THREE

THE CHALLENGE OF ONTOLOGICAL POLITICS

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Preliminaries

Ontology has many meanings, as does politics. The challenge of ontological politics connected to the Zapatista call for "a world where many worlds fit" must mean not clarifying, but taking a stand for some of the meanings of both politics and ontology, and not for others. The stand I will take is not a judgmental one. It is the one I need to think my way as challenged by the ontological politics proposition.

The path I follow will connect politics, as implied by ontological politics, with the old art of diplomacy, rather than with rules ensuring that a choice or decision will prevail over the conflicting opinions of the concerned parties. I am thus disconnecting "politics" from the Greek idea of equality, or isonomia, the affirmation of the homogeneity of the space where citizens gather as members of the same political community. Let us be clear—this disconnection does not mean that "inequality" would come into play. It is from the notion of "opinion" that I am distancing myself, from the idea that since there is no privileged position all opinions should a priori have the same weight, each citizen being free to defend "his" (allochthones, women, slaves, and children being excluded) opinion. In contrast, as we know, diplomats are not meant to defend "their" opinions. They intervene as representatives of a "cause" that transcends them, and they are not free to enter into an agreement without first reporting its terms to those who are empowered to ratify it or to disavow their representatives.

Correlatively, citizens were conceived as what Aristotle called "political animals." When political animals gather and discuss what is good or bad for the city, neither gods nor mountains nor forests have a voice in the process. When the city is extended into one cosmopolitan world, it is a world of which humans are citizens, everywhere at home, not a world where many worlds fit.

A second point to be clarified concerns ontology. It is important to stress that I am a European philosopher, belonging to a tradition for which ontology points toward a highly conflictual adventure of philosophical thinking—what French philosopher Étienne Souriau describes as the most lively, but perhaps the most tendentious, in philosophy: "The most divergent conceptions of existence . . . clash over a single proposition, that 'there is more than one kind of existence,' or conversely that 'the word "existence" is univocal.' Depending on our answer, the entire universe and all of human destiny will change appearance. . . . Doors of bronze swing and pulse—now open, now shut—within the philosophy of great hopes, in the universe of vast domains."[1]

In contrast, the US philosophical tradition, often following the lead of W. V. O. Quine, has turned ontology into a kind of suburb to its capital question, the epistemological question of what we mean when we utter a proposition. For Quine, all ontologies would be equal, as each is relative to a particular language or culture as a whole and its value is only pragmatic, relative to this culture. Physics and mythology are rationally equivalent as epistemic or representational devices to relate to a mute reality, but in order to relate to our technoscientific world, physics is pragmatically better—too bad for those who would have gods' intervention explain the turns of human destiny as the Greeks did. In other words, the Zapatista call is a pragmatic non-sense in our globalized world. Tolerance is what peoples who remained attached to a peculiar ontology may hope for, at best.

To refuse the Quinian trivialization of ontologies is to claim that fitting many worlds into one world will not be done by taming their wild divergence, by reducing that divergence to the incommensurable ways we may frame the understanding of our worlds. Obviously the point is not to extend the passion of the philosophical ontological question to the question of ontological politics. Also, I do not forget that it is possible to associate, as feminist thinker Sandra Harding did, Quine's definition of ontology with an anti-imperialist stand for plurality. This association, however, risks engulfing the question in ethics or politics and the demand that we respect

others. If we cannot take seriously—but only respectfully, with what Helen Verran calls "bad faith"—these others' eventual fright at the betrayal of obligations derived from their ontology, we are back to tolerance. We are those who know better, that is, those who can be frightened by nothing—a discreet, well-behaved cosmopolitism.

My point is not to extend the passions of philosophical ontology to political epistemology, but to claim that in order to accommodate "ontology" with ontological politics we need to disentangle it from epistemological presuppositions implying a mute reality available for many worlding and wording ontologies. The problem with ontology is not knowledge or representation, but engagement with and for a world. And this engagement is not an implicit or unconscious one, as epistemological presuppositions are often characterized, but a matter of commitment to obligations that can, if necessary, become a "cause," what you live by and may die for.

Which engagements can we imagine dying for, or at least waging a war for? Twenty years ago, scientists waged such a war against deconstructivist critiques. But the "science wars" were waged not to defend a commitment to obligations or the particular way these scientists engage the world. They were waged in the name of universals such as "reason" or "the advancement of knowledge," and, as such, they excluded the possibility of diplomacy. This question has been central in my writing of *Cosmopolitics*. But before I address it, I will propose a last preliminary point: the importance I will be giving to diplomacy must be understood as "speculative."

In a way, diplomats are by themselves creatures of speculation. They intervene where war seems the logical outcome of a disagreement, and work for a peace that might be possible, for a (partial) articulation between antagonistic commitments. The possibility of a world where many worlds would fit implies that protagonist worlds agree about peace as a possibility, that they agree about "giving peace a chance": this is the condition of diplomatic intervention. Speculation here is defined against the power given to the definition of a state of affairs that logically leads to war. It implies the trust that this definition might not be the last word. Ontological politics, however, implies another kind of speculation, more akin to what physicists call a "thought experiment." There is, indeed, one powerful protagonist that cannot be trusted because it is not equipped for agreeing about peace as a possibility. It is what I would call, among other denominations, the global West.

The global West is not a "world" and recognizes no world. Referring to Deleuze and Guattari, I would rather characterize it as a "machine," destroying both politics and ontologies. No peace is possible with this hegemonic machine, because it knows only, as Bruno Latour emphasized (using another of its names: the advancing front of modernization), "pacification," or police operations. Those who oppose modernization are just "backward" or "misled." The agents of modernization do not wage war against such "bad pupils" and cannot imagine a peace settlement with them. At best they will tolerate them up to the point when they make real nuisances of themselves. As Latour concludes, "Yes, their wars, their conquests, were educational! Even their massacres were purely pedagogical!"[2]

A world-destroying machine cannot fit with other worlds. Whatever its meaning, ontological politics is thus connected with the possibility of resisting our worlds' ongoing destruction. But my speculative stand, what makes my proposition akin to a thought experiment, implies a distinct, complementary hypothesis: the possibility of distinguishing between "agents of modernization," the servants of the machine, and what I will call "modern practitioners," with whom diplomacy might be possible. Even if most modern practitioners would present themselves, even think of themselves, as belonging to the one world with which all the others should agree, I will speculatively address them as captured by, but liable to betray, the destroying machine.[3]

Such a stance may easily be understood as an attempt to exonerate "moderns" from "modernist" crimes. Let me emphasize that the question of innocence or guilt is not my problem. I have no difficulty admitting that right from their beginning modern sciences, for instance, have been complicit with imperialist claims and enterprises. The speculative notion of practice is meant to affirm that their participation in the world-destroying machine did not follow from a logical, even less ontological, necessity, that what came to be called "modern science," rather, results from an operation of capture. It certainly does not deny that this capture was mostly consented, even called for and indeed quite beneficial for those concerned. But to distinguish between modern scientific practices and the institution of Science that results from the capture opens the possibility that practitioners might become able to ally with others who also resist capture and destruction—"also," because, as we will see, characterizing modern practices is also characterizing what is today in the process of being effectively destroyed.

