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Desert Islands and the Origins of Antirealism¹

Jure Simoniti

Western philosophy from Kant onward seems particularly inclined to indulge in two contradictory, yet complementary narratives on the relation between man and the world.

On the one hand, the world is being constantly recalibrated so as to fit into the mind of the modern subject.² Kant's epistemological constraint of "the conditions of the *possibility of experience*" being "at the same time conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience*"³ developed subsequently into a veritable program of practical appropriation of the world, resulting in an increasingly exhaustive interpenetration between the subject and the object. Fichte, to give only one of the many possible examples from his work, instructs us that "[t]he world must become to me what my body is."⁴ Hegel defines reason as "the certainty of consciousness that it is all reality."⁵ Marx puts it in economic terms: "As the earth is [man's] original larder, so too it is his original tool house."⁶ In Nietzsche, "*there simply is no true world*"⁷ beyond the perspective illusions of the will to power. Heidegger laments that "the farthest corner of the globe has been conquered technologically and can be exploited economically."⁸ And the entire French structuralism is haunted by the discomfiting feeling of being imprisoned within the structure of finite possibilities that lack any outside. Lévi-Strauss even deplores "that our world has suddenly found itself to be too small for the people who live in it."⁹

On the other hand, the very same man who incorporated the world so successfully begins drifting toward the most infinitesimal margins of an inhuman universe and pale there in his cosmic insignificance. He is, as Nietzsche notably put it, rolling from the center toward x. In Kant, the starry heavens annihilate "my importance as an *animal creature*" (*KpV* 289–90).¹⁰ Schopenhauer places us "on one of those numberless spheres freely floating in boundless space, without knowing whence or whither."¹¹ Nietzsche locates our planet "[i]n some remote corner of the universe, flickering in the light of the countless solar systems into which it had been poured."¹² And Heidegger compares the earth to a "tiny grain of sand."¹³ Lévi-Strauss pointedly notes: "The world began without the human race and it will end without it."¹⁴

It is a case of a disruptive development of man enclosing the world into his mind, while simultaneously perceiving himself as the world's most minute and trivial eventuality.¹⁵ In this sense, the usual diagnosis that, with Kant, we have delved into the

realm of antirealism and have not recovered from it since, falls short to an extent, as it fails to take into account the fact that post-Kantian philosophy never shied away from acknowledging the planetary smallness of man. A certain “normative antirealism,” which puts the entire reality in the hands of man, and a certain “existential realism,” which constantly shoves man towards the state of creatural negligibility, seem to go hand in hand, hardly aware of the contradiction that they nevertheless unfold. For the purpose of exploring new possibilities of realism, this chapter will thus venture a step behind the constitutive tension between the epistemic centrality and the cosmic marginality of the modern subject.

In short, the post-Kantian self-awareness seems to be torn apart by two peculiarly divergent “myths”: first, the myth of absolute interiority, which leaves nothing outside the remit of man, and second, the myth of absolute exteriority, against the vastness of which the vanishing human can no longer claim having any inside. In searching for the cause of this impasse, one of the unobtrusive, unrecognized philosophical phantasms could perchance come to our aid. It is a phantasm of the subject beholding a “virginal object” in the midst of an already occupied world, an object that has fallen out of the totalizing matrices of man’s theoretical and practical prerogative. The marginal texts, poetic accounts, unintended anecdotes, and passing metaphors of the great philosophers from Fichte to Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Deleuze sometimes put the philosophical subject in a specific context; they place him on an island in the sea, a deserted, coral, oceanic island, still unspoiled and untrodden by the terrestrial appetites of the human race.

The island in its uncontaminated quality serves as a representative of the “absolute Outside” of human jurisdiction. And the question is, what might be the conditions for this object to manifest itself before the eyes of the modern subject? What is it that the subject must put in the balance, so that he can finally witness an object so flagrantly exhibiting its inhumanity? As we will see, this irreducible object will only disclose itself to a certain kind of subject, one of *creative excess* over the mere subjective mediation of objectivity. Philosophy after Kant has often been reproached for positing an “object relation” in which congruity with the subject is presupposed, enforced, taken for granted, and without a surplus or remainder. But against this “conventional” background, a new, extravagant relation between the two extremes will establish itself: a novel kind of subject, who transcends the constraints of this world, will find himself in an unexpected equilibrium with a unique kind of object, one utterly resistant to subjective appropriation. And it is this new “truth form,” extending between the *subject-surplus* and the *object-residue*, that will hopefully shed new light upon the common, totalizing truth form as a (projected, anticipated, asymptotic, or always already attained) correspondence with reality.

The goal of this chapter is thus to gain some insight into the origins of Western antirealism. As we hope to demonstrate, the reason for post-Kantian antirealism might not lie in the fact that the subject fails to surpass the limits of correlation, being somehow naturally unfit to egress from his “hermeneutic bubble,” from the realm of his consciousness and language. It could well turn out that, instead, he is unable to come to terms with him being condemned to produce his own truth, one which is spontaneous, groundless, unforeseeable, and absolute. What he cannot face is not reality-in-itself but *truth-in-itself*, i.e., truth which discloses reality as it is, but of which reality has no need,

and to which it provides no sufficient reason. Seen from this perspective, man will sooner believe in reality belonging to him, even in it being created by him, than endure the gaze into the excessive novelty of truth, which, from the point of view of reality, is entirely superfluous. Therefore, the alleged humanization of reality might well be a mere consequence, a masque, of the prior incapability of withstanding the “essentially non-derivable quality” of truth, which became imperative after Kant’s invention of the spontaneity of reason. In a nutshell, examining the source of post-Kantian antirealism, we will rather shift the emphasis to the hitherto overlooked *anti-verism* of Western thought.

