



Universiteit
Leiden

The Netherlands

Planetary thinking in the era of global warming

Lindberg, S.E.

Citation

Lindberg, S. E. (2023). *Planetary thinking in the era of global warming*. Leiden. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3656463>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3656463>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Prof. Susanna Lindberg

Planetary Thinking in the Era of Global Warming



Universiteit
Leiden

Bij ons leer je de wereld kennen

Planetary Thinking in the Era of Global Warming

Inaugural lecture by

Prof. Susanna Lindberg

On the acceptance of her position of professor of

Continental Philosophy

at the Universiteit Leiden

on Monday November 20, 2023



**Universiteit
Leiden**

Madam rector magnificus, dear colleagues, friends and family.

I stand here in order to inaugurate the academic chair of Professor of Continental Philosophy at the Institute for Philosophy of the University of Leiden. I thank you warmly for your presence today.

Inaugurating this chair calls for a clarification of what I take continental philosophy to be. I do not intend to approach this task by explaining the tradition from which it draws its force, a tradition that many of you know so intimately. Instead, I wish to speak about the situation in which philosophy finds itself today, a situation that asks for a certain reconfiguration of the field – for I believe philosophy to be a task, rather than simply or narrowly a discipline.

Continental philosophy faces the same challenge as all academic research today: *global warming* and the adjacent ecological and social crises that it translates into (the melting of the ice caps, wildfires, droughts, floods, population displacements, etc.). Global warming is a planetary problem and I believe it calls for a new kind of *planetary thinking*. I do not maintain that we can simply apply existing philosophical tools on the reality of global warming, but on the contrary that the emerging situation requires that *philosophy itself must change*. After all, modern (‘Western’) philosophy reflects the same modern (‘Western’) culture that first led to global warming. Criticizing the latter therefor implies criticizing and reconfiguring the former. My aim today is to show what this could mean for continental philosophy. I do believe that continental philosophy has a specific role to play in the task of thinking contemporary planetary disasters, because, more than most other academic disciplines, it can make sense of the affective charge of a situation. It can conceptualize, that is, *disaster*, *disorientation*, and even *despair*.

What follows is a small reflection on a huge topic. Though it will necessarily be schematic, running the risk of simplifying complex questions, I would like to sketch an broad problematic entire. It will be articulated in three subchapters: thinking, world, and ethics.

1. *Thinking the disaster*

Modern European Thought begins in Greek antiquity and takes its distinctive form in Enlightenment. One of its most precious consequences is modern natural science. This scientific work, as summarized by the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), is our evident starting point.

Obviously, contemporary continental philosophy is not a natural science, it is only informed by it like any ordinary citizen. What continental philosophy *can* do is investigate the existential signification of the situation revealed by natural science and, in doing so, prepare the task of reconfiguring the field of ethics and politics. The climate historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has claimed that a tendency of indifference towards global warming arises because it is viewed as a scientific fact that cannot really be experienced personally. But I think that in this particular case, both the impersonality of scientific understanding and the lack of personal experience are existentially significant. In what follows, I will first describe the specific *impersonal experience* we have of global warming, in the conviction that it is the key to understanding contemporary being-in-the-world. It is the experience of an event, of *disaster* that arouses specific *affects*: *indifference*, *despair*, and *courage*. I do not use the terms ‘disaster,’ ‘indifference,’ ‘despair,’ and ‘courage’ as fortuitous rhetorical effects but, on the contrary, as (post-)phenomenological technical terms that prepare the task of thinking today.

Let me start with the term ‘disaster.’ From a scientific point of view, global warming is a measurable evolution of the planetary climate system. From the everyday existential point of view, however, this scientific fact represents an immeasurable *disaster* that destabilizes our habitual natural and social lifeworlds. I use the word ‘disaster’ in the precise sense first formulated by Maurice Blanchot in *L'écriture du désastre*. For Blanchot, the disaster – *dés-astre*, which literally means an *evil star* – differs from human tragedies and catastrophies because it is not a thought-provoking event that clarifies the sense of human life, it does not add to our understanding of

life, but a frightening event that does strikes us as *unthinkable*. He writes: 'the thought of the disaster overflows every variety of thought, as the intense, silent affirmation of the outside.' (ED 11 / WD 3) I propose to understand global warming as just such an overpowering event, one that does not accord with our inherited ways of thinking human existence. It is a planetary natural process that results from the activity of human industrial civilization irrespective of intention. Insofar as it is not destined to any specific human individual or community but indifferently befalls everybody – humans as well as nonhumans – it is not a human tragedy but a planetary disaster. Blanchot says that the disaster is neither a fact nor an event because it has no presence, 'not only because there is no "I" to undergo the experience but because, [...] since the disaster always takes place after having taken place, there cannot possibly be any experience of it.' (ED 50/WD 28) Similarly, global warming cannot be experienced here and now. It is 'without presence' because it is too slow and too vast for any kind of perception; it 'takes place after having taken place' because it has always already started, long ago, and it is yet to come. It does not happen to anybody in particular but to both nobody in particular and everybody as an anonymous mass. Global warming only affects people impersonally and anonymously (in the mode of Martin Heidegger's *das Man*).

