

Recourse to the Stars: Authoritarian Technologies, Cosmological Freedom, and the Planetary Condition

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Abstract

Silicon Valley CEOs have postponed their trip to Mars to seize power on Earth instead. Let's take this opportunity—even if it's a sombre one—to philosophically affirm our *planetary condition*: however situated we may be (in terms of race, class, and gender), we are cosmologically un-situatable, i.e. exceeding any terrestrial situation. Escaping all terrestrial power, this cosmological freedom can be a last resort when democracy, attacked by authoritarian technologies and neo-dictatorships, is fading away.

Keywords: Planetary condition, Technology, Authoritarianism, Cosmology, Freedom

Every human being is immortal and there is eternal life in him, an unexplored and yet inhabited land, which, though he himself may deny its existence, no timely power can ever take from him. For many, indeed for most, the access to this life will resemble a well into which rubble and rubbish has been thrown for centuries.

Yet, if someone manages to clear it out, they will not only rediscover the spring but also the old images.

Ernst Jünger, *The Forest Passage*

“2024 is the year where Elon stopped believing in Mars—not as a silly science tech project, but as a political project.”¹ This observation comes from Peter Thiel in an interview with the *New York Times* in June 2025.² Thiel is a leading figure in American techno-accelerationism, the idea that technological development, like AI, should be promoted at any cost, without limits or government regulation, even if society suffers as a result. As an influential American software engineer, entrepreneur, and venture capitalist, Marc Andreessen wrote in his “Techno-Optimist Manifesto”:

We believe in accelerationism—the conscious and deliberate propulsion of technological development—to ensure the fulfilment of the Law of Accelerating Returns. To ensure the techno-capital upward spiral continues forever.³

But it seems that things weren’t moving fast enough for Silicon Valley CEOs. The “techno-capital machine”—as Andreessen calls it—was too far removed from the levers of power, and techno-accelerationists have decided to go “down to Earth.” Where exactly? Into the

1 A short version of this article appeared in French online journal AOC, with the title: “Le recours aux astres” (09/12/2025). I thank William Zeng for proofreading this extended version. I would also like to thank the Political Theory Workshop at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for inviting me to present this paper on the 10th of October 2025: their comments and constructive criticism helped me improve it. Finally, Arne De Boever gave me crucial suggestions for improving my essay, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to him.

2 “Peter Thiel and the Antichrist” in *NYT*, June 26, 2025. See Q. Slobodian, “Speed Up the Breakdown” in *NYRB*, February 15, 2025: “Accelerationists do not want merely to make government more efficient, nor simply to prevent it from pursuing redistribution or propagating progressive values. “Speed up the breakdown” is the mantra. Their objective is not to tame or starve the beast but to kill it.”

3 M. Andreessen, “The Techno-Optimist Manifesto” (<https://a16z.com/the-techno-optimist-manifesto/>).

White House, into geopolitics and for the delights of state power. Did this descent also introduce a farewell to astrocapitalism and its plans to mine asteroids?

Far from it. It'd be more accurate to affirm that Musk, Thiel, and Bezos never understood anything about the stars and the cosmos. For them, they were simply a field of exploitation and narcissistic projection. By contrast, the project of truly recognising the cosmos and revealing the cosmological dimension of Earth could today help us to loosen the stranglehold that compresses our subjectivity. Every day, another disaster or threat is added to the list: heat waves, the drying up of democracy, the spread of war, and cognitive decline from the use of AI.⁴ Fear sets in, and we feel trapped on an increasingly uninhabitable Earth, knowing that no spaceship will be able to save us like a technological messiah. But how could a cosmological perspective change anything about this growing feeling of claustrophobia?

In my 2025 book *La Condition planétaire: Sortir de l'anthropocène* (*The Planetary Condition: Exiting the Anthropocene*), I proposed a radical philosophical rethinking of our being-in-the-world in order to consider ourselves as *planetary beings*. By this, I mean that we are both terrestrial and more-than-terrestrial, both situated in a specific environment (social, racial, ecological, related to class and to gender) and absolutely outside of any situation—unsituated.⁵ At the heart of our terrestrial situation, I argue that our planetary condition reveals a cosmological outside that exceeds any geolocation, any hold by any power, whether technological, religious, or military. This planetary condition exceeds both the terrestrial situation to which ecological thinking constrains us and what Hannah Arendt called the “human condition.” For her, this condition was weighed down by the tragic burden of Earth’s gravity, condemning any artificial satellite—as she believed in 1958, at the time of the launch of the first Sputniks—to fall back to Earth, supposedly the ontological homeland of all human-made devices. Recall her famous phrase: “The Earth is the very quintessence of the human condition.”⁶

