

Being Earth: The Culture of Nature in a Post-Holocene World

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*Abstract: In the 21st Century's "new climatic regime,"^[1] when even in cities nature has become a creative force that can't be held back for long by building higher bulwarks, the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty wrote: "It is only recently that the distinction between human and natural histories...has begun to collapse."^[2] In the debris of this fortuitous event we are confronted with many questions, all of which at bottom are: How do we gain a sane footing on a planet we've spent thousands of years as a geophysical bully wielding ever more clever tools and powerful machines in a mad quest for total domination? Toward this, for the past thirty years I've been developing a poesis of Arts-Based Research, requiring "deep reading, between texts and across the ages."^[3] This orientation opened to me during the two years I was writing "The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico." First seen as a museum exhibition in 1992, the epic poem was published in book format in 2021.^[4] Since 1992 I've presented many Arts-Based Research projects,^[5] of which *Being Earth* is the latest "prose of my poems."^[6]*

Notes

1. B. Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*. Cambridge UK, 2018. [↑ Back](#)
 2. D. Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*. Chicago, 2021. p.31. [↑ Back](#)
 3. M. Gaskill, "Philosophical Vinegar, Marvellous Salt." *London Review of Books*, 15 July 2021. [↑ Back](#)
 4. amazon.com/Jungian-Arts-Based-Research-Nuclear-Enchantment/dp/1138310794 [↑ Back](#)
 5. See, weishaus.unm.edu/Projects.htm [↑ Back](#)
 6. A. Badiou, *The Age of the Poets*. London and New York, 2014. p.12. [↑ Back](#)
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Part One

What we lack, and what alone can help us to understand this new age, are new concepts and a revision of the originally metaphysical concepts and central categories of philosophy we already possess -A. Avanesian, *Future Metaphysics*. Cambridge UK, 2020. p.25

1:1

Although it is not yet spring, a warm wind whispers, *be green again*. A few plants stand and bend as if sensing a god soon to be born in their roots. Upstream the river is wider, but tamer. I waded into the shallows where the water's voices struggle in my dry throat like fish frantic to breathe.

1:2

Geologists don't take a mountain's solidity for granted but imagine it blasting through the planet's mantle like Wittgenstein's poker, "to make a point about causation."^[1] Pondering this, a mosquito buzzed in my ear: *Now you have entered the Critical Zone...then bit me.*

1:3

With bony fingers splayed across her gray density, Old Stony Face and I don't talk, but listen to each other.^[2] What do geologists hear when while hammering, chipping and splitting horizons of rock? "The problem becomes for all of us in philosophy, science, or literature, how do we tell such a story?"^[3]

1:4

In 1987 the distinguished biologist Lynn Margulis wrote: "The history of human beings is a mere moment compared with what went before--the first modern human remains, those of *Homo sapiens sapiens*, appear in the fossil record of only about 35,000 years ago."^[4]

Is our knowledge advancing so quickly that Margulis' estimate fell short by more than 200,000 years?^[5] Or have the cladograms been parsed too fine, as "the second (attribution of sapiens), far from marking a further subdivision, registered a decisive break from that world."^[6]

The next step would be clambering up a path leading to a field of old dualities: yin/yang, sacred/profane,^[7] his/her...melting like shelves of ice calving into "a new concept of matter that is both affective and autopoietic or self-organizing."^[8]

1:5

The sky brightens, the air begins to warm. I pull my hood back and walk between What am I? What are we? and, How can a mountain be scaled when each stone marks its own place on the planet? Kicked aside, stones take their place with it. Their bodies are Gaia's relationship with all other minerals in the universe.

1:6

In Japan, Matsuo Basho told his students: "If you want to write a poem about bamboo, first you must become bamboo. He didn't tell them how to become bamboo, only that "we are woven together, entwined in each other's fates."^[9]

In China, Wu Tao-tzu had painted "a glorious landscape, with mountains, forests, clouds, birds, men, all things / as if in nature." Then he "opened a door in a mountain's side and disappeared into his painting. / Then the painting, too, faded away."^[10]

In Paris, near the end of his life darkness began seeping into Alberto Giacometti's paintings, around their figures and the artist himself, into which they were all disappearing.

1:7

From initial causes that enlightened minds of the European Middle Ages, knowledge and belief continued to rub against each other, their cinders flaring up and burning through the forests of facts scientists lovingly tender. Now we ponder "an emergent form of consciousness resulting from an evolutionary process. It is therefore

developmentally progressive. But developmentally progressive towards what?”^[11]

1:8

Most paleoarchaeologists would ask: “What do these paintings *mean*?” This assumes that meaning itself hasn’t changed over the centuries that the paintings were made and remade.

At Lascaux, in the Chamber of The Felines, “where visibility of the artwork is limited...it is evidently the action of engraving or painting that is important, rather than the effect produced.”^[12] Later, pre-Socratic philosopher/poet Parmenides wrote, “To be and to have meaning are the same.” So that by the 5th Century BCE meaning had become synonymous with being.

Perhaps Paleolithic Art is akin to what mid-20th Century art critic Harold Rosenberg called Action Painting, work that was “not a picture but an event,”^[13] foreseeing when art would be “no longer evolving, but rather evolving so rapidly in sync with the surrounding world, that we can barely articulate what is happening before we have moved on.”^[14] In this scenario, artist and art historian are both confused, as meaning adapts to each morning’s news.

1:9

Before dawn, not a coyote’s howl but human chatter breaks through. A flashlight bounces along trail; a figure appears. “Is this the summit?” *Just for a moment*, Einstein thought he had reached the summit, from where he could see the whole universe rushing away.

1:10

“Many philosophers are now at work on the relation of thoughts, words, and things. And in their hands this relationship grows even more mysterious.”^[15] For example, “‘Burn scars,’ ‘debris flows,’ ‘atmospheric rivers’ have joined the lexicon of natural-disaster terminology already used in everyday conversation.”^[16] What’s behind these terms can be understood only by those who see the Anthropocene as synonymous with their own death.

1:11

At their 2019 meeting, the Anthropocene Working Group, who had been considering whether we are in a new epoch; and if so, when it began, voted that “the primary guide for the base of the Anthropocene be one of the stratigraphic signals around the mid-twentieth century of the Common Era.”^[17] This year was also when, on the night of October 13, 1955, Allan Ginsberg “read *Howl* and started an epoch.”^[18] A human-induced epoch cannot be declared by geologic evidence alone, it must also deploy cultural artifacts.

1:12

During the Upper Paleolithic, hominid creativity developed what we call multimedia art,^[19] perhaps responding to radically changing conditions of the planet, such as the Laschamp geomagnetic event that reversed the planet’s magnetic fields, allowing higher levels of ultra-violet light and causing another mass extinction of life.^[20]

As an extreme change in the climate stimulated art that was made in caves, until the beginning of the long stable period we call the Holocene, will the current climate crisis drive some artists underground, out of reach of the marketplace, where art is evaluated by the price it commands, not talent, knowledge, or foresight?

1:13

A long time ago this rock was born hot and complete. Marked now, the fading chalk scribbles seem pointless on the whale of a stoic gray body. Are they names? Messages? Predictions of rain or draught? The oracle at Delphi spoke only in riddles.

1:14

Wild beings respond proactively to the planet's environment, in which "the striations of rock that jut out over the sea not only mark time with their varied colors and lines, but make time through their encounters with the waves and wind."^[21] Time can then be "the correspondence between formative processes of mind and formative processes in nature."^[22]

Perhaps someday our bodies be made of manufactured materials, no longer subject to impersonal evolution, but biopragmatic. Will we be alien to the planet of whose materials we will still be made, as we are today? Even today, as I approach the Wall of Gods that looked timeless when seen from above, it's faces are slowly crumbling, leaving only the wall itself.

1:15

Predictions are like sinking into melting permafrost and sloshing around in what once was firm ecological ground. Mired in the slush of decaying organic matter braced with thawing limestone discharging hydrocarbons and gas hydrates, variables of every projection predict thick mud sticking between the cleats of hi-tech shoes.

1:16

Crossing the river this morning, not falling but stepping in with shoes dangling around my neck to keep them dry, *I grow old...I grow old...I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.*^[23] My legs would rather fold than climb with the weight of an old God dragging me down.

1:17

The high steps of lopsided rocks are difficult on knees and lungs working to raise me to where tall plants are waving. Is it the wind? There is no wind.

1:18

A young deer sees me and bounds away. Such is the distance that opened as we became human. "It's important for us to know where we're headed, to know the predicament life is in—not lives, but life.... all told, it's a crisis of domination."^[24] Domination and despair.

In a world that consists of "feedback loops and recursive, adaptive systems,"^[25] amongst Spring's greenery the stump of a tree is "neither dead nor alive,"^[26] I climb to where "the mountains flow faintly like smoke,"^[27] every word with a mind of its own.

1:19

Only in retrospect we can say, "These were the forces at play." Subject to context, which is subject to time, some rocks grow slowly, some mountains spring up.