I analyse global warming in terms of disaster because the more common term 'catastrophe' appears misleading to me. A catastrophe threatens people's families, their homes, and their hearths. This is why the very idea of climate catastrophe is so vehemently rejected by 'climate deniers' or 'climate reassurers,' who do not mind rejecting scientific evidence if it allows them to believe that the catastrophe does not exist. Philosophical anticatastrophists are different: they do not (openly) reject science, but they combat the *affect* of despair aroused by its catastrophist interpretation. These philosophers do not know *what to do with despair*, because it is just an unreasonable affect, an affect that paralyses thought and action. Now, contrary to these philosophers, I am interested in the stupefying affects caused by this particular disaster.

Philosophy should not flee the thought of disaster nor avoid the despair it engenders, but, on the contrary, it should take these shocks seriously. Indeed, philosophy needs such shocks in order to understand that it, too, must change. To think the contemporary world, it has to face the real disaster and see why it is also a disaster of philosophy.

Most of the time, imagining or thinking about the impersonal disaster of global warming arouses two kinds of *affects*: indifference and. Commenting on Chakrabarty, Catherine Malabou notes that most people meet the Anthropocene, of which global warming is the most imposing aspect, with indifference. We all know what it is like: indifference thinks 'What can I, what should I do about it?' Such indifference is, I believe, actually the reverse side of despair, a despair which thinks: 'Whatever I do is insignificant.' Here I understand *despair* in the specific sense given to this affect by Claude Romano in *L'événement et le monde*. Despair is, he says, a painful apathy in which I cannot appropriate things that happen to me, the sinking into an impersonal groundless anonymity in which 'I am there without being there, in an impersonal stupefaction in which suffering becomes painless.' (EM 161) The disastrous event cannot be integrated in the familiar world; the world is undone, I can neither make sense of it nor orient myself in it. What is thus common to indifference and despair is the loss of the personal I that dissolves in anonymous impersonality.

In Blanchot's thinking, the disaster leaves the human being stunned and paralysed, but in Romano's thinking, 'human adventure' consists in inventing a way out. For the latter, even very negative affects such as despair are not pathologies that one should suppress, but fundamental ways of relating to events that one should examine attentively. When a destructive event occurs, it disarticulates the world and disorients human existence, but the human adventure consists in rearticulating the world that is out of joint. *The task of thinking is this new articulation of the world disarticulated by the disaster*. This does not mean healing and mending the world so that it becomes the same as before; on the contrary,

the disaster is deeply destabilizing because we know that the world will *never* be the same again. It is a disaster of *thinking* that finds itself at a dead end when it realizes that if it continues to orient life like before it becomes impossible to live like before.

So, the world really needs to be *articulated, constellated, composed* differently. As Jacques Derrida remarks, real invention is the *invention of the other*. Real invention is the realization of something that, until now, appeared *impossible*; not the continuation of the past but a rupture with it. When thought sees the coming days only through the lens of impossibility, it sinks into indifference and despair. But when it sees the *need of a future*, despite its impossibility, it arms itself with *courage* in order to demand the impossible. Although, by definition, one cannot know what future will be, one can still imagine it; indeed, imagination is the only way of thinking the impossible (future). Of course, one cannot count on imaginary futures alone, because, after all, imagination is a truthless force – though truthlessness is not falseness but only ignorance of truth. This is why one also needs to keep imagination in check by means of reason. Thinking towards the future is thus an incessant exchange between reason and imagination. Reason is a *technique of thinking*, a thinking that already knows how to think. Imagination refuses ready-made techniques, it reaches towards unexpected things that thinking deems impossible. Thinking is needed to test imagination, but for thinking to meet the challenge of imagination it must be able to let go of its routines and invent new techniques of operating. This is the moment of invention, the moment in which a former technique of thinking is overcome and a simple possibility becomes reality. Invention occurs in this space between reason and imagination. Or better, it is their coincidence, the moment in which fantasy becomes reality, in which impossibility becomes reality.

In what follows, I provide two examples of such *rational imagination*. Firstly, I will show how the disaster of the concept of world leads to the notion of the planetary; and secondly, I will outline the task of creating a new planetary ethics.

2. *Homeworld and planetary unworld*

As I noted, the task of thinking today is rearticulating, constellating, and composing with the world that has been disarticulated by the disaster of global warming. From a philosopher's point of view, what has been fundamentally disarticulated is the very *concept* of world. *What is called world?* In philosophy, this concept has been elaborated most extensively in phenomenology. It is not only my contention, though this need now be demonstrated, that the phenomenological concept of world helps us understand the present situation of global warming and, more generally, that of the Anthropocene, but also, inversely, that these invite us to rethink the phenomenological concept of world along *planetary* terms.