I Fichte’s desert island

In one of the notorious scenes of the history of philosophy, Kant’s moral subject raises his eyes to the night sky. At the precise moment of experiencing his innermost truth, the moral law, his gaze opens to the regions of being thus far unknown:

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.*

KpV 289

Within the Kantian scope, both entities, freedom and the unexplored world, standing here face to face with each other, represent a certain excess; and it is this balance of excesses that needs to be brought to light. Freedom is a breach of the otherwise universally valid causality. Along the same lines, the thought of the world being infinitely larger than me seems to violate the fact that everything I perceive, have perceived, or will ever perceive is a synthetic product of my own original creativity, “the spontaneity of concepts” and its faculty to generate representations. Thus, on the one hand, Kantianism looks at first sight like a clear-cut case of “antirealism.” On the other hand, what Kant here superimposes upon this ordinary, antirealist relation, is an entirely new, unprecedented “scene of truth.” While the forms of understanding must always be “filled out” with the content of the senses, now, in practical philosophy, the subject is granted the privilege of experiencing his own “absolute spontaneity,” whose ace in the hole is precisely its being relieved of the telluric burden of receptivity. By hearing the voice of the moral law, by becoming free, he reaches a state of self-determination, without thereby having to synthesize any empirical, sensual object. And it is at this very point that an abyss opens above his head, a celestial void that his theoretical and practical efforts will most likely never be able to traverse and fill. The feelings of “admiration,” “respect,” and “sublimity” (KpV 290) that the starry heavens inspire in him perhaps bear testimony to the unfolding of something older and greater than the human subject. But what exactly is the lever that provides a glimpse into this pre-subjective realm of being?

With morality, Kant introduces a schism into the subject. It is the moral law that “reveals to me a life independent of animality and even of the whole sensible world . . . , a determination not restricted to the conditions and boundaries of this life but reaching

into the infinite.” (*KpV* 289–90). Man is no longer merely a finite subject of knowledge, but also an infinite subject of freedom. In turn, however, an unexpected deflation is set in motion. Instead of arrogantly elevating his creatural uniqueness into a divine being, the moral, sensually autonomous subject rather looks up into the sky, which “annihilates, as it were, my importance as an *animal creature*” (*KpV* 289–90). Ontogenetically, man advances from being a theoretical and empirical subject to a moral and free one; beginning as a finite creature, he becomes infinite. Yet phylogenetically, he regresses from bearing the name of “man” to calling himself an “animal.”

What interests us here is the new counterbalance that inverts the values of the old, antirealist correlation. Kant’s theoretical program of comprehensive knowledge of the world, placing the subject in the center of the universe and reproducing the forms of his understanding throughout its expanse, was frequently deemed to be an act of anthropomorphism. In practical philosophy, however, the subject becomes conscious of the moral law within him, while simultaneously attending, and even relishing, an unanticipated revelation of a de-anthropomorphized universe. The subject of cognition first constitutes the world, but when he, for good measure, realizes his own moral freedom as well, he is suddenly allowed to contemplate a sky that no longer reflects his figure back to him.¹⁶ Ironically, he must become “more than man,” in order to behold a “world without man” for the first time. It is from this configuration that the function of the moral law can be deduced: the law, the experience of absolute spontaneity, seems to be the only momentum powerful enough to make man briefly suspend the quintessential Kantian compulsion to synthesize experience, stare into the sky impassively, and recognize in the distant stars, not evidence of his epistemological activity, but a pervasive image of material diminishment, cosmic devaluation, and existential annihilation of his being.

Thus, the moral law and the obscurity of space achieve a taut equilibrium: freedom guarantees an exception from empirical causality, while the sky exemplifies an untraveled horizon, a world as yet unmapped. Two irreducible relations stand opposite to each other. As a reference point, there is the “antirealist” relation of the entire world being embedded in the mind of the subject. But against it, the “realist” relation is silhouetted, one in which the true “otherness of the world” unwittingly reveals itself to a free, excessive, self-sustaining subject. It is a juxtaposition of two correlations:

Spontaneity of Understanding – Receptivity of the Senses
Moral Law – Starry Heavens

This double balance may well represent the matrix that will help us understand all the other appearances of “nonhuman objects” in the philosophy to follow.

Our first case is Fichte. In his work, he sporadically made use of the metaphor of the desert island as signifying a not-yet-occupied world. However, in his short treatise *A Contribution to the Rectification of the Public’s Judgment of the French Revolution*, the reference to *die wüste Insel* is somewhat more conspicuous.

Fichte embodies the post-Kantian stance at its purest, centering his entire ontology around the spontaneous, autonomous, self-positing, originally practical, and consequently relentless absolute subject, who invents being, modifies matter, and has the right to take possession of everything on which he can impress his form.

