bit of green stuff in front of it: similarly if you proffer me volumes of speeches I don't doubt you can cart me all round Attica, and anywhere else you please. Anyhow, now that we've got here, I propose for the time being to lie down, and you can choose whatever posture you think most convenient for reading, and proceed."

"So it is the speech you're interested in", says Phaedrus rolling his eyes coquettishly. But his thirty years senior doesn't notice. He seems preoccupied with finding a comfortable seat in this moist, dirty, uneven green with who knows what bugs and monsters in its crooks and crannies... After a longer while he seems ready – Phaedrus unfolds the scroll and starts to read. Socrates closes his eyes to listen.

"You know how I am situated, and I have told you that I think it to our advantage that this should happen. Now I claim that I should not be refused but on the other sort no occasion arises ... for being free agents under no constraints ... Again, lovers weigh up profit and loss ... whereas the non-lovers cannot allege any consequential hence, with all these troubles removed, all they have Again, it is argued that ..."

Socrates' attention drifts away. Lysias' speech sets off as confused as expected. It always makes the old man a little sad how easily the youth is seduced by the mere appearance of argumentative stringency. He only listens to Lysisas' dialectical flubdub with half an ear, and only to gather enough to charm the beautiful youth with some quickly improvised counterarguments. He considers Phaidros his pupil. In order not to fall asleep, he opens his eyes, contemplates Phaedrus' face, which is still so radiant with youth, his full lips, which toil on the writing of that Sophist. Eventually though, he lets his heavy head fall back into the soft moss and watches the hypnotic swaying of the sycamore leaves.

"...And observe this: it ought to be for your betterment to listen to me rather than to a lover; for a lover commends anything you say or do even when it is amiss, partly from fear that he may offend you, partly because his passion impairs his own judgment. For the record of Love's achievement is, first that, when things go badly, he makes a man count that an"

As much as he tries, he cannot focus on the speech. Phaedrus is indeed a good reader, but the arguments and strategic maneuvers of the text were clear to him after a few sentences and he knows there will be nothing new until its end. Only the same old litanies in various superficial garments. The purling of the stream, the softness of the moss and the gentle rustling of the wind in the treetops put him into an unknown calm that paradoxically triggers some nervousness and insecurity. As much as he fights it, his thoughts keep drifting away, adapting to the exultant as well as completely *meaningless, planless* and *aimless* ambiance. They assume a softness in which his dialectical arguing, that is used to wear out contradiction like prey, dissolves into insignificance and takes on the form of the ever-changing and changeable brook. His thoughts become a stream over which Socrates no longer has any power. The voice of Phaedrus is no more than one more element in the

total cacophony of the environment assigned to it by the harmony of frequencies. The semantic decoding machine in Socrates' brain has been momentarily shut down, it no longer thinks in the logic-analytic way he is infamous for in the city. This would not happen to him in the homely territory of the rigid city blocks and corners, he thinks with growing unease. Yet, he cannot help to somehow like this feeling of relaxation and belonging...

Abruptly, he sits up in an uncomfortable cross-legged position and forces his brain to unfold the meaning that is only conveyed by human lips.

"... but the non-lovers who master themselves will choose the best, not the fame of the people... Further..."

It takes an almost superhuman strength to focus on those boring words. His brain much rather wants to devote itself to the lure of the river valley. But the calmness it emits has something deeply unsettling to the ego of the urbanite philosopher who likes to feel in control over his thoughts and wor(l)ds. Here, outside, they are weirdly set free, his rigorous thinking and indisputable logic all-of-a-sudden feels insignificant and pointless. His well-established certainty, built over years of argumentative training, feels futile.

Forcing himself through the last chapters of the speech, he produces a cascade of counterarguments, better arguments, stronger arguments, only to stay alert. He holds them ready like a bouquet of flowers, to beat Lysias the sophist with them as soon as beautiful Phaedrus has stopped reading.

"...and what is wanted is that the business should involve no harm, but mutual advantage. And now I think I have said all that is needed; if you think I have neglected anything, and want more, let me know."

At last, the speech is over. Socrates relaxes inwardly and prepares himself for the forthcoming conversation. Countless niches and arguments he holds ready, as adrenaline fire they blaze in him. After exchanging a few courtesies about the text and the intonation of the interpreter, he draws the best among the collected counter-arguments and criticizes the negligent lack of a clear, strict definition in the speech given. What is this Lysias even talking about? Love? Being in love? What kind of love? Before we start talking big, do we not first of all need to clarify what we are talking about? To fix the essence of the discussed thing once and for all to gain some stable theoretical ground?

With Socrates, the notion of theory changes in ancient Greece. "Before this term was used exclusively to refer to the contemplation of the mind and speculation, missions and journeys abroad were called 'theories'." In the times before Socrates, the world traveler and explorer was a theorist. But with Socrates, theory becomes a stay-at-home - she sets off her nomadic roots and "does not go on adventures and longer" (Jullien 2009, 89), but dwells in their own four walls and dissects the world according to previously defined standards. Socrates liberates philosophy from its wandering life, its *nomadology*, and makes it static. For this he uses the construction of the notorious, eternally

unchangeable and, above all, extrasensorially true heaven of ideas, which serves as a benchmark for the world. This ideal is no longer part of the negotiation - it forms the transcendence that makes possible a crushing criticism of the speeches of what he denigrates as “Sophists”. And Phaidros gets a hearty taste of it.

Love, this is no longer simply an object about which one can parade about freely under plane trees on a beautiful early summer day. First it must be clearly recognized and defined. What is the idea of love? The unchangeable essence in every ephemeral phenomenon we call ‘love’?

Provoked by this harsh criticism, Phaedrus asks Socrates to make his own speech - if he already knows so well what others do wrong, then he should also be able to do it better himself.

At first, the bearded man responds with timidity and humbleness. *Please...completely unprepared I have no chance....* He plays this role for so long that Phaedrus threatens him with physical violence and the prohibition of any future speech – the opium of Socrates.

Of course he then agrees.

"So listen to my speech!" the old man rises in order to use the maximum of gesticulation space while standing. He briefly pauses and gathers his loose thoughts to a bursting speech. But the splashing of the Ilisos distracts him irritatingly strong. He keeps losing the threads of his usually always waterproof argumentation.

What is happening?

He pulls himself together, looks down at Phaedrus – his eyes full of expectation.

"Well, do you know what I'm going to do?" bursts out Socrates, following a spontaneous idea. "I shall cover my head before I begin: then I can rush through my speech at top speed without looking at you and breaking down in shame."

He seems to have swallowed it.

He wraps a scarf around his head. Wide-legged, with his arms spread out and suppressing an impulse of ridicule, Socrates shouts against the artificially created sensory void: "Come then, ye clear-voiced Muses, whether it be from the nature of your song, or from the musical people of Liguria that ye came to be styled, assist the tale I tell under compulsion by my good friend here, to the end that he may think yet more highly of one dear to him, whom he already accounts a man of wisdom."

He feels relief as his speech flows on uninterruptedly. At first, with the improvised definition of love, he had to struggle. But now the content of his speech flows as if by itself. Much less than usual he has to keep in mind the punch lines, premises and logical dependencies. The speech comes automatically. Delighted by this fact, he lets himself drift in the word flow.

Soon he has spoken a good quarter of an hour. He notes that he can hardly remember the thrust of his speech. He awakens from a trance and realizes that his lips are still moving. *But what did I say?* he asks himself. *Did I speak for or against Eros? On what argumentative grounds?*

Without interrupting the speech, he tries to trace the streamlines of the previous verbiage. But he gets into a stutter and finally has to pause.

He tares down his veil and finds himself reflected in Phaedrus big, questioning eyes.

“But..., Pheadrus, does it not seem to you, as it does to me, that I am possessed by a divinely occurrence?”

“Indeed, Socrates, a very unusual stream of speech has seized you.”¹⁰²

The unaffected enthusiasm radiating in Phaedrus face reassures the intimidated Socrates. He concludes that his speech probably consisted of good sentences, whatever their content was. Despite an unruly feeling in his stomach, he lets the beaming youth persuade him to continue the speech. He warns the youth: “For truly there seems to be a divine presence in this spot, so that you must not be surprised if, as my speech proceeds, I become as one possessed; already my style is not far from dithyrambic. [...] But for that you are responsible.” Then he straightens his blindfold, raises his voice to the second part of the speech, which immediately escapes him again.

Suddenly - after many more minutes of this magical speech - Socrates abruptly tears down his veil and yells angrily:

“There, I knew I shouldn’t, Phaedrus. Not a word more shall you have from me: let that be the end of my discourse.”

“Why, I thought you were only half-way through [...] Why is it, Socrates, that you break off?”

“My dear good man, haven’t you noticed that I’ve got beyond dithyramb, and am breaking out into epic verse, despite my fault-finding? What do you suppose I shall do if I start extolling the other type? Don’t you see that I shall clearly be possessed by those nymphs into whose clutches you deliberately threw me? So why waste words? [...] I will take myself off across the river here before you drive me to greater lengths.”

a) Contradictions put in place to portray a certain ecology of thought

We will leave the two love-birds for now and end the re-telling of Plato’s famous dialogue *Phaedrus*, which was presumably written around 370 before our time – about the same time as *The Republic* and *Symposium* and at the peak of Plato’s artful creation. What is remarkable about this dialogue is its exuberant use of poetic, lyrical language, which runs contrary to Plato’s (in the voice of Socrates) devaluation of poetics and the arts. For let us not forget that in Plato’s / Socrates’ ideal state, the poets and artists belong to one of the lowest castes – according to his biggest and most central oeuvre, poets only imitate the truth, corrupt the youth and incite the passions instead of the faculties of Reason, hence the necessity to expel them from the ideal state (Plato 1991, 377 d, 398 a).

¹⁰² Since the English translation cited above does not suit my point, this is my own translation based on the German text translated by Kurt Hildebrandt - (Platon 2012)

This same disregard concerning poetry is expressed in the shocked words of Socrates in *Phaedrus* when finding that he “got beyond dithyramb, [...] breaking out into epic verse, despite [his] fault-finding”, making him want to depart from the beautiful river environment that inspired such poetic language. Nevertheless, the dialogue – authored by Plato – uses such poetic language itself excessively and indeed goes on to do so: for Phaedrus manages to persuade the old philosopher to stay a little longer – “until it gets cooler” (342 a) – which results into one of the most lyrical and beautiful songs on love in the history of occidental literature. Why then is there such a stark discrepancy between the content and the form of Plato’s text? Why is poetry officially disdained while at the same time used excessively?

I think we will have to grant Plato enough literate mastery to affirm that these contradictions are put into play consciously – to make a certain tendency in emerging philosophy and reasonability of his time tangible by the means of such an artful dialogue. Plato is not just the defender and canonical formulator of Socratic Reason as the blueprint for occidental Reason. In the *Phaedrus* – as much as other dialogues – Plato as much grants us insights into the ecologies of such thinkers – what stimuli they had to repress, what fears and desires drove them, on what environments they were dependent, in order to erect this particular Reason that stands at the base of occidental culture.

b) Expelling the Poetry we are devoted to

Opposed to many other Dialogues of Plato’s oeuvre, the environmental setting plays a significant role in *Phaedrus*. Not only do the two characters marvel at and describe it at several occasions, but also – as I have tried to hint at in my narrative re-writing – do the river valley and its non-human inhabitants have a significant influence on the development of the discursive content itself.

In Plato’s *Ion* (presumably written around 400 BC¹⁰³) we find poetry defined as a mimetic relationship to the *oikos*. “Poets tell us that they carry honey to us from every quarter like bees, and they fly as bees do, sipping from honey-flowing fountains in glens and gardens of the Muses. And they tell the truth. For a poet is a delicate thing, winged and sacred, and unable to create until he becomes inspired and frenzied, his mind no longer in him; as-long-as he keeps his hold on that, no man can compose or chant prophecy.” (Plato 1996, 534 b) Whereas rational thinking requires the “mastery” of a self-possessed subject, free(d) from environmental influence, poetic thinking requires the exact opposite: the dissolution of the secluded subject position – to go “out of one’s own mind” and become a sensible medium of the surroundings (Morton 2009, 55). This form of poetic relating to the environment is clearly underway with Socrates on the riverbanks of Ilisos, which – as he readily confesses – is far from being his comfortable home-territory. The “lover of learning” rarely leaves the city walls since “trees and open country won’t teach [him] anything, whereas men in town do.” The muses of the place speak through him, but this is not what he is after.

¹⁰³ The dating and authenticity of *Ion* is unclear. Some presume it was written before Socrates’ death in 399 BC, others say in the 390ies. Others assume that the dialogue was only drafted by Plato and finished by one of his scholars after his death.

His rational thinking (and the strong subject-position it requires) seems to be endangered by the strong environmental influences of his inspiring surroundings. The knowledge and argumentative rigor idealized by Socrates – needed in order to defeat other male competitors – is of abstract, detached nature and requires a strong subject position that only values the exchange with other *men*. Thus, the anthropocentrism of occidental philosophy is grounded in its earliest textual sources: only other *men* (anthropoi) can contribute to the growth of desired knowledge – a poetic, environmental sensibility needed to apprehend what the trees and the open country might teach us is excluded from the very foundations of occidental epistemology. Their poetic inspiration is regarded as a threat to Reason.

c) A corporeal, sensory regime in the making

It is interesting to regard this in relation to what lured Socrates out of the city in the *Phaedrus*: speech. “[Y]ou seem to have discovered a recipe for getting me out. A hungry animal can be driven by dangling a carrot or a bit of green stuff in front of it: similarly, if you proffer me volumes of speeches, I don’t doubt you can cart me all round Attica, and anywhere else you please.” (230 c) The knowledge Socrates is after is that conveyed by language in scrolls – it is the logical relation between the words ordered by the Greek alphabet which seduce him to erect a transcendent sphere of truth independent from worldly matters (compare chapter 3.A and 6d). He neglects the environment and what it could teach us because he only shows interest for knowledge that can be conveyed in the form of texts, in turn alienating himself from his bodily perception in order to focus on a transcendent world of mere logic. Sensory stimuli are, within this logic, regarded as a threat or at least nuisance that one has to abstain from (remember the veil) in order to reach eternal truth. Logical relations that lead to transcendent truth require a strong, secluded subject that is mastering his own thoughts. Poetic inspiration (in which the muses of the respective place speak through the medium in form of words, dance, chants, etc.) irritates these men of Reason in the making, making them flee to their home territory, the cities, in which the environment is anthropogenically controlled and thus sensory stimuli reduced to a minimum. The desire of the bodies to connect with their environment is repressed or at least minimized. It is replaced by a will to power that wants to express itself in a textual world.

This displacement of bodily desire into logical furor is only one side of the coin, for we clearly encounter an erotic desire for the young boy Phaedrus that seems to be displaced into a dialectical frenzy of argumentation. The speeches given by Socrates are obviously designed to impress and seduce his young companion. We encounter moments of rivalry to other possible lover/teachers such as Lysias and a rich play with sexual metaphors of pollination, penetration and reproduction. In fact, this philosophical transvestism uses the imagery of heterosexuality – of reproduction between men and women – and displaces it to a logical (and homosexually leaning) realm of Platonic knowledge quantification: “The philosopher who erotically implants his seed, his words, in

the soul of the beloved, will begin and endless process of reproduction, where the produce is always more words, more seeds” (Dubois 1982, 14) The business of occidental Reason and philosophy thus becomes a business between men, in which “female reproduction” (as a discursive imaginary) is appropriated and transformed into an abstract, logical transcendence, whereas women are excluded from reasonability and submitted to this displaced dialectic eroticism between men. “Socrates’ delicate, literate gesture towards transvestism belongs to a pattern of the Greek male’s fascination with and imitation of the socially suppressed female other. [...] It plays with the possibility of the woman’s presence at the scene of philosophy, a presence which is allusively represented and then controlled, in a strategy to stabilizing the practice of philosophy around the central figure of the male.” (Ibid. 13)

Thus, a sensory regime is put into place that will define occidental culture: it is marked by a displacement of bodily desire and poetic relation to dialectical disputes between men. With this maneuver, everything else is turned into the great “Others” of occidental Reason: the Female and “Nature” from thereon can become a nuisance that men need to avoid to exercise their power of Reason most effectively.

d) City boys

Another important point is Socrates’ identification as an urbanite. His philosophical reasoning, the patriarchal order and the prevalence of text, as well as mind over body is deeply rooted to the milieu of the city that formed it. In cities, the environment is controlled and modified to serve the needs of the anthropoi. Thus, sensory stimuli can be minimized or channeled to allow the emancipatory power of subjective seclusion from environmental influence (Sennett 1997, 41–84). In it, *men* can stay among themselves and develop their rational empires that will define the occidental canon, as well as its political systems. The environmental influences are regulated to inspire ideal behaviors and sensory regimes that allow the development of strong subjects that can move and think independently and free from bigger environmental constraints. Spaces are created in which men can exchange words among themselves to decide upon the fate of their *polis* (the Agora) and experiment with new visually dominated regimes in the theater (which not by chance is deriving from the same word as theory). The connotations of the Greek words for “urban” (*asteios*) and “rustic” (*agrikos*) reveal this relation of Reason with the city environments poignantly: *asteios* can also mean “witty”, whereas *agrikos* means “boorish” (Roberts 1984, 10). Only in cities – among the free flowing, textually and visually mediated exchanges between men – Reason could prosper to such a degree.

Michel Butor goes as far as to claim that one of the main roots for the emergence of cities is its function as a “storehouse of texts”. “Archaeological research teaches us that everywhere on earth the first great cities arose at the same time as writing, whatever its manifestation was. Therefore, it may not be that text accumulated in a place because many people resided there, but conversely, because text accumulated, people settled there to, in a sense, serve it. The seat of authority is not so

much the seat of the government, the commander-in-chief, the chief priest, as it is that of the archives." (Butor 1992, 13)¹⁰⁴ This strong condensation of text made occidental Reason possible in the first place. Only in an environment that is that much anthropogenically modified that text can become a primary source of interaction, an epistemic regime that is nourishing for the slow emergence of a transcendent Reason can come into place.



The river Ilisos today

Today, in the so-called Anthropocene, these *witty – asteios* spaces have expanded to such a degree that humans can dwell in them without ever having to leave them. The river Ilisos wouldn't seduce anybody that easily today¹⁰⁵ as Socrates back then, since it is covered by the contemporary city of Athens and is entirely tunneled and channeled. The muses of the river must have become undead zombies celebrating the urban pollution of the water and the traffic noise that surrounds it. The poetics of the space must have clearly become something different and rather sound like the noise of contemporary industrial bands than heavenly songs of the muses.

With the expansion of urban spaces and the re-urbanization of most of the landscapes that are densely populated by humans, the sensory regimes that made Reason become the majoritarian way of relating to the world (Jörg 2020a). More and more humans live in strongly anthropogenically

¹⁰⁴ Since I could not find this source in English translation, I have translated it myself from the German one: "Speicher von Texten". "Archäologische Untersuchungen lehren uns, dass überall auf der Erde die ersten großen Städte zur gleichen Zeit entstanden sind wie die Schrift, welches auch immer deren Ausprägung war. Deshalb ist es vielleicht nicht so, dass sich Text an einem Ort angehäuft hat, weil sich viele Menschen dort befunden haben, sondern umgekehrt, weil sich Text gesammelt hat, lassen sich die Menschen dort nieder, um ihm gewissermaßen zu dienen. Der Sitz der Obrigkeit ist weniger der Ort der Regierung, des Oberbefehlshabers, des Oberpriesters, als vielmehr der Archive."

¹⁰⁵ The imagine of the river Ilisos today is taken from this source:
<https://www.keeptalkinggreece.com/2018/05/12/ilisos-river-tavros-parking-collapse-athens/> [27.1.2021]

modified worlds that actually require a deprivation of poetic environmental relation as the one we have seen in the *Phaedrus*. The poetic relations to our modern landscapes might whisper the musings of a transcendent Reason into our orifices.

e) Displaced city walls: metaphysical walls

Nonetheless, it would be way too easy – and depressing – if the Platonist way would be the only way to inhabit urban, anthropogenically modified landscapes. In fact, Plato lived in a time of crisis of these city-formed metaphysics and their socio-political order. The canonization of his metaphysics and its Reason can be understood as a reaction to this crisis. According to Peter Sloterdijk, Plato perceived the *demos* of Athens to be in vital danger by atheism and the crisis of Athenian identity after the 30-year's war with Sparta and the shocks that resulted from it. The reasonability that was formed in the city seemed no longer to be maintainable and so what Plato, according to Sloterdijk, had to do was to devise a way to transform this immunological regime “from collective self-extrication in fortified townships to individual self-insurance in a whole” (Sloterdijk 1999, 355) - a universally applicable ontology of Being, no longer dependent on any specific environment.

So, while Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus* is still struggling to maintain his ontological safe-zone outside the city walls that enabled it, the intended lesson behind this artistically portrayed struggle might in fact be a call to make themselves independent of the environment that nourished them. Since the city walls seemed to be crumbling, Plato's call was to transform these city walls into metaphysical walls of a universally unanimous and applicable ontology of Being that would no longer be dependent of its immediate environment.

“‘It is necessary to set the 'event Plato' against the background of the political and biological polis-catastrophe in order to understand what a change later Greekism brought about with regard to the lifestyles of the educated. From him radiates a suggestion that remained characteristic of philosophical life for a world age: as a broker of the new ontology, the philosopher advertises to his fellow citizens that they should participate in the transition from city-dwelling to being-dwelling.” (Ibid. 360)¹⁰⁶ The stable transcendence of Being that was only possible to emerge in the environment of the city, emancipates itself from its home-grounds to become a universal static truth sphere that can from thereon become the globalized ontologies of the occidentals. “Thinking now means moving to that from which no further uprooting [Entwurzelung] is possible.” (Ibid. 361) This radical move of detachment from any environmental relationship is the genius of Platonisms¹⁰⁷.

Formed in the city, it managed to cut itself loose from any material preconditions and become the

¹⁰⁶ I found it particularly hard to translate this quote (and was unable to make the official translation available to me in times of Covid-Lock Down). The German original says: „Man muss das Ereignis Platon vor dem Hintergrund der politischen und biologischen Polis-Katastrophe setzen, um zu verstehen, welcher Wandel das spätere Griechentum im Hinblick auf die Lebensstile der Gebildeten bewirkt hat. Von ihm strahlt eine Suggestion aus, die ein Weltalter lang für das philosophische Leben charakteristisch blieb: Als Markler der neuen Ontologie wirbt der Philosoph bei seinen Mitbürgern dafür, sich an dem Übergang von Stadt-Wohnen zum Seins-Wohnen zu beteiligen.“

universal Reason of the *anthropos* by projecting the epistemological order of the city into the entire cosmos. The etymological origins of κόσμος (cosmos) are very telling in this regard, for they can mean: “lawful order or government”, “honor”, “ruler”, “mankind” as much as its today most commonly associated “universe”. By creating an anthropocentric concept of the universe, Reason could be transformed from a “regional wisdom tradition into a universally oriented culture of knowledge” (Ibid. 358) in which anthropoi felt at home at any place, enabling the subsequent *occidentalization* (a more precise term for globalization (Sloterdijk 1999; 2009)) of the world that will lead to what today is tentatively called the Anthropocene.

Though, as we shall see, it will require yet another major crisis of this metaphysics to develop the unprecedented expansive and destructive force we associate with European Modernity.

B) Cartesius

The light that the sun emits about two thousand earthly rotations later is as good as the same. From the perspective of the small wooden hut it stands in the west – the almost oceanic, wide Dutch sky is about to transform its rays into the first redness of dusk. The songs of the cicadas oblige to the same harmonic ideals as two thousand years earlier, even if the pitch is slightly lower this time. The chitinous exoskeletons of the small insects adapt to the ambient temperature, whereby the rubbing of the cuticular plates emitting their music produces a different frequency.

About the cicadas’ songs, Socrates felt they were mocking him in his weariness. “So if they were to see us two behaving like ordinary folk at midday, not conversing but dozing lazy-minded under their spell, they would very properly have a laugh at us, taking us for a pair of slaves that had invaded their retreat like sheep, to have their midday sleep beside the spring. If however they see us conversing and steering clear of their bewitching siren-song, they might feel respect for us” (359 a). Men have to drown out the animal voices – they must not give in to their tempting lull, but sing louder! Sing better! The chirping of the cicadas is – equal to eroticism without philosophy – only a silhouette of music¹⁰⁸, which is to be completed by the human race.

All of this is of little interest to René. He devises elaborate methods on how to attain epistemic certainty and is rarely distracted by such trifles. He is the forerunner of one of the greatest epistemological re-configurations since Socrates and is hardly interested in the more lyrical outbursts of Plato. Through the mediation of Augustinus and the institutionalisation of the

¹⁰⁷ I would identify Sloterdijk as a conservative thinker inspired by Nietzsche: in a Nietzschean way he recognizes how this regime of globalized occidental Reason is much rather a means of discipline and preservation than an access to universal truth and rightness. Sloterdijk claims that Plato “knows that no society can really put its effective immune systems, its life-giving common beliefs, at disposition without destroying itself. His proof of God or gods does not have the purpose of providing the arguments for the more probable in an undecided matter.” (Ibid 278) And he seems to agree with this necessary lie for the sake of survival. He thereby fails to see that Nietzsche’s analysis (its very epistemic possibility) implies that the time of the necessity for survival of this regime has come to a decisive end. The “philosopher with the hammer” exactly wanted to dismantle the epistemic regime that Sloterdijk wrongly sees as still necessary for preservation of a culture. In a time with modernity in ruins our task has exactly been reversed: what we used to think as necessary for our survival is now recognized as fatal – we today need to devise new forms of relating to the world and the social.

¹⁰⁸ Compare Gardeya 1998, 20

Scholastics, Plato has mutated into hard-hitting, Christian-influenced Platonism. The interest of his time seldom lingers on such beautiful allegories and fixates itself on the passages out of which the clear-cut dialectical analysis that can elevate us into the universal heaven of ideas can be distilled.

Besides, there is the trouble with Galilei. Marin Mersenne - his former fellow student, friend and now priest – had asked him in a letter for his opinion of the Florentine astronomer and now he is struggling with his reply. It's a tricky issue with Galileo Galilei – how open can he be with Mersenne? In earlier years, Mersenne had been a devout scholastic. But more recently his positions appear to have softened – also due to his influence, as Descartes proudly likes to believe. Apparently, Mersenne is now even considering publishing the sacrilegious Galilean *Discorsi e Dimostrazioni Matematiche, intorno a due nuove scienze*. A book officially banned from publication by the Vatican! But at the same time, Mersenne is still a priest, direct subordinate to the Catholic Church, which had condemned Galileo for heresy half a century ago.

It has always been a touchy business with Galileo. The shock Descartes suffered on the day he heard of Galilei's condemnation haunts him to this day. After all, the worldview for which the Florentine has been condemned has also been put forward in Descartes' *World* – which is the title (“Le monde”) of the book he had worked on for more than three years at the time of the verdict.

Back then, surprised and shocked, he reacted quickly: "However, since I would not for anything in the world want a treatise of mine to be published that contains the slightest word that would be disapproved of by the Church, I prefer to suppress it rather than let it appear mutilated."¹⁰⁹ He almost would have burned all of his works to be on the safe side. "Persons to whom I submit, and whose authority over my actions is scarcely less than that of my reason over my thoughts, had disapproved of a physical doctrine published a short time before by some one else."¹¹⁰ In this particular case, they were able to do more than his Reason, or much rather: he considered it more *reasonable* to align his reasoning with those in power.

The World - *Le Monde* - would have become his big breakthrough. But because of that Florentine his almost finished manuscript had to remain locked in the drawer and could not earn him the fame he deserved. A silent grudge overcame him. Again and again this Galileo! He started to write.

"My dear Marin" "In general, I find that he philosophizes much better than the average, because he abandons, as far as possible, the school fallacies and tries to test the physical objects with

¹⁰⁹ Quoted via Schultz 2001, 78 and translated by myself. The original source is indicated as: „S. 64 aus Descartes, René: Briefe 1629-1650. Hrsg., eingel. und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Max Bense, übers. ivon Fritz Baumgart. Köln-Krefeld 1949.“

¹¹⁰ Quoted via Schultz 2001, 152 and translated by myself. The original source is indicated as:“ S. 99 aus Descartes, René: Discours de la Methode - Von der Methode des richtigen Vernunftgebrauches und der wissenschaftlichen Forschung. Übers. und hrsg. von Erich Christian Schröder. Hamburg 1956.“ The German quote is: „Personen, denen ich mich unterwerfe und deren Autorität kaum weniger über meine Handlungen vermag als meine Vernunft über meine Gedanken, hatten eine kurz zuvor von einem anderen veröffentlichte physikalische Lehrmeinung missgebilligt.“

mathematical considerations. In this I entirely agree with him, and I maintain that there is no other means of finding the truth."

So far, so innocuous. He would have liked to continue to write that these means have permitted the two of them to access the truth that the earth revolves around the sun and not vice versa – but for this doctrine one was still punished with the gallows. He got sick imagining the murderous instrument of inquisition. He must mark his distance to Galileo's teaching to stay save. ""But he seems to me to commit a great error by continually digressing and never dwelling on explaining an object fully. This proves that he has not examined them in order, and has only sought out the reasons for some particular effects without having considered the first causes of their nature, and that in this way he has built without foundation."¹¹¹

Hence, Descartes is criticizing Galileo exactly for what today is often regarded as his greatest achievement (making him a so called pioneer of the modern natural sciences:) that he is *not* adjusting his investigations to a fully thought-through metaphysical system, but is privileging individual results, which are no longer abandoned in advance because they do not fit a pre-given foundation¹¹².

Meanwhile, Descartes has written himself into rage: Galilei writes texts, he continues, "that do nothing but praise his inventions in turn and lift them to the skies." Only in one single thesis he can actually fully agree with the Florentine: ""His consideration of why fish can be larger than land animals is not bad."

On a general onset, he is declaring himself as completely un-influenced by and distanced to Galileo's oeuvre: "I have never seen him, nor ever had any connection with him, and consequently I cannot have borrowed anything from him."¹¹³

Slowly it is getting dark in his small wooden hut. He gets up, lights a candle and takes a sip of water. Then he returns to his desk and goes through what he has written so far. The cicada's songs are quite subdued by the double winged windows. He only hears them subconsciously. Maybe they are inspiring his thoughts from there.

Hew picks up the quill, bends over the sheet of paper, and the small blots of ink take on the meanings assigned to them. The words do not need to drip over the author's lips. The alphabet is

¹¹¹ Being unable to read Latin, I have only found this letter, which was written to Mersenne by Descartes on the „11.x.1638“, in the learning materials of my old teacher Kurt Walter Zeidler. Precisely here: p. 29 on <http://homepage.univie.ac.at/kurt.walter.zeidler/Erkenntnislehre05.pdf> I have translated the German translation into English by myself. The German translation is "Im allgemeinen finde ich, dass er sehr viel besser als der Durchschnitt philosophiert, weil er soweit als möglich die Schulirrtümer aufgibt und die physikalischen Gegenstände mit mathematischen Überlegungen zu prüfen versucht. Darin stimme ich gänzlich mit ihm überein, und ich erhalte dafür, dass es kein anderes Mittel gibt, um die Wahrheit zu finden. Aber er scheint mir dadurch einen großen Fehler zu begehen, dass er fortwährend abschweift und niemals dabei verweilt, einen Gegenstand vollständig zu erklären. Das beweist, dass er sie nicht der Reihe nach geprüft und nur die Gründe für einige besondere Wirkungen aufgesucht hat, ohne die ersten Ursachen ihrer Natur betrachtet zu haben, und dass er auf diese Weise ohne Fundament gebaut hat."

¹¹² Thanks to Wolfgang Pircher for these insights.

¹¹³ These three citations are quoted via Schultz 2001, 194 and translated by myself. The original source is indicated as: „S. 137- 143 aus Descartes, René: Briefe 1629-1650. Hrsg., eingel. und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Max Bense, übers. von Fritz Baumgart. Köln-Krefeld 1949.“

internalized, the writing culture has long been established. Descartes does not lead spoken dialogues, but writes unanimous discourses on paper.

To be on the safe side, Descartes asks Mersenne to keep the letter to himself. Then he signs it with haste, puts it in an envelop and places it on the correspondence pile with a quick gesture.

It feels good to have gotten done with this critique on Galileo. For a long time the unanswered letter from his priest-friend lay on the to-do stack – weeks passed before he could get himself to answer.

Galileo feels for Descartes – even if they most likely never met in person – like a kind of schoolmate with whom he has committed all sorts of bad deeds. Enthusiastically, both stood up for the forbidden, scandal-inducing Copernican worldview. But then the inquisitorial reality stroke back and Galileo almost paid for it with his life – like Giordano Bruno, who proved even more persistent on his views 33 years earlier. Descartes – who was always the more cautious – had shocked this for life: he flinched from this dangerous world view and became *reasonable*. He moved to Amsterdam to be safe, succumbed to the power constellations of this world, adapted to them. His life was dearer to him than the assertion of truth – *the world is just not ready yet, you have to give it some time*. Now he was reluctant to recall that youth and the associated faces and worldviews.

Galileo had acted foolishly and prematurely, Descartes reassured himself. *The whole lacked a solid foundation, so he had no chance*.

This sure foundation the steady and assiduous Descartes has completed in the meantime, making him feel rightfully better and further. *He should have been more patient*.

That the voices of reason who kept him from publishing the *World* also made him see the necessity of a solid foundation, this idea he never had.

a) Modern world as / in upheaval

Descartes saw his times as marked by manifold upheavals. The traditional knowledge systems mainly inspired by medieval scholasticism that formed his academic education seemed unfit to him in a time moved by various cultural and worldly changes. About 150 years earlier, the discoveries of the Americas shook the idea of Europe's centrality on the ancient trinity of continents (Africa, Asia and Europe). What can be called "Magellan's radical revision of world pictures" shifted the image of our planet from one dominated by land to a so called "blue" planet. "When Columbus was proposing his project to the Catholic majesties of Spain, he was able to state that the earth was 'small' and mostly dry, with the damp element constituting only a seventh of it. The sailors of the late Middle Ages likewise declared the predominance of the terran space – for understandable reasons, as the sea is an element not usually loved by those closely familiar with it (the romanticization of the sea, like that of mountains, is an invention of modern urban sentimentality). [...] All of a sudden, the Europeans of the early sixteenth century were expected to understand that in the face of the predominance of water, the planet earth had been named rather inappropriately. What they called the earth was revealed as a waterworld; three quarters of its surface belonged to

the damp element. This was the fundamental globographical insight of the Modern Age, and it never became entirely clear whether it was an evangelic or a dysangelic one.” (Sloterdijk 2013, 40–41) The central element of his planet-habitat was found out to not be what the anthropos named himself and the planet after: *men’s* world is one of water, not of earth¹¹⁴. At the same time, the rising modern natural sciences produce knowledge hitherto unheard of, questioning the earth’s centrality in the universe and *man’s* centrality on his planet. Many central assumptions of ancient occidental cosmologies seemed to be crumbling and *man* had to orient himself anew.

The rather accidental discovery of the Americas by Columbus and his successors and Europe’s fortunate geo-political location enabled – as we have seen in chapter 3.De – Europe to take the leading role in the development of modern capitalism. The technological and imperial acceleration was only made possible by unidirectional resource- and work-force streams from the new and exploitable land on a now blue planet and made Europe the single economical hub of a developing, globalized world-system of capital. These changes are in full development in Descartes’ time and his oeuvre is marked by their imprints.

For example, he frequently expresses experiences of cultural relativism – triggered by the accelerated cultural exchange in his times – as for example in his 1637 *Discours de la methode* where he notes: “that all those who have opinions that are diametrically opposed to ours are not on that account barbarians or savages, but that among their number there are many who make use of their reason as much or more than we do” This is because “a given man with a given mind, brought up since childhood among the French or the Germans, develops differently from the way he would if he had always lived among the Chinese or among cannibals” (Descartes 2008a, 16)

An accelerated exchange of peoples and their customs makes scholars of his time doubt the validity of the ancient cosmologies. Aside from non-European influences it is mainly the development of the modern natural sciences which literally shake the foundations of world views: with the Magellian revision the geo- and helio-centrism come into question and suddenly reveal a so far well-ordered and -centered cosmos to be fearful void without any apparent center. The cosmos is revealed to be much rather a *chaosmos* (compare Footnote 70).

These irritations are greatly magnified by the propulsion of one key technology that marks European modernity: the printing press. By the so called “Gutenberg revolution” (see chapter 3.Ae) – the facilitated propulsion of books through this – in Europe – new printing technique, academic and scientific discourse is accelerated to a degree which was perceived as a frenzy of too much available knowledge by contemporaries, as we can also find it in Descartes’ oeuvre when he expresses – in his *Recherche de la verité par les lumières* – the feeling that “all the science that we can desire is to be found in books, what good they contain is mixed with so many useless things, and scattered in the mass of so many large volumes, that to read them it would take more time than

¹¹⁴ “Adam” – the Biblical first man and general word for “human” in Hebrew – etymologically derives from from “Adamah” - which means “earth” or “soil”.

human life gives us, and to recognize in them what is useful, more talent than to find it ourselves.” (Descartes 1826, 6¹¹⁵)

A similar sentiment of overwhelmingness and discontent with the traditional canons is expressed in the religious wars of his time, which cannot be separated from Descartes’ biography. The catholic authority over the right view of god and the cosmos has been under attack since the late-medieval revolutionary forces around the heretics and other anti-capitalist upheavals (Federici 2004, 22 ff.). With the reformatory movements of Luther and other protestants this opposition became stabilized and canonized, resulting in open war. As Plato, Descartes similarly witnessed a Thirty Year’s War – one that devastated Europe between 1618-1648 and greatly influenced Descartes in manifold ways: on the one hand he fought for the Catholic forces (which enabled him to visit – among others – Kepler’s workplace in Regensburg) as a young man. On the other hand, to escape the catholic inquisition and censorship, he migrated to the more liberal – and protestant – Amsterdam (which was, not by coincidence, the central hub for capitalist expansion at the time (Braudel 1986, 187 ff.)) in his later years to produce most of his work there.

b) Ecology of / in Descartes

Descartes’ philosophical intervention has to be understood in the following socio-ecological context: various modern events have shaken the scholastic truths and certainties and present Descartes a world that seems much more complex than the well centered cosmologies he was taught.

“[F]or all these reasons, I could not choose any one person whose opinions struck me as preferable to those of others, and I found myself forced, as it were, to provide for myself my own guidance.” (Descartes 2008a, 16) The central move of Descartes consists in an internalization and individualization. The world outside seems too chaotic for a rationally aspiring *man*, which makes him turn inward and look for *one* method that can master all the modern trouble. Since the cosmological stability has been lost, it has to be regained on the inside of *men*. By this move the dichotomous differentiation between humans and animals, culture and nature, mind and body, which was already dormant in Ancient Platonist Philosophy, became ever more aggravated, as we will see in the following pages.

It is curious to regard the path on which Descartes has reformulated his rationalist regime that can master the manifold modern troubles. On his infamous argumentative way of *radical doubt* we encounter strange and bodily forms of reasonings that remind us of previous demons and muses we encountered on Socrates’ rural excursion. To examine more closely how Moderns tend to react to

¹¹⁵ Original quote: „toute la science que nous pouvons desirer se trouveroit dans les livres, ce qu’ils renferment de bon est melé de tant d’inutilitiés, et disperse dans la masse de tant de gros volumes, que pour les lire il faudroit plus de temps que la vie humaine ne nous en donne, et pour y reconnaître ce que est utile, plus de talent que pour le trouver nous-memes.”

these museful whisperings and reasonings of the environments, an excerpt of the Sixth *Meditation on First Philosophy* (1641) is very insightful.

As is canonically well known, Descartes decides to radically put everything he can into doubt and see what's left to build certainty (and hence certain knowledge) on. He turns his regard away from the busy and confusing chaosmos to meditate what he can rely on with certainty: "First of all, then, I had the sensation of having a head, hands, feet, and all the other parts comprising this body I used to consider as part of myself, or perhaps even as the whole of myself." (Descartes 2008b, 53) In the beginning, he sees himself as a primordially corporeal entity that is connected to his environment by means of the senses and their affectations. He goes on to describe how his ideas and concepts of himself and the outside world seemed to have arisen gradually from sensual perception: "because I remembered that I had made use of my senses before I made use of my reason, and saw, as well, that the ideas I formed myself were not as emphatic as those I perceived by the senses, and were mostly put together from those ideas, I readily convinced myself that I had nothing at all in the intellect, that I had not previously had in the senses." (Ibid. 53)

At this point in the *Meditation* we are encountering a decidedly *un-Cartesian* reasoning: one that seems to have gathered all its conceptual knowledge from sensual and bodily partaking in its environment. The reasoning we encounter at this point of his *Meditation* is identifying the act of feeling with thought itself (Debaise 2017a, 43–44) – sensual and rational relating to the world are identified to be – qualitatively – one thing that can only be told apart by intensity, quantity or the like. Feeling is regarded as a universal mode of relating to the world that can also be expressed in rational insights – it is a "*constant* activity, which involves *all aspects* of a subject, and whose reality is in the activity itself." (Ibid. 44) This surprisingly non-cartesianIST revelation in the midst of Descartes' argument is followed by an equally surprising analysis of the centrality of his body: "Nor was it without reason that I judged that the particular body I seemed specially entitled to call my own belonged more closely to me than any other body. For I could not ever be separated from it, as I could from the other bodies; I felt all my appetites and passions in it and for it; and finally I was aware of pain and pleasure in parts of it, but not in any other body existing outside it." (Descartes 2008a, 53) At this point in Descartes' *Meditation*, we encounter a very interesting ecological reasoning: by sensual and bodily perception Descartes seems to reason with the environment he is apprehending without the need to dissociate himself from it. Similarly to Socrates in *Phaedrus*, it seems that in this interim concept of reasoning, the muses of the specific *oikos* seem to be speaking and thinking through the medium of the thinker.

c) Mastering the trouble: one Reason against one Nature

Descartes, however, does not stop at this surprisingly ecological image of thought, but suppresses it with apparent haste. It will be very telling to analyze precisely what conceptual move enables Descartes to depart and eradicate this ecological reasoning even more effectively than Socrates.

After this image of bodily reason, Descartes asks himself why certain stimuli are followed by certain feelings/thoughts: why pain arises sadness, pleasure joy, why a “dryness in the throat prompts me to drink” and so on: “I certainly could not explain [this] except by saying that nature teaches me that it is so. For there is plainly no affinity (at least, none that I understand) between the pangs in the stomach and the will to eat, or between the sensation of a thing that is causing pain and a thought of sadness arising from this feeling. And all the other things I judged concerning the objects of the senses, I thought I had also learned from nature. For I had persuaded myself that this was the way things were before I had considered any reasons by which this could be proved.” (Ibid.) Somehow, it doesn’t seem enough for Descartes to *feel* the connection between certain stimuli, be they sentiments, perceptions, imaginations or concepts. For him, there needs to be a somewhat more logical, causal, enduring connection between things that is in fact not as ephemeral as the environment he senses. For this, the central move is to hypostasize every sensual input into one unitary concept: that of Nature. While in the *Phaedrus* there were multiple muses and voices of the place, they are now becoming united under one big concept of (a female connoted) Nature in Modernity.

Against this – and with the help of (a male connoted) God – Reason is put back into place. Descartes hastily brings up some arguments against this first image of a (potential) ecological reasoning (such as misperceptions, phantom limbs, “this could all be a dream” and the *genius malignus*) but doesn’t really try to reconsolidate these problems with the original reasoning¹¹⁶. He seems relieved to be leaving such messy entanglement with the muses of his troublesome environment: “since I was still ignorant of the author of my existence (or at least was pretending to be so), I could see no reason why I could not be so constituted by nature as to be deceived, even in things that appeared to me entirely true. [...] For since I saw that I was impelled by nature to many things from which reason dissuaded me, I thought I should not place much faith in the teachings of nature.” (Ibid. 55) Out of nowhere, Reason appears. This is interesting because it marks a very telling inconsistency in the text.

So far in the written argument, all conceptual knowledge has arisen from feeling and sensing (what Descartes calls “Nature”). Such a reasoning would have hardly dissuaded him from the teaching of nature since they exactly were – by his own account – *the teachings of Nature*. So, it remains unsaid where this faculty of Reason, that so easily manages to make Descartes turn his argumentative course, comes from. As he readily admits, he was just “pretending” (Ibid.) to not know the real

¹¹⁶ The greatest argumentative effort for this consolidation is – to my knowledge – Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945)

author and cause of things. And then – suddenly & out of nowhere – this author and cause reappears in the argument: “[S]ince I know that whatever I clearly and distinctly understand can be produced by God such as I understand it to be, then if I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing without another, this is sufficient for me to be certain that the one is distinct from the other, since they can at least be produced separately by God.” (Ibid.) With no convincing explanation, the logical certainty God can provide is put back into place. It is by the power of this god-given, transcendent Reason that men like Descartes manage to not make too much of a fuss about all the worldly troubles in the chaotic world around them. When it seems to become too touchy for the philosopher in his purported “radical doubt”, God pops back without apparent *reason*.

d) Swallowing the pill: Cartesianism = internalized Platonism

Descartes’ radical doubt is therefore not as radical as it purports to be. In fact, as Wittgenstein reminds us, doubt can never be radical: “If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty.” This is because: “If you are not certain of any fact, you cannot be certain of the meaning of your words either.” (Wittgenstein 2008, § 115+114). Since the language and the socio-ecological conditions that produced Descartes’ subject position are not reflected by Descartes, he is reproducing the logocentrism of occidental Reason with its internalized values, judgments and ontological prepositions.