The classical phenomenological concept of world is the horizon of meaningfulness. 'World' does not mean primarily the planet as a physical entity (the object that is studied by some of the natural sciences), but the *homeworld* of human individuals and communities, their horizon of sense (the object that is also studied by the human sciences). Such a homeworld consists of knowledge and values, ideas and illusions; it consists, shortly, of everything that frames our experiences and helps us make sense of them.

Global warming destabilizes planetary nature, but as the changing planetary nature impacts our homeworlds, the latter are destabilized, too. It becomes obvious that our situation is not only our finite homeworld but its entire planetary condition; it is not inhabited only by humans but also by innumerable other living beings. The inherited concept of world ends up in crisis when it is stretched – literally extended – to such planetary and nonhuman dimensions. To put it very briefly, we do not find ourselves *at home* in the planetary space, it does not *make sense* to us, we don't know how to *orientate* ourselves in it. How, then, should we understand this new space?

Some contemporary thinkers have characterized this situation as a kind of an 'end of the world' – meaning, here,

the end of the phenomenological idea of world. This end, they suggest, should lead to a different ontology, for example so-called object-oriented ontology or speculative materialism. I do not follow this line of thought but instead examine the undoing of the classical conception of the world within the framework of (post-)phenomenology. I find this approach important because I believe that the central notion of phenomenology, *being-in* (the core of intentionality), is crucial for trying to figure out how we should inhabit the planet.

This being said, the *classical* phenomenological concept of world as a horizon of sense has certainly become insufficient. In light of the event of global warming, we must, firstly, redefine the world as a planetary extension and, secondly, redefine the subject of this experience as the anonymous inhabitant of the planetary extension.

As this redefinition takes place *in the light of the event of global warming*, we should first linger on what it means to consider global warming as an *event*. In the tradition of phenomenological philosophy, it is not evident that one can interpret a process like global warming as an event. Typically understood, an event is a remarkable singular happening that interrupts time and breaks history in two, like the encounter of a friend or the advent of a God. On the contrary, global warming is *unremarkable*. It does not appear as singular, because it takes place everywhere over the planet, and it does not even appear as eventlike, because its duration counts only in centuries and millennia. Of course, it is not exactly this process but *our realization* of it that constitutes an event for us. But this realization is not an illumination of truth, either. We, sitting in this room, do not really know the innumerable ecological processes that make up global warming, nor, I presume, have we read the innumerable scientific studies that explain it. We only have an approximate general representation of 'global warming' and we know enough of its conditions of enunciation to trust this representation. But once we assimilate it, we look at our world differently. Neither the beating sun, the pouring rain, nor the soaring plane maintains its innocence anymore. The world in which most of us were born

has lost its solidity and habitual sense. The world has been disjointed and we have become *worldless* in the specific sense that maintaining the world we knew – continuing to live in it as before – amounts to destroying the very world we try to maintain.

The event of global warming provokes the 'unworlding' of all finite homeworlds; it pushes them out of joint, reveals their fault lines, and shows how they rely on unforeseen planetary events. Being a natural reaction to human industrial activity, global warming unfolds the planetary dimension not only as 'nature' but as *techno-nature*, a situation in which nature and technics are inextricably mixed. By 'planetary techno-nature', I do not mean the material reality in which every culture is necessarily embedded, and in which science can seek the orderly causes of everyday disorder. Instead, I use the it as a philosophical term that designates the transcendental or elemental condition of the contemporary lifeworld. The difference between the two approaches is important. Sciences can show *what* such a techno-natural ground of lifeworld might be, and investigate causal relations between a cultural world, its technological context, and its natural environment. But phenomenology does not ask such *what*-questions, it asks *how*-questions: how does the world appear, how does it make sense, how can it be thought? I cannot here develop these technical distinctions, but I can give two quick examples of the theoretical considerations they lead to.

First, the event of global warming breaks through the traditional phenomenological coordinates of a world: the *locality* and *historicity* that constitute the world's 'situatedness.' Although global warming is revealed by universal science, it is not a universal truth but a *planetary event* which is *finite* – even though it overflows the traditional notion of finitude, calling for a new understanding of it. Now the dimensions of finitude are not locality and historicity, but what I have called elsewhere the planetary *displace* and what Ted Toadvine has called the *deep history* of nature. Planetary techno-nature is not local because it takes place everywhere. It is a *displace*, both in the sense that it is a non-place in which one cannot dwell and in the

sense that it is a place appearing only in terms of displacements and transitions of human beings, goods, energy, information, etc. Such a place is an uninhabitable dimension of general unhomeliness and alienation. Similarly, planetary techno-nature cannot be inserted in a historicity, but it evolves along the nonhuman 'deep history' of nature. Human historicity tends to become a story that moves from our past towards our future; this is how it understands global warming either in terms of collapse and catastrophe of human societies or in terms of progress and anti-catastrophism. Deep time does not care about such narrations, it does not predict a future of doom and salvation, because its disasters only operate neutral *change*.