This speculative possibility means resisting the moralistic tale that since they were not innocent, but deeply compromised, indeed they "deserve" the destruction they collaborated in bringing to others. Such a tale has immensely simplified the working of the machine where it could be seen as "progressive," not imperialist ("capitalism opening the way to socialism by destroying what socialism should eliminate anyway"). I will not condone it and thus choose here a resolutely "naturalist," eco-evolutionary stance: it may indeed happen that species are destroyed because what they require is no longer there, but nothing deserves destruction.

Modern Practices

The speculative concept of practices was born at the time of the "Science Wars," with the realization that the belligerent parties, each defending a "cause," were equally indifferent to the possibility of negotiating the terms of their conflict—not to speak of the terms of a peace settlement. In brief, either (physical) reality existed by itself and for itself, or it was only a human construct, reality being mute. It may be remarked that the conflict was not a fully developed one. About other sciences, physicists would rather easily agree with critiques, or endorse a vaguely "reductionist" program—for physicists, "other sciences" are not really sciences, anyway: they just do their best. The tug of war was really the question of reality explaining the success of physics.

It was during this period that I began to envisage the need to "civilize" the way scientists think of themselves, that is, to separate them from hegemonic-order words such as rationality, objectivity, and universality. The correlate was to separate critics of scientific hegemony from their own hegemonic claim that any knowledge is a matter of (human, cultural, linguistic—pick your choice) representation.

The concept of practice I introduced is not meant to be a peaceful one. It rather aims at dividing scientists with regard to their loyalty toward the hegemonic conquest machine called Science, blindly, unilaterally imposing so-called objectivity and rationality over whatever exists. Critical thinkers had very good reasons to be convinced that if they wanted to debunk scientific claims in general, they had to go for the head, to directly attack the authority of theoretico-experimental sciences, among which physics stands as the leader, because these are the only sciences that claim access to "reality" as such. For physicists, other sciences are rather like satrapies,

allowed to exist if they pay tribute and help defend the imperium. They even tolerated the skepticism of Quine, since he recognized that science was the only game in town. However, what critical thinkers took for the head of a unique body called Science worked, under attack, rather like a spearhead, the very specific force of which was precisely to be able to counter attacks about objectivity being only a human construct. The critique, instead of weakening Science, contributed to its unification, all satrapies laying claim by proxy to a force of which they are utterly devoid, and which they can only imitate.

Taking seriously this force, but not as a privilege, rather as what specifically engages the passionate commitment of experimental scientists, is the game changer I have proposed in *The Invention of Modern Science*. One can then claim that critics were a bit like bulls charging into a red flag, accepting the propaganda argument that experimental objectivity is heralding a general method for obtaining objective knowledge while it points to a very exceptional achievement specific to the experimental practice.

The possibility of reducing the definition of an experimental object to a "merely human" construction is a critical concern for experimenters themselves. Indeed it may be said that the very condition for the recognition of such objects is their ability to defeat objections implying this possibility, and these objections are produced by experimenters themselves.[4] For them, objecting is a way of participating in an eventual achievement that matters directly for their own work because this work will eventually rely on it. The verification of the ability to defeat objections is thus a crucial part of the collective effort of practitioners for whom reliability is not a simple matter of methodology but a crucial claim on which the future of their research depends.

It is thus no surprise that experimenters felt insulted but were not at all impressed by the attempted critical "deconstruction" of their claims. This deconstruction attacked not a misplaced realism but the very meaning of their achievement: what they address has not only been enrolled in an argument (this is easy) but has proved to be able to "endorse" this role, to play the part of a "reliable witness." Certainly this witness has been mobilized by the practitioner—it is a "fact of the experimental art." But it is not a mere "artifact," a human interpretative construct. It has authorized an interpretation of its own mobilization against other possible interpretations. When they denied that "reality" is able to endorse any interpretation,

critiques were denying the whole point of the experimental practice: giving reality the power to make a difference in the way it is to be interpreted.

If one takes seriously the specificity of experimental practices, the unity of Science and its epistemological claims becomes a moot point, to say the least. The very term "objective representation" may appear as a betrayal of what these practices aim at. A representation allows secure argument, a secure chain of "ifs" and "thens" and "thuses." The specificity of experimental practices is such that in their case each link of the chain is itself a question, their verification being a matter of suspense—will it obtain its reliable witness? The first word of this practice appears in Galileo's hand, in 1608, when the first experimental event, the enrollment of balls rolling down an inclined plane as reliable witnesses of the way they gain speed, was about to be achieved: *Doveria*—if I am right, this is the result that should be obtained, and no other characterization of their movement will then be able to undo the created link, to reduce it to a human interpretation imposed on a mute reality.

It may be that if critiques had emphasized the very singularity of experimental practices, some experimenters, instead of feeling insulted by the attack, would have realized that the worst insult to their practice is to use the same word, objectivity, to characterize both the general reduction of any situation to objective terms and their own passionate attempt to create experimental situations empowering a difference between relevant questions and unilaterally imposed ones. This was indeed the very point of my characterization of experimental practices—to thwart the way they are taken as a model to be blindly, that is, methodologically, extended. How indeed to extend a practice which demands that what is mobilized, actively framed in the terms of the question it should answer, be nevertheless able to reliably endorse its mobilization? From the fact that experimental achievements happen, it can only be concluded that some ingredients of "reality" lend themselves to this demand. But, even then, their "objective definition" is strictly relative to the experimental conditions that enabled them to reliably answer the experimenter's question. To take an example, the "objective definition" of genetically modified soybeans or cotton does not cover at all what they will be able to become part of "outside of the lab," in the fields or in living bodies. More generally, as soon as it becomes an ingredient of matters of common concern, an experimental being is no longer liable to an "objective" definition.

In other words, what is created in experimental laboratories are fragile and partial connections, but relevant ones. If, instead of a general ideal of objectivity, the thread uniting scientific practices had been the commitment to create situations that confer on what scientists address the power to make a crucial difference with regard to the value of their questions, relevance and not authority would have been the name of the game. What would have been produced then is a positive, radical plurality of sciences, each particular scientific practice answering the challenge of relevance associated with its specific field, each crafting the always particular achievement that it will eventually call a scientific fact, each presenting itself in terms of its specific achievement.

If "Science" in the singular was to be used, it would be in the sense of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari called a rhizome, growing through local, always particular and partial connections. A kind of ecological anarchy, certainly, but not a free-for-all connectivity, because while connections may be produced with any part of what will be called "reality," they must be effectively produced. Such productions are events that are and will remain plural, not the witnesses of a potential unity.