Thus, Descartes only pretends to put the monorationalist concept of Reason (formed in Ancient Greece) into question (let’s suspend the dualist question if this happened consciously or unconsciously). It is withdrawn from the scene for a second only to unify the great *Others* of Reason under one concept against which Reason can strike harder as ever before. The Platonist hierarchy of Being and existence is never really put into question by Descartes, but unreflectedly reproduced. As Etienne Souriau poetically puts it: “A marble pillar intact after the fire; not a column to be built.” (Souriau 2009, 94–96)

As we have seen in both the oeuvres of Plato and Descartes, there are rudiments of another form of relating and reasoning in the environment. Both authors see a possibility of conceptual knowledge and reasoning arising from the *oikos*, but they both seem to withdraw from it in a certain haste: seeking stability, certainty and power in more stable, transcendent spheres. They sense the possibility for something that can be called ecological reasoning, but never develop it. Much rather, they reformulate a transcendence-based Reason that can only be one. As Plato, Descartes never puts into question the role of mathematics to attain knowledge or the method of lonesome and dialectical (“Socratic”) analysis to attain unalterable, eternal truth (Buckle 2007; Boulad-Ayoub 1996).

Modern Reason is thus a prolongation and enforcement of parameters that have been developed in Ancient Greece. Triggered by an even more fundamental crisis than the one perceived by Plato in his time, Reason is becoming ever more detached from its ecology in Modernity. The ancient distrust towards sensual perception (as we have encountered it in *Phaedrus*) and the resulting

Reason is thus gradually relocated to the *ego* of the subjects (Vietta 2012, 64–67). While the Ancients believed the universe to be a *cosmos* – a rationally and beautifully ordered spherical thing centered around men – the moderns gradually recognize it as a *chaosmos*: the rational structures can no longer be expected from the universe. The newly discovered silence, infinity and apparent senselessness of a world we are just thrown in makes the cosmological protective sphere erected around Plato’s time collapse. (Sloterdijk 1999, 364 ff.) Thus occidental Reason and its cosmology is internalized in Modernity and by modern subjects: while the world was expected to be rational for Plato, if only one could abstract oneself from ephemeral sensual perception, for Descartes and the moderns, reasonability is only to be found inside the *ego*. What is baptized *Nature* has to be bend and transformed according to this now internalized, transcendent Reason. Prior, men had to erect themselves into the heavens to become part of this one (phallic) Reason, now – in Modernity – they have to penetrate deep into the earth for creating more and more fundamentals to remain the *men* in power (Irigaray 1985, 134–36) over this ever-messier world becoming the Anthropocene. Men – in the sense of *anthropos* – become the subjects of the Anthropocene by digging their rational foundations deep into the soil – the imprint of Reason today is everywhere on this fucked (in the sense of damaged) planet.

C) Anthropology of the Moderns I

According to the anthropologist Philippe Descola (born 1949), this cosmology we have seen exemplified in Descartes’ oeuvre is something peculiar about the European modern society. While other parts of the world could be identified with cosmological totemisms, animisms, etc., Descola proposes the term “naturalism” for the cosmology of the moderns. This cosmology is not unique among the various cultures on this planet. In fact, Descola sees rudiments for such naturalist cosmologies in the oeuvres of certain Chinese thinkers around the 1st century of the Christian calendar, in particular Wang Chong, as well as in medieval Islam (Descola and Charbonnier 2017, 288–89). But only in Modern Europe (and subsequently the colonized Americas, becoming globalized / occidentalized from there) this cosmology became a majoritarian way of relating to the world. As we have seen, its rudiments were developed in Antiquity around Plato’s time and were conserved in monasteries and other small, minoritarian elites during the so-called medieval ages. Then, during the Renaissance of the 15th century, “naturalism” witnessed a certain accession and a subsequent stabilization in scientific discourses of the 17th century (=Descartes’ time). Only in the 19th century the emergence of an explicit opposition between “nature” and “culture” started to effectively organize our distribution of knowledges [partage des savoirs] and was still, in numbers, minoritarian: the large majority of the peoples of Europe lived in rural, peasant contexts until the mid-20th century and pursued cosmologies that were not related to naturalism (Ibid. 314-5). However, the hegemonic powers spread their cosmologies since early Modernity and were thereby

bringing forth the so called Anthropocene, which is not by accident named after the Ancient Greek word for “man”.

a) Anthropocentrism transformed

Two of the main traits of “Naturalism”, according to Descola, are a dichotomous split between nature and culture and an emphasis on a privileged and exclusive human interiority (Ibid. 204-206). Both these traits can be well exemplified in Descartes’ oeuvre, who is not by chance often referred to as the father of modern philosophy, and whose arguments still haunt us until today¹¹⁷.

After his pretended radical doubt, Descartes has freed himself from sensual, corporeal perception and can now establish the logical and causal connections between objects that his proximity to god allows him: “for by nature, in a general sense, I now mean nothing other than either God himself, or the system of created things established by God; and by my own nature in particular, I mean nothing other than the combination of all the properties bestowed on me by God.” (Descartes 2008b, 57) The suppression of nature goes hand in hand with a replacement of an organic, plural universe with a mechanic machine whose unchanging laws and causalities only men (thanks to his privileged access to god) can see with the help of mathematical logic (Merchant 1989, 203). Animals no longer have any souls and are mere automata, thus sanctioning their torture and incorporation into an emerging capitalist machine. Whereas matter was regarded as full of souls, muses, spirits and nymphs in previous cosmologies and animals were regarded as sentient and intelligent beings even being accountable for crimes in court (Federici 2004, 159), the modern natural sciences and the politics that were related to them transformed matter and animals conceptually into dead machines of causally connected (visually preconceived) objects, into which only the sole soul of men can *see* (let us remember how occidental Reason is ocularcentric, as shown in chapter 3.Cd) by its proximity to god.

For Plato, human exceptionalism was legitimized by his central position in a cosmos ordered for *him*. For Descartes (as representative for a predominant modern cosmology) human exceptionalism was grounded in a proximity to transcendent, eternal truth spheres that were unworldly. Modern men’s task was thus to transform the planet according to his privileged insights into godly Reason.

b) Fucking up the planet

Although, as argued before, occidental Reason neglects reflection on power, the rise of the mechanical order that marks the modern declination of occidental reasoning can only be understood in relation to the political powers that are connected to its rise.

As Silvia Federici (2004, 150) observes, there have always been various competing cosmologies during Modernity. To just name one, a striking example for such alternative, non-mechanist

¹¹⁷ European – and especially French – philosophy after Descartes almost always had to position itself critically towards the infamous *cogito ergo sum*, thereby varying its scope and confirming its magnitude within modern cosmologies. For a good overview over some main francophone variation of the *cogito*, see Waldenfels 2000.

philosophies is the work of Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673), a contemporary of Descartes and Hobbes, who formulated a fierce critique of the majoritarian mechanist and body-mind-dualist philosophies of the time and a – for today’s standards – much more useable organicist, pan-psychist philosophy that can be summarized in this short quote of hers: „Neither can I perceive that man is a Monopoliser of all Reason, or Animals of all Sense, but that Sense and Reason are in other Creatures as well as in Man and Animals; for example, Drugs, as Vegetables and Minerals, although they cannot slice, pound or infuse, as man can, yet they can work upon man more subtly, wisely, and as sensibly either by purging, vomiting, spitting, or any other way, as man by mincing, pounding and infusing them, and Vegetables will wisely nourish Men, as Men can nourish Vegetables.“ (via Hustvedt 2016, 136)

It is telling for the state of intellectual enterprises in the 17th century forming the modern physicist main-stream cosmology up until today, that Hobbes refused her request to converse on such issues and that her work (comprising 23 books) is largely ignored until today outside feminist circles.

Alternative cosmologies and reasonings have always existed everywhere. However, during European modernity, they were stigmatized, marginalized to the “wrong” genders and ethnicities or simply pursued as heretic. According to Federici, it “is because it interpreted so well the requirements of the capitalist work-discipline that Descartes' doctrine, by the end of the 17th century, had spread throughout Europe” (2014, 150)

“With the institution of a hierarchical relation between mind and body, Descartes developed the theoretical premises for the work-discipline required by the developing capitalist economy. For the mind’s supremacy over the body implies that the will can (in principle) control the needs, reactions, reflexes of the body; it can impose a regular order of its vital functions, and force the body to work according to external specifications, independently of its desires. Most importantly, the supremacy of the will allows for the interiorization of the mechanisms of power. Thus, the counterpart of the mechanization of the body is the development of Reason in its role as judge, inquisitor, manager, administrator. We find here the origins of bourgeois subjectivity as self-management, self-ownership, law, responsibility, with its corollaries of memory and identity.” (Ibid. 149)

Parallel to this expansion of a “naturalist” body-mind hierarchisation runs the development of central state power in the 17th and 18th century. As much as the functions of command were centralized in the body, they were centralized in the state as a new sovereign. “In being divorced from its body, the rational self-certainty lost its solidarity with its corporeal reality and with nature. Its solitude however was to be that of a king” (Ibid. 148) “As Descartes wrote to Mersenne in 1630, ‘God sets up mathematical laws in nature as a king sets up laws in his kingdom’.” (Merchant 1989, 205) With the rise of the mechanical world view, the “state of nature” is seen as “a state of chaos, anarchy, and fear” which has to be governed and ordered by a central & god-like king who brings

rational control to the otherwise disorderly peoples, as is best exemplified by the political theory of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* from 1651 (Ibid. 209).

This capitalist political power and its according metaphysics could only become a model for social behavior and centralized order because many belief systems, cosmologies, practices and subjectivisations that were not in line with this rising naturalism were eradicated and destroyed (Federici 2004, 141). What was labeled as "witchcraft" was hunted down and caused the largest femicide in – at least – European history. Other practices such as those of Catharism and other heretic movements (Ibid. 21-60), Gnosticism or Holism (as manifested in the philosophies of Tommaso Campanella or Valentin Andreä (Merchant 1989, 16+80 ff.) were marginalized and prosecuted. Thus, the rise of what Descola calls "Naturalism" was made possible by a history of political class suppression and censorship. Only by this, the modern mechanical world view could give rise to an unprecedented anthropocentric power that we today call the Anthropocene.

D) Spinoza

As the last of three occidental classics, I will examine a position that has – in the history of its reception – first been suppressed and neglected. Only way after its author's death did it acquire the canonical status it has today: Baruch de Spinoza's (1632-1677) philosophy of immanence, as expressed in his *Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order* – written between 1664 and 1665 and published posthumously 1677. At the time of his life, his rationalist, bible-critical and in many ways ground-braking stance has met much resistance and defamation, culminating in an attempted assassination and the banishment from his Sephardi Jewish community. Like Descartes, Spinoza's central hub was around Amsterdam, the nexus of capitalist expansion at the time, where he lived a secluded and mostly unnoticed intellectual life, conversing sparsely with anti-clerical, dissident Christian sects such as the Collegiants and the Mennonites. Only about a century after his death, the reception of his philosophical oeuvre left its marginal circles and slowly developed to what we regard today as one of the classics of modern philosophy. While in the 18th century the label "Spinozist" was mostly used as a defamation that could, in the worst situations, lead to prosecution, the reception of Goethe, Lessing, Feuerbach and many other mostly German Romantics made Spinoza become one of *the* names of modern philosophy, whom even Nietzsche – who otherwise liked to smash the entire tradition with his hammer – recognized as one of his predecessors (Nietzsche 2009a, BVN-1881,135).

Although Spinoza's oeuvre can only be understood in relation to that of the 36 years older Descartes (Rölli 2014, 170), contemporary ecological and philosophical discourses frequently regard Spinoza as a pioneer for ecological thinking, while Descartes – as we have seen – as the antithesis and "bugbear of ecological thinking ever since" (Morton 2009, 105). Although this is, in part, a just classification, I will complicate the issue in this chapter. As much as there are interesting ecological

elements in Descartes' oeuvre, there are ecologically problematic traits in Spinoza's *philosophy of immanence*. In the vein of Philippe Descola's analysis of occidental modernity's cosmology, I will regard Spinoza as another declination of modern *naturalism* (Descola and Charbonnier 2017, 285), and not as a way-out or already existing non-modern philosophy inside the canon. By doing so, I aim to nuance the understanding of Modernity's complex relationship to its environments and much rather see Spinoza and Descartes as two modern ways of dealing with modern ecologies.

a) Spinoza as a proto-ecological thinker?

Let's first regard what made Spinoza so attractive for ecological philosophies. For there is, at first sight, a lot of useful material for thinkers who seek to mend the huge crevasses modern philosophy has torn in ourselves as well as our relationship to the environment.

Spinoza sees the human as an inseparable part of Nature. For him, both the human's intellectual as well as affective relating stem from this "Nature", thereby mending the dichotomy between body and mind that Descartes so emphasized. For Spinoza, "we are a part of Nature" and this part cannot be "conceived through itself, without the others." (Spinoza 1994, 202). Thus, the Cartesian move of radically doubting everything exterior is declared impossible by Spinoza, for our *I*'s (in the sense of Descartes' *ego*) can only be understood as parts and expressions of this god-like Nature. In fact, Substance, God, and Nature are used almost synonymically in Spinoza's work – we can relate and take part in its thoughts and affections (for Spinoza only a heuristic distinction) by means of Reason.

Such an immanent conception of the human within Nature bares hugely different notions of freedom of the will and its activity. Whereas Descartes managed to make himself (and many that followed) believe that he is the sole, active subject in a universe of dead matter, for Spinoza, freedom means acting in accordance with a Nature that is itself considered active. It is not the *I* that is dictating its internalized cosmological laws by the power of Reason onto the universe, but the *I* is only an expression of various affective / intelligible compositions of Nature that act anyways. For Spinoza, freedom (attained by Reason) consists in clearly *seeing* (note the ocularcentrism) all the affects that make my *I* act. "In the mind there is no absolute, or free, will, but the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another, and this again by another, and so to infinity." (Ibid. 146) In fact, it seems that people's belief in an *I* becomes stronger, the less they are able to see into the reasonability of this natural, affective causality: "men are deceived in that they think themselves free, an opinion which consists only in this, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined. This, then, is their idea of freedom - that they do not know any cause of their actions. They say, of course, that human actions depend on the will, but these are only words for which they have no idea. For all are ignorant of what the will is, and how it moves the body." (Ibid. 137) Thus, for Spinoza, mind and body are not separated – Reason does not enable the mindful *I* to solely act upon dead matter and

passions, but Reason as well as passion are active compositions of vibrant matter in which an *I* can take part in.

This prompts Spinoza (as already quoted in chapter 3.Ca) to argue that “no one has yet determined what the body can do”, for our entanglement with the environment is manifold, and the affective as well as intellectual structures we perceive through it produce a much more complex image of *reasonings* than that of a monorationalist Reason (see also chapter 8). In seemingly direct response to Descartes’ radical doubt, Spinoza argues: “An idea that excludes the existence of our body cannot be in our mind but is contrary to it.” (Ibid. 160) Conceptually, a body-mind-dualism is maintained in Spinoza’s oeuvre, but it is translated into an *isomorphism*: bodily affections and intellectual inspirations are considered to be “one and the same thing” and they “by nature exist together” (Ibid. 157). In parallel, a more complex form of reasonably relating to the environment is established. Since the environment is made of bodies and everything we call “we” is an assemblage of certain bodies within this environment, acting, thinking and willing become something greatly different to the Cartesian notion. It becomes a form of *intra-action* (see also chapter 9i) within a composition of entities – some of which we are more prone to call ours, others less – that are all thought of as vibrant and active matter in what is – by contemporary thinkers of *New Materialism* – often read as a *vital materialism* (Braidotti 2012, 55–57; Bennett 2010, 21–23). Consequentially, “bodies enhance their power in or as a heterogenous assemblage” (Bennett 2010, 23) and our power to act, think and will becomes an insightful entanglement with much of living matter (as opposed to Descartes’ clear-cut separation from dead matter). Every being is composed of an affective relationality of bodies, thus premeditating ecological thinking in terms of Ethology (as is much later developed by Jakob von Uexküll and others (Deleuze 2001, 124)).

Lastly, such immanent concepts of human reasoning and becoming (much rather than being) in Nature give birth to completely different ideas of morals and politics. Reason and desire are no longer seen as apart and in conflict with each other. The mind, in turn, does not need to be the king reigning over the desiring body – an image of thought that – as we have seen (chapter 5.Cb) – served to legitimize central state power and capitalist corporal regimes. Much rather, Reason and desire are expressions of the same *conatus* (which can be translated as a sort of cosmological desire) in Nature and to follow one will automatically augment the other. Thus, to follow desire, to give in to lust is not only reasonable. Following desire does indeed enforce the power of our reasoning as worldly relating (Deleuze 2001, 55–58). Such a conceptual shift gives way to what Nietzsche will eventually celebrate as “revaluation of all values” in morals, for “then, it is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary; we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it.” (Spinoza 1994, 160) Morals are expression of the (often hidden and thus twisted) desires of a society and no transcendent laws from an unworldly, supernatural god. In fact, the nature-culture

dichotomy does similarly dissolve as the body-mind one, since a good society for Spinoza does not have laws to protect people from the unruly natural state (as in Hobbes' model), but good social laws are in accordance with natural laws (Spinoza 1994, 218 ff.).

b) Anthropocentric Socialism

According to Spinoza's *Ethics*, the ideal political state implies that "he who strives from reason to guide others" should lead because he "acts not by impulse, but kindly, generously, and with the greatest steadfastness of mind." (Ibid. 218) In such a speculative state, this guiding figure is not a sole king or tyrant, but profits greatly – and even necessarily – from the exchange with others. "[I]f we consider our mind, our intellect would of course be more imperfect if the mind were alone and did not understand anything except itself. There are, therefore, many things outside us which are useful to us, and on that account to be sought. Of these, we can think of none more excellent than those which agree entirely with our nature. For if, for example, two individuals of entirely the same nature are joined to one another, they compose an individual twice as powerful as each one. To man, then, there is nothing more useful than man." (Ibid. 209) Spinoza's political vision could be labeled as an "anthropocentric socialism" – a model of governance in which humans come together equally to create a greater good: "Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all should so agree in all things that the minds and bodies of all would compose, as it were, one mind and one body; that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all, together, should seek for themselves the common advantage of all." (Ibid. 209) Similarly to Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Rousseau's social contract and other modern political ideas of the social body, in Spinoza's model humans unite into one big mind and one big body. In this variant (and similarly, Rousseau's) they are not governed by a sovereign but are self-governed by the insights into *Reason* (with a capital R). This social body strives for homogeneity and tends to preclude other forms of Being on this planet: "The rational principle of seeking our own advantage teaches us to establish a bond with men, but not with the lower animals, or with things whose nature is different from human nature. We have the same right against them that they have against us. Indeed, because the right of each one is defined by his virtue, or power, men have a far greater right against the lower animals than they have against men. Not that I deny that the lower animals have sensations. But I do deny that we are therefore not permitted to consider our own advantage, use them at our pleasure, and treat them as is most convenient for us. For they do not agree in nature with us, and their affects are different in nature from human affects." (Ibid. 219) Then, although Spinoza is far more ready than many of his contemporaries to affirm the sentience and vitality of animals and matter, the political consequences of his philosophy tend to stay the same: they are centered around the reign of the *anthropos* over everything else on this planet. And this *anthropos* – how could it else be – is a rational and *male* figure, more apt to stay clear "from unmanly compassion, partiality and superstition" and more able to follow the "guidance of reason" than

women, children or lunatics (Ibid. 151-2). In Spinoza's political visions, the anthropocentric hierarchies stay untouched. The *anthropos* in his modern frenzy continues to create the Anthropocene by seeing himself as the crown of creation, reasoning: "Apart from men we know no singular thing in Nature whose mind we can enjoy, and which we can join to ourselves in friendship, or some kind of association. And so whatever there is in Nature apart from men, the principle of seeking our own advantage does not demand that we preserve it. Instead, it teaches us to preserve or destroy it according to its use, or to adapt it to our use in any way whatever." (Ibid. 249)

c) Reason prevails

I have so far surveyed Spinoza's metaphysics of immanence within Nature, which seemed rather promising in its notions of a vivid and vibrant cosmos to overcome the modern anthropocentric regime of transforming the planet into a dead entity. In spite of this, we can still find the same notions of the reasonable men as the crown of all of creation in this oeuvre, leading to similar (eco-)political consequences. To elucidate and get closer to this point, I will examine the relation of Reason and Nature in Spinoza's work as both are envisaged as monolithic entities that are not (yet) pluralized. This will guide the way to where we must depart from Spinozist metaphysics of Nature to attain a pluralist and more inclusive affirmation of ecological reasonings.

"How Spinoza fantasizes about reason! A basic error is the belief in unity and the absence of fight - this would be merely death! Where there is life, there is a cooperative formation, where the comrades fight for food and space, where the weaker ones follow, live shorter, have less descendants: Diversity reigns in the smallest things, sperm eggs – the equality is a great madness." (Nietzsche 2009a, NF-1881,11[132]¹¹⁸) In a note written in 1881, Nietzsche is uttering frustration about the otherwise highly esteemed oeuvre of Spinoza. The concept of Reason upheld by Spinoza seems to deeply dissatisfy our prototypical thinker of ecological reasonings, for it – according to Nietzsche – contains a "contempt for everything changing" (Ibid. NF-1887,9[160]), reproduces moral codes of occidental culture (Ibid. BGE-25) and – on top – the "rigid mathematical formula" of Spinoza's approach are concealing an anthropocentric will to power that – for Nietzsche – today no longer has any other value than an aesthetic one (Ibid. NF-1872,19[47], BGE-5).

In fact, Spinoza's philosophical approach is not so different than the one from Descartes – the latter is considered to be "bugbear of ecological thinking ever since" (Morton 2009, 105). They might attain different results, however, their rationalist approaches are both based on a universalisation of the geometrical method (which in both cases is sanctioned and enabled by God) and the relation of

¹¹⁸ Original German quote: "Wie phantasirt *Spinoza* über die Vernunft ! Ein Grundirrthum ist der Glaube an die Eintracht und das Fehlen des Kampfes — dies wäre eben Tod! Wo Leben ist, ist eine genossenschaftliche Bildung, wo die Genossen um die Nahrung den Raum kämpfen, wo die schwächeren sich anfügen, kürzer leben, weniger Nachkommen haben: Verschiedenheit herrscht in den kleinsten Dingen, Samenthierchen Eiern — die Gleichheit ist ein großer Wahn."

cause and effect¹¹⁹. The Reason that both regard as the tool for understanding and rightly relating to the world is one dominated by geometric, mathematical and logical ideals and are therefore not at all different from the form of objective reasoning (abstracted from all sensory input, for no one has ever seen a perfect triangle in reality) inaugurated by Platonism. Fichte goes as far as to state that “mere objective reasoning” necessarily leads to the Spinozist System (Seidel 1982, 6–11).

Although the body-mind-dualism is transformed into a body-mind-isomorphism in Spinoza’s *Ethics*, we encounter aphorisms such as the following at the end of the oeuvre: “The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal.” (Spinoza 1994, 256) and “Only while the body endures is the mind subject to affects which are related to the passions.” (Ibid. 260) Contrary to the organic and monist image we gathered at the beginning of this examination, we now seem to encounter residues of a Platonist notion of an eternal mind opposed to an ephemeral bodily matter. This eternal mind can see clearer into the state of things as the body could, for it is closer to God: “Whatever the mind understands under a species of eternity, it understands not from the fact that it conceives the body’s present actual existence, but from the fact that it conceives the body’s essence under a species of eternity.” For “it is of the nature of reason to conceive things under a species of eternity” (Ibid. 258) and “Knowledge of God is the mind’s greatest good; its greatest virtue is to know God.” (Ibid. 213)

With such a notion of godly Reason that is based on the exclusion of duration, anything that changes – one could also say: lives – is excluded from rational reflection. As Nietzsche, and later Bergson and Whitehead will observe, this is one of the key assumptions of classical modern science and its problematic relationship to an ever-fluctuating chaosmos (see chapter 9e). These ideals of unchanging eternity can only be inspired by unworldly geometrical and mathematical ideals following ocularcentric standards – sensual and bodily perception is *per se* changing and thus excluded from Reason as much as it ever was in occidental Monorationalism. As Nietzsche challengingly asks us: “These old philosophers were heartless; philosophizing was always a kind of vampirism. Looking at these figures, even Spinoza, don’t you have a sense of something profoundly enigmatic and uncanny? Don’t you notice the spectacle that unrolls before you, how they become ever paler - how desensualisation is interpreted more and more ideally? Don’t you sense a long-concealed vampire in the background who begins with the senses and in the end is left with, and leaves, mere bones, mere clatter? I mean categories, formulas, words (for, forgive me, what was left of Spinoza, *amor intellectualis dei* is mere clatter and no more than that: What is amor, what deus. if there is not a drop of blood in them?)” (Nietzsche 2009a, GS-372)

There is neither conflict, nor chaos in Spinoza’s metaphysics, save from appearance. If it appears that there is dissidence and conflict among humans, this is only by appearance, for: “when they contradict one another most vehemently, they either have the same thoughts, or they are thinking of

¹¹⁹ Furthermore they both reject the anthropomorphisation of God and prioritize the mind / spirit that is – also in Spinoza’s oeuvre – considered to be eternal and has to be reduced as much as possible from sensory input.

different things, so that what they think are errors and absurdities in the other are not.” (Ibid. 146) If regarded under the perspective of godly eternity (as Spinoza’s Reason suggests to) everything is in harmony. Thus, by the power of godly Reason “[a]n affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it” and “[t]here is no affection of the body of which we cannot form a clear and distinct concept.” (Ibid. 247) Under the veil of monism we encounter a similar paradigm of rationalist control over the body as we did in Descartes’ – comparatively clumsy – dualism. Liveliness is thus suppressed in an all too well-known way by a logocentric, ocularcentrist and monorationalist Reason.

E) Anthropology of the Moderns II

a) Another variant of a modern regime of Nature

While we at first glance discovered vast – and promising – divergences from Descartes’ philosophy, they now more and more seem to evaporate. Let’s recall the quote from Descartes’ *Meditations* cited above: “for by nature, in a general sense, I now mean nothing other than either God himself, or the system of created things established by God; and by my own nature in particular, I mean nothing other than the combination of all the properties bestowed on me by God.” (Descartes 2008a, 57) At closer examination, this sentence could just as well come from Spinoza’s quill. The role of the *I* might be a different one in each philosophical system, however, they both conceive Nature as a God that governs the unchanging cosmos by harmonious, geometrical laws¹²⁰. We encounter two forms of modern subjectivity: the active entrepreneur and conqueror and the passive, contemplative monk or *laissez-faire* defeatist – both share the same modern cosmology of a rational control over worldly troubles which goes as far as transferring the laws of Reason to those of Nature, thereby overcoding the multiple environments with a reified, deified and unified, harmonic Nature.

With such a cosmology, human exceptionalism is maintained because of human’s proximity to God and Reason: “Our actions - that is, those desires which are defined by man’s power, or reason - are always good; but the other desires can be both good and evil.” (Ibid. 239) Since Nature and Reason somehow become the same, it is not surprising that “reason demands nothing contrary to Nature” (Ibid. 209) In Descartes’ oeuvre we have seen how Plato’s stable and harmonious cosmos was transferred into the laws of Reason by opposing them to Nature. In Spinoza’s oeuvre we now find finalized what is already premeditated in Cartesianism: Nature becomes the new place holder for the rationally ordered cosmos. The modern cosmology is one which projects Platonist ideals of reasonability into the environments by unifying them under the great modern concept of “Nature”.

¹²⁰ The idea of the world / nature as the harmonious “book of god expressed in mathematical laws” dates back to at least Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) and forms a central assumption of the modern cosmology vastly inspired by its sudden and vast advancements in the natural – physicalist – sciences.

“Things could have been produced by God in no other way, and in no other order than they have been produced” (Ibid. 106)

b) Nature & emerging ecological thought

With such a stable and closed system as the Spinozist “naturalism” change in the sense of mutation, adaptation and the emergence of new forms of existence can not be sufficiently thought (Souriau 2009, 168 ff.). Nature, “a transcendental term in a material mask” (Morton 2009, 15), unifies multiple and chaotic environments under one harmonious concept. “Far from being natural itself, Nature hovers over things like a ghost.” (Ibid.)

Ecological thinking has been occupied with this so centrally modern concept of Nature from its very beginnings. For Carl von Linné (1707-78), who “opens the way for ecological thinking” with his “genetic” approach towards a “system of Nature” (Debourdeau 2013, 10), “Nature” is still regarded to be in such grand harmony that it cannot be anything but the “immutable law of God, by which things are as he wanted them to be” (von Linné 2013 [1788], 31). According to Linné, *she* “does not do anything without a determined objective; she does not employ anything superfluous. She provides all beings with everything they need.” (Ibid. 32) Within this feminized Nature “the reasonable man is born to recognize the author of his being; and the study of nature leads necessarily to the admiration of the creations of the supreme being.” (Ibid. 34)

While von Linné is still heavily influenced by a modern naturalism greatly reminiscent of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) – the inventor of the term “oecologie” already rejects a godly and supreme authorship of nature by saying the organic and inorganic interactions in our ecologies are “not the deliberate work of a creator modeling nature with method but rather they constitute the necessary effects of matter endowed with inalienable properties in constant movement in time and space ” (Haeckel 2013 [1866], 54) In the further development of ecological thought, this Nature – as a singular, unifying concept – is more and more challenged, although it still remains intact way after Haeckel’s invention. For Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944) the “role that nature plays as an object in different milieus is highly contradictory. If one wanted to assemble all its objective characteristics, one would be facing chaos. And yet all these environments are carried and preserved by the totality that transcends each particular environment. Behind all the worlds to which it gives birth, hides, eternally present, one subject: Nature.” (Uexküll 2013 [1909], 103)

As we develop further and clearer understanding that we are now in the catastrophic time of the Anthropocene, it becomes progressively clear that ecologies cannot be unified as a harmonious, well-ordered cosmological wholes, but as a chaotic and ever changing dynamic patchwork of temporarily “stable imbalances” (Reichholf 2009; Prigogine 2008). In the Holocene – a time of relative ecological stability which coincides with the emergence of human civilization – we could still make ourselves believe that “Nature” is a harmonious, godly cosmos. However, as Gaia more

and more clearly intrudes (Stengers 2013a) and we found the term “Anthropocene” for expressing our sentiment that all equilibrium seems unhooked, we have to rid ourselves of Spinozist ideals of a harmonious Nature. The Sixth Mass Extinction and the vast ecological damages our planet witnesses exceed the range of a Spinozist system of one, unchangeable & harmonious Nature, since from its metaphysical assumptions “follows that the mind avoids imagining those things that diminish or restrain its or the body's power.” (Spinoza 1994, 162) In a time that is marked by environmental erosion, messiness and damage on a planetary level, we have to depart from such a Spinozist system in order to become sensible to those toxic and pollutant problems that are restraining our bodies power. Ecological reasonings fit for the time need to develop more chaotic ways of relating to the environments as those enabled by a harmonious Nature-whole, whose anthropocentric values render us blind to the degradation of the environment that will – in the long run – also hinder our further development.

With a totalized concept of Nature, relating to a concrete environment is made more difficult, since everything is beforehand harmonized. The *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (cited in the introduction) require us to go into more ecological detail of certain (usually messy) environments than a beforehand posited, unified Nature. To learn how to deal with the troubles of our manifold crumbling worlds, we have to get rid of the great unifiers (“Nature”, “God”, “World”, “Reason”, “Human”) to make new sense of what is happening. Only by zooming in and letting the chaotic, the destructive, the impure and the toxic take a hold of our reasoning as well, will we be able to invent and rediscover forms of existing, flourishing and reasoning with the catastrophic time we live in (see particularly chapter 9 for a “reasoning with chaos” developed from the philosophies of Stengers and Prigogine).

Presentiment II: Towards affirming Ecological Reasonings in the Ruins of Modernity

As we have seen, in Spinozist metaphysics we can find a lot of potential for ecological thought, since it allows us to reflect our subject-position as part of vibrant matters and thus turns a lot of classical occidental assumptions about morals, reasons, bodies, and our position in the environment upside down. However, by remaining entangled by the great modern concepts of Reason, Nature, God, and a logo- and geometrico-centric image of thought, a lot of the problematic structures become enforced or at least stay untouched. We will thus return to Spinozist-inspired ideas in the continuation of this investigation, however, we will have to detach them from the modern trinity of Monorationalism, Mononaturalism and Monotheism.

For doing so, it is much less productive to regard Spinoza's philosophy as "better" than Descartes'. They much rather form two different layers equally predominant in the moderns' individual psyche as well as in modern societies and sciences. Regarding them as philosophical narrators rather than systematic geniuses enables us to see them in an "ecological" angle, that is, understanding them in relationship to their particular cultural, historical and individual environment (see also Excursion 6). In Descartes' version of modern philosophy, "poetic" relating to the specific environment is cut off from what is considered reasonable, thereby reproducing Platonist ideals and rendering the thinker unable to reflect the productive ecology of *his* particular reasonability. Contrastingly, in Spinoza's version, poetic relating is not methodically excluded, but it is rendered impossible by overcoding particular environments with a totalized and harmonized concept of Nature that reproduces Platonist standards by still regarding logo-centric rationality as the only form of Reason.

Descartes displaces the Platonist notion of cosmic stability into the subject or *I*, whereas Spinoza projects the same stability onto Nature as a unified whole. Both strategies are in fact very telling about the emergence of ecological reasonings within modernity, since they both can be understood to react to this form of ecological relating in their particular (and negating, suppressing) ways. Under this angle it is interesting to note that Descartes (whose ontology is based on a complete exclusion of the *I* from worldly, bodily affairs) pursues a narrative strategy which makes use of biographical examples as a form of philosophical argumentation / persuasion a lot, whereas Spinoza (who much more should regard his *I* as entangled with worldly matters) founds his works on strict and abstract logical argumentation without any personal, textual relating.

These contradictions should not incite us to resolve them. Much rather, we should see them as food for thought (problems in the Deleuzian and Stengerian sense – see chapter 4d) to understand European Modernity better in its peculiar relationships to environments. Descartes' richly biographical oeuvre is useful since it shows us clearly how it deals with ecologies: it actually takes

into account a reasonability that stems directly from poetic, ambiguous relating to the environment, but then excludes it from Reason's realm by taking flight from it into preordained Platonist ideals. This form of ecological relating, where everything becomes ambiguous and blurry as a form of immanent mattering never is taken into account in Spinoza's logical treatment of the immanence of Nature. Since he unquestioningly adopts a geometrical, logical ideal of reasoning, this very different and chaotic notion of reasoning with a particular – and *troublesome* – environment doesn't even appear in his oeuvre – according to Spinoza's pre-established harmony, contradiction does only exist in appearance by mere superficiality of *sight*. We are let alone to imagine what strategies of flight Spinoza undertook to establish his harmonic system in God/Nature¹²¹.

a) Unpacking Monorationalism

We therefore see that there exist imminent ideas of more ecological forms of reasoning within modern and occidental discourses. By examining Descartes and Spinoza together anthropologically, we can comprehend how modern philosophy is characterized by a particular monorationalist solution by suppressing other – and more ecological – kinds of *making sense*. Without going into greater detail¹²², it can be assumed that modern philosophy – be it with Kant, Hegel, or others – can be characterised by establishing a particular relationship to the uncertain ground of an ecological relating. This relationship consists in somehow neutralizing or controlling it by relying to some kind of stable transcendence from which outerworldly certainty can be attained (in Kant this would be the ahistorical *apriori*, in Hegel the *Weltgeist* as telos, etc.). This movement we have already found in Plato's work and can be retraced during modernity in all forms of declinations¹²³.

Thus, we can understand the nature of occidental Monorationalism better: it does not consist in one exact version of Reason that is uniformly applied by all its contestants. Much rather, Monorationalism is a particular strategy of flight from plural and messy environments by way of a unified and monopolized concept of Reason (which often is accompanied by God and Nature as

¹²¹ The lack of biographical knowledge and material on Spinoza is also the reason why there is no prosaic part for Spinoza in this chapter. For a good narrative speculation on his life in relation to his thought (which is, interestingly, connected to the difficulty the Nazi Alfred Rosenberg had in taking a stance towards him) see Irving Yalom's *The Spinoza Problem* (2013)

¹²² The undertaking of coherently (and with all contradictions) demonstrating this tendency of the entire modern canon would fill entire books. However, if this were to be done, one would only reproduce the masculine predominance of philosophy by citing almost entirely solely men all over again, even if it was *critically*. The angle of this thesis is another one, in that it wants to give other voices about reasons more room and thus break – at least tentatively – a masculinist hegemony of discourse.

¹²³ Petrarca's *Ascent of Mount Ventoux* (1336) can be rightly seen as a founding text of this modern tendency. After describing in poetic language the inspirations of the mountain-environment he climbed, he opens his copy of St. Augustine's *Confessions* – a central text for translating Platonism into Christianity – and is reminded, that this form of worldly relating is sinful and leads nowhere *he* would want to go. "I closed the book, angry with myself that I should still be admiring earthly things who might long ago have learned from even the pagan philosophers that nothing is wonderful but the soul, which, when great itself, finds nothing great outside itself. Then, in truth, I was satisfied that I had seen enough of the mountain; I turned my inward eye upon myself, and from that time not a syllable fell from my lips until we reached the bottom again. [...] [W]e look about us for what is to be found only within. [...] How many times, think you, did I turn back that day, to glance at the summit of the mountain which seemed scarcely a cubit high compared with the range of human contemplation" [via https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrarch#Mount_Ventoux]

unities). The various positions within this Monorationalism are held together by this family likeness and are not as much a unity as they proclaim to be.

b) Occidental Reason(s) vs. Ecological Reason(s)?

From this perspective, ecological reasonings seem like the opposite of occidental, monorationalist reason(s): whereas occidental reason(s) consist in an *upward* movement from concrete messiness to transcendent clarity, an ecological reasonings' movement appears like a *down to Earth* movement of emancipating itself from too abstract schemes in order to relate to the complex situation of a particular here and now.

This opposition might be helpful for an approximate understanding, however, it has to be handled with great care, since it a) carries along and reproduces occidental values of hierarchization (high-low) and b) might seem like replacing a monorationalist ideas with a dualist notion of two reasons. This thesis will not be able to completely free itself of this dualism, however, it wants to keep it as a reminder that this affirmation of ecological reasonings can only be regarded as a first step concerning a *pluralization* of reasons. The *strategic dualism* (compare chapter 1) in use is only a tool to go further.

c) A Thousand and one Ecological Reasonings for Gaia

In comparison to occidental reason(s), ecological reasonings consist in staying with the messy epistemic trouble of a particular environment and making sense *with* it – without resolving its inherent contradictions by means of transcendent abstraction. It implies thinking and staying with an environment however ambiguous and unclear it might appear – sense will emerge by mere bodily and sensual partaking (see chapters 7 and 8), without the need to return to an active, transcendent – and “torturous” in Bacon’s sense – subject position. As shown in this chapter, modern philosophy is conscious of instances of such reasonings, but characteristically takes flight from them. Thus, such a form of reasonability could never have been developed within the monorationalist constraints of the occidental modern canon and only rudiments are known to it and thus degraded. However, as we shall see in the next chapters, by staying with the trouble, more coherent characteristics and traits of this form of reasoning can be developed: Ecological reasonings do not only consist in this down to Earth-movement, but an entire different and dynamic structure of reasoning can be developed and sketched if we stick to it. This will be the undertaking of the next part (IV) of this thesis.

To conclude, a little remark on the number of ecological reasoning(s), thereby explaining the “(s)” at the end of “reason(ing)(s)”. Since ecological reasoning(s) consist in thinking/relating/partaking with a particular environment, one could assume that there are as many reasons as environments, making the term somewhat obsolete. However, as we will see in the following, some general traits

and systemic structures can be found which unite all of these reasonings – not essentially, but by various structural likenesses and tendencies.

In allusion to James Lovelock (1981) and Lynn Margulis (1998) we can say: Many environments form Gaia, who never forms a whole in the sense of unity, since it is always dynamically and chaotically changing and fluctuating. There are uncountable ecosystems that can not be homogenized to one, but nevertheless form what we can call Gaia – a living, synergistic and self-regulating complex system in fluctuation, never fully graspable, ever fluctuating from our conceptual understandings while synchronically being the only cause and soil for any known reasoning to emerge. Next to this idea of Gaia, the role of one God and one Reason becomes understandable as a dangerous reduction of the fluctuating reasonings and becomings to one static, abstract sphere. In the attempt to reason *with, from, as a part of and in* Gaia (and many more adjectives for the many more names Gaia could have) the unity of Reason crumbles and its number becomes somewhat obsolete: there are million angles one could take on this planet, and they all form a non-unitary, dynamic chaosmos that *makes sense*. And, if we tread well enough, we can be an active and living part of its reasonings.

Excursion 5: Crisis

Common sense would understand a crisis as a symptom for one regime ending, bearing the potential for renewal, change and the inauguration of a new order. Activist theories of revolution, intervention and political or social change would often assume that it is necessary to bring the status quo into crisis in order to overcome it. In our case, we would have to bring the epistemic regime of occidental Monorationalism into crisis to enable the emergence of other, more ecological forms of reason.

Unfortunately, a closer examination of the matter reveals a more complex image of transition and change. Political philosophies have identified the neoliberal order to be maintained by implementing state of exceptions and crises (Agamben 2005; Mirowski 2013) and revolutionary positions such as those of the French *Comité Invisible* state: “We’ve had a blind faith in crisis, a faith so blind and so enduring that we didn’t see how the liberal order had made it the centerpiece of its arsenal. [...] Far from fearing crises, capital now tries its hand at producing them experimentally” (Comité invisible 2015, 21–22) By creating a state of permanent crisis, it is argued, the contemporary regime of capitalism is rendering itself untouchable. Far from being a reason for hope in transition, crises can be identified as false friends for revolutionaries since they tend to much rather enforce the modern Status quo than heralding its approaching end.

From the findings of the last chapter we can add that this regime of crisis might be older than most Marxist revolutionaries would assume. As we saw in the case examples of both Plato and Descartes, both clearly react to what they perceive as a time of crisis and upheaval with a further stiffening into transcendent untouchability of fundamentally the same ontological hierarchies. Plato reacts to a crisis of the Athenian city-state with transferring the cosmological city walls into transcendent metaphysics. Descartes reacts to what he perceives as a fundamental crisis of the social and epistemic order of his time by implementing a mechanico-rationalist regime central for producing capitalist work-forces and mind-frames.

As Carolyn Merchant brilliantly shows in her study of the rise of the mechanical order in Modernity, such new rationalist epistemologies become predominant in the course of Modernity *because* they are an effective reaction to an increasingly devastated and manipulated environment. Ecological damage and decline are not discoveries of the 20th century. Problems such as deforestation, aquatic contamination, soil exhaustion and erosion, resulting in declining soil fertility, decreasing livestock, crop productivity and food availability started to become an issue from what is called the late Medieval Ages¹²⁴ (Merchant 1989, 36–48). These early modern ecological devastations cause a feeling of fear and anxiety among Renaissance intellectuals, there was “a

¹²⁴ Which, in Braudel’s much more revealing model of *longue durée*, is seen as the crucial starting point for the development of modern capitalism.

persistent concern” that “nature’s order might break down” and a general “sense of sickness and decay in the organic order of nature” (Ibid. 128). Whereas “nature” was regarded as a benevolent organic mother in earlier times, the rising ecological damage and loss of equilibrium caused by emerging modernity made “sixteenth and seventeenth-century writers exhibit a growing tendency to view both nature and society as wilderness and to advocate control over the forces and fates dealt by nature.” (Ibid. 129) Thus, a new regime of rationalist control – as exemplified by Descartes – can be understood to be a reaction to ecological crisis in the first place, sanctioning increasing anthropogenic control over human environments. Similarly, Spinoza’s *Ethics* – which presupposed that there is order in the cosmos (Seidel 1982, 16) – should be understood as a reaction to environmental crises by means of rationalist, geometrical control.

“The disruption of [...] ecosystems (forests, prairies, marshes, lakes, oceans) and their human components affects the course of history in the form of social uprisings, wars, laws, and technological innovations [...]. Conversely, psychological adaptation to altered environments helps to explain the rise of intellectual movements, conceptual structures, and new human behaviors. As European cities grew and forested areas became more remote, as fens were drained and geometric patterns of channels imposed the landscape, as large, powerful waterwheels, furnaces, forges, cranes, and treadmills began increasingly to dominate the work environment, more and more people began to experience nature as altered and manipulated by machine technology. A slow but unidirectional alienation from the immediate daily organic relationship that had formed the basis of human experience from earliest times was occurring. Accompanying these changes was alterations in both theories and experiential bases of social organization” (Merchant 1989, 68).

We can see from these accounts that crises were not adapted by (neo)liberal capitalism to neutralize the threat of revolutionary ideas, as some theories would have it. A reaction and inauguration of environmental crises forms the basis of the epistemic modern regime that developed alongside capitalism. “Among the marks of the discursive formation of modernity” is a “empirico-transcendental confusion” (Spivak 1993, 33) that can reinforce the occidental subject position *exactly because* it is in crisis. Environmental disconcertion does not necessarily lead to giving up a strong subject position, but can equally lead to a stiffening and internalization of the same subjectivity. As Sloterdijk comments on Descartes: “Chronical doubt is the most effective exercise to keep the doubted alive.” (Sloterdijk 2012b, 153)

Crises were always a central motor for occidental Reason from which it reinforces and stabilizes itself in even higher (or more internalized) transcendence according to geometrical laws¹²⁵. By maintaining a state of “permanent liminality” (Boland 2018, 38) an emphasis on analytical and logico-critical thinking tending to “deconstruction, disintegration or atomisation” got reinforced

¹²⁵ It is interesting to note that the time (= the early 20th century around Le Corbusier etc.) in which the geometrization of urban planing become the predominant way of anthropogenic world-manipulation, Geometry as a scientific domain was perceived to be in a huge crisis by contemporaries such as Válerý or Husserl – compare (Vietta 2012, 159 ff.)

and became the monorationalist norm of Modernity. This modern Monorationalism feeds *from* while at the same time *is creating* crisis. It will not easily be deterred by producing more crises.

6) Resilience of Reason

As a last investigation before this thesis enters its affirmative part of tracing ecological reasonings in contemporary discourses, this chapter will be devoted to a problem and phenomenon that I label the „Resilience of Reason“. With this term I want to denote the problem that the notion of a unity of one, occidental Reason is so strong, that it tends to recover itself even after manifold critiques and negations of the concept.

