

# CyberParks and Geoaesthetics

## Reading modern technology after Nietzsche

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**Abstract** – *Although Nietzsche never mentioned the term geophilosophy or geoaesthetics, from his work emanates a thought connected to the Earth, and to a new direction for the Earth, in order to achieve the Übermensch. Geoaesthetics is assumed as the latent purpose of Nietzschean geophilosophy, aiming to build the world from the artist's figure. And all can be artists, when thinking and constructing, critically and creatively, one direction to Earth (Sinn der Erde). This construction presupposes a Menschen-Erde, that is, a planetarian humanity – that might be attained communally through new medial practices. Now, with the expansion of territories through technics, construction isn't exclusive to real space, but also concerns virtual or outer space architectures. This is an attempt to read the notion of CyberParks through Nietzschean perspective and regards the implementation of land art and site-specific art projects as further developments of a CyberPark.*

**Keywords**—Geophilosophy; Geoaesthetics; CyberParks; Technics; Planetarium

«You're on Earth. There is no cure for that.»

Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*

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## I. A NEW DIRECTION FOR THE EARTH

Although Friedrich Nietzsche never appointed the expression geophilosophy nor geoaesthetics, from his work emanates a thought connected to the Earth, and to the construction of a new *direction for the Earth (Sinn der Erde)*, in order to achieve the *Übermensch*, or *overhumanity* – one of his most significant concepts and that sets the question of self-overcoming.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche conduces an all-encompassing uprising of Geography and Geology against the domination of History, which Hegelians required in order to locate historical events in a temporal organisation of the world. Often described to be Nietzsche's most paradigmatic work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is also considered unusual and hermetic. This has made possible different sorts of reception. This paper is one of them; an attempt to read Nietzschean geophilosophy and geoaesthetics expanded by the question of modern technics. Additionally, I regard the implementation of land art and site-specific art projects as further developments of a CyberPark<sup>1</sup> and as workable territories to set a geophilosophy through geoaesthetics.

Nietzschean *Übermensch* is the creator of new values: it is collective solution for mankind, and without any moral principles. Nothing is imposed to the *Übermensch* but to reconnect

<sup>1</sup> CyberParks: fostering knowledge about the relationship between information and communication technologies and public spaces supported by strategies to improve their use and attractiveness (TU 1306) is a Cost Action (European Cooperation in Science and Technology), a network of investigators under open access. For more visit: <http://cyberparks-project.eu/>

body and spirit<sup>2</sup> – what Zarathustra allegorically calls the conflict between *plants* and *ghosts* – in a substantial element of global extent, exuded from the Earth. *Thus spoke Zarathustra*:

But whoever is wisest among you is also just a conflict and a cross between plant and ghost. But do I implore you to become ghosts or plants? Behold, I teach you the overman! The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth! 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 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! [1], p.6

It is by freeing himself from the local and mythical binding, that the *Overman* is thus the *meaning* and the *direction of the earth* (*Sinn der Erde*). Zarathustra exhorts to the abandonment of transcendental promises, and even nationalistic motivations<sup>3</sup>, to engage a single planetary movement. The proposal is based on a collective, trans-local and decentralised drive based on geology and geography. Or, to be more precise, and in order to be immense and endurable, a reformulated history must presuppose geography, geometrics, geology, geophilosophy and geoaesthetics. Nietzsche's concepts are catalysers of a Geophilosophy.

In our view, the planet Earth becoming central to thought is one of the essential premises for the implementation of CyberParks.

## II. GEOPHILOSOPHY

The concept of *Geophilosophy* appears firstly in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari last book together *What is philosophy?* (1991) and steams from Nietzschean philosophical positioning of the Earth, who they regard as the first geophilosopher.

And what is the reception of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari of Nietzsche's geophilosophy? Precisely this essential connection to the Earth:

Subject and object give a poor approximation of thought. Thinking is neither a line drawn between subject and object nor a revolving of one around the other. Rather, thinking takes place in the relationship of the territory and the earth. [2], p.85

Following Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari read the world and the human mind through the geological paradigm, employed in metaphysics landscape metaphors.

<sup>2</sup> The 'overman' whom Nietzsche proclaims demands an unconditional affirmation of the present: he wants nothing other than itself – which is to say, its own expansion and intensification, and that will entail a reconnection of body and soul – what Nietzsche refers to as *plant* and *ghost*.