This corresponds to the speculative idea of "civilized scientific practitioners," practitioners who would know that it is an insult to their practice to characterize it in terms of general attributes such as objectivity and rationality—this way of presenting themselves implying that their achievements are "normal," that their only difference with regard to "others" is that those others are lacking objectivity or rationality; practitioners who would know that what follows from their achievements should never claim to replace the answers others give to their own questions because the answers they themselves get are affirmatively situated, relative to the situations which allowed them to claim relevance, that is, the situations which enabled the addressee to "take a position" about the way they are addressed. As such, "civilized" sciences would participate in a "world in the making" through the creation of connections with a specificity related to what commits them: the question of what, how, and under which conditions we can "learn from" what we address.

This is a very specific commitment indeed, as "learning from" is not a common human concern. People more usually learn with or learn together. As such, the scientific commitment, to abstract and extract what will be brought back to the "colleagues" as having been "learned from," and what will sustain, one way or another, the collective learning enterprise

proper to their common field, is not an innocent one. I would dare to propose that sciences are, from this point of view, entrepreneurial practices, in the sense that entrepreneurs are the children of the possible, which is a potentially predatory passion. What has then to be attentively taken care of is the easy transformation of "it might be possible" to "it must be possible," or to "whatever the price, we have to make it possible."

More generally, I would call civilized practice a practice able to exhibit its own, never innocent, "divergence": in the pragmatic space it creates, the specific way in which its practitioners world and word their world, as Haraway would say. The way a practice diverges characterizes not its difference from others but the way it has its own world mattering, the values that commit its practitioners, what they take into account and how. It communicates with the idea of an "ecology of practices"—not a stable harmony or a peaceful coexistence but a web of interdependent partial connections. Ecology is about the interrelations between heterogeneous beings as such, without a transcendent common interest, or without an arbiter distributing the roles, or without a mutual understanding. Conflicts of interests are the general rule, but the remarkable events (without which only the triviality of predator-prey relations would exist) are the creation of symbiosis or the weaving of coevolutions—that is, the making of connections between "beings" whose interests, whose ways of having their world matter, diverge but who may come to refer to each other, or need each other, each for their own "reasons." Agreements without a common definition or without an understanding reaching beyond divergence is an ecological trope, disappointing the idea of "true," nonpartial connection. It is also a trope for a "diplomatic peace."

However, such a peace, as a speculative possibility, requires practitioners, not scientists functioning as parts of the hegemonic machine. If there is something of a tragicomedy in the Science Wars, it is that at the very time they happened, while furious practitioners were insulting each other and I was beginning to speculate about an ecology of practices and diplomacy, the tug of these wars was being disposed of through completely different means. This is what Donna Haraway understood when she asked us to think in the presence of OncoMouse, the patented mouse created to suffer for women. Second-millennium science is no longer the practice of experimenters such as Robert Boyle. We already knew that conquering, destroying, blindly objectifying never needed reliable relevant knowledge. But we have now to understand that competitiveness and innovation are

also generally indifferent to reliable knowledge, and rather require flexibility. Scientists have now to accept that the knowledge they generate is good enough if it leads to patents and the satisfaction of stakeholders. The hegemonic machine is now destroying the practices that claimed to be indispensable for the "modernization" of the world. It does not need those who presented themselves as the very soul of "progress," as it does not need a general trust in progress either.

If the so-called "knowledge economy" has its full way, what had been an insult for scientists, the idea that their knowledge is a matter of representation only, will be verified. It is not, however, the kind of verification critical thinkers should be happy with. It means indeed that the social fabric required by the concern for relevant knowledge has been destroyed. Scientists will no longer need that their colleagues object and test their claimed achievements, as there will be other, easier and more rewarding, means to succeed, which depend on other interests, on promises liable to attract industrial partners. If objections to the weakness of a particular claim may lead to a general weakening of the promises of a field, nobody will object too much. Dissenting voices will then be disqualified as minority views that need not be taken into account, as they spell unnecessary trouble. What may well prevail then is the general wisdom that you do not saw off the branch on which you are sitting together with everybody else. And what is bound to happen has already got a name, "promise economy," when what holds protagonists are glimmering possibilities of innovation nobody is interested in assessing any longer. A knowledge economy is indeed a speculative economy, a bubble-and-crash economy taking control of the production of scientific knowledge.

The same is true for all modern practices, which, we discover, were just surviving, on borrowed time, as flexibility has become the general rule, and ways of diverging synonymous with rigidity. It does not mean that the speculative ideas of "civilized practitioners" and of an "ecology of practice" have lost relevance. They can still make a difference when addressing practitioners oscillating between despair, revolt, angry cynicism, and easy submission. But more than anything, they may protect those who fight the hegemonic machine from the temptation of taking seriously the idea they have to fight against "objective facts," "rationality," "universality," or a Western ontology when they often deal with lying puppets. And finally they bring me to cosmopolitics, my access to the question of ontological politics.

I conceived the "cosmopolitics" proposition as a European philosopher, not a decolonizing anthropologist. Like Bruno Latour's "Parliament of Things" in *We Have Never Been Modern*, but much more explicitly so, it is a speculative idea since it presupposes civilized modern practitioners.

The Parliament of Things modified the Greek idea of politics in two main ways. First, those who gather are not "naked humans" with conflicting opinions, but "spokespersons" for "things," situated by what they have learned "from" them. Second, they gather around an "issue" that should be given the power to problematize each diverging contribution and discover if and how it is relevant in this case, for this issue.

To me, giving an issue the power of having people thinking together resonates with the wide resistance against the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that has developed on European soil. We have seen the beginning of an effective redistribution of expertise and a collective enlargement of imagination and sensibilities. The strength of the movement, its capacity to make "official" experts stammer and to make the imperative of competitive modernization lose some of its grasp, comes from the collective realization that there is not one, but many, good reasons to resist GMOs. Learning from others why they resisted and realizing the interdependence of their respective reasons was transformative. Young urbanites have learned to care about what they eat, not for health reasons only but as a way to continue the fight against the enclosures associated with the industry's property rights over seeds, while farmers have learned that some biologists could be their allies against industrialized monocultures, and environmentalists that their concern could enter into a geopolitical alliance with African and Indian peasants. As for scientists in general, they were divided, with some discovering that the so-called rationalization of agriculture was not that rational at all.

The Science Wars taught me to speculate about the relevance of diplomacy, but what I have come to call the "GMO event" taught me the crucial and actual relevance of activist politics. Giving an issue the power to make concerned people think and act together, enabling each to connect with the ways others come to be concerned, is what activists aim at. And it would also be the political achievement of an issue-centered, not opinion-centered, Parliament of Things gathering "civilized" concerned protagonists, able to disentangle their argument from claims about rationality or

objectivity, agreeing that each of them has a legitimate voice and is entitled to contribute to the issue that concerns them all.