Nevertheless, this hyperbolic idealism of the I soon reaches a most prosaic empirical limit. Even though reality, the not-I, is posited within the I alone, the I experiences a shortage of the given world. The great subject of the *a priori* practical infinity must face the *a posteriori* finitude of the meager planet on which he was born.

It is this discontent over an unduly cultivated world, this imbalance between the new work mania of the modern man and the earth being too small for his endeavors, that sets the tone to the essay on French Revolution:

While some take all our clothes, the others expel us to the air; for the earth and the sea have already been occupied, and the pope, by divine law, has given away even the lands that are yet to be discovered.¹⁷

Or:

Our powers are thus evolved; we want to take possession of something, we look around, and everything has its owner except air and light; for the simple reason that they cannot assume a foreign form. We can travel around the earth without finding anything to which we could apply our right to appropriation, which extends only to all raw matter. Raw matter is almost non-existent.¹⁸

Upon this undividedly conquered globe, the desert island can merely provide a ground for the re-enactment of the property right being established:

Imagine a number of people arriving with agricultural equipment and drought cattle to a desert, uncultivated island. Everyone carves with his plow in the earth, where he wishes; where he stands, no one else can stand. Everyone ploughs over what he can, and whoever reclaimed the greatest part until the evening, will legally possess the greatest part. — Now, the entire island is ploughed over. Whoever overslept the day, will possess nothing, and this by law.¹⁹

Still, it is not the last mention of the island motif. A few pages later, Fichte strikes a different chord. He draws his famous diagram of four interlinking circles, each of which encompasses its respective area of legal legitimacy. The smallest is the “domain of civil contract,” which is embraced by the “domain of contracts in general,” which is a part of the “domain of natural law,” while all three are included in the largest “domain of conscience.” According to Fichte, one has every right to resign any obligation of the first three domains. One is permitted to secede from the state, annul all contracts, and, in fact, disavow the natural law. But one can never escape one’s conscience, for its voice can be heard everywhere, even on a desert island:

The domain of conscience encompasses all and the domain of civil contract the smallest part. Everyone must be allowed to withdraw from the center to the periphery, even to step out of the domain of natural law, if one prefers to live on a desert island; but it is impossible to exit the domain of conscience if one is not an animal.²⁰

The least that can be derived from these sparse indications is that Fichte distinguishes two types of desert islands. Whereas the island in its first mention merely repeats the experiment of man's right to appropriate land, it now becomes a space of retreat from the very world of property and endless cultivation.²¹ Moreover, within the discursive setting of this argument, something else transpires: without the possibility of complete withdrawal from the realm of social ties, conscience would perhaps remain deprived of the most important metaphor of its absolute demand. If it is possible to pass over from the inside of an occupied land to the outskirts of an unoccupied world without thereby silencing one's conscience, then the desert island assumes an additional, metaphorically charged role. It seems also to represent the place that allows conscience to speak in its most undisturbed clarity. To put it in another way, the sole reason why the "second" desert island resists appropriation, thus undercutting the basic claim of Fichte's philosophy, is because it lets only one voice be heard, that of conscience itself.

The key point of the "metaphorical reading" is that in order not to vanish under the possessive grasp of the practical subject, this small patch of land must be maintained by a different kind of subjectivity. The primary relation of Fichte's philosophy is that of the objectivity of land surrendering to the form of the subject, letting itself be conquered, belabored, *verichlicht*, "turned into the I." As Fichte says, "We are *our* property: I say, and assume thereby something twofold in us, a proprietor and a property."²² However, our discursive analysis of symptoms detected a surfeit on each side of this confined and self-evident equation, an excess irreducible to the I's exhaustive preemption of the world. On the subjective side, conscience speaks up, while on the objective side, a desert island is mentioned, serving as a limiting condition of the audibility of that inner voice. But if there is a relation here at all, what sustains it? What does the surplus of conscience over the usual practical I consist in, so that it can stand face to face with this categorically anti-Fichtean object of absolute otherness?

Conscience is not an altogether other self, but rather the pure, self-referential form of the I folding back upon itself. While the Fichtean I is still caught in the object-relation to a not-I, conscience embodies more fully his own ideal of not having anything outside himself. As an unequivocally "inner" voice, it is the origin of the moral law that lies "in our self, as it would be without any experience."²³ Whereas Fichte's I is primarily a proprietor whose function is to exclude others from the use of things of which he himself has taken hold, conscience, by contrast, surpasses the shackles of objectivity and teaches a life beyond any personal gain, thereby displacing the kernel of the subject from his "practical" center. After all, conscience commands us to do what anyone else should do in our place. Paradoxically, thus, the function of this innermost instinct of Fichte's rather egocentric subjectivity is to reveal to the subject his own intrinsic substitutability. It is this "irreducibly other subject" in the heart of the I who can finally indulge in referring to a desert island without letting it evaporate in the frenzy of his own possessive desire; he is perhaps even capable of living on a land that is never to be owned.

In summary, Fichte performed a certain redoubling at both sides of the equation. The very treatise that defines the subject as a laborer and proprietor whose ambition is to snatch away things from others, simultaneously specifies him as a conscience that, following its own inner voice, always already speaks on behalf of any other subject.