<sup>3</sup> Anticipating discourses in geopolitics, or 'The Will to Power' which lead to misconceptions of Nietzschean philosophy, wrongly regarded as proto-Nazi.

For Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy *is* thinking immanence<sup>4</sup>. They claim that ‘*thinking consists in stretching out a plane of immanence that absorbs the earth*’ [2], p.88. So the proposition is to set a new geographic model of philosophical positioning<sup>5</sup>, where thinking is not entirely a subjective activity but rather takes place in the relation between territory and the Earth.

Furthermore, by seeking the Earth, Deleuze and Guattari propose the decentralisation of Greek Philosophy<sup>6</sup>. Finally, they object the role Hegel commends to world History, i.e., that of the ‘German Fate’ in the History of Philosophy, if we are allowed to say so. Despite the ‘German dream’<sup>7</sup>, claim Deleuze and Guattari reviewing Hegelian ossified German Idealism, there is no universal democratic state<sup>8</sup>. But the point is to know whether this enveloped universal tendency inflicts the unity of the earth or not. The kernel of the fact is embedded in geopolitics, and the clarification of the relation between the earth and the political is very problematic for Friedrich Nietzsche:

“The earth”, he said, “has a skin; and this skin has diseases. One of these diseases for example is called: ‘Human being’”. [4], p.103

How should we interpret these diseases? We admit that Nietzsche is criticising the way the Earth was built, precisely the geopolitical regimes that were arranged over the surface of the Earth that required violent deterritorialisation and its reterritorialisation<sup>9</sup>. For Nietzsche, political intervention and its effects establish people in a relation to one another, and those relations have nothing to do with the laws of nature or that of the Earth<sup>10</sup>, hence

<sup>4</sup> And Nietzsche uses the landscape metaphors in opposition to their transcendent meaning. Hastily clarifying, immanence and transcendence are positions of different metaphysics. For Deleuze, philosophy must be thought in terms of immanence, as it implies the relation ‘in’ something rather than a hierarchical directed ‘to’ something – and that is the transcendence plane (humans are transcended by God, or that mind transcends the body, for instance). Immanence privileges connections over any kind of separation. Deleuze follows Nietzsche’s doctrine of eternal return as it provides an ontology of immanence (in *Difference and Repetition* (1968), for instance).

<sup>5</sup> Stephan Günzel argues that their work redefines the utopian structure inherent in most philosophies, transposing to philosophy a spatial force: “[...] in a geographical context that usually persists in the presence of the absence of the place to come. This redefinition consists in the transformation of a temporal structure back into the spatial structure from which, they claim, it originally stemmed”. [3], p.78

<sup>6</sup> Geography is not confined to providing historical form with a substance and variable places. It is not merely physical and human, but mental, like the landscape. Geography wrests history from the cult of necessity in order to stress the irreducibility of contingency. It wrests it from the cult of origins in order to affirm the power of the “milieu” (what philosophy finds in Greeks, said Nietzsche, is not an origin but a milieu, an ambiance, an ambiance atmosphere: the philosopher ceases to be a comet). [...] Finally, it wrests history from itself in order to discover becomings that do not belong to history even if they fall back into it [...] “Becoming” does not belong to history. History today still designates only the set of conditions, however recent they may be, from which one turns away in order to become, that is to say, in order to create something new.” [2], p.96

<sup>7</sup> That concrete ‘incarnation’ leads them to conclude that “If there is no universal democratic state, despite German Philosophy’s dream of a foundation, it is because the market is the only thing that is universal to capitalism. In contrast with the ancient empires that carried out transcendent overcodings, capitalism functions as an immanent axiomatic of decoded flows (of money, labour, products).” [2], p.106

<sup>8</sup> Admitting here that only capitalism is able to traduce this desire. Capitalism is the philosophical reterritorialisation in its current form: “capitalism reactivates the Greek world [...] it is the new Athens” [2], p.98. And the danger is, it is so planetary. However, modern technology has, as well, a global reach. I will come back to this point later.