The term “resilience” in ecological sciences is defined as “the ability of a system to absorb disturbances before unpredictably changing its structure from one equilibrium state to another, less desirable one.” (Hornborg 2011, 22) Usually the talk is about environments of the Holocene and how the anthropos could change *them* to maintain their relative stability favorable for human civilization as we know it. Since the impetus of this thesis is at least critical to these rather *conservative*, anthropocentric impulses and shares the assumption with Haraway and others (chapter 1g) that it is too late to restore the Holocene, the term “Resilience” is used a little counter-intuitively in this chapter – in fact, this conceptualization can be understood as an attempt to “hijack” the term from its predominantly neoliberal use in contemporary discourses (see chapter 12f)

The angle of examining the “Resilience of Reason” wants to make understandable what elements make Monorationalism so resilient that it still is hardly dismantled although the critical disturbances of our belief in *this* particular reasonability have been many. I am proposing to analyze the Resilience of Reason in order to change *our* discourses and thinking enough to attain the *ecologically more desirable* state of a plurality of reasonings. Contrary to the mainstream usage of “Resilience”, I do not examine resilience (of an ecosystem) in order to make it more disturbance-resistant, but I am using the term resilience (of our epistemological categories and orders) in order to understand better how we can effectively dismantle them (which proved hard so far). By this, I want to help to understand what’s in the way of pluralizing Reason within our traditions of making sense of the world. The first part of this investigation was just touched in the last Excursion about Crises.

I have written an entire book titled *Backlash – Essays on the Resilience of Modernity* (2020) in which I lead a similar investigation with focus on our modern anthropogenic manipulations of the environment and how they feed us into “feedback loops” that make the augmentation of the cause of the problem appear like the solution for the problem. In essays about land appropriation, automobility, masculinity, fear and political populism I try to understand what makes Modernity so irresistible to be overcome, although we feel *post-modern* since at least four decades and have even been correctly shown that – in fact – *we have never been modern*. Since Reason and occidental Monorationalism are essentially linked to European modernity, this chapter wants to extend these

investigations to the more epistemological realm of reasons. This will be undertaken in the following points:

- a) reactionary conservatism
- b) denunciative and abundant critique
- c) anthropogenic environments and their feedback loops
- d) the influence of language and text

Since many of the topics have already been touched in earlier chapters, most points will remain rather short reminders of the issue on the angle of Resilience of Reason. In fact, naming the phenomenon is already half the deal to escape it. As we have seen in the chapters on Descartes and Spinoza, the very notion of a unitary Reason is so ingrained in our minds that it keeps reappearing unquestioningly even after what is purported to be “radical doubt”. Somehow, Reason as One is never really questioned, but forms something like the *mythic* or *dogmatic* base of modern rational and critical thought. To overcome this foundational assumption of occidental modern cosmology an anthropological research perspective is needed.

a) reactionary conservatism

The first element co-constituting the Resilience of Reason, reactionary conservatism, has already been touched on various points in this thesis and we have already outed our suspicion that Peter Sloterdijk might be the most prominent example of a thinker who fell into its traps (compare Footnote 109). As shown in Part II, in the last two centuries the occidentals progressively realized that Reason is not a god-given, eternally unchangeable gift, but is produced from a certain and contingent socio-cultural order and relationship to the environment. This realization is connected to the insight that – as Nietzsche showed us – this form of epistemic regime was necessary for the survival of occidental civilization. It’s on the dice that such an insight would – and does – render many people *conservative* in the sense that they want to maintain the status quo recognized as vitally necessary lie. However, what such positions fail to take into account is a) that this occidental culture brought forth the catastrophic time we today call the Anthropocene and b) that there are other highly developed cultural forms of epistemic regimes that fostered civilization and did not require monorationalism (see chapter 7). In a time that is marked by the Intrusion of Gaia, such conservative motivations become equivalent with a will to human self-annihilation¹²⁶, for it should be quite clear that the continuation of the same degree of occidental expansionist rationality would almost certainly lead to an ecological collapse not many humanoid lifeforms would survive. The first step of countering the Resilience of Reason would therefore be to not essentialize Reason as necessary for civilizational survival just after realizing its contingency. The very fact that we are able to regard Reason as a culturally contingent product means that *we* – as an occidentally shaped,

¹²⁶ In fact, fascists – the radical declination of conservatism – are uncannily aware of this tendency to self-annihilation. Inspired by the works of Oswald Spengler and others they find occidental culture in decline and see only two options: the installment of a great occidental Awakening or total annihilation.

discursive culture – are no longer dependent on it in a way that – as Nietzsche speculated – we once probably were. We are already partially outside the epistemic regime of Reason, otherwise we would not even be able to have such insights. With this considered, the vital reformation of a necessary lie for civilizational survival of the occidentals has to be regarded as a reaction that forms a part of the Resilience of Reason.

b) denunciative and abundant critique

The second aspect that needs to be addressed concerning the Resilience of Reason has already mostly been developed in Chapter 4. As shown there, critique can only exist as the *negation* of a criticized status quo. To once more refer back to Tom Boland's brilliant work of a sociology and anthropology of critique: "The desire of critique is not simply an urge to ascertain the 'truth' in the sense of 'producing reality congruent knowledge'; rather, the desire of critique is to unmask and destroy other people's 'ideology. Ironically, this means that critics are dependent upon the persistence of those things they oppose" (Boland 2018, 44) Since the privileged mode of cognition and reasoning of Modernity progressively became that of Critique, at some points nothing more than denunciation and a critical "raging deadlock" became possible within the regime of monorationalist Reason. The overabundance of critique can easily lead to the cynical reinstallment of the objects criticized. To quote Sloterdijk's analysis of Kant – the modern philosopher per se: "Reason sits, so to speak, behind a grating through which it believes it gains metaphysical insights, but what at first seems to be 'Knowledge' (Erkenntnis) proves to be self-deception under the light of critique. To a certain extent, reason has to be taken in by the illusion that it itself has created in the form of metaphysical ideas. By ultimately coming to recognize its own limits and its own futile play with the expansion of those limits, it unmask its own efforts as futile. This is the modern form of saying: I know that I know nothing. This knowledge entails, in a positive sense, only the knowledge of the limits of knowledge." (Sloterdijk 2012a, 34) Caught within such self-referential auto-critique, Reason can only reproduce its own premises, for the mode of critique as preferred means of acquiring knowledge is never questioned. Thus, when critique – as a monolithic, modern practice of Reason – can only denounce the structures it is depended upon, the very same structures will find – as Didier Debaise put it - "their efficacy in their effacement" (Debaise 2017a, 26). Caught within this critical aspect of the Resilience of Reason, the very negation of the occidental, anthropocentric subject, its metaphysics and Monorationalism will reproduce what it negates. Thus – as Bruno Latour has it – there is no choice "between engaging or not in metaphysics, but between going back to the old metaphysics [of nature] or practicing an experimental metaphysics that will allow us to follow the way the" (Latour 2004, 130) ecological problem leads us. We have to invent new narrations and conceptual story-containers. Merely criticizing the old ones will keep us locked up within the cages of occidental Monorationalism. For developing an "experimental metaphysics" (as Latour called it) and invent new concepts and manifold reasons, we have to get beyond

denunciative critique and add an affirmative element to the modern business of critical reasoning. Left by itself, Reason as a modern critical tool will reproduce itself endlessly in its very own self-limitation and effacement. Everything will be maintained in a zombie-like status, as post-modern critics would have it. Such a Zombie-state of things bleached but unchanged form a self-referential circle that produces the second layer of the Resilience of Reason.

c) anthropogenic environments and their feedback loops

The classically occidental image of Reason saw itself as somehow hovering transcendently over the Earth – universally the same for everybody, accessible by solitary reflection and unspoiled by ephemeral worldliness. However, when we – in the wake of the intrusion of the ecological – more and more understand reasoning as a collective process among human and non-human actants on this planet, the reflection on the milieu of reasoning becomes central. As we have seen, Reason was not as universal as it purported to be but was limited to a certain socio-cultural position (male, white, privileged) in a peculiar (occidental, urban) environment. Thus, any image of reasoning has to take into account the ground that forms it. Ecological reasoning means at first to include into reflection the productive ecology which made this reason possible in the first place – its earthly and ecological conditions of possibility.

Since most people reading this text will be living in anthropogenically heavily modified landscapes such as cities or *rurbanized* countrysides, we have to consider their effect on our images of reasons. The modern way of life most of us lead today was brought on its way by the modern epistemic regime of monorationalist Reason. Thus, the landscapes we inhabit today carry forth the characteristics and priviligations of occidental Reason – as we saw in the last excursion about crisis, the proliferation of modern landscape modifications fostered modern, mechanist declinations of Monorationalism and vica versa. These traces are hardly to be ignored in our human, all too human environments the very most of us inhabit today. Within them, the culturally contingent assumptions of Reason appear to be *self-evident* since our environments are more and more build after the sensory (ocularcentric & body-alienated – compare chapter 3.C) privilegings that characterize Reason. For example, city traffic with its huge dependency on cars can only work with its limitation to a logocentric and ocularcentric regime of perception (you only need the eyes to stir a wheel and read the traffic signs) and a repression of sensory stimuli (such as smell, noise, etc.). Cities in general allow for more abstraction from the sensory perceived environments than the countryside (remember Socrates' excursion to the river Illisos in chapter 5.A). Furthermore, as shown in chapter 3.D, the norms of Reason have been inscribed into our city planning and into our behavioral as well as jurisdictional norms and laws to prevent digression from the monorationalist epistemic regime. To follow another Reason than the unearthly one can easily lead to ending up in the psychiatry, court or jail, if this hasn't been done under the label of "art" or another established transgression of the modern normality.

The characteristics of modern Reason are thus *imprinted* into our landscapes, souls and jurisdictional systems. This leads to a phenomenon I call “feedback loops”: within these environments it seems reasonable to follow the guidance of Reason as a monorationalist entity. Most other behaviors (to give just a few examples: 1) walking or sitting down in the midst of a street to perceive the environment sensually, 2) reading out loud all the text you can see in your local environment, 3) masturbating in front of a sexy advertisement billboard 4) shouting back at noisy cars) would be quickly label as irrational or mad by most bystanders. The “muses of the place” that whispered into Socrates’ ears and deferred him from his emergent monorationalist regime of Reason would today much rather advertise for the same regime. From a completely tunneled and paved Illisos, not many reasons other than an unworldly, modernist Reason that advised for tunneling can emit its influences unto us. The Resilience of Reason is thus strongly connected to the Resilience of Modernity I have described in my aforementioned book. If we understand reasons ecologically, we have to understand them in relation to the space they reason in. In order to pluralize Reason and escape the Resilience of Reason, a modification of our environments as much as our relationship to them will be needed¹²⁷. In times called the Anthropocene, creating new utopias means at first: dismantling, deconstructing the old idols that the are no longer only in the heavens, but that the anthropos paved into our environments and inscribed into our bodies and laws. To foster the emergence of ecological reasonings, our social order, our culture, and our architecture will have to change accordingly (and already do change) as much as we will have to find other ways of inhabiting this ruinous modernity the Anthropocene confronts us with.

d) the influence of language and text

For an examination of the last element of the Resilience of Reason I want to address here, I’ll have to pick up a thread I have touched in Chapter 3.A – when I reflected about the textual constitutedness of occidental Reason and its specific – e.g. ignorant – relationship to its prime medium: that of text. As shown there, Wittgenstein was an early thinker who was concerned with undoing this consequential shortcoming of occidental philosophy that, as he put it, made one think that “one is tracing nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.” (Wittgenstein 2010, para. 114). This fatal confusion of the frame with “nature” – making occidental philosophy assume to make direct judgments about “nature” where in fact it was heavily influenced by the grammar of its languages – was understood by Wittgenstein as a sort of “sickness of the mind” and his positive vision of philosophy in his later work period was that of a therapeutic undertaking.

¹²⁷ We can also understand the growing interest in Ancient Chinese, Indian or Amerindian cosmologies in this vein: since they emerged out of completely different environments than our modern ones, they can help us understand what from mere sensory relating in our modern environments might be hard to grasp.

After the publication of his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1921) in which he famously declared everything outside language to be unspeakable, Wittgenstein meant “to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. And if I am not mistaken in this belief, then the second thing in which the value of this work consists is that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved.” (Wittgenstein 2014, 4) By discovering how “philosophy” is centered around problems that are only a product of this misconception of language, he gave up on philosophy and retreated to the countryside to do something else (becoming an elementary school teacher, building a house for his sister, dreaming of becoming a worker in Soviet Russia, etc.). The problems of what he was taught to understand as philosophy were not connected to the world Wittgenstein felt to be living in and, consequently, he gave up on it, declared it to be sense-less, use-less and even a “sickness of the mind”¹²⁸.

However, after several years of retreat – and being asked to come back repeatedly – he returned to his philosophical milieu Cambridge to pursue his philosophical project from a different angle, that can perhaps best be described as ethico-aesthetical and soteriological / therapeutical (Arnswald and Weiberg 2001). Whereas in his more logically oriented earlier phase, he was concerned with showing that “philosophy” cannot say what it wants to say, he was now concerned with establishing some form of therapy that might prevent us from wanting to express and ask these ontologically flawed things in the first place: how one will never become seduced by the illusion of the completion of any systemic reasoning. Whereas the unspeakable (and its mystical impossibility) is the center of his early *Tractatus*, in his later work he radicalizes his insights into theoretical action by trying to show how language seduces us to run “against the walls of our cage” (Wittgenstein, Lecture on Ethics) and offering therapy of how we can avoid to even come close to what he identified as unspeakable. By drawing a map of the seductiveness of our (Indo-European, fully alphabetized) languages without a *will to system* or completion (but by following it loosely, with a readiness to turn back and do mistakes as described in Excursion 1 as a method of “sich auskennen”), he finds way to offer us *soterological* guidance to free ourselves from the constraints and harmful mechanisms of occidental Reason in its entanglement with the unreflected conditioning of language and text.

Such a mission prompts even Wittgenstein to give a positive definition of (a task for) the, often dismissed, philosophy *en passant*: “Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding [Verstandes] by the means / medium [Mittel]¹²⁹ of our language.” (Wittgenstein 2010, para. 109) Such a “bewitchment” of the mind can be understood as Nietzsche’s “seduction of language” that petrifies “the fundamental errors of reason” (compare chapter 3.A). So if we understand Wittgenstein’s therapeutic attempts in that vein, we can make use of Wittgenstein’s work

¹²⁸ As the actor impersonating Wittgenstein is muttering in Derek Jarman’s marvelous biopic *Wittgenstein* from 1993.

¹²⁹ I have altered the translation of Anscombe, Hacker and Schulte of “Mittel” as “resource”, which I do not believe to be the luckiest one.

for understanding better and finding ways out of this fundamental and hugely consequential entanglement of Reason and language to undo an element that forms the Resilience of Reason.

The confusion and synonymization of language with thinking makes us believe to be able to deduce facts from the world where in fact we are only following the logical relations of our language. Thus, we believe to find an “essence” behind reified “things”, that actually only appear to be misleadings of our language. The task of a fitting soteriologically redefined philosophy is to make us aware of such misleadings and gently bring us back to the grounds on which we stand (Wittgenstein 2010, para. 116). By confusing the logical system of our languages with those of our world, we are made to believe we can close our conclusions about “the world” into one coherent and complete system that would allow us to regard “the world” from an outside, exterior, transcendent perspective: Godly Reason looking upon “Nature” (see chapter 9f for an analysis of how this idea of completion forms the basis of modern scientific reasoning). By emancipating from these oversimplified images of thought and finding that language is more than logic – and thought more than language, we can escape the linguistic seduction of occidental Reason forming its another layer of its Resilience.

Hence, the most handy antidote to the Resilience of Reason is to *ground* reason in the environments it detached itself from by escaping into a self-referential logical circle. As Feldenkrais, a somatic-therapist with clear positions on language states: “much of our trouble lies in the fact that we confuse speaking with thinking. Thinking is a much wider function which contains many forms of possible expression. Speech is a serial event, as words come one after the other in time and by their nature cannot communicate the thought which may contain an immense number of aspects. There is always more than one way of expressing a thought.” (Feldenkrais 1981, 147) Being detached from the body, thoughts can race in unhealthy speed by only being pursued in silent or even spoken language, thus creating a transcendent truth-sphere in which Reason reinforces itself resiliently. By bringing thought back to our bodies, hands (LeGuin 2016d, 175) and environment, by remembering the poetic relating with a specific milieu from which all concepts – even those of the most abstract logic – originally came from, the Resilience of Reason can be most effectively defeated and what our language-seduced minds believed to be one is shattered into various ecological reasonings in their respective environments. To experiment and carefully research how many reasonings connect our bodies with our environments is the best activity to counter the Resilience of Reason.

Part IV :

Affirmation

Excursion 6: Narration

An affirmation of ecological reasonings needs to go beyond critique and analysis by daring to speculate about alternative and new narrations that do not stop short of the most venerable concepts of philosophy. As has been established so far, the modern stories of human exceptionalism, a neat culture / nature divide and a detached transcendent Reason hovering over it have to be overcome. In the time called the Anthropocene, these narrative webs need to be rethought and retold. As many voices in contemporary ecological debates have highlighted, „we must change the story, the story must change“ (Haraway 2016, 40) because, facing ecological catastrophe, „what's sure is that we can no longer tell each other the same stories.“ (Latour 2017a, 60¹³⁰) We have to “learn somehow to narrate – to think – outside the prick tale of Humans in History” (Haraway 2016, 40) and “tell stories that allow us, perhaps, to dream other dreams, to understand in a different way what happened to us when we proclaimed ourselves 'modern'.” (Stengers 2013b, 125)

In our times of ecological catastrophe, the cosmological order is breaking down to a degree that requires a renewed focus on narrations and their capacity of speculating new forms of making sense of the larger picture (or smellscape, to escape our ocularcentristic image of thought). As Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro point out in their study about *The Ends of the World* from 2015, “the semiotic regime of myth, perfectly indifferent to the empirical truth or falsity of its contents, comes into play whenever the relation between humans as such and their most general conditions of existence imposes itself as a problem for reason.” (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017, 6) In this time of worldly upheaval, problems such as “the end of the world” – which Kant posited as inaccessible to Reason – become a matter of (serious) reflection again and for such, a narrative turn is required that can create the mythological basis upon which factual regimes reside.

Within ecological sciences, there is a growing awareness of the insufficiency of gathering more information about our critical situation. The majority of scientists working in the domain today would agree that we have more than enough information on global warming, glacial melting, ocean acidification, accelerated species extinction and so forth – the knowledge is there, but they somehow can't seem to make us act and change accordingly¹³¹. For this, many would agree, different forms of storytelling, of making the facts *felt* are required. Only if factual information can be sensually comprehended and emotionally related to will it alter our way of reacting to the facts (Marshall 2015, 105 ff.). For such a shift, the art of narration comes back into place. “Stories perform a fundamental cognitive function: They are the means by which the emotional brain makes sense of the information collected by the rational brain.” (Ibid.)

¹³⁰ The original quote is: “c'est qui est sur, c'est qu'on ne peut plus du tout se raconter les memes histoires.”

¹³¹ Thanks to Julia Grillmayr for pointing this out to me.

To facilitate the inclusion of these affective means of knowing in our present time of *becoming ecological*, reason(s) will have to (re-)incorporate domains which have been banned from the territories of sound reasoning by the somber men of Reason: invention, speculation, fantasy and myth will no longer be regarded as *the Other* of Reason, but much rather as a fundamental operation *within* reasonability. Another story about reason(s) will entail other consequences, as much as any form of reasoning resides in a certain form of story-telling which is never fully stringent and consistent, but always founded on one particular form of narrative relationality with the environment.

As we have seen in chapter 5, Descartes is far away from radically doubting all occidental presumptions but is more than ready to ride along on some of its central narrative elements such as a nature / culture divide and an anthropocentric prioritization of men by means of proximity to god. These tropes form the intricate narrative web of occidental culture and cannot be, as such, refuted.

As Wittgenstein remarks in a very lucid paragraph in *On Certainty* : “If someone said to me that he doubted whether he had a body I should take him to be a half-wit. But I shouldn't know what it would mean to try to convince him that he had one. And if I had said something, and that had removed his doubt, I should not know how or why.” (Wittgenstein 2008, para. 257) Within logical argumentation, there is no way to once and for all refute the body-mind-dualism (see also chapter 3.Cb), since it does not found itself – contrary to its own aspiration – on a logically consistent ontology, but on a narrative web. Descartes’ “radical” doubt is itself only possible within the narrative ecology of occidental philosophy and it is not the point to logically refute it. In fact, as Whitehead put it, inconsistencies within philosophies are not a sign of their weakness, but a sign of them being still very vividly around. A “system of philosophy is never refuted; it is only abandoned.” (Whitehead 1979, 6) And to get beyond the modern cosmology and its catastrophic ontological splits, we have to change the underlying story, not argue on its own conceptual plane. Changing the narrative base will – at least for rationally oriented people – subtly make the body-mind-dualism, the nature-culture-divide, and so forth less attractive, because it can render less and less sense of the world.

Regarding philosophers as story-tellers is already an act of ecological reasoning: we can see what kind of narration transported what kind of ideas: what is readable and what is very hard to read thereby become serious criteria for philosophical works: how is it, that Plato, Descartes and Nietzsche are readable to so many, Kant and others aren't ...what does this reveal? To tell a good philosophical story is an art and has to adjust to the environment we are in! As one of the master narrators of the last century, Ursula Le Guin, put it: “Rightly or not, I believe a dull, inept style signals poverty or incompleteness of thought. I see the accuracy, scope, and quality of Darwin's intellect directly expressed in the clarity, strength, and vitality of his writing – the beauty of it.” (LeGuin 2016c, i)

For such an expansion of our reason(ing)(s) towards the speculative, we have to dare to extend our narrative imagination to the “hard” and venerable domains of epistemology and metaphysics and stop seeing them as a business of mere “rigorous connections of ideas” (Ibid. ii), but as much as fiction reliant on narrative qualities. The millennia old, Platonist, divide between fiction (poetry) and “serious” philosophical reasoning has to a degree to be overcome to enable to envision something like a “Märchenvernunft” (Harrasser 2018, 30) – a fairy tale reason, which does not only work within the preset informational plane, but is actively taking part in reworking what is fact and what is fiction, being aware of the narrow – culturally co-constituted – line between the two. The magic of the fairy tale is to subtly alter the reality we believe to be living in – and such a quality needs be incorporated into reason(s) facing the collapse of many worlds we believed to be “rock-hard” but now facing ecological catastrophe.

In order to create new forms of living and dying on a changing planet, we need to train our imagination to come up with new narrations. “Reality” – always a very fluid concept – becomes less and less stable in the times called the Anthropocene so “that we may be more likely to meet a shared reality in fiction” (LeGuin 2016a, 108) which is much more than mere “information transmission” (Ibid. 110). “Realism” – the mere verification or falsification of an unquestioned informational regime – used to be the fetish of the last two centuries of so called “World Literature” and still is of contemporary politics, but its power keeps waning as our societies more and more become (acknowledged as) heterogeneous. “Until fairly recently, the societies in and for which realistic fiction was written were limited and homogeneous. The realistic novel could describe such societies. But that limited language is in trouble now. To describe society since the mid twentieth century – global, institutional language of fantasy.” (LeGuin 2016b, 19) Greek *phantasia* literally means “a making visible” and “in the late Middle Ages meant ‘the mental apprehension of an object of perception’, the mind’s act of linking itself to the external world” (Ibid. 16) Such an imaginative fantasy departs – “even in its wildest flights” – from reality and “returns to it to enrich it.” (LeGuin 2016a, 108) In the times called the Anthropocene, narrative fantasy will have to become a part of reasoning in order to escape the modernist deadlock and its resilience.

Our current languages (derived from a culture that mostly ignored its own productive environmental relations) make the writing and talking about the ecological threat particularly difficult, since they tend to semantically align it with stereotypes from other domains such as Christian Apocalypse, bourgeois cultural pessimism, Old-Testamentary Hubris or a moralism of individualistic modesty. Fantastic fairy tale reasons should attempt to invent alternative forms of writing and talking about our ecological problem that will no longer be put into boxes of modern cultural domains (that were somewhat built on ignoring the ecological relatedness). An affirmation of ecological reasonings sees itself as a part of such an undertaking. It probes the narrative potential of a pluralization of reasons in the time called the Anthropocene in order to invent new c(ha)osmologies that make sense

of our situation. Of course there will be objections to this undertaking that can not easily be refuted. However, as shown above, it is not about being irrefutable. In fact, provoking refutations might only prove its strength and efficiency as a new narrative strategy within the Anthropocene. Its further potential will be explored in this fourth part of the thesis where we will explore a speculative affirmation of ecological reasonings from three different angles. We will first depart from what is considered to be “outside” of occidental reason – intercultural and corporeal philosophies – and will then slowly approach the very heart of modern reasoning: Science. We will find interesting parallels and similarities that will help us to narratively synthesize ecological reasonings that act within contemporary discourses. Such an affirmation will only then allow us to also develop a critical approach towards it.

7) Provincializing Reason - Ecological Reasonings in intercultural cross-examination¹³²

As we have seen in the last chapter, the Resilience of Reason is so strong that it made other reasonings invisible for millennia – and even after more than two decades of critical philosophy, a pluralization of Reason and thus an affirmation of other, more ecological reasonings seem to be unthinkable to most inside the occidental canon. It is therefore not surprising that many occidentals who saw the deficiencies of Reason with lucidity were inspired by excursions into the philosophical traditions of other cultures. Notably Indian – and particularly Vedic – philosophy exercised a huge influence on European thought, as can be exemplified by the works of both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. More recently, Chinese philosophy such as Laozi's inspired many occidental reformers and revolutionaries, such as Peter Kropotkin or Ursula LeGuin. As occidentals became gradually aware of the huge shortcomings and exclusions of Reason, it was clear to many that “we in Europe can no longer limit ourselves to the horizon of European thought. We have to get out of our homes and shake off our philosophical atavism. We have to go 'see' elsewhere - which was the primary meaning of 'theory' for the Greeks, before it became flatly speculative.” (Jullien 2012, 16¹³³)

a) Detour, not Displacement

This citation about a ‘return’ to the old Greek sense of “theoria” as *looking* elsewhere already gives us a hint that the intercultural excursion of this chapter is much less a hermeneutic work about Chinese or Indian philosophy, but about a re-flection and therefore re-construction of occidental philosophy by means of intercultural inspiration. In the sense of Chakrabarty (chapter 3.Dg) it can be understood as the project of a Provincialization of Reason in order to find the plurality of Reasonings within and around it.

As François Jullien (born 1951) – the main inspirator of this chapter – puts it very clearly, his *Detour* to Chinese philosophy is about returning to occidental Reason, to „return from this [Chinese] point of view of exteriority to the biases from which European reason has developed – hidden, non-explicit biases with which European thought prospered and which it transported as a matter of course, so much did it assimilate them.” (Jullien, Baecker, and Jousset, Philippe 2008, 10) Because „there is that which I think, but also that from [and with] which I think and which, precisely for that reason, I do not think.“ (Jullien 2006b)

¹³² Much of the arguments put forth in this chapter have already been developed in my (2021b) paper “Über den Umweg nach China vorbei am Anthropozän – François Julliens Vernunftexkursionen für ein ökologisches Bild des Denkens nutzbar machen” to be found in this upcoming book publication: *Jenseits der Identitäten. François Jullien – Eine neue Herausforderung für das Denken im Zwischen von China und Europa*, hg. von G. Stenger, F. Jullien, M. Ates, Heidelberg, Springer & Metzler-Verlag (Reihe Interkulturelle Philosophie) 2021. [erscheint im Sommer 2021]

¹³³ Original: „nous ne pourrions plus, en Europe, nous limiter à l’horizon de la pensée européenne. Il nous faut sortir de chez nous et secouer notre atavisme philosophique – aller ‘voir’ ailleurs, ce qui était déjà chez le Grecs, souvenons-nous, avant qu’il ne devienne platement spéculatif, le sens premier de ‘theorie’”

These hitherto unthought of elements of Reason have – according to Jullien – brought occidental Reason to a stand-still. In the catastrophic times of the Anthropocene, Reason is suffocating of what it hitherto has repressed. With his construction¹³⁴ of an *Other*, Jullien is tracing the „conditions of the possibility of European reason to its beginnings, in order to shake its evidence and reconfigure the realm of the thinkable.“ (Jullien 2006b, 9) By doing so he wants to lift „the repressed that threatens the spirit of today“ (Jullien 2006a, 9¹³⁵) and make usable for thought „what also we know from experience, but have hardly grasped theoretically - what we have less illuminated“ (Jullien 2006b, 87).

Jullien himself is not talking about a pluralization of Reason and – problematically – restricts the denomination of Reason to the occidental canon, but if we *think with* (and thus beyond) his *Detour*, we can make visible what has been repressed by the majoritarian occidental canon for its longest time: other forms of reasonings, sprouting in and outside classically European or Western territories. By using Jullien’s work to return to occidental philosophy, we will be able to trace what is already happening for at least two decades within its canon: the emergence (and preceding pluralization) of ecological reasonings¹³⁶.

It is important to note that the impulse of story telling here (and at other parts of this thesis) acquires a size that can appear contradictory. For I will use Jullien’s work that is not afraid of big words such as “Chinese thinking” or “European Reason”. By indeed thinking through that trouble of reproducing such phrasings, I am conscious that I am at the danger of creating too big containers and exclusions that go with them. Of course, I am not an expert on Chinese philosophy and am aware that Jullien’s work is hugely contested within Sinology. However, as stated above, this chapter is much more inspired by Jullien’s work on occidental Reason and is using his perspectives and wordings in order to attain a pluralization. Words such as “Chinese thinking” in this chapter and elsewhere will appear problematic for they are too big constructions that cannot include all of the traditions and thinkers of a culture as vast as the Chinese one. I have personally been strongly influenced by the work of Jullien and therefore require his perspective on “European Reason” in order to think with and beyond him about a pluralization of such a Reason. In this – as in many other instances of this thesis – this also requires me to *stay with the trouble* (Haraway 2016), sometimes too big words and to develop a conscious reasoning with them that uses their contradictions in order to inspire other, perhaps more subtle, reasonings.

¹³⁴ “Oser construire” – “Daring to construct” is a title of secondary literature about Jullien’s oeuvre. Compare Chartier et al. 2007.

¹³⁵ Original quote: „ das Verdrängte [, dass] den heutigen Geist bedroht“

¹³⁶ I strongly believe – as argued in my above cited paper on Jullien – that one necessary condition of the possibility of Jullien’s image of China is exactly this emergence of another image of thought within occidental – and especially French – theory of the last century. By this I mean what Pierre Montebello (2003) calls “an other metaphysics”- a philosophy emancipated from Platonism and the occidental stereotypes treated extensively in chapter 3.

b) Different relations to text

As it is more and more realized that thought is not a body-less, place-less, purely transcendent activity restricted to humans in the androcentric sense of anthropos, but actively grows out of every environment that makes it sprout, a reflection of the different milieus of reasonings becomes important.

For example, in both India and China, we find highly developed cultures that had a discordant relationship with text to the occidental one. In the early Indus valley – the first advanced civilization on the territory of what is today called ‘India’ – archaeological excavations up until today only found few remnants of scripts (Renfrew 2008, 178). Meaning was mostly conveyed by means of codified mantras and only after the reign of Ashoka (268-232 BCE) there is clear archaeological evidence of a larger textual culture.

Whereas India’s Sanskrit, though, still shares a relative proximity to European languages as being part of the large Indo-European family and based on a phonetic alphabet, Chinese logographic writing has developed altogether into completely different directions. Up until today, its iconographic form of codification seems to be the only non-alphabetic writing system that resists the proliferation of the Latin alphabet. It’s “singular relationship to orality as well as an unresolved dependency on the figurative power of the drawing” (Jullien 2012, 12¹³⁷) must have exercised a completely different influence onto thought and a media-philosophy of Chinese writing in the style of Derrick de Kerckhove (chapter 3.Ad) has yet to be written. Whereas, as we have seen in chapter 3.A, the Greek and Latin alphabet form thought according to linear and analytic schemes oriented towards substances, Mandarin iconography, according to Jullien, much rather invites a reasoning of synchronicity and relationality, which is much more multidirectional than linear (Ibid. 35 ff. - in which examples exemplifying this are demonstrated).

c) Why China?

In this chapter, I will thus focus on “Chinese thought” as related to us by François Jullien in order to understand the globally catastrophic condition and its emergent reasonings. Let us not forget (as Chakrabarty showed us in chapter 3.Dg), that the occidental categories of thought have now spanned the globe and have to be regarded as a gift to all.

Foucault has already commented in the 70ies that the large interest in Far Eastern philosophy of occidental thinkers is much less the result of a ‘process of orientalisation’, but “in reality, the whole world is becoming westernized, and therefore Western culture is becoming somewhat more permeable, for example, to Hindu philosophy, Japanese painting, Arabic music, and so on: [they] arrive at an awareness of themselves by virtue of the structures to which Western culture aligns them.” (Foucault, Caruso, and Seitter 1978, 11) However, exactly at this peak of *occidentalisation*

¹³⁷ Original quote: „ rapport singulier à l’oralité ainsi qu’une dépendance, non dénouée, avec le pouvoir figurateur du tracé”

called globalization, where the Occident believes to witness a “definite triumph of its conceptions” (Jullien 2012, 31) be they philosophical, economic, social or political, we simultaneously witness an emptiness and insufficiency of the exact same conceptions, creating a vast desire for other metaphysics, other thoughts, other reasons. Perhaps we can speculate that we are witnessing the emergence of a new global philosophy which is largely inheritant of occidental presumptions at its base but keeps incorporating other ontological orders because of its internal deficiency. As Isabelle Stengers and Ilya Prigogine put it in the early 80ies: “We believe that we are heading toward a new synthesis, a new naturalism. Perhaps we will eventually be able to combine the Western tradition, with its emphasis on experimentation and quantitative formulations, with a tradition such as the Chinese one, with its view of a spontaneous, self-organizing world.” (Prigogine and Stengers 1984, 22)

While Schopenhauer believed that “the influence of Sanskrit literature will penetrate no less deeply that did the revival of Greek literature in the fifteenth century” (Schopenhauer 1966, XV), today Indian thought seems to be rather close to Europe when compared to China. As Jullien argues, we – the European, Christian ‘We’ forged from two and a half millennia of binary thought between substances (Jullien 2006b, 32; 2006a, 25) – have always had minor exchanges with the Indian and Islamic cultural spheres. However, before the 19th century and with the exception of exotic entertainment such as Marco Polo’s famous (and partly fictional) voyages of the 13th century, there wasn’t any intellectual nor mercantile connection between what it today called China and the European, Western empires (Jullien 2012, 14+20).¹³⁸

d) Unnatural thinking – vital thinking

I will approach what Jullien calls ‘Chinese thought’ by one of its significant shortages – a shortage that might prove to be its greatest advantage for the task of getting past the Anthropocene. Whereas occidental and especially modern thought has conceived Nature as an external, passive entity ready for human modification (with the many violent connotations ranging from “torture” to “rape” as examined in chapter 3.Bc and 5.Cb), “China” has never altogether experienced the need to isolate a specific concept of Nature, “since it has not developed as a value or paradigm what could be counterposed to it.” (Jullien 2006b, 53) Whereas the *anthropos* defined itself to be apart from vegetal vitality that forms the common base of all earthly life, the Chinese 人 (*rén* ...‘human’¹³⁹) always considered herself to being acting with(in) it. Only in the 19th century, when the epistemic and economic imperialism of Europe hit China hard, did it develop a concept of Nature¹⁴⁰. Prior to

¹³⁸ The same is true for Amerindian thinking – which might explain why both traditions are witnessing a certain hype in contemporary discourses.

¹³⁹ Allegedly the Occident and China are the only cultural spheres that developed a unitary concept of ‘human’ - compare Jullien 2009

¹⁴⁰ While traveling China in the early 20th century, Henri Michaux (1899-1984) is astonished how “close to nature” Chinese people live (Michaux 1986). By calling himself a “Barbarian in Asia” he very early on turns the modern

that it was able to think without it. Since, as we have already discussed at length, the modern concept of Nature has to be classified as one of the main intellectual problems connected to the conundrum of the Anthropocene, a return to this old – and admittedly perhaps outdated (Billeter 2014, 9+32; Zhang 2005, 30–39) “Chinese” image of thought – can help us. In Chinese traditions, we can find images of thought that never thought along the lines of a “culture – nature” division.

e) Becoming Vegetal

Whereas the occidental tradition marked by Aristotelian philosophy has tried to “with a single blow” (Jullien 2006a, 18) break away from vegetal life, the maintenance and care of vegetal life was the main concern of Chinese thought. Vegetal life is the base that all living beings share and any ‘higher’ forms depends on. As Emanuele Coccia puts it, every vegetal lifeform is “the invention of a way to produce the world.” (Coccia 2016, 55¹⁴¹) – as vegetal lifeforms, we are partaking in the greater biosphere of Gaia, consisting of manifold niches, folds and plateaus that in manifold ways depend on each other.

A tradition that saw the anthropos as the crown of creation, much closer to God than to muddy, vegetal nature, thus carried with it an internal deficiency of reflecting the productivity inherent in its (and any other) life forms (see Presentiment I) that was reproduced during the entire era of modern, physicist sciences (Jullien 2006a, 35). With Chinese philosophy, we can discover the consequences of an image of thought that has, according to Jullien, always stayed inside this “immanence of nature” and its vitality.

f) Reasoning without ideas and fundamentals

A reasoning that stays within this “immanence of nature” (and therefore does not need the concept of Nature after all) has a completely different understanding of cognition. For it, knowledge and truth are not ends in themselves, but are put into relation with the vital *physis* that performs them. Free of a strong body-mind-dichotomy, such a reasoning automatically includes the corporeal base into any act of cognition, resulting in the wisdom that there can be *too much* cognition. As the Taoist philosopher and poet Zhuangzi (ca. 365-290 BCE) puts it in the *Guo Quingfan*:

"Your life has a limit, but knowledge has none. If you use what is limited to pursue what has no limit, you will be in danger [of exhaustion] . If you understand this and still strive for knowledge, you will be in danger [of exhaustion] for certain" (via Jullien 2007, 15)

If mind and matter are – as in European modernity – more and more neatly separated, the bodily exhaustion resulting from an overt focus on cognitive truth-finding can not be sufficiently reflected.

constitution upside down: it is no longer the others, the people from non-European countries, who are the savage barbarians – as it has moved occidental modernity for its longest time –, but it is the ‘us’, the Europeans themselves who are the barbarians that live in a distorted relationship to what can no longer be called nature. This discovery of the ‘savage barbarian’ within the occidental subject is a trait of the early 20th century and can – among other – also be found in the works of Freud, Celan, Adorno and others being shocked by the atrocities of the first and then second world war. The barbarian in us is one of the discoveries that make the modern constitution crumble. Thanks to Olivier Marboeuf to point this out to me.

¹⁴¹ Original quote: „l’invention d’une manière de produire le monde”

A thus conceived subject stiffens onto a rigid path towards transcendent idea(l)s and hierarchies, seeking for completion of abstract theories, thus abandoning the ambiguous vitality of life on this earth. Since its cognitive motivation is unearthly, it can neither reflect on the damage it does to itself or its environment, nor adapt and change with the vital flow of life.

To preserve the freedom to change and become with this vegetal flow of life, the Chinese wise person has to free herself from the desire of setting foundations and ends. Whereas occidental philosophy starts from postulating an *ἀρχή* (*arché*), an origin, fundamental or first principle – be it water, fire or the idea of goodness, god or truth –, Chinese thought can teach us how this very fundamental act of philosophizing can cut our connection to an ever-fluctuating chaosmos. By prioritizing a certain element as first principle and starting point for logical deduction, one already creates a biased image of the world that heightens certain objects and leaves others aside (Jullien 2001, 13) (such as, for example, the prioritization of visual objects and the neglect of olfactorial ambience, or the prioritization of truth over its effects, of what is called “spiritual” over the corporeal).

In contrast, Chinese *love for wisdom* (e.g. “philosophy” in its etymological sense) can be summarized as such: “One can dispense with truth, she says casually (congruence shall suffice); there is nothing at all to say about things (for this form of speaking only blocks their well-regulated process); and above all one must beware of ideas, for they not only create distance but, by fixing and codifying thought, make it eternally partial and deprive the mind of its disposability and openness.” (Ibid. 8) This disposability and openness – mostly neglected or evaded within occidental cosmologies – becomes a main virtue for Chinese philosophy that much rather seeks to develop a *feeling* for the relational connectedness of the ever-processual chaosmos, not to distill static object usable for scientific conquest, from it.

“So, let us strive not so much to recognize (by determining objects), but to become aware of that fund of immanence [Immanenzfond] which presents itself with such evidence - in such close proximity - that we are not able to see it (although we always have it before our eyes, or rather: because we always have it before our eyes).” (Ibid. 9¹⁴²)

This devaluation of truth-finding cognition and the the fixation of ideas has a clearly ecological motivation. By advising to merge with the landscape (and not to oppose yourself with it by means of visually construed objects, as the spectator of the occidental landscape would do) one can feel it speak and reason through you, your corporeal self-actualising a contemplative part of it that is no longer separated as in the Cartesian tradition of the moderns (Jullien 2014, 31). By consciously liberating yourself of ideas and a prioritized position in the universal flow, the environment

¹⁴² I have translated this from the German translation (the French original was unavailable to me), which is: „Streben wir also nicht so sehr danach, zu erkennen (indem wir Objekte bestimmen), sondern danach, uns jenes Immanenzfonds bewußt zu werden, der sich mit derartiger Evidenz — ganz in der Nähe - darbietet, daß wir ihn (obwohl wir ihn stets vor Augen haben, oder vielmehr: weil wir ihn stets vor Augen haben) *nicht* zu sehen vermögen.“

composes itself congruently in and around you (Ibid. 61 ff), whereas the opposition between you and the world becomes artificial.

The subject is in the end much rather a cognizant fold among many in a constant flux that comes close to Plato's suppressed idea of poetry as a form of environmental relating (chapter 5.Ab). In fact, the fixing of yourself in a strong, Cartesian subject position by means of (transcendentally put) ideas is regarded to be foolish from a Chinese perspective. By setting a first principle from which one deduces static truths (the fundamental philosophical act of the Occident), one separates oneself from the vitality of the world and stops becoming a reasoning part of a greater vibrant universe (Jullien 2006a, 53).

g) Transforming with matter – Strategic thinking

Such an understanding of our embeddedness in a greater, vibrant universe entails a radically different notion of acting. Within the most classical occidental notion of action, the reflexive subject thinks of all consequences in an abstract manner and then acts upon the world before him. According to Jullien, "Chinese wisdom" does reverse this idea, much rather advising to suspend action in favor of sensing and contemplating the transformative power of a vibrant environment and then moving *with* its flows and powers. Much rather than taming and subordinating the environment, it is about flowing with it and actively using the potential arising from the thus apprehended situation. The awareness necessary for such a theory of action is called the *Shi*. It can help to "illuminate something that is usually difficult to capture: namely, the kind of potential that originates not in human initiative, but instead results from the very disposition of things' *Shi* is the style, energy, propensity, trajectory, or élan inherent to a specific arrangement of things. Originally a word used in military strategy, *shi* emerged in the description of a good general who must be able to read and then ride the *shi* of a configuration of moods, winds, historical trends, and armaments: *shi* names the dynamic force emanating from a spatio-temporal configuration rather than from any particular element within it." (Bennett 2010, 357). We will return on this point in the next chapter (8.j) on corporeality in which we will encounter a different concept of "passivity" in line with this Chinese wisdom around the *Shi* and how to act with and from the potential inherent in a specific environmental situation.

h) No more heroes

For a holistic investigation into existing alternative reasonings, I will now explore the *moral* consequences of such a cosmology and hint at startling parallels to a Nietzschean "reversal of morals [Unkehrung der Moral]".

A theory of action oriented after this *Shi* is essentially a strategic thinking. Whereas occidental Reason considered things to be open to the eye and tried to act on them directly, Chinese reasoning

is much more *cunning* in the sense that it heightens its awareness on the background of things and tries to manipulate it partakingly, so the results come easily and *like by themselves*.

This reveals a completely different theory of acting that is connected with what Nietzsche called a “reversal of morals”: cunning and a strategic reflection oriented on efficiency – always connoted to be shady, unheroic and honorless – become virtues that mark good and efficient thinking – something, as already argued, the occidentals always had a hard time in embracing in their fixation on transcendent truth.

An example from the theory of warfare can illustrate this further. For the occidental general – as represented in the book “On War” (1832) from Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz (1770-1831) – an action is the more honorable and heroic, the more spectacular and higher the risk he takes. In contrast, for the Chinese thinker of the *Shi*, the good general “wins easy victories” and “he attacks only that which can be vanquished” (Jullien 2004, 195).

This wisdom deduced from Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* (5th century BCE) illustrates poignantly the differences between occidental and Chinese reasoning. The Western general needs to be a hero, no matter what cost, no matter what risk he takes (remember Herodot’s culturally defining story of 300 Spartan soldiers defeating the vastly superior number of Persians that still inspire our cinematic imagination). Exactly antithetical, a Chinese general acting in the same manner would be considered a fool in Sun Tzu’s understanding: to take high risks is a sign of weak preparation and insufficient reflection and planning. The scope of reasoning of the good Chinese general doesn’t merely entail the human bodies that will collide in warlike actions, but is widened to the general *Shi* of the situation: the morals of the troops, the historical roots of the conflict, the food supply, the weather and topological conditions, etc. . The cunning of the good general would be to weaken the morale by subtly changing the (hi)story, cutting the food supply and minding the right meteorological conditions for her or his troops.

This form of reflection is by definition *unheroic*, for it actively seeks facility and lack of friction. It is telling that the epic form of tragedy, so defining to occidental subjectivity, did never occur in Chinese antiquity (Ibid. 51). An – what we can call – ecological awareness deduced from such Chinese wisdoms excludes Western heroism, for – as Haraway puts it – „[t]he last thing a hero wants to know is that his beautiful words and weapons will be worthless without a bag, without a container, a net.” (Haraway 2016, 118) The occidental, secluded hero-subject could only work because the unreflected environmental conditions surrounding him were favorable for his exploits. Now, in the time of great shifting and transitioning called the Anthropocene, this heroism is less and less convincing¹⁴³ and an awareness of embeddedness becomes vital.