Challenging Arendt’s anti-Copernican perspective, what I call the planetary condition implies a profound change in our relationship to celestial bodies, the cosmos, the Earth, ourselves, technology, and ultimately politics. Once freed from all economic greed and colonial ambitions, the stars could become the distant force that helps us existentially resist the disintegration of the world. That is what I want to show in this text, beginning by explaining the reasons for Silicon Valley’s landing in the seats of political power (section 1). I will then explain that the New Space of astrocapitalists has always been based on a

4 On AI, see, for instance, H.-P. (Hank) Lee & Ali, “The Impact of Generative AI on Critical Thinking: Self-Reported Reductions in Cognitive Effort and Confidence Effects from a Survey of Knowledge Workers,” *CHI* 25, Yokohama, Japan, 2025.

5 F. Neyrat, *La Condition planétaire: Sortir de l'anthropocène* (Paris, LLL, 2025).

6 H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 2.

denial of the cosmos (section 2) and show (section 3) that this denial is not unique to the promoters of New Space but stems from a nihilistic interpretation of the Copernican revolution, wrongly accused of having rendered the universe absurd. It will then be time to propose a cosmotherapy emphasising the radical unknown revealed by contemporary astrophysics and astrobiology (section 4), making us planetary beings (section 5) capable of using our cosmological freedom as an anti-gravitational force. Even if this freedom is first inward-oriented and primarily concerns our psychological space, it could also turn outward and challenge any unjust terrestrial order, thus becoming political (section 6).

1. Silicon Valley's Terrestrial-authoritarian Turn

In his interview with the *New York Times* in June 2025, Thiel gives the reason for Musk's U-turn: Musk realised it would be impossible for him to achieve his Martian dreams on his own. Inevitably, everything he wanted to leave behind on Earth by going to Mars would follow him on his journey, namely, explains Thiel, "the socialist U.S. government" and "the woke A.I." Instead of becoming an "interplanetary species," he would remain a terrified Earthling—poor creature—troubled by taxes and queer people. Musk would then have understood (so Thiel reasons) that before going to Mars, he would need to go deeper and more intensely into Earth: "he decided he had to win some battle over budget deficits or wokeness to get to Mars."⁷ In short, Musk would have finally understood... that Thiel was right.

Because Thiel, whose mind is full of subtle apocalyptic enlightenment, has always been anti-"woke, opposing capitalism and democracy clearly and distinctly.⁸ He has invested directly in U.S. politics, for example, by financing J.D. Vance's 2022 Senate campaign. Thiel and his flagship company, Palantir, now represent, technologically and ideologically, what I call *Silicon Valley's terrestrial-authoritarian turn*. Palantir's motto is "AI-Powered Automation for Every Decision," whether that decision is industrial, military, or ultimately political. Palantir now provides the U.S. border control agency (ICE) with a platform that helps the administration track down people targeted for deportation. The function of AI is therefore twofold: on the one hand, to replace the human capacity for thinking, deciding, and working; and on the other, to prevent humanity, now desperate due to AI's effects on the environment, society, and the mind, from revolting.

Written by Alexander C. Karp (co-founder and CEO of Palantir) and Nicholas W. Zamiska (head of corporate affairs at the company and legal counsel) and published in 2024, *The Technological Republic* explained this terrestrial-authoritarian shift several months before