However, would those "civilized" people be able to listen to those who would claim that the issue as such does not concern them, that they do not wish to contribute, but refuse eventual consequences of what may be decided? Would they listen to those who would cry: we cannot be part of your political deliberation process because it will consider eventually disposing of what nobody is free to dispose of? To those who cry: if you decide this, you will destroy us! Or: if you decide this, it will mean war!

Here is where I felt the need to slow down, to recognize a limitation of the "Parliament of Things" proposition, as conceived by Bruno Latour. The Parliament of Things keeps from Greek politics the definition of a gathering of people who feel free to negotiate an issue, of people whose knowledge and experience may diverge as much as one can wish, but who accept that it belongs to the political process of collective deliberation to assess the way the knowledge and experiences of each will contribute to the issue that gathers them all. However, those who disrupt deliberation by objecting without contributing, by presenting some aspects involved in the issue as nonnegotiable, may well be rejected as mere nuisances.

I forged the word "cosmopolitics," adding the prefix "cosmo-" to "politics" in order to think with the need to overcome this limitation. The prefix "cosmo-" aims at making the disruption matter. It proposes to characterize the disruptive event as the entering on the scene of human deliberation of "causes" that do not accept dependence on a regime of deliberation and transaction. The cosmos is not an argument and nobody can purport to be its spokesperson, but it signals that together with issues, worlds are in the balance. It "makes present, helps resonate the unknown affecting *our* questions, an unknown that our political tradition is at significant risk of disqualifying."[5]

Those who protest but refuse to contribute are those who need diplomats, since for them what is at stake in the political process is a question of life and death, of peace and war. It is important to emphasize that they are not specifically "nonmoderns." It is the issue that determines who will feel free to contribute to the transaction and who are potentially its victims. It is also important to emphasize that cosmopolitics was not proposing a full recognition on the political scene of "more-than-human" causes. It was only demanding a slowing down of the political process. It called for the political scene to accept being inhabited, even haunted, by those who

present themselves as not interested in the creation of partial connections, not forced to think together with the others by the issue. It might well be that the disruptive cry would be in vain, but the slowing down means that it should not be ignored, that it should be heard in its frightening intensity, without the protection of any argument justifying that, even if tolerated, it is not to be taken into account. Cosmopolitics means that politics should proceed in the presence of those who will bear the consequences, who will be the victims of political decisions, in the presence not only of "humans" but also of the multiple divergent worlds they belong to, which this decision threatens.

From the ontological politics point of view, cosmopolitics is badly limited. The cry "you will destroy us," even if it may cause fright in the political assembly, even if, as amplified by diplomats, it may effectively disrupt the collective deliberation and maybe reorient it toward new horizons, is still defined as a disruption, political deliberation being now defined as what must accept disruption. Accept or tolerate? What is lurking is nothing other than the curse of tolerance, a tolerance that would have "us" accept the crucial importance of "causes" for "others" while, except for very special cases, "we" would be "free."

This is why I would take ontological politics as corresponding to the reverse situation, when "causes" would not mean only the disruption of political deliberation. If politics is ontological, ontological clashes would have to be anticipated everywhere as no issue can any longer be considered as a matter of free deliberation, putting into brackets the worlds it implies and the way it matters in these worlds. It would be diplomacy all the way down. There are certainly other definitions of ontological politics, but this definition, avoiding the harmless notion of "representation," accepts that ontology is a matter of commitment. As such, it challenges the idea that the problem with ontological politics is only a question of the long, entrenched life of colonial thought habits.

I will take as a first approach to this challenge a story by Tania Katzschner about the Cape Flats Nature project in the Cape Town area, a project that aimed at preserving an ecologically significant dune system. The cause of preservation in South Africa often clashes with the cause of the struggle for emancipation of (poor, black) communities—communities only too aware that preservation has usually meant fencing them away from what is to be protected. "The project chose a process of open-ended dialogue, and knew very well that in doing so there was a chance that they might

lose the dunes."[6] This risk, losing the dunes, was a necessary condition if their preservation and the empowerment of the community were not to stand as rival causes. The project thus implied that the dunes' preservation would not be obtained by protecting them "against" the community but by betting that the community could become an actor in this preservation if it learned to trust those who entered into dialogue with them. The central challenge was thus a creation and nurturing of trust. Trust is transformative, and the process had an impact beyond the dunes: "new young, vocal black conservators" were born from the process, community champions whose voice "has shifted the possibilities for the excluded and powerless to be part of the process of biodiversity conservation, and in turn has changed the fora themselves."[7] About another case, Katzschner writes, "The project itself engaged many sensibilities: head and heart, perception, intuition, feeling and imagination. In this way it also shifted and changed all that it touched."[8]

We may feel that Katzschner tells us a "good ontological politics story," in contrast with those numerous ones in which "nature" is "protected," whatever the consequences for local peoples. But this appreciation should not authorize us to take it as a model. It may, for instance, be objected that conservationists are certainly strongly committed to the defense of biodiversity but that it is a matter of strong concern, rather than of a "cause." For them the dune system was "a" dune system, however ecologically precious. But substituting the "a" with a name, the name of a dune-being, respected and feared as such, would change the whole story. Such substitution obviously entails many other substitutions—it is a fictional hypothesis, abstracted from the geopolitical state of affairs. It is only proposed in order to dramatize the challenge of ontological politics.

When what is at stake are causes that cannot be a matter of human negotiation, there is never a model or a warrant, only the uncertainty of diplomacy together with the practices whereby concerned peoples convoke and consult the nonhuman others to whom belongs the power to accept or refuse eventual diplomatic propositions. Despite their wish to become civilized, it is hard for modern practitioners to accept this suspense.

It is all the more hard that today those practitioners are under stress and may well feel that whatever the niceties of ontological politics, all inhabitants of the Earth are facing a common challenge, which calls for urgent recognition and action. The climate disorder that the functioning of the hegemonic extractive machine has triggered, and which now affects all

peoples on this earth, thus threatens to induce a new "pedagogical" position. Peoples all over the Earth are already affected in always specific ways, but "we" know that what affects them is one and the same global change brought by the rise in the emission of greenhouse gases. In other terms, modern practitioners are those who belong, whether they like it or not, not only to the fossil-burning world that bears responsibility for the trouble but also to a world able to formulate the problem, define what is globally at stake, and conclude that unanimous mobilization is necessary, whatever our divergences. In this situation they might well be tempted to discuss and assess the capacity of ontological politics to rise to the occasion and demonstrate that it can be entrusted to generate its own way of answering the climate challenge: other-than-humans are acceptable if they collaborate.