¹⁴³ Leading to a vast problem of white, toxic masculinity that grips onto this vanishing heroism with more and more violence (and actively supplied by a vast array of video games and action movies simulating this fatal heroism).

i) Embracing boredom

This entails a shift in aesthetics as well. In occidental reasoning, almost everybody, be they left or right, would agree that boredom and blandness are to be evaded. A sign of something being important is that it is exciting, that it shakes you and takes you in. Again on the very contrary, Chinese aesthetics sees the bland as an aesthetic ideal and much of its arts are oriented towards this state of unaffected boredom (Jullien 1999). For this perspective, being bored is a sign of being free in the sense of disposable for apprehending the *Shi*. Only if you are in a state of blandness, no affect moves you involuntarily and you can decide which affect you let yourself be carried away. Therefore, while the Western hero-philosopher would see his freedom in following his desires unhindered, the Eastern sage-philosopher would seek to be untouched by her desires in order to be free to go with which ever she deems the most useful for her strategy. Only the slightly bored one can really decide wisely over the material flows of which he's a part of.

j) Reflection of Reason: making a detour to the outside to discover the other reasons within

As already stated, the aim of Jullien's excursions are not about "renouncing the claim of reasonability, but on the contrary of reviving it: to - in the encounter with Chinese thought - reorganize and reshape the categories of reason, to make it work again by opening new construction sites for it." (Jullien, Baecker, and Jousset, Philippe 2008, 29¹⁴⁴) Taking the inspiration from Jullien's excursion further, I propose we will gain even more clarity if we break Monorationalism and affirm the possibility of various reasons, Chinese and European, Majoritarian and Minoritarian, and everything in between, at the same time. With this conceptual move, we will be able to understand mechanisms of exclusion inherent within both major philosophies (both Chinese as well as European sources are only representing men) better and will be able to see that other reasonings within the occidental tradition that share various traits with what Jullien gathered from his Chinese excursion, but does nonetheless have a completely different status since it is connected with the event of the Anthropocene and its specific ecological challenge brought forth largely by occidental culture and its philosophical constrictions. For example, we can understand how Isabelle Stengers advise to "respect established sentiments" (chapter 4d) within critical thinking can be understood as a strategic undertaking in order to argue better. In the next two chapters, we will return to largely occidental sources and trace the recurrences of other reasonings within later modern sources. Sensitized by this construction we can now dare to go back to two main problems of occidental philosophy. One – the body – it always repressed, while the other – Science – was understood to be its centerpiece. A reevaluation of both will make us feel the emergence of other reasonings in them.

¹⁴⁴ I have translated this from the German translation (the French original was unavailable to me), which is: "auf den Anspruch der Vernunft zu verzichten, sondern im Gegenteil darum, sie wieder zu beleben: bei der Begegnung mit dem chinesischen Denken die Kategorien der Vernunft neu- und umzugestalten, sie wieder zum Arbeiten zu bringen, indem man ihr neue Baustellen öffnet."

8) Ecological reasonings & corporeality

a) Intro

As we have seen in chapter 3.C, a discursive entity called „the body“ enters the stage during European Philosophical Modernity. Philosophers of immanence such as Spinoza or Nietzsche noted it's hitherto repressed state within occidental Reason(ing) and took this insight as inspiration for inventing new forms of thought by emphasizing the corporeality of reflection. Ecological philosophies, such as the one of David Abram, have since then precised that “[w]hen reflection's rootedness in such bodily, participatory modes of experience is entirely unacknowledged or unconscious, reflective reason becomes dysfunctional, unintentionally destroying the corporeal, sensuous world that sustains it.” (Abram 2017, 313) A new sensory order and thinking *with* the body is thus in high demand for ecologically minded thinkers in the Anthropocene.

b) The modern emergence of “the body”

However, it needs to be stated, following our goal of creating somewhat of an archive of proto-pluralisms, that the modern emergence of “the body” has manifold aspects to it. As Jullien notes by comparing “the body” to possible Chinese translations, it “remains a diffuse notion in classical Chinese, and its configuration varies.” (Jullien 2007, 67) Only in European modernity “the body” as a distinct, unitary and somewhat thing-like concept was invented and – as Jullien holds it – this invention could only be maintained by the equally unitarian, dualistic counter-concept of “the soul”. From this foundation, “the body” must not only be understood as a hitherto blindspot of occidental discourse, but equally as a re-stabilization of occidental tropes in a new dualistic regime. Let us not forget that it was “the body” that characterizes classical Newtonian physics as much as Cartesian epistemology as a passive entity to be governed by the soul and active contemplation by Reason. As Jean-Luc Nancy puts it in wonderfully poetic terms: “Does anyone else in the world know anything like ‘the body’? It's our old culture's latest, most worked over, sifted, refined, dismantled, and reconstructed product. If, as its name suggests, the Occident is a fall, then the body is the ultimate weight, the extremity of the weight sinking from this fall.” (Nancy 2008, 7)

In order to alleviate this fall, we should thus be very aware of not essentializing “the body” to a new “special version of metaphysics” (Morton 2009, 107) when thinking of the corporeality of our reasonings. We do not only have a single body, equally the same to all, but an assemblage of manifold (human- and not-human, microbic) corporealities that we have been drilled (in the Wittgensteinian sense) to call “my body” or “me” (see also chapter 9j). By descending from the transcendent highnesses of occidental Reason, we need to be careful to not unitarize the material plurality of this earthly mess into one body of perception. This would only reproduce the same

imperialist, sexist and environmental exclusions of Reason on another, only seemingly more material level.

“The body” is not so much repressed by classical Reason, but produced by it: as much as Reason, “the body” is a reciprocal unitary concept that is effective for certain kinds of reasonings, but renders us blind to the more manifold, chaotic corporealities as well as rationalities that are overcoded by it.

It would be too easy to demand that occidental Reason would only have to re-integrate “the body” into its realm, for there always was one relation to this “body”. A “reverse Cartesianism” and a mere critique of the lack of “the body” in occidental Reasoning is not enough, for it fails to reflect on how the entire body-mind-dualism emerged from a specific environment that we are still part of. The much more difficult task, as we will learn from Kathryn Yusoff and others in this chapter (d), is to change our relation to environments and the material flows that constitute us and them – and this will not stop short of radical reformulations of concepts such as “body”, “passivity” or “Reason”. We will thus affirm multiple corporealities that form the time of *corporeal realities* going haywire in the Anthropocene in order to better understand and engage with the problems and potentials of our global situation.

c) The rise of interest in corporeality in relation to our environmental problems

Some ecologically motivated authors, such as Gernot Böhme (born 1937), claim that only because of the environmental problem we are led to reflect about our corporeality: “What we call the environmental problem is primarily a problem of human corporeality. It only becomes urgent at all because we ultimately feel in our own bodies the changes we are inflicting on external nature. [...] Through the environmental problem we have encountered our corporeality in a new way.” (Böhme 2013, 14¹⁴⁵)

This statement is in stark contrast with the often-uttered complaint (for example by (Marshall 2015, 54)) that the exact problem of our ecological conundrum is its very abstract, non-sensual, nature: that it mostly is communicated in the form of numbers such as CO₂-levels, water-heights, extinction rates etc., and *not* in easily mediatisable and affectively relatable images. An early spring-like day in (Mid-European) February might very easily *not* be identified as a consequence of “Global Warming”, neither does the lack of insects in a lake area or as corpses on car windows intuitively awake the concept of the “Sixth Mass Extinction” in our corporeal awareness¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁵ Original quote: „Was wir das Umweltproblem nennen, ist primär ein Problem der menschlichen Leiblichkeit. Es wird überhaupt nur drängend, weil wir letztlich die Veränderungen, die wir in der äußeren Natur anrichten, am eigenen Leib spüren. [...] Durch das Umweltproblem sind wir in neuer Weise auf unsere Leiblichkeit gestoßen.“

¹⁴⁶ For this reason, Morton 2013 proposes the term “Hyperobjects” for entities that exceed temporal and spatial dimensions that would be intuitively senseable to us, such as the above mentioned “Global Warming”, “Sixth Mass Extinction” etc.

But perhaps there is still something to Böhme's statement if we look at it from a different angle: perhaps it is not the discomfort of a changing planet in general that is causing our corporeal awareness, but the design of our heavily modified habitats. What – especially in post-modern discourses – has been called “alienation” (from modern capitalist life-forms we are forced to be partaking in) might be the cause for the high demand of body-philosophies in European Modernity. Reason produces norms, postures and environments that create uneasiness, fearful frenzy and a very unfortunate relation with one's own sensuality. Only because we do not feel well – e.g. disconnected from a specific environment – in the landscapes of Reason does “the body” become particularly important to European reflection. Since the designs of these modern habitats, with their reliance on a car- and fuel-based economy, are ecologically catastrophic, the environmental problem might thus at least indirectly be a cause for the rise of attention towards corporeality in occidental reasoning.

d) “The human”, *his* body and their environment

As Kathryn Yusoff argues, the emergence of the notion of “universal human” (equally the same everywhere, independent from the humanoid's particular environment, carrier of Reason) so cherished in occidental Modernity has to be understood in relation to the specific materiality that formed it: fossil fuels. “Humanity built on the dead matter of the Carboniferous is not just underpinned by that materialism, but an expression of it; and the subsequent geographic expansion, of human populations across the Earth (as a planetary colonisation) and into the atmosphere and strata is a consequence of it. Fossil fuels are a material condition that subtends contemporary geopolitical life [...] – in unearthing one fossil layer we create another contemporary fossil stratum that has our name on it.” (Yusoff 2013, 784) Only because modern culture slowly developed a relation to the fossilized life of millions of years ago could we attain the “great acceleration” that brought “the human” as a universal globalizing agent onto this planet. Our contemporary corporeal situation and thinking is an expression of a certain form of collaboration with geological life – one that is short-lived if we regard the ecological collapse of the Holocene it provoked – and this realization slowly dawns us. We need to listen more to our bodily sentiments, tensions and excitements to guide ourselves toward other – more sustainable – ways of relating to this planetary material we are a part of. What we are today is the “material expenditure of the remains of late capitalism” (Ibid. 784) that unitized concepts such as Human, Reason, Science, the body etc and , with this devastating epistemological regime, went on to globalise the world.

Today, as we see (at least the necessity of) the end of our fossil fuel-based economies, we will not only require the creation of new ways of energy production and consumption, but equally so new ways of incorporating this new geological living situation after the Anthropocene: “new forms of subjectivity and geo-ontologies of the Earth” (Ibid. 792) will require us to unthink the unitary notions of the “human”, his (let us remember the phallocentrism inherent to the concept as outlined

earlier) “body” and its particular relation to environments and collaboration with materials. We have to consider what relations and collaboration with organic as well as inorganic matter create what form of conceptual notions. A reasoning with corporeality in the large sense will think what matter makes what material matter for us, what incorporations and subjectivities are produced by what kind of relationality, what bodily norms are in reciprocal productive relation to what material relation and how what bodily connection feels like.

We will now first try to understand some implications of the specific relation Reason established with “the body” in order to then slowly work our way out of its regime towards other – more ecological – forms of incorporating reason.

e) Drill & Reason

As Sloterdijk (2012, xxxi) argues (in his typically grandiose way), today there can no longer do any philosophy that is not also a physiognomy – that is not concerned with the corporeal relationality to the very milieu it sprung from. In classically modern times, “to be reasonable” meant “to put oneself into a special, rarely happy relation to the sensuous” which was synonymous to “do not trust your impulses, do not listen to your body, learn control, starting with your own sensuousness.” (Ibid).

This “special, rarely happy” relation to the corporeal can be exemplified by the young Törleß, protagonist of Robert Musil’s *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* from 1906, who is suffering from paranoiac fits and other symptoms of fear¹⁴⁷ while attempting to read Kant as a young student. “Törleß’s outbreak of sweating after two pages of the Critique of Pure Reason contains as much truth as the whole of Kantianism.” (Sloterdijk 2012a, xxxi) Occidental “Pure” Reason requires a detachment from lived relationality and corporeal experience that easily leads novices to great pain and mental suffering. The feeling of not having a bodily belonging to a particular environment, the alienation and rootlessness that results from this experience (a young – male – student is initiated to) primarily lead to feelings of (mostly repressed) panic that can only over time be transformed by scholarly drill and academic rigor into a self-awareness of freedom, entitlement and authority. As Musil’s phenomenological description of Törleß’ feelings after his first encounter with Kant puts it: “By evening, however, he did not even want to touch the book. Fear? Repulsion? He didn’t quite know. Only one thing tortured him with burning clarity, that the professor, this person, who didn’t look like much, had the book lying around openly in his room, as if it were for him a daily conversation.” (p. 85 of Musil’s *Törleß* quoted via Sloterdijk 2012a, xxxi)

Since the protagonist is a young male privileged enough to go to an elitist school, this bodily composition called Törleß has other male human beings to look up to and set as a role model. After care- and painful years of Kantian, scholarly drill he will with high probability succeed to become a

¹⁴⁷ The fourth chapter of my Book “Backlash – Essays zur Resilienz der Moderne” is entirely devoted to this relation of fear to occidental form of Reason. All the argument made here can be found in this chapter and greater detail.

detached *man of Reason*, who is regarding himself as belonging to the gender closer to Reason, ascribing female connoted bodies the material, reproductive and bodily work they are forced to take on by the economic regime that is central to the occidental modern constitution and its emergent capitalism (see chapter 5.Cb). Other genders, class-belongings or ethnicities will not have a comparable access to education, role models and their institutionalization and thereby – with much higher likelihood – never exceed the stage of fearful (or simply non-interested e.g. “This is not for me”) reactions to Kant and other central authorities of occidental Reason.

f) Feeling Reasoning

An ecological reasoning for the 21st century that has understood the necessity to change the social and economic order to go beyond the Anthropocene (see chapter 3.D) can profit a great deal from such phenomenologies of how certain philosophical stances *feel*. As already argued in chapter 3.Cd, occidental Reason is only at a superficial regard characterizable as a non-sensual, non-bodily stance, but is much rather built on a senso-corporeal regime that defines “Reason” based on a certain exclusion, repression – but also streamlining – of sensuous, corporeal experience that is ascribed to belong to “the body” (as opposed to “the mind” or “the soul”).

Feeling how a thought feels can thus be a very reasonable stance to undo occidental Reason’s regime. We have to develop a culture of taking serious of how abstract treatments about allegedly “reasonable” things feel, to become aware of how thoughts form our reality and come from a certain relationship with reality. For example: Take the boredom you feel about a – rationally regarded – “interesting” paper serious, mind if a lecturer whose critical rigor you admire makes you feel empowered or intimidated. It is important to mind what happens to a body when engaging with a new reasoning. A body who enters a new ecology of logical, reasonable thought, undergoes a sensual trauma as their body shifts into becoming and being in an-other world. It matters how a thought is incorporated, which what events and affects it is associated with in its corporeal actualization. How a reasoning is *matter*ing inside a human¹⁴⁸.

A reasonable culture beyond the Anthropocene has to cultivate so called “affective” or “corporeal” levels of discursive matter, has to understand its own dynamics and rationalities that are alien to what has hitherto been considered as reasonable. This does not suggest that the affective level of a discursive matter is the only aspect we should reasonably think with – in the spirit of a pluralization of Reason we must find the right balance between various elements we could – minding the often difficult semiotic and cultural weight these words carry – call “logical”, “affective”, “rhetorical”, “convincing”, etc. Only a just balancing of all these elements can be considered reasonable.

Every thought originates from a specific corporeal situation, a specific assemblage of various entities that together materialize something that seems to matter in a thought. So much more than

¹⁴⁸ Thanks to Demi Denise Spriggs for pointing this out to me.

the mere textual, semiotic content can be learned about a thought by *feeling* its context and how it stands within it.

Let's put this into an example: the statement that the body is mostly repressed by occidental discourse is true from various angles and can create a helpful effect in most situations. However, it carries with it the problems of the unitarized concept of "the body" we have addressed in this chapter. In some more patient context, another phrasing would be necessary. A lecture about the necessity of listening to "the body" will vary from audience, motivation of the gathering, attention span etc. It is always important to ask: What is the situation the statement is made in? What effect does it have on this particular situation?¹⁴⁹

If we look beyond mere abstract logic, no thought can claim universal truth for itself, but is heavily reliant on its environment: what might be true in one situation, might be wrong – or even harmful – in another. By reminding ourselves – as already Nietzsche did as is today more and more confirmed by results from neuroscience – that we do not only think with the brain, but with our entire corporeality and its environment¹⁵⁰, we can go beyond the catastrophic confinements of Reason with our reasoning and understand and think with and through the situatedness of any thought.

g) The temperament for Reason & Movement

As we have seen, every philosophical stance, even the most idealistic ones, emerge in relation to a specific environment and its material composition in it. Thus, there is not one singular posture that could incorporate every thought independent from location or time (as the idea of the universal "human", "Reason", or "body" suggests), but there are always various temperaments that express the thoughts they gather from the situations they experience differently.

The temperament that is most suitable for the long tradition of occidental "men of Reason" seems to have a particular problem with movement. This can already be exemplified by the etymology of the word *theory*: ""Before this term was used exclusively to refer to the contemplation of the mind and speculation, missions and journeys abroad were called 'theories'." (Jullien 2009, 89) Whereas in pre-Socratic times, travelers and other movement-friendly beings were considered to be theoreticians, with Socrates – who, as we already learned, preferred to stay within the city walls of Athens (chapter 5.A) – philosophy has "disowned this origin: she stayed at home, no longer goes on adventures, only reluctantly embarks on this work of information gathering and considers it impure." (Ibid.¹⁵¹) Through this logic, Reason becomes a static undertaking for bookworms and homestayors that are much more content with what has already been established – and written down – by others. Thereby, the situation that necessitates a thought in the first place (central to Chinese

¹⁴⁹ A similar example would be calling humans animals – while in some contexts this would be important for an ecological politics to come, in others, this could become an easy gateway for racist politics and exclusions.

¹⁵⁰ In the language of ISMS so favored by contemporary, anglosaxon-leaning academia, this basic insight is debated around the term "enactivism".

¹⁵¹ I have translated this from the German translation (the French original was unavailable to me), which is: "diesen Ursprung verleugnet: sie ist zu hause geblieben, begibt sich nicht mehr auf Abenteuer, macht sich nur widerwillig an diese Arbeit der Informationsermittlung und hält sie für unrein."

thought around the Shi, as we have learned in the last chapter), is systematically disqualified by a canonical body of knowledges and norms conveyed by a literary tradition.

Just as Socrates never really left Athens, Kant never left his Königsberg either. Occidental Reason seems to favor the temperament of the inert and the less-curious in terms of worldly experience. The “repression of the body” ascribed to occidental Reason is characterized by a disqualification of movement – both in corporeality, as we have just seen, as in reasoning itself: for a static fundament was always the first and foremost desire of those who felt lured in by Reason. “Give me one fixed point and i will move the earth” was already Archimedes’ (288-212 BC) standard for solid reasoning and became one of the pillars of occidental Reason thereafter, be it expressed in *aprioris* or other fundaments to “strike into the sure path of science” (Kant 1999a, B ix).

h) Moving Reasonings & Static Reason

In paragraph 381 of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche advises us to not stick too long with too abstract, too deep thoughts. “For I approach deep problems like cold baths: quickly into them and quickly out again. That one does not get to the depths that way, not deep enough down, is the superstition of those afraid of the water, the enemies of cold water; they speak without experience. The freezing cold makes one swift.” (Nietzsche 2009a, FW-381) He affirms the necessity “to tackle a matter swiftly to tackle it at all [einer Sache geschwind beizukommen, um ihr überhaupt beizukommen]” because if one remains for too long in the cold depth of abstract thoughts, one might freeze and get stuck with it. This – we can deduce – happened to the “Schwergeistern [heavy spirits]”, the classical *men of Reason*, who stick too long with one particular problem: they become obsessed with the details and disqualify any movement in order to create a static transcendent metaphysics of Being. This Being is considered to be the passive conglomerate of dead matter active scientific Reason can work on. Any awareness of the permanent Becoming of the universe is cut off from reasonability, in favor of the postulation of the eternal, unchanging “natural laws” of the cosmos.

The ivory tower might be a result of not knowing how to cope well with the depths of thought. Reason – as the discursive centerpiece of Modernity – can be regarded as the consequence of a canonized lack of experience with how to deal with deep thoughts and their material connection. The anxiety of young Törleß reading Kant can be understood as the first pre-sentiment of the cold depth he will be trained to dissect in contemplative stillness. It will only be “the mind” that will be required to move actively, while his and other corporeality is commanded to passivity.

Nietzsche, who – as we argued in chapter 2 – can be regarded as a key thinker for ecological reasoning, gives us a radically different advise of how to think well: “Sit as little as possible; do not believe any idea that was not conceived while moving around outside, — with your muscles in a celebratory mode as well. All prejudices come from the intestines. — Sitting down — I have said it before — is a true sin against the Holy Spirit.” (Nietzsche 2009a, EH-Klug-1)

This wonderfully polemic hijacking of Christian terminology (“Holy Spirit” and “sin”) shows us some aspects of a reasoning culture behind the static regime of Reason. Exactly contrary to the ideals canonized by the occidental tradition, every thought that does not emerge in relation with a moving connection to active corporeality should be distrusted. Let us remember the Spinozist mantra, that, contrary to the Christian ideology, Reason is not opposed to the desires of one’s bodies, but following one’s bodily desires actively augments Reason. A more ecologically aware reasoning is alert to not statically stick to eternal laws and rules, but actively seeks the joy¹⁵² of the emerging and again fading problems and regularities that *come to mind*. Ecological Reasonings should try to never become to static but enjoy the movement of truths, problems and questions without any taking on some eternal solidity. *Panta rhei* can be a joyful slogan for a reasoning of the living.

i) Learning & Corporeality

Who among the writers, thinkers and philosophers (at least those who share my temperament) don’t know the following situation: one sits for hours in front of the computer (or another writing medium for that matter) and – after a certain flow in the beginning – one gets stuck, the head feels more and more blurry, the legs become edgy, the back might fold forward, signifying its desire to jump, to move, to do something else. But as rational subjects drilled to the occidental tradition, we ignore our bodily impulses, force them into passivity, and stay actively focused on this abstract problem we try to solve. We might sit there for another hour or two and then – after feeling clouded in a complete mess of what we were trying to say – we decide to leave, take a walk, *give it up*.

Ideally we walk through a forest, or some other landscape we feel particularly well in, and let our thoughts wander. We do not try to actively think about the problem that so occupied us, but let passivity take us in, think about whatever comes up by itself: the name of the bird that just passed, that other appointment tomorrow, what person X said yesterday or simply what you will have for dinner tonight. This wandering can take a considerable time and then, from somewhere, seemingly nowhere and completely unintended, the problem comes back again and we have a completely fresh look on it: the argumentative steps we were looking for so desperately now just seem as intuitive as the path among the trees we are following. The next day we sit down in front of the writing device, there will be a new flow, one that brings us further, perhaps until the next time we get stuck.

The trick is to know when that moment is – to develop a feeling of when hope is lost and it is much more productive for whatever we are trying to achieve to just give and get up, get out and let the thoughts develop themselves – reintegrate them into the rest of our corporeal belonging to the world. Otherwise we might deep freeze like the occidental men of Reason and alienate ourselves

¹⁵² Even Descartes is aware of this (for him problematic) joy of movement in thought when he writes in the second meditation: “My mind enjoys wandering off the track, and will not yet allow itself to be confined within the boundaries of truth. Very well, then: let us, once again, slacken its reins as far as possible—then, before too long, a tug on them at the right moment will bring it more easily back to obedience.” (Descartes 2008b, 21)

from the becoming chaosmos we are a part of, think that the world is only a textual matter that can be fully explained by means of logic.

As Mosché Feldenkrais (1981, 92 ff.) teaches us, concentration is a false friend for corporeal learning, for it excludes us from our surroundings and thus prevents us from embedding the knowledge into the situation that required it. “Striving for a goal reduces the incentive to learn” (Ibid. 93). It might of course have a beneficial aspect as long as *it comes natural* (and we can of course train ourselves to make these “natural” concentrated times longer¹⁵³), but if we only stick to the abstract concentration, we lose the awareness of the corporeality of any thought and its effects and consequences in it.

Certainly, deep thoughts sometimes require the stillness of “our body” and the surrounding environment to be pursued, but they also need the movement and diversion our corporeality is longing for afterwards. Thoughts can go much deeper if we know how to handle them well – and do not see them as the sole *telos* of reasoning but as a thing that always emerges from an ever-fluctuating corporeality. A good deep thought follows these joyful wanderings “our” corporeality requires from us. It sees what activity lies in the passivity it produces and vice versa.

j) Activated Passivity

We can then take the position that such new forms of corporeal and ecologically aware reasoning require a fundamental reformulation of the potential and role of *passivity* in thinking. Whereas classical Reason saw itself as the active entity reigning over passive, dead matter, in the Anthropocene we see not only that our material environments drastically alter far behind the scope of “mere inert passivity”, but also that our material collaborations (such as the one with fossil fuels) *passively* constitute what our reasoning thinks to do *actively*. The men of Reason where so dismissive of movement because they thought the material world they lived in was a mere passive machine that was governed by a great spirit they can only approach through active Reason with their and other still bodies. As we have seen in earlier chapters, modern science is centered around this active / passive-dichotomy between Reason and matter, and in part, is responsible for the sculpting of a material world of which the alienable mind was entirely master of.

¹⁵³ No PhD, certainly not this one, could exist without such training. On the training of how to write and dwell well in abstract thoughts for longer, Michel Serres gave some beautiful advice in his France Culture conversation with Adèle van Reth (Serres 2018). Asked how he writes, he affirms that one first needs to find the time of the day when one is “the most intelligent” and continues like this: “Donc une fois que vous avez pigé le temps en question, vous dites, je travaillerai de telle heure à telle heure. Et vous vous y tenez toute votre vie. Sans aucun arrêt. Notre corps, nos organes, sont soumis à un rythme. Il y a le rythme du poulx,, le rythme du coeur, le rythme de la respiration, etc. Et beaucoup de gens connaissent une spécialité qui implique de travailler sur le rythme du corps. Par conséquent, tout travail qui n’a pas de rythme est voué à l’échec. Donc vous avez un rythme : de telle heure à telle vous travaillez, et vous vous y tenez. Et le rythme arrive de telle sorte qu’au bout d’un certain temps, si vous ne travaillez à cette heure là vous ne travaillez pas, vous êtes très très malade vous voyez ce que je veux dire. C’est plutôt un entraînement de Sportifs de haut niveau, c’est exactement ça. Et d’une certaine manière c’est plutôt mes profs de gym et entraîneurs qui m’ont appris mon métier.

Adèle van Reth : Donc on écrit aussi avec le corps ?

Michel Serres : Ah, mais on n’écrit qu’avec le corps, ma chère. D’ailleurs on a mal au dos, on a mal aux épaules, bien sûr. C’est pourquoi qu’en dehors des heures où je parle, il faut faire beaucoup de sports.”

Thanks to Déborah Brosteaux for the hint and the transcription.

Today it seems to us that what those men focused on while philosophizing about Reason was only the proverbial tip of the iceberg: what they called active thinking (such as the formulation of humanism, freedom, scientific principles, etc.) was constituted by manifold so called “passive” processes they could never reflect about. As we will see, what has been called the passive is the alien and non-human in any humanoid reasoning (see also chapter 12g) – and a new image of ecologically aware reasoning has to fundamentally take into account the constitutive role it plays in our so called active reasoning.

As results from neuroscience show us, the role of active thinking in any creative thinking process and problem solving is much smaller than the majoritarian idea of Reason had it. The role of so called subconscious processes plays a vital part of integrating the informational material on a more profound, corporeal level. If we refrain from active thinking and acting, the corporeality surrounding us (comprised of what we are used to call “our body” and other bodies that constitute the environment we are in) can play its active part, no longer being forced to passivity.

We should therefore not singularly praise passivity and laziness, as some more superficial voices in recent philosophy advise us (Han 2010), but completely rethink and put into question the dualism of passivity and activity; because passivity does “reach much further into being active [das Aktivsein] than previously thought.” (Busch 2012, 9)

“The decisive thing, then, is not the 'doing-nothing' [das Nichtstun] as an end in itself, but what other things happen to one in the meantime. Its meaning lies in the release of the ego-distant [das Ichferne] or foreign, which only occurs when one abstains from determining a situation and in return allows it to determine oneself.” (Ibid. 19¹⁵⁴) In this vein we can understand Nietzsche’s recommendation for quick dives in deep waters and moving thought better. By considering corporeality of reasoning, he sees the vital necessity of any good thought to be formed not only by active reasoning, but equally so by the surrounding situation that is rendered passive by it. It has to be embedded in a certain environment – made passive by a concentrated, active thought – to become an ecologically aware reasoning that does not retreat into the ice-cold ivory towers of Reason.

Simple logical tasks, such as “2+3”, or anything that remains in the simple confinements of linguistic analytical logic – those tasks we more and more outsource to computers – can in theory be done by mere active thinking: that’s why computers do them. However, more creative and innovative thinking needs to make use of sensual passivity to lead anywhere. “Passivity not only creates a space for thinking in the suspension of action, thinking itself is passive and [...] haunted by

¹⁵⁴ Original quote: „Das Entscheidene ist also nicht das Nichtstun als Selbstzweck, sondern das, was einem währenddessen an anderem passiert. Ihre Bedeutung liegt in der Freisetzung des Ichfernen oder Fremden, das nur dann eintritt, wenn man sich enthält, eine Situation zu bestimmen, und sich im Gegenzug von ihr bestimmten lässt”

phantasms from which the power and dynamics of researching and writing are nourished.” (Ibid. 12¹⁵⁵) Any reasonable thought in the Anthropocene should seek its connection with the *Shi* of a situation to become aware of where it comes from.

k) Reasonings with the radically changing environments

As Lou Andreas-Salomé (2013, 26 ff.) puts it, for Nietzsche there were two forms of reasoning. The first one is oriented towards acting: in order to act, one needs to set oneself as a unity that can actively engage with what is simplified to be passive objects outside of this *one* self. This is not a metaphysical truth, but simply a subjective need to survive as an active being.

The second form of reasoning is one of contemplation: for it, one needs to affirm “the chaos of drives [Triebe]” in their often contradicting multitude and dissolve in it. No longer being a *one* self, this form of reasoning enables to see the engagement with the manifold corporealities, drives and movements that form a situation of which what is called “I” (in the first form of reasoning) is a part of – it is a poetic relating to the *Shi*.

Both of these forms of reasoning are indeed necessary. However, the problem of classical Reason seems to be to have overstated the role of the first form by making metaphysical principle and a scientific world view out of it. Reason thus became the only active unity in a universe of dead passive matter.

By unlocking the potential of what was called passive, reasonings will happen in relation to and with the environments they are a part of. Reason will disintegrate into manifold reasonings. These will in turn occasionally necessitate an active Reason to emerge and form it – but it should no longer become completely isolated and detached from it. As we have learned from young Törleß, as soon as it creates fear and bursts of sweat, it might be a good time to reconsider if it is not smarter to let Reason go and return to the “passivity” of corporeal reasonings.

As we have learned from Jullien in the last chapter, for what he calls “the Chinese tradition” the refraining from actively partaking in a situation in order to let the potential of a situation develop by itself is of central importance for any reasonable thought to emerge. The wise person is accordingly the one who transforms the situation in accordance with it, subtly changing little parameters so that the process is more favorable to her desires.

The ecological catastrophe of the Anthropocene calls us to think further than mere active Reason. As we have seen with Kathryn Yussuf, it is imperative for us to understand what material, corporeal relations made us and our cultures in order to rework them. We need to reintroduce what has been labeled as “passive” in order to do so. As the Chinese wise person, we need to refrain from mere active Reason, in order to understand our entanglement with a catastrophically changing environment and live, change and die with the situation. Whereas Reason only acted on a pre-

¹⁵⁵ Original quote: “Passivität schafft nicht nur in der Suspension des Handelns einen Denkraum, das Denken selbst ist passivisch und [...] von Phantasmen heimgesucht, aus denen sich die Kraft und Dynamik des Forschens und Schreibens speisen.”

disposed passivity, ecological reasonings need to affirm *what* passivities created our current Reasonings and *how* we need to change with our material configurations and collaborations in order to produce other – more sustainable forms – of living and dying on this planet.

Excursion 7: Epistemological Pluralism

The concept of “temperament”, utilized in the last chapter, originates from physiology and denotes „an equilibrium of vital functions“¹⁵⁶. Under the influence of German Romanticism (such as Schiller’s or Goethe’s) it was introduced into philosophical reflection by William James’ psychological approaches (Weigand 1952), but can at the same time – in a completely different, but sometimes surprisingly congruent tradition – be found in Nietzsche’s earlier texts such as *Die Philosophie im Zeitalter der Griechen* from 1873, where he writes about the relation of personality and climate in thinkers.

It seems, then, that a term from physiology managed to make it into the realms of epistemological, metaphysical reflections and can perhaps provide the tools to help us think about the manifold incorporation of thought and reasonings. To quote William James from his 1907 *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*: “The history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments. [...] Of whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries, when philosophizing, to sink the fact of his temperament. Temperament is no conventionally recognized reason, so he urges impersonal reasons only for his conclusions. Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises. It loads the evidence for him one way or the other, making for a more sentimental or a more hard-hearted view of the universe, just as this fact or that fact would.” (James 2000, 8–9)

James is mainly speaking about a rift between two temperamental adjustments: that of the tender-minded (rationalists, idealists, intellectualists, monists, etc.) and the tough-minded (empiricists, materialists, sensationalists, pluralists, etc.) (Ibid. 11) – and he describes the history of philosophy in a conscious oversimplification as a balancing act between the manifold expressions of those two inclinations. However, if we remind ourselves of the many mechanisms of exclusion of other genders, class-belongings, ethnicities etc., we can only speculate about how many more temperaments there are that could contribute to a much more complex and colorful landscape of thought than that of the male philosophers James is describing. It is such a pluralistic landscape we have to actively promote in our academic landscapes to become more ecological in our reasonings. James’ is continuing his above quoted description of the relation of the philosopher to his – yes, he is still a *he* in 1907 – temperament like this: “He *trusts* his temperament. Wanting a universe that suits it, he believes in any representation of the universe that does suit it. He feels men of opposite temper to be out of key with the world’s character, and in his heart considers them incompetent and ‘not in it,’ in the philosophic business, even though they might excel him in dialectical ability.

¹⁵⁶ I am restating here what I have learned from Didier Debaise in his oral lectures on William James’ *Pragmatism* at ULB Brussels in autumn 2019.

Yet in the forum he can make no claim, on the bare ground of his temperament, to superior discernment or authority. There arises thus a certain insincerity in our philosophic discussions: the potentest of all our premises is never mentioned.” (Ibid. 9)

James goes on to bare – as best as he can – his own temperamental dispositions before he continues his lectures on Pragmatism. As we have seen in the last chapter, philosophical reflections of the last centuries have more and more become aware of corporeality and how it affects the place and validity of reasoning. It becomes apparent that there is not one, single and immaterial Reason for all, but that manifold reasonings spring from our bodily configurations within respective environments. However, as James poignantly describes in the above quoted excerpt, every philosopher is still inclined to claim a certain oneness and stringency of *his* own world view. Perhaps we can add in Nietzschean terms that *he* simply – to at least some degree – needs the illusion of the unity of *his* reason in order to survive and stay sane – to maintain the “vital equilibrium” of his temperamental disposition in this world. Every reason might need some image of oneness in order to work. However, in times after Nietzsche and James, we might be able to at the same time retain a certain permeability among our various reasons, leading to a *epistemological pluralism*.

“It is neither a universe pure and simple nor a multiverse pure and simple. And its various manners of being One suggest, for their accurate ascertainment, so many distinct programs of scientific work.” (James 2000, 67) This quotation can lead us the way to such a pluralism. As it seems to me, the value of pluralism is hardly denied by anybody these days (at least within leftist, progressive spectra of society and discourse), however, when it comes to how a thought and discussion is actually *carried* out, be it in political discussions (see chapter 12b) or scientific arguments, the openness for epistemological pluralism is quickly declining. This might be due to the vital necessity of keeping a specific equilibrium in order to stay sane and safe, but it is immensely aggravated by monorationalistic images of thought that exercise their influence far into the realms of many self-ascribed pluralists.

This might be due to our still majoritarian image of Science (with a capital S) that – as we have already learned – was at least since early European modernity seen as the best or even only image to exercise Reason. The inclination of scientific discourses to intrinsically negate the plurality of manifold different approaches to what is called nature is examined by Isabelle Stengers and Ilya Prigogine in their infamous and still far too little read *La Nouvelle Alliance* from 1971. They argue that it is since Kant, who synonymised the mechanistic, Newtonian style of pursuing science with Science (with a capital S), that other forms of doing scientific research have become unthinkable for many philosophers thereafter, such as Heidegger, Hegel and many positivists until today (Prigogine and Stengers 1986, 95). By associating the traditional notion of a monorationalist Reason with the

mechanist Science that accelerated – and to a significant degree caused – European Modernity, all other approaches became disqualified from reasonability.

Since from such reasonings about a universe of dead matter everything that was vivid, spontaneous, sensual and inspiring was expelled, a huge romantic counter-movement to “rationalistic” traditions emerged in the aftermath of Kant, according to Stengers and Prigogine. This intellectual reaction was mostly inclined to negate Reason in general by embracing various – potentially dangerous – forms of irrationalism (Ibid. 17) and Unreason. In order to – for example – enjoy the singing of a bird at dusk and claim a specific, important value to it, the romantics felt inclined to suppress or negate Reason, because the only Reason they knew would have told them that these is merely a trite mechanism triggered by the photons of the sun to trigger a certain mating- and territorial behavior in this assemblage of passive atoms we call bird. They could, therefore, never discover other reasonings in their musings about “Nature” and its beauty. Furthermore, most of the temperaments that might have been inclined to affirm the value of such “unscientific” inspirations were expelled from the academic realm of *men of Reason* from the very beginning.

At the time of James, a certain turn in this romantic / rationalist divide is taking place, for he is considering “as immoral” any reasoning that decreases the value of any experience. For him, the aim of morals is to intensify experience- and nobody would deny that there are various ways of intensifying experience. Modern, mechanist science is for sure among them, but it would be wrong and indeed immoral for it to claim it is the only just one, for listening intently to the chirping bird for sure is also intensifying our experience of belong to the world.

To use the words of fellow pragmatist Alfred North Whitehead: “What is wanted is an appreciation of the infinite variety of vivid values achieved by an organism in its proper environment. When you understand all about the sun and all about the atmosphere and all about the rotation of the earth, you may still miss the radiance of the sunset. There is no substitute for the direct perception of the concrete achievement of a thing in its actuality.” (Whitehead 1970, 199)

The experience privileged by modern Science (with a capital S) can lead to explanations and explorations of many important phenomena about the movement of objects, their relations and so on, but – as we have already seen – it excludes and completely overlooks many other important phenomena that are dismissed as secondary (chapter 3.Cc) or irrelevant. An epistemological pluralism countering such a monorationalist regime has to mind and actively find various ways of intensifying and amassing experience in order to cultivate the “so many distinct programs of scientific work” James is talking about. In it, no experience can be disqualified from priorly (and a priori) established standards.

An epistemological pluralism as the one that is put forth in this thesis thus requires us to not disqualify any experience of reasonings from beforehand. This is almost unthinkable when coming from a standpoint of reflecting on Reason (with a capital R), for it was mostly regarded as the exact means of imposing criteria and hierarchies on experiences: disqualifying some and prioritizing others (such as “secondary qualities” like smell or color against “primary qualities” like extension or solidity we have encountered with Locke in chapter 3.Cc). And it might even be true that any reason might need to retain some claim of unity and stringency, thus imposing a certain hierarchy. But in becoming ecologically aware, any reason within the plurality of reasonings should mind that any stratification of order and hierarchy is dependent on its specific corporeal relation to its specific environment. It is therefore, considering this point, reasonable – exactly contrary to Reason’s intuitions and laws – to never decide on any first or last question, fundamental principles or eternal apriorism. Reasoning *with* the environment means to stay open to change, letting that change work on oneself, dissolving and interchanging the roles of activity and passivity – to be able to make sense of it and adjust. It is not about defending one standpoint against and in any situation, but being aware of how this particular standpoint might interact and possibly transform (“learn from”) you and that specific situation. Moving and transforming with the imposing matter, not acting stiffly against it in a state of confrontational warfare (see also chapter 12d).

“The center of gravity of philosophy must therefore alter its place. The earth of things, long thrown into shadow by the glories of the upper ether, must resume its rights. To shift the emphasis in this way means that philosophic questions will fall to be treated by minds of a less abstractionist type than heretofore, minds more scientific and individualistic in their tone yet not irreligious either.” (James 2013, 57) It will be minds that will learn to cope with a plurality of reasonings at the same time, finding and making sense within them, becoming reasonable without ever attaining the static state of Reason. Such a transformation is still taking place more than 110 years after James’ wrote those passages. To many it does still, as James stated about the “ultra-rationalists” a century ago, seem “a mere mess of anarchy and confusion” leading to “sheer trash, philosophically” (Ibid). But, as James puts it, “life wags on, all the same, and compasses its ends” (Ibid.) and today, after a century of becoming ecologically aware, we might even say: it wags on much better without the monorationalist regime of Reason. Its resilience is still strong, but the life that still wags on after the catastrophic aftermath of Reason will surely be one of such pragmatist pluralism. It is time to foster and nurture it as such: as a survival strategy in a times of ecological collapse. As a means to understand and reason with the plurality of the planet we are aloud to inhabit with a myriad of co-critters.

9) Ecological reasonings in the sciences

a) Romantic doubt in Science

So far we have affirmed traces and rudiments of ecological reasonings in somewhat *cliché territories* of ecosophy: other cultures and bodily awareness. Unfortunately, these discursive ventures frequently get dismissively labeled as „romantic“ and are laughed at as “escapist tendencies” for those who are said to not be able to stand the hard reality of modern Science, a techno-capitalist life-style and its achievements.

From Kant to Heidegger, this reproach goes (Prigogine and Stengers 1984, 85–92), “romantic” (in the largest sense of the word) thinkers have tried to claim a territory alien, sometimes even hostile, to that of modern science. They saw the violence and problems of modern Science (with a capital S) clearly and wanted to find other ways of relating and reasoning with the Earth. However, the reproach continues, be it Bergson’s *intuition*, Heideggers *Being* or Hegel’s *Naturphilosophie*, they have never achieved to propose a model that could potently compete with the level of abstraction and refinement of Science (Ibid.).

It is nonetheless important to warn about the hidden complacency between romanticism and modern Science (in that they both form two cultures that mutually maintain each other exactly because of their stark opposition), we should neither underestimate the influence of the warnings and longings-for-the-other-shore expressed in romanticism that did in fact inspire and influence – among many others – scientific thinkers. It is correct to remind us somewhat superciliously that – for example – Bergson’s endeavor about the *elan vital* was bound to fail (Ibid.), but only if we are at the same time willing to admit that such “romantic” accusations influenced scientific thinkers (such as Prigogine himself) to look elsewhere – to *renew science from within*.

Having said that much in defense of so called “romanticism”, it is nonetheless crucial to depart from its often truly escapist tendencies and undo some of its hidden complacency. Undoing the monolithic notion of Science (with a capital S) will enable us to sense and affirm very different reasonings within sciences that sometimes reveal striking parallels to reasonings we have encountered in the last two chapters and I propose – throughout this thesis – to call “ecological”.

This chapter will start with discussing the conditions and problems of such a “romanticism” and will then follow Alfred North Whitehead’s departure into a new and pluralized understanding of sciences beyond a mechanist paradigm of Newtownian science. I will then complicate our understanding of what is at stake in contemporary scientific practices with Isabelle Stengers’ and Ilya Prigogine’s book *La Nouvelle Alliance*. After having revised a pragmatic view of new scientific images of thought, I will set them in dialogue with more recent approaches & results to develop a different epistemology (and concept of Reasoning) from scientific insights: Karen Barad’s reading

of Bohr'ian quantum-theory and the post-anthropocentric implications of the “microbial turn” around Lynn Margulis.

However, at the end of this chapter, I will have to warn about a new pitfall of a certain kind of new romanticism *within* sciences we can sometimes encounter in so called “New Materialism” that seems to me to fall behind the pragmatic insights of Whitehead, Stengers and Prigogine. This problematisation – that I will engage with a short excursion into Ludwik Fleck's philosophy of thought-collectives and thinking-styles – will enable me to initiate what can only be done after a longer work of affirmation of ecological reasonings: a subsequent critique of ecological reasoning, that might – much like Spinoza's philosophy of immanence (chapter 5.D & E) – be at danger of becoming a new majoritarian principle that could end up reproducing a very modern Monorationalism.

A central argument developed in this chapter will be that we must not regard Science as a unitary practice that can be reduced to one Reason – it is much rather a loose patchwork of various fields, styles of reasoning, perspectives and plateaus that are not necessarily in accordance (in a sense of excluded contradiction) with each other (and can never be completely assessed for that matter). Much rather, the contradictions implicit in and between various fields should stimulate and fuel a new inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue between various domains that have been rather unproductively caged by modern disciplinary borders. This chapter is written in such a spirit, therefore necessarily not following one congruent line of reasoning, but being colored and influenced by various textual artifacts in order to draw the inspiration necessary to find reasons within the complex time we call the Anthropocene.

b) Beyond Romanticism: Leaving Science behind to think with various sciences

As we have learned from earlier chapters, majoritarian modern Reason had a very intimate relationship with Science, regarding it tendentially as the single – or at least – best suited way of conducting one's Reason. Reducing the world to a passive machine full of dead atoms, Reason (regarded as an exclusively human capacity) was regarded as the active entity that could in scientific thinking deduce its mechanical laws, thereby acquiring power and dominion over everything that was labeled to be “Nature”. This entailed manifold dynamics of exclusion and oppression, as we have learned from feminist, imperialist, political and ecological critiques (chapter 3 and 5).