7 Thiel, "Peter Thiel and the Antichrist."

8 See P. Thiel, "The Education of a Libertarian" in *Cato Unbound*, April 13, 2009.

Trump's second election. The two authors attack the giants of Silicon Valley (Google, Amazon, Facebook, etc.), accusing them of abandoning any national purpose, any idea of collective well-being, and any defence of the country, in favour of individualistic, consumerist research focused on "social media platforms and food delivery apps."⁹ These "cosmopolitan and technological elites" are "citizens of no countries; their wealth and capacity for innovation had, in their minds, set them free"¹⁰ and seek only to achieve "technological escapism"—to Mars if necessary. In contrast, Karp and Zamiska reaffirm a "sense of national and collective identity. To them, the nation must be defended by the military advances that AI will enable, because we are no longer in "the atomic age" but in the "software century, and the decisive wars of the future will be driven by artificial intelligence, whose development is proceeding on a far different, and faster, timeline than weapons of the past." What the "wunderkinder of Silicon Valley" forget is that their fortunes, business empires, and, more fundamentally, entire sense of self, exist because of the nation that in many cases made their rise possible. They charge themselves with constructing vast technical empires but decline to offer support to the state whose protections—not to mention educational institutions and capital markets—have provided the necessary conditions for their ascent. They would do well to understand that debt, even if it remains unpaid. This is what Musk has finally admitted, and just before him Zuckerberg, advocating the return of "masculine energy": that it is necessary to put an end to "cosmopolitanism" and to anchor ourselves in the homeland through a security-based nationalism supported by AI.

2. Acosmism and Capitalism

Let's not be mistaken, however: for Musk, Bezos, and other leaders of New Space, Mars and outer space have never mattered as such. The term "New Space" refers to the privatisation of outer space exploration, enabling companies to appropriate all mineral resources extracted from asteroids.¹¹ Unlike the Space Age of the 1960s, New Space is less concerned with sending colonists to other planets than with exploiting Earth's sphere. As John Marburger, a physicist who advised George W. Bush, put it, the goal is to "incorporate the Solar System in our economic sphere."¹²

9 A. C. Karp and N. W. Zamiska, *The Technological Republic: Hard Power, Soft Belief, and the Future of the West* (New York: Crown Currency, 2024), 9.

10 Karp and Zamiska, *The Technological Republic*, 70.

11 See for instance the "U.S. Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act" of 2015. (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/2262>).

12 See "2006 Goddard Memorial Symposium speech by John Marburger" (<https://nss.org/2006-goddard-memorial-symposium-speech-by-john-marburger/>).

On this subject, let's hear what Jeff Bezos has to say. He talks about the "finitude" of the Earth, how it is unique and "irreplaceable," and he tells us that we must "save" it, as he said in 2019 during the presentation of a lunar module.¹³ To do this, he explains, we need to exploit resources beyond Earth, which is the only way to avoid "stasis and rationing" (which also frightens Thiel in the interview cited above) in favour of "growth" and "dynamism" in space. Yes, but not to live on other planets. To "protect" Earth, Bezos tells us—but from what? Against whom is the better question, which Bezos does not ask: against those who also want to live here, the remaining 99% of the population, who are to be abandoned to their fate without, however, abandoning Earth. Bezos real goal is to transform Earth into a Zone to Defend against the people.

Musk, Bezos, and Branson don't seem to have any real understanding of what is not terrestrial. The secret goal of New Space is actually to create a New Earth for Earthlings 2.0, transhumanists who will have eradicated Earthlings who were too human. Earthlings against Earthlings: a sort of unacknowledged intraspecies civil war. The universe interests the captains of New Space only as a *uni*-verse, a uniform plane of energy resources to be exploited, an annex of Earth and not a truly alien space. The universe of the astrocapitalists has always been *acosmic*, denying any cosmic plurality: a space waiting to be conquered, a screen on which to project their narcissism, where they can duplicate what they already are (remember the Tesla car sent into space). And their Earth has never been one planet among others in an expanding space, but a space under construction where the aim is to grab the remaining environmental resources.

3. Rereading Galileo

However, it would be wrong to believe that (astro)capitalists are the only ones who are insensitive to the cosmos, incapable of seeing the Earth as a cosmological body. In fact, modernity as a whole has been built on a strange repression of the true message of the Copernican revolution. There are exceptions, notably Giordano Bruno and his assertion of the . We know what it cost him: being burned alive by the Inquisitors.¹⁴ But even Kant, who celebrates Galileo and Copernicus in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, completely reverses the meaning of the astronomical revolution. Copernicus, writes Kant, "made the observer revolve and left the stars at rest" (note that this is already an undue extension of Copernicus' proposal: just because he stopped the sun's course does not mean that he stopped *all the stars*), adding:

13 "Blue Origin 2019: For the Benefit of Earth" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQ98hGUe-6FM>).