1:20

He could swear the rock had altered its angle, until he fell to where Gaia greeted him as one of her own. Sprawled on drought-hardened ground, both knees and one ear bleeding, cautiously he stood and continued to climb. “You ask me who I am. If you wish to know, you must seek me in the clouds.”^[28]

Notes

1. D. Edmonds & Eidinow J., *Wittgenstein's Poker*. New York, 2001. p.18. [↑ Back](#)
2. See: weishaus.unm.edu/Anthropocene/Series%203/text-1.htm [↑ Back](#)
3. A. Sepahvand, Rosol. C, & Klingan, K., *Textures of the Anthropocene*. Cambridge, MA 2015. *Manual*, p.23. [↑ Back](#)
4. L. Margulis, “Early Life: The Microbes Have Priority.” In W.I. Thompson, ed. *Gaia: A Way of Knowing*. Great Barrington, MA, 1987. p.99. Scientists may argue as to exactly what constitutes a species, or subspecies, and that *Homo sapiens sapiens* “are us,” as opposed to just *Homo sapiens*. However, a species is more inclusive than just us, and *Homo sapiens* is the more commonly accepted term for us. [↑ Back](#)
5. “Oldest *Homo sapiens* bones ever found shake foundations of the human story. Idea that modern humans evolved in East Africa 200,000 years ago challenged by extraordinary discovery of 300,000-year-old remains in Moroccan mine.” I. Sample, *The Guardian*, 7 June 2017. See also C.W. Marean, “An Evolutionary Anthropological Perspective on Modern Human Origins.” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 44, 2015. pp. 533-556. [↑ Back](#)
6. T. Ingold, “Posthuman Prehistory.” *Nature and Culture*. Vol. 16, No.1, Spring 2021. p.86. [↑ Back](#)
7. See, M. Eliaide, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York, 1959. [↑ Back](#)
8. R. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*. Cambridge UK. p. 158. [↑ Back](#)
9. G. Grindon, “Art and Activism in the Age of the Anthropocene.” vam.ac.uk/blog/disobedient-objects/art-and-activism-in-the-age-of-the-anthropocene [↑ Back](#)
10. J. Weishaus. From, “Feeling for Stones.” In, *While I Was Waiting For You: Complete Poems 1965-2000*. London, 2021. [↑ Back](#)
11. J. Bernstein, “The Borderland Patient: Reintroducing Nature as the Missing Dimension in Clinical Treatment. What I’ve Learned From Navajo Medicine Men.” In P. Bennett, ed., *Montreal 2010 - Facing Multiplicity: Psyche, Nature, Culture: Proceedings of the 18th Congress of the International Association for Analytical Psychology*, Einsiedeln, 2015. In *Living in The Borderland* (London & New York, 2005), Bernstein writes: “Perhaps the immanence of calamity for species *Homo sapiens*, ‘wise man,’ is what must be risked by going to the edge of chaos in order to obtain the necessary reordering for the growth and relative stability of civilization.” p.51. This is akin to Karl Jaspers’ “border situations, which Sarah Bakewell describes as being “constrained or boxed in by what is happening, but at the same time pushed by these events towards to limits or outer edge of normal experience.” In *At the Existentialist Café*. New York, 2016. p.82. [↑ Back](#)
12. J. Clottes, *What is Paleolithic Art?* Chicago, 2016. p.13. [↑ Back](#)
13. “The Art Story,” theartstory.org/movement/action-painting [↑ Back](#)
14. T. Lykkeberg, “Extemporary Art.” *Nordic Art Review*, June 6, 2020. [↑ Back](#)
15. P. B. Diederich, “The Meaning of ‘The Meaning of Meaning.’” *The English Journal*. Vol. 30, No. 1, January 1941. [↑ Back](#)
16. S. Wilson, “A Road Like No Other In Peril Like Never Before.” *Washington Post*, Feb 27, 2021. [↑ Back](#)
17. quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene [↑ Back](#)
18. K. Rexroth, *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century*. New York, 1973, p.141. The other poets who read that night were Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and Philip Lamantia. [↑ Back](#)
19. See, J. Weishaus, “The Way North.” weishaus.unm.edu/North/Intro.htm [↑ Back](#)
20. K. Shah, “Earth’s Magnetic Field Flipping Linked to Extinctions 42,000 years ago.” *New Scientist*, 18 February 2021. [↑ Back](#)
21. A. Neimanis & R.L. Walker, “Weathering: Climate Change and the ‘Thick Time’ of Transcorporeality.” *Hypatia*, Vol. 29, No. 3. Summer 2014. [↑ Back](#)

22. B. Roszak & T. Roszak, "Deep Form in Art and Nature." *Alexandria* 4, 1997. [↑ Back](#)
 23. T.S. Eliot. From, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." [↑ Back](#)
 24. E. Crist, "Our Great Reckoning." *The Sun*, December 2020. [↑ Back](#)
 25. M. Wark, "Heidegger and Geology." Retrieved from publicseminar.org/2014/06/heidegger-and-geology. [↑ Back](#)
 26. From an old Zen story in which a monk and his teacher attend a funeral. The monk asks of the corpse, "Are you dead or alive?" The master replies, "Neither dead nor alive." Which brings to bear the famous story of Schrödinger's cat. [↑ Back](#)
 27. K. Miyazawa. From, "Spring." In, *Spring & Asura: Poems of Kenji Miyazawa*. B. Watson, trans. Chicago, 1973. [↑ Back](#)
 28. Keesh-ke-mun. Crane Clan Hereditary Chief of the Lac du Flambeau Chippewa. Quoted in G. Vizenor, *Interior Landscapes*. Minneapolis, 1990. p.5. [↑ Back](#)
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Part Two

Finding an adequate language for post-anthropocentrism means that the resources of the imagination, as well as the tools of critical intelligence, need to be enlisted for this task. -R. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*. Cambridge UK, 2013. p.82.

2:1

Bear paws pressed into the earth, a small plane roars behind a ridge. The bear is no longer there, the plane remains unseen. There're rocks that speak and rocks that have taken a vow of silence, just as one moment lives within another.

2:2

When we learned to coax dreams into images we thought we could explain, shamans indigenous to the planet dropped into being. Not healers, but seers,^[1] they answered questions such as: "How many levels of reality are you aware of at this moment?"^[2]

2:3

Clay heated and shaped into domesticated earth was "the first material, the ground, its richness."^[3] Then, with red ochre she painted the horizon on her skin and walked slowly toward the rising sun, chanting words that had never been spoken before.^[4]

2:4

The oldest of trees were planted in mythologies. The biblical trees of Life and Knowledge; *Yggdrasill*, the tree from which one-eyed Odin hung for nine days and nights. The Cosmic Tree is at the center of existence, roots spread throughout the underworld, branches embracing the sky. "At its base lies a serpent, and a bird sits at its crown."^[5]

This snake, "Prince of twisted meanings,"^[6] is the convolutions of Anthropos's "reptilian brain."^[7] The bird, is perched atop the staff of a bird-man, a therianthrope crudely drawn in Lascaux cave more than 12,000 years ago.

He, dancer of chasms, spirit, not yet born / Bird and perverse fruit of magic cruelly saved.^[8]

2:5

After millions of years of evolution, testing how various forms, organs, shapes function together, the human body will be asked to accept a digital pulse in place of a beating heart.

Will the impulses of electronic prostheses retain “the sustainable ethics of transformation,”^[9] emulating the phantom pain of amputated flesh? Or will cybernetic implants have no memory, no history, no ethics, not even a mythology?

“From the outset until the moment he reaches Ithaca, we observe him as he consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or instinctively, discards laboriously and ceaselessly those elements that do not correspond to his inner reality.”^[10] Where poet and reality became one, a tree’s branch cracked: *What will your reality be when your body has a nervous system that is not sympathetic?*

2:6

Perhaps it was because the grass had risen with weeds wild as Gaia’s dendrites conducting heat from the planet’s fiery core up to its Critical Zone, or the eddies of messages surging between plants, that yet another species disappeared into the morning mist...when a man I took for Po Chu-i walked past me and shouted, “Read the original!”^[11]

2:7

“It happens when you’re walking along – you find dead things here and there that just shouldn’t be on the beach,”^[12]

We skirted foamy tide sliding in with clumps of salty weeds, sandpipers running pecking for worms and the slimiest biofilm. as a “fishapod” emerged from the sea breathing oxygenated air.^[13] Confused as to what it was, what it had become, it turned back to the familiar currents, and eddies,^[14] “protocontinents of granites and carbonates (that) float on underlying basalt and interact with the abundant surface water and, later, with early life.”^[15] When we turned back, in the distance someone was fishing off a long strand of petrified hair.^[16]

2:8

Where last week I had to wade across, this morning I’m walking on humus thirsty for what it can’t grow anymore.^[17] As the already sun colors the sky with fresh blood, the point is not to fund more ecological studies but preserve the wild that doesn’t fit on a slide.

There is no guide to humanity’s next step. Is it a matter of which genes to turn on or off? Which chemicals to circulate? What algorithms to write?

2:9

“Since the sacred and strong time is the *time of origins*, the stupendous instant in which a reality was created... man will seek periodically to return to that original time.”^[18] As an “eddy in the stream of becoming,”^[19] the mystery of the universe’s origin is cosmology’s ur-tale, a uroboros whose circular myth devours itself.