Second, planetary techno-nature has a particular ontological-transcendental structure, that of *bio-technics*, that calls for a particular kind of philosophical thinking, *elemental thinking*. Though, for brevity, I cannot here develop these highly technical terms, I want to name them to indicate that the entire philosophical edifice is touched when the concept of world is rearticulated through the prism of global warming.

As I suggested above, in addition to the concept of *world*, the event of global warming also invites us to redefine the *subject* who inhabits and experiences the planetary extension. From Heidegger to Romano, phenomenology calls 'event' a remarkable occurrence that happens to the subject, to whom it gives a more authentic selfhood (personality). But we have seen that global warming presents itself as a peculiar *unremarkable event* that overwhelms *everybody's* existence, not in the authentic sense sought in phenomenology, but in the *inauthentic impersonal* sense that phenomenology can hardly understand. We saw that the phenomenological concept of world was insufficient insofar as it is a horizon – a horizon understood as the perspective of a subject (*Dasein*) who can appropriate the world and think about it. On the contrary, the event of global warming dissolves the horizon and *destroys the I* who could appropriate the world, it is an event that happens to the impersonal anonymous crowd (*das Man*). Global warming addresses itself to the impersonal crowd that is incapable of appropriating the world in thoughts. *Thinking*

in the proper sense of the word happens to the *I* who thinks, *ego cogito, ego sum*, while the anonymous crowd can only be *captured by images* floating in the planetary extension.

This is why, differently from classical phenomenologists and rather like Jean-Luc Nancy, I think that the planetary dimension is not a horizon of sense but only an *extension of images*; not a horizon but a whirlwind of images that blurs every horizon. By 'image' I do not mean a concrete visual picture but any *product of imagination*, be it visual, sonorous, linguistic, ideal, or other. The images of the world are not representations of an underlying reality but just groundless images, a ground that only consists of images. Some images might be perceptions, but the vast majority are images made by and shared with others. To take our chief problem, how do we perceive global warming? It cannot be perceived by senses. We discover it through a vast imagery that includes the IPCC reports, our personal experiences of a hot summer, a couple of end-of-the-world movies like *Melancholia* (2011) and *Don't Look Up* (2021), international press articles, discussions with friends and debates with foes, and so on. We do not have a clear idea of what global warming is and what it will become, we cannot organise all this information into a clear worldview, it shows itself as a whirlpool of images in which we try to orient ourselves towards an uncertain future. This kind of imagination is not a subjective faculty, it is the element through which the world shows itself. The subject is in the *element of imagination* in the same way it is, according to G.W.F. Hegel, in the 'element of reason.' *This* is the imagination that reason must at the same time pay heed to and hold in check, so as to invent new ways of figuring out how to orient oneself in the planetary sphere.

3. Impersonal ethics and politics

To conclude, I would like to propose a tentative answer to a final question, a question which is actually the first of them all. Does the planetary of the kind I have just outlined have

a practical dimension? Can it help us in the primordial task of finding an ethics and maybe even politics for the epoch of the Anthropocene? I cannot pretend to offer any normative advice – you already know that our categorical imperative is something like ‘always act in such a way that you mitigate global warming instead of increasing it.’ However, I think that those changes in the concept of world that I have explained above provoke changes in our understanding of being-in-the-world, which always has a practical dimension, too. The task of planetary thinking is difficult, because the planetary dimension is not a homely world but an unworldly techno-nature. It is difficult because to think it, we need a new kind of rational imagination. What kind of ethics and politics are commensurable with the planetary dimension? To answer to this, we need to *imagine* new world articulations, even if these are, for the time being, hardly anything more than *sketches* issuing from a kind of a *rational imagination*. You can take this as an example of the *elemental thinking* of ethics and political philosophy in the epoch of Anthropocene.

Let me briefly indicate three such sketches. I will ask: one, how do we *relate* to the world; two, who the ethical *agent* that relates to it is; and three, what kind of *community* comes together under global warming.

Firstly, how do we relate to the world. We have seen that the event of global warming shatters our inherited conception of world and reveals the *uninhabitable* or *unworldly* techno-nature on which it lies. What exactly is shattered? With the interpretation of the world as a *homeworld*, we lose the idea of world which appears to be our ‘*own*’ and to which we relate in terms of ‘*having*.’ Both continental and analytical practical philosophies are used to conceptualizing the world as something that we *have*; this is the case for philosophers as divergent as Heidegger, Karl Marx, and John Rawls. If the event of global warming shatters the inherited concept of world, it shatters this *sense of the world as something one can have*. It shows that every homeworld is conditioned by the much more general evolution of the planetary techno-nature. The planetary techno-nature itself is inappropriable, neither

individuals nor political communities can lay claim on its entirety, which is, at most, the inappropriable horizon of appropriations.