14 G. Bruno, *On the infinite universe and worlds* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

Now in metaphysics we can try in a similar way regarding the intuition of objects. If intuition has to conform to the constitution of the objects, then I do not see how we can know anything of them *a priori*; but if the object (as an object of the senses) conforms to the constitution of our faculty of intuition [my emphasis], then I can very well represent this possibility to myself.¹⁵

This statement leads to exactly the opposite of the Copernican revolution insofar as it immobilises the subject of knowledge. “The Earth does not move,” Husserl will assert; nor does the rational being, Kant anticipated.¹⁶ Thus, we must face this truth, along with its ultimate consequences: the Copernican revolution has been philosophically misunderstood, culturally repressed, and overwhelmingly interpreted as a disaster—a “frightening silence” (Pascal), a “narcissistic wound” (Sigmund Freud), a form of “nihilism” (Friedrich Nietzsche), leading to a “glacial” universe “indifferent” to humans (Quentin Meillassoux), etc. For “Man,” it was said, had been at the centre of the universe since he inhabited the central planet; but Copernicus, Brahe, and Galileo destroyed this order, the Earth lost its privileged position, and the world became absurd.¹⁷

However, this interpretation is debatable. It misunderstands the fundamental intention of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, who wanted to raise the Earth up to the status of a “noble star” (Nicolas of Cusa.)¹⁸ The exact opposite of a disaster or biblical Fall, this considerable act aimed to free the Earth from its lethal immobility, from its stagnant state in “the dump heap of the filth and dregs of the universe.”¹⁹ The goal was to elevate the Earth to the rank of a planet among other planets, to establish a celestial democracy, a galactic equality. So, was it a “narcissistic wound,” as Freud argued? Or, rather, according to the cosmo-analysis I propose, a kind of masochism stubbornly whispering: “Earth must remain immobile, unique, subject to Heaven—to religions or the satellites of capitalism.” Have we been unable to accept the extraordinarily good news of an Earth that had found its place in Heaven?

15 I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 110.

16 E. Husserl, “Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of the Spatiality of Nature: The Originary Ark, The Earth does not Move,” in E. Husserl and M. Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 117–31

17 See my essay “Celestial Democracy: From Geocentric Ecology to Planetary Philosophy” in *Comparative Literature* 76, no.3 (2024): 274–276.

18 See A. Koyré, *The Astronomical Revolution – Copernicus, Kepler, Borelli* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 72.

19 Galileo Galilei, *Sidereus Nuncius; or, The Sidereal Messenger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 57.

Be that as it may, the sad version of the astronomical revolution has gained strength. Inheriting the nihilistic interpretation of the astronomical revolution, ecology has sought to heal the so-called Copernican “wound” by making Gaia a new centre, a unique and living anti-planet in a desert universe. In doing so, environmentalist discourse has forbidden itself from taking up the ontologically anarchist gesture of the astronomical revolution: the abolition of the ontological hierarchies of the universe between the supralunar and the sublunar, what is immortal and what is mortal, etc.

Whether they come from New Space CEOs or from those who, quite rightly, would like to see them leave for Mars on a one-way ticket, the contemporary difficulty in recognising the place of planet Earth in the universe is perfectly illustrated by the film *Ad Astra* (2019). Clifford McBride is sent to the edge of the solar system to search for extraterrestrial life, but he finds none. “There was nothing,” he says, “no other consciousnesses.” Tasked with finding him, his son Roy makes him understand that the only thing we really have is “us,” is Earth, to which he returns to marry a woman. Do we really only have a choice between a heteronormative-terrestrial happy ending and cosmic nihilism?

Yet the images the film shows us when Clifford expresses his cosmic despair are splendid, colourful, with infinite contrasts, like a multiverse of shapes and tones; but Clifford sees nothing, feels nothing, obsessed as he was with his anthropocentric quest: he was looking only for human consciousness, an equivalent for life on Earth. What kind of cosmotherapy could he be offered to make him sensitive to the non-terrestrial?

4. Cosmotherapy

We need to philosophically rethink the entire relationship between Earth and cosmology. Some believed the term “cosmos” to be outdated and replaced it with “universe,” a sad term supposed to convey a mature mathematical uniformity. But let’s not be like Clifford from *Ad Astra*: post-Copernican physics did not give rise to a flat and empty universe, but to what physicist Chanda Prescod-Weinstein calls a “disordered cosmos,” queer and surprising.²⁰ Anyone interested in contemporary cosmology discovers that it is permeated by a dimension of radical unknown. This does not challenge scientific rationality but rather stems from it, in its depiction of the universe with an infinity of centres, exoplanets that may harbour living beings, wandering suns, zombie planetary systems recreated after the death of their suns, and hypotheses about cycles of the universe’s birth and rebirth.