In an epoch of critiques, as inaugurated by Kant (chapter 3), it is therefore understandable that this idea of Science has come under a lot of scrutiny and sometimes even flat out rejection from emancipatory and critical movements. “Romanticism” can be regarded as the tendency to reject this

majoritarian rationalism of Science and its specific way of relating and technologically altering the condition of the planet.

According to Isabelle Stengers and Ilya Prigogine (1984, 86-88), the roots of romanticism lie in Kant's identification of classical Newtonian science as the only way of conducting Science. Impressed by the success of the Newtonian / Cartesian rationalism, he neglected the possibility of any other forms of reasonings within sciences. However, as Stengers and Prigogine claim, these other forms always existed and Science was never as homogeneous as the stories of "men of Reason" taming "Nature" with Science have claimed. In Kant's time, the heyday of this classical image of Science and Reason was already faltering. Scientists whose primary education was in medicine (such Diderot or La Mettrie) or chemistry (such as D'Holbach and Stahl) (Ibid. 79-85)) already questioned the physicist dominance of Science. But Kant seemed to have been unaware of these minoritarian streams within sciences and fell into a trap that Whitehead describes to be the problem of modern philosophy in general (Whitehead 1970, 138 – see later in this chapter): By equating / synonymizing Science and Reason as such with the science and rationalism of Newton and Descartes, Kantian critique "branded as impossible any opposition to classical science that was not an opposition to science itself" (Prigogine and Stengers 1984, 85) By doing so, he "denies the diversity of possible scientific points of view, the diversity of presupposed principles. In agreement with the myth of classical science, Kant is after the unique language that science deciphers in nature, the unique set of *a priori* principles on which physics is based and that are thus to be identified with the categories of human understanding. Kant, contrarily, denies the need for the scientist's active choice, the need for a selection of a problematic situation corresponding to a particular theoretical language in which definite questions may be asked and experimental answers sought" (Ibid. 88)

This drastic short-circuiting / over-simplifying of the business of scientific Reasoning has influenced – and made impotent – all "romantic" critique and philosophy that was to come after, according to Stengers and Prigogine. By reducing science's always existing plurality of approaches to one monolithic entity of Science (with a capital S), other forms of reasoning and relating with the world were – from Hegel to Heidegger and beyond – only searched for *outside* of any scientific realms, thus cutting philosophical thinking short from the largest field of reasonings in modernity. By speaking of "Science" as if it would be one monolithic thing¹⁵⁷, any other form of scientifically relating to the planet was declared impossible and many promising fields of other reasonings *within* sciences were rendered invisible by a romantic, undifferentiated rejection of science in general rooted in this monorationalistic understanding of Science.

¹⁵⁷ Up until today it is used as an abundant political strategy to justify any action by legitimizing it by declaring them to be in line with "Science" as such, thereby neglecting the plurality of – frequently contradictory – positions within any scientific debate. In the line of Latour's (2002) critique of the political usage of "Science", it is therefore vitally important to always stay skeptical if somebody is justifying actions with "Science" - a pluralized perspective will enable us to stay true to the complexity of the matter that can – in any situation we can deem interesting – never be reduced to a single truth or answer.

In order to begin the undoings of such a dangerous romanticist short-circuiting of Science that makes it impossible to detect some of the most interesting understandings of our current situation on this planet, we will first follow Alfred North Whitehead's early assessment of a new image of science within sciences and will then further nuance the matter with the work of Stengers and Prigogine.

c) Happy choices turned unhappy (Whitehead)

What makes the philosophy of the mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) so interesting for this endeavor is that he would – to a large extent – agree with the romantically motivated critiques of mechanist, physicist Science in the tradition of Heidegger or Bergson, but – contrary to their rejection – is able to affirm the perceived shortcomings and exclusions as – what he calls repeatedly – a “happy choice” (Whitehead 1970, 18). His pragmatic approach allowed him to question what an abstraction such as that of modern Science actually *does* (to the environment as well as to the culture it is embedded in), suspending questions of truth and rightfulness (that would lead to – if the result were negative – flat out rejection and moral outrage) by regarding them as an event with concrete practical results. He would therefore agree with romantic critics that modern Science has a destructive and exclusive tendency towards anything outside its quite narrow realm and would add that the reduction of the universe to dead, passive matter was not at all a necessity or even a “golden way” to fundamental truths and universal laws (as it was believed to be by believers in classical Science such as Newton and Descartes). However, he would claim that this specific reduction was not evil, bad or wrong as such, but actually enabled scientific reasoning to do and produce certain results that were very fortunate for the profiteers of Western Science (which were, as we have seen, mostly privileged white men) and the modern culture that would be unthinkable without it. “In one sense the abstraction has been a happy one, in that it has allowed the simplest things to be considered first, for about ten generations.”(Whitehead 2010, 154)

According to Whitehead, classical modern Science is constructed on what he calls a “scientific materialism”, which is based – among others – on the assumption that matter is mere “material”, that is in itself “senseless, valueless and purposeless” (Whitehead 1970, 18) and can be simply located in space and time by an independent spectator who is necessary outside of the examined material (Ibid. 50). This material is believed to “just do[...] what it does do, following a fixed routine imposed by external relations which do not spring from the nature of its being” (Ibid. 18) and it is only the human e.g. white men of Reason who can – invested by the exceptional powers he ascribes to himself – objectively deduce its allegedly universal laws.

This scientific materialism is, according to Whitehead, “not wrong, if properly construed” (Ibid.). It does have a “narrow efficiency” (Ibid. 19) for it can – with satisfactory accuracy – explain a limited

range of phenomena we humans can perceive in the universe, such as the gravitational or causalistic relation between visually construed objects. In the specific historical situation of early European modernity, these explanations were extremely helpful for the development of European modern culture in the direction it was taking. Modern classical Science's "narrow efficiency of the scheme was the very cause of its supreme methodological success. For it directed attention to just those groups of facts which, in the state of knowledge then existing, required investigation" (19).

Thus, the problem that Whitehead perceives with this particular modern form of making science is not intrinsic to its set of assumptions, but in its field of application which was – in the course of modern history of science – extended far beyond its reach and even declared as a universal principle of scientific reasoning (called "Reason") that could explain the world fully and in all important detail once and for all. In this overreaching tendency of monopolizing Reason as one Science, many phenomena that do not fit the presumptions of scientific materialism have been disqualified as irrelevant – for example what Locke' called secondary qualities (see chapter 3.Cc). According to Whitehead, the development of psychology and biology has been greatly inhibited and delayed by this reduction because many phenomena central to its realms of reasoning lie outside of this narrow reduction of the universe to mechanist objects. The fatal problem that arose from such reduction is that the phenomena of living, "soulful" beings and a philosophy of "organisms" (as Whitehead calls them) were excluded of what classical, modern Science considered to be relevant phenomena. Science could explain and – in its technological application – influence the visible, mechanist realm of our field of vision better than perhaps any cultural technique before. But it failed to account for life as a frail and irreversible process developing over time in this more and more technologically refurbished and transmuted planet.

Already in Whitehead's early 20th century work, we can find glimpses of a clear ecological motivation for such a problematization of Newtonian Science, when he writes: "In the immediate past, and at present, a muddled state of mind is prevalent. The increased plasticity of the environment for mankind, resulting from the advances in scientific technology, is being construed in terms of habits of thought which find their justification in the theory of a fixed environment." (Ibid. 114) Such an evaluation of the shortcomings of "scientific materialism" does not lead Whitehead to a romantic rejection of "Science", since he regards Newtonian Science as one efficient scientific practice among many others. According to him, the problem is that this specific form of making science and qualifying phenomena has been taken way too far off its appropriate range of application. By declaring Newtonian Science to be the way of Reasoning that can potentially fully explain the universe in all relevant aspects, a fatal shortcoming of understanding how such and other practices influence the biosphere of our planet became a – much criticisable – blind spot of modern Science. The work that needs to be done is therefore not to reject modern science as such, but to affirm other forms of reasoning and knowledge-production which have

always been latent and working within (other) scientific practices. Restricted to their fields of application, modern classical Science and the particular sensory regime favoring so called men of Reason (see last chapter) are a helpful tool among many others. Freed from the completely delusional ideology that this very specific corporeal assemblage is the only way to meaningful truth – thus sanctioning dominion over any other corporal assemblage on this planet – they can still and will continue to provide one among many perspectives needed for multirationalistic forms of understanding and coping with an ever-transforming universe and a drastically changing, *living* planet.

d) Rationalism, Anti-Rationalism, Multi-rationalism (Beyond Whitehead)

Before we will encounter a few helpful examinations of other forms of reasonings in contemporary sciences, such as Stengers and Prigogine's excursion into chaos-theory and their theory of irreversible "dissipative" structures, Lynn Margulis' "microbial turn" and emphasis on symbiosis and Karen Barad's agential-materialist reading of Nils Bohr's quantum physics, I need to lose a few words in where I think it is needed to depart from Whitehead's philosophy and take another turn than the one he is proposing.

Curiously, for Whitehead, the entire history of modern Science is characterized by an "anti-rationalistic movement" (Whitehead 2010, 17). He warns us to not believe the labeling of "rationalism" commonly associated to thinkers such as Descartes, Newton or Bacon because their "historical revolt" (against late-medieval philosophy) was one motivated by a naive empiricism: "It is a great mistake to conceive this historical revolt as an appeal to reason. On the contrary, it was through and through an anti-intellectualist movement. It was the return to the contemplation of brute fact; and it was based on a recoil from the inflexible rationality of medieval thought." (9) Whereas the predominant medieval philosophy of scholasticism was concerned obsessively with founding and justifying one's own epistemological and ontological assumptions in one eternal principle called God (and thus never really wanting to touch the world), Modern philosophy – taken in awe by the early successes of Science – departs from this contemplative fixation and reversely sanctions experience and experiment-based reasoning one-sidedly, in turn bifurcating the world into two neatly separated realms of subjectivity (the domain of philosophy) and objectivity (the domain of Science) (Ibid. 138 ff.).

Problematically, residues of this medieval belief in eternal god-given laws were reproduced as a central feature of modern science¹⁵⁸ : it was by experiment-based modern science that one was now

¹⁵⁸ "When we compare this tone of thought in Europe with the attitude of other civilisations when left to themselves, there seems but one source for its origin. It must come from the medieval insistence on the rationality of God, conceived as with the personal energy of Jehovah and with the rationality of a Greek philosopher. Every detail was supervised and ordered: the search into nature could only result in the vindication of the faith in rationality. Remember that I am not talking of the explicit beliefs of a few individuals. What I mean is the impress on the European mind arising from the unquestioned faith of centuries. By this I mean the instinctive tone of thought and not a mere creed of words. [...] My explanation is that the faith in the possibility of science, generated antecedently to the development of modern scientific theory, is an unconscious derivative from medieval theology" compare

believed to attain such eternal principles – thus ideologically transforming the same contingent ontological division between ephemeral matter and eternal spirituality into the Golden way of Science and Reason which was never really assessed and properly questioned in the following centuries. “The anti-rationalism of the moderns has checked any attempt to harmonise the ultimate concepts of science with ideas drawn from a more concrete survey of the whole of reality. The material, the space, the time, the various laws concerning the transition of material configurations, are taken as ultimate stubborn facts, not to be tampered with.” (Ibid. 141) “A self-satisfied rationalism is in effect a form of anti-rationalism. It means an arbitrary halt at a particular set of abstractions. This was the case with science.” (201)

Whitehead’s central claim is that modern science’s presumptions need to be reflected in and returned to Reason (which he only knows in the singular). While I agree – as should be clear by now – with the point that modern Reason’s exclusions and naive assumptions need to be questioned and ecologically reflected, I am more inclined to stress the continuities, rather than the discontinuities between Medieval and Modern occidental philosophy. It was after all the residue of a belief in one God – and “the human”’s exceptionally favorable position towards him through the gift of Reason – that made the strong belief in eternal laws so central to Modern Science possible. By urging us to return Science back to a reflection in Reason, I fear that the hegemonic monorationalistic principle guiding occidental culture will not be questioned radically enough, but will only be displaced into a more transcendent, eternally unascertainable realm. Whitehead is, in my opinion, performing a typical classically modern move in posing that what his predecessors called Reason is not actually Reason, but needs to be embedded and reflected in *his* greater Reason, which he does refer to the old wise men (a move we already know from Plato or Descartes, who constantly legitimizes his thoughts to be in line with “the ancients”). This falls in line with a failure to reflect that both the “happy choices” of early modern Science were only particularly merry for a small group of white, privileged Europeans of mostly male gender, as well as that the so cherished “true rationalism” of scholastic philosophy was an exclusively male business and was only made possible by a specific eco-corporeal regime of ascribing Reason to men and matter to women (see chapter 3.B).

In short: I do believe it is not only necessary to pluralize Science (as is very well thinkable *with* Whitehead) but also to pluralize Reason, otherwise the exclusive mechanisms of the monorationalistic regime cannot be properly reflected *and experienced*¹⁵⁹. I would, therefore, continue to call Modern Science a particularly *rationalist* movement whose problem was not that it was *anti-rationalistic* in some hidden core, but mono-rationalistic to its base, thereby continuing a problematic trait of occidental philosophy that was already existing and developing in Medieval and

Whitehead 1970, 13+14

¹⁵⁹ For let us remember with Bourdieu (from chapter 3.Da) that every stance in itself is already based in a specific corporeal habitus that needs to be experimentally engaged.

even Ancient philosophy. I think it is much less helpful to *return* to some older, more profound (because secluded from reality in monasteries) Reason, but to look actively for and engage with other reasons we can find in history (such as minoritarian streams of thought within occidental culture, see chapter 3.B and 5.Cb)), other cultures (chapter 7), corporeal awarenesses (chapter 8) as well as in contemporary and historical scientific practices, which we will now examine with the help of Isabelle Stengers and Ilya Prigogine.

e) Becoming / Thinking with time (Stengers and Prigogine I)

In contemporary discourses, we meet various attempts to re-examine sciences and draw ecological consequences from them. What makes the book *La Nouvelle Alliance* by Isabelle Stengers and her co-conspirator, chemistry noble-prize winner Ilya Prigogine, outstanding is that it was already published in 1979. Together with Michel Serres and his *Hermes* pentalogy (written between 1968 and 1980), they can be regarded as the first thinkers who systematically demonstrate that there are new ways of reasoning within so called “natural sciences” that differ substantially from the image of classical Science and – if taken serious – could help us understand life and becoming in its manifold ecological entanglements – living, transformation and becoming cease to be regarded to somewhat lie outside the scientifically explainable world and instead become central problems of modern scientific reasonings. If we want to summarize this now well established insight to one philosophically understandable sentence, we could say that the essence of these new images of thought is a transition from an ordered cosmos of *Being* to a processual chaosmos of *Becoming*. Quite analogous to various occidental philosophical positions of the last two decades, Modern Science gradually cedes regarding its involvedly examined matter as a passive and static entity and starts to understand itself as being part of a permanent process of becoming with no safe outside and no eternal transcendence from which one can draw / discover truths that are not in themselves subject to this permanent becoming and transforming.

As we will learn, this does not at all entail a radical loss of any safe prediction, understanding or even truth (commonly called “relativism”) – much rather, multiple Reasonings can be relied on in much more sustainable and diverse ways to relate and create with and in a permanently becoming *chaosmos*.

Classical modern Science is, according to Stengers and Prigogine, based on the assumption of the reversibility of time, meaning that the flow of time is a mere abstract that can – in principle – be reversed at any given situation without any consequence. The continuum of space/time is neatly dichotomized into the separate concepts of space and time¹⁶⁰, in which the first is mathematically ordered by a Euclidean three-dimensional grid and time is subordinated by becoming the fourth

¹⁶⁰ It is worth noting that the clear dichotomisation of space and time is something quite unique to occidental, modern thinking. The – within modern scientific reasoning – relatively recent concept of a continuous space/time seemed to have been the norm among various indigenous peoples around the world. (Abram 2017, 181 ff.)

axis / dimension of this mathematical model. By regarding the change-in-time of any material (to continue to use Whitehead's term) under this simplified rationale, transformation and becoming are turned into something secondary and reducible to a set of subsequent images / static states of Being (what Bergson (1959) called the *cinematographic mechanism of thought*).

"In classical science the priorities were set on time-independent laws. As soon as the initial conditions are given, these eternal laws determine the future for all times, as much as they determined the past. Such a view arouses our enthusiasm, for it says that the world is intelligible to the human mind. And nevertheless it raises a problem, because the world unraveled in this way appears as an automaton, a robot." (Stengers and Prigogine 1986, 11¹⁶¹)

Stengers and Prigogine agree with Whitehead's pragmatic point that this over-simplification is not entirely "wrong, if properly construed" (1970, 18). However, they point out that this reduction of time to a reversible and somewhat negligible variable paved the way for the mislead belief that there could, in principle, be a perspective that can oversee all the subsequent states and therefore formulate a complete theory of (physical) Being. Stengers and Prigogine remind us that in the history of Modern Science it was repeatedly believed that scientific theory was on the verge of completion (Stengers and Prigogine 1986, IV), an assumption that marks the continuity with the medieval scholastic faith in God (as the eternal super-perspective of any Reasoning into eternity) who became conceptually transformed into the Laplacian demon during Modernity (Ibid. 94) and hunts physics up until today as in such ideas that the much debated "Higgs-bosom" could complete the contemporary cosmological theory of the universe (Unzicker 2010).

This *illusion of completion* (that forms a part of the Resilience of Reason – chapter 6d) seduced modern scientists to overshoot the mark and believe that there could be one theory for all of the phenomena in the universe – at least for those who were deemed "relevant", for (as we shall see) such endeavors create(d) an underside of what is labeled "irrelevant chaos" that nobody cared to examine.

f) Completion and Seclusion (Stengers and Prigogine II)

The problem of such aspirations to master-theories that are believed to be complete(able) is that they necessarily create an outside from which *somebody* has to be able to regard the perfectly explainable universe. This is how the centrality of monotheism is metaphysically actualized in

¹⁶¹ The English translation adds a – in my opinion unnecessary – dramatic tone to the text, which is why I translated this part from the German translation which reads: „In der klassischen Wissenschaft lag der Akzent auf den zeitunabhängigen Gesetzen. Sobald die Anfangsbedingungen gegeben sind, bestimmen diese ewigen Gesetze für alle Zeiten die Zukunft, sowie sie die Vergangenheit bestimmt haben. Eine solche Sicht weckt unsere Begeisterung, denn sie besagt, dass die Welt für den menschlichen Geist intelligibel ist. Und dennoch wirft sie ein Problem auf, denn die auf diese Weise enträtselte Welt erscheint als ein Automat, ein Roboter.“ The English translation reads: "In classical science the emphasis was on time-independent laws. As we shall see, once the particular state of a system has been measured, the reversible laws of classical science are supposed to determine its future, just as they had determined its past. It is natural that this quest for an eternal truth behind changing phenomena aroused enthusiasm. But it also came as a shock that nature described in this way was in fact debased: by the very success of science, nature was shown to be an automaton, a robot."

Modern Science. Although its God became more and more a figure of the background – as in the Laplac’ian demon, a rhetorical figure needed to account for the theoretical possibility of a universal understanding or in Einstein’s insistence of classical objectivity against quantum physics (Stengers and Prigogine 1986, 236) – its unitarian tendency still hunts contemporary scientific practices. Stengers and Prigogine concede that “it is quite possible that modern science in its early days needed the conviction that it could reach the comprehensive truth.” (Ibid. 51) However, they argue that for an understanding of our contemporary, anthropogenically modified world at the verge of ecological collapse¹⁶² it is more than ever necessary to understand what such an abstraction entails. As we have already learned from Whitehead, modern physicist Science was never able to explain life – it always remained a fringe event that retained its sense of unworldly wonder. It was the chaotic, inexplicable side-product of an otherwise perfectly balanced cosmos that could be fully determined by physicist “natural laws”.

“‘The 'normal' universe, that which can be derived from the laws of nature, is a lifeless universe; the only predictable and reproducible laws are the laws of death and the return to the inanimate. Thus, chance - the unexpected appearance of the genetic code and the series of beneficial mutations - is contrary to the lawfulness of nature. Chance wrests the living creature from the lifeless order of nature and makes it a being that lives for a limited time on the edge of a universe in which it is only a strange, unexpected feature.” (Ibid. 196)

According to classical modern Science, the universe is a fully determined, perfectly balanced machine, but – however improbable that may seem – life and becoming in general and human understanding in particular were put aside into the conceptual realms of inexplicable, irrational chaos. “The great physical theories describe a world in which time and becoming play no role. However beautiful and however powerful these theories might have been, they made humans, themselves creatures of time, strangers in the world they described; and they made all our empirical knowledge, as it were, mere approximations, devoid of any deeper meaning.” (Ibid. IV)

Anything that would account for the sense of living, becoming and reasoning on this concrete environment of the biosphere we call Earth became a mystical “unscientific” void that would occupy romantic endeavors in the decades to come. Resulting from this, a figure called “the human” felt excluded from the cosmos *he* otherwise could explain so perfectly, feeding *his* feelings of seclusion and alienation from the rest of the world. In such alienation, *human exceptionalism* – secured by the metaphysical focal point of God – was an almost necessary consequence. The *natural laws* he found to be universal favored such an anthropocentric world view, for they were construed according to his sensual realm (chapter 3.C) and were located and extrapolated from his

¹⁶² This point is only implicit in *La Nouvelle Alliance* and shall become one of the main points of interest in many of Stengers’ later solo-works such as *A temps de catastrophe – résister à la barbarie qui vient*, etc.

dimensional preferences called the “medium range” (as opposed to macro- and microscopic investigations in which classical Newtonian laws quickly reach their limits (Ibid. 224))¹⁶³.

g) Living off balance = Living (Stengers and Prigogine III)

What is so fruitful about Stengers’ and Prigogine’s work is that they do not only redeem this often deployed sorry state of “the human” within Modern Science, but they turn them into advantages and causes for a joyful co-relating to a necessarily chaotic entanglement with living becoming. They do this in a breathtaking revision of classical physical theories, as well as excursions to chemistry, biology, ethology and even such unexpected fields like anthropology or urbanistics. By stimulating new dialogues between the modern disciplinary borders, they mark continuities and fields of cross-fertilization that show us that life *can* be explained by scientific reasoning and that such explanations help us to think ourselves as part of a permanently becoming, thinking planet we felt so alienated from – with vast consequences for our theories of reasoning and understanding in general.

They set off by showing that time cannot be regarded as a reversible process under every circumstance. Where this might be a useful abstraction for Newtonian laws, living and transforming can only be understood as a process of irreversible becoming that cannot be fully predicted from an objective – and secluded – Euclidean grid. As regarded from our “medium range”, matter seems to obey Modern science’s repetitive, reversible and close-to-equilibrium laws (Ibid. 224), however if examined in micro- and macro-ranges, results from chaos-theory, quantum physics and other such fields show us that there are in fact “dissipative structures” (as Stengers and Prigogine call them) in ranges that hitherto were, considered as, irrational chaos. What modern science has disqualified as irrelevant phenomena is revealed to be the key to an approximate understanding of how we fit into this living biosphere and its ever-becoming chaosmos. Life can only exist under conditions (that are at least partly) far off balance and deterministic laws.

In fact, the idea of such determinism and completable laws of a cosmos in balance is the result of an anthropocentrism taken too far: where it can explain with more than sufficient accuracy phenomena of our immediate and *visible* (remember modern Science’s ocularcentrism) surroundings, turned into a complete theory of the universe, it eradicates life from theory (and – one might add – from this planet if blindly and unreflectedly put into practice by techno-scientific conquest.)

¹⁶³ It is interesting to note how scientific endeavors that still seek a complete theory of the universe (such as the partly mystical quests for the Higgs-Boson) seem to almost compulsively reproduce the anthropocentrism so persistent in Modern Science. While it has today long ceded its aspirations for being located at the center of the universe, we witness a strange remnant of it in what is called the “coincidence problem” in contemporary cosmology. This problem consists of the strange coincidence that we are living at the seemingly single spot in space/time where the acceleration and deceleration of the universe exactly even each other out (in which the proportion of “dark matter” and “dark energy” coincide) so that life as we know it (and the visibility of the galactic distribution) is possible. (Unzicker 2010, 47)

With such a renewed perspective, sciences (and technologies) do no longer need to be the cause for what Freud called “mortifications of humanity [Kränkungen der Menschheit]” and Max Weber “disenchantment of the world” - sentiments that also lead to romanticism.

Instead, by abandoning the seductive aspirations of unity, simpleness and completeness in Modern Science, the manifold problems of a complex and not determined chaosmos become a cause for wonder and enchantment the *more* one follows scientific reasonings: the more one examines and questions, the more wonder about the complexity and ambiguity of things arises. It is no cause for sorrow that the planet Earth is *only* one planet among so many, that the human is *only* one among so many (animal) life forms and that what is called “I” is *only* a superficial and small part of the psychic (as well as microbial, see below) life of myself. It is much rather a cause for endless wonder and marvel how these specific entities co-exist and co-evolve in myriads of interdependent ways with can be observed, smelled, sensed, heard, calculated, etc. around us. An explanation can be found *in* what we sensually perceive – it can never be completed to a universal law in the strong sense for we are part of the ongoing process that – among billion other ways – expresses itself in such an explanation. Science is no longer reduced to contend itself with determining a dull and alienating regularity behind the manifold appearances, but is now actively bringing about, *producing* meaningfulness and distinctions that are capable of rendering a complex world (and our belonging to it) intelligible (Stengers and Prigogine 1986, 295 ff.). As we shall see, by finally being able to place human reasoning and theory-making *in* the scientifically explainable world, we can overcome the anthropocentrism made necessary by our alienation from the becoming universe and will be able to develop a renewed epistemology and concept of reasoning in its wake.

h) Truth is relational, not relative (Stengers & Prigogine IV)

To touch upon a reviewed concept of Reasonings that can be drawn from such a contemporary theory of science (which to my knowledge, has never explicitly been done), we will first follow Stengers’/ Prigogine’s reading of the consequences of the theory of relativity and will then shift towards Barad’s concept of “intra-action” developed from Nils Bohr’s quantum theory. After achieving this, we will – after a dialogue with our microbes and excursion to Ludwik Fleck’s theory of thought-collectives – problematise Barad’s over-affirmation and preacher-like tendencies. We will then slow down to develop on comprehending what reasoning might mean in a much more than human world without having to install a new Monorationalism.

According to the theory of relativity, time and space lose their role as absolute constants on a Euclidean grid. In the wake of Einstein, the strict dichotomisation of time and space so central to Newtonian physics is shown to *not* be a universally applicable constant (that would permit universal laws), but relative to the observer’s situation: in the “middle range” of human visibility it is a good enough abstraction to regard them as constants, however – when zoomed out into macroscopic realms of cosmology – time and space become an interdependent continuum that make any

universal statements of regularity and synchronicity impossible. They cannot be regarded as absolutes, but only as relative to a situation and the observer it it (Ibid. 226).

While this insight makes any aspirations for universally objective & deterministic *natural laws* obsolete, this does not require a withdrawal from any notion of truth or objectivity in general. As Stengers and Prigogine insist, the theory of relativity – if thought through and *beyond* Einstein’s rejection of the consequences of quantum physics – does not lead to a merely subjectivist and relativist theory. Such a position would only reproduce the anthropocentrism of classical science’s objectivism in the negative, stating that only what “I” (a human, all-too-human concept and – as we know from Descartes – a concept that inaugurates modern dualist Reason) see is true. Much rather, it shows that human’s scientific reasoning “remains subject to intrinsic constraints that identify us as part of the physical world we are describing. It is a physics that presupposes an observer situated within the observed world. Our dialogue with nature will be successful only if it is carried on from within nature¹⁶⁴.” (Prigogine and Stengers 1984, 219)

Following this insight – and departing from Einstein, who stuck with the idea of the extra-human possibility of a Laplac’ian demon, thereby sanctioning subjectivist relativism – it might be more sensical to speak of a theory of relationality, and not of relativity. As Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 129) put it in their critique of subjectivist interpretations of thermodynamics, relativity, and quantum physics: they do not entail a “relativity of truth but, on the contrary, a truth of the relative”. Truth has to therefore be understood as a *relational event* in which the theoretician posing a certain truth is an integral part of the truth-producing relation. Through this logic, a deterministic law independent of the reasoning & living being is impossible, but the truth and relational objectivity of a reasonable assessment of the regularities and structures it perceives are an integral, vital and irreducible part of the situation itself.

This insight entails a radical up-valuation [Aufwertung] of the role of the specific situation. “So long as I keep before me the ideal of an absolute observer, of knowledge in the absence of any viewpoint, I can only see my situation as being a source of error. But once I have acknowledged that through it I am geared to all actions and all knowledge that are meaningful to me, and that it is gradually filled with everything that may be for me, then my contact with the social in the finitude of my situation is revealed to me as the starting point of all truth, including that of science and, since we have some idea of the truth, since we are inside truth and cannot get outside it, all that I can do is define a truth within the situation.” This quote taken from Merleau-Ponty’s *Le Philosophie et la sociologie* (requoted from Prigogine and Stengers 1984, 299) allows us to draw together the insights from the last two chapters with this one. For Merleau-Ponty departs from a perspective of an (phenomenological) examination of corporeality and how concepts and truths arise from such a situated corporeality. And, as learned from chapter 7, the appreciation of the

¹⁶⁴ As already discussed, this insight makes the concept of “nature” obsolete for many contemporary theorists such as Latour and Morton – that partly build on Stengers and Prigogine’s work.

specific situation in order to acquire wisdom and relational truth is a central agenda of classical Chinese philosophy as brought to us by Francois Jullien. As Stengers and Prigogine put it, what we are witnessing today in our new images of reasoning is that “we are heading toward a new synthesis, a new naturalism. Perhaps we will eventually be able to combine the Western tradition, with its emphasis on experimentation and quantitative formulations, with a tradition such as the Chinese one, with its view of a spontaneous, self-organizing world.” (Ibid. 22) Not only in the so far frequently disqualified as “romantic” field of exotic philosophies and corporeal investigations do new images of Reasoning *in the world* emerge, but also – and with stunning parallels – in what used to be considered the central occupation of modern Reason as Science can we find such *poetic* form of relating “in which the activity of questioning nature is part of its intrinsic activity” (Ibid. 301). As I will argue in the next chapter, those three very different fields of reasonings can be summarized in *one* family of reasoning I propose to call “ecological reasoning(s)” - and the corporeal and Chinese wisdoms we have visited in the last chapters can be understood as a method / angle to attain similar results as those of contemporary scientific practices. They might represent different sides of the same – multidimensional – coin.

i) Quantum-Reasoning? - Barad’s concept of Intra-Action

This activity of reasoning and acting as a part of what used to be (and sometimes still is) called “Nature” can be further elaborated with Karen Barad’s concept of “intra-action”. Combining both Niels Bohr’s quantum theory and so called “post-humanist” theory such as those of Foucault and Butler, she seeks “to escape the grasp of these anthropocentric forces” (Barad 2007, 134) and develop a theory of agency in a much-more-than-human world. We will use her theory and question the role of Reasoning in such a more-than-human world, creating a dialogue with a Margulian take on microbes and Ludwik Fleck’s philosophy of science around “thought collectives”. By doing this, I hope to be able to show some limitations to Barad’s philosophy and develop a refined concept of ecological Reasonings (that – in my opinion – have to remain plural). In a first step, I will try to explain the central points of Barad’s concept without too much letting myself become adrift by her almost preacher-like jargon, which I shall problematise after the short detour of understanding her theory as part of what Fleck calls a “thought-collective”.

In her much-quoted opus magnum *Meeting the Universe Half-Way* from 2007, Karen Barad discusses the “implications of Bohr’s philosophy-physics” (24) and tries to rework central philosophical concepts accordingly – since it would go beyond the scope of this chapter, I will avoid an in-depth discussion of quantum-theory and will focus on the philosophical consequences in order to extend them to a concept that Barad hasn’t touched upon: reasonability.

As Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle famously demonstrated, the impulse / momentum and the location of a particle cannot be known at the same time/space, but the knowledge of one

proportionally diminishes the other. On quantum levels, no observation from a neutral and exterior perspective is possible, but observation always influences the observed, therefore making this dichotomy between observer and observed problematic (not obsolete – this would lead straight to relativism). The Cartesian cut which takes this distinction between the observer (what was called *res cogitans*, the soul, the “I”, the mind, etc.) and the observed (what was called “brute” matter, *res extensa* or material) for granted, is being nuanced by what Barad calls an “agential cut” (Barad 2007, 140), which shifts attention from things to phenomena. In a universe in which everything is regarded to be *mattering*, there is no preestablished dichotomy securing an “objective” position for the observer. Much rather, this position is created in an intra-action in which certain phenomena are assigned and assembled according to a situation-specific cut that makes two (overlapping and in principle interchangeable) realms of what is observable and what is observing appear.

Under such perspective of “agential realism” (as is the ISM-name Barad introduces) it is no longer “things-in-themselves” or “things-behind-phenomena” (Ibid) which constitute reality, but “phenomena constitute the ontologically smallest unit” (Ibid. 429) that “are constitutive of reality” (140). In other words, the universe is no longer a mechanism composed of atom/things that obey determinate laws we can examine from an exterior, but full of phenomena that in “intra-action” produce events we can only then call “I”, “irrelevant and relevant phenomena”, “things”, “ideas”, “truths”, “objects”, “opinions”, “laws”, etc. This is what can truly be called a “radical challenge not only to Newtonian physics but also to Cartesian epistemology” (97), since everything we used to call “objects” (including – in this context – concepts, ideas, things, smells, etc.) loses the centrality it used to have in modern epistemology and is transformed into the intermediate result of a never-ending process called “Intra-action”. Activity and Intelligibility is not something outside a passive universe of material, but an event intrinsically emerging from within what we call matter that in specific situations creates active *and* passive as much as intelligent *and* intelligible phenomena. Our very ideas, reasonings or actions no longer have any position outside this universe of mattering, but in themselves are a part of this ongoing mattering that differentiates itself through phenomena we think with.

j) Who is the “I” ? - overcoming anthropocentrism with Lynn Margulis’ “microbial turn”

Before we further explain the consequences of such an “agential realist” philosophy by rethinking our ideas of what constitutes scientific practices and then extrapolate what reasoning could mean according to it, I will allow myself a detour into recent results from (micro)biology that somewhat confirm the same insights from a different angle of scientifically making sense of the living universe: that of the “microbial turn” and the upvaluation of symbiosis in biology as inspired by

Lynn Margulis (1938-2011) and others¹⁶⁵. These results are a source for inspiration (as introduced most famously by Donna Haraway (2016, 43 ff.)) for fields of discourses that are, closely associated to that of Barad, most commonly called “New Materialism”.

“The human” has in modern biological thinking regarded *himself* as the crown of creation or – in the secularized form – evolution. Evolution was understood as a progress from “lower” (e.g. less complex) life forms to higher ones. On top of such a ladder that divided the “tree of life” into three main, hierarchically ordered categories of fungi, plants and animals (a division dating back to at least Aristotle), “the human” saw *himself* as the most complex and therefore most highly developed individual, thus translating anthropocentrism (originating from medieval theology) into the realm of *life sciences* (Hejnol 2017).

Such an understanding of life was based on a prism that regarded living beings as individuals. Such a perspective has become hardly tenable by the so called “microbial turn” of recent years, which argues that we have by far over-stressed the role of individuals in evolution and have completely down-played the essential role of symbiosis, co-evolution and collaboration (McFall-Ngai 2017). The logic of individuals – somewhat analogues to that of the logic of visually construed objects in classical science – does make sense on the medium range of human (visual) perception, however, it completely overlooks the role of microscopic beings without which not only life as we know it would be impossible, but which completely and radically questions the “tree of life” trinity of three main categories of life. Not only benefiting from, but remaining actually unthinkable without the huge improvement of electron microscopes and DNA sequencing since the 60ies (Ibid. 52–54), biological theory now understands what has previously been called *individuals of one species as complex assemblages of various (largely microbial) species*.

Not only can “the human” regard himself no longer as the most complex being on the tree of life, the entire concept of the tripled division of life (fungi, plants, animals) is made complex: “In 1990, [Carl] Woese, along with his colleagues, drew on the most recent DNA-based research to craft a new phylogenetic tree that radically decentered plants, animals, and fungi. The new diagram depicted three domains of life — the Archaea, the Bacteria, and the Eukarya — and moved the

¹⁶⁵ It is of course virtually impossible to condense the vast field of investigations and new insights in microbiology – that have been performed by huge research clusters comprised of humans and their favourable internal and external microbial ecosystems – to one name. However, for the sake of following the conventions of writing histories of sciences (as we have reproduced it by calling classical science “Newtonian” and quantum physics “Bohr’ian” – both of which were of course also only made possible by uncountable critters), the name of Lynn Margulis seem to me to be the fairest, for – as Margaret McFall-Ngai (2017, M60) argues – she was “the scholar who first drew attention to symbiosis as a major developmental and evolutionary force. Margulis, far ahead of her time, crafted entirely new biological paradigms and founded the entire field of symbiosis. Unfortunately, too many recent works barely refer to her and her pioneering accomplishments. I prominently cite her here, because I do not want the accomplishments of women scientists to continue to be dismissed and forgotten. Although Margulis made symbiosis into a field of study, she did not invent symbiosis as such. By the late nineteenth century, biologists were already aware of a handful of symbiotic relationships, such as those that made up lichens and algae that lived inside sea anemones. But before Margulis’s work, symbiosis was seen as a rare exception in a world dominated by unmitigated competition. Margulis showed, instead, that symbiosis was the ‘norm’—and a core form of relationality. Importantly, she was able to do so by focusing on microbes.”

long-standing groups of plants, animals, and fungi in one tiny corner of the tree of life. The reordering reflected what new technologies highlighted: that the earth's biological diversity is far more microbial than ever imagined." (Mcfall-Ngai 2017, 54)

And even the entire notion of a tree is problematised with the realization that most microbes do not engage in vertical, but horizontal gene-transfer. "Recent research appears to demonstrate that the paradigmatic Modern Synthesis, the focus on the vertical transmission of genetic traits that emerged from the integration of Darwinian selection and Mendelian genetics, applies only to a very small portion of the biological world. Most of the world's living things—particularly its microbes—are busy engaging in horizontal gene transfer, the lateral movement of genetic traits, even among very distantly related organisms from different domains." (Ibid)

If we take this as a starting point, we are led to question and indeed challenge the notion that individuals are inherently engaged in this competitive web that is the "survival of the fittest". Rather, we are then brought to understand everything we call individuals as "bodies-as-ecosystems" (M65) that co-evolve in complex, manifold and often symbiotic relations.

"Microbes don't just 'rule' the world: they make every life-form possible, and they have been doing so since the beginning of evolutionary time. [...] It turns out that most animals and plants have co-evolved in and with microbial-rich environments and have relied on the microbial world for their own evolution and health." (Ibid. 59)

This insight has seeped through popular discourses in recent years with the (for some) shocking insight that what is called "the human" is of more than 50% comprised of "non-human" cells. "Only about half the cells in our bodies contain a 'human genome'. The other cells include about 160 different bacterial genomes. We have about 160 major species of bacteria in our bodies, and they all form complex ecosystems. Human bodies are and contain a plurality of ecosystems. Our mouths are different ecosystems than our intestines, or our skin, or our airways." (Gilbert 2017, M 75)

What has been called the "I" in modern reasoning can be problematised through these means, for it consists of various smaller ecosystems that are made of a relatively stable collaboration of various critters. The late 19th century intuition by Arthur Rimbaud that "moi, c'est un autre" can thus somehow be specified with microbiotic insights to "moi, c'est des autres".

In fact, it is quite interesting to note that the deconstruction of what Modernity took as a necessary unity for its Reason has become deconstructed and problematised as a general tendency in various fields of 20th century reasonings – be they in literature (Rimbaud, Proust, etc.), philosophy (Nietzsche), linguistic and semiotic investigations (the growing insight that my "I" is a product of various discourse practices "I" have been drilled to use – such as Derrida and Wittgenstein), or – as we have already seen – biology or physics.

Following the insights of Margulian microbiology, we can translate and extend Barad's concept of the "agential cut" into the microbial realm: the situation which makes an "I" that is able to reason about something emerge does not follow a pre-disposed dualistic order (such as in the Cartesian cut between matter and mind) but is actively produced by the phenomena in intra-action. It is not only the human subject (that considers – at least to a degree – herself as an "I") that emerges in intra-action with various apparatuses, objects of study and reasonable insights, etc. – the microbes that make the "I" see itself as an "I" equally play a huge role for the reason-ability to emerge. Recent research confirms old Nietzschean and Feuerbach'ian claims that the intestinal bacteria have a huge influence on our thinking capacities, as well as moods and motivation (Mcfall-Ngai 2017, 64). We will only be able to consider ourselves in a position to conduct our reasoning capacity well if we are well in-tune with our internal ecosystems. The situational awareness required for ecological reasoning does not just begin "outside" of the "I", but equally requires an awareness of the situated tendency of the multiple critters that form the "I" on what has traditionally been considered its interiority. The "I" – that produces itself as a result of such a particular "agential cut" – has to much rather see itself as a relatively balanced "parliament" (to commit to anthropomorphism for a second) or assemblage of various critters that have to be "convinced" to be open and ready for certain reasoning-dispositions by a good corporeal balance of movement, passivity, nutrition, etc. We can begin to see that the corporeal awarenesses we have investigated in the last chapter are not secondary or subordinated to the scientific results we have encountered in this chapter: much rather – they form different approaches that are mutually dependent on each other to produce a certain reasoning: only a specific corporal, microbial assemblage will be able to attain a certain reasoning, while another might be more prone to another scientific result. The "temperament" we have discussed in the last Excursion (6) does become a central point of reference from evaluating and understanding situated, ecological reasoning. And: there are always various modes and possibilities of temperamental equilibrium of humans and non-humans, thus requiring an epistemological pluralism entailing Multirationalism.

Reasoning is always an event that involves various critters, beings, entities, phenomena, etc. - it is the intra-active event of what is sometimes popularly called a "queer" universe of constant becoming and mattering. Before we return to Barad's philosophy that will help us to – at the same time – develop *and* problematise (remembering the insight from chapter 4 that problematising is always reasoning and reasoning wouldn't be possible without problems) a concept of ecological reasoning inherent in contemporary scientific practices – we will take a step back and turn to a very early concept of scientific reasoning as a collective result (as opposed to the older idea of secluded "genius" individuals discovering deeper truths about the world): that of Ludwik Fleck's (1896-

1961) “thought-collectives”. This will set the foundations for a more productive dialogue with Barad’s philosophy by extending Fleck’s social epistemology to the more-than-human realm.

k) The ecology of facts – thought collectives and styles of thought (Fleck)

To say that Ludwik Fleck didn’t have an easy life and career would still understate the conditions that marked his life. Being of Polish-Jewish ancestry, he had to deal with antisemitic and racist discrimination throughout his still rather successful career as a microbiologist, immunologist and bacteriologist specialized in typhus, syphilis and similar infectious diseases. During the Nazi occupation of his hometown L’viv / Lemberg he survived first the city’s Jewish ghetto and – after having been deported with his family – both the concentration camps of Auschwitz in 1943 and Buchenwald from 1943 to 1945. In the latter he was forced to perform serological test on inmates to develop a typhus vaccine – which he did, despite the horrible conditions, and further managed to only use the effective vaccine on fellow inmates while distributing a fake vaccine for the SS soldiers that demanded it. After the liberation, Fleck managed to continue his career, becoming head of the Institutes of Microbiology of first Lublin and then Warsaw, before migrating to Israel where he – after receiving various prizes – died in 1962.

Despite these credentials, the work he put the most value in – and is posthumously the most recognized – wasn’t successful at all during his lifetime. In fact, the reception history of his central book *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache – Einführung in die Lehre vom Denkstil und Denkkollektiv* from 1935 is almost as informative as its ideas that only much after his death become recognized for their importance in philosophy of science. The book – now regarded as one of the first and most important works of social and historical epistemology – was anything but a success during his lifetime. In fact, twenty years after its first publication, no more than 500 copies were sold and his publisher refused a republication because there were still way too many unsold copies left (Graf and Mutter 2000, 283).

At first publication, the most prominent publishing houses for scientific publications at the time, such as *Springer Verlag*, refused the work because they perceived his oeuvre to lack the necessary “Strenge der Form” and “Stringenz der Argumentation” (Engler and Renn 2018, 111) As we shall see, Fleck’s entire work is about showing how argumentative stringency is not a value in itself but dependent on the scientific ecology it is situated in. A work that breaks with the predominant ideas and styles of thought at the time could not be perceived as one of rigorous form. The standards for scientific publication thus *automatically* expelled anything that would deter it to greatly. The reasons for Fleck’s rejection are exactly the ones he is trying to challenge as wrong idea(l)s within scientific knowledge production. We could in our terminology say: Ludwik Fleck’s success was defeated by the resilience of Reason (chapter 6) that ensures that anything too much outside of the

box of Monorationalism is disqualified as trite, chaotic or simply unconvincing within preset assumptions. The policy of “scientific standards” in Journals could only reproduce what was within their realm of paradigmatic judgments of its time (a dynamic which remains until this day and which is – as Fleck would argue – intrinsic to scientific knowledge-production).

Having hitherto already entered the philosophical implications of his oeuvre, we can more generally say that Fleck is interested in how certain scientific paradigms and – more precisely – facts [Tatsachen] come into existence. A fact in classical reasoning is considered to be “something definite, permanent, and independent of any subjective interpretation by the scientist” (Fleck 1981, xxvii). According to this image of thought, a scientist would be the one who *discovers* eternal truths by his active use of Reason – this confirms the mechanist world view of a universe of dead matter in which only human (and godly) spirituality [Geist] is an active entity.

Yet, this concept of a fact, being a central vehicle of modern epistemology and science, commits, according to Fleck, the mistake of regarding exclusively “well-established [uralte] facts of everyday life, or those of classical physics, as the only ones that are reliable and worthy of investigation.” (Ibid.) By sticking to the physicist realm of Reasoning that dates back to Ancient Greek philosophies and beyond, “such an investigation is inherently naive, with the result that only superficial data are obtained.” (Ibid.) To translate this to what we have already established with Whitehead’s work earlier in this chapter: by sticking to – and being awed by – the “narrow efficiency” of “scientific materialism”, the concept of facts as “definite, permanent, and independent of any subjective interpretation” was established.