2:10

With the humpbacked fluteplayer, Kokopelli,^[20] Anthropos carries in the hump of his mind “a language of substance which cannot be taken substantively,”^[21] along with theories “that are assumed to be true without any attempt having been made to challenge them.”^[22]

2:11

In 2015, tools were found in Kenya that were dated to before Homo sapiens became a distinct species. We may trace the latest computer back to “parts of the body itself, and above all, of its privileged organs and functions: cutting, chopping and grinding--tools modeled, at the outset, on teeth and prosthetic cutting.”^[23] Unlike lightweight computers, these people didn’t carry but *were* the tools they walked with into an unknown world.

2:12

No GPS can guide me over this jumble of pebbles that looks like a defoliated corpus callosum connecting two sides of the feral. Last year a bridge was built over a chasm. Squared and heavy lengths of wood were carried up steep hills on the shoulders of young men opening a new path that loops back to the old.

2:13

Paleolithic cave paintings may have been stories that, even when updated over the centuries, as palimpsests, when the environment changed outside, where some of the animals depicted in the caves disappeared, inside they continued to stretch, twist, and prance across the walls. The hard question now is: Were the paintings symbolic or not? There is a similar situation with religious hagiography whose stories originated in environments that no longer exist.

2:14

When glaciers retreat mountains feel sluggish. Sweating before sun barely clears the horizon, I wrap sweater around waist, and think: Existence is easy, but “becoming-imperceptible,”^[24] in midst of social media and newscasts constantly cloning instant celebrities----takes real courage.

I smell the damp that recently sank beneath earth’s gritty skin. Small animals bore in. Plants reach deeper and deeper until roots and rhizomes turn dry. While humans are unconsciously creating future “habitats for other forms of life.”^[25]

2:15

All life speaks in a lexicon of words and/or chemicals. Although we must not speak *for* nature, we can learn to speak *through* nonhuman nature. But would we understand what’s being said?

Is Wittgenstein’s famous statement: “If a lion could talk we would not understand him” correct?^[26] For example: GOOOOOO! GOOOOOOOOOO! / GOOOOOOOOOR!^[27] are “purely invented and meaningless sounds (that)...can be explained as spirit language, animal language, or a language of the ancestors.”^[28] However, “Research has shifted to better understanding other species’ own languages,”^[29] not our romantic fabrications.

2:16

“One of the most difficult things of all is not to have the painting be a depiction of the event but the event itself.”^[30] This kind of art will be made by cyborgs programmed to take up unknown causes in which the present is the future appearing to be in the past. What can't be said will be left for the rest of the sentient world to communicate.

2:17

As I climb the river's embankment, from the steep jumble of rocks the arm of a dead plant reaches out and catches my foot...I begin “teetering on the edge of catastrophe.”^[31] Falling backward but leaning forward, I recall: “Just think how amazing! Someone getting up and walking /on the water.”^[32] Then I muse, *You can't walk on water when the water is gone.*

2:18

We are split-brained and Janus-faced in harmony and debate over Earth's limited resources in lieu of an apparently unlimited universe. Yet we were only able to land on the moon because it rises in the chaos of our dreams.

2:19

One morning, I wondered how I can live in a world whose changes are exponentially speeding up. Not in, I realized, but as someone who may at any moment be grabbed and slowly digested by a flesh-eating plant. Language too returns to the earth; along with its meanings, which were only insinuations. The forest grows in sorrow, tall or bending, living while decaying, eaten by other forms of life.

2:20

Today the river is sleeping beneath its sun-drenched bed. Its dry mouth can't utter a single word. Now I can question my teachers.

Notes

1. “The traditional shaman was not primarily a ‘physician’ in our medical sense---there wasn't our medical sense available. So any healing role assigned to the contemporary shaman (I would say neoshamanist) doesn't need to be medical either.” D.C. Noel, “The Soul of Shamanism: A Conversation with Daniel C. Noel” J. Weishaus, *Myhtosphere*, Vol. 1 No. 4., 2000. pp.397-404. [↑ Back](#)
2. T. Mckenna, “All About Shamanism” [youtube.com/watch?v=b4S-eH-1PTw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4S-eH-1PTw) [↑ Back](#)
3. M. de Kerangal, *Painting Time*. New York, 2016. p.189. [↑ Back](#)
4. At least 160,000 years ago at Pinnacle Point on the southern coast of Africa red ochre was collected. Interesting here is that they knew that if you heat the mineral (to around 175-275 C) it becomes a darker red, or if it's not red to begin with (for example yellow) it turns into a shade of red. In Australia, “Paints made with red ochre, charcoal and white paste made from gypsum or pipe clay were applied in bands to greased areas of the body with fingers, wrapping the body with a design.” S. Lerner, “The Australian Aborigines: *Contemporary Art from a Recent Exhibition.*” *Zero* Vol.V,1981. [↑ Back](#)
5. J.M. Vastokas, “The Shamanic Tree of Life.” In, *ArtsCanada: Stones, Bones and Skin*. Dec 1973-Jan 1974. p.126. [↑ Back](#)
6. R. Char, From, “The Snake.” [↑ Back](#)
7. “Should danger or enemies come near, an alarm system comes into play, and the reptile brain takes over from the other brains--it takes what we might call ‘executive power.’” R. Bly, “Poetry and the Three Brains.” In, *American Poetry: Wildness and Domesticity*. New York, 1990. pp.52-53. [↑ Back](#)
8. R. Char. From, “Lascaux: Dead Bird-Man and Dying Bison.” In, M.A. Caws & N. Kline, trans. *Furor and Mystery & Other Writings*. Boston, 2010. p.357. “The Paleolithic Bird-Man shaman at Lascaux, 15,000 BC, is the earliest we know of this tradition. the man with the head of a bird, and a staff with a bird's head lying by

his side, is looking at a bison who is dying and also watching his own death. From the direction of the imagery, the shaman seems to be flying in his mind, or his dream, towards the dying bison to learn about death from the wisdom of the bison." A. Baring & J. Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*. London, 1993, pp. 35-37. [↑ Back](#)

9. R. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*. Cambridge UK, 2013. p.90. [↑ Back](#)
10. G. Seferis, "Cavafy's Ithaka." *Conjunctions 31*, 1998. p.92. [↑ Back](#)
11. Po (772-846) was probably referring to, "Five Spring Poems by Po Chi-i." J. Weishaus, trans. In, *While I Was Waiting For You: Complete Poems*. Kindle e-book, 2021. [↑ Back](#)
12. J. Roame. Quoted in G. Canon, "Fangs and Tentacles. Rarely Seen Deep Sea Fish Washes Up On California Beach." *The Guardian*, 12 May 2021. [↑ Back](#)
13. "The boundary between water and land is quite porous and bridged by modern fish from around the world. In fact, the adaptations we see in the fossils of the fish-tetrapod transition seem almost trivial in comparison to the living animals." N. Shubin, "The 'Great Transition.'" In, J. Brockman, ed., *Intelligent Thought*. New York, NY, 2006. p.88. "The fishapod underscores one important point: It is no longer easy to distinguish a fish from a tetrapod." Ibid. [↑ Back](#)
14. "The eddies played a 'profound role' in moving heat, carbon and nutrients through the ocean and regulating the climate at regional and global scales, the research said." G. Readfearn, "Changes in Giant Ocean Eddies Could Have Devastating Effects Globally." *The Guardian*. 22 April 2021. [↑ Back](#)
15. P. Gillen, "Notes of Mineral Evolution." *Environmental Humanities* 8:2 Nov. 2016. p.217. [↑ Back](#)
16. It was Sedna's--the Inuit goddess of the sea and marine life--hair. [↑ Back](#)
17. "Giambattista Vico, in his *New Science* of 1725, thought that (the source of the word 'human') lay in the Latin word for burying, *humando*, itself derived from humus, soil. Humans, then, would above all be people of the soil, who bury their dead." T. Ingold, "Posthuman Prehistory." *Nature and Culture*, Spring 2021. p.83. [↑ Back](#)
18. M. Eliade, "Regeneration Through Return to the Time of Origins." *Myths, Rites, Symbols: A Mircea Eliade Reader. Volume 1*. W.C. Beane & W.G. Doty, eds. New York, 1976. p.45. [↑ Back](#)
19. W. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. London, 2009. p.45. Written in 1925 as Benjamin's postdoctoral dissertation, its insights are more relevant today than when they were rejected. [↑ Back](#)
20. Images of the humpbacked fluteplayer appear on rocks in desert areas of Southwest USA. He is a symbol of fertility, a minstrel, a storyteller, a rainmaker, a healer, a teacher, a jokester, and a magician. [↑ Back](#)
21. J. Hillman "The Therapeutic Value of Alchemical Language: A Heated Introduction." In, *Alchemical Psychology. The Uniform Edition of the Writings of James Hillman. Vol. 5*. Putham CT, 2010. p.16. [↑ Back](#)
22. J-P Dupuy, *The Mark of the Sacred*. M. B Debevoise, trans. Stanford, 2013. p.67. [↑ Back](#)
23. E. Grosz, "Naked." In, M. Smith and J. Morra, eds., *The Prosthetic Impulse*. Cambridge MA., 2007. p.189. Ibid; Benjamin, p.36. [↑ Back](#)
24. R. Brandotti, *The Posthuman*. Cambridge UK, 2013 p.137. [↑ Back](#)
25. B. Bratton, "The Post-Anthropocene." [youtube.com/watch?v=FrNEHCZm_Sc23](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrNEHCZm_Sc23) [↑ Back](#)
26. L. Wittgenstein. *The Wittgenstein Reader*. A. Kenny, ed. Oxford, 1994. p. 213. [↑ Back](#)
27. M. McClure. From, "Ghost Tantras." [↑ Back](#)
28. J. Halifax, *A Fruitful Darkness*. San Francisco, 1993. p.88. She calls these sounds "vocables." [↑ Back](#)
29. C. Reily, "The Dolphin Who Loved Me: The NASA-Funded Project That Went Wrong." *The Guardian*, 8 June 2014. [theguardian.com/environment/2014/jun/08/the-dolphin-who-loved-me](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jun/08/the-dolphin-who-loved-me) [↑ Back](#)
30. G. Hartigan. Quoted in, S. Smee, "Portrait of a Poet." *Washington Post*, March 17, 2021. [↑ Back](#)
31. "Human walking is a unique activity during which the body, step by step, teeters on the edge of catastrophe." J. Napier. "The Antiquity of Human Walking." *Scientific American* April 1967. p.56. "Could it be that all human life is suspended in this alternation, between an imagination that sets us loose to fall, and a perception that restores our grip so we can keep on going? T. Ingold, "Posthuman Prehistory." *Nature and Culture*, Spring 2021. p.97. [↑ Back](#)
32. A. Ginsberg. From, *Galilee Shore*." In, *Planet News*. San Francisco, 1988. pp. 39-40. [↑ Back](#)