Consider that billions of neutrinos pass through you every moment without interacting

20 C. Prescod-Weinstein, *The Disordered Cosmos: A Journey into Dark Matter, Spacetime, and Dreams Deferred* (Bold Type Books, 2021).

with the atoms in your body, that a virtual vacuum constantly vibrates and questions the difference between existence and non-existence, and that a strange dark energy permeates all reality. Consider this entirely serious thesis of a pre-geometric quantum state originating in the universe, where space-time in its potential state would be coupled with a form of consciousness: has astrophysics not become a knowledge of the invisible par excellence?²¹ Does this not invite us to conceive of a *speculative astrophysics*, which makes the cosmological invisible the diaphanous part of our being, an impregnable (im) material part?

It is important to show how contemporary science, astrophysics included, is integrated into capitalism. But it is also important to show how astrophysics transcends itself and generates a specific speculation, a metaphysics of the (in)visible from which to question, on the one hand, the established division between the visible and the invisible and, on the other hand, the narrow materialism that dominates the prevailing representations of the critique of “modern science.” It is time to find another critical activity than that of shooting at the inert effigy of Descartes.

The Earth itself is a cosmological entity, formed from interstellar matter following the collision of meteorites. It is caught up in the expansion of the universe, which literally prevents Earth from being precisely located, since the cosmological territory is constantly changing and expanding. And that is what is difficult to imagine, hence territorialising gestures such as Roy’s: seeking reassurance by returning to Earth, forgetting the rest of the universe... But we can cure ourselves of this voluntary amnesia by seeing planet Earth as both an ecosphere and a celestial object, turned on one side toward lakes, mountains, and data centres, and on the other toward the stars. In this way, we would move away from geocentrism without forgetting the Earth.

This cosmotherapy would then enable us to become sensitive to the findings of astrobiology, a rapidly growing science which, thanks to the exponential discovery of new exoplanets, challenges the limits of the habitable zone for life. Life, astrobiologists tell us, could exist almost anywhere, inside droplets of sulfuric acid floating above Venus or in the ocean of Europa, Jupiter’s icy moon.²² This does not mean that we should not protect life on Earth; it means that life is more powerful than we believe, because it is more-than-earthly, other-than-earthly, hiding virtues still unsuspected. The Earth may not be as rare a planet as we once believed, and this possibility matters for any philosophy of the cosmos: Earth is unique, no doubt, but probably not the only haven for life in the universe.

21 See S. Alexander, *Fear of a Black Universe: An Outsider’s Guide to the Future of Physics* (Basic Books, 2021), 4 and 207. I also lean on Lyman Page, *The Little Book of Cosmology* (Princeton University Press, 2020) and Trinh Xuan Thuan, *The Secret Melody: And Man Created the Universe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

22 See for instance N. Cabrol, *À l’aube de nouveaux horizons* (Paris, Seuil, 2023).

Earth is one among many: Galileo's galactic equality has finally been recognised! At last, Earth is freed from the burden of being Gaia-the-Only, and can become, as Nietzsche wished, "the light one"²³

5. We, the Planetary Persons

Calling for "lightness" when the situation on Earth is getting worse every day? I can see how my cosmological proposal could be rejected in the name of pressing political imperatives that require consideration of the zones of life threatened by capitalism at bay. But politics is not only an immanent struggle: it is also driven by ideals, hopes, and specific ways of relating to the world; it is not a mechanism determined by objective rules fallen from the Sky, but a matter of subjectivities. In response to our contemporary claustrophobia, I propose to give back some room for manoeuvring—a cosmological freedom—to our frightened subjectivities, which are losing the very possibility of a future as terrestrial space is damaged.