Through an examination of the emergence and establishing of younger phenomena from less traditional fields we today call “facts” (Fleck advises fields such as medicine and microbiology and demonstrates this with a careful reproduction of how the modern concept of syphilis was developed), he argues that facts are actually a collective endeavor which is only made possible by a scientist’s being situated in a specific social environment he calls “thought collective”. Such thought collectives always follow a specific style of thought which cannot be reduced to mere logical stringency and by “regarding logical conclusions with a kind of pious reverence” (ibid. 53) – as he reproaches the, contemporaneous, dominant *Wiener Kreis* around Schlick and Carnap to do.

Much rather, a student or novice to the field has to follow what he calls a “rite of initiation” (Ibid. 54) into the specific style of thought that is conventional at the time and has – over years of initiation (what Wittgenstein would call “drill”) – to develop a rather intuitive feeling for what – within this society – is considered to be a relevant and irrelevant phenomenon. Only from within this initiation the “normal” scientific business can be performed. So, while Barad teaches us how – in intra-action – phenomena come into existence as distinct objects of observation as much as “observing objects”, Fleck reminds us that there is a social factor behind what is considered to be (re)produced as relevant phenomena.

I) A scientific experiment according to agential-realist understanding (Barad II)

We will later return to Fleck to problematise Barad's rather preacher-like jargon. However, we will now try to bring Barad and Fleck into a dialogue in order to understand how scientific practices produce knowledge in *and with* a more-than-human-world.

As we have learned from Ludwik Fleck, anything that will be considered as a scientific fact is the complex result of initiation and confirmation within social and – more precisely – scientific communities. It is only certain genders, following certain corporeal norms that are permitted to take part in the scientific business of establishing facts. While, though, it is not explicitly excluded from possible influences, Fleck writes nothing about non-human elements that are essential actants (to use Barad's word) in establishing scientific facts.

We can bring into reflection what is missing in Fleck's writing with Barad's notion of the apparatus. She further radicalizes these insights of knowledge-production as a collective event by proposing a non-anthropocentric model of scientific knowledge-production in which "the human" is part of the produced results of a intra-action. The phenomena considered by any scientific practice are, according to her, "not the mere result of laboratory exercises engineered by human subjects; rather, phenomena are differential patterns of mattering ('diffraction patterns') produced through complex agential intra-actions of multiple material-discursive practices or apparatuses of bodily production, where apparatuses are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices – specific material (re)configurings of the world-which come to matter. These intra-actions need not involve humans. Indeed, it is through such practices that the differential boundaries between humans and non-humans, culture and nature, science and the social, are constituted." (Barad 2007, 140)

Under such an angle, a scientific experiment – as much as any other (human or non-human) attempt to make sense – is not an undertaking in which the scientist actively tries to *discover* phenomena and truths. Much rather, the scientist is herself part of the assemblage of phenomena that intra-act in a specific way to produce what the scientist (who herself is only constituted as a distinct entity in and through the intra-action) might then call "truth" (which is usually the success- and frequently artful reproduction of a specific desired phenomena under replicable conditions). To put this into an example: Under this angle, the Higgs-Bosom, if it ever will be "found" ("produced" is in fact the more accurate term), will not be a discovery that can complete any predetermined (in the sense that it is a law that awaits us behind physical appearances) cosmological theory, but the replicable result of a carefully designed intra-active assemblage (comprised of phenomena like CERN's Large Hadron Collider, computers, various devices, lenses, photons, humans that call each other scientists, funding-agents, cleaning personnel, bureaucrats, communicators, their intestinal microbes that

allow them to be concentrated and happy enough to focus on such levels of abstraction for a long enough time, etc. etc. etc.) that makes a phenomenon perceivable which is similar enough to the properties that suits what is missing in the current “standard model” of physics.

A scientific result, or any reasoning for that matter, is thereby an event that involves not only the social environment as sketched by Ludwik Fleck to produce facts, but also the entire so-called “non-human” environment of the situation. These non-human elements – as we have learned from Margulis microbial turn – are not only outside the “I” that emerges in intra-action with other phenomena, but also constitute the scientific “I” – or “we” for that matter – internally. An entire corporeal culture (comprised of so-called “human” and “non-human” elements) is in fact the necessary environment for any scientific experiment.

m) Intra-active Reasoning

This agential-realist shift of perspective does not only make the concept of “agency” an almost-universal constant in a permanently becoming universe that is everything but exclusive to humans, but also concepts such as “intelligibility”, “meaning”, “cognition” and – as I will argue – “reasonability” follow a similar development.

We have already established above that a *relational interpretation* of the insights of contemporary scientific models regard truth as the *product* of a relation (as opposed to the discovery of some substance) between entities. In Fleck’s terms: ““Truth is not ‘relative’ and certainly not ‘subjective’ in the popular sense of the word. It is always, or almost always, completely determined within a thought style. One can never say that the same thought is true for A and false for B. If A and B belong to the same thought collective, the thought will be either true or false for both. But if they belong to different thought collectives, it will just not be the same thought! It must either be unclear to, or be understood differently by, one of them. Truth is not a convention, but rather (1) in historical perspective, an event in the history of thought, (2) in its contemporary context, stylized thought constraint.” (Fleck, 1981, 100)

While we can, however, understand the relationality of any thought and truth with Fleck, what Barad’s shift underlines and further stretches is that “relata do not preexist relation” (Ibid. 334), meaning that the relation produces not only the truths and thoughts, but also the entities / phenomena / things the truths and thoughts are be about. They *organically* grow out of an intra-active event as much as any other part of the process.

I will now quote a long citation from Barad that explains – in her very own jargon – the consequences of such a shift for the concepts of “meaning”, “intelligibility” and “knowing”:

“Meaning is not a property of individual words or groups of words but an ongoing performance of the world in its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility. In its causal intra-activity, part of the world becomes determinately bounded and propertied in its emergent intelligibility to another part of the world, while lively

matterings, possibilities, and impossibilities are reconfigured. Discursive practices are boundary-making practices that have no finality in the ongoing dynamics of agential intra-activity.

In traditional humanist accounts, intelligibility requires an intellective agent (that to which something is intelligible), and intellection is framed as a specifically human capacity. But in my agential realist account, intelligibility is an ontological performance of the world in its ongoing articulation. It is not a human-dependent characteristic but a feature of the world in its differential becoming. The world articulates itself differently.

Furthermore, knowing does not require intellection in the humanist sense, either. Rather, knowing is a matter of differential responsiveness (as performatively articulated and accountable) to what matters. As such, agential realism goes beyond both humanist and antihumanist accounts of the knowing subject as well as recent insights concerning the knower as a prosthetically enhanced human. Knowing is not about seeing from above or outside or even seeing from a prosthetically enhanced human body. Knowing is a matter of intra-acting. Knowing entails specific practices through which the world is differentially articulated and accounted for. In some instances, ‘nonhumans’ (even beings without brains) emerge as partaking in the world's active engagement in practices of knowing. Knowing entails differential responsiveness and accountability as part of a network of performances. Knowing is not a bounded or closed practice but an ongoing performance of the world.” (149)

While Fleck does not talk much about extra-human factors of any cognitive act, Barad definitely leaves the human, all-too-human scope and widens the process of any fact-finding, cognition and knowing to centrally involve non-human elements. Before I shall problematise some implications of Barad’s jargon, I will develop a concept of Reasoning that would be in line with her agential-realist philosophy.

It is interesting that the word “reasoning” or “reason” is hardly ever mentioned in Barad’s entire work, thus reproducing the already mentioned tendency of contemporary ecological or “ecosophical” discourses to just avoid the concept, if not flat out reject it. However, if we deduce from what has been said so far, we can easily develop a concept of Reasoning in such “agential-realist” terms. It would only be consequential to say that – as much as we can no longer regard “agency”, “meaning”, “intelligence” and the ability to “know” as properties singular to *anthropos* – the same would result from “reasoning” or “reasonability”.

Much rather, reasonability should equally be re-conceived as an event that arises in the “intra-action” between various earthly phenomena, be they winds, stones, trees, ideas, smells, meanings, jellyfish, institutions or humanoids.

If “I” (already an assemblage of various phenomena) have an idea about the relation of a stone with its environment that I call “gravity”, it was not the introspective retreat into my unworldly reasonability that gave me this idea, nor only the “initiation” into a scientific community of reasonable men, as Fleck sketches.

Much rather, it was the “intra-action” of the stone with the floor, the molecules comprising the air, the size of the orb we are inhabiting, the hormones and microbes in my stomach that produced a certain receptiveness in my brain, the social state “I” have permitting me a certain authority to speak and a certain education to express an idea accordingly to a historically grown “scientific corpus” and many other such factors that together made a particular reasonability emerge resulting in the expression of the concept of “gravity”. Reasonability can only exist as a worldly connection and intra-action between its mattering critters and it cannot be reduced to be a property that is apart or outside of the universe it reasons about.

Some might say this might be too trivial to explicitly state it. This concept of “ecological reasoning” is inherent in Barad’s philosophy: any concept of reasonability would have to leave the human, all-too-human realm and be understood as a mutually causing event: reasonability arises at certain fortunate material dispositions that do not necessarily involve (and necessarily not only) humans. It would be a consequential question to ask what the standards for extra-human reasonability might be, but this shall not concern us at the moment. Much rather, I think it is (as argued before) important to extrapolate the implicit concept of reasoning in Barad’s philosophy and develop an explicit concept. Otherwise one either reproduces the very modern forms of irrationalism or simply leaves the question of what reasonability might be to other, likely more conservative (or anthropocentric) fields of discourse.

n) Towards a Critique of Ecological Reason(ings) or: Baradian romanticism

Only by making the concept of “Ecological Reasoning” which – as I would argue, lies implicitly in Barad’s work – explicit, we can begin to problematise (and thus criticise) certain traits of such a new paradigm of Reasoning that is quite symptomatic for contemporary discursive fields. After the long work of affirming ecological reasonings in this PhD, we have now entered a stage in which these new and frail forms of reasoning have become explicit enough to be problematised. As stated before (Presentiment II), a *Critique of Ecological Reason(ing)* does only become sensical after affirming it a status *aside* classical modern Reason. The problem we now have to tackle is that it

does *not* replace classical Reason as *the* new Reason but remains regarded under a multirationalist angle of various Reasonings in a chaotic and non-unitarian world.

“Time is not a succession of evenly spaced individual moments. It is not simply there, a substance or measure, a background uniformly available to all beings as a reference or an ontological primitive against which change and stasis can be measured. In my agential realist account, what is at issue is not merely that time and space are not absolute but relative (following Einstein); rather, it is that intra-actions themselves matter to the making/marking of space and time. In other words, spatiality and temporality must also be accounted for in terms of the dynamics of intra-activity.” (180)

Sentences like these are abundant in Barad’s oeuvre and many affirmations of new ecological “images of thought” around contemporary discursive fields such as New Materialism etc. These arguments tend to be made in the following structure: “X is not (to be understood as) Y but (as) Z” - Y being the classical occidental interpretation (which might in-itself be an over-simplified projection) and Z a new concept of manifold, post-anthropocentric entanglements.

This thesis up until here is in itself full of such statements, arguing that Reason should not be regarded as a non-material, exterior unity exceptional to anthropoi, but has much rather to be understood as an entangled *process* of Reasoning that emerges in manifold ways within mattering. Also, in essence, what the quote above explains about a renewed concept of time is largely in accordance with what Stengers’ and Prigogine’s work exemplified earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, I have the feeling that statements such as Barad’s risk to fall behind the important pragmatic insights of Whitehead and postulate a new “true” (in the absolute sense) theory that is not able to examine itself as located in a specific discursive ecology and thus – unwillingly – reduces the epistemological pluralism, so vital to an ecological understanding of the world, to a new monorationalism. Of course, Barad would be the first to agree that truth is not a single, transcendent substance, but a phenomena-specific event that arises from intra-actions and is irreducibly manifold. However, the style of argumentation risks to sound (and especially be interpreted) as the new “true” understanding of the physical world. In this criticism I have picked Barad because I have the feeling she is either used or misunderstood in that manner quite a lot – especially in the art and performance scene. However, I want to state that a) I deeply respect Barad’s very lucid work and b) there are many authors which somewhat fall into the same pitfall and Barad is just a rather subjective pick of mine to question and criticize a tendency I see in many contemporary ecological reasonings.

Let’s remember Whitehead’s pragmatic analysis that modern classical Reason is not wrong in itself, but merely a fruitful reduction that made certain things understandable and others not – to repeat his words, that it was a “happy choice” “in that it has allowed the simplest things to be considered first” (see above).

As it seems from the results of this PhD so far, at a certain situation in history with all its ecological, social and cultural specificities, occidental Reason was made to be so predominant that it could claim unity. With Ludwik Fleck’s sociological epistemology we can understand the development of

such a hegemonic state of discourse I have called Monorationalism. In examining the development of thought collectives, he argues that a plurality of opinions within a field is becoming smaller “[t]he more developed and detailed a branch of knowledge becomes” (Fleck 1981, 83) If the validity of a thought-style is widely accepted within the community (which – as we have seen in chapter 3 and 5 requires a lot of violence and social and cultural structures of repression and exclusion) we can witness the following scenario: “Whole eras will then be ruled by this thought constraint. Heretics who do not share this collective mood and are rated as criminals by the collective will be burned at the stake until a different mood creates a different thought style and different valuation.” (Fleck 1981, 99¹⁶⁶)

I would argue that such a dynamic has happened during the time of modern Monorationalism – one concept of Reason was so widely accepted (among those who were considered as “men of Reason”) and violently monopolized (against those who followed other reasonabilites), that it seemed like the only Reason there is.

Luckily, as extrapolated from Barad, Nietzsche and many other over the course of this PhD, this time where the force of Monorationalism was too strong to be countered (in that the “means of discipline” [Zuchtmittel] were still considered necessary for human civilisation’s survival, to remember Nietzsche’s analysis from chapter 2c) seems to be coming to an end. As I hope to have shown in this PhD so far, we can – and should! - affirm various other reasons in contemporary and minoritarian discourses in- and outside the occidental canon. However, while these new reasons are much needed, we should not overshoot the mark in claiming the absolute or radical novelty of the concepts that lead us to such a tentative multirationalism, thereby presenting them as some new kind of Reason (with a capital R).

Ludwik Fleck reminds us that thought styles and collectives *are* able to renew their paradigms, but only in a slow and subtle way of changing emphasis and conceptual implications. He argues that there are hardly ever any really radically new concepts, but heritages from older thought-styles always form the most recent one: “[E]very thought style contains vestiges of the historical, evolutionary development of various elements from another style. Probably only very few completely new concepts are formed without any relation whatsoever to earlier thought styles. It is usually only their coloring that changes.” (Fleck 1981, 100)

We can see these vestiges clearly in Barad’ian and other contemporary philosophies. As above stated, they almost always need a Y (being the classical occidental interpretation) in order to present their Z (being the new concept of manifold, post-anthropocentric entanglements). They should, though, be careful to not sound like *the* new image of thought, but position themselves as one

¹⁶⁶ Since I am not particularly happy with the English translation of this part, but wasn’t able to find a better translation myself either, I want to quote the original as well which reads: „Ganze Epochen leben dann unter dem bestimmten Denkwange, verbrennen Andersdenkende, die an der kollektiven Stimmung nicht teilnehmen und den Kollektiv-Wert eines Verbrechers haben, solange als nicht andere Stimmung anderen Denkstil und andere Wertung schafft“ (Fleck 2017, 130)

among many, built on a long human and non-human tradition of reasoning and relating with the world. Among those many reasons, also the old (Y) should find its place – it does so anyways, if we believe Fleck’s analysis that any new thought-style contains various vestiges of older ones.

So to not fall prey to the over-emphatic style of argumentation at the danger of a new Monorationalism that would again downplay the complexity of plurality, we should stick to pragmatic insights as well as Fleck’s analysis and ask with them: what are the ecological situational specificities that make philosophies such as Barad’s agential realism appear not only as a “happy choice”, but like a new, monolithic truth in some niches of contemporary discourse that – from certain angles – make it seem like *the* new Ecological Reason? What thought-collectives are forming at the present time that sometimes almost preach a new orthodox truth of ever-becoming, ever-processual universes of multi-species entanglements? Who are these people? Do their dogs and microbes appear as co-authors of their papers? What are their specific entanglements with non-human materialities? What materials do they require in order to think what they think and be accepted? How are they involved in a current neoliberal capitalization of academic knowledge production? What were and are the “rites of initiation” into these particular thought-collectives? Whom do they structurally exclude? (for example, it is worth noting that most of these discourses come from US-American elite universities)

The over-emphatic styles such as Barad’s risk to sound (at least to me) like *preaching* the new truth. I am quite sure that Barad – and almost any other *New Materialist* – would agree with many of the points being made here and I do not wish to unfairly attack. I would even claim that most of my points are not in contradiction as such with an agential-realist philosophy. However, we should stay aware of the tone and mode of presentation we are applying and add more questions to the new answers we are presenting. *Staying with the trouble* to me also means: *staying with the questions*.

The over-abundant structure of “X is not (to be understood as) Y but (as) Z” risks to become a romantic gesture within discourses of sciences. While – as we have seen – romanticism traditionally located itself as exterior to science, Barad might be the expression of a new kind of romanticism within science: the repetitive insistences of “X is not (to be understood as) Y but (as) Z” can take on the form of a prayer *against* the human, all-too-human condition.

I sometimes wonder if anybody could really live a normal, sane and happy (at least the last one should be a criteria) life if staying true to the ontological implications of Barad’s philosophy, in which nothing can ever be taken as a “solid object” or as a simple subject. I cannot help but think of Nietzsche’s concept of certain simplifications (such as truth in the conventional sense of monorationalistic Reason) as a “necessary illusion” that humans need in order to survive (or at least to go about in their everyday businesses). Could we survive under a solely agential-realistically regarded universe? Should we? Do we not sometimes need the oversimplification of simple objects,

of actions being something that “I” do and want, and of ideas as something that “I” have and want to convey onto others?

The overabundant “X is Y not Z” structures seem to me as alert prayers to overcome the human, all-too-human condition. Of praying and preaching to overcome our being constrained to a certain anthropocentrism in some aspects of our lives because we know that this exact life is in danger if we continue to do so. Such prayers would sound like this: “We know, the world is not as simple as our dualist/objectivist logics tell us, but we still, on an everyday basis fall prey to them. Let us therefore remember that dualisms are in fact wrong, objectivism is in fact a result of such too simple logics. Transcendence is an impermissible simplification. I want to repent my sin.”

To not be misunderstood: I am not a modern, dogmatic atheist. I actually think we need to devise many new spiritualities and religions and a lot of my artistic work is devoted to it¹⁶⁷. By calling Barad’s style preacher-like style I do not mean that in a prerogative way. I think it is necessary to speak those prayers – we need to overcome our human, all-too-human restrictions – even if this might seem impossible. We should – most likely – try to achieve the impossible regarding the ecological collapse we are facing. But we should still at least try to know what we are doing and not forget the ecologically catastrophic context that might cause the ardor of such new religiousness to state it as an absolute necessity (I do not accuse Barad or anybody else in specific of doing so but see the tendential danger of their philosophies being read in that vein).

If taken out of context, such prayer-like-mantras would reproduce a self-negation quite common to any monorationalistic image of Reasoning: “my earthly, human, all-too-human shell behaves in such and such ‘unreasonable’ ways, however, as a reasonable being-becoming, I want to absolve myself from those as much as possible.” Such a self-negation would only reproduce a very modern Monorationalism that would only pretend to be more ecological, while still repressing any other forms of more minoritarian reasonings (that might, in the future, even include classical modern Reason).

I think it is necessary to avoid reproducing such all-too-well-known tropes and I see a danger in all-too-naïve affirmations of ecological reasonings. Therefore I think it is necessary to not only affirm ecological reason, but to pluralize reasonings and reasonability: it sometimes *is* more reasonable to follow “traditional” or “classical” images of Reason, and sometimes much more reasonable to follow others. One does not have to be replaced by the other.

“X is not (to be understood as) Y but (as) Z” builds – at least grammatically – on an either/or logic. Let’s not seduce ourselves by grammar and language (chapter 3.A and 6.D) but let’s escape the either/or logic.

¹⁶⁷ To give three examples: my and Jorinde Schulz have tried to understand the Berlinesse techno-club Berghain as a modern post-industrial Temple (Jörg and Schulz 2018), furthermore I am exploring a religiousness in polluting the planet with in my project “Toxic Temple” with Anna Lerchbaumer and am writing post-anthropocentric prayers to a “Post-Coronal” World with Helena Dietrich.

X is Y and Z (and A and B and C for that matter). It arises from and depends on the specific situation and intra-active assemblage which cannot be reduced to one. Reasonability is in itself an event that actualizes in manifold ways. There is no singular new reasonability that would remain universally true, but one that moves and flows and interacts in a messy network among many. In this PhD, at the end of chapter, we have finally gone beyond merely affirming ecological reasoning. Now we are truly beginning to see what we have already hinted at in chapter – critique is needed to stay true to the plurality of reasonings. The next chapter will continue to touch upon such a *Critique of Ecological Reason*.

Excursion 8 : Progress & Utopias

"The people of the Western nations bequeathed to their descendants the iron, the machines, electricity, the invisible strong rays, the calculation of innumerable forces of nature. They had apparatuses of tremendous power. As the new people came into life, they rejoiced at the task that lay before them. They did not care that the path was laid down for them; they and this path could not separate. The machines, apparatuses for which the most glamorous richest teaching institutions had been founded, which had displaced the other sciences and made them banal, unserious and poor, became sucking apparatuses, which from century to century, at last from decade to decade, developed more intensive power.

As the apparatuses and devices stood there, sparkling with fortune, humans were urged to lead them across the lands. The inventions were magical creatures that slipped from their hands and dragged them behind them. People felt it was their will that flew before them." (Döblin 2013, 14¹⁶⁸)

This quotation from the first pages of Alfred Döblins phantasmagorical future visions in *Berge Meere und Giganten* express the sentiment of humanity's relation to technology and applied science in industrial Modernity very well. The unparalleled technological application of modern Science (with a capital S) in more and more fields of reflection and culture submitted "life" to the narrow realms of its driving Monorationalism. Streamlined, it developed such a high degree of magnetic force that it almost sounds like a drug – or a magic spell – to which humanity became prey. It is their *will* externalized which drives them in forms of machinic externalizations and less and less they feel authors or subjects of their lives. Simplified to one, very narrow, brain capacity (/reasoning) – that in itself is more and more taken over by machines – they become will- and soulless colonizers and conquerors of the planet. They submit every other culture to their rationalism, create huge streams of forced migration (Ibid. 29), destroying all hopes in other forms of relating and reasoning (Ibid 18-19). The political leaders became the same as the leaders of this technology-driven capitalism (Ibid. 23) while the people were willingly turned into stupid masses content as long as they had food and brainless jobs to perform. Knowledge about the powerful technologies is turned into elitist secrets, "the theoretical sciences were enveloped in secrecy. The

¹⁶⁸ Original quote: „Die Menschen der westlichen Völker hinterließen ihren Nachkommen das Eisen, die Maschinen, Elektrizität, die unsichtbaren stark wirkenden Strahlen, die Berechnung zahlloser Naturkräfte. Man hatte Apparate von ungeheurer Macht. Wie die neuen Menschen ins Leben traten, jubelten sie über die Aufgabe, die vor ihnen lag. Es war ihnen gleich, dass ihnen der Weg vorgezeichnet war; sie und dieser Weg konnten sich nicht trennen. Die Maschinen, Apparate, für die die glanzvollsten reichsten Lehrstätten gegründet wurden, die die anderen Wissenschaften verdrängt und banal gemacht hatten, unernst und ärmlich, wurden Saugapparate, die von Jahrhundert zu Jahrhundert, zuletzt von Jahrzehnt zu Jahrzehnt intensivere Kraft entfalteten. Wie die Apparate und Einrichtungen da standen, sprühend an Vermögen, wurden die Menschen gedrängt, sie über die Länder zu führen. Die Erfindungen waren Zauberwesen, die ihnen aus den Händen glitten und sie hinter sich herzogen. Die Menschen fühlten, es war ihr Wille, der vor ihnen flog.“

disciplines were divided up so that no one who was not appointed could have an overview.” (Ibid. 29¹⁶⁹)

Society thereby turned into a machine and became dependent on constant conquest, warfare and an other form of externalization of its surplus powers: “no-one was safe from the inventions that fell on people like from ambush. Just as epidemics devastated people and wiped out cities in the past, so now the relentless advance of new inventions.” (Ibid. 79¹⁷⁰) The narrow Monorationalism applied to technology created monsters called scientific inventions that increasingly devastated the planet. “Progress”, in Döblin’s novel, became synonymous with social as well as ecological devastation. *Berge Meere und Giganten* was written in 1924, two decades before the horrors of the Second World War, the atomic bomb, the concentration camps made even more people doubt the course taken by Western society and its blind reverence to narrow rationalism and its technological utopias. Even today, almost a century later, we are still caught in-between the same bipolar state of blind trust and huge distrust in technological progress. Albeit the constantly looming techno-skepticism in modernity – as expressed in Döblin’s 1924 visions –, the idea of technological progress as our savior from contemporary problems still gets re-actualized in the so-called Anthropocene.

Today, most political leaders react to the growing popular concern about the environmental crisis with renewed vows to technological progress. They claim that innovations in geo-engineering, electro-mobility, and other such phantasms like hydrogen fuel and nuclear fusion will save us from this pending crisis. From within this belief, they continue to feed and support the industries that have so far been responsible for the catastrophic state we find ourselves in, preventing more profound change: to give two examples: the growing governmental support of electro-mobility (accompanied with fantastic promises of hydrogen fuel whose feasibility is far from proven) is impeding the more radical change of getting beyond a car-based society that would be much needed, since the car’s destructiveness is much more profound than that emitted by its exhausts (Jörg 2019b; 2020a, 93 ff.). Similarly, the promises of the invention of feasible “transmutation” of nuclear waste into a renewed source of energy can serve as an extenuation of the dangers of nuclear waste and thus a legitimization of the continuation of support for the nuclear industry (Grotelüschen 2018).

Such a newly majoritarian Eco-capitalist utopia of “green” technological progress falls back behind Alf Hornborg’s insights into the ontology of techno-fetishist progress and the idea that we can solve our problems with technological innovation in general (chapter 3.De) – “technological progress” has served throughout European modernity as a tool of legitimizing the Status Quo while invisibilizing the exploitative structures (of other people, genders and so called “Nature”) it is based on.

¹⁶⁹ Original quote: „[m]it einem Geheimis umgab man die theoretischen Wissenschaften. Man zerstückelte die Disziplinen, um keinem, der nicht bestellt war, eine Übersicht zu gestatten.”

¹⁷⁰ Original quote: „[n]iemand war vor Erfindungen sicher, die aus dem Hinterhalt auf die Menschen fielen. Wie früher die Epidemien die Menschen verheerten, Städte ausrotteten, so jetzt das rückweise Anwogen neuer Erfindungen.”

However, this critical attitude towards the modern fixation on technological progress as already expressed in Döblins century-old work should not lead us to flat out reject the notion of “progress” and “utopias” in general. This general rejection was symptomatic to so called “post-modern” discourses and in my opinion shoots over the mark in a vein that is remarkably similar to the general rejection of Reason (Excursion 3).

As Michael Hirsch has taught me (mostly in private conversations), only because the European tradition in the 18th and 19th century has connected progress with some all-encompassing, totalizing idea of a world-history and teleological necessity, this does not mean that they can only be thought in such a universalistic manner. As he argues, any political, societal or cultural transformation needs to set some goals towards which it wants to progress – without the need of making a historical necessity out of it (which could still, for rhetorical purposes, be a suitable strategy under certain circumstances). If we stick (even by rejecting it) to the hegemonic idea of progress as “growth by means of technological progress” we will witness a decline of civilizational and social standards (Hirsch 2019, 22), as well as a further accelerated ecological collapse. As Ivan Illich has put it: “A low-energy policy allows for a wide choice of life-styles and cultures. If, on the other side, a society opts for high energy consumption, its social relations must be dictated by technocracy and will be equally degrading whether labeled capitalist or socialist.” (Illich 2013, 73) If we stick to the high-energy driven ideas of technological progress as always faster, louder, better, the plurality of modes of being, inhabiting and reasoning on this planet will be further declined. Technological progress in its modern, narrow understanding is further accelerating the spread of the so called „Homogenocene“ (see chapter 1g).

To actively counter this blind downward spiral of naive technological progress (“Tesla” seems to become the symbol for this naiveté), we should work on devising other concepts of progress and utopias that break with the monorationalistic norm of occidental Reasoning that will – quite surely – lead us to dystopian ecological collapse. A pluralization of Reasonings entails a pluralization of the utopias and ideas of progress that motivate the critters inhabiting the planet – and is itself a utopia (see Preface and Presentiment III): more than Reason is possible and needed in this messy time of the Anthropocene!

As Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro put it very well, “we believe it is necessary to do the same in relation to Technology and technologies that Latour has done in relation to the fateful amalgam of Science and sciences: rejecting the unidirectional, modernist understanding of Technology that regards it as an onto-anthropological essence whose triumphant deployment blossoms across history.” (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017, 98)

By deploying an “enlarged and pluralized category of technology” (Ibid.) we can undo the unfortunate connection of mechanist, modern-industrial machinery with the only means of bringing

forth technological progress and devise new ideas of technology, progress and utopia. Why, after all, should a deepened psycho-technology of emotional openness and will to share hurtful feelings necessary for a flourishing culture of polyamorous love-life not be considered as technological progress? Why should corporeal techniques of sensing bodily relations to our environments and others not be considered one of the utopian technologies we need to foster? Why should technologies of inclusion for a more open and democratic transnational debate not be a part of our future visions of progress?

Contrary as seems to be the tendency of the “green capitalism”-mainstream (see also chapter 12f), in the times called the Anthropocene we should rather work on revising our concepts of utopia and progress in such a way to aim towards a “non-material intensification of our way of life.” (Ibid. 99). If we rid ourselves from the mono-rationalist blindness, the examples in such directions abound: there exists “a whole series of socio-technological detours and institutional inventions, some very ancient, others quite recent, from the kinship systems and totemic maps of Australian aboriginals to the horizontal organization and the defensive Black Bloc tactics of antiglobalist movements, from the forms of production, circulation, mobilization, and communication created by the internet [...] to the organizations who protect and exchange traditional seeds and plants in zones of peasant resistance all over the world, from efficient extra-banking financial transfer systems like *hawala* to the different arboriculture of the Amazonian indigenous and to Polynesian stellar navigation, from the ‘experimental agriculturalists’ of the Brazilian semi-arid [...] to hypercontemporaneous innovations such as ecovillages, from the psychopolitics of technoshamanism to the decentralized economies of social currencies, bitcoin, and crowdsourcing. Not every technological innovation needs to go through the corporate channels of Big Science or the very long human and non-human networks mobilized by ‘cutting-edge’ technologies.” (Ibid. 98)

In the Anthropocene, we need new and old alternative metaphysics and ontologies that make it possible to think progress outside the mechanist reduction of the universe to dead matter that leads to a phallogocentric dominion over the planet. As Michael Serres once noted, philosophy is “an anticipation of future thoughts and practices [...]. Not only must it invent, but it invents the common ground for future inventions. *Its function is to invent the conditions for invention.*” (Serres and Latour 1994, 129¹⁷¹) While the modernist, Cartesian reductionism created the common ground for today’s heavily technologized world, the task for contemporary philosophy and reasonings should be to invent new forms of technologically relating to the planet: to reason in ways that make classical technological progress not seem like the only option to deal with our problems. We must think progress outside of the modern, mechanist cosmologies in a pluralistic manner! Progress can be so much more than the sterile penetration of white rockets into the heavens! An – admittedly

¹⁷¹ Original quote: „une anticipation des pensées et des pratiques futures [...]. Non seulement elle doit inventer, mais elle invente le sol commun aux inventions à venir. *Elle a pour fonction d’inventer les conditions de l’invention.*”

Utopian – pluralistic understanding of reasonings should help us undo the feeling of being trapped in the unilinear logic of techno-capitalist exploitation of the planet that Döblin already sketched a century ago.

Contemporary Utopias and future visions do already break radically with the stereotypical images of a machinic and clean future of techno-capitalism and help us to anticipate other, perhaps more endurable futures; be it the future deciphering and appreciation of the poetical language of eggplants and rock formations as in Ursula LeGuins *The Author of the Acacia Seeds* (2017 [1973], 617 ff.); the idea of communication-technologies that work over long distances and trans-species via pheromonal coding as in Dietmar Dath's *Abschaffung der Arten* (2008); the idea of space-travel as a form of biological exchange program with organically grown and gen-engineered space ships that form a part of the travelers as in Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood* (2000 [1989]); the visions of future life on the planet as freed from the limits of human exceptionalism and in forms of inter-species cross breeding and biological utopia as in Donna Haraway's *Camille Stories* (2016, 134 ff.) – just to name a few.

Our utopian sense must become more than to just project the already existing reasonabilities and logics into a future. The predominant Reason will only lead to a Döblin'ian dystopia. Utopias much rather require the alteration of logics out of which only then different future visions can emerge – utopias need new reasonings and new reasonings are utopian!

A will for utopias thus needs to engage without material, corporeal, social and cultural conditions of possibilities of thought in order to examine and alter them – in feeling what is there below the radars of Monorationalism can we sense other future visions that can be considered as utopian progress.

10) Ecological Reason(ing)(s)

a) Affirmation

There is a certain repetitiveness in the last chapters: from various angles – be they Spinozist / Nietzschean philosophies of immanence or pragmatist takes on thinking, Chinese-inspired deterritorializations of occidental reasoning, philosophies of corporeality or the philosophical consequences deduced from contemporary sciences. This PhD was devoted to demonstrate (the existence of) certain recurrent traits that could be synthesized to detect an emergence of a particularly occidental Reason(ing) in the Anthropocene I want to propose to call “ecological”.

While it is dangerous to claim any new unity of such a Reason, this chapter nevertheless attempts to draw together certain family likenesses that could comprise a family of emergent “ecological reasonings” in the Anthropocene.

As we have seen in the introduction to the second part (problems & critiques), occidental Reason could only become subject to critique once it was discursively turned into a unitary concept. The same will be somewhat true for ecological reason(ing): we can only critically evaluate its pros and cons and status in the world if we have finally decided for a terminology and discursive status for it. Before that, it can only be a naive and romantic appraisal of a vague entity in the becoming we cannot quite make out yet. Ecological Reasonings will only be reduced to (preacher-like) “X is Y and not Z” statements (see chapter 9.n)

As much as occidental Reason was not only born after it was baptized into one single concept in European Modernity, but has a long history ranging back to Ancient Greece and beyond, the same is true for ecological reasons. As we have hinted to in earlier chapters, ecological reasonings have been shimmering their way through for many decades if not even millennia. But only in the environment called the Anthropocene it seems to become as apparent and / or necessary to require an own concept: that of ecological reasonings.

Only after we have speculatively solidified such a concept can we also critically problematise it and ask questions such as: why do certain contemporary discourses require a radical rejection of old occidental Reason & formulation of new principles of Reasoning? What is the ecology of ecological reasonings? To what (unreflected) need and material constraints is such a new conceptual invention the answer?

This chapter will first synthesize and summarize certain traits of a particularly ecological Reasoning in the Anthropocene and will then problematise and argue for a certain critical stance towards it (which, as has been said before, is only possible after the long process of affirmation this PhD was devoted to so far).

b) Immanence

Many of the philosophical positions we have been using in order to affirm ecological reasonings are so called “philosophies of immanence”. A thinking of immanence – be it that of Chinese philosophy or of Spinoza – reasons *within* the world and without reference to external, *transcendent* spheres or ideals. An immanent reasoning would thus always be one that reasons with and within its environment. Why – therefore – do I not write of “immanent reasonings” instead of “ecological reasonings”?

With the concept of “ecological reasonings” I want to geo-historically locate a certain development of a mainly immanent reason. To put it simply: ecological reasonings are immanent reasonings that become aware of themselves and the world in the geo-historical status of the Anthropocene. While older immanent reasonings might have been the result of ascetic or other practices, the state of our planet somewhat forces into us [aufdrängen] the concept of ecological reasoning. In a world that has become as anthropologically modified and as narrow as ours, philosophies of immanence become a certain *ethical* (see point k) consequence of partaking in some, (mostly humanoid) life-forms in the Anthropocene, not a spiritual or logical ideal.

A further important nuance of difference between immanent and ecological reasoning is that the second is aware of its irreducible relationship to classical, occidental Reason. As I have shown, the Anthropocene would not be possible without the globalization of occidental culture (characterized by Monorationalism) that has imprinted itself on the planet. We do no longer need the reference to transcendent ideal heavens, because those ideals have imprinted themselves on the world and have ordered it accordingly (see chapter 1e, 3.D, 5.C&E, 6c and Excursion 5). Ecological reasonings are those that know their dualist complacency with transcendent reasonings – and therefore (should) maintain a plurality that immanent reasons do not tend to keep (as we have seen with the example of Spinoza – see chapter 5.Dc).

c) Environment & Reasoning

On a planet that has become that narrow, we are realizing that reasoning is not a solitary act, confined to humans (anthropoi) that refer to a godly transcendence outside of this planetary mattering. Much rather, it is a collective process that can involve human and non-human actants in and with their environment or milieu. If we build this affirmative part of our exploration from this basic assumption, the relationship towards and composition of the respective environment the reasoning takes place in become central factors for what and how the reasoning will appear.

An awareness of an ecological reasoning thus entails the possible reflection of a specific modification or alteration of the milieu it situates itself in: certain states of reasonability can only be attained in a certain environment / a certain position within this environment. Such an insight starts

with sociological milieu-reflections such as those of Marx and Bourdieu (chapter 3.Dab), the reflection of genderized and racialized embodiments of knowledge (chapter 3.B&Dafg), the role of the medium of reasoning (chapter 3.A), and goes all the way to (in theory) account for every phenomena involved that comprises (even through their absence) an environment. “We” can *only* think through our environment – the “we” being much rather a grammatical necessity than one that would be separate from the environment: it is an event within it. Therefore – in certain heavily modified environments – we can only reason in very classical ways: comprising one of the many layers of the Resilience of Reason (chapter 6c).

A treatise of good reasoning in the Anthropocene would thus not only have to outline a teleology of how one can attain a certain correct form of reasoning (as was Kant’s project for Modernity), but would have to entail the reflection under what conditions the desired correct form can emerge. On a planet become small, the choice of the right milieu and relation to it become central to reasoning. How can I think with the matter I am a part of in order to attain a certain reasonability? In a time after “the world” (as a stable, unitary concept we considered to be the “Holocene”) has ended (Jörg 2021a), one needs to seek for the right nourishing ground to attain the desired form of reasonability: the environment needs – to a certain degree – confirm the *Selbstverständlichkeiten* (*self-evidences*) of one’s particular reasoning. One cannot think certain things without the right grounds (“grounds” thereby freed entirely from the transcendent status).

d) effect & efficiency

One could say, drawing from a methodology of oversimplified dualisms, that while classical Reason was teleologically oriented and centered on truth, an ecological reasoning is much more oriented towards the effects it has. Truth can – and will – be one of the many effects a reasoning can bring forth, but in an ecological context it loses its centrality and needs to be reasonably balanced with a reflection on what it causes and how it causes certain results to emerge. Under certain contexts, a true statement can be very inefficient (as for example in the discourses of climate change, the “truth” of the manifold problems do not seem to stir much in the greater society – see Excursion 6) On the other hand, an untrue statement can be very efficient in that it provokes certain reactions that might lead to much more insightful movement than a simple utterance of “the truth” (see Excursion 4). Strategic cunning (chapter 7g) – or rhetoric argumentation – which was “the enemy” for classical Reason ever since Plato (chapter 5.Aab) – becomes a central operator for an ecological reasoning in the Anthropocene. Contrary to occidental aspirations, ecological reasonings are not about attaining insights that are “right” or “good” for the environment or Nature (both concepts would retain an all-too static status in this context), but it is about sensing what effects one’s own thinking/acting involvement in the mattering environment one has and can – consciously and subconsciously – strategically transform in certain desired directions.

e) truth

In fact, certain effects of a reasonable thought can – and always did – feel / appear like truth. In a dynamic, ever- fluctuating chaosmos of mattering, truth loses its stasis and becomes an “event” in the pragmatic sense as put forth by James, Whitehead, Dewey, etc. One can even go further and state that every truth ever postulated was first an event arising from a specific situation and was only then generalized into a static, text-induced system of ideality and universality – no truth a Plato or Descartes ever postulated was something more profound, but their “mistake” (from an ecological point of view) or “strategy” (from a more neutral standing ground) was to universalize them and thus detach them from the specific situation they arose from.

To reiterate what has been explained in the last chapter (9h), truth is not at all relative and a pluralization of reasonings, in turn, does not at all entail a so called “relativism” defining all truth to be relative and thus somewhat obsolete. Contrary, truth can always only emerge in a certain relationality to its context, meaning that there only is a truth *of* the relative and nothing else. This turns a fundamental occidental trope upside down: a static and universal system of reference is afterall not the only means of securing truth. Much rather, it leads to a losing of the event-character of truth: occidental Reason’s truth depends merely on its auto-referential truth-status within the (mostly textually construed) system of transcendence. But it is a truth detached from a concrete situation whose effects and event-character can easily become worn out and “abstract” in the negative sense. Ideally (from the standpoint of ecological reasonings) one needs to revise and reevaluate every new instance of application of any truth anew.

g) contradiction

In such an image of thought, contradiction takes a completely different place. Whereas for classical Reason (which limits itself to transcendent self-reference), it is something perceived only negatively as something to eradicate and dissolve to attain truth, in the fuzzy times of the Anthropocene, contradiction much rather takes the status of “fuel for thought” and stimulant for new truth-events to emerge. Reasoning in the Anthropocene is not only about solving contradictions, but *also* about detecting, placing and embracing them as conditions for truth-events to eventually emerge. To use Whitehead’s words: “In formal logic, a contradiction is the signal of a defeat: but in the evolution of real knowledge, it marks the first step in progress towards a victory.” (Whitehead 1970, 186)

In order to attain such „real knowledge“ that is no longer centered around truth, contradictions need to strategically be used and implemented to bring forth a certain effect that stimulates knowledge. Reasoning is therefore – among many other things – also the affirmative sensing and finding of contradiction. Humor might be the most developed cultural practice specialized to a large quantity in detecting and embracing contradiction¹⁷².

¹⁷² Wittgenstein famously said “A serious and good philosophical work could be written consisting entirely of jokes” and I – among others – would argue that his *Philosophical Investigations* should also be read in that vein. I would also argue that Douglas Adam’s *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* is one of the best oeuvres of post-modern

h) foundation

Another term that drastically changes function in ecological reasoning is that of a foundation. Together with truth, the sound and eternal foundation of reasoning (that only allowed it to become monorationalistic Reason – see chapter 5) was the central mode of Reason. For ecological reasoning, a foundation or ground is just one of many instances of a processual, ecological reasoning. This does not entail a radical rejection of any foundation or grounding – as the nihilist, irrationalist play-forms of modernity or “anti-modernity” would have it – but much rather the act of knowing that every truth event entails and brings with it a certain foundation that could be logically – or by other means – explored and systematized. This systematization can be a very fruitful undertaking under various circumstances (and at least *one* reason can take its grounding in such). However, in our Monorationalist culture such movements tend to regard themselves as the *only* Reason in universalizing the momentary foundation it has found in its eventful truth-finding and reasoning to a monorationalist regime. To counter that tendency, foundations, as much as truth and contradictions, should therefore much rather be regarded as tools and food for thought, not as – negative or positive – goals (telos) in-itself for reasoning¹⁷³.

i) knowing

The concept of knowledge in ecological reasonings is thus something that exceeds *mere* logical deduction – be it of numeric or linguistic / semantic nature – on one foundational plain. As we have seen, Reason was for its longest time synonymously associated with *logos* – the word and their logic relations. In the time of the Anthropocene and after the *linguistic turn* (chapter 3.Aa) this *liaison* should be severed and other forms of reasoning that are no longer merely textually and logically construed should be explored (compare chapter 3.Ae).

Today, we discuss the environmental problem mainly in the form of numbers (such as CO² or ocean levels, energy consumption and degree Celsius). However, this numerical regime of discussing the environmental problem should not be confused with ecological reasonings for ecological reasonings do not confine themselves to a certain foundational field (Deleuze called them plains of immanence), but actively move with them intuitively in order to create a more sensory awareness of the environmental situatedness and embeddedness than any mere numerical – or logical – relation could produce.

In fact, there is a danger in thinking about the environmental problem only in abstract terms such as numbers, for they fail to produce any sensory connection and thus physical awareness of the problem – and this would instead prolong a regime of a merely logos-based Reasoning about

humorous philosophy.

¹⁷³ For a further exploration of such an ecological reasoning *with* foundations see David Lapoujade’s examination of Souriau’s philosophy (Lapoujade 2017b, 15 ff.)

ecological. One can always keep numbers in the abstract “rational” brain without having to process them in their corporeal entanglements (which include oneself)¹⁷⁴.

In an image of thought de-centered from truth (compare chapter 2d), misunderstanding and not-knowing can be more effective than the flawed aspiration of attaining universal knowledge by means of logical deduction of one foundational field. Knowledge has no limit, but your physical presence does have one (compare chapter 7f). A mono-thematic obsession of foundational truth-knowledge can thus become unhealthy for an individual as well as environmental corporeal level (compare chapter 8a).