<sup>9</sup> Gary Shapiro synthesises superbly the meaning of these fundamental concepts: “[...] people inhabit or territorialize a certain area or space; they deterritorialize by identifying themselves with certain values and norms; they reterritorialize by making the claim that these values “come with the territory”. This is the law of their overcomings, by which their habitation becomes a human earth (*Menschen-Erde*).” [5], p.479

<sup>10</sup> And Gary Shapiro also sees this in this way: “So when Zarathustra, a year later, raises the question “Who will be the lords of the earth?” and counsels “be true to the earth,” we do not hear him calling for the total mobilization of a state war machine, but as beginning to articulate a geophilosophy and an eco-aesthetics that will not be complicit in the technocratic construction of land.” [5], p.492

people will be critics of the laws that have divided what may be permitted and not permitted. And furthermore, as said before, Nietzsche suggests the dissolution of all the inherited forms of history. Henceforth, the geopolitical map must be intersected, abrogated and abolished.

As way of conclusion of this matter, Philosophy, as Deleuze and Guattari avow in 'Geophilosophy', has been too centred on the Hegelian hegemonic vision of history, whereas it should be concentrated on the Earth's entire surface. Even the tropics, following here Nietzsche's claim in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Does it seem that moralists harbor a hatred against tropics and primeval forests? And that they need to discredit the "tropical man" at all cost, whether as a disease or degeneration of man, or as his own hell and self-martyrdom? But why? In favor of "temperate zones?" In favor of temperate men? Of "moralists"? Of the mediocre?" [1], p.124

*Menschen-Erde*, or the 'planetarian' man, must be extensive, until the *tropics*<sup>11</sup>.

Human unity is fundamental here, although it is an impossible concept since humankind does not proceed from a common origin. Nevertheless, its purpose is to reinforce the supremacy of the Earth and that of the future; that of the perpetual becoming of earthlings, and not that of civilisations.

Deleuze and Guattari's Geophilosophy is complex, and our approach is far from revealing the totality of it. Nevertheless, our goal concerning Geophilosophy is more centred in the *Geo* (Earth) and less in the philosophy. And precisely we would like to underline how Deleuze and Guattari read in Nietzsche the big escape from the local and the mythical, in order to engage the global.

So far, we have seen how Deleuze and Guattari revised Zarathustra's principles. Nietzsche, distancing himself from a historical view, retains geography, geology, meteorology, and calls for a conception of culture based on a *Language on the Earth* [5], indeed that is so because the essential question of geophilosophy is Earth as an object. This, too, is the subject for the Geoaesthetics that Nietzsche intuits in order to reorganise all philosophy from the Earth perspective.

Geophilosophy, in the way it seeks to establish a relationship between thought and planet, should be understood as the horizon of destitutions or restitutions that results from the Earth's elements. Hence, the need for a *new direction for the Earth (Sinn der Erde)*.

### III. GEOAESTHETICS

In his essay 'Nietzsche on Geophilosophy and Geoaesthetics' (2006), Gary Shapiro opens Nietzschean Geophilosophy to Geoaesthetics<sup>12</sup>. In our view, Shapiro underlines a truly essential aspect of Nietzschean *Übermensch (Overman)*, precisely the constructive character

<sup>11</sup> "The geographical analogy offers an example of a way of thinking that pursues as wide a range as possible of singularities in their series, spectra, and groupings." [5], p.478

<sup>12</sup> Gary Shapiro has other substantial essays on this matters, such as 'Earth's Garden-Happiness: Nietzsche's Geoaesthetics of the Anthropocene'. We will be following 'Nietzsche on Geophilosophy and Geoaesthetics'.

of *Menschen-Erde* (*Planetarian Man*). Geoaesthetics is assumed as the latent purpose of Nietzschean geophilosophy, aiming to build the world from the artist's figure. And all can be artists, when thinking and constructing, critically and creatively through and for the Earth.