For we are, indeed, all of us, "stardust," as astrophysicist Hubert Reeves said.²⁴ We, inhabitants of Earth, are life forms that carry within us the (im)material memory of the cosmos. Like the Earth, we are traversed by the unknown, by the bottomless depths of the universe. Like planet Earth, we are terrestrial and more-than-terrestrial, ecologically situated and penetrated by the unlocatable virtual void—such is our planetary condition. We planetary persons drift through the universe, merely camping on Earth, our temporary abode. After all, this is what the word "planet" originally meant: a wandering star. But in a universe where nothing is fixed anymore, wandering no longer characterises some kind of lack (in relation to what would be immobile) and becomes the common fate of all creatures—stones, humans, plants, comets. Such is our cosmological freedom.

One might say that there is something mystical about my approach, and one would be right. It is indeed a matter of rediscovering, on a cosmological level, what certain religious experiences have described as a feeling of strangeness in the world. Think about the *Epistle to Diognetus*, a text dating from the early centuries of the Common Era, describing Christians as beings who consider "every foreign land to be their native country, and every land of their birth to be a land of strangers;" or also this passage from *The Bible*: "they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (*Books of Hebrews*, 11:13). But the perspective I propose is without a designated Church and involves other experiences, another source of mysticism than that of religions. It seeks, through the most total and original materiality, from within science itself and not against it, the most absolute exit.

23 F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, L.III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 154.

24 H. Reeves, *Poussières d'étoiles* (Paris, Seuil, 2008 [1984]), 33.

6. From Forests to Comets (Ernst Jünger and Auguste Blanqui)

What does this cosmological freedom allow us to do? To say this: “We residents of planet Earth are not bound solely by earthly orders, whether biological or social, ecological or military. As planetary beings, we have the power of a sovereign detachment that no techno-political order can contain. Acceleration is nothing compared to our motionless drift.”

Of course, this non-political, poetical/mystical sovereignty must still be converted into acts of liberation. But I am not proposing a political program here, nor am I seeking to deny that the planetary community is anything but homogeneous: it is divided between the “damned of the Earth” (F. Fanon) who suffer most directly from injustice, and those who have the privilege of having land to rest on.²⁵ However, it will be necessary to find passages, coalitions, and means of communication across racial, class, and gender divides. While everything seems to tie us to the ground, each of us in our own country, everyone with their own patriotism and partial political cause, I consider it essential to promote a cosmopolitics whose challenge, as Étienne Balibar writes, would be to reverse the “reversed cosmopolitics” that reigns today, which tends to transform every foreigner into an enemy in order to eliminate them.²⁶

To be effective, this twice-reversed cosmopolitics should be situated according to specific social, gender, and racial issues. But if this cosmopolitics is so weakly promoted today, if authoritarian technologies and neo-dictatorships are now taking hold almost everywhere, on every continent, it is because we lack an existential horizon, not just a political one. It is because we feel so psychologically weak in the absence of an internationalist movement, of alliances for trans-political peace. It is not possible to respond to these absences in this text, or in any single text for that matter, nor can we hope, let’s be honest, that our perilous situation will be resolved quickly in the coming years. But in this pivotal historical period, when everything we love—freedom, democracy, the rights of the excluded, the biosphere, and the conditions for the reproduction of life—is collapsing, we can at least find a source of strength, or conceive of one, and seek to experience it. *Let us declare our anti-gravitational capacity, our refusal to yield to the attraction of the unjust world order.*

This capacity is within us; we carry it with us wherever we are, wherever we go—it comes with the motionless drift of planetary persons. I model this capacity on what

25 See my article “Alterrestrial: Planetary Experience and Cosmological Freedom” in *cultural geographies* 32, no.3 (2025).

26 E. Balibar and P. Maniglier, *La Terre ou le monde – Divergences cosmopolitiques* (Paris: Miallet-Barraut Éditeurs, 2025), 127. See also the conclusion of Balibar’s talk “Global Racism as Reversed Cosmopolitanism (A Public Lecture for the CRMEP at Kingston University London, May 12th, 2023). I would like to thank Étienne Balibar for sending me his talk.

the controversial essayist Ernst Jünger called “the forest passage” (*Waldgang*), the forest serving as a metaphor for that which is within us—immortal, timeless—and that allows us to refuse an unjust social order. Jünger’s translator, I point out that “passage” means both deciding to move toward a new situation (that of the rebel hiding in anonymity, for example) and already being there, living within this passage in the forest.²⁷ We can therefore understand that, as Jünger explains, the forest can be everywhere:

The forest is everywhere—in the wastelands as much as in the cities, where a forest rebel may hide or live behind the mask of a profession. The forest is in the desert, and the forest is in the bush. The forest is in the fatherland, as in every territory in which resistance can be put into practice. But the forest is above all behind the enemy’s own lines, in his backcountry.²⁸

This allows me to substitute cosmos for forest, especially since Jünger tells us that this indestructible freedom can be “conceived as salvation, as the soul, or man’s eternal cosmic homeland.”²⁹ But I will not give the last word to Jünger, whose “warrior desires”—his fascination with death, war, and violence—are well known.³⁰ Rather, in this passage from forests to stars, I am thinking of another author, August Blanqui, and his famous *Eternity by the Stars: An Astronomical Hypothesis*, which the revolutionary wrote in prison in 1871.

In Blanqui’s cosmology, some beings are signs par excellence of radical renewal, beings that Sean Bonney, in his commentary on Blanqui’s text, defines by their “anti-gravitational anarchism”: comets.³¹ We never really know where they come from and when, or where, they will stop their course, Blanqui explains. And even when they end up trapped by the gravitation of a planet, they continue to manifest a kind of extraterritoriality—a refusal to be territorialised, nationalised. The earth’s atmosphere is “doubled out with a comet-like envelope,” Blanqui writes, hinting at the fundamentally *atopic* situation of comets, at the same time both outside and inside.³² This atopic situation is summarised by Blanqui in the opposition between, on the one hand, the “crushing masses” of stellar bodies and, on the other hand, with regard to comets, what he calls their “excess of nothingness,” adding: “There is no reason to include the comets in a description of the world. They are nothing,

27 E. Jünger, *The Forest Passage & Eumeswil*, Wewelsburg Archives, 2020, 5.

28 Jünger, *The Forest Passage*, 66.

29 Jünger, *The Forest Passage*, 78.

30 See D. V. Brosteaux, *Les désirs guerriers de la modernité* (Paris: Seuil, 2025), 143–196.

31 S. Bonney, “Comets & Barricades: Insurrectionary Imagination in Exile” in *Mute*, January 9, 2014.

32 L.-A. Blanqui, *Eternity by the Stars: An Astronomical Hypothesis*, trans. Frank Chouraqui (New York – Berlin: Contra Mundum Press, 2013), 83.

they do nothing, and their only role is that of an enigma.”³³

This is the enigma of the un-situated that comets, as conceived by Blanqui, manifest. One cannot pin them on any map, because their nothingness cannot be turned into data harvestable by Generative AI. The time has come for becoming-comet. Anthropomorphism? Rather, a return to the original meaning of the term comet: from the Greek *komê*, meaning “hair,” comets appeared to humans looking up at the sky with their bright trails—like hairy stars.

7. Celestial Guide for Missing Techno-politics

Such is the *recourse to the stars* that I have attempted to outline in this text: it has abandoned all colonial ambitions, all capitalist expansion beyond Earth, all technological development projects that are not guided by the desire for radical democracy, all accelerationist projects that unavoidably accelerate the damaging of the ecosphere and the sphere of mind.

This recourse could foster what Martin Heidegger called for: a “free relationship” to technology.³⁴ Unlike what Heidegger argued, however, we would not have to wait to be “saved by a god”: insofar as the planetary condition does not define a future event, but a cosmological untethering that has already happened. As I define it, planetarity is not a becoming, but a return to a cosmological condition that has been with us and carried us along since the origin of the universe. Far from being limited to a change in the “use” of technology, such a “free relationship” should lead to a complete redefinition of planetary technologies, freed from nationalism, terrestrial anthropocentrism, and any subjugating effects.³⁵

But it is true that such changes will not be possible until authoritarian technologies are clearly challenged by states, institutions, and philosophies of technology. It is not just a specific, messianic technology that we lack (as the Silicon Valley accelerationists may propose), but rather a new techno-politics: a technology guided by a cosmopolitics capable of reversing racism and overcoming nationalism, to use Balibar’s terms. It is also crucial that thinkers and intellectuals continue their critical work, rather than supporting the dominant technological powers.

33 L.-A. Blanqui, *Eternity by the Stars: An Astronomical Hypothesis*, trans. Frank Chouraqui (New-York – Berlin: Contra Mundum Press, 2013), 90.

34 M. Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” in *The Question concerning Technology* (New York: Harper Celophon, 1977), 25–26.