Because tradition thinks about the world in terms of ‘having,’ it is tempting to suggest that it would be possible to regain control of the world by *reappropriating* it. It is easy to imagine ideologies that demand *we take back the Earth!* or *seize the techno-sphere for the people!* But it is not enough to change owners if the fundamental principle of owning remains. This is why some thinkers have suggested, instead, that the idea of ‘having’ is distorted, that it is modelled on the idea of private property. Should we not instead reactivate a thinking of the world in terms of *commons* that are *shared without owning*? Doesn’t global warming take place in the planetary techno-nature which all inhabitants of this planet share without owning it? Shouldn’t it be considered a new kind of ‘common’ that belongs to nobody, that is available to everybody and therefore also a concern of everybody? This is a beautiful idea, but there are no signs of its realizability. The real cases in which common life has been organised in commons – such as the Whanganui river in New Zealand – function because these commons are shared by people who are personally related to them. But global warming is a genuinely planetary phenomenon that is more than the sum of local situations and strategies. It is not an entity, like a river, but a planetary event. People who live by a river recognize one another in the situation they share, but, judging by recent Conference of the Parties (COP) negotiations, the totality of all inhabitants of the planet live in such different situations that they appear to not recognize one another as a community with a common interest but only as an anonymous mass. Judging purely by facts, ‘humankind’ does not see the planetary atmosphere and hydrosphere as ‘commons’, but at most as a common dumping ground.

If planetary techno-nature is neither owned nor in common but inappropriable, how should we relate to it? I believe Giorgio Agamben’s term ‘use’ is here instructive. Agamben distinguishes *use* from *possession* and *consumption*

of goods and defines it as a *skill* of handling *means*. Language is the prime example of means that one cannot own but one still has to learn to use – among Agamben's other examples are the ambiguous use of bodies and the use of a landscape. Though none of these can be owned, knowing how to use them properly is indispensable for life. The theory of *use* is a new formulation of the ancient interpretation of *technics as skill*: using things is neither theoretical knowledge nor economical possession but a *know-how* of relating to things. A know-how does not simply take up things, it learns what they are and adapts to them; a skill can only submit things if it is submitted to the thing's own nature in the first place. Perhaps this idea can be inspirational in the task of inventing an ethics of planetary techno-nature. We have seen our relation to planetary techno-nature is not that of having it. But it is still necessary to *make use* of the possibilities that it entails (natural resources, technological equipment, etc.). The ethical question that follows is, then: How to use the planetary techno-nature *well*? How to use these possibilities without *abusing* them and without submitting them to destructive *usury*? How to handle the available techno-natural possibilities in such a way that these possibilities can flourish and renew themselves instead of extenuating and extinguishing them? How to use them so that they can go on renewing and reinventing themselves instead of being just mishandled and hurt? If this line of inquiry sounds abstract, try these questions on a forest, a sea, or a new technological principle.

I must here caution that the sole relation of *use* cannot, of course, be sufficient to determine an *ethics*. Ethics rather asks how human beings relate to other human beings and not simply to nonhuman techno-natural possibilities. What, then, does it mean to be an ethical agent today?

Secondly, the event of global warming shatters the conception of the moral agent as the autonomous subject conscious of its actions.

Earlier I characterized the event of global warming as an unprecedented *impersonal event* that does not happen to *anybody* in person although it also happens to *everybody* (to

the *inauthentic* “‘*the they*’, *das Man*). What kind of an ethical agent would such an impersonal, unconscious, inauthentic ‘they’ be? Classical (‘Western’) moral theory considers that it is not a moral agent at all, because agency requires shaking away dreamy inauthenticity and waking up to authenticity, the prerequisite of conscious action and responsibility. It seems to me, however, that the event of global warming does not fit this conception of moral agency. Rather, it reveals the ethical and even political character of impersonal, inauthentic existence itself. To some extent, it is as terrifying as existentialist ethics, because it demands to be *responsible* of an impersonal situation that we have not chosen but into which we have just been ‘thrown.’ But it lacks the heroic pathos of the authenticity that characterizes existentialism, it asks not to reject inauthenticity but to take care of it.

In classical moral theory, whether analytical or continental, the moral agent is an autonomous individual subject. Depending on the theoretical framework, one stresses the individual subject's freedom, practical reason, action, recognition, etc., all of which are possible thanks to the individual's authenticity. The first question of political theory is, therefore: How is it possible to acquire authentic agency? As Hannah Arendt answers: it is by action, by speaking and acting in front of others; or as Michel Foucault suggests: it is by *parrhesia*, by telling truth before others even against all odds. The field of action of this authentic individual is the political community in which human beings encounter one another and negotiate questions of human possession of the world and human recognition of other human beings. This fundamental structure is again shared by philosophers as different as Rawls, whose theory presupposes free and rational individuals, and Marx or Heidegger, whose theories presuppose sovereign collectives. Whatever the political choice – and this is not at stake here – the principle of a subjectivity capable of self-affirmation is the driving force of all modern political ideologies.