By seeing projectively the *new builders* of the Earth, and what a city can be – a new and inventive structure planned and implemented in absolute resonance with the audacity of the artists [5] – a new process underlying creation emerges. Simultaneously, the new builders of the Earth will reflect the landscape metaphors for thought, Earth and the collective, to finally attain the reality of a common becoming. Nietzsche's texts are sprinkled with allusions to architecture and landscape architecture, because he sees in art the way for new land production. Gary Shapiro finds this through the comparative Nietzschean approach to the gardens:

This is what a city can be, an adventurous, inventive structure through which the daring of its artists is reflected back to them and which also opens out to the wild exterior of sea, mountains, and strange and distant lands. These houses and gardens, the geoaesthetics of Genoa, constitute what Deleuze and Guattari would call a "modern" art, one open to the cosmos as opposed to the "sentimental" or Romantic mode of the English garden. [5], p.492

Although expressed in a different register, this proposition is compatible with Stephan Günzel conception of the landscape metaphors<sup>13</sup>, that accords primacy to geophilosophy. But, as Günzel emphasises, whereas Nietzsche's contemporary philosopher Heinrich Romundt demands a *quasi-theological geographisation of philosophy* "from which *the philosophy of the future must arise*", Nietzsche will "use of landscape metaphors in opposition to their traditional transcendent meaning (which as a critic he tried to make immanent to the earth), on the other hand, his philosophical geography is far from geopolitics" [3], p.87. Besides, Gary Shapiro will enlighten how aesthetics is a non-contemplative attitude in Nietzsche and strongly a constructive and productive way of perceiving the Language of the Earth:

Nietzsche used them to develop a conception of culture and language on the earth, a *Menschen-Erde*. *BGE [Beyond Good and Evil]* 268 sketches a conception of culture as effecting a linguistic shorthand for registering the common experiences of a people who have long lived together under "similar conditions (of climate, soil, dangers, needs, and work)." For Nietzsche, as for Deleuze and Guattari, the aesthetic is a significant avenue for exploring the possibilities of earthly life. In contrast with the idealism of Kant and Hegel, and in opposition to Schopenhauer's view of aesthetic experience as purely contemplative,

<sup>13</sup> Stephan Günzel has developed some thoughts around Nietzschean predilection for the topographic and the geographic, by analysing the predominance of the geographical metaphors in the work of Nietzsche. Although Ernst Bertram, Theodor Lessing, Karl Jaspers, pre-war thinkers, have considered that the geographical descriptions of Nietzsche Zarathustra were representations of the actual landscapes he experienced, Stephan Günzel sees the geographical within Nietzschean philosophy. In his essay [3] Günzel lists the types of cases of the geographical and the cosmographic figures in Nietzsche's Zarathustra – the sun, the moon, the sea, the desert, the mountains and the volcano to be used as allegories.

Nietzsche sees the aesthetic as the way in which fully embodied agents affectively respond to and alter their environments. [5], p.480

Shapiro determines Geoaesthetics as a garden theory<sup>14</sup> – which might be suitable for CyberParks, but we will only follow some basic premises here, precisely that of the Earth and that of Geometry (*qua* technics extracted from the Earth). Later we will follow them in the attempt of establishing a *way to a planetarian experience*. But before, and continuing with Shapiro to confirm our previous expectations on Nietzschean geopolitics, the German philosopher is not exhorting to the organisation of a new state apparatus, but rather conceiving the articulation between a geophilosophy and an eco-aesthetics, something that might prefigure a *post-human form of constructing the Earth*:

We can imagine that Nietzsche would be receptive to some of the land or earth art that has emerged since the 1960s, especially in Anglophone countries, insofar as these works redraw the lines of exterior and interior, frame and content, or site and non-site. Some of these may prefigure a post-human form of constructing the earth, some may offer critical perspectives on environmental crisis or globalization [...]. [5], p.492

This may concern the practice of the artist Robert Smithson<sup>15</sup>, who in his earthworks develops a scheme around the immense plasticity of earth materials and that of geology. Paradigmatic models for this process is particularly the *Spiral Jetty* – an earthwork sculpture of 460 meters long and around 5 meters wide in 1970 on the Great Salt Lake near Rozel Point in Utah. This installation was documented by the artist in a 32 minute film and in an essay. The ‘Spiral Jetty’ conveys a kind of a Geophilosophy, since it grasps concepts and establishes conditions for the experience of the Earth<sup>16</sup>.

Regarding Nietzschean Geoaesthetics, *Land Art* renders a true commitment for constructing a direction and sense for Earth<sup>17</sup>.