And the very treatise that first made the desert island into a laboratory of the process of appropriation then elevates it into a place of retreat from the compulsion of working, forming, and occupying the world. The Fichtean subject is split into his primary practical and secondary ethical nature.²⁴ And the Fichtean object is also split into the already conquered land and the desert island eluding this claim. It is in this situation that both excessive elements receive their poignant figurative charge. The reference to the desert island must be placed against the backdrop of Fichte's own admonition that the land of this world is already settled and distributed. And conscience must be contrasted with the subject's innate drive toward incessant labor and progress. To put it simply, the island is a metaphor for something that resists becoming a part of this world, and conscience is a metaphor for something speaking from the other world.²⁵ In this pronouncedly "secular" philosophy, they thus announce a new symmetry that serves as some kind of phantasmatic inversion of the fundamental Fichtean operation. One could speak of two relations, the first being that of appropriation and totalization, the second that of an equilibrium of extremes and de-totalization:

I – not-I

Conscience – Desert Island

What must be stressed, however, is that we could allow ourselves to write out this double correlation of still vague symptoms only in light of the subsequent appearances of desert islands in the philosophical literature. There, as remains to be seen, the logic behind it will become more solid and definite.

II Nietzsche's happy isles

After Fichte, it became a veritable contest among the philosophers of who would find a more compelling conceptual frame and a starker imagery for the subject's thoroughgoing "acculturation" and downright permeation of the object. Hegel and Marx were never weary of repeating that there is no world left outside the human endeavor to usurp and subdue it.

No one despised the oceanic feelings at the sight of the spectacle of nature as much as Hegel. In a private discussion with Heinrich Heine, he called the stars "a luminous leprosy in the sky." When he visited the Swiss Alps, the *locus classicus* of the Kantian sublime, he could not help but describe in his travel diary the tedium, monotony, and ugliness of these still pristine mountainous regions. His hike in the Bernese Alps in the summer of 1796 is considered by some as one of the great intellectual experiences in his philosophical biography. For it is there that this absolute idealist suddenly stood face to face with a piece of nature that refused to hold a mirror up to him, a glacier that persisted in the midst of the ploughed, planted, and harvested land. Its only purpose seems to have been to facilitate, by way of contrast, "a new form of seeing":

Today we saw those glaciers [the glaciers of Grindelwald] at only half an hour of distance, and the sight is of no further interest. One could name it a new form

of seeing, which, however, does not engage the spirit, except that it may occur to it that, in the most extreme heat of the summer, it finds itself so close to the ice masses, which, even at a depth where cherries, nuts, and grain mellow, can only be melted inconsiderably.²⁶

Confronted with this inhuman prospect, Hegel utters his famous judgement *Es ist so*:

Neither the eye nor the imagination will in these formless masses find a spot to rest upon, to find occupation or reason to play with. . . . The sight of these eternally dead masses gave nothing to me but a monotonous and horribly dull notion: *it is so*.²⁷

In the same vein, Marx considers nature to be a mere organ of man's right to achieve complete mastery over the world. The sensible reality is an overall product of society, industry, and history and the objects not bearing the stamp of man can only be stumbled upon anecdotally. Nonetheless, Marx's reference to the "coral island" in *The German Ideology* is particularly interesting, for it spells out the hidden relation between the subject's unrelenting incorporation of objectivity and the revelation of the ontological "priority of external nature":

So much is this activity, this unceasing sensuous labour and creation, this production, the basis of the whole sensuous world as it now exists, that, were it interrupted only for a year, Feuerbach would not only find an enormous change in the natural world, but would very soon find that the whole world of men and his own perceptive faculty, nay his own existence, were missing. Of course, in all this the priority of external nature remains unassailed . . . For that matter, nature, the nature that preceded human history, is not by any means the nature in which Feuerbach lives, it is nature which today no longer exists anywhere (except perhaps on a few Australian coral-islands of recent origin) and which, therefore, does not exist for Feuerbach.²⁸

In Marx's universe, nature is nowhere to be seen under the vestiges of man's labor. Only under very specific conditions does its temporal antecedence shine through. At some point, the labor process reflects upon itself and becomes aware of its automatism, its self-created impetus, its emergent *causa sui*. And it is not until the subject discovers in himself a momentum of spontaneity, an element not simply derivable from nature, that it can afford to regard nature, once his mere object, as *older than himself*. The thing that now symbolizes this "priority of nature" is the island emerging from the sea, out of nothingness, as it were. Perhaps a double relation upon Fichte's matrix could be written out:

Labor – Nature

Unceasing Creation – Coral Island

Nevertheless, the structure of four elements is, at the moment, a weak coincidence of symptoms at best. Only in Nietzsche will the philosophical exploitations of desert islands get more substantial. When Zarathustra sets out to find solitude on the happy

isles, it is this “residual object” which seems to offer the only possible ground for the Nietzschean “emergent subject” to stand upon.