In order to resist this temptation, it may be useful to recall the obvious, which is forgotten by this entrepreneurial urge for unanimous mobilization. Assessing ontological politics would mean that, if it is found lacking, we should have to accept the necessity of a global political answer short-cutting those who resist it. But political deliberation has already been found lacking in this case. In fact, the only protagonist that is well equipped to rise to the occasion—and to turn this occasion into fully developed barbarism[9]—is the hegemonic machine, and it is already at work, demanding that indigenous peoples act as dutiful, strictly controlled stewards of their lands to "save the planet." Those peoples have many reasons to distrust the idea that the trouble with the climate is, or should be, a matter of "shared, mobilizing concern."

However, I think that we academics cannot ride piggyback on their reasons and deny that we "know" something is coming with a rather awful speed that will put into question the ways of life of most inhabitants of this earth—while we also know that this knowledge situates us in our own temporality, which should not engulf other peoples.[10] We cannot dream—let alone think—this tension away with sophisticated arguments about cosmopolitics or ontological politics. We have to accept and think with this perplexing situation.

In the first part of this text I have proposed considering scientists as "entrepreneurs who might be civilized." But I have now to include in this characterization myself as well as those who argue about "ontological politics," together with all other critiques of scientific imperialism. I will claim that we academics cannot deal with this perplexity without interrogating our own situation in our own worlds from an ontological politics perspective, and

first remember a world marked by the destruction of the arts of sustaining and entertaining a consistent relation with our own causes—we may be perplexed, but we do not know whom we should consult in this matter. The desperate cries of all those who are separated by neo-management and its imperative of flexibility from what caused them to feel their work as worth doing imply that "causes" are still among us. We just do not know any longer how to name, honor, and defend them. We may feel indignant but not frightened at the prospect of betraying them. Should we not, as perplexed academics, learn to share fright, rather than exchange arguments?

I am taking "fright" in the sense I have learned from the ethnopsychiatry of Tobie Nathan, which actively involves "other-than-humans." Fright would not be a psychological experience, rather the experience "that some 'other' has intruded, has influenced or modified us, possibly even caused our metamorphosis. . . . The essential fright is that the truth of what I perceive, of what I feel, of what I think resides in an Other."[11] What metamorphosed us into the "frightless ones"?

Can We Feel Fright?

Staging "us" academics as the frightless ones is not a denunciation but an "active proposition," meant to make us feel and think. Moreover, this proposition is not addressed to all. It might not concern contemporary field anthropologists who have accepted experiences through which they have learned that fright is something more than a psychological affect—and who have learned also how difficult it is to report that in the academic milieu. But I am certainly not excluding from this address an anthropologist such as Philippe Descola, who proposes to put on the same quadri-partitioned plane Euro-modern so-called naturalists, together with animists, totemists, and analogists. Only—and Descola agrees on this—what he calls a naturalist would imagine without fright such a plane on which other peoples' ways of perceiving and thinking are distributed on the basis of materials extracted and brought from faraway worlds to be organized in a Parisian office. And only a scientist, speaking in the name of science, would confront without fright other scientists, proposing to recognize that what they (rather sloppily) address as "nature" identifies them as belonging to one of his own four compartments.

As for those who are bystanders when scientists' contradictory arguments thunder, they may certainly wonder whether giving to neurons

the power to explain our ways of organizing and understanding our world is a case of "naturalism," or whether the organizing quadri-partitioned schemes should be explained in terms of some neuronal attractors. What they know well is that they cannot intervene in those fights any more than a mortal could intervene in the Olympian gods' quarrels. Even philosophers, although they are self-proclaimed inheritors of Greek reason, and theologians, inheritors of the monotheistic creed, have no voice in the matter. Let us not speak of the old lady with a cat, claiming that her cat understands her. She probably knows that her account of her relations with her cat is only "tolerated," as a matter of private belief, that her claim has no purchase in the fighters' world, and that it will probably fare no better with critical academics. Maybe she even knows the pejorative characterization she would deserve in the academic worlds—she entertains "animist beliefs."

As we all know, whatever their scholarship, the diverse definitions given to animism bear the stamps of their origins and can hardly be disentangled from pejorative colonialist associations. But I would claim that those associations also work upon us as commitments. They committed the colonizers of the past to "civilize" others, to have them accepting the hard truth that makes us human: that we are alone in a mute, blind world. But if we are the frightless ones, it may well be that we are still today compelled by this commitment, bound to resist what would mean betraying it. "Do not regress" is a commandment devoid of biological or even ethological connotation. For the fighters, the old lady's stubbornness is rather a witness to the power of ever-resurging illusions, that is, also to the permanent and heroic character of the commandment it is their duty not to betray.

I thus propose to take seriously the power of the "thou shall not regress" commandment, which is alive and well among us, even if the science of biological evolution has left far behind any idea of regression. When the objection resounds—"But this would be animism!"—no particular reference is made to past or present scholars' definitions. I propose taking seriously that this objection may well activate a peculiar fright, as provoked by a transgression. Animism equals regression; it is what we are committed to resist.

As may now be emphasized, my initial propositions—about civilized modern practitioners, the ecology of practices, or cosmopolitics—did not directly contradict this commandment. Cosmopolitics simply complicated its meaning, demanding that an issue be considered in the presence of those who could be the victims of its negotiated formulation. The term

"issue" itself is significant. The power conferred on issues, to have people thinking together, is certainly a transformative one, but the transformation is not an answer to something that would have in itself the power to question us. We do not practice arts of consultation. Rather, the power conferred by the question "What does this issue demand?" is considered as a collective human achievement. I myself did not face the question of "other-than-human beings" but rather evaded it, or tamed it, like many "posthumanist" authors. We all feel the commandment even if we are trying to negotiate its consequences. It would seem that we are afraid, indeed frightened, that, if we squarely transgress it, all our resources for thinking will be destroyed—a kind of Dostoyevskian fright may be felt that "everything would be permitted!" A very interesting case of reverse cosmopolitics indeed: when ontological politics demands that we take seriously the existence and power of other-than-human beings, it is we who cry: do not demand that we do that when we ourselves are concerned, or you will destroy us. A strange equality is at last achieved—we are frightened to betray what we are.

This fright may well point to a figure (a strange one) that Bruno Latour has crafted.[12] According to Latour, what we have called "progress" or "emancipation" would not make us look forward; rather, it makes us look backward, as if, running toward the future, we were escaping something horrible, a monster that would take advantage of any weakness, any "opening of the door," and engulf us. What is called "emancipation" would then mean quasi-exclusively the destruction of the so-called "shackles of the past."

With Tobie Nathan, I have learned that peoples who know how to relate with other-than-human entities know well that such entities have to be recognized and honored if they are not to become devouring, furious powers. Civilized, cautious relations with them have to be established and sustained—the gods, spirits, or ancestors must be fed. Bruno Latour's backward-looking flight toward the future correlates with this diagnosis. It seems that the commandment not to regress has such a furious power over us—for instance, possessing us with a compulsive reliance on the power of critical deconstruction. As if making the difference between what is entitled to "really" exist and what is not were our only safeguard against the monstrous grip of illusion.