Now, the event of global warming escapes this kind of ethics because it does not happen to people as authentic

individuals and full citizens, but only to the anonymous crowd of the global displace. The principle of autonomous subjectivity is unsuited to the terms of planetary space because it is not a genuine political space in which individuals could take a stand like legitimate citizens of the world state. In the planetary space, everybody is by right a stranger; those who stand up to demand change do not speak and act as Arendtian members of the public space but as lawless rebels, modelled after Antigone who only follows her own law (this is the case of the members of Youth for Climate and Extinction Rebellion). Despite all efforts of international organization, collective subjects (nation-states) also suffer from similar lack of legitimacy and profit from impunity. This is why, to give a well-known example, the promises made by most states of the world at COP21 in Paris to limit global warming to a 1.5°C increase have not been held but are now set on a trajectory leading, at least, to 2°C increase without sanctions.

10 So, what kind of agency characterizes our inauthentic being-in-the-world? It consists mainly of *habitudes* that support people's actions unconsciously and that have been acquired in cultural habituation. When *habitudes* turn out to be pathological behaviours with toxic effects, they can be called *addictions*. As Malabou shows, we do not use the world freely, but are habituated and addicted to certain ways of inhabiting the world (for example, certain ways of eating, heating, and travelling). Global warming is an event because it is not only a crisis in which the *world* changes, but also an existential crisis that demands that *people* change. It shatters people's *habitudes*, demands that they invent new *habitudes*, only to then establish new *addictions*. The good news is that *habitudes* are not fixed natural determinations, they can be changed. The bad news is that this requires the kind of an effort that most people are not willing to undertake. Where *habitudes* make up our identity, changing *habitudes* tampers with our identity in ways that frightens many people.

For classical ethical and political theories, the task of ridding ourselves of bad *addictions* and developing better *habitudes* appears disappointing and petty. It seems to

reduce noble questions of ideology and action into simple questions of lifestyle. However, the task of inventing wiser ways of relating to planetary techno-nature is not without its own philosophical and social challenges. It is a question of developing more reasonable modes of life (*savoir-vivre*) that in turn presuppose more reasonable ways of thinking and doing (*savoir théorique* and *savoir-faire*). One could say that we need *new techniques of living*. At the core of every habitude and addiction is a technique; the process of changing habitude means inventing a new technique, learning it, and only after a long period of habituation can it then become the new second nature. Habitude is a technique that has become unconscious; changing habitudes requires wilful unlearning of old reflexes and learning new techniques. This technical skill is the kind of agency that 'the they' is capable. Shortly, facing global warming, the supreme responsibility concerns weaning *addictions* to inherited ways of life, it concerns changing *mentalities* and developing new *habitudes*. In the present situation, *habitudes* are not just something we have grown into, they are political choices.

Is this disappointingly simple? Less than one might think because the term 'technique' is richer than many would expect. Technique does not simply mean *using things* by submitting them to one's needs. Techniques also include ways of *encountering other inhabitants* of planetary space, of including other biological entities and human beings – these are social techniques. The other inhabitants of planetary space are not just available to our projects, like tools and materials, they are in planetary space *with us*. *The technique of living is the skill of being-with*. This is why the invention of new ways of living also demands inventing new ways of thinking *community*.

Thirdly, the event of global warming shatters the traditional conception of the political community as a stage of encounters between human beings.

Classical political philosophy pays attention only to the human world. It asks, for example, whether the best way of governing human community is authoritarian or democratic.

The event of global warming does not depend on the way in which human community is organised, it falls similarly upon all types of communities and all of them find it difficult to relate to it. It does not easily become an affair of political consideration because its planetary dimension overflows all traditional political communities.

Global warming does not take place *between humans* but in a wider planetary techno-nature in which it depends on complex interactions between humans and very different kinds of nonhumans (glaciers, oceans, winds, coral reefs, pine trees, power plants, greenhouses, cows, cars, bicycles, etc.). This interaction is not *political* in the typical sense of the word, though it is obviously a *practical* situation to which many different elements contribute actively. It is not easy to capture the sense of this 'practicality'. It indicates that the interaction of the different elements that contribute to global warming is not just a mechanism that functions in a determined way. It also consists in *habitudes* of acting in a specific way, providing space for acting on these habitudes and even inventing new ways of acting. There is room for making good or bad choices, for caring about the situation and carrying a responsibility for the situation. But *who* can act in this way?