Not only does Nietzsche fit perfectly in the tradition of the post-Kantian, i.e., Fichtean, Hegelian, Marxist total interpenetration of the subject and the object, but he intensifies this process to its utmost possibilities. In the polycentric world of the will to power, man is no longer merely Fichte’s proprietor conquering new land or Marx’s laborer acquiring means for living. Instead, he, being himself an “aristocracy of cells,” infiltrates and impregnates things to the point of depriving them of their depth, their qualities, unity, and number. Facing the omnipotence of the will, the world ceases to exist. For the ultimate purpose of the will’s overpowering is not only to take hold of everything under the Platonic Sun, but to incorporate the Sun as well. Such might be the meaning of the concluding lines of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where the hero, after having projected nothing but his own self upon the walls of the cave, emerges from it as the light of the eternal noon:

This is *my* morning, *my* day is beginning: *up now, up, you great noon!* —

Thus spoke Zarathustra and he left his cave, glowing and strong, like a morning sun that emerges from dark mountains.²⁹

As we have vaguely observed so far, to the fall of the boundary between the subject and the object philosophy tends to react by introducing an additional distinction into each of the two poles. On the one side, some kind of “double subjectivation” is performed, and on the other side, some kind of “double objectivation.” And Nietzsche carries out these two operations more forcefully and coherently than before. A certain dialectics within the subject is a recurring motive of post-Kantian philosophy: the subject of understanding stands against the subject of reason, the theoretical against the practical subject, the natural consciousness against the spirit, the capitalist against the proletariat. But it was Nietzsche who brought the logic of two subjects to the extreme of genetic differentiation, not shying away from the starkest of rhetorical effects. He opposed the heroes to the people, the master race to the slave race, Zarathustra to the crowd, the *Übermensch* to the *Untermensch*. This being the case, the object-correlate assumed two antagonistic, if concomitant, aspects as well. In Nietzsche, reality is always already absorbed by the will of the subject; everything exists in his inside, and there is no outside to the infinite process of his overpowering. Concurrently, the world discloses itself as a plain Outside with no inside, an indifferent universe, incapable of even acknowledging the existence of humanity. Thus, at one end of the spectrum, the subject liberates himself from his human origins and becomes a being of self-transcendence; at the other end, it is the object that abandons its correlation with the subject and becomes an utterly inhuman macrocosm.

Both dimensions, that is, of the world inhabiting the overwhelming inside of man and simultaneously representing his most grandiose outside, are so self-evidently synchronous that they need not be broken apart. What is more, this tension lies at the very core of the Nietzschean truth-form:

The most extreme form of nihilism would be the view that *every* belief, every considering-something-true, is necessarily false because there simply is no *true*

world. Thus: a *perspectival appearance* whose origin lies in us (in so far as we continually *need* a narrower, abbreviated, simplified world).

—That it is the measure of strength to what extent we can admit to ourselves, without perishing, the merely *apparent* character, the necessity of lies.³⁰

One might observe a certain ambiguity at play here. If there is no true world, any truth cannot but be true, since there is nothing real to belie it. Compared to what, then, could it be false? But it is. And this is so because of the specific Nietzschean abeyance, according to which the world can never falsify any of our truths, while simultaneously making them all look like illusions. Thus, for a belief to be false within a world which is itself a falsity, reality must assume two modes. On the one hand, it is *a priori* untrue, having automatically been curtailed and engulfed by our will to power. However, being caught within this circle of perfect auto-verification, one could never know of the world's untruth. Therefore, on the other hand, our "false" beliefs must additionally be measured against something nevertheless real, something factual beyond the grasp of illusions, because otherwise they could not be false. In more concrete terms, this means that, with Nietzsche, the limited, self-contained environment of our mendacious lives is indeed regularly collated with the harsh and cold facticity of the Outside.³¹ Regarding the "epistemological" relation between truth and reality, the existence of "brute facts" is now shifted from the immediate things of our daily endeavors to the more large-scale prospects of universal disillusionment. While, for instance, the table here is undoubtedly a "false" projection of our simplifying self-preservation drive, and while we are the rightful usurpers of our proximate surroundings, this practical self-confidence will hardly extend to the realm of the stars above our heads, whose unintended virtue is to make us feel cosmologically null and inconsequential. And even though we might have once swallowed the sun, we will be no less dead by the end of our lives. It is for this reason that our only chance at eternity lies in the momentary radiance of the "great noon," in the creation of a truth which may outshine the facts but will never look away from them.

In other words, the double modality of reality must be echoed in truth having two modes as well. The one mode believes to be grounded in the facts of the world and lays claim to its own verifiability; it is a "false" truth, so to speak, one that requires critique. Once we recognize the falsity of every possible *Fürwahrhalten*, the concept of "truth" should become altogether obsolete. Nietzsche does sometimes sentence it to death:

The world with which we are concerned is false, i.e., is not a fact but a fable and approximation on the basis of a meager sum of observations; it is "in flux," as something in a state of becoming, as a falsehood always changing but never getting near the truth: for—there is no "truth."³²

And yet, he never lets go of the "regulative idea" peculiar to the semantics of "truth," reserving its name precisely for this final insight into the falsity of every holding-to-be-true. Hence, he repeatedly refers to another truth, one that is noble, grand, conscientious, almost ethical:

We have to wring the truth out of ourselves every step of the way, we have to give up almost everything that our heart, our love, our trust relied on. It requires greatness of soul: the service of truth is the hardest service.³³

This, then, would be the second mode of truth, the “true” truth. Its aspiration is not to believe that the facts can be approached, mirrored, and expressed, but to abide them, face them with indifference, and stay alive. In a way, the highest truth is not the one corresponding to reality, but rather the one withstanding the fact that reality is itself untrue. For this reason, truth oscillates between two opposing, albeit correlative valences:

“How much truth can a spirit *endure*, how much truth does a spirit *dare*?”—*this* became for me the real standard of value.³⁴

What man must dare is to create his own truth, for there is nothing outside of him that could falsify it. And what he is compelled to endure is that reality has no desire whatsoever for his truth and will also never verify it. In this way, the Nietzschean subject is constantly swaying between his unbridled creativity and his cosmically purposeless createdness. However, what looks like a contradiction turns out to be a careful proportion of *daring in order to be able to endure*. Only a truth unfolding in the medium of invention, artistic production, and spontaneity, a truth averse to approximating to the facts, will afford to look them in the eye without needing to turn away. Nietzsche’s philosophy is nothing but an immense lesson that the bigger an “inside” world one creates, the more of the “outside” world one will manage to survive. And this is the frame within which Zarathustra’s journey to the happy isles might finally be addressed.

While the modern subject’s goal is to gain absolute possession of the world, Zarathustra’s agenda is of a different sort. He looks for a place to give birth to the overman, and he finds it on an island. It is a singular setting where both the subject and the object are of a most distinct kind. What, then, defines the inner structure of the subject who sets foot on an island in the middle of the sea? The crucial quality of Zarathustra is that he himself is not a “subject in full,” but only serves as a placeholder for the future incarnation of the *Übermensch*. As such, he is what we call an “essentially secondary subject.” For what distinguishes the overman from man is that the first is never fully embodied. He represents a mere ideal point upon which every “temporary subject” stands for his substitutability by his own successor. And Zarathustra is precisely this transitional subject. Nietzsche consistently depicts him as defying any form of social identity, as appearing more like a woman than a man, more like a child than an adult, more like a replicate than an original. He describes him as pregnant, incomplete, and transitory, as “going to my children and returning from them; for the sake of his children Zarathustra must complete himself.”³⁵ He is, so to speak, a uterus of an incorporeal ideal:

In order for the creator himself to be the child who is newly born, he must also want to be the birth-giver and the pain of giving birth.

Indeed, through a hundred souls I went my way and through a hundred cradles and pangs of birth.³⁶

What Nietzsche seems to aim at with these exuberant allegories is to distil a kind of “emergent subject of processual self-reference.” The original design of the Nietzschean subject is already projective, dynamic, and endlessly increasing his power. But now this impetus of subjectivity is creamed off and enclosed into a circuit of both automatism and self-transcendence. After all, it is Nietzsche’s regular maneuver to lift man off the ground and hold him in mid-air, thus flaunting his excessive, self-gratifying drive. Let us not forget that one of the great identification figures of Zarathustra is a tightrope walker whose performance he witnesses at the beginning of his adventure, sees him falling from the rope, comforts him in his last dying moments, and buries his body. Later, he even defines mankind as “a rope fastened between animal and overman—a rope over an abyss.”³⁷

However, our interest here lies exclusively in the object-correlate of this abysmal being with no land below his feet, who, in his rootlessness, nevertheless yearns for some kind of support. But what might be the proper ground for the groundless subject? The soil for him to set foot on can no longer be the world already consumed by the osmosis of the will to power. Only a piece of land resisting this overbearing ambition will do the trick; hence, an island.

In one of the nine *Dionysos-Dithyramps*, titled “The Beacon,” *Das Feuerzeichen*, Zarathustra finds his “seventh solitude,” his homeland, precisely there:

Why did Zarathustra flee from animal and man?
 Why did he suddenly desert all firm land?
 Six solitudes he knows already —,
 but the sea itself was not lonely enough for him,
 the island let him rise—at the top of the mountain he became a flame,
 toward a *seventh* solitude
 he casts, searching, a hook over his head.

Lost mariners! Remains of old stars!
 You, seas of the future! Unexplored sky!
 Toward all the lonely I cast my hook . . .³⁸

Upon a “lonely island” Zarathustra lights fire signals to fish for other lonely souls. Within the bounds of a new land, humanity thus stratifies into a peculiar kind of intersubjectivity, a vaporous community of equals, one no longer determined by the differential social roles of ancestors and progeny, adults and children, superiors and inferiors, men and women.

This line of thought is then taken up and developed in the main, prose text. Zarathustra reaches the happy isles, and what he finds there is no longer the battlefield of countless counteracting wills to power, but an eminently different kind of society:

Like a shout and a jubilation I want to journey over broad seas until I find the blessed isles where my friends dwell —

And my enemies among them! How I love everyone now, with whom I may simply speak! Even my enemies belong to my bliss.³⁹

His friends live together with his enemies; on an island even the fiercest of the social antagonisms are abolished. Nietzsche thus imagines some kind of undifferentiated partnership, united in a collective effort:

Could you *create* a god? —Then be silent about any gods! But you could well create the overman.