Part Three

Holocene-trained humans are extraordinarily ill prepared to master anything, especially a planet.” --B. Latour, “Gaia 2.0/Drown to Earth.” *Lovelock Centenary Conference*, July 2019.

3:1

Becoming-Earth, the Green Man,^[1] with vegetal hair and virtual eyes, is a non-site,^[2] but for the continuum of “becomings launched in a process of perpetual co-creation,”^[3] I remembered the panoply of talented people who entered my life, only for me to scuttle back into “that secret place within (myself) that could have made possible an entirely different human adventure.”^[4]

3:2

On the steep climb up a red clay road,^[5] horseshoe tracks suddenly broke into a gallop, running toward the smell of sulfur and blood lingering from when the centaur “reeled away...his heart like a wild storm,”^[6] circulating the toxic fumes of “a new mythological and religious universe,”^[7] that erupted from the tempestuous mind of an Iron Age God of Mining and War.^[8]

3:3

As old age arrives the brain shrinks, drawing its synapses closer together for faster calculations. Names slip into deep crevasses, recognition slinks away, leaving behind a fear of abandonment. Now the pathways are inevitable, recursive, rejoining each other, where broken fallen limbs are rotting together, and eucalyptus peels and performs Gaia’s Dance Macabre.

3:4

One simple definition of organic life is: self-organizing chemistry that can reproduce itself and pass on its genetic materials encoded as DNA. But with a humanity whose organs are made of clever alloys how would life be defined? “In the bestiaries the imaginary animals are given the same treatment--both pictorially and textually--as those animals that were known to exist.”^[9]

In this century, “a linguistically informed view of the structure of language actually shows that there is no being at all.”^[10] So “What is Life?” is better inscribed as, “What is Existence?” (Not, “What does it mean to exist?” which would keep us anthropocentric.)

3:5

If there is anywhere algorithms will fear to tread it will be into the domain “where the unknown haunts us in our innermost self, at the farthest point of being.”^[11] Co-opted by religious sects and institutions, spirituality is the essential incompleteness of a creatively evolving mind.

Deliberate pursuits, such as art and science, may someday be subsumed by artificial intelligence (AI). But as long as there is “no hope that the validity of any statement about unconscious states or processes will ever be verified scientifically,”^[12] an always incomplete unconscious will remain beyond AI’s capabilities to replace.

3:6

In Yolngu mythology, “Time was created through the transformation of ancestral beings into a place, the place being forever the mnemonic of the event.”^[13] Philosophers may call this an arche-fossil, an object that indicates “the existence of an ancestral reality or event; one that is anterior to terrestrial life.”^[14]

If “Ancestral reality...is not empirical, but transcendental,”^[15] is there a correlation between a place that was evented by *mythological* ancestors and an arche-fossil?

3:7

High mind, deep mind, the Unborn Mind reaches a point of no return.^[16] Here a company of rocks oversees a valley planted with strict rows of carrots and beets. Drink water, then climb a pitch of switchbacks, where a *lung-gum-pa* may pedal around a curve and plow me,^[17] to feed the future.

3:8

Old Stony Face is pockmarked, mottled, and overweight. As a man he'd be an ugly Calibanic creature.^[18] As a rock she was one of Gaia's virgins who danced until, too large to move, she hunkered for over a million years beneath this mountain's crown.

Is there any mountain left on whose summit a god can still enflame an imagination? “Whatever madness may have crept into (Newton's) method...natural philosophy had different boundaries to modern science, encompassing--or porous to--the supernatural.”^[19]

Scientists can no longer delude themselves into thinking that their lofty calculations will leave their unconscious mind behind, as though the “leap to the unknown part of the mind (no longer) lies in the very center of the work.”^[20]

3:9

At some point humans, who had migrated over the entire planet, and had lost touch with each other, each developing their own symbolic systems, language, mythology, economy, skin color too, were no longer adapting to the planet's environment, but rather degrading it for their own temporary gain. They began circumambulating “a center (that) is the point of no return.”^[21]

For a long time, then, I only heard my own breathing, the crunch of familiar steps on hard-packed ground, and the buzz of insects honing in.

3:10

Do we have the wisdom to reduce the output of toxic wastes with the planet's interlocking life-support systems displayed on the long table of political ontologies, brushing aside the unnatural boundaries drawn by our own histories? The path is strewn with obstacles, routes are overgrown. Taking them today, we may miss a sign, an existential turn, a pile of dung infested with mites.

3:11

There is no description of nature that is not a way to a more complex level of knowledge. Hiking from the mountain's sweaty brow into the canyon's cool shadows, to a pump that was draining the last drops of the aquifer's moisture.

3:12

The concrete culvert, its signs: "Fish Passage Diversion," and "Keep Out," is always too dry for Steelhead salmon's alternate passage to the sea after the dam was built. Here is ignorance of the intimacy between earth's waterways, its circling atmospheric systems and sediments needed for the ocean's windward shores.

3:13

Was my bruised knee caused by two universes bumping into each other, or of bone meeting terrestrial stone? "Big Data can replace *cause* with *correlation* as the primary means of framing inquiry. The Bigger the data set, the less we'll have to rely on the 'lazy' notion of causality at all."^[22] But cause is not the aggregate of information, it's born from interpreting both conscious and unconscious effects. Is Big Data the vision of yet another God, another Absolute, just when my knee is beginning to heal?

3:14

For the most part, the AI enterprise consists of a comparatively small STEM-educated cabal inventing, planning, philosophizing in midst of billions of people to whom concepts such as posthumanism ignore the grit of their daily existence. No matter how much data is collected, algorithms written, planets discovered, works of art made,... *we must not fail each other.*

3:15

Hearing echoes of voices ascending the opposite mountain, steep stone steps climb to where the path splits: right fork leads to the needs of an ephemeral being, left toward a ubiquitous world. This morning, a predator dives to where a rabbit's hopping, and like Icarus saved by the talons of a hungry bird, lifts it into the reddening dawn.

3:16

After an embryo refigures itself, it begins an indeterminate maturation entangled with all other biological life, and beings "that know themselves to be part of multiple realities."^[23] What from afar looks like a wall of Mesoamerican gods up close are naturally cleaved rocks. On the other side of the world, rusting gods are sipping ambrosia through the curled-up lips of equations.^[24]

3:17

Boots assume the flaws of heat-hardened soil, dust clings to tightly tied laces. Centuries ago, Zen Masters shouted, "Emptiness!" It's not what consciousness *is*, but what it is not. Here is where the arts flourish, posthumanism stutters, philosophy stumbles on the qualities of steps, not before, nor ahead.^[25]

3:18

On Oso Ridge, a rusty barbed wire fence was cut and pulled aside. Behind it an overgrown trail overlooks a valley. From here can I see a world without leaving it, one that doesn't look like the projections of Earth-system scientists plotting Gaia's temperature in straight lines of peaks and retreats, now climbing toward heights not reached in 50 million years.

Psychologist James Hillman called the valley soulful and the mountain's peak spiritual, as in having a "peak experience." "From the viewpoint of soul," he writes, "going up the mountain feels like a desertion."^[26] The hellish temperatures gathering in the valley are caused by gases rising and deserting their terrestrial soul. Is air pollution the future's spiritual high?