Through a Geophilosophy, opened to a Geoaesthetics through the immanence of the Earth<sup>18</sup>, Nietzsche appointed to the construction of a new world – as a garden. The *Menschen-*

<sup>14</sup> Shapiro explains that “If a garden is to be seen as a painted composition, then it is already from the outset understood to be a creation of artifice. (It is telling that the English garden is typically constructed by means of a hidden frame, a sunken ditch or ha-ha, which obscures the fact of its framing.) What Burckhardt and Nietzsche admire in the Italian garden is its forthright exhibition of its powerful style, its foregrounding the gesture of the artist. But as the history of the reception of the English garden shows, there is a deep tendency to imagine its aesthetic form as a kind of natural beauty, as when children or the naive think of a carefully designed park as unspoiled nature. As Nietzsche’s note makes clear, he sees this as a selfdeceptive, sentimental construction of nature. In the language of Deleuze and Guattari, we could say something like this: The state transforms a relatively unstructured territory into land dedicated to measurable production, as it transforms free activity into regulated work, and exchange into a system of money and taxation. The English park, private property of a gentleman, was the result of a general enclosure of common land that forced a peasant population into the cities. It disguises this situation (hence its “sentimentality”) by creating the illusion of sheer territory, that is of a pastoral utopia before the threefold apparatus of capture of land, work, and money. In terms borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of the refrain, it is a form of the Romantic, but one that testifies to its own fragility and discloses its lack of a people. It fails to be true to the earth”. [5], p.491

<sup>15</sup> cf. Gary Shapiro *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art After Babel* (1995). Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Smithson in his essay ‘A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects’ writes: “The earth’s surface and the figments of the mind have a way of disintegrating into discrete regions of art. Various agents both fictional and real, somehow trade places with each other – one cannot avoid muddy thinking when it comes to earth projects, or what I will call ‘abstract geology’. One’s mind and the earth are in a constant state of erosion, mental rivers wear away abstract banks, brain waves undermine cliffs of thought, ideas decompose into stones of unknowing, and conceptual crystallisation break apart into deposits of gritty reason.” (quoted in [6], p.116)

*Erde (the Planetarian Men)* is that who builds inventively a direction to Earth in order to rise, collectively and with the Earth, as the *Übermensch*.

#### IV. BUILDING THE PLANETARIUM

I shall now pursue some questions of Nietzschean resonance for the creation of what might be a CyberPark. As a practice, CyberParks can be accomplished through art (land art, site specific, geo art, global art) by setting an expanded project that imparts both nature, technics, earth and the collective. My attempt could never aspire to exhaust these ideas, but to consider the direction of the earth as a workable and vast territory for Cyberparks implementation<sup>19</sup>.

Zarathustra foresees a new World. Through Zarathustra, Friedrich Nietzsche wants both to reveal and assist the beginning of a new effort for humankind: a post human era of planetarian aspiration, possible through what he calls the 'over the human' (*Übermensch*). He is exhorting us to leave the platonic cave and build over the Earth. And it will be by constructing a new sense and direction of the Earth [Sinn der Erde] that humans can overcome themselves.

The way we see this is that technics can provide a planetarian link. The possibilities for the onset of a coherent and truly common organising process lie in contemporary technics, which has a planetarian scale and strength, and incarnates processual reality. To follow this idea, lets turn 'to the Planetarium', a significant essay written by Walter Benjamin between 1923 and 1926.

<sup>17</sup> Simon O'Sullivan regards Robert Smithson works as Geoaesthetics: "It is in this sense of opening up non-human worlds that the film of *Spiral Jetty* is as important as the essay. The film – a kind of geo-cinema – is in fact a construction just as the essay and the jetty themselves are (all involve the manipulation of matter). Through the use of montage, closeups and stills (for example, of maps and charts, of the ripples of the lake and of the sunlight), as well as the different 'view points' of the car speeding through the desert towards the lake, the slow motion and low camera angle of the dump trucks constructing the jetty, and the helicopter's birds eye view over the jetty itself, the film actualises the different durations and different scales at stake in the experience of the jetty, and written about in the essay. The camera then operates here as a machine eye opening us up to worlds beyond the human. [...] We might say then that the film parallels the work of the essay, which itself parallels the construction and the experience of the jetty itself. Each is a component of the *Spiral Jetty machine* whose operative field we might give here a new name: *geoaesthetics*." [6], p.119, 120

<sup>18</sup> "Nietzsche's attempt at a fully immanent thought, involving a geophilosophy and a geoaesthetics has a role to play (recognized by Deleuze and Guattari and others) in thinking critically and creatively about the direction of the earth." [5], p.492