Such a possession cannot be directly related to scientific practices, as I have characterized them, because their questions are positively situated ones—for instance, the surprise that such a seemingly ghostly existent as

the Newtonian force is not just a human construction but a scientific event with no negative correlate. But Science is certainly possessed, as well as critical thought. The power over us of "really" may well be related to the propaganda that wipes away the situated character of any "scientifically authenticated existent," but this does not account for the passionate importance given to the exclusion of what cannot demonstrate its "real" existence. It could be said that we have turned into a compulsive duty the craft and concern of testators who, in the past, tested, in the service of a prince, the gold alchemists paid by this prince presented to him. They knew that all that glimmers is not (really) gold. The monster that we fly away from is indeed glimmering, seductive, inviting us to wallow in illusion.

That "Science" has taken upon itself the testator commitment may be associated with the event the historian Robert Darnton associated with the end of Enlightenment, when the "monster" made its appearance under the guise of the crowd of agitated enthusiasts seduced by the promise of Anton Mesmer's magnetism.[13] Putting their craft in the service of public order, a set of distinguished experimenters accepted the job of demonstrating that Mesmer's magnetic fluid, whatever its impressive effects, "did not really exist." Science served as a rampart against the dangerous gullibility of people ready to follow quacks and miracle workers, just as the testators defended the princes against the alchemists' tricks.

The use of "really" thus denotes the passionate commitment of both Science, at the service of public order, and critical thought, denouncing the normative character of public order, to defeat what tricks us into believing. If ontology is to be related to a sense of commitment, ours is a testator ontology. "Naturalism," in Descola's sense of the term, would be a rather incoherent assembly of what survived, always on borrowed time, the testators' dissolving agents. And I would add that those who would claim to be animists, if they affirm that rocks "really" have souls or intentions as well as we do, could be devoured by the same passion. I would guess that peoples categorized as animists by anthropologists have no word for "really," for insisting that they are right and others are victims of illusions.

Let us emphasize that the modern testators' commitment is all the more passionate as it cannot rest on its efficacy, only on a duty that should never be betrayed. The old testators successfully devised effective dissolving agents, and they are often considered the precursors of modern chemistry. In contrast, whatever the verdict against Mesmer's magnetic

fluid, magnetism kept generating a strong interest during the nineteenth century, blurring the well-guarded frontiers between what was opposed as natural and supernatural. Nature was made mysterious, and supernature was populated by messengers bringing news from elsewhere to mediums in magnetic trance—a very disordered situation, which understandably provoked the hostility of both scientific and church institutions. It has even been proposed that psychoanalysis was not the subversive "plague" that Freud boasted about, rather a restoration of order, because it provided the means to explain away, or dissolve, mysterious cures, magnetic "lucidity," and other demonic manifestations, now pigeonholed as purely human and bearing witness to a new universal cause, the Unconscious, deciphered by Science.[14]

Today as yesterday, healers and people looking for a healing path joyfully betray the commandment. However, this betrayal is tolerated. We take it for granted that people who are looking for healing and, by extension, those who take charge of healing by unorthodox, not data-based, means, are somehow lost, unable to bear their duty not to regress. This is why New Age healing, as welcoming as it may be to animist creeds, is not an answer to the challenge of ontological politics as we discuss it on academic grounds, that is, grounds populated by testators. This challenge does not demand either that we repudiate right away the "do not regress" commandment—a rather bad idea if it has over us the power of an "other-than-human" injunction. It is the way this injunction works that perhaps should interest us—the position it proposes us to occupy. We academics have learned to consider that without our commitment to critique, "everything would be permitted." Diffracting the way in which we have learned to occupy this position, breaking it up into the many occasions when it was the only safe position against such insidious words as "Do you 'really' believe that . . . ?" may bring us to address our milieu as what separates us from the possibility of honoring and feeding what makes us feel and think.

Reclaiming Animism?

It is important to first emphasize that this diffracting operation is not a matter of reflexive critique, a typical testator exercise. I received as a shock, an active transforming proposition, the cry of neopagan witch Starhawk: "The smoke of the burned witches still hangs in our nostrils."[15] Certainly the witch hunters of the past are no longer among us and we no longer take

seriously the accusation of devil worshipping that witches were the victims of. Rather, our milieu is defined by the modern pride that we are now able to interpret both witchery and witch hunting as a matter of social, linguistic, cultural, or political (glimmering) construction or beliefs. We are those who know that neither the devil nor "true" witches, whatever this means, really existed. And we forget that we are the heirs of an operation of social and cultural eradication—the forerunner of what was committed elsewhere in the name of civilization and reason.

The point is obviously not to feel guilty. It is rather to open up what William James, in his *Will to Believe*, called a genuine, effective option, complicating the power of the injunction "not to regress," demanding that we situate ourselves with respect to this eradication: will we side with those who "normalize" this eradication, or will we reclaim this past? And here comes the efficacy of Starhawk's cry. Reclaiming the past is not a matter of dreaming to resurrect some "true," "authentic" tradition, of healing what cannot be healed, of making whole what has been destroyed. It is rather a matter of reactivating it, and first of all, of feeling the smoke in our nostrils—the smoke that I felt, for instance, when I hurriedly emphasized that, no, I did not "believe" that the past could be resurrected. Learning to feel the smoke is to activate memory and imagination regarding the way we have learned the codes of our respective milieus: derisive remarks, knowing smiles, offhand judgments, often about somebody else, but gifted with the power to pervade and infect—to shape us as the ones who will be among those who sneer and not among those who are sneered at.

However, to reclaim is not only to feel the way the devouring infection works. It is also to recover, that is, to approach in another, not accusatory, way what has been turned into a devouring power.

Here I will call to my help another ally, David Abram, whose *Spell of the Sensuous* proposes an "animist" account of rationality.[16] Animism, here, is no longer an anthropological category. David Abram's learning from and with shamans was grounded on the mutually recognized relation between their craft and his own being, among other things, a sleight-of-hand magician. The point was not, however, to reduce this craft to a matter of illusion. For Abram, what "illusionists" artfully exploit is the very creativity of our senses, "the way the senses themselves have of throwing themselves beyond what is immediately given, in order to make tentative contact with the other sides of things that we do not sense directly, with the hidden or invisible aspects of the sensible." Our senses throwing themselves beyond

the given do not explain magic away. As Abram characterizes them, they rather respond to "suggestions offered by the sensible itself."[17] Magic has nothing to do with credulity; it is a witness for our senses not being at the service of detached cognition but existing for participation, for sharing the metamorphic capacity of things that lure us or that recede into inert availability as our manner of participation shifts—shifts but, he insists, never vanishes: we never step outside what he calls the "flux of participation."[18]