3:19

Along the path I stopped thinking in straight lines, avoiding the stumps of dead trees. Why Land Art when the land has been creating itself beautifully for billions of years? While the "best known earthwork in the world,"^[27] Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty, is disappearing into the Great Salt Lake, "'draped' with a crust of white salt crystals."^[28]

3:20

On a hillside, chunks of rock have sheared off, others are slowly wearing down to pebbles. As cities spread out, the *Hagazussa*, "semi-demonic" beings who sat on the fence marking town from wilderness, "participat(ing) in both worlds,"^[29] lift off toward a future "deprived of a future."^[30]

Notes

1. "The Green Man, and very occasionally the Green Woman, is a legendary being primarily interpreted as a symbol of rebirth, representing the cycle of new growth that occurs every spring."
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Man ↑ [Back](#)
2. Robert Smithson (1938-1973) made "non-sites, works that represent foreign, hard to reach locations in the American and European landscape in the white cube of the gallery using land matter, aerial photographs and maps." R.B. Martinez, "Robert Smithson in Texas at the DMA." *Glasstire*, January 31, 2014. ↑ [Back](#)
3. T. Ingold. "Posthuman Prehistory." *Nature and Culture*. Spring 2021. p.167. ↑ [Back](#)
4. J. Genet, *The Studio of Alberto Giacometti*. London, 2014. p.41. ↑ [Back](#)
5. "In 1949, the Irish scientist J.D. Bernal suggested that clay minerals may have created a meeting place for life's first molecules. Such a scenario could explain how the randomly dispersed molecules of life managed to come together in the diffuse primordial soup." (Alexander Graham) Cairns-Smith's idea takes Bernal's theory a step further. In his view, clay mineral layers not only attracted certain chemicals from the environment to their surfaces, the mineral layers also acted as the first genetic information carriers, much as the base pairs in DNA do today." L. Mullen, "Life's Crystal Code." *Space.Com*, March 19, 2009.
space.com/6456-life-crystal-code.html ↑ [Back](#)
6. Homer, *The Odyssey*. R. Fagles, trans. New York, 1999. p.434. ↑ [Back](#)
7. M. Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible*. New York, 1971. p.181. ↑ [Back](#)
8. There is a body of evidence "that long before becoming the deity of the Israelites, Yahweh was a god of metallurgy in the ancient Canaanite pantheon, worshipped by smelters and metalworkers throughout the Levant, not just by the Hebrews...In Psalm 18:18, Yahweh is depicted as an anthropomorphized furnace: "Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it." A. David, "Jewish God Yahweh Originated in Canaanite Vulcan, Says New Theory" April 17, 2018.
haaretz.com/archaeology ↑ [Back](#)
9. P. Gravestock, "Did Imaginary Animals Exist?" In, D. Hassig, Editor, *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature*. New York, 1999. p.120. ↑ [Back](#)
10. A. Avanessian, *Future Metaphysics*. Cambridge, UK, 2020. p.150. ↑ [Back](#)
11. E. Jabès, *From the Desert to the Book*. Barrytown NY, 2010. p.72. ↑ [Back](#)
12. C.G. Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*. R.F.C Hull, trans. Princeton NJ, 1973. p.124. ↑ [Back](#)
13. H. Morphy, "Landscape and the Reproduction of the Ancestral Past." In, E. Hirsh and M. O'Hanlon, eds, *The Anthropology of Landscape*. Oxford, UK, 1995. p.188. ↑ [Back](#)
14. Q. Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. London, 2008. p.10. ↑ [Back](#)

15. G.A. Bruno, "Empirical Realism and the Great Outdoors: A Critique of Meillassoux." In, M-E Morin, ed., *Continental Realism and Its Discontents*. Edinburgh, 2017. p. 24. [↑ Back](#)
16. See, N. Wadell, *The Unborn: The Life and Teaching of Zen Master Bankei 1622-1693*. Berkeley, 2002. It could be that the insight an unborn mind, one unsullied by either existence nor nonexistence, may see us through to a true transhumanism. [↑ Back](#)
17. *Lung-gum-pa* are Tibetan monks who run non-stop for days in a trance. In 1611 John Donne wrote that the "new Philosophy calls all in doubt, / The Element of fire is quite put out; / The Sun is lost, and th'earth, and no man's wit / Can well direct him where to look for it." From, "An Anatomy of the World." [↑ Back](#)
18. See, C. Zabus, *Tempests After Shakespeare*. New York, 2002. [↑ Back](#)
19. M. Gaskill, "Philosophical Vinegar, Marvellous Salt." *London Review of Books*, July 15, 2021. [↑ Back](#)
20. R. Bly, "Looking for the Dragon Smoke." In, *Leaping Poetry*. Boston, 1975. p.1. [↑ Back](#)
21. E. Jabès. Quoted in W.F. Motte, *Questioning Jabès*. Lincoln NB, 1990. p.79. [↑ Back](#)
22. L. Weatherby, "Digital Metaphysics." *The Hedgehog Review*. Spring 2018. p.24. [↑ Back](#)
23. S. Rowland. In, S. Rowland and J. Weishaus, *Jungian Arts-Based Research and "The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico"*. London and New York, 2020. p.80. [↑ Back](#)
24. "You need some rust; sharpness does not suffice / Else you will seem too young and too precise." F. Nietzsche, "Joke, Cunning and Revenge." In, *The Gay Science*. NY 1974. W. Kaufmann, trans. p.47. [↑ Back](#)
25. In Object-Oriented Philosophy, "The basic idea is that, insofar as we can never experience real objects--they always hide behind their qualities, or their appearances, the closest we can come to them is through an experience of what they call a 'sensuous' object,' the content of an experience, with its sensuous qualities. Metaphorical or aesthetic experience replaces the sensuous object's normal qualities with some other object's sensuous qualities." P. Gamez, "Metaphysics or Metaphors for the Anthropocene? Scientific Naturalism and the Agency of Things." *Open Philosophy* 2018; 1. p.201. [↑ Back](#)
26. J. Hillman, "Peaks and Vales." In, J. Moore, ed., *A Blue Fire: Selected Writings by James Hillman*. New York, 1989. p.116. [↑ Back](#)
27. L. Lippard, *Undermining: A Wild Ride through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West*. New York, 2013. p.86. [↑ Back](#)
28. S. Ballard and L. Linden, "Spiral Jetty, Geoaesthetics, and Art: Writing the Anthropocene." *The Anthropocene Review*, 2019. p.151. [↑ Back](#)
29. H.P. Duerr, *Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary Between Wilderness and Civilization*. F. Goodman, trans. Oxford UK and New York, 1985. p. 46. [↑ Back](#)
30. "The problem of the loss of the future...entails jeopardizing the stability of planetary systems, as well as that of other species or entire ecosystems directly deprived of a future." E. Bińczyk, "The Most Unique Discussion of the 21st century? The Debate on the Anthropocene Pictured in Seven Points." *The Anthropocene Review*, 2019. p.6. [↑ Back](#)

Part Four

In its best dress, philosophy wears hiking boots and carries a walking stick, wandering trails that lead into the heart of our wildernesses—both natural and cultural. -R. Frodeman, "Philosophy in the Field." In *Rethinking Nature: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Bloomington IN, 2004. p.149.

4:1

Turning a corner we're confronted with walls on which animal spirits were distilled into minerals that became their being. Some evolved as a conference of superimpositions. Therianthropes, who synthesized matter and myth, had sought shelter in a steeper darkness. When the planet warmed again, shadows emerged from the caves and

became shamans who rode the animals' spirits to other worlds. Centuries later archaeologists, even in their dreams could not remember the meaning of the images their ancestors had made for them.

4:2

According to philosopher John Sallis, M. Heidegger said that a Greek temple “gathers its lines and masses to the place, to its unique site, and, gleaming in the morning sun, the entire edifice seems suspended and yet thoroughly delimited in a presence akin to that of the rock on which it is erected.”^[1] In the ruins of Greece, “the absence of the goddess... draws invisibly near.”^[2]

Sallis adds that, “One senses the absence, senses it, in the stones;” stones that “air pollution and acid rain (are) eroding ...while extreme weather phenomena such as droughts or torrential rains have led ancient walls and temples to develop structural problems.”^[3] In the Climate Emergency, all the gods, Olympian and otherwise, suffer from structural problems.

4:3

The old Ch'an Masters dropped their teeth until they could only suck up noodles, or swallow mouthfuls of unchewed rice. With no more allure,^[4] they left for “the great outdoors,”^[5] and the infinite beauty of emptiness-- where a mind is not “blocked by the visual, auditory, the tactile, and the mental.”^[6] With a few teeth still rooted, they stroll among stones that have taken a vow of silence.

4:4

About 1.5 billion years ago, eukaryotes, the first cells whose DNA was protected by a membrane, appeared, and nanocellular structures we are only now able to see began evolving toward the appearance of a species so intelligent that it “accomplishes itself in disappearing.”^[7]

At first light, where the path starts downward I reach Old Stony Face. What I can't see in her is unseen in me. To understand this requires “that we precisely define life and mind in ways that capture their more-than-material properties.”^[8] On a steep path my thoughts become steep.

4:5

Even though “organized according to very ancient biological design principles,”^[9] the brain creates a reality in concordance with one's body, “characterized by the looping movement of returning to itself in order to determine itself...”^[10] Perhaps Artificial Intelligence will be able to program minds to function in alternative realities, with anatomies that have their failure built in.

4:6

After grading marks made on stone, and objects shaped from clay, or carved in wood that rotted away, standing on a shaky platform humans declared themselves to be the most intelligent form of life. But if “One never says, ‘This is nothing,’ but one says, ‘This is.’ ...one understands what the transversal connection, the synchronistic connection, really is.”^[11] Every organism contributes a bit to Gaia's genius.