<sup>19</sup> As a practice, still on a very preliminary stage, some attempts were made. Within Cost Action TU 1306 CyberParks, in October 2015 I undertook a Short Term Scientific Mission at Faculty of Architectural Theory of the Technisches Universität Berlin. One important objective of this STSM was to plan artwork possibilities for a *CyberPark*. From the observations we have done during an empirical field research at the Görlitzer Park in Berlin-Kreuzberg, two different directions for the work emerged: the first is called 'The Himmel Palast Project' and the second is called 'Walk a line in the park'. The 'Himmel Palast Project' was highly inspired by the topographical landscape of Görlitzer Park which is characterised by a circular central area that is transversely crossed by a paved path. Our idea is for the redesign of this topographic feature through a construction. Out of the exchange between philosophical consideration centred around the concept of the cosmos and its relation to technology as in the writing of Benjamin, and site-specific and architectural considerations concerning spatial context and design possibilities, this (utopian) project aims to build a spherical structure at the centre of Görlitzer Park, Berlin-Kreuzberg. The globe or dome is conceived of as a temporary construction, the precise design of which in terms of detailing and particular programme remains to be developed in turn with the overall course of the COST action. 'The Walk a line in a park' project is conceptually grounded on Nietzschean Geoaesthetics and was inspired by Richard Long's *Walking a line in Peru*. Richard Long expanded the idea of sculpture when he 'drew' lines while walking in the Earth's surface. This project has to be done in association with 'CyberParks' app management. The exercise we propose goes as follows: the app user will be encouraged to 'walk a line' in the park. For that, GPS coordinates (or more sophisticated geo-located datasets) of virtual incentives are provided through the app. The idea is on the one hand to experiment with the app as an artistic device and on the other to explore (research-throughdesign approach) the specific conditions of the performative entanglement of virtual and material spaces in CyberParks. For more, see <http://cyberparks-project.eu/stsm/visual-rhetoric-smart-cities-between-theoretical-approach-and-artistic-practice>.



The instrumental conception of technics reveals nothing of its processual reality. It is by setting a new place for technics in philosophical questioning that Walter Benjamin will develop an important argument concerning technique and nature, and the powerful planetarian hypotheses. This important essay reinforces the outline of the metaphysical collective body that we read in Nietzschean *Übermensch*, and here attained through modern technology. We regard this as highly insightful to apprehend the immense potential for building a CyberPark.

In 'To the planetarium' (first published in 1928), an essay which is still highly influential to apprehend the notion of 'global constellation', Walter Benjamin develops an argument concerning a planetarian *Eros*, where modern technique and the political are intertwined. In the beginning of the essay, Benjamin writes: "*Nothing distinguishes the ancient from the modern man so much as the former's absorption in a cosmic experience scarcely known to later periods*" (p.103). What Benjamin resonates about is that, with the First World War, the cosmos was enacted for the first time, on a planetary scale, through the spirit of technology, while "*the ancients' intercourse with the cosmos* – claims Benjamin – *had been different: the ecstatic trance [Rausch]*" [7], p.103. Men's misreading of technics thus turned a "*bridal bed into a bloodbath*" (p.104). The revolutionary character of modern technic, precisely the global experience, is thus *the way to the planetarium*, because only communally can humans ecstatically connect with the cosmos<sup>20</sup>.

Influential for Benjamin's 'Planetarium' might have been his reading of Paul Scheerbart. In Paul Scheerbart's *Lesabéndio: an asteroid novel* (1913), a fantastic parable about the political life of the small planet Pallas is told. Inhabited by creatures of an immense plasticity, the Pallasians – who are *formless*, made out of a fantastic clay which stretches and shrinks in order to see a longer distances along with their telescopic eyes, and their incredible feet that grasp by suction and propel at high speed – smoke pipes in colourful meadows filled with mushrooms. Further on with the oddity, in planet Pallas the skies are violet and the stars are greenish. Amid their highways of conveyor belts and large headlights illuminating the nebulous landscape, a visionary called Lesabéndio conceives a plan for the construction of a tower which is more than 70 kilometres high, a huge project that aims to connect the two stars of Pallas.

And why would an eccentric utopia as *Lesabéndio* become the central inspiration of a political essay? Precisely that of technics being a solution to an ecological and political crisis.