Not you yourselves perhaps, my brothers! But you could recreate yourselves into fathers and forefathers of the overman: and this shall be your best creating!⁴⁰

In brief, the only purpose of this unearthly insular existence is to produce a unique subject, the overman. And, reciprocally, the only land suitable for the birth of this new god is an island.

To come to the point, all the leitmotifs are there, but laid out more evidently than in Fichte or Marx. In view of the fact that the entire drama of absolute creation is set on an island, Nietzsche seems to elaborate, albeit unconsciously, a complex twofold equilibrium. Against the backdrop of man's sweeping assimilation of the world he places a symmetry of extremes, that between the object of the inhuman earth and the subject merely maintaining an empty space for the emergence of a superhuman entity. It is once again an instance of a double correlation:

Will to Power – Untrue World
Zarathustra (Übermensch) – Happy Isles

III Heidegger's island of Delos

Our goal is to trace out a certain unidentified relation between the subject and the object, the rationale of which is still lacking and cannot be accounted for by either epistemological, practical, pragmatic, social, or linguistic theories. Heidegger is the first in our line of cases who dared to explicate the link of the island appearing solely for the eyes of an essentially different, surplus dimension of truth. For the Greek island of Delos only discloses itself to the higher illumination of *Aletheia*.

In the basic scope of his ontology, Heidegger is yet another advocate of the thorough subjective saturation of the object. His analyses of worldhood and thinghood in *Being and Time* offer arguably the most monumental account of a rounded, suffused, holistic world, a "totality of involvements," at the center of which a demiurgic *Dasein* imbues every single thing with its adequate meaning. As shown by his famous example of the broken hammer, a thing must be malfunctioning or absent from its usual place to step out of its original "inconspicuousness" and become noticeable in the first place. In *Sojourns*, however, one of his lesser works, he witnesses the revelation of the Greek island of Delos, which does not need to be defective to display its immutable and inscrutable presence.

Heidegger recounts his journey across the Mediterranean. From a too old, too civilized, too “touristy” Venice, a mere “object of historiography,”⁴¹ he, in an “effort to return to the origin,”⁴² sets off for Greece by ship. In anticipation, he stylizes this country as an autonomous object that speaks out of itself:

Can Greece still speak what is proper to it and claim us, as listeners to its language, we, the people of an age whose world is throughout pervaded by the force and artificiality of the ramifications of the enframing (*Ge-Stell*)?⁴³

It looks as though the world has already been totalized. What remains is a search for the almost magical objects that have somehow managed to hide from the hegemony of the *Ge-Stell*. At first, Heidegger is subject to a series of disappointments. Ithaca is too Byzantine, Olympia too American, and Rhodes even too Asian; the essence of Greek existence eludes him. Then the ship drops anchor before Delos:

[T]he island was barely inhabited and its vegetation scarce. . . . In comparison with everything else we have seen up to now in our journey, the island looked on first sight deserted and abandoned, in such a way, though, that it couldn't have been the result of mere decline. At once it laid a claim totally unique that we had nowhere felt before up to that point. Through every thing a veiled great beginning (*Anfangs*) was expressed that once was.

Δήλος is the name of the island: the manifest, the visible, the one that gathers every thing in its open, every thing to which she offers shelter through her appearing she gathers in *one* present.⁴⁴

A pure presence shines through, one untouched by the shifts and deferrals of mainland. The subject and the object enter a new relationship. While a damaging industry dominates the world on the continent, here *Aletheia* comes to the fore. Two irreducible truth procedures stand against each other:

What for us today is called world is the inestimable entanglement of a technological apparatus of information that confronted the unscathed φύσις and took her place, while the function of the world became accessible and tractable only by calculation.

It is only seldom then and after long preparation that we can succeed in looking at the presence of that which had once received form and measure from the field of Ἀλήθεια.⁴⁵

In our cases so far, the matrix of redoubling both the subject and the object has not been written out as plainly and straightforwardly as it is here. While the calculative subject of the continent transforms nature into his own product, the adventurous subject of truth witnesses the sudden manifestation of the object in its sheer *Gegenwart* and *Anwesenheit*. After all, the only reason why Heidegger set out on this journey was to flee from the “technological scientifically-industrialized world,” ordained by the laborious, diligent, guileful modern man. The two truth procedures are strictly differentiated. In the first, the subject intends the object and aligns it with himself.

However, according to Heidegger, this assumed and pursued correspondence presupposes another logic, that of truth unfolding as an interplay between concealment and unconcealment. In this second, more original, inclination of truth, man is no longer the self-assured master of truth. He does not have the *Wahrheitsgeschehen* at his command but can only hope that truth might render itself to him, unexpectedly and fatefully. Heidegger devises truth as event, *Ereignis*, precisely for the purpose of depriving man of his disposition over the veridical agenda. It is now truth that appeals and summons man, while he merely answers to its call. One could perhaps observe some structural similarities between Fichte's conscience, Nietzsche's overman, and Heidegger's *Aletheia*: they all seem to evoke a higher dimension of subjectivization, a de-centerment of subjectivity, an afflatus that is irreducible to a mere mastery of things. And here, hidden in one of Heidegger's minor writings, the objective correlate of this subjective transcendence is precisely an island.