4:7

One night I dreamed that if I stood stock-still I'd be invisible to the malevolent force pursuing me, like this rabbit frozen the middle of the pass. But "Invisibility is a state in which we mustn't linger or be trapped."^[12] So *Lepus californicus* suddenly breaks for cover... *Stone, wherever you look, stone, / Let the grey animal in.*^[13] Then I walked through the space the animal had displaced, as if we had both awoken from the same dream.

4:8

Before leaving this morning I checked to see if any of my old teachers had passed away. None today. With this in mind, where the path begins a downward pitch I saw Fred Nietzsche sitting by Old Stony Face, muttering something to the boulder through his droopy mustache my high school German couldn't understand. Seeing me, the old philosopher hobbled away with what passed for a smile.

4:9

Beneath a Prussian blue sky in Aix-en-Provence Paul Cézanne spread his easel's legs, mounted a canvas onto it, and began painting with brushstrokes that embraced each other like old lovers he was uniting again.

Around the same time, in his Paris studio the sculptor Rodin was standing in a dense cloud of plaster dust pontificating to a starry-eyed poet, "There is nothing more beautiful than absolute trust in real existence." One day a century later, dark clouds of an unthinkable summer storm rolled over California as though existence begins and ends "in both an ontological and an existential sense with finitude."^[14] Yet here they are again: "Cézanne," "Rodin," "Rilke"...

4:10

If painting caves and rocks was a nascent form of symbolic and metaphorical writing, this may explain why written languages developed later than practical, mundane speech.

I leave the main path, searching for rock paintings left by the people who lived here before the missionaries arrived. Perhaps they wore off: it rained more often than it does today. Or these rocks didn't attract artists who preferred the walls and ceilings of shallow caves to connect the animals they lived amongst with those alive in the nighttime sky: their trope for interspecies communication.^[15]

4:11

To reinhabit the natural world means returning to before we became modern, which "designates a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time."^[16] Because premodern societies adapted to each season appropriately there was no need for acceleration, rupture, or revolution, placing them in a world whose climatic forces they knew how to accommodate. Modernity began, then, with capitalism's mission to control the production of objects with a mind that "simultaneously is its own object."^[17]

4:12

When death is less a word than a future way of being, the earth is your destiny, not to land *on* but to land *in*. Although a philosopher's mind can breach a valley planted in strict rows of harrowed fields. But a path "bathed in the blazing light of the Greek sun and its reflecting from the elemental stone of the mountain itself,"^[18] can blind even the brightest minds.

4:13

After ten months of no rain, a long thin atmospheric river, “emerging from the warm waters of the Pacific Ocean, cruising more than two miles above the sea,”^[19] rolled into California. On a morning like this Heidegger hunkered down in his hut, stoked up the woodburning stove in the *Vorraum*, and conjured up ethereal beings roaming the Black Forest beyond the singing of the chimes outside the window of his study...,^[20] and Kant writing that in the future we may have opinions about spiritual beings but we would have no more knowledge of them.^[21] But it was already too late for the numinous when fifty-four years earlier Newcomen’s coal-driven “atmospheric engine” was fired up, and from then on gnosis could be engineered.

4:14

Mud between cleats walked home with data collected from an unknown source is a practice that maintains a balance between integration and differentiation in a landscape with no spirit without substance to bind it, and no ethos without beings to pry it free.

4:15

Although he never climbed the mountain the truth of its vision drew Cézanne to paint Mont Sainte-Victoire, “as though such marks and such a surface were generating a space that was moving into a different, yet-to-be-named space.”^[22] From Adam to Linnaeus, who “was in reality a poet who happened to become a naturalist,”^[23] we lord over objects we have assigned ourselves the authority to name, to classify, to place species in taxonomies. As Cézanne painted the mountain from various angles and inclinations, its “surface ruptured with a pulsation of marks that tend not so much to elide as to ignore the code of resemblance” to the truth of a vision yet to be named.^[24]

4:16

Would Rilke have tweeted poems to “friends,” or have joined a hummingbird, flitting from flower to flower sounding like an old foghorn? After all, “The daemonic life (of his poems) is the life that withdraws from our comprehension while still maintaining the power to act upon us,”^[25] like an ornithologist birding from various angles of perception.

4:17

Clay shaped by hands, cured in kilns, “took the character of a return to beginnings, of a dream of beginning that linked primal innocence with sculptural simplicity.”^[26] And clay baked by sun and pressed under the pressure of passing feet---both maintain the complex balance between differentiation and integration.

4:18

While the walls of Paleolithic caves helped shape the images painted onto them, the art may have had cosmological significance, forming “a connecting link between the two elements of an ‘above-ground:below ground’ binary opposition,”^[27] re-membered in the hippocampus’ dendritic synapses, in the dark passages of the human mind. The gods of neo-liberalism are also above and below: Coal, Oil, Gas pumped up fuel machines coughing and spewing CO₂ and other climate-warming gases. There are no binaries here, only smooth flows of capital returns.

4:19

On the curve of a recently opened path, redwood and knotty pine nailed together become “another footnote that will make a bridge to the past that will give ideas from the past the power to affect the present.”^[28] Rocks are weathered by windy thoughts howling until they crumble into the loam of an unknown calligraphy. Walking downhill

in full career, one foot slips, then another, three times I'm saved from the jagged portals of Cerberus' jaws by a walking stick probing for signs of Gaia's most awesome direction.^[29]

4:20

Past a signpost pointing in several directions, a narrow trail leads to where poems ring with the angular beauty of the rocks. Now mythological time subsumes cosmological place, "an intermediate force, freely composing and freely inventing."^[30] Here a burning bush is a wild-fire, and the mountain itself turns me around.

Notes

1. J. Sallis, *Stone*. Bloomington IN, 1992. p.93. [↑ Back](#)
2. M. Heidegger, *Aufenthalte*, Frankfurt, 1989. p.25. [↑ Back](#)
3. Sallis, *Ibid.* [↑ Back](#)
4. "Weird (or speculative) realists cannot be downward scientific reducers, nor upward humanistic reducers --- they can only be hunters, forever chasing 'ghostly objects withdrawing from all human and inhuman access, accessible only by allusion and seducing us by means of allure.'" S. Alexander, "Graham Harman: The Third Table (Synopsis and Critique)." 10 March 2018. torpedotheark.blogspot.com/2018/03/graham-harman-third-table-synopsis-and.html [↑ Back](#)
5. In Quentin Meillassoux's philosophy, the great outdoors is "the wilds of the Real to which philosophy may achieve direct access once it frees itself from the correlation between thinking and being." D. Spaulding, "Inside Out." 9/21/21. metamute.org/editorial/articles/inside-out-O [↑ Back](#)
6. Huang Po Hsi-Yün (?-849), Quoted in, *Essentials of the Transmission of the Mind*. Quoted in C. Chung-Yuan, *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*. New York, 1969. p.87. [↑ Back](#)
7. C. Malabou, "Superhumanity on Plasticity with Catherine Malabou." MMCA, Oct. 27, 2017. [youtube.com/watch?v=8kL6oQRKu4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kL6oQRKu4s) [↑ Back](#)
8. T.W. Deacon & T. Cashman, "Steps to a Metaphysics of Incompleteness." *Theology and Science*, Vol.14 (4) 2016. [↑ Back](#)
9. T.W. Deacon, *Incomplete Nature*. New York, 2013. p.70. [↑ Back](#)
10. Y. Hui, *Recursivity and Contingency*. Lanham, MD, 2019), p.X. [↑ Back](#)
11. C.G. Jung, *Visions: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1930-1934*. C. Douglas, ed. Princeton NJ, 1997. p.31. [↑ Back](#)
12. P. Ball, *The History of the Unseen: From Plato to Particle Physics*. London, 2015. p.7. [↑ Back](#)
13. P. Celan. From, "Assisi." [↑ Back](#)
14. N. Wilde, "Burning Bridges: The problem of relations in object-oriented ontology—a topological approach." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 25 Feb 2020. p.9. [↑ Back](#)
15. "We do know that a number of animals were recognized by the Chumash to have counterparts among the stars, such as coyote, deer, bear, raccoon, and snakes and birds of various sorts." T. Hudson and K. Conti, "The Aquatic Motif of Chumash Rock Art." *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology*. 3(2) 1981. p.227. [↑ Back](#)
16. B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA, 1993. p.10. [↑ Back](#)
17. U. App, *Master Yumen: From the Record of the Chan Master "Gate of the Clouds."* New York and Tokyo, 1994. p.39. [↑ Back](#)
18. Sallis. *Ibid.*, p.89. "Greece is still always the dream, and every new advance in thinking lives in it." M. Heidegger. Letter to E. Kästner, July 1957. [↑ Back](#)
19. R. Ramirez, "Weather Whiplash: A series of Storms Could Ease California Drought, But Also Unleash Flood Hazards." *CNN* Oct 23, 2021. [↑ Back](#)
20. A. Sharr, *Heidegger's Hut*. Cambridge, MA, 2017. p.58. Philosopher Hannah Arendt called the hut "a kind of mouse hole into which he withdrew." In, E. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt / Martin Heidegger*. New Haven, CT, 1995. p.67. [↑ Back](#)