35 See, for instance, “once we recognise that danger and its deepest ontotheological sources, we can learn to use [my emphasis] technologies in ways that resist that nihilism and even help move us beyond it”: Iain D. Thomson, *Heidegger on Technology’s Danger and Promise in the Age of AI* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2025), 65.

Consider this article by Benjamin Bratton, published in 2025, entitled “Is European AI A Lost Cause? Not Necessarily.” In this deliberately polemical article, which is *aligned* with techno-accelerationist theories, Bratton propagates both neoliberal and far-right stereotypes—the fusion of which is one way of approaching the essence of techno-accelerationism—about Europe, accused of being trapped in its “Regulate first, build later (maybe)” motto.³⁶ He also attacks what he calls the “Critique Industry that monopolised both academia and public discourse” (not far from Curtis Yarvin’s “cathedral”): those who dare to talk about “socialism,” who use the word “resist,” who want to “stop the construction of data centers,” and who, “of course,” use the term “communism.”³⁷ Woke A.I., I tell you.

The problem I just pointed out raises the very question of planetarity. In his book *The Terraforming* (2019), Bratton seems to adopt a non-geocentric perspective, referring to outer space and black holes, but this extraterrestrial excursion is short-lived. Very quickly, the goal turns out to be to look “back onto the Earth’s surface,” to isolate Earth in the name of planetary design and geoengineering.³⁸ “Planetarity” is reduced to “the technosphere and all its artificiality” and thus becomes acosmological, stripping the Earth of its wandering condition—as if Copernicus had disappeared into a black hole, leaving the field open to the knights of the Republic of Design.³⁹ From this, we can learn a lesson: retaining only the decentring and so-called narcissistic wound of the astronomical revolution to derive an anti-anthropocentric faith in the technological design of the Earth serves only to repress, once again, our planetary condition.

Given the worrying political situation that currently prevails on every continent, a situation that strengthens the reversed cosmopolitics of authoritarian technologies, I have sought to ensure a form of cosmological freedom at a time when social, political, academic, and cultural independence seems increasingly compromised. Cosmological independence allows us to take a radical distance from the present situation *without leaving Earth*: the Space Age is over, long live the planetary condition! Or, more precisely, the part of the Space Age that must be definitively abandoned is that which was based on the triumphalism of the technological conquest of the Moon, on the Cold War, and on anthropomorphic imaginaries à la Star Trek, where we encounter beings more like us than truly alien.

36 B. Bratton, “Is European AI A Lost Cause? Not Necessarily” in *Noēma*, (2025).

37 Concerning Yarvin’s concept of cathedral, see J. Tait, “Mencius Moldbug and Neoreaction” in ed. M. Sedgwick, *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: University Press, 2019), 193–198.

38 B. Bratton, *The Terraforming* (Moscow: Strelka Institute Press, 2019). Since it’s a digital book, I’ll only list the title of the relevant section. See the section “Space Theory in Place.”

39 B. Bratton, *The Terraforming*. See the section “Planetarnost: Space is the Place.”

Nothing prevents us, however, from retaining from the Space Age the cosmological promise that Woodstock and the spiritualities of the time represented. As Crosby, Still, Nash & Young sang in 1970:

We are stardust, we are golden
We are billion-year-old carbon
And we've got to get ourselves
Back to the garden.⁴⁰

Freedom understood as the *capacity for terrestrial untethering*, the recourse to the stars is, first and foremost, an internal recourse, since the cosmological dimension is not external to Earth: let us not forget that, since Copernicus, Earth itself is in the cosmos, in which it drifts endlessly. But this recourse can also be guided by the world as it presents itself to our senses, in those moments of strange correspondence between the interior and the exterior, the mind and the stars, giving rise to a sovereign emancipation. In this context, it may be worth recalling that *North Star*, led by the famous African-American abolitionist Frederick Douglass, became one of the most important African-American anti-slavery newspapers: first published in 1847, the newspaper's name paid tribute to fugitive slaves who used the North Star in the night sky to guide them to freedom.

40 Crosby, Still, Nash & Young, "Woodstock" in *Déjà vu*, 1970. I would like to thank Howard Schweber, who introduced me to this song during the discussions that followed my participation in the Political Theory Workshop mentioned in the first footnote. I have since also discovered Joni Mitchell's original version, which has slightly different lyrics.

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