An ecologically motivated knowing must therefore refrain from penetrating into the depth of everything to force first and final answers: “The solution to our problems is to realize that there is no solution to the intrinsic weirdness of a thing.” (Morton 2017, 315) Only by affirming one’s *subjective* (the “I”) incompleteness can one then become a knowing and knowledgeable part of the environmental mattering one is always inevitably a part of. “When thinking becomes ecological, the beings it encounters cannot be established in advance as living or non-living, sentient or non-sentient, real or epiphenomenal. What we encounter instead are spectral beings whose ontological status is uncertain precisely to the extent that we know them in detail as never before.” (Ibid. 309)

Because Reason has, regardless of our conceptual awareness, already pluralized within sciences (chapter 9) and other field of thought, the degree of complexity we have attained in knowledge about our precarious status enables us to see ourselves as a part of an ever-fluctuating, never-complete universe, not as detached surveyors from an imaginary outside (chapter 9e-g).

j) subject

The position of the subject in such a vibrant universe is no longer one secluded from the rest by means of insight into some completeness associated with the phantoms of a god. Conceptual reformations such as the “superject” (Whitehead 1979, 55 & 109 ff.) or the “dividuum” (Raunig 2014) have tried to highlight the irreducible entanglement of the subject with its surrounding world. For ecological reasonings, what was called the subject is “a cognizant fold among many in a constant flux” (chapter 7f), it is an assemblage of various corporealities and bodies that are in a processual exchange with the environment on a microbial (chapter 9j) and sensory (chapter 8ij) level that can be reduced to one fixed entity called the “I” only by taking a second step of conceptual abstraction.

The reasoning subject is no substance and does not preexist what it feels and thinks with its surroundings. “Only after the fact, when the activity of feeling has already taken place, can we attribute a source or a purpose beyond it.” (Debaise 2017a, 54) A vibrant universe is full of thinking,

¹⁷⁴ The project Toxic Temple of Anna Lerchbaumer and me is devoted to this becoming sensory aware of the environmental catastrophe we are living in and more on this take can be found in the upcoming book publication (de Gruyter, Edition Angewandte 2022)

feeling, reasoning dynamics that fold at various instances that can only *then* – at certain fortunate moments – call themselves “subject”.

Occidental Reason has based itself on reversing this dynamic in trying to make the subject a preexisting “theoretical bedrock” (Ibid. 55). But by doing so, it alienated itself from the constant flux of matter and thus created a very problematic (and often mutually destructive) relationship to it. From the angle of Ecological Reasonings, Descartes foundational subjective argument of *cogito ergo sum* does not make sense, for “[m]ost of the time, a thought does not need to be tied to a subject, but if, retrospectively, we try to retrace the steps of its development, we can add a subject to it, when it is actually derivative.” (Ibid. 55) Thoughts can exist without a subject, so the thinking cannot be the foundation for the subject (the “I”).

Such a view of the subject as “momentary centers of force” (Montebello 2019, 31) or “centers of experience” (Debaise 2017a, 55) does free us from anthropocentric epistemological restrictions, for they cannot qualitatively be limited to humans (anthropoi) – there is no essential difference between the thought-nodes we ascribe to the “I” and others. Be it animals, humans or plants, all of which are “composed of a multiplicity of centers of experience” (Ibid.) that do allow for multiple reasonings to emerge within each situation.

k) ethos

Under this angle, the subject is certainly no longer the only active entity in a universe of dead matter – it is itself a product of living, vibrant matters and any cognizant action requires what Karen Barad beautifully calls an “ethics of responsibility” (Barad 2012).

Since the subject is only the secondary result of vibrant dynamics, every subject needs to provide opportunities for the surrounding world to respond by taking in a specific *ethos* (translatable from ancient Greek with “position” or “disposition”). A responsibility in this understanding is “a matter of inviting, welcoming, and enabling the response of the Other” (Barad 2012, 81). The reasonable subject can only be such if it lets itself have a dialogue (or polylogue) with its environment. By reevaluating the activity / passivity divide, it can *responsibly* activate what has been – in an over-simplified manner – understood as passive (chapter 8j) and attain a deeper, more reasonable and response-able insight into a certain situation, leading to a wisdom of favorable transformation of the mattering one is a part of (chapter 7g).

Such an ethics of making things respond is nothing that a pre-existing subject can ascribe itself to in a secondary step (such secondary rules of conduct should – in a Nietzschean distinction – be called “Morals”). Much rather, this ethics¹⁷⁵ is an essential and primordial part of any functioning reasoning. No reasoning could work without its mattering being allowed to respond. This is even

¹⁷⁵ This is, in essence, a fully Spinozist posture. Spinoza called his epistemological main-oeuvre *Ethics* – etymologically meaning “disposition” or even “posture”. We could not have any reasonable insight into the world without the adequate ethics = (effective) position / disposition in it.

true for occidental Reason, although it was based on repressing and systematically overseeing that very fact of responsibility and productivity (compare Presentiment II) of its environment.

I) productivity

Occidental Reason was and still is a very efficient reasoning. But since it is based on suppressing or ignoring what it produces, it has intrinsic deficiencies for grasping the material consequences its monorationalist application produced during modernity: the times of catastrophes called the Anthropocene and the unfathomable, toxic boredom of the “Homogenocene”. By disavowing the vegetative elements of human, modern beings (chapter 7e), the productivity of Reason modified environments in a very specific manner that – in the degree of expansion we have attained today – has disturbed the metastability of the Holocene.

Ecological Reasonings in the Anthropocene are then required (by their newly mattering and imposing environments) to reflect and incorporate its productivity and thus reconnect with its vegetative and material basis. (see point c of this chapter).

In certain fields of application, classical Reason will surely be and remain the best pick – but only in an ecological meta-reflection of the effect it produces in view of a larger whole. For example: an ideal such as the equality of all humans – offspring of classical Reason’s humanism – should surely not completely be abandoned: but be used strategically to produce a certain desired *equalizing* effect – and not be regarded as an unchangeable, pre-existing ontological status of all humans. Such a static ontology would indeed be unproductive and cause more harm than good for the cause of equality. The idea of equality of all humans comes exactly out of this world – it is a tool to produce effects, impacts and affects, not a pre-existing status one only has to realize in this yet unjust world (see chapter 12e for a further development of this point).

20th century discourses have slowly realized the productivity of any model of reasonings. For example, the big shift-of-perspective attained by Deleuze and Guattari in thinking about psychoanalysis is to regard “the unconscious” as a product and invention, not as a discovery (Félix Guattari 2014, 23). Psychoanalysis is extremely helpful as a means to produce certain therapeutic effects, but it does not uncover a preexisting truth about the intrinsic nature of, for example. gender-roles or any such thing. A similar insight seeps through contemporary theories of sciences (see chapter 9): sciences do not so much uncover truths, as they rather produce them. Even ontologies can, under this angle, be no longer regarded as the final order of things, but must anthropologically revised as active referential points of how a certain culture produces its reality on an ontological level it calls “the world” (Descola and Charbonnier 2017, 236–40).

Reasonings produce their insights as an active part of a vibrant universe – the concepts they devise are nothing unworldly and transcendent but have a concrete mattering and consequences in the world and environment. They are modes of existence in this complex, becoming chaosmos, not merely abstract ideas that could help to eternally order and bring sense into existence / Being.

m) writing

Lastly, this quick summary of some – surely not complete – parameters of ecological Reasonings will reflect on its own medium: that of written text. As demonstrated (chapter 3.A), occidental Reasoning was a textual thinking: one that – mostly unreflectedly – imposed the structures of its grammars and alphabets onto the world. This intimate relationship led to a confusion of words with things. The belief that the knowledge of the right word or language would suffice to see the fundamental and eternal truth behind things shaped occidental Reason for long. To write, therefore, meant to reveal deeper truths and not only the bible was culturally regarded as a book *that reveals the truth*. This expectation is being maintained – to a certain degree – up until today.

While truth is of course always a function of language, writing today should not only be about such a misconstrued idea of laying bare a foundational truth. Writing – as well as any other form of reasoning – can stimulate truth-events in the reader, and, through doing so, influence her thinking in a certain degree / and the discourse in a certain direction. A book – such as this one – should be regarded as an intervention into a certain discursive field (involved in various truth-games) and be written and read as such. There are so many ways of aligning discursive matter in a book to form truths, that this should in no way represent the only criteria. The effect a book can stimulate in a certain receptive environment is much more important for me as a writer. The writing I am putting forth here is not only interested in logical truths, but in affective stimulation (of negative as well as positive responses) and other effects that create a living reasoning that is no longer only limited to the narrow realms of *logos*.

Presentiment III: Critiques of Ecological Reason

While Reason took its strength from stasis and a construed idea of eternal order (cosmos), ecologically motivated Reasonings should then do the opposite: embrace the fluxus and permanent development of a “chaosmos”. To reiterate some points made above: such Reasonings would at any moment have to account for every factor that comprises the milieu the thought emerges from (c) and would need to revise the truth-effects of a reasoning at any given moment (e).

While such aspirations seem to be a common denominator of many contemporary discourses that try to understand the Anthropocene, it is worth asking to what extent such an Ecological Reasoning is in fact *humanly possible*. The moment has come to remind us once more of Nietzsche’s claim that the unity of Reason might “be a necessary illusion” for human corporeality and a culture / civilisation concerned with them in order to work.

Advocates of radical versions of what I call Ecological Reasonings claim that the occidental tropes such as the secluded subject and eternal truths have – in the time of the Anthropocene – “finally become unavailable to think with, truly no longer thinkable, technically or any other way” (Haraway 2016, 5). In a time that is not only marked by the becoming-mainstream of ecological discourses, but also by right-wing backlashes as best personified by “Trump” (as a conceptual persona) who does advocate classical tropes in a renewed force and banality, I wonder how much that is adequate. Certainly, in certain academic and art-world discussions, those tropes might have become “unavailable to think with”, but I doubt that this is the case for human reasoning in general. I cannot get rid of the suspicion that the advocacy of Ecological Reasonings in current times tends to become an elite phenomenon – or to be more precise: that of a certain part of a liberal elite.

This elitism is (contrary to old-fashioned leftist intuitions) not intrinsically bad, but it should become aware of itself. Who is able to maintain a position of Ecological Reasonings? And where and when: On their writing tables (remember the role of text for reasoning)? In their corporeal practices? In their sleep? While shopping in the supermarkets? While driving a car?

A tentative critique of ecological reasonings should go beyond the affirmation of the mere existence of such reasonings and evaluate critically in what milieu each specific reasoning does emerge and is tenable. What material, sociological, environmental, educational factors are required to promote ecological reasonings? To whom are they – e.g. their material, ecological requirements to safely think so – really available? How available are ecological reasonings in Trump’ian backlands of the US or in the poor quarters of Mumbai?

Such critiques of ecological reasonings can further examine and openly ask if an ecological reasoning is always the better option to handle a thought reasonably. Perhaps, in certain mathematical fields and everyday practices the affirmation of ecological reasonings would be

counterproductive. I am certain that – while driving a car – the sensual awareness of every phenomena would certainly be the more dangerous mode of reasoning than the classical reduction to textual, visual elements¹⁷⁶. We have to become environmentally aware of the functioning of any reason and also consider the modification of environments to promote the extended usage of a certain reasoning.

At this point in material history, I do not see how Ecological Reason offers a mode of reasoning that should be regarded, in any case and milieu, to be the most effective and productive to deal with the problem called the Anthropocene. We should be wary of any new *Monorationalization* under the umbrella of an Ecological Reason – this would make us less able than a pluralized epistemology of Reasonings in a messy chaosmos. Perhaps (and I am inclined to feel that way) ecological reasonings should take on the nature of a certain ideal or utopia (see Excursion 7): a political and cultural ideal of our time should be to encourage large parts of the world and our selves to leap towards ecological reasonings, rather than stretching out the life expectancy of Monorationalism that homogenized and suppresses our interior as well as exterior corporeality.

This would perhaps help to solve most of the problems we now associate with the Anthropocene (and would, in turn, create and activate new problems that keep life and reasoning exciting and involving). However, this would require a long and nuanced process of consensus-making and environmental relating that can occupy and excite us for decades to come. On this long way, we would need to get beyond a mere affirmation of ecological Reasonings (that are at the danger of reproducing a new version of romanticism – compare chapter 9n) and test critiques of ecological reasonings as well. However, this will not occupy this PhD too much, for it was concerned with the long and difficult process of Affirmation of Ecological Reasonings in a world still mainly under the spell of Monorationalism and the Homogenocene.

¹⁷⁶ On the *Cartesian* nature of car culture and its involvement in the current socio-cultural Backlash see chapter 2 “Autoregime” of my book *Backlash – Essays zur Resilienz der Moderne* (2020a)

Part V :

Consequences

11) Ecological reasonings & the digital

a) When machinic matter starts thinking

Modern Reason saw matter as something passive, inert, dead. However, modern technological progress reached a refinement of machinery that did not only make them take over many of our physical actions, but also those that fall within the semantic field of “thinking”. The so-called digital or computer revolution confronts discourses to discuss and reevaluate what is “thinking” and “intelligence”. Suddenly *matter is thinking* – in the forms of Silicon plates and invisible server landscapes. Our modern self-assurance of being the only reasonable being out there is challenged and has to (whether we like it or not) be put anew.

In the wake of discussions about the emergence of Artificial Intelligences, Machine Learning and other forms of non-human, machinic thinking, many issues closely related to the emergence of Ecological Reasoning(s) pop up. In this short chapter, I will discuss some of the fears and misconceptions that predominate many discourses around A.I. and evaluate what roles these digital companions play in relation to ecological reasoning(s) – this should help us to safely pass some of the most dystopian scenarios that characterize today’s discussions.

b) What Alice and Bob are telling us - Introduction

Bob: i can i i everything else

Alice: balls have zero to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to

Bob: you i everything else

Alice: balls have a ball to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me

Bob: i i can i i i everything else

Alice: balls have a ball to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me

Bob: i

Alice: balls have zero to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to

Bob: you i i i i everything else

Alice: balls have 0 to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to

Bob: you i i i everything else

Alice: balls have zero to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to me to

In July 2017, almost every big newspaper covered the story of Facebook’s chatbots Alice and Bob, who developed a language so entirely of their own that even their programmers couldn’t understand it any longer and had to shut it down. This sparked fear of an impending, so called “singularity” which went quickly viral in the medias. Newspapers such as *Die Welt* or the *New York Post*

spectacularly announced that this shows that machines had finally outsmarted us and hinted that the age of human supremacy might soon be over.

Despite the moral panic, when we examine these developments more soberly, the story appears to be much less spectacular than it was presented. Although it is true that the software developers of Facebook didn't exactly understand the content of Alice and Bob's dialogue, this is not because the bots were so much smarter than their human makers, but much rather because the latter didn't care enough to try to understand the gibberish of their immature offspring. Alice and Bob were designed to simulate human language to humans – and this design goal was obviously missed with the above quoted dialogue. So the programmers in Silicon Valley simply – and disinterestedly – switched Alice and Bob off again and wet back to their well-paid jobs of creating an even smoother digital surface for their employer who today is one of the biggest monopolies of 21st century data capitalism.

To summarize: what was presented as an almost-civilization-crumbling shift in some medias was simply a routine – and frankly boring – step in a design process of digital infrastructure. Facebook once more got a lot of free advertisement in the form of international media attention – the capital central for enterprises dependent on venture capital.

Not many other market segments could expect so much attention for something so banal. However, this example of Alice and Bob is quite paradigmatic for the discourses around A.I. and the role of intelligence and reasoning in the time of the “Anthropocene”.

A categorical misunderstanding of A.I. and it's role in the emerging form of digital capitalism creates a toxic mix of fears, attention and wrong ideas of intelligence, capital and our global situation that can have dangerous consequences.

c) prophecies of singularity & digital capitalism

Prophecies such as these that our thinking capacities will be surpassed *very soon* by machines hunt contemporary discourses and media spectacles. But if one looks just a little into the history of the development of artificial intelligence, it is stunning to note that such iconoclastic prophecies of a looming “singularity” are almost as old as the first cybernetic conceptualization of “A.I.” in the 60ies (Hustvedt 2016, 229 ff.). In every decade since, this singularity event was said to come within the next years and that the time of human supremacy in reasoning is coming to an end (Hustvedt 2016, 231 ff.; Daum 2019, 24 ff.).

Such anxieties (or ecstasies for the most technophile) seem to be witnessing a boom again today with A.I.-based machines becoming available for every household or person in the form of Alexa, Siri and others. The newspapers abound with annunciations of the coming singularity, the resulting dangers for job-markets and democracies, the dystopian scenarios of hostile A.I.'s taking over, the cultural shifts that the introduction of a non-human super-intelligence would entail and so on.

However, if one looks beyond spectacular news and the TED-based sales pitches of start ups promising the salvation of mankind with yet another app, one finds that research on so defined “strong A.I.” (that would be akin to human intelligence in its ability to not only solve problems, but also detect them, be creative, have empathy etc.) has almost been given up. The projects that are funded today are mostly working towards refinement of “weak A.I.”s that are programmed and long-before (humanly) trained to solve hitherto (and humanly) specified tasks in a delimited situation (Daum 2019, 11). Alexa or Siri are *not* intelligent beings with their own feelings and humors, but they are units that were carefully designed by thousands of humans to imitate intelligent behavior in a simple conversation with a human – and they are spies for the new digital monopolies they “mine” the 21st century resource data for. The association with real intelligence is an animist projection or “social hallucination” (Ibid. 29-30) in the human/customer that is willfully stimulated by the design of the product.

It is thus important to note that the current boom of singularity-debates is not so much caused by an impending break-through in computer sciences, as it is the result of the advent of a new form of “digital” capitalism and it’s hitherto unseen distribution of A.I.-based devices in the form of mass-consumer goods in the everyday habitats of consumerist life-styles (Ibid.).

d) Cartesian thinking machines

Already in the early 80ies, renown Speech Act philosopher John Searle (born 1932) made the point that the entire debate of machines surpassing human thinking capacity makes a categorical conceptual mistake. In his influential paper *Can Computers Think?* from 1983 he notes that most arguments around the coming singularity base themselves on some future promise of a “yet uncreated technological wonder” (Searle 1983, 670). However, this blind belief in the coming technological break-through that will deliver “strong A.I.” rests “on a rejection of the idea that the mind is just a natural biological phenomenon in the world like any other” (Ibid. 673) and fails to see that “there is more to having a mind than having a formal or syntactical process” (Ibid. 671). The idea of intelligence in A.I. is one reduced to “a matter of manipulating meaningless symbols” that doesn’t by far take into account the scope of abilities carried out by the human mind, according to Searle. With this elucidation considered, A.I. in its strong sense cannot ever be attained technologically following such narrow assumptions of what intelligence is.

Siri Hustvedt (born 1955) takes this point further by showing how a Cartesian reduction of the mind to a body-less, logical apparatus lies at the core of and is reproduced unwittingly by contemporary A.I.-debates. The underlying “computational theory of mind, with its concept neurons and its notion of the ‘mental’ as an information-processing machine that may be considered independently of brain function, mechanizes and ‘dries’ the mind into comprehensible algorithms.” (Hustvedt 2016, 251) Such a reduction ignores human, biological development, the essential role of having a thinking *and* developing body which is being made by others (firstly a mother, thus reproducing the

sexism inherent to Cartesian Reason). “Biological realities of human development play no role in computational theory of mind except as an inferior gelatinous substrate or annoying complexities to be cut through so a conceptual essence can be revealed. The leaky, moist, material body is not part of its model of mind. The embryo, the growing or the grown-up body that throbs and oozes, has nothing to do with intelligence or the mind advocates of GOF AI [=the standard, still predominating cybernetic formulation of A.I. in the 60ies mentioned above, K.J.] hoped to build – a smart, clean, man machine. [...] Doesn’t this theory harbor a wish for a beautiful, dry, thinking machine, a new race that will not grow in or be born from the organic maternal body or from organic materials at all: no wimpy dependent genes, no mother’s egg, no father’s sperm, no embryo, no placenta, no uterine environment, no birth by pushing one person out of another, but rather a new kind of person made from cogs and wheels or digital ones and zeros?” (Ibid. 252)

The current A.I.-debates that so spectacularly haunt our contemporary discourses with images of overcoming the human are thus the unwitting reproducing of the central tropes of occidental, anthropocentric Reason that were in themselves a short-sighted reduction of thought to logical, visually construed object-reasonings. This reduction in A.I.-conceptualization dates back all the way to Alan Turing (X) – the fore-father of contemporary formulations of A.I. To quote Hustvedt quoting Turing: “The intelligent machine he dreamed of ‘would still have no contact with food, sex, sport and many other things of interest to the human being.’ It therefore seemed best to explore what “can be done with a ‘brain’ which is more or less without a body, providing at most organs of sight, speech and hearing.” (Hustvedt 2016, 223)

e) (Re)producing Intelligence

Turing was aware of this reduction that was – and still is – initial to the production of A.I. What is today, alongside this conscious reduction, often overseen, is that his infamous test for A.I. is aimed at simulating or performing intelligence, not creating it. The so-called “Turing test” - still considered valid and up-until today never really accomplished by any machine yet (Daum 2019, 25) – is knowingly based on the reproduction or simulation of intelligence and *not* on the creation of it (as contemporary debates seem to believe) (Daum 2019, 29).

Turing consciously dismissed the question for the *essence* of intelligence (in the sense of clarifying “What is intelligence?”) as a vain and unproductive obstacle in the way of A.I.-production. What instead counted for him, is if a machine has the ability to make a human believe it is intelligent for a long-enough time. Only this readjustment of the orientation of defining A.I. made the subsequent advances possible: one gave up the idea of building a new form of intelligence (that never led to anything fruitful, barring a dependable definition of what intelligence actually is) and concentrated on simulating intelligence for human perception. A.I. is designed to make humans believe it is intelligent. It is not intelligent by itself.

Of course, in order to convince *humans* of it being intelligent, it has to reproduce *human* tropes of what is considered intelligent – and so it reproduced occidental tropes and reductions that date back to Descartes and beyond, as we saw in the last sub-chapter.

A.I. is hence not so much about letting new intelligence happen, but to make certain pieces of matter think within our very narrow ideas of what is thinking, what is reasoning, what is intelligence¹⁷⁷. With (re)producing intelligence *artificially*, we make the world even more anthropocentrically oriented. By limiting reasoning to a very narrow realm and then reproducing it within matter, we make it even harder to sense other forms of intelligence and reasoning out there.

As David Abram (2017, 280–84) speculates, the so-called Internet of things and the digital revolution might be motivated by a desire to make the world we turned silent speak again. But we keep forgetting that it is only us and our very narrow understanding of Reasoning – reproduced in matter – that speaks. We turn ourselves tone-deaf to the intelligence and reasonings we could sense, feel and apprehend everywhere, if we allowed ourselves to leave the narrow, anthropocentric preconceptions of what is Reason and intelligence.

f) God is dead matter

The spectacular A.I. debate is thus assuming that what we program to simulate intelligence for us will outgrow us in intelligence. Something that is from scratch designed to make us believe it is intelligent, succeeds in making us believe it could become more intelligent than us.

By forgetting its conceptual origins, we are at the danger of completely misplacing the role A.I. has (and also can have, as I will argue later) in our society: a tool for big multinational corporations such as Amazon or Google society to gather – “mine”, as it is called – data to accumulate capital in data-driven digital capitalism.

One cannot help the suspicion that the popular, market-ready idea of A.I. as a new, coming “super-intelligence” that has the ability to compute all the necessary data and solve the problems that are too complex for our meager and fleshy brains are the faint remnants of a conceptual centrality of occidental Reason: that of God. Perhaps, in a very weird and twisted way, we are answering to Nietzsche’s call of becoming gods ourselves after the death of god by constructing a new god in the form of silicium plates¹⁷⁸. We still want to believe that there is an all-seeing, all-understanding mind out there that could give complete and eternal sense to our little reasonings and allow us to master the worldly trouble once and for all in order to become masters of the planet (chapter 5.B-E,

¹⁷⁷ The – unfortunately badly done – Graphic short story - “Resolution” by Clifford V. Johnson does exactly act out this intuition. In it, Aliens realize that they won’t be accepted (or even perceived?) by humans if they meet them in their real presence. They thus take up contact with humanity in the guise of an “A.I.” that is accepted by and seen as proof of humanities technological genius. Only after such an introduction this alien intelligence slowly reveals its real & alien nature. (Thanks to Julia Grillmayr for leading me to this short story and the “Way of Future”-church in the next footnote)

¹⁷⁸ The church “Way of the Future” does in fact believe that such a “strong A.I.” will be developed soon and is thus – and preemptively – venerating it religiously so, once it has come, it will be favorable to us and our earthly existence.

especially 5.Bc and 5.Ea), even in these times of ecological turmoil (Esposito 2019, 10). The artificial god – the singularity – unified under one Reason that finally has the power to take in all the data – will fix it! Such seems to be a looming belief within the contemporary A.I.-debate¹⁷⁹. This unfortunately completely misses the real implications of such a reduced understanding of intelligence – be it in our own heads or imprinted on silicious plates.

g) A.I. reproducing Reason's exclusions (dangers of misconceived A.I.)

By failing to remember as what A.I. has been defined as in its foundational beginnings – a simulation and not a somehow ontological essence that could become super-intelligent – there is a great risk to reproduce many problematic and exclusive effects of our reduced and narrow regime of Monorationalism.

This starts with the reproductions of sexism and racism in A.I.-powered machinery. Such examples today abound (Daum 2019, 64-79), be it the A.I.s that are supposed to help judges decide on trials by scanning all-available prior cases and give (tendentiously racist and classist) recommendations, the A.I.s that select job-applications for various companies and reproduce sexist and racist exclusions or the A.I. powered chatbots such as Microsoft's Tay that turn anti-Semitic xenophobes overnight¹⁸⁰.

In his text *Cyberspace as the darker side of the West* from as early as 1995, Ziaduddin Sardar warns us that cyberspace is tending to become the next territory for a new form of colonialism in a time when the entire globe has been already colonized. "The occupation of cyberspace has direct parallels with the colonisation of non-Western cultures. Cyberspace is turning out to be the new Other of Western civilization which is projecting all its colonial prejudices, and the images of sex and violence in which it framed non-Western cultures, on to cyberspace." (Sardar 1995, 777) When all real places are already occupied by occidental normative regimes, one has to create new, artificial ones to further expand its normative power and accumulate capital, he argues¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁹ Another aspect of this secularization of hitherto religious believes by means of digital interfaces is the promise of eternal life by means of A.I.-simulations of the deceased. By uploading your mind to the cloud, you are promised eternal life in the energy-hungry server-landscapes of today's digital capitalism that still fuels on very old, radicalized body-mind dualisms. (Riesewieck and Block 2020)

¹⁸⁰ While machines will not be able to copy human intelligence in any foreseeable future, humans can easily copy A.I. - the best example for this might be Donald Trump, whose apparently massive social media consumption turns him more and more racist and sexist almost as fast as Tay. Even the content and format of Trumps speeches could be fairly well reproduced by an AI of limited capacity. Here is an excerpt of his speech on the Iran Nuclear Deal in Sun city, South Carolina on the 21st of July 2015: "but you look at the nuclear deal, the thing that really bothers me—it would have been so easy, and it's not as important as these lives are (nuclear is powerful; my uncle explained that to me many, many years ago, the power and that was 35 years ago; he would explain the power of what's going to happen and he was right—who would have thought?), but when you look at what's going on with the four prisoners—now it used to be three, now it's four—but when it was three and even now, I would have said it's all in the messenger; fellas, and it is fellas because, you know, they don't, they haven't figured that the women are smarter right now than the men, so, you know, it's gonna take them about another 150 years—but the Persians are great negotiators, the Iranians are great negotiators, so, and they, they just killed, they just killed us." via John Oliver, The Trump Presidency. (min 3:30) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZAPwfrtAFY&t=57s> [1.2.2021]

¹⁸¹ I am deeply thankful to Tabita Rezaire's video-work *Deep Down Tidal* that introduced me to the Sardar's text.

What is overseen in the booming and expanding application of A.I.s and machine learning algorithms in various domains is that their prognostics do not so much foresee the future, as they are actively producing it. Thus, the suppression and forgetfulness of Reason is reproduced in the (application of the) simulation of it: it's productivity and how it reproduces the exclusive mechanisms in the digital world as much as in the real world it is applied in. This does not only hold true for the discursive effects, but also the environmental ones, for it is so often assumed that digital technologies are clean ones with no impact on this planet, completely failing to take into consideration the gigantic energy hunger of the server landscapes (about 10% of the global electricity consumption go to Internet infrastructure) and environmental devastation needed for the cable connections they require (Parikka 2015).

h) A.I. as a governmental technique

Aside from these well documented problems addressed in the last sub-chapter, I want to point out yet another problematic effect of a misconceived A.I. I haven't found convincingly outlined yet: that of A.I. as a governmental technique. I will explain this by means of inspiration of Wladimir Velminski's (2012) analysis of Soviet research on *auratic-electromagnetic telepathy* and *radio-control*.

In the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, it was widely believed that one could influence human thought by electromagnetic impulses. Telepathy could – so the assumption went – be realized by means of electromagnetic radio emitters and such tools were researched in various Western countries. Particularly the newly formed Soviet Union was stunned by the potentials of creating the “perfect proletariat” with such external form of programming. True communism, it was believed, could be much faster realized if every comrade were exposed to the radio-waves that make people good communists. Leaders like Trotzky had hoped that the power of the central committee and other self-ascribed “avant-gardes” of the true communist spirit could be thus quickly abandoned and true equality among the people finally free established. Soviet Scientists such as Pavel Guljaev, Velimir Chlebnikov or Vladimir Becherev set forth to create devices that should not only read the thoughts of people but could induce the right insights of brotherly solidarity required for the communist utopia the Soviet Union was devoted to.

It might be hard to believe that such – for today's understanding – completely mislead scientific projects were funded in the Soviet Union until the 1970ies – when it should have already been clear for long enough that the underlying assumptions were flawed and thus the “radio-controlled world” an ungrounded u-/dys-topia.

Velminski's book *Gehirnprothesen* tries to demonstrate that these long attempts did not happen out of mere scientific idiocy, but that there actually was a political calculation behind it that lead the Soviet Union to fund research in *electromagnetic telepathy* for much longer than would have been justifiable in terms of scientific feasibility.

Velminski shows that the idea of radio-programming and electromagnetic telepathy has seeped through popular culture and was a widely recognized idea among Soviet people. He argues that the belief alone that such a technology could someday exist (or already exist hidden from the public by Soviet Secret Service) made the people more inclined to be obedient and acritical subjects of a state becoming more and more totalitarian. When people believe their thoughts can be read they will try to not even think critical, potentially subversive thoughts in a regime that puts defenders of such thoughts into the Gulag. Velminski argues that exactly this normative, disciplinary effect was consciously aimed for by the Soviet authorities in funding *electromagnetic telepathy* for much longer than was scientifically reasonable.

Inspired by Velminski's analysis I want to ask if a similar and less conscious oppressive structure is not being reproduced in contemporary times with the discourses around A.I. As I have shown above, the technological feasibility of a "strong A.I." is almost certainly put aside as impossible by most funding agencies, however, the public imaginary and the media discourse around it still preach the advent of a coming singularity.

What effects does such a belief in a coming super-intelligence in the form of A.I. do to people? Certainly, it would make them less willing to think for themselves and trust that the intelligent machines will solve the present problems much better than they themselves could do. The discursive myth of a coming strong A.I. tends to make people less inclined to (have the guts to) reason for themselves – and find and actively engage other reasonings than the majoritarian one reproduced in digital matter.

If we consider the narrativisation and investment of the Soviet example, this potential governmental *technique* of the discursive entity called "singularity" actively forms a part of the Resilience of Reason in that it prevents people from reasoning different or at all. It makes people numb and obedient to a coming digital capitalism and the accelerated environmental devastation it brings forth. We should work on freeing ourselves from this wrong image to prevent the worst.

i) how to reason well with A.I.?

I do not want to say that these governmental effects of current spectacular A.I.-debates are created consciously by some hidden agenda or deep state. Such an image easily creates anti-Semitic, paranoid conspiracy theories that forbid us to see into the reality of things: that we live in a hugely complex world in which no easy answers work, and governmental techniques are more and more auto-poetically created just by following the impulses of our already existing anthropogenically modified landscapes. I have made this point about cars and car infrastructure in the chapter Autoregime of my book *Backlash – Essays zur Resilienz der Moderne* and think the same is true for A.I. as a governmental technology.

Since the development of A.I. since Turing was oriented towards simulating occidental Reason for humans, it also reproduced its political effects: aside from the racist and sexist exclusion mentioned

in sub-chapter f, they also reproduce a tendency of obedience and submission to a greater intelligence that is imagined to see the world clearer than our feeble human flesh could do: the digital reproduction of god outlined in sub-chapter e leads to this governmental effect of submission without any evil conspirators necessary (other than the hugely problematic occidental heritage).

What I finally want to argue for in this chapter is that we need to become aware of these auto-poetic structures that fulfill one other circle of the Resilience of Reason and see A.I. as what it is: *a tool designed by and for humans*. The dystopias and exclusions of digital technology only result from a misconception of their abilities and ontologies. These technologies are not inherently evil, as many pessimists today would argue. In the vein of an *affirmative critique* as proposed in chapter 4, I want to argue that, if placed well, we could actually use A.I. infrastructure to liberate ourselves from the regime of Monorationalism and the negative effects of Reason to a larger degree than was hitherto possible. Why not let the machines do the tediously rigid & logical reasoning we have hitherto considered to be the only Reason?

As I have argued throughout this PhD, in the times of the Anthropocene we need to overcome Monorationalism and actively engage with other forms of Reasonings to understand our involvement in a processual becoming chaosmos better. However, this does not entail a complete abandoning of classical Reason – as argued in the last chapters, we might in fact need it to survive as sane humanoid beings on this planet. But we might in fact be able to *outsource* this very narrow, machinic image of Reason to a certain form of modified and imprinted matter so our minds can have more free capacity to *reason differently*.

What we might have managed in the so-called digital age is to make a certain form of matter reason better in the monorationalist way than we do: they can process binary and numerical information much faster than we can. However, this is by far not the only ability we should focus our reasonings on – and we have done so for way too long.

In the catastrophic times ahead of us, the outsourcing of this narrow image of Reasoning might in fact be a chance to focus human brain capacity on other reasonable domains, such as those of creativity, in(ter)vention, speculation, humor and the likes. Digital machines taking over certain – rather boring – modes of reasoning should be regarded as a liberation that can set free potentials as much as any other useful technology has liberated some of our abilities to be further refined elsewhere (Serres 2012). If the machines provide us with the momentary fundamentals and truths established by tedious logical data-analysis, we can focus our minds on reasoning about how to creatively alter and transform them with what has been established as the facts by machines. This can alter our understanding of what is reasonable to a larger degree and might be already doing to.

It might in fact be true, as Erich Hörl (2013) suggests, that the digitization might have caused a further leap in the ecologicalization of thought. For not only can we suddenly see in Live-Trackers and Social Media feeds how discourses and thoughts do not only follow simplistic, logical and argumentative logics, but are influenced by much more complex, multi-causalistic dynamics of affects, rotations and dispersations. Logic and truth-finding are only a very superficial part of a global Reasoning, as the Internet shows us. But even more profoundly, the interconnected machines perform their narrow-mindedness (and the hugely problematic effects it creates) in a manner so visible to us, that we see the problems of Reason externalized and can thus – if we steer clear from the dangers and dystopias I have outlined in this chapter – feel empowered and encouraged to actively broaden our Reasonings. As much as our ecologically catastrophic global state, the new state of global digital connectedness and the various intelligences that inhabit it, require a new stance towards reasoning. A.I.s and the internet can, if understood correctly, help us to overcome Monorationalism and understand the world in its complex entanglements of various forms of existence.

12) Ecological reason & the political

a) Epistemology is political

The project of affirming ecological reasonings is inherently political – during the process of this research, I more than once came to suspect that my primary motivation is actually a political one: that to investigate how we can reason with the earth in manifold ways is vitally important to transform our political concepts and their efficiency and thus invent new forms of narrating, sharing and populating space on a vibrant ground.

As an extension, but by no means is secondary, I am trying to show is that our ecological problem is one that is – in its philosophical foundations – centuries, even millennia old and is deeply embedded in “our” occidental ways of understanding and making human culture. We should thus not despair – after 10, or 20, or 50 years of struggle for climate justice, an ecological transformation, more humane and non-humane equality – and regard the struggle as futile because “the resistance is too strong” or “nothing will change anyways”. On the contrary, the recent developments can make one slightly optimistic about the direction we are slowly beginning to take as a larger society – and the struggle will keep on for centuries. The problems we are facing are so deeply embedded in European modernity and its 2.5 millennia old heritage of occidental philosophy that a progressive undoing and re-working of those problems is nothing that will happen overnight, or even in our generation. We have to take the *unhuman* strength to keep the transformation going for centuries – until we are slowly realizing (and living and dying accordingly) that we are always (and have always been) part of the transformation that makes the biosphere alive.

However, this strong political inclination of this intervention should not make the reader wait for clear-cut stances and an unmistakable, unshakable positioning towards contemporary political problems and discourses, be they of feminist, ecological, post-colonial, social or of other nature. As argued before, ecological reasonings tend to see problems as means to think and make sense with, rather than something that could quickly be solved with a simple, once-and-for-all political positioning and or ideology. Problems are prisms and scents of this world’s shaky grounds that should incite us to move and transform with them: in reasoning ecologically, we become a fluid part with the processual formulation of the world and its problems, abandoning the ancient instinct to set ourselves apart critically from the problem (chapter 4c). They can much less be solved than surfed – they are a power to transform with, nothing to do away with with neat and preset concepts of purity. As David Lapoujade points out with Deleuze’s philosophy, ontology and epistemology are always political. “Politics precedes being” means that “philosophy cannot pose the question of ground without the question becoming one of populating the earth.” (Lapoujade 2017a, 59) By

distinguishing what *is* on and in this earth, with what concepts, terms and lines of flight one identifies and is made to identify with, forms alliances and hostilities with, the political is already a central prism to our grounding ourselves and others. No categorization and subsequent mode of relating and reasoning in a world *being* so and so could ever be politically neutral – it is always entrenched with hegemonic and counter-hegemonic streams that reproduce political effects of in- and exclusion long before any political, ideological statement comes into being. It is way too late to demand – for example – “equality for all” or other such simple ideologies if one does not rethink our entanglement with inherited – and frequently toxic – structures of the still-hegemonic idea of occidental, monorationalist Reason. With Reason, one can exclaim the nicest ideas of inclusion of other genders, peoples and critters without changing anything: if our epistemological and ontological grounds stay untouched, our reasoning will stay as patriarchal, racist and ecologically catastrophic (compare chapter 3) as it ever was. Contrary, a pluralization of Reason aims at not only expressing the right ideology on the level of intellectual content but changing and pluralizing our ways of reasoning and relating with the Earth in manifold ways – thus giving rooms for expression to hitherto repressed or under-evaluated beings.

This short chapter about ecological reasonings & the political will *not*, therefore, hand out a political program in the sense of a list of things to do and realize, but much rather examine some conditions and consequences for “the political” in times of the emergence of ecological reasonings to become an effective and conscious transformative agent. It will first question some still-majoritarian expectations towards the political and how they can and will be overcome. Subsequently, in a second step, we will examine the political consequences of what we have worked out in our first and tentative critique of ecological reasonings (chapter 9n and Presentiment III): that an *ecologicalization* of our Reasonings is not and cannot be a simple solution we should one-sidedly and monorationalistically affirm and put our hope into. Much rather, its development can express itself in manifold ways among which are some I would classify as negative and even dangerous and I would propose – with many others – to call “eco-capitalism”. Finally, at the end of this chapter, I want to drift into the speculative with Octavia Butler’s dark vision of an alien takeover and the (xeno)politics that result from such an insight: we might come to realize that “the alien” is the mattering ground we all are part of. We might be close to – in Bruno Latour’s words – *land* the political in our corporeality that has in Reason’s tradition been considered as alien.

b) all-too modern ideals of the political

In the last years we have witnessed a quite significant shift in progressive politics. New movements seem to follow very diverse and discordant insights and assumptions about how to be political than an older generation that – to me – still seems to cling on to very modern ideas of a “revolutionary cell” and the political as some kind of competition in who has the most radically critical position.

But still, also today, the political is frequently associated with – the finding and maintaining of – a pure, unchangeable position that stands for some universally applicable “right” that has to be brought into the world to make it a good place. I will consciously avoid giving a concrete example in order to avoid any unnecessary hostility. Much rather I will give a general – and perhaps slightly caricatural – description of some traits of such an all-too modern ideal of the political which many should be able to recognize in themselves or others.

Such an “all-too modern” position is characteristically believed to be attained by the excessive practice of critique that leads to further and further purify the “right” position (believed to be) required. It tends to lead its adherents to break up in smaller and smaller sub-groups that will eventually lead schismatic conflicts between closely associated, neighboring sub-groups that would in fact – if examined globally – agree in most points, but fight bitter wars over minor differences in their critical assessment of the world. To such critical beings, there can only be one true political position and the minor differences are believed to be the real obstacles to the final revolutionary overturning of the world. They regard themselves the revolutionary cell or “Avant-garde” working hard on attaining the correct political consciousness that would – if finally attained – somehow radiate so strongly that it would alter the entire world in its brilliant light.

In a monorationalist epistemology, such a residual ocularcentric messianism seems to be the majoritarian tendency for the political to express itself. In classical occidental understanding, one has referred to *one* Reason if one wanted to conjure humanity to some form of unity – and, once attained – it has to be conveyed to the others. Plato’s latent totalitarianism is still dormant in many political movements that fight bitter wars over the correct critique of the status quo of worldly becoming.

c) from changing the world to changing with the world

I would argue that this briefly sketched stance I call “all-too modern” is a remnant of a humanist and anthropocentric contraction of the political to an only-human and only-societal (in the humanist sense) project. The classical political ideologies of modernity tend to claim that it is humanity that has to change the world to become a good place – and such remnants of messianic providence are strongly connected to occidental Reason’s tendency to think itself outside of / transcendent to the real, messy world. Political ideals, it sometimes seems, were for the very longest time understood to be Platonist ideals that would only have to be realized in this ephemeral world.

I would argue that such Monorationalist residues are not only epistemologically flawed / short-sighted, but that they are in fact harmful for the political ideal (whatever it may particularly be) to have a chance to realize itself as a process in the world (I will argue for this in the next sub-chapter d).

A significant parameter changes when ‘the ecological’ intrudes in occidental discourse: new popular political voices do no longer call humanity to change the world, much rather, they are warning us

that the earth is changing fast, and we should be compelled to adopt to that problem. This can be best, and most widely known, exemplified with Greta Thunberg (born 2003), the young Swedish climate activist, who paradigmatically phrased this shift at her speech at the U.N.'s Climate Action Summit in New York City on the 23rd of September 2019 with the words: “change is coming, whether you like it or not.” I think we should not misunderstand this sentence as a description of a purely-human political uprising. Much rather, I believe that Thunberg is referring to our biosphere that is facing the largest turmoil and parameter-shift in at least 10.000 years. This change is *coming, whether we like it or not*. And it is up to us to *react* accordingly to this new becoming worldlings, even if we still would have preferred the old modern smooth way of living. Contrary to modern instincts of making life better for humans, the catastrophe some call the Anthropocene is imposing us to change for better or for worse. We cannot (and should not, if we do not want to make things even worse (see sub-chapter e)) try to proactively *create* or *maintain* another, better world, but much rather refrain from pure, human exceptionalist agency and let the change that is happening anyways transform us (with it).

In contemporary political thinking, we actually see the slow and creeping emergence of a profound and very consequential shift of agency: it is no longer the human “revolutionary” subject that is considered as the political agent bringing about change. Much more, it is our ground, our literal standpoint on this planet, that is changing: matters are understood as the manifold agent in bringing about change and – realizing ourselves to be a part of that mattering – we have to develop new and old strategies and reasonings to act political with the world: not against, neither for it.

Such a shift in agency can tend to require any political will-to-change-things to become much more inclusive than those of an old “revolutionary” ideology. Where adherents of a political group that wants to change the world tended to form small, and often clandestine underground or avant-garde groups that believe themselves to be the vanguard of the change to come, the political being of the Anthropocene should in fact work *diplomatically* on finding new and weird, sometimes difficult alliances between many (human and non-human) stakeholders. Even if we do not like bacteria, viruses, algae, weeds, spiders, slimes and other such more negatively connoted critters, they still perform a vitally important role in a more-than-human chaosmos. Additionally, within the spectrum of humanoids, a plurality of opinions and standpoints is needed to be in line with the manifold ways of relating and reasoning with a particular environment. Thus, where the “all-too modern” idea of the political claimed unity (among humans) by one transcendent Reason, the political unifier becomes immanent in ecological reasonings: it is the Earth that unifies us but can, with good reasonings, never be reduced to one principle, one logic or one truth. We are realizing ourselves to be an integral part of a messy, dynamic and open entanglement that is much more fuzzy than pure and transcendent Reason – and does still, in a somewhat always elusive, never-fully-to-grasp way, unify us. Political thinking and acting never stops at one finally attained truth (the phantasm of the

“post-revolutionary world”) but becomes a never ending part of – to remember Lapoujade’s words – the ongoing process of “populating the earth”.

d) more effective than war

So how can, in such an immanently *grounded* understanding, any political action become effective? Surely, the above mentioned ideals of the revolutionary cells and their truths they want to convey onto the world were proven quite ineffective by history: the more violent and enclosed these self-acclaimed revolutionary groups became, the more parts of society were turned away from the ideals they fought for – even if they would have been, in other – “softer” – contexts, been generally open to the very same ideas. We should take distance from ideologies and discourses that claim *the* true stance and rather experiment with a plurality of stances and how they apply and what they stimulate in different respective environments and fields of application.

I am at times quite baffled by the bitter and frequently hostile discussions I witness in political theory departments and elsewhere between proponents of contemporary *chic* theories, be they – to give some example – Mouffe’ian radical democracy, Badiou’ian marxism or Negri’ian workerism. To me, they often still seem to cling to a need to sort out once and for all which take on the world and its politics must be the right one. Even if, in theory, many political thinkers would agree with the necessity of pluralism for any open society to work, in argumentative practice they often reveal themselves to be fighters for the one and only Reason.

Of course, such academic, argumentative battle-sceneries can be helpful to refine one’s own adequate standpoint. But it seems to me that it is too frequently forgotten that every one of these positions needs the others to critically distinguish themselves from. In an inter-relational understanding of Reasoning, anything that touches us discursively – positively or negatively – forms our theory. It might be unpopular among critical beings to write this, but: Marxists need capitalism as a concept. They wouldn’t be able to formulate the ideals and scenarios of achieving a better world if they couldn’t have capital and its rather disputable Ism to critically discern themselves of.