21. *Kant on Swedenborg: Dreams of a Spirit-Seer & Other Writings*. G.A. Magee, trans. West Chester, PA, 2003. p.39. (Originally published in 1766.) [↑ Back](#)
 22. R. Morris, "Cézanne's Mountains." *Critical Inquiry*. Spring 1998. p.815. [↑ Back](#)
 23. A. Strindberg. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Linnaeus [↑ Back](#)
 24. R. Morris, *Ibid*. And yet, "Like Manet and with almost as little appetite for the role of revolutionary, (Cézanne) changed the course of art out of the very effort to return it by new paths to its old ways." C. Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Affirmations and Refusals*, 1950-1956. Vol. 3. J. O'Brian, ed. Chicago, 1993. p.84. [↑ Back](#)
 25. D. Rockrohr, "The Daemonic Life of Objects: Object-Oriented Criticism and Cynthia Ozick's 'The Pagan Rabbi.'" *symploke*, Vol. 26, Nos.1-2, 2018. p. 217. Original reads, "The daemonic life of an object..." [↑ Back](#)
 26. S. Geist, "Brancusi." *Artforum* March 1967. <https://www.artforum.com/print/196703/brancusi-36744> [↑ Back](#)
 27. D. Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in The Cave*. New York, 2004. p.209. [↑ Back](#)
 28. I. Stengers, "Reclaiming Animism." *E-Flux Journal*. Issue 36, July 2012. [↑ Back](#)
 29. "Odysseus follows Circe's instructions, digging a hole as broad and deep as his forearm." There he makes several offerings and sacrifices concluding with the blood of a ram and ewe. "When the dead get wind of this blood, their hungry souls come flowing up from Erebus, the Underworld." G.D. Mazur, *Hinges*. Natick, MA., 2010. p.32. [↑ Back](#)
 30. F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. W. Kaufmann, and R. J. Hollingdale, trans. New York, 1968. p.66. [↑ Back](#)
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Part Five

"But if a new consciousness of earth is to come into prominence on the far side of Apollo's Space-Age ascendancy, Gaia will need to return with her dragon energies, her dreams, and beneath all, her ambiguous grounding for a metaphorizing form of understanding." D. Noel, *Approaching Earth*. Warwick, NY, 1986. p.95.

5:1

On a cool autumn morning a red scarf of light warms the shoulders of the mountain's highest peaks. While climbing I think: Do we still need a god to look up to? If so, perhaps we should worship the sun, who both makes life possible and will someday bake it to a crisp. A pinch of pollen at dawn, three bows facing East, and a pair of UV 400 sunglasses, is all this god needs. However, at this tipping point, when "prophecies are no longer proclaimed from the mountain-top but from the metrics,"^[1] we need to make a gradient descent to Gaia, "who opened up and brought forth the first human beings."^[2]

5:2

Using 3D photogrammetry and laser scanning, reanalyzing footprints thought to be the paws of a bear now suggests they were made by "a small, cross-stepping bipedal hominin... indicating that a minimum of two hominin taxa with different feet and gaits coexisted" more than three million years ago.^[3]

As scanning machines become more sensitive, who we are will continue to be theorized by posthuman anthropologists tracking the loops and curving paths homo sapiens had walked, leaving behind "a trace, and a trace of the erasure of the trace."^[4]

5:3

Falsifying predictions of another dry winter, the trail's muddy lives stick between cleats. Immigrants of pebbles and rocks slid down the mountainside. "On the horizon were just sky and clouds—and mountain ranges like so many distant waves. I couldn't tell where the United States ended or Mexico began, and it didn't matter."^[5]

Slip-sliding sideways, a gash in the path invites a fall into "instant global consciousness,"^[6] or dropping into Hades, and basking in its warmth on this two-sweater morning.

5:4

Today my mind is spinning the story of a species that became a predator then sharpened its teeth into technologies that made an entire planet its prey, mindlessly stripping its resources like meat flensed off bone; then metastasizing its wastes through the planet's circulatory systems, throwing them into rages and assaults called hurricanes, tornados, heatwaves, droughts...So clever had this species become, they couldn't see that they were tumbling ahead of themselves into a void.

5:5

One autumn morning at Ryutaku-ji, a Zen Buddhist monastery above Mishima City, Japan, its abbot, Nakagawa Soen, entered the sōdō, in which I and others had been asleep. Seeing a broken handbell he picked it up and cradled it as if a small bird with a broken wing. Then he walked away intoning in a deep, compassionate voice, "Everything breaks...everything breaks."^[7] But "there is such a *technological* fascination with the keeping alive of the all but dead."^[8]

5:6

From above and below, the din of human activity reached me shivering as if Boreas himself was shouting gloomy predictions into the darkest regions of my reddening ears. When the sun finally peeked over a frigid horizon, CO₂ continued to puff from my nose and mouth. Even if Net Zero emissions of greenhouse gases were achieved, we'd still be guilty of breathing.

5:7

Up from where undercut rocks had reseated themselves on freshly watered earth, "Where'd you come from?" I asked a man who'd emerged from the bushes. "There's a foot of mud I avoided," he replied, pointing, sounding annoyed. I had just left a charred tree whose roots were still alive. Picking my way downhill, flanking rifts and interrogating depths,^[9] like "Socrates walk(ing) the agora; environmental philosophers should get their feet wet..."^[10]

5:8

A deer swimming up the path before me,^[11] is a psychopomp leading to the Wall of Gods, whose fractured faces are sandstone masks,^[12] covering the nakedness of leaping spinning atoms. All gods are outcrops of significant dwelling in "the final darkness" of the human soul.^[13] Here we approach the mystery of why Paleolithic "caverns measureless to man,"^[14] and difficult to reach, were adorned with signs and symbols,^[15] while some of the more accessible galleries were left bare.^[16]

5:9

Soon after the new year, the river is raging again. There is no crossing, even wearing the boots sitting silently in my knapsack. Around 1688 Matsuo Basho wrote in his *Knapsack Journal*, “Nothing one sees is not a flower, nothing one imagines is not the moon.”^[17] For one contemporary philosopher with Object-Oriented Ontology in mind, this would be: “All things equally exist insofar as they exist at all”^[18] I suspect a Zen Master today would accept this statement. But how nice it could be if the same river ran here too!

5:10

Many lands sacred to indigenous peoples by history or religion are also from where natural resources critical to modern technologies are extracted. In North America, what began with gold, copper, coal, uranium, petroleum, is now lithium, essential to rechargeable batteries for electric vehicles. Large deposits of lithium lie beneath Thacker Pass, Nevada, where Paiute Indians “harvest traditional foods, medicines and supplies for sacred ceremonies,”^[19] and where they honor their dead from what they claim to have been a massacre in 1865 by the First Nevada Volunteer Cavalry Battalion.^[20] If technology and spirituality would allow “the mineral imagination...its full cosmic resonance,”^[21] they may learn to respect each other, making one bow to the past, two bows to the present, three bows to the future.

5:11

Early one morning, on a different path, recent showers scoured stones into slippery pebbles. Trees huddled within a hazy sky as “the first poet of a civilization that has not yet appeared,”^[22] jogged past me, a “graceful son of Pan,”^[23] fangs gleaming as if the Anthropocene had never occurred.

5:12

For the physicist the cat sealed in a box is *either* dead *or* alive; for the zenist it's *neither* dead *nor* alive. Sauntering downhill, negotiating stones loose and skittish, the landscape dreams an obsolete ken, in which wispy clouds are “the shining beard of the / patriarchs.”^[24] With mud stripped from its geology rock queries charred tree: a flat ontology, “the field in which the work of connecting and disconnecting will continue.”^[25] The cat's fate is in the riddle of the linkage.

5:13

What were the initial conditions in Upper Paleolithic Franco-Cantabrian societies that led their people to create some of our greatest cultural achievements? A landscape of ice, and snow driven by whips of freezing wind? Short summer days following long winter nights? Huddling in shelters near the entrance to caves too dark and damp to live in, where the rank smell of bears still curried lungs;^[26] to crawl into, drop down, walk through would have been as entering a series of galleries in which artists were hunting their animal spirits. “O inwardness slain!”^[27] What was imagined thousands of years ago on scabrous walls gallops through the initial conditions happening now.

5:14

Searching for life in the universe, we tend to use a carbon-based model of ourselves; even though, biologically, there is no anthropomorphic “us.”^[28] If we could define an “us,” at least twenty-one ancestral lines classified as human have been unearthed so far. Whether on Earth, or in the universe, “We are always struggling with ghosts.”^[29]

5:15

The red tube and its black rubber grip is the handle of a bowsaw whose steel teeth bit through fallen limbs and their nubbins the old sycamore had suddenly dropped. The *bang* on the hardwood deck awoke trees and wooden fish, thousands of miles away; and the neighborhood's dogs dreamed of chewing on redwood fences, on a night "made of doors and witches."^[30]

5:16

Like a field of dreams, the Higgs field substantiates particles; yet the wind has no mass until its riotous air sings through bushes and trees. Far below an unseen river sends its choir clambering up a mountain. On a summit that can never be conquered, a god who sleeps will enflame the mind of posthuman beings. Thus, end won't be a whimper but a dream.