What is so interesting here is that this approach allows Abram to conclude that we ourselves could legitimately be called "animists." When we look at small black signs and experience that they are speaking to us, we are both animated by the signs and animating them. Instead of talking about the disenchantment of the modern world, Abram thus emphasizes the strong enchantment of the written text, more precisely of the alphabetic text, the only text that presents itself as self-sufficient, as able by itself to have us "hear spoken words, witness strange scenes or visions, even experience other lives." And he proposes that this efficacy might be recognized as an animating magic—a strong magic, as he experienced himself when he came back to New York from countries where the written letters do not rule, and felt fading away the lure of the stones or the birds or the rivers he had learned to listen to and talk with. "Only as our senses transfer their animating magic to the written word do the trees become mute, the other animals dumb."[19]

If, as Abram claims, our senses make us animists, we nevertheless are not animists in the sense of anthropologists, because we do not honor or recognize what animates us. Alfred North Whitehead wrote that after *The Symposium*, where Plato discusses the erotic power of ideas animating the human soul, he should have written another dialogue, called *The Furies*, which would deal with the horror lurking "within imperfect realization."[20] The possibility of an imperfect realization, that is, of not recognizing and honoring as such animating powers, at the risk of turning them into devouring ones, is certainly present whenever transformative, metamorphic forces make themselves felt. It may well be, however, that it is dramatically so when ideas are concerned, as testified by our violent history, during which wars, including academic wars, have been waged in the name of written-down ideas.[21]

Once "written down," indeed, ideas entice us with the temptation to assimilate them to the expression of the author's intention and to enter

into discussion with this author, thus turning what had been the animating experience of reading into the expression of the writer's intentions. A human author has been writing about something and we, the readers, are replaying, in order to understand or criticize, alternative versions of this purely intentional human activity. How then can we grant this kind of intentionality to other beings? Not only the text imposes itself as of human provenance only, but we are put in a position to test its author's ideas, to assess how they are addressing the issue they deal with. This, at least, is the case since the written text has become a printed text, since "authors" are no longer, as in medieval times, "authorities" to be carefully quoted and commented on, but entrepreneurs, rivaling in the conquest of readership.

David Abram nevertheless writes, and passionately so. I would propose to take the experience of writing—not writing down preconceived ideas—as a first antidote against the compulsive insistence of the "either . . . or" unpalatable alternatives: either reducing the reading experience to a cognitive performance or accepting that an "other-than-human" entity is "really" addressing us as an intentional subject would. Writing is an experience of metamorphic transformation. It corresponds to one of those situations that make one feel that something "other-than-human" is addressing us, but not as an intentional subject, rather as demanding its own realization, requiring from the author some kind of cerebral, that is, bodily, contortion (making us larvae, wrote Deleuze) whereby any preformed intention is defeated.[22]

For me, as a philosopher, this first antidote brings with it the temptation to relate animism, as characterized by Abram, to such philosophical ideas as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's idea of an assemblage, as developed in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Indeed, an assemblage, for Deleuze and Guattari, is the coming together of heterogeneous components, and such a coming together is, for them, the first and last word of existence. I do not exist and then enter into assemblages. The manner of my existence is my very participation in assemblages. I am not gifted with agency, the possessor of intentions or initiative. Animation, agency, intentionality, or what Deleuze and Guattari called "desire," belong to the assemblage as such, including those very particular assemblages, called reflexive ones, that produce an experience of detachment, the enjoyment of critically testing the ins and outs of what we feel or think in order to determine what is "really" responsible for what.

I may also be tempted to relate assemblages to William James's radical empiricism, with its affirmative, not demystifying, promotion of experience—of the full fact of experience, not of experience as critically purified, dismembered into an experiencing subject and an experienced object. Experience as an ongoing flux of participation.

However, relating animism to the efficacy of "assemblages" is a dangerous move because it may well reassure us a bit too easily. When pondering such sophisticated philosophical ideas, we do not fear the suspicious gaze of the inquisitors; we do not feel the smoke in our nostrils. We are protected by the academic assemblages we participate in. But most of all we are protected by the fact that we are pondering what Deleuze and Guattari have published—it is what they meant to mean that matters.

This is why it may be better to revive more compromising words, words that have been academically restricted to metaphoric use only, without ins and outs. "Magic" is such a word, and we freely speak of the magic of an event, of a landscape, of a musical moment. . . . Protected by the metaphor, we may then express the experience of an agency that does not belong to us even if it includes us, that does not address us as intentional agents, but us as lured into feeling by something else, by something which may or may not be intentional—we do not know and, what is more important, we do not "really" care.

Reviving magic, depriving ourselves of the protection of the metaphor, will attract the gaze of the inquisitors and also, inseparably, activate the sad, monotonous critical or reflexive voice that whispers that we should not accept being mystified. This voice may also tell us about the frightening possibilities that would follow if we gave up critique, the only defense we have against fanaticism and the rule of illusions. And this is precisely one of the reasons why neopagan witches call their own craft "magic": naming it so, they say, is, in itself, an act of magic because by experiencing the discomfort it creates, we may feel the smoke in our nostrils. Worse, they have learned to cast circles and invoke the Goddess, She who, the witches say, "returns," She to whom thanks will be given for the event that makes them, each of them and all together, capable of doing what they thus call "the work of the Goddess." So doing, they put us to the test: how can we accept such a return of, or regression to, supernatural beliefs?

The witches' ritual chant—"She changes everything she touches, and everything she touches changes"—could surely be commented on in terms of assemblages because it resists the dismembering attribution of agency.

Does change belong to the Goddess as "agent" or to the one who changes when touched? But the first efficacy of the refrain is in "she touches." The recalcitrance against dismembering is no longer conceptual. It is part of an experience which affirms that the power of changing is not to be attributed to our own selves, nor to be reduced to something "natural" or "cultural." It is part of an experience that honors change as a creation. Moreover, the point is not to comment. The refrain must be chanted; it is part and parcel of the practice of worship.

Chanting, one no longer wonders whether we have to "believe" that the Goddess that contemporary witches invoke and convoke in their rituals "really exists." The commandment "not to regress" is floundering, losing its grasp, because those who chant know the little skeptical voice inside us perfectly well.[23] Indeed, if one told them, "But your Goddess is only a fiction," they would probably smile and ask us whether we are among those who ignore that fiction has the power to shape us. And if one wondered about the danger of fictions that may capture and enslave, it may well be that they would answer that the debunking of illusions is a rather poor defense against such dangers. What they themselves cultivate, as part of their craft (as it is probably a part of any craft involving other-than-humans), is a practice of immanent attention, an empirical practice of "realization," to use Whitehead's word, experiencing what may be toxic—an art of diagnosis which our addiction to "the truth that defeats illusion" has too often despised as too weak and uncertain. Contemporary witches resist this addiction. They are pragmatic, radically pragmatic, experimenting with effects and consequences of a craft that, they know, is never innocent and, as such, involves care, protections, and attention.