Obviously, all human beings can and should be responsible for the way in which they use their situation, even if they do not master and possess it. But attributing agency only to human beings does not seem to correspond to the fact that humans are not only masters and possessors of nature but also mastered and possessed by it, not simply do they impact nonhuman processes but are also impacted by them. This is why, in recent times, taking inspiration from thinkers such as Bruno Latour and Philippe Descola, some radical ecological thinkers have attempted to extend the notion of agency to nonhuman beings. But it is very difficult to conceive of a more-than-human actor network as a political community. Either nonhuman actants end by being represented by specialized humans, as in Latour's parliament of things, so that after all, politics stays between humans. Or, like Karen Barad has suggested, one observes factual *practices* that connect different

human and nonhuman entities (sheep–shepherd–dog–wolf) and one calls *that* 'politics' – but is this still 'politics'?

What are such practices and what kind of communities do they create? Real practices are not something that already constituted subjects do, but are something through which subjectivations take place. Similarly, a community is not a collective subject engaged in self-affirmation, but the provisional ensemble of those who, in a given situation, are engaged in a common practice. When one is engaged in a practice, one is not simply fulfilling one's part in a determinate process, one is instead engaged in action that includes at least some kind of choice and maybe invention. This kind of action consists in *creating bonds between actants* – or, to put it in slightly metaphorical terms, they are *social techniques* – and the capacity to create new bonds or invent new social techniques *is* the originary technicity that makes up a community. Techniques of bonding between actants can be simple, like the ones between the gardener and the seed, or complex, like the ones between all actors of global fishing business, but they are never without some play.

One can give a political dimension to the encounters in which the sense of the situation is negotiated by thinking of them in terms of *diplomatic* encounters. Baptiste Morizot has shown how this happens in experimental situations of interspecies negotiations between wolves, sheep, and sheep farmers. In such negotiations, it is not a question of representing (speaking of one's needs) but of diplomacy (which also requires hearing to others' needs), so that very different needs and expressions are encountered and exchanged. Diplomacy is not easy. It is the technique and the art of hearing strangers and speaking with them. Diplomacy between different species in a shared terrain is a difficult long-term endeavour that can succeed in a local context.

However, once again, we know how to negotiate on a local level. But can we imagine planetary negotiations between all actors of a mega-phenomenon such as global warming? Logically, planetary politics should now consist in diplomatic negotiations between all kinds of human and

nonhuman actors, but our imagination cannot expand enough to see how this could happen, the planetary space is always too vast, too multiple, to incomprehensible to hear every one of its inhabitants. This is why, in practice, huge cosmopolitical organisations like IPCC and COP are necessary – after all, without them, the universal nature of the event of global warming would not even be known. But the power of these organisations is very limited. Even if they were able to formulate reasonable recommendations, they can neither enforce them on different local situations nor impose them on individual agents. Organisations and institutions cannot alone limit global warming. This is why, in the end, so much depends on the habitudes and practices of anonymous people inventing different techniques of combining life with life.

Here is what I take planetary thinking in the era of global warming to be: accepting to think differently, learning to use the world differently, and finding the courage to do what we very well know must be done. Philosophy is there to invent this courage.

Bibliography

- Agamben, Giorgio (2016), *Homo Sacer : L'intégrale (1998–2015)*, Paris: Le Seuil.
- Anders, Günther (1981), *Die atomare Drohung. Radikale Überlegungen zum atomaren Zeitalter*. C. H. Beck, München.
- Barad, Karen. (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Combined Academic Publishers.
- Bennett, Jane (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- Blanchot, Maurice (1955), *L'Espace littéraire*, Paris, Gallimard
- Blanchot, Maurice (1980), *L'Écriture du désastre*, Paris, Gallimard.
- Blok, Vincent (2022), "The Ontology of Technology Beyond Anthropocentrism and Determinism: The Role of Technologies in the Constitution of the (post) Anthropocene World." *Foundations of Science* 28, 987–1005.
- Bonneuil, Christophe et Fressoz, Jean-Baptiste (2013), *L'événement anthropocène. La terre, l'histoire et nous*. Seuil.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2009), "The Climate of History: Four Theses". *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2: 197–222
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2012). *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Chicago: IL, University of Chicago Press.
- Charbonnier, Pierre (2020), *Abondance et liberté. Une histoire environnementale des idées politiques*. Paris: La découverte.
- Derrida, Jacques (1987), *Psyché Inventions de l'autre*, Paris, Galilée.
- Derrida, Jacques (2003), *Béliers*, Paris, Galilée.
- Derrida, Jacques (1993), *Khôra*, Paris, Galilée.
- Derrida, Jacques (1994), *Force de loi*, Paris, Galilée.
- Dupuy, Jean-Pierre
- Foessel, Michel
- Foucault, Michel (1966), *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Foucault, Michel (1971), *L'ordre du discours*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Fritsch, Matthias (2018), *Taking Turns with the Earth. Phenomenology, Deconstruction, and Intergenerational Justice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Fritsch, Matthias, Lynes, Phil and Wood, David (editors) (2018), *Eco-Deconstruction. Derrida and Environmental Philosophy*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Gaston, Sean (2013), *The Concept of World from Kant to Derrida*. Rowman and Littlefield international.
- Gé Bartoli, David & Gosselin, Sophie (1922). *La condition terrestre. Habiter la Terre en Communs*. Paris: Seuil.
- Hache, Émilie (ed) (2014). *De l'univers clos au monde infini*, Paris: Dehors.
- Hamilton, Clive (2017). *Defiant Earth: The Fate of Humans in the Anthropocene*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Heidegger, Martin (1927/1977), *Sein und Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin, (1929/30) *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit (Wintersemester 1929/30)* Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin (1954), *Die Frage nach der Technik*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin (1951–1952/1997) *Was Heißt Denken?* Gruyter.
- Hui, Yuk, *The Question Concerning Technology in China*
- Husserl, Edmund, *Ideas I Edmund Husserl (Hua 3, 49), Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. tr. F. Kersten (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1983),
- Husserl, Edmund, *The Crisis of European Sciences and transcendental Phenomenology*
- Hörl, Erich with Burton, James (2017) (eds). *General Ecology: The New Ecological Paradigm*, London etc, Bloomsbury.
- IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report