5:17

To say there has not been a megadrought like this in the American West for at least 1200 years, or that the planet hasn't been heating this fast for millions of years, is to forge a link with older traits as the river races between rocks bending ankles into critical angles. Too cold to wade across, one summer day in the last century, these feet dangled in a freezing Yuba River, on the road to Kitkitdizze, so many leaps and inspirations ago!^[31]

5:18

Humanity is bound by a shared propensity for destruction. "*The disaster takes care of everything.*"^[32] "Man-made" and "natural" disasters coalesce in the Anthropocene, the epoch in which humanity joined to exploit, aggress, defend, and mourn its own. If we could grieve for all forms of life Gaia has birthed and we have driven to extinction, a cry would rise from Antiquity: Great Pan Has Been Reborn!^[33]

5:19

I'm standing by a garage that seems to be in Seattle, in which a few poets are performing. Robert Bly, the 20th Century's spirited performer/teacher of poetry slides into the dream, his broad back blocking sound and view.^[34]

It is almost spring. The path is versed in glossy red leaves of Poison Oak. Nearly dry, the river has spread long fingers feeling their way to the dark blue sea. As I descend a ridge a buzzard rises on a breath of warm air. "Lew!" I call, "Is this you?"^[35] Or am I still dreaming that "the duende which seized the heart of Nietzsche" has fermented into a grunge?^[36]

5:20

Most accounts of mountaineering relate the ascent, rarer is the descent where life is slippery, broken over rocks, frozen into crystals of blood. Since the "Great Acceleration,"^[37] graphs of CO₂ emissions mimic a route clambering up a mountain. But the tumble to Holocene levels will again pass through the depth and despair of the human-created Death Zone;^[38] the unavoidable Void, in which nothing is everything.

Notes

1. A. Appadurai & P. Kift, "Beware the Magic of Metrics." *Eurozine*, 27 June 2020. [↑ Back](#)
2. N. Hall, *The Moon & The Virgin*. New York, 1980. p.52. [↑ Back](#)
3. E.J. McNutt, et.al. "Footprint evidence of early hominin locomotor diversity at Laetoli, Tanzania." *Nature*, Dec. 2021. Reference to prints found at a nearby site two years earlier. [↑ Back](#)
4. J. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago, 1985. p. 24. [↑ Back](#)

5. T. Miller, "Visions of a Borderless World." *The Nation*, Dec 16, 2021. [↑ Back](#)
6. Ibid. This was "astronaut Edgar Mitchell's reaction when he gazed back at Earth from the moon." [↑ Back](#)
7. Revised from, "Two Words." *Shambhala Sun*, March 2002. weishaus.unm.edu/Writing/two_words.htm [↑ Back](#)
8. C. Ricks, *Beckett's Dying Words*. Oxford, UK, 1993. p.41. [↑ Back](#)
9. "Heidegger calls this antagonism (between world and earth) a rift (*Riss*), suggesting a tension or disruption that has overtones both of artistic process and of the physical earth, as when we speak of a rift between different geological strata." G. Shapiro, *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art after Babel*. Berkeley, CA, 1995. p.134. [↑ Back](#)
10. R. Frodeman, "The Future of Environmental Philosophy." *Ethics and the Environment*. Fall, 2007. p.120. [↑ Back](#)
11. In the cave of Lascaux, is "the line of deer heads that have been dubbed 'Swimming Deer'..." D. Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in The Cave*. London, 2002. p.258. [↑ Back](#)
12. "There is no appearance that (sandstone) does not take, no caprice which it does not have, no dream which it does not realize. It takes every shape; it makes every grimace." V. Hugo. Quoted in G. Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Will*. Dallas, 2002. p.144. (See endnote, p.337.) [↑ Back](#)
13. In Samuel Beckett's narrative, *Murphy*, "(Murphy, it will be remembered, prefers the dark part of his mind to the light.)" A. Cronin, *Samuel Beckett*. New York, 1996. p.221. Cronin is referring to C.G. Jung, who "portrayed mind as made up of concentric circles becoming ever more darker till we reach the final darkness of the unconscious." pp.220,221. Was Jung remembering Dante's "Divine Comedy," which was also a favorite of Beckett? [↑ Back](#)
14. S. Coleridge. From "Kubla Khan." [↑ Back](#)
15. "A sign is an image that principally stands for what is known and knowable...Symbols point to what is relatively unknown, not yet known, or even unknowable." S. Rowland, *C.G. Jung in the Humanities*. Oxon, UK and New York, 2020. p.53. [↑ Back](#)
16. This also applies to rock art of the American Southwest. Outside Santa Fe, NM I came upon a figure painted on a wall where the artist would have had to have been suspended in the air like a hummingbird. [↑ Back](#)
17. D.L. Barnhill, trans. *Basho's Journey: The Literary Prose of Matsuo Basho*. Albany, NY, 2005. p.29. [↑ Back](#)
18. N. Wilde, "Burning Bridges: The Problem of Relations in Object-Oriented Ontology—A Topological Approach." *Palgrave Communications*, 6:29 (2020) p.3. [nature.com/articles/s41599-020-0406-7](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-020-0406-7). He is playing on "Ian Bogost's paradigmatic formula: 'All things equally exist, yet they do not exist equally.'" I. Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology Or What It Is Like To Be A Thing*. Minneapolis and London, 2012. p.11. [↑ Back](#)
19. "According to the investor analyst firm MSCI, 79% of lithium reserves in the United States are within 35 miles of Native American reservations." B. Flin, "Like Putting a Lithium Mine on Arlington Cemetery." *The Guardian*, December 2, 2021. [↑ Back](#)
20. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Mud_Lake [↑ Back](#)
21. G. Bachelard; Ibid, p.185. [↑ Back](#)
22. R. Char. Quoted in, J.R. Lawler, *René Char: The Myth and the Poem*. Princeton, NJ, 1978. p. xiii, n.4. Char is addressing Arthur Rimbaud. [↑ Back](#)
23. A. Rimbaud. From, "Antique." [↑ Back](#)
24. P. Celan, From, "Tübingen, January." In the poem Celan writes that if a patriarch lived today, "he / could / only babble and babble / over, over /againagain." M. Hamburger, trans. [↑ Back](#)
25. J.V. Harari and D.F. Bell, Introduction to M. Serres, *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*. Baltimore, 1982. p. xxxiii. [↑ Back](#)
26. See, B. Kurtén, *The Cave Bear Story*. New York, 1976. [↑ Back](#)
27. R. Char. From, "Bird-man Dead and Bison Dying." J.R. Lawler trans. Ibid, p.53. [↑ Back](#)
28. "This means that 90% of cells in the human body and 99% of genes are not human! The human body is best conceptualized as a multispecies ecology comprised of bacteria, archaea, fungi, and some animals, too—which are all invisible to the naked eye." J. Turnbull and A. Searle, "Anthropo(s)cene." *The Philosopher*.

thephilosopher1923.org/searle-turnbull As for extraterrestrial geology. On Mars, for example, “You don’t find landscapes that are even close to that on Earth.” K Farley, geophysicist at the California Institute of Technology. K. Chang, “On Mars a Year of surprise and Discovery.” *New York Times*, February 15, 2022. [↑ Back](#)

29. A, Kapoor, “Artistic Truth in Virtual Space by Anish Kapoor at Nobel Week Dialogue 2017” youtube.com/watch?v=qRIYiCUPORA [↑ Back](#)
30. Adonis (Ali Ahmad Sa’id). From, *Day’s Twin*.” [↑ Back](#)
31. “Snyder built a house that he named ‘Kitkitdizze’ in 1970..The name was taken from the Wintu Indian word for *Chamaebatia foliolosa*, a low-growing, spicy-odored shrub.” K. Yamazato, “Kitkitdizze, Zendo, and Place: Gary Snyder as a Reinhabitory Poet.” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. Spring, 1993. p.51. [↑ Back](#)
32. M. Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*. Lincoln NB, 1986. p.3. [↑ Back](#)
33. “A cry went through late antiquity, ‘Great Pan is dead!’ Plutarch reported it in his ‘On the Failure of the Oracles,’ yet the saying has itself become oracular, meaning many things to many people in many ages. One thing was announced: nature had become deprived of its creative voice.” J. Hillman, “Nature Alive.” In, T. Moore, ed., *A Blue Fire: Selected Writings by James Hillman*. New York, 1991. p.97. [↑ Back](#)
34. The poet and teacher Robert Bly (1926-2021) died a few weeks before the night of this dream. [↑ Back](#)
35. See, “Song of the Turkey Buzzard.” In, *Ring of Bone: Lew Welch Collected Poems*. San Francisco, 2012. In May 1971, Lew Welch walked into the wilderness in California, and wasn’t heard from again. [↑ Back](#)
36. F.G. Lorca, “Theory and Function of the Duende.” In *Frederico Garcia Lorca: Selected Poems*. Northumberland UK., 1993. [↑ Back](#)
37. “Only beyond the mid-20th century is there clear evidence for fundamental shifts in the state and functioning of the Earth System that are beyond the range of variability of the Holocene and driven by human activities. Thus, of all the candidates for a start date for the Anthropocene, the beginning of the Great Acceleration is by far the most convincing from an Earth System science perspective.” W. Steffen, et.al., “The trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration.” *The Anthropocene Review*, Vol 2 No 1, 2015. [↑ Back](#)
38. “By definition, since a person descends after they have ascended, people are at their most exposed during their descent, as they have been in the death-zone longer by that stage.” F. White, Dec 21, 2021. quora.com/Is-it-hard-to-climb-down-from-Mount-Everest [↑ Back](#)

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