This might well be what we are separated from—what the testators suggest the prince is devoid of—the pragmatic art of immanent attention, of discrimination between the toxic and the helpful. The devouring power of the commandment "not to regress" would then be related to the fact that we have not honored what makes us capable of this art, that we have not learned how to foster and sustain it—leaving to the testators' truth the charge of protecting us. This, at least, is what David Abram and neopagan witch Starhawk both inform me of. If magic is to be reclaimed as an art of participation, or of luring assemblages, if we have to reclaim the risky business of honoring change, the assemblages we participate in, inversely, are to become a matter of empirical and pragmatic concern about effects and consequences, not a matter of general consideration or textual dissertation.

I would thus claim that we, who are not witches, do not have to mimic them in order to discover how honoring change exposes one to academic sniggering. We also, like the witches, have to learn how to cast circles that protect us from our insalubrious, infectious milieu, without isolating us from the work to be done, from the concrete situations to be confronted. Turning into an academic argument the Zapatista call for a world where many worlds would fit may be rewarding, as it may give the feeling that we relay this call, that we bring it into the very heart of the enemy fortress, under the very gaze of the testators. But challenging their gaze may not be an end in itself any longer. I have insisted on "us" academics, because for us recognizing and honoring the power of ideas may still matter. But how long will they matter when the princes whom testators serve do not give a darn any longer about the difference between true gold and what just glimmers? How to avoid the temptation to join with the testators lamenting the end of our (academic) world?

Donna Haraway has borrowed from Anna Tsing the thought-provoking formula of "living in the ruins."[24] Eduardo Viveiros de Castro recalls us that for other peoples the "end of the world" is a foregone topic, and living in the ruins is what they have learned. I certainly do not deny that some ruins are much more comfortable than others, but the question of how to live in the ruins is now raised everywhere, and the challenge of ontological politics should not be abstracted from the question of activating this question in the academic ruins.

Ruins are not safe places. Distressed colleagues lurk, made furious by the destruction of what they took for granted, of their "ways of assessing as usual," and caution is needed when you meet them—they may have turned into cannibals, whose only satisfaction is to attack those who threaten the certainty of their despair. But ruins may also be alive with partial connections, connections that do not sustain great entrepreneurial perspective but demand a capacity to learn from and learn with, and to care for what has been learned from.

It may well be that to me, as a European city dweller, alphabetized to the core, a daughter moreover to philosophy, which is an adventure of (written) ideas, a mountain is just a mountain and a fish just a fish. But an idea is not just an idea, it is a metamorphic power, and I have to reclaim the capacity to honor this power just as Ecuadorian peasants honor their land and mountain. In the ruins of our world, reclaiming ideas is remembering that ideas cannot be trusted as such, that they need to be fed, connected with

something other than entrepreneurial "thuses" and "therefores," which are always liable to turn their power into an authority or into a weapon. I may align as many thuses and therefores as anybody else to justify the need to struggle against the machine that is turning our many worlds into a devastated "cosmopolitan" desert, but the reclaiming witches taught me the need to cultivate, where we are, what we struggle for, to relay what we have learned and have rendered each other capable of. The idea of ontological politics needs the transformative magic of tales, rituals, modes of palaver, ways of thinking-feeling with, which reworld our ruins and open them to partial connections with other worlds. This is also the only legacy we can leave to the next generation, what can perhaps help them make a difference between living in the ruins and just surviving.

NOTES

1. Étienne Souriau, *The Different Modes of Existence*, trans. Erik Beranek and Tim Howles (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2015), 100–101.

2. Bruno Latour, *War of the Worlds: What about Peace?*, trans. Charlotte Bigg (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2002), 26, also available at http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/85-WAR-OF-WORLDS-GB.pdf.

3. Bruno Latour has since attempted a similar operation, but with other means, in his *Inquiry into Modes of Existence*. At the time I wrote *Cosmopolitics* (1996–97), I borrowed from him a tool he has now dropped, that of the factish (which English readers saw appearing in *Pandora's Hope*, the translation of the *Petité Réflexion sur le culte moderne des dieux fétiches*, published in 1996, having waited fourteen years). Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

4. See Isabelle Stengers, *The Invention of Modern Science*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

5. Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics II*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 355.

6. Tania Katzschner, "Cape Flats Nature: Rethinking Urban Ecologies," in *Contested Ecologies: Dialogues in the South on Nature and Knowledge*, ed. Lesley Green, 202–26 (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2013), 221.

7. Katzschner, "Cape Flats Nature," 222.

8. Katzschner, "Cape Flats Nature," 221.

9. See Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, trans. Andrew Goffey (London: Open Humanities, 2015), free access online.

10. Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro give us what I read as a very salubrious and perplexing warning here in "Is There Any World to Come?," *e-flux journal*

65 (May–August 2015), http://supercommunity-pdf.e-flux.com/pdf/supercommunity/article_1231.pdf.

11. Tobie Nathan, quoted in Stengers, *Cosmopolitics II*, 325.

12. Bruno Latour, "An Attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto,'" *New Literary History* 41, no. 3 (2010): 471–90. See also Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2017).

13. Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986). I analyzed this episode in Leon Chertok and Isabelle Stengers, *A Critique of Psychoanalytic Reason: Hypnosis as a Scientific Problem from Lavoisier to Lacan*, trans. Martha Evans (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992). Let us emphasize that "mesmerized crowds" do not initiate "the fear of the monster," rather reactivate it, as fanatic Nazis or so many others will also do. As Stephen Toulmin proposed in *Cosmopolis*, we may have to turn to the Renaissance in order to meet the prototypical monster that moderns have been flying away from ever since. Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

14. It is worth recalling that, with André Breton, surrealism was originally associated with automatism, as practiced by mediums and clairvoyants. Breton's conviction that the milieu of art should foster what science rejected was, however, an appropriative one, marked by a typically modernist triumphalism. To him, art was supreme, not a craft among other crafts, but the final advent of the surreal, finally purified of superstitious beliefs. He fully obeyed the commandment that we not regress.

15. Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics* (Boston: Beacon, 1982), 219.

16. David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

17. Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 58.

18. Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 59.

19. Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 131.

20. Alfred N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 148.

21. David Abram proposes that what we have called "idea" since Plato cannot, whatever Plato's distrust for writing, be disentangled from the new Athenian literate intellect and the detached reflection that the writing technology induces.

22. The French philosopher Étienne Souriau speaks about a "questioning situation," the progressive exploration of the answer to be given to an enigmatic insistence. See Étienne Souriau, "On the Work to Be Done," in *The Different Modes of Existence*.

23. A similar point is beautifully made by Tanya Luhrmann in *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (New York: Vintage, 2012). Contemporary Evangelicals are aware not only that for many the voice of God they experience inside themselves is a delusive product of self-suggestion, but that the problem of discriminating what comes from God and what comes from them is part and parcel of their experience.

24. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

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