As argued in the last sub-chapter, in Ecological Reasonings, our political positioning does not come from a transcendent, unchangeable sphere, but is grounded in our particular way of populating the earth. Since we have learned that inter-species, inter-cultural, inter-natural interdependence is the vital norm of sharing this planet, there can never ever be only one form of positioning ourselves on this round planet. We cannot aspire to change the world in one single way according to our abstract ideals but should neither become fatalist in such an insight and refrain from any political action at all.

Any political act is also a mode of reflecting and attempting to change our grounding and form of populating the earth. Taking this into account, ecological reasonings do better if they regard

themselves as part of the problem, not the solution (chapter 4d): as political entities, one can understand one's grounding as problematic and try to change it, meaning: try to change (with) the conditions that form this particular form of relating to the planet (chapter 7g & 8j). Our and other's political positions are part of the vitally impure soil they come from, an ecological reasoning should embrace and accept them as such.

As we worked out with Isabelle Stengers in chapter 4d, this "respecting of established sentiments" does not necessarily result in an apolitical defeatism. Much rather, it acts as a reasonable insight into how one's own political goal can become more effective – it is the incorporation of strategy in the realm of the political.

Following Stenger's pragmatic insight, a political – as much as a scientific (compare Excursion 6) – position should never disqualify any sentiments, even if they are opposed to it. This is not because it wants to tolerate the other position in a shallow version of neoliberal multi-culti where everything co-exists in vacuum-like spaces without any visible exchange on the surface – creating lots of toxic turmoil in the undergrounds. But exactly because it wants to change the other's position and knows that by apriori disqualifying the opposed sentiment, it weakens its own base, for it intrinsically creates opposition to it. It is much harder to convince anybody if you tell them they are wrong from the start. Much rather, in taking the opposed feelings, reasonings and positionings serious and affirmatively attempting to understand from which particular grounding in the earth such a position can possibly sprout from, it can gain political effectiveness. This can either – in rarer cases – lead to 1) convincing the other of your position by showing and making appreciable the way from their to your position (which requires exploring this way yourself first) or 2) lead to an interchange between the two positions that creates a third – and possibly stronger e.g., more globally applicable – stance. This second option requires the risk and simultaneous joy of permanently accepting the becoming and never-arriving of one's own position.

e) what role for political ideals?

In such an understanding of an ever fluid, fluctuating chaosmos, it might at first glance seem that there is no place for values, ideals or customs of a good living and dying together in a shared civilization. Whereas this used to be a reproach that traditionally came from the political right-wing spectrum, in recent years this somewhat became introduced as an acceptable position among leftists and progressives witnessing the socio-cultural Backlash that marked our most recent history. In watching the populist and radical right undermining democracy and its institutions, many turned to claiming the need for universalisms such as the universal declaration of human rights and other such charters.

While this reaction is emotionally understandable, it should not lead us to overshoot the mark and become part of the same cultural backlash on a higher level in turning back to Platonism in

exclaiming universal, unchangeable laws and rules to be necessary for societal holding-together. By merely defending established values, we become reactionary and let others have the field of actively shaping the political realities while we try to decelerate this tendency. To over-come this – in the most direct sense of the word – reactionary tendency among progressives and leftists, it is necessary for us to embrace new ideals and a new understanding of how ideals work.

For this task, I find Barbara Kirchner's and Dietmar Dath's approach in their book *Implex* particularly helpful. Taking an analogy from mathematics, they claim: "0 is nothing, but you need it to calculate" (Dath and Kirchner 2012, min 16:30 ff.) – when the zero was first introduced in India as a mathematical concept, it allowed to calculate and tackle problems one couldn't do before. The same is true for political ideals.

The sentence "all men are equal" is by no means anything tangible – for what exactly would it mean? Equality in rights? In property? In wealth? In size? In gender? In skin color?

As much as zero enabled certain mathematical operations to happen, the idea of "equality of men" made certain political processes possible. For the questions and struggles only start when it is used: who are "all men" - those of all color and classes? What about children? Disabled people? Violent criminals? Does the term "men" as an archaic way of denoting humanity, include, then, other genders? If so, why?

The ideal of such abstract "nothings" as "equality of men" can trigger such questions and struggles – make them possible where they have hitherto been unthinkable. Ideals are – in this understanding – nothing complete, absolute and intrinsically good. They are abstract interventions producing certain effects in specific historical and social situations that are ready and open for it.

Similar historical examples of such ideals that Kirchner and Dath offer are that of "God" – who allowed profound discussion about justice – or "natural law" – that, albeit empirically wrong, stimulated debates that lead to the establishment of rudimentary social state with basic human rights, according to Kirchner and Dath. The strength in their "fiction with concepts as main protagonists" is that the notion of political progress and ideals is liberated from Platonist problems of the essence of ideals: they are nothing concrete one can once attain and then for ever hold.

By highlighting the interventive, performative nature of ideals, the emphasis shifts from the postulation and vindication of ideals to a cultivation of ecological awareness about which ideal might trigger certain desired effects in the current specific situation. In a world understood through pluralized reasonings, there cannot be only one ideal that would be the right one everywhere and once and for all.

Globally, some of the pressing questions in this time called the Anthropocene are: does the declaration of universal human rights still create enough interventionist dynamic to create badly needed societal change? And if so, in what fields exactly? And in those fields, it doesn't: what else could do the trick? And what about the fields that do concern our relationship with other, non-

humanoid, modes of beings on this planet: what political ideal could create enough dynamics and irritations to stimulate progress in these domains? Does Thunberg's sentence "change is coming, whether you like it or not" already lead the way? Or the ZADist slogan of "we are not defending nature, we are nature defending itself?" Time will show.

f) The port of Antwerp must sink! - eco-capitalism

As we wait for the most effective ideals to crystallize in the current reformulation of political movements, we should, however, stay alert of something that seems to use very similar strategies ("fight with similar weapons" would be the all-too modern phrasing) but would lead us to an even more prolonged catastrophe – it is time to write about "eco-capitalism", "green economy" or other such contemporary labels.

Of course, "capitalism" – as much as "capital" – are infinitely large concepts that seem to stretch and change their meanings over time. Similar as "Reason" (or "Vernunft"), "Capital" ("Kapital") is almost always only used in the singular form. This should make us suspicious and query about the entanglement of capital in occidental culture's tendency to unify and universalize concepts central to its epistemological regime. I tend to believe that a thorough pluralization of the concept of "capital" and subsequently "capitalism" would be needed for Leftists to tackle some of the difficult entanglements even the most ardent Marxist cannot liberate herself from with certain capitalisms¹⁸². However, the place for such a "pluralization of capital" would have to be elsewhere. The more concise aim of this sub-chapter is to develop a quick glance over a fairly new form of capitalism that – contrary to its older, more work-centered & industrially inspired modes – uses *ecological* insights to maximize (or at least stabilize and continue) the accumulation of capital. These quick illustrations will make us understand that a monorationalist affirmation of ecological reasonings would be naive. A critical awareness of how ecological reasonings can also be set in motion by the wheels of capital is needed to steer away from the more dystopian (and longer) scenarios of how the Anthropocene will pan out.

In her ongoing work *The promises of the wetlands*, Benedikte Zitouni illustrates this point poignantly with a critical examinations of the recent endeavors of the Flemish right-wing government to restore the wetlands behind the port of Antwerp. "In 2005, the Flemish government agreed to return the marshes to a delta that has lost so many of them in the last decades in the interest of the economy. The diked river needs more breathing space; nature must again be developed on the banks to promote a more natural interplay of shallow and deep waters." (Zitouni 2020, 304) At first glance – and as promoted by the official communication – these endeavors are a success story of society finally come to ecological reason: the pollution of the Scheldt (the most

¹⁸² I think Pierre Bourdieu lead the way in such a speculative pluralization of Capital by discerning „cultural capital“ and „Social capital“ (both of which many established (post-)Marxist are quite good at accumulating) from „classical“ material or financial capital. Another piste one could follow in pluralizing capital would be that of Whitehead's philosophy of science, who talks about „accumulated capital of ideas“ (Whitehead 1970, 40) in the context of understanding scientific progress.

polluted river of Western Europe since the 80ies) decreased and a larger number of the endangered migratory bird population returned to the newly conceded wetlands.

However, Zitouni urges us to look behind this all-too simple narration of industry and government finally come to their ecological senses and examine the deeper, never officially communicated motivations for conceding more space to natural reserves (while not forgetting to mention that many farmers were expelled from their lands in the process).

It is worth noting that in 2001, the combined efforts of inhabitants, ecologists and farmers succeeded to stop the land grabbing of the port which was going on continually since the 60ies. Since the port lost millions because of this activist success, “one might be tempted to think that in 2005, the Government, with the support of the Port, decided to ‘give back’ the wetlands in order to get rid of the obstacle” (Ibid. 305) and continue their expansionist and exploitative business as usual.

But there is even another, deeper-lying rationale behind the restoration of the Flemish wetlands: already in the 80ies, it was realized that a pollution and exploitation of the river as it was happening since the 60ies would soon make global container trade impossible because of coastal erosion and natural degradation that would make the port inaccessible to large vessels. To counter this erosive development, the engineers, health staff and ecologists contracted by the Flemish government worked on models on how to “develop nature” (Ibid. 306) to increase the resilience of the current extractivist status quo of the port’s global capitalist expansion. “They conceived of the river basin as a system of interrelated functions and processes which had to be optimized. In the 1990s, they presented their ecological restoration reports to the Flemish Government and recommended increasing the sedimentation areas, which amounted, they said, to boosting the ‘self-cleansing capacity’ of the river. As they would put it more covertly in 2004 when addressing the public, sedimentation areas, for example, new protected wetlands, allow particles of all sorts to settle, hence they fulfill a valuable ‘bio-reactor’ function.” (Ibid. 306)

With this example, Zitouni shows impressively how capitalist agents (the port of Antwerp is the second largest of Europe and holds factory sites of multi-national corporations such as Solvay, Monsanto, BASF, Shell and Total) already included ecological reasonings into their extractive strategies to maintain the status quo in the face of ecological collapse. “[I]t is obvious that the motive of the ecological restoration project, its guiding force, lies in the Port’s need for deeper and more navigable waters” (Ibid. 306) Contemporary capitalism and “today’s modernist gigantism involves ecological restoration. [...] The global port is drawing wetlands into its expansion equations and merging two systems, the estuarine one and the port one, to form a single integrated and highly consolidated Scheldt ecosystem that must play its role on the map of international trade and production. [...] The new wetlands hold a promise, and it is a systemic one, a sinister one, of

business continuing regardless. The call for optimization means nothing else – let business continue.” (Ibid. 307)

This concrete case study exemplifies a general tendency in contemporary capitalism. Capitalism becoming “eco-” and “green” means that it more and more includes ecological reasonings as strategies to maintain the capitalist status quo when facing the ecological catastrophe that was – in the first place – brought forth by the capitalist way of life and relating to the planet. It can thus be understood as the attempt to continue a catastrophic lifestyle (for a small elite minority) in times of ecological catastrophe one can no longer oversee.

As Orit Halpern illustrates in her work *The Smart Mandate* (Halpern 2017), in such eco-capitalist ventures, the term “Resilience” (in an exactly contrary way than the one I propose in chapter 6) becomes a key concept to deal with as a vehicle to reason about how to maintain the extractability and “capital-usefulness” of our planet in a changing, declining environment. Where capital investment traditionally was based on predictable outcomes, in times of ecological disasters financial speculation becomes risk management of unpredictable events. The unpredictable becomes key to such resilient, capitalist reasoning and investing. By attempting to manage the environment in order to augment its resilience (such as the hugely endangered coastal cities of New York or Singapore central to contemporary capital flow), one tries to save the most capital-intensive nodes of the current system, thus being predominately occupied with the survival of the current system rather than the species.

A one-sided affirmative embrace of any agent who reasons *ecologically* (outside of Reason’s constitutive nature-culture divide and in a relational entanglement with corporealities and environments of thought) is thus all-too simple. As Zitouni’s example exemplifies, ecological reasonings can appear to be deeply entangled with the still-dominant way of humanly relating to the planet: capitalism. In one-sidedly affirming Ecological Reasonings without critical scrutiny, one risks that a new ecological capitalism makes such an – monorationalized – Ecological Reason its main agent of continuing anthropocentric dominance over the planet and thus make the time of the human-made catastrophe called the Anthropocene much longer than necessary. If we wish to shorten the Anthropocene, a pluralisation of reasonings in which relational entanglements are an inherent consideration and active practice should be the better way.

g) Alien ways of reasoning politically without words

To end this chapter, we will turn our backs to such human, all-too-human ways of colonizing the ecological conundrum and will escape into the fictional & speculative to think with aliens & more creatively about other ways of thinking the political as an ecological relation to our modes of populating the planet.

In her *chef d’oeuvre* trilogy *Xenogenesis* (later rebranded as *Lillith’s Brood*) – published between 1987 and 1989 – Octavia Butler tells the story of a humanity that has to learn how to deal with the

catastrophe that already happened and is still happening. After an unspecified nuclear war, humanity went almost extinct and its last survivors awake onboard a strange, organic, plant-like spaceship hovering over the planet. They learn that the alien race of the Oankali has rescued them from certain death and is now proposing them a choice between two – to the anthropos’ eyes – horrible alternatives: either they are let in peace to die away on their decaying and poisoned planet or they can mate with the Oankali to form a new alien species.

Whereas humans – especially in their long-monorationalized way of populating the planet as anthropoi – attach great importance on their essence of being human in such and such way, their Oankali saviors are – completely contrary – something one could call a non-essential, ever fluid species. They live from mutation. As a space-migratory species, the move from one inhabited planet to another and propose with the respective species to mate and mingle. Thus, they always change form, always *become* something different and never maintain a stable form or gene pool. They are ever mutating *becomings* inviting humanity to go on a mutational journey with them or perish.

In that – and among many other ways of interpretation – the Oankali are an apt and particularly useful metaphor for the ecological catastrophe of the Anthropocene, for they present us with an impossible alternative: either we cling to our essentialist human form cherished as anthropos and will quite certainly die out after long and horrible struggles on a decreasingly humanely habitable planet. Or we affirm the catastrophe we are in (and responsible for) and accept to change and transform with it: *for better and for worse*. The third option of maintaining the status quo is revealed to be not an option: in fact, some – mostly male – humans try to go that way, but it grows clearer to us that their alternative is a false one that will lead to prolonged and horrible suffering and dying.

What is – among so many other things – particularly interesting in Butler’s SF is that this catastrophe is nothing malevolent or evil. The aliens – as much as the drastic change in our biosphere – are not evil and they do not come with bad intentions: they are not a godly vengeance punishing a babylonian humanity: they are just how they are: and ever-changing, ever-adapting multitudinous life-form that invites humanity to change with them.

For our investigation of the political & ecological reasonings, it is intriguing to examine how they try to “do politics” with the humans, meaning: how they try to convince and persuade the humans to go on a mutational journey with them.

Whereas our humanly way of doing politics (with all its treatises, contracts, chartas, speeches and declarations of intent) is essentially based on the exchange of words and language, the Oankali didn’t even have organs for verbal speech when arriving at planet earth. Among them, they do not communicate their tensions or problems (or, for that matter, themselves) with externalizable words, and so therefore, they had to develop such capacity merely to interact with the humans they want to mingle with. Lies do not exist for them, for an untruth can only be stated in words. In the more

bodily & sensual Oankali way of relating, one can feel the corporeal position of the interlocutor and thus untruth cannot really exist.

As an Oankali explains: “There had always been a fear among Humans that we could read their thoughts. [...] Most had never understood that it was their bodies we read inside and out. And if we were alert and competent [...] their bodies kept few secrets.” (O. E. Butler 2000, 729)

For the human way of politics since the Enlightenment period, the freedom and illegibility of thought is a central trope as expressed in the popular German folk song *Die Gedanken sind frei* popularized by Hoffmann von Fallersleben in 1842:

Thoughts are free, who can guess them?
They fly by like nocturnal shadows.
No person can know them, no hunter can shoot them
with powder and lead: Thoughts are free!

I think what I want, and what delights me,
still always reticent, and as it is suitable.
My wish and desire, no one can deny me
and so it will always be: Thoughts are free!

However, when dealing with the aliens, this political requirement can no longer be upheld. For the Oankali – and especially their third sex “ooloi” – communicate with scents and other ways of corporeal relating. As an ooloi puts it: “My scent and Aaor’s probably could not convert these people quickly without direct contact, but our scents could make everyone more likely to believe what we said. We could persuade them to do what they knew they really should do.” (O. E. Butler 2000, 735) Which, in this case, was the surrendering and mingling with the aliens.

This is – by most humans – perceived as an unfair manipulation. They do not feel taken serious in their freely established thoughts and opinions.

“Humans tended to misunderstand ooloi when ooloi said things like that. Humans thought the ooloi were promising that they would do nothing until the Humans said they had changed their minds—told the ooloi with their mouths, in words. But the ooloi perceived all that a living being said—all words, all gestures, and a vast array of other internal and external bodily responses. Ooloi absorbed everything and acted according to whatever consensus they discovered. Thus, ooloi treated individuals as they treated groups of beings. They sought a consensus. If there was none, it meant the being was confused, ignorant, frightened, or in some other way not yet able to see its own best interests. The ooloi gave information and perhaps calmness until they could perceive a consensus. Then they acted.” (Ibid. 553)

This alien way of convincing people breaks with a long-standing body-mind-dualism as expressed in *Die Gedanken sind frei*. Anthropocentric political thinking assumes that our thoughts – expressed in words – are independent from the material realities they try to apply them to. In such understanding, ideals are transcendent, Platonist ideas that have to be – rather violently – realized on this planet. The Oankali perspective breaks with this deep-rooted political belief and shows us – whether we want it or not – that our thoughts and political opinions are always a relational process with the earthly ground on which we stand. They cannot be neatly separated from the smelly, messy world out of which they grow.

From such an angle, working with corporealities (those you consider your own and others) becomes a central part of political work and reasoning. The ooloi way of regarding any person as a multitudinous assemblage of many critters and directions (remember the microbial turn of chapter 9j) is breaking with a logocentrism that takes serious only the political stances humans have the ability to express in words (lets remember that this possibility is dependent on education and certain privileged class standings only an elite majority of humans can access). Our arguments and political positions are only the proverbial “tip of the iceberg” of an ecology of embodied politicality and corporeal politics.

Disputes over rational arguments and contradicting standpoints lose political centrality once we become aware of the incorporation of our reasonability and how every standpoint is made from a certain milieu and corporeal regime of relating to the planet. So many disputes in the academic sphere become futile because they – in traditional occidental ways – detach their opinions from their corporeal standpoint and fight bitter wars over the first, while completely ignoring how they all sit in the same manner, eat similar food, breath similar airs and have a specific way of relating to the corporeality.

Reasoning *with* our corporeal entanglement with this planet will lead us to a very different way of doing politics – one, in which the Oankali way might not seem that alien as it is first perceived. In the time of the Anthropocene, the ecological catastrophe can be perceived as exactly such an alien: our classical way of Reason (based on a body-mind dualism) could never incorporate it into its realm of reasonability and thus declared it alien to Reason. Yet, in a time in which our material connection and standpoint on the planet is in ecological turmoil, this alien is invading us in ways we can no longer ignore. The catastrophe is happening, whether *we like it or not*. It challenges our bodily ways of thinking politics. As Octavia Butlers xenogenesis excursion can show us, in times of such catastrophe, we can only reason with the corporeal entanglement and transform with it. Whereas traditional politics was only concerned with mastering and crafting the best arguments, an ecological politics would have to develop corporeal techniques and reflections of how to convince people and critters to live in such and such ways: forms of “populating the planet” differently, more inclusively. This directly leads us to domains that are more frequently associated to the field of the

arts: performance arts and other ways of artistic incorporation. The last chapter of this PhD will thus be devoted to ecological reasonings & the arts.

13) Ecological reasonings & the arts

a) the modern division of arts and science

Whereas „Science“ is up until today referred to mainly in the singular form (see chapter 9b), „the arts“ – as in „Academy of Fine Arts“, „Arts & Science“, „Support the Arts!“ – are more frequently mentioned in their plural than their singular form. It would be absurd to try to find one single denominator that could usefully unify every “artistic” form of creation from performative interventions and musical composition to sculpture, literature or poetry, just to name a few. One might argue that this in fact also holds true for what is denominated as “the sciences”: the practices, approaches and prerequisites of ethological biology have little in common with astrophysics, those of quantitative sociology little with musicology and those of anthropological field research little with inorganic chemistry.

As we have learned during this PhD, the concept of Science was a central ideological tool to the European modern undertaking of unifying / monorationalizing *one* Reason that was believed to secure anthropocentric dominance over the planet. Thus, everything called “Science” had to – at least tentatively – try to fit into one method, one form of Reason. That this never really happened or did take place is another point – what counts is the ideological motivation of Monorationalism so central to majoritarian streams of occidental Reasonings.

At the beginning of Modernity, the distinction of “science” and “the arts” was not as definite as it is perceived today (by many). For the idealized European “Renaissance men” such as Michelangelo or Da Vinci, arts and sciences were essentially one – and to progress in one necessarily entailed progression in the other. Even Descartes himself still referred to disciplines such as logic, geometrical analysis and algebra as “arts or branches of knowledge” (Descartes 2008a, 16). The separation of arts and sciences is a fairly recent phenomenon and a result of the advanced industrialization and specialization of humanoid life and research forms that only really took concrete form in the latter half of the 19th century. Whereas sciences – as “Science” – were esteemed to be the golden way to success, the arts became seen as something ... nice but not really relevant to what was considered human progress (which was and still is mainly understood as “technological progress” - see Excursion 6). In the monorationalistic regime of occidental culture, everything that did not fit the image of one unified reason was thus put into the plural label of “the arts”, while what was widely agreed to be of help was confined to the very narrow parameters of Reason.

This, I would argue, deeply obstructs creativity and progress (in a not-only technological sense) in both realms: “scientific work” is restricted to extremely specialized research questions that – in all their focus on detail – almost intrinsically tend to lose the “bigger picture”. The methods and hidden assumptions are often unreflectedly reproduced and the work of scientists frequently becomes an

extremely uncreative, almost robotic task of confirming priory existing assumptions about a minor detail behaving so and so under such and such a condition. The “Denkzwang” described by Ludwik Fleck (see chapter 9n) to appear whenever a science becomes so closed and narrow in its style of thought that it expels other approaches with disdain still is a dominant trait of much scientific “business as usual” today.

On the other hand, “artistic creation” becomes stigmatized as airy and futile speculation that might be nice to watch / hear / smell / feel but has no relevant grounding on the hard Earth of facts. At best, it can be seen as an exercise in futility and an exhibiting of the relevance of musing for humans, but artists had – and still have – a very hard time if they actually want to argue that they in fact do serious research and can share consequential knowledge acquired from their practice.

b) the boom of trans-disciplinarity in the face of Anthropocene

Luckily, this changes. Buzzwords like “transdisciplinary” or “interdisciplinary” become selling points in more and more application processes and many art institutions and fewer scientific institutions become open and interested in an exchange between – what C.P. Snow (1959) called – the “two cultures”. I myself have been fortunate enough to – as an arts student in my MA program called “Arts & Science” – do trans-disciplinary and artistically motivated work with and about CERN and the largest hospital of Austria called AKH.

In the wake of the Anthropocene, it dawns us that our normalized modern ways of separating the world and our fields of knowledge about it were and are hugely problematic. The essential role of narrative elements (see Excursion 4) becomes understood as a central motivator in even what was considered to be the “hardest” science: Newtonian physics that, as Eco-Feminist critique made palpable (chapter 3.B and 5.Ca), is deeply entrenched with patriarchal, colonialist images and bias – even the description of “hard” science could be seen as an erectile metaphor as opposed to squashy, fluid, “soft” science.

Today, theories like the “Aquatic Ape Theory” (Morgan 1999; Parisi 2004, 177 ff.) are used as narrative interventions to challenge and de-stratify normalized, patriarchal narrations such as the “Savanna theory” of the evolution of humankind. It is not even about the point whether the ape evolved into *homo erectus* because of men the Savanic tool maker or the female child-bearers and care-takers preferring water – what such narrative interventions show is that every scientific theory is inseparable from cultural norms and values – and to work on the one automatically entails to work on the other as well.

Thus, the essential role of narrative strategies (classically always seen on the side of “the arts”) thus becomes visible in the sciences – which in itself is more and more seen as a plurality of approaches to make sense of the world that can no longer that strictly be separated from the arts. To find a new narration can often also mean: to fertilize the grounds for the discovery of such and such facts. In such a world, what is called the arts can stimulate those so called scientific insights.

Such stories about the communion of arts and sciences in our times of ecological precariousness are necessary, yet they still reflexively hold on to a primacy of sciences over the arts, tending to reproduce a concept of creativity and technological innovation that is confined to the narrow realms of eco-capitalist technophilia. It is much more argued that the arts can inspire and help scientific insights than it is praised how scientific insights can inspire artistic creation. But in fact, many artistic strategies on the realms and brims of disciplinary borders have developed techniques, knowledges and approaches that could lead us to a much more sustainable, much less anthropocentric, megalomaniac approach of inhabiting the earth.

As already hinted at in Excursion 6, many performative, corporeal or emotional techniques could lead – if thoroughly developed – to a much larger progress of human and more-than-human living together than the technological promises of the new iPhone or the faster Tesla. The psychological, emotional insight developed by novelists such as Christa Wolf, Octavia Butler or Joseph Roth can be regarded as technologies of a better and deeper relating with others (human and non-human). Corporeal techniques such as Feldenkrais, Contact Improvisation, Butoh or 8os can be used as techniques to learn how to deal better with conflict, pain and the slow but steady changing of corporeal patterns of how we situate and position ourselves on the ground forming a part of the Earth. The stimulus of compositions in sound such as Sasu Ripatti's or in smell such as Wolfgang Georgsdorf's OSMODRAMA can teach us how thought as matter in a hypertechnical environment moves and how we can cultivate ways of relating to such new, sensual hyper-connectedness that reaches Reasonings that are much more subtle and profound than that of mere textual logic (Jörg 2017b; 2020c). Immersive installations such as Hito Steyerl's *Factory of the Sun* or Pamela Rosenkranz's *Our Product* can lure us into a relationship with problems that are worth a thorough critique, but still do not allow us to detach ourselves from it (Jörg 2017a).

I could go on with an abundance of – personally inspiring – examples of artworks that helped me to develop my reasonings and my standings in this ever-fluctuating chaosmos and I invite everyone who is interested in such musings to consult my writings on arts. However, this would overshoot the purpose of this short closing chapter about ecological reasonings. Instead of giving the appearance That i am speaking about how the vast plurality of the arts does relate to ecological reasonings in general, I want to give a few closing remarks and thoughts connected to the arts and ecological reasonings that are – mostly – inspired from my own artistic as well as theoretical practice. I will start with a return to last chapter's final musings about a politics of corporeality before proceeding to discuss the artful & affirmative creation of new norms, as well as new sensual cultivations, which will lead me to a final appreciation of a more sensual relating to the ecological catastrophe we call the Anthropocene. Whereas what is called science provides us with the abstract numbers, more creative and artful practices are needed to create a sensory awareness of the problem that is needed

to develop technologies of change and transformation towards more sustainable forms of humanoid culture.

c) Atmospheric Power

In the last chapter we have encountered “alien” perspectives that revealed to us the corporeality of politics. Whereas politics is still largely associated with the exchange and usage of words (in oral and written form), performative and dance practices traditionally associated with “the arts” can create knowledge and do work (hardly anywhere else are those two practices more connected) that is intrinsically political. As we have seen by the usage of Octavia Butler’s alien metaphor, the forming of political positions is a processual result of one corporeal, sensual relation to a specific grounding on the planet. Whereas it is visitors from outer space that “manipulate” the political opinions of humans in Butler’s SF by bodily stimulation, this practice is actually a standard procedure of politics in the contemporary world.

As Gernot Böhme (born 1937) in his influential work *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres* argues, the creation of atmospheres or environments goes hand in hand with what he calls – with Benjamin and Durth – the “aestheticization of politics” and the “staging of everyday life” (Böhme 2017, 27). Their knowledge and cultivation forms a form of “soft power” that is intangible and unconscious to the occidental understanding of the subject: “the subject experiences them as something ‘out there’, something which can come over us, into which we are drawn, which takes possession of us like an alien power.” (Ibid. 29) “Atmospheres are apprehended as powers which affect the subject; they have the tendency to induce in the subject a characteristic mood.” (Ibid)

A corporeal, aesthetic understanding of how atmospheres work and form us is necessary for a critical deconstruction of how hegemonic environments produce and stimulate (consciously and unconsciously) specific subjectivities in us and others. As established in chapter 6 and 8, our massively anthropogenically modified environments promote certain – ocularcentric, logocentric and anthropocentric – subjectivities that tend to form an auto-poetic viscous circle I called the “Resilience of Modernity” (Jörg 2020a) elsewhere. Our entanglement with our very specifically altered environments makes beings out of us that have huge – and mostly negative – political consequences. Apolitics for the Anthropocene needs to build on and affirmatively engage with what was traditionally seen as “artistic” practices in order to work on a modification of our environments to bring forth atmospheres that are more inclusive and welcoming for more various forms of living and dying on this planet. For this, insight of the plurality called “the arts” are essential.

d) changing corporeal regimes

For such a political reasoning, what is foremost needed is to engage with body-thinkers that have centered their work on our corporeal standing in the world and how it can be transformed. As my dancer-friend Diego Agulló puts it: “The catastrophe is to think that we already know what a body

can do and how a body can move” (Agulló 2020, 10) The Cartesian tradition so central to European modernity always believed it knows everything about the body, so it could safely put it aside as irrelevant to sound reasoning. This very “special, rarely happy relation to the sensuous” (chapter 8e) produced subjectivities and atmospheres that had catastrophic consequences for the biospheric equilibrium now lost. The catastrophe emerged from corporeal rigidity – and in the catastrophe we need to develop new modes of relating to problems in order to transform with them. To get out of this catastrophic atmosphere, Agulló advises us to “learn how to conduct oneself in life, to generate situations and contexts for problems to appear, for thought to take place. The philosopher should be like a choreographer creating context, and not just waiting to be invited to them.” (Ibid. 56)

A corporeal awareness of how we are situated in the ongoing, “slow” catastrophe can indeed help us build new subjectivities. For this it is necessary to *stay with the trouble* of sticky, anthropogenically modified matter and find queer ways to perform subjectivities in our massively normalized environments. We should learn how to make problems emerge in our standardized quotidian environments characterized by car traffic, racial and sexist discrimination, sensual deprivation and textual and verbal communication¹⁸³. These problems can help us to develop new and old forms of living more sustainably in the ruins of modernity.

From such a perspective, what was – with Octavia Butler’s help – introduced as “alien” no longer seems so strange at all. Politics that are fit for the Anthropocene will incorporate body knowledges and regard the positioning and moving of bodies as a central, political operation. This entails a sensibilization for the circumstance that every being (human or not) is always many: many (microbial) critters, many ideas, many opinions that frequently contradict each other. By *not* taking the political subject as a unity, one can zoom into the manifold elements that create a specific situation and emit atmospheric stimuli that might change the mood / inclination of the subject towards another equilibrium state of multitudinous elements resulting in another (equally contradictory) position. Under such a perspective, it is *not* politically effective to fight the one position visibly or audibly uttered by that subject. Much rather, it is advisable to *feel* into (“*dance with*”) what makes that position appear as predominant in that plural assemblage of opinions and reflect on how – with what stimuli – one could promote the emergence and becoming-majoritarian of other, minoritarian, elements in the same assemblage marking “subject status”. What is – in classical terms – frequently dismissed as “manipulation” might often merely be a consequence of the radical dissolution of the body-mind-dualism that is still deeply anchored in our political thinking. Most artistic forms of creation entail a sensibilization for the coexistence and manipulation of various, manifold currents: be they of tonal, narrative, pictorial or olfactorical nature.

¹⁸³ The 77 performative scores of my book „Backlash – Essays zur Resilienz der Moderne“ (2020) are designed to exactly do that.

e) Smelly Arts

Another *genre* of creative activities associated to the arts that is worth exploring is that of a cultivation of smell. As we have already established in chapter 3.Ce, smell might be considered the “most ecological” of the senses. Whereas the eyes – so dominant in our ocularcentric culture – require the distancing from the perceived (thus promoting causal and oversimplified, mechanistic object-logics), the nostrils can only work if one mingles with it. Smelling is breathing in: it is accepting your atmosphere and inviting it to enter you, to become a part of you and to change with it. It is a constant exchange with the microscopic components that make our processual life as permanent exchange with the environment possible.

In smell, there are no distinct units but what smells is always an assemblage of many bodies that only in an irreducible together-ness form the experience we apprehend olfactorily. Neither can one smell as an intentional subject: rather, one smells by giving up one’s closed and controlled subject position: one allows the smell to enter, to penetrate and to take one away to a manifold associative network of memories, subconscious influences and corporeal assemblages that reveal a deeper truth about any so-called subject: one can smell the psychological state of a person (in a way similar to the Ooloi of last chapter). Whatever the outspoken positions of that person might be, in examining their pheromone communication, one pursues the way of a much deeper atmospheric relation towards the other. What appeared – in an ocularcentric regime – as two distinct, closed entities is, in the world of smells, already always and interchanging, intermingling affair of processional exchange. A metaphysics of intermingled bodies and permanent becoming will have to follow the nose much more than the hitherto privileged eyes.

In this exploration of our olfactory embeddedness in the world, the arts and a cultivation of smell can lead the way to a deep and long-lasting rearticulation of how we order and structure our very much lived through culture and society.

In this realm, there is still a lot of work to do, for most artistic endeavors are still focused on acoustic and visual strategies and the few positions that artistically work on smells merely focus on what our culture deems as “positive” and “good” smells: the art of perfume making. As I argue elsewhere in greater detail (Jörg 2020c), an artistic development of working creatively with smells in composition and narrative speculation could lead the way to a profound change towards a more ecologically sensible and much less anthropocentrically centered form of humanoid culture. Our nose could help us to re-include ourselves in novel and old forms of relating to the planet we have distanced and alienated ourselves from by centering our culture too much on the eye¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸⁴ As Siri Hustvedt (2018, 207 ff.) argues, our sensual perception of the world is only differentiated into distinct, separated senses in the courses of the first months and years of child development. This plasticity of our senses shows that there could in fact be another order of the senses if we would change our environments in radical ways to favor the development and focus of other senses.

f) reworking cultural categories

For this, I believe it is necessary to overcome and play with our culturally construed distinctions between the good and the bad, the fragrant and the smelly, the straight and the queer, the brilliant and the muddy. What Nietzsche inaugurated with his slogan-ready *Beyond Good and Evil* can still help us today as a guiding principle for the reworking of our culture on its most profound levels: that of incorporated, culturally embedded evaluations and inclinations. This reevaluation of all values does not only entail moral codes or other legislative-like regulatories, but also our very corporeal entanglements with the world and their habituated judgments and positionings. For example, and as we have already touched (felt, smelt) on earlier, our culture is prone to frown upon what is smelly, muddy or slimey (essential conditions of anything living (Grillmayr 2019)), while “we” are inclined to favor the clean, the neat and the distinct (that much more represent “cold”, inorganic objects). Our classical metaphysics favors distinct objects with causal relations. Our heroes are clear-cut individuals that move untouched by their corporeal entanglement with the more-than-human world and only by the power of their loudly expressed free will, excluding a larger awareness of his embeddedness in a specific situation (chapter 7h). Many of us still see “queer” as a prerogative and “straight” as an ideal, be it in cosmic or sexual domains. We are afraid of spiders or bacteria, although they perform vital tasks for the health of our bodies and the environment. We love cats, although the little predator – in its suburban overabundance – creates significant ecological problems by locally extinguishing small rodents and larger insects. We tear out plants dismissed as “weeds” and try to extinguish so called “invasive species” in vegetal and animal form, although they often perform a central task of readjusting the local ecosystem to the changing climate and soil conditions (Pearce 2015).

Such examples abound and could go on forever. Since our culture is footed on so many ecologically catastrophic assumptions, so many of our culturally learned and handed down values and customs do need a profound reworking. Which societal branch could inspire such transformations better than the domain of “the arts” that, since European Modernity, always maintained the culturally ascribed position of standing outside the norm and being – to a certain degree – free from cultural and societal restrictions. By *exhibiting* the contradictions of our cultural values, the arts can make palpable / visible / audible / tangible what is usually overseen exactly because it is so normal. By exhibiting the norm, it can become – through scandal, revelation or silent shift of opinions – a matter of discussion and be eventually transformed. For this, it will become necessary to – with a new verve and refocused on extra-societal norms – break the rules in order to make palpable where the borders of categories such as nature / culture, masculine / feminine, good / bad, sustainable / unsustainable define our culture in its problematic and therefore transformable ways (Jörg 2020b).

Let's breath in what is considered smelly, let's confront ourselves with what we learned to fear and find repugnant, let's explore new ways of integrating and living better with invaders and newcomers of any species, let's investigate how toxicity does affect our and other bodies, let's listen to the stories that tell us how the hero wouldn't be the hero without his network of friends, foes, cultural preconditions and environmental entanglements, let's explore how queer our own and other's bodily entanglement and desire is and how our many bodies always mingle. Under such an angle, artistic creation can lead the way to transform our normal ways of relating to the environments.

g) More than critique: creating new norms as aesthetic practices

The role of artistic work, with its process as means and ends, always exceeds a critical denunciation. Whereas it is important to deconstruct existing norms, it is equally necessary to emphasize the need for the affirmative construction of new and better normativities. In fact, in creative practices, it is hard to separate one from the other: from a critical assessment of a certain status-quo follows an artistic, affirmative repositioning of that normality – analysis is directly followed by a new synthesis.

I find Alexis Shotwell's concept of "open normativities" helpful in that regard. Coming from queer and disability studies, she argues against a purely negative understanding of norms and normativity and urges us to affirm the collective construction of new and "open" normativities. "Under conditions of oppression, norms generally do not proliferate ways of flourishing. Rather, they delimit and constrain the ways of being once can take up, and they contribute to the death and degradation of people who fall outside currently normative bounds" (Shotwell 2016, 156). But, as she argues, this is not the only way norms can be put into practice. She "understands normality to mean the process by which people claim that a given way of being is good or beautiful, or to be endorsed. Notice that this conception of normativity is nonrestrictive: there may be many recommended ways of being. Endorsing a way of being is distinct from endorsing the idea that everyone ought to be that way" (Ibid. 143)

According to Shotwell, the predominant rejective attitude towards normativity has the problem of regarding it too much on a merely individual level, without understanding that any corporeal position is always a result of a collective and normative process and entanglement. A mere rejection of any normativity would "individualize[...] our resistance, obscuring the agency of power involved in setting norms, and it makes it hard to talk about the normative claims we queers and feminists want to make." (Ibid. 143) If, instead, "normativity can be understood as facilitating a too-easy collapse of complex subjectivity into one or two options, forming new orthodoxies is an important part of the collective work to forge more capacious and diverse ways of being. Shaping new ways of knowing and being with altered criteria for what will count as successfully meeting relevant

norms – creating new normativities – opens the possibility for finding our bearings even in the process of working to change the world.” (Ibid. 154)

Shotwell exemplifies this affirmative and inclusive collective creation of new norms with the work of the disability justice based performance project *Sins Invalid*. As Shotwell puts it, they perform new (non-heteronormative, non-ablist) standards of beauty that can set new and liberating norms that can help to make society more inclusive and less anthropocentric in it’s narrow, humanist sense. “Creating new normativities is always in part an aesthetic project in the sense that it aims to shift the grounds for judgment. It is perhaps most effective, then, to use aesthetic forms to directly alter the conditions of judgment, to claim beauty in the face of invisibility.” (Ibid. 159)

I would argue that this practice of collectively creating new and plural, open norms needs to be a central motivation for any responsible art making in the times of the Anthropocene. In aesthetically reworking our habituated and culturally traditionalist normalities we can – slowly but steadily – make the profound transformation that is needed to learn and relearn¹⁸⁵ the manifold new and old forms of *living and dying on a damaged planet* we badly need. A mere – in traditional terms – rational overturning and changing of some of our outspoken values and moral codes will not suffice. Much rather should we seek to alter and rework our corporeal, always-collective, never singular relation to the planetary environment we ground ourselves on in its profoundest and most incorporated and normalized ways. For this, a transdisciplinary fusion of what was called “Science” as opposed to “the arts” (as well as parts of societal segments that are ascribed to be spiritual, religious, political, etc.) will become necessary.

h) in the end: a plea for openness (especially if it is stupid and boring)

In this chapter, I consciously refrained from using examples of specific artistic works and practices for there are simply too many. I would not want to chose specific works of myself or others, simply because this would always go into too much detail and regional selection I deem not interesting enough for a closing remark of this chapter. Much rather, these short and final ideas about arts in the context of ecological reasonings should enable the reader to feel, see, hear, smell and understand artistic practices in a slightly altered way: to discover potentialities of new and manifold ecological reasonings in the many good art works that abound in today’s artistic spheres. Furthermore, one might be encouraged to ask oneself how much the speculative intervention of a pluralization and affirmation of Ecological Reasonings is in itself – and to what degree – an artistic project. As I have tried to propose, disciplinary borders dissolve when we truly want to affirm Ecological Reasonings in all their muddy, weird and twisted plurality.

¹⁸⁵ We should be careful to not commit too much to a language of general and radical novelty for all our practices in the face of the Anthropocene, for this would way to easily fall into the trap of neoliberal product logics. As Shotwell very well puts it when writing about Rodney Bell’s Maori-inspired dance performances: “In this way, he interpellates his audience into a norm new to them. Open normativities may not shift into something new in the world. They may, as in this case, reference Indigenous traditions that are new to dominant and oppressive norms” (Ibid. 160) “New” is always a relative term and the language of radical novelty is something we should be attentive towards in a further pursued Critique of Ecological Reasonings (as started in chapter 9.n and Presentiment III).

This project of an Affirmation of Ecological Reasonings is, in the end, a huge plea for openness. Contrary to many contemporary reflexes of isolation, exclusivism, alarmism and elbow-mentality (the SUV, the boom of border walls, the polarization of society and ghettoisation of opinions, the decline of international solidarity), I want to advertise and plea for a willingness to commit to new experiments, new logics, new truths in the face of ecological catastrophe. Even – and especially! – if these new Reasonings might seem frail, stupid or short-sighted at first *sight*. From the all-too easy and dominant position of Reason, monorationalized and refined for more than two millennia, any thing else might seem stupid, shallow, trivial and without significant value.

But, to allow myself to mention Nietzsche one last time: how do the effects of this long fetishized Reason *smell*? In an atmosphere that is filling up with the toxic exhaust from the burning of billions of fossilized animal corpses, do we want to cling to the ways of sense making that contributed significantly to bring us into the mess we are finding ourselves in?

I have tried to communicate and make digestible, with this process of understanding through text, that this trivialization and devaluation of anything outside the norms and expectations of occidental Reason is not an argument for its strength, but the *modus operandi* of its exclusive and ecologically catastrophic epistemic regime. In the times of catastrophe we call the Anthropocene, we need to focus on the development and further pluralization of – hitherto – weak and minoritarian Reasonings, exactly because we desperately need to find new and old but re-framed forms of relating to a drastically changing planet. They might seem stupid in the beginning, but the direction counts.

We have witnessed a drastic “boom” of the ecological topic in mainstream medias and especially in the world of the arts in the last years. Of course, many of the countless works we see in galleries, newspapers, cinemas, etc. that “try to perform intra-action” or “find new ways of relating to jellyfish” are dull, unoriginal or simply opportunistic in the context of the contemporary art market. But this is – regarded on a global level – not a bad sign! It is a wrong and dangerous idea that change will come from the one, pure and inscrutably perfect idea (compare chapter 12b). Much rather than falling into the trap of this individualistic, residual-platonic expectation, it is important to regard the general direction and alignment of a society and well meaningly – and most of the time silently, unheroically (compare chapter 7h) – work on and with its transformation. We will have to learn to accept so much blandness (compare chapter 7i), so much stupidity and tiresome boredom in the process of transforming our societies towards more ecologically sensible ways of relating to our planet. An insight may be revolutionary and mind-changing from one specific situation on this planet, while it is bland, outdated and trivial from another. There will never be one truth, one right insight, one state-of-the-art in a plural and planet-spanning ecosystem in constant becoming.

In the process of the invention of electricity – that might have transformed the face of the Earth even more than the usage of fossil fuels – people truly believed such (today assumed to be) “stupidities” as electricity being one cosmic principle of life or an aetheric fluid of godly nature. However stupid they might appear to contemporary physics, they formed a necessary part of the general-ecological plateaus that formed our modern reasonings about the matter. As I would argue, it is the general epistemic alignment of a more-than-human collective that eventually – and after decades and centuries – will produce these new truths and new technologies that drastically change our relation to earth.

The failures, weirdnesses and stupidities of our experiments along the way of our profound transformation provide a vital core to our thinking, being, feeling, living reasonings – our multiple, overlapping, messy forms of living and dying together. Whether that be the digitisation, electrification or ecologization of our societies, let us willingly accept (if not welcome in!) the yawn and the revulsion, the banalities and stupidities, as much as our calls to power against injustices and indignities of living with, through and as our – after all – very large planet in catastrophic turmoil. The anthropocentric megalomania that marked modernity will surely have a short life span – it is a gigantically stupid reduction of billions of interdependent perspectives and forms of life to a hegemonic one that will and should not much longer be endured. To overcome its stupidity, we have to embrace it and laugh about it, we need to become so bored AND infuriated by it that we long to hear the many other voices, reasonings and happenings that mark the transformation of our planet. There is so much more to discover – and to become. “Our” planetary transformation, our “us” is always in process. Since this is happening with or without *our* consent, an affirmation of ecological reasonings should help us to become more sensible and open to who this “we” actually entails – in its largest sense.

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All translations from German and French sources that are quoted in English are mine. In cases where I feared that aspects would get lost in translation, I have put the original quote in a footnote below. I have refrained from doing this in all cases, because in many cases the original version doesn't really add anything to the English text.

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