- of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
doi:10.1017/9781009325844.001.
- Jonas, Hans (1979). *Das Prinzip Verantwortung. Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*. Insel: Frankfurt am Main.
- Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe (1985), *L'imitation des modernes: Typographies 2*, Paris, Galilée.
- Latour, Bruno (2015). *Face à Gaïa*, Paris, La découverte.
- Lemmens, P., Blok, V., & Zwier, J. (2017). "Toward a Terrestrial Turn in Philosophy of Technology?" *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology*, 21(2–3), 114–126.
- Lindahl, Hans (2023). "Geoconservatism. Authoritative Lawmaking in the Anthropocene". Draft, forthcoming.
- Lynes, Philippe (2018). *Futures of Life Death on Earth: Derrida's General Ecology*. Rowman & Littlefield International
- Malabou, Catherine, "The Brain of History, or, The Mentality of the Anthropocene", in *Climate Change and the Production of Knowledge*, Special Issue of *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 116:1, January 2017, eds Ian Baucom and Matthew Omelsky, p. 39-54.
- Merleau-Ponty (1964), *Le Visible et l'invisible*, publié par Cl. Lefort. Paris: Gallimard.
- Morizot, Baptiste (2020). *Manières d'être vivant : enquêtes sur la vie à travers nous*, Arles, Actes Sud.
- Morton, Timothy (2007), *Ecology without Nature. Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Harvard University Press.
- Morton, Timothy (2013), *Hyperobjects. Philosophy and Ecology After The End Of The World*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc (1993), *Le Sens du monde*, Paris, Galilée.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc (2012), *L'Équivalence des catastrophes (Après Fukushima)*, Paris, Galilée.
- Naess, Arne (1989). *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*. Cambridge UP
- Rawls, John, *Theory of Justice*
- Romano, Claude (1998) *L'événement et le monde*. Paris, PUF.
- Sallis, John (2000), *Force of Imagination: The Sense of the Elemental* Bloomington: Indiana University press.
- Stiegler, Bernard (2018), *La Technique et le Temps. 1. La faute d'Épiméthée — 2. La désorientation — 3. Le temps du cinéma et la question du mal-être*. Suivis de *Le nouveau conflit des facultés et des fonctions dans l'Anthropocène*, Paris, Fayard.
- Toadvine, Ted (2007). *Nature's Edge: Boundary Explorations in Ecological Theory and Practice*. Edited with Charles Brown. Albany: SUNY Press.
- van der Heiden, Gert-Jan (2014). *Ontology after Ontotheology: Plurality, Event and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- van der Heiden, Gert-Jan (2020). "Exile, Use, and Form-of-Life: On the Conclusion of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* Series." *Theory, Culture & Society* 37(2): 61–78.

PROF. SUSANNA LINDBERG



Prof. dr. Susanna Lindberg studied philosophy at the University of Helsinki (minor: musicology). She received her PhD from Université Marc Bloch of Strasbourg, where she studied under the supervision of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, enjoying also the teaching of Jean-Luc Nancy. She worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the Academy of Finland (2001-2006) and at the University of Helsinki (2007-2010). She worked as university lecturer and professor of philosophy at the University of Tampere (2010-2014), after which she spent a three-year research period as researcher associated to Université Paris Nanterre funded by Kone foundation. From 2017 to 2020 she worked as core fellow of the Helsinki University Collegium for Advanced Studies. In 2020, she starts as full professor of continental philosophy at the University of Leiden.



Universiteit
Leiden