We are now the readers of the future. We have temporal distance to see the utopian potential of modern post-industrial technology. Here is clearly emphasised the revolutionary character of technics.

In *Lesabéndio*, and technics and nature do not object<sup>21</sup>. Nor is technics opposed to the pallasians. The inhabitants of that strange planet, instead of dealing with tools to dominate

<sup>20</sup> And Benjamin remarks that "*It is the dangerous error of modern men to regard this experience as unimportant and avoidable, and to consign it to the individual as the poeticapture of stary nights*" [7], p.58.

<sup>21</sup> According to Gilbert Simondon, technical evolution results from a coupling of humans and nature, where technics is thus the milieu that connects humans with nature cf. Gilbert Simondon *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (1958).



nature and reconfigure Pallas surface (like firstly Peka, Labu and Lesabéndio intended), the technological devices are precisely the link that changes the relationship of the Pallasians with their cosmic niche.

In Pallas, the hero Lesabéndio decisively contributes to a consensus amongst all Pallasians. A single purpose unites all of them: they should build a huge tower, large enough to alter the gravitational centre of the planet and trigger changes that would lead to changes affecting the internal nature of Pallasians. When the construction of the great bridge begins, oddly enough, all individual idiosyncratic projects were put aside. All work and effort are to be enacted to a common project favouring a collective and fraternal construction –and the reason of such construction is the planet Pallas itself. In Pallas we find Geoaesthetics, Geopolitics, and Zarathustra:

Mankind is a rope fastened between animal and overman - a rope over an abyss. A dangerous crossing, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and standing still. **What is great about human beings is that they are a bridge and not a purpose:** what is lovable about human beings is that they are a *crossing over* and a *going under*. [4], p.7, emphasis added

True politics is represented in Lesabéndio; and utopia. The story tells the intertwining of Pallasians and planet Pallas through technical and artistic designing to reach, ultimately, self-overcoming. Conceiving a new entity, becoming an indivisible whole, Lesabéndio offers his body to accomplish a true *spiritual* superiority: an *Übermensch*. And his sacrifice is thus something Nietzsche praised in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering – don't you know that this discipline has been the sole cause of every enhancement in humanity so far? The tension that breeds strength into the unhappy soul, its shudder at the sight of great destruction, its inventiveness and courage in enduring, surviving, interpreting, and exploiting unhappiness, and whatever depth, secrecy, whatever masks, spirit, cunning, greatness it has been given: - weren't these the gifts of suffering, of the disciple of great suffering? In human beings, creature and creator are combined: in humans there is material, fragments, abundance, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos; but in humans there is also creator, maker, hammer-hardness, spectator-divinity and seventh day: - do you understand this contrast? [1], p.116-117

This is nihilism: only the will that affirms indifference accomplishes the making of a difference that produces being, not by producing being as an object of representation, but rather as a creative power worthy of affirmation. Lesabéndio is a being of becoming who affirms himself by undergoing the metamorphosis. Becoming then expels the negativeness. For Nietzsche, it is through the self-affirmation of the will that the creative power of affirmation is validated, that I read in Lesabéndio as engendering a new and active life and not a reactive death.

Walter Benjamin so wisely identified that technics not only produces new objects but also produces new relations and new subjects<sup>22</sup>. Moreover, with technological individuation<sup>23</sup>, new technologies emerged which are related to transmission and circulation and no longer with production, and with these new technological possibilities comes a certain drive for interactivity, an urge for the end of intermediations and a sense of urgency for a general connection.

Only in the situation of a possible global contact, a contact from everybody to everybody supported by technology (a world-wide peer-to-peer), will some of the major challenges and promises of history be solved. It is a collective body that now matters, and this collective body might be attained through modern technics. Benjamin claimed that only through the transductive liaison that modern technics allow, can all humans be connected and commune with cosmos, ecstatically [7]. As way of a conclusion, we point here to the possibilities of a work done by all, with no artist, but done by everyone on the planet. And around major issues that transcend even the biggest questions history may have posed. The only question is Earth. *We are on Earth and there is no cure for that.*

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Walter Benjamin 'Das Kunstwerke im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit' (1936-39).

<sup>23</sup> It would have been necessary to proceed here with an analysis of the Simondonian question of technological individuation. For more cf. Gilbert Simondon *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (1958).