Thus, the relation between the subject-surplus, which frees itself from the form of the *Ge-Stell* as the technological enframing of the world, and the object-residue, which resists assuming any kind of practical, pragmatic, social meaning, is explicated. Again, two correlations can be juxtaposed:

Truth as Ge-Stell – Continent

Truth as Aletheia – Island of Delos

IV Deleuze's oceanic islands

The melancholy over an already occupied, overly humanized world reached its peak in French structuralism. The basic structuralist operation was to draw the lines of an ontological field "with no outside," hence, a field of totality which, admittedly, tends to be defined more and more negatively. In the heyday of the movement, Lévi-Strauss declared: "The principle of all or nothing . . . is also an expression of a property of what exists: either everything, or nothing, makes sense."⁴⁶ In the aftermath, there was hardly a structuralist who would not argue for his own version of this methodological totality. Foucault stated: "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere."⁴⁷ Derrida put it in a famous adage: "There is nothing outside of the text."⁴⁸ And Barthes posed the question, "Everything, then, can be myth?" and answered, "Yes, I believe this, for the universe is infinitely fertile in suggestions."⁴⁹ Never had the boundaries of closed and finite structures exerted a more restrictive grip, so it comes as no surprise that an object escaping the grasp of discourse became one of the recurring phantasms of the era. Jean-Claude Milner called this search for the pure *physei* beyond *thesei* "the holy grail of structuralism."

Tristes tropiques, perhaps the most popular text of the entire movement, is nothing but a monumental testimony to the deplorable anthropogenic disenchantment of the world. Lévi-Strauss paints in somber colors the last corners of the planet being contaminated by the obscene traces of man, by concrete, poverty, and litter. It is a world where traveling, exploring, and having an adventure have become impossible. In response, however, his travelogue nurtures a specific pathos of undrawn maps and

unpopulated landscapes. On one occasion, he describes the “entirely virgin landscape” in South America, which “is so monotonous as to deprive its wildness of all meaning. It does not so much defy us as return a blank stare: almost it abolishes itself as we look at it.”⁵⁰ And in the celebrated, somewhat awkward last sentence of the book, he implores us, “during the brief intervals in which humanity can bear to interrupt its hive-like labors,” to

grasp the essence of what our species has been and still is, beyond thought and beneath society: an essence that may be vouchsafed to us in a mineral more beautiful than any work of Man; in the scent, more subtly evolved than our books, that lingers in the heart of a lily; or in the wink of an eye, heavy with patience, serenity, and mutual forgiveness, that sometimes, through an involuntary understanding, one can exchange with a cat.⁵¹

On a similar note, Barthes, in his *Mythologies*, first tries to convince us that no such thing as nature exists, that Nature itself is historical, that there is nothing outside the calculable social constraints of myths and significations. And yet he cannot but indulge in reveries of adventures, foreign places, open horizons, unnamable experiences. At some point, he regrets that wooden toys for children have gone out of fashion, since wood “is a familiar and poetic substance, which does not sever the child from close contact with the tree, the table, the floor. . . . Wood makes essential objects, objects for all time.”⁵²

Lastly, even Lacan, albeit more cynically, presents his own phantasy of a world without man. In *Seminar II* he says: “Suppose all men to have disappeared from the world.”⁵³ He asks us to imagine that all living creatures have vanished, and there were only waterfalls and springs, thunder and lightning left. What would remain of reality if we were to subtract consciousness from it? Would there still be images in the world? There would be, he claims, since

at the high point of civilization we have attained, which far surpasses our illusions about consciousness, we have manufactured instruments which, without in any way being audacious, we can imagine to be sufficiently complicated to develop films themselves, put them away into little boxes, and store them in the fridge. Despite all living beings having disappeared, the camera can nonetheless record the image of the mountain in the lake, or that of the Café de Flore crumbling away in total solitude.⁵⁴

What Lacan evokes here in his own way is precisely our double correlation. While the consciousness of a speaking being sits in the Café de Flore, the “secondary subject” of the camera, which, as Lacan insists, is “made only with words,”⁵⁵ captures the image of the Café de Flore in a state of decay.

But it was possibly Deleuze whose phantasms of the absolute Outside went farthest. He elevated the desert island into a genuine object of philosophy. The insular experiences of post-Kantian philosophers are usually less interested in cultivating unknown land than in witnessing its power of resistance. And Deleuze made no secret

of his disdain for Daniel Defoe. His anti-Robinsonian resentment found its expression in two short visions, in the posthumously published paper from the 1950s titled *Causes et raisons des îles désertes*, conceivably the most ebullient philosophical text on the subject, and in “Michel Tournier and the World without Others,” a supplement to *The Logic of Sense*, where the relation between the “secondary subjectivity” and the outside of the world comes to light even more elaborately.

In *Causes et raisons*, Deleuze begins with the well-known geographical distinction between continental islands, i.e., those that are accidental, derived, born of the disarticulation and fracture of the mainland, and oceanic, originary, essential islands, some of which “emerge from underwater eruptions, bringing to the light of day a movement from the lowest depths.”⁵⁶ It is this other, oceanic, type that represents the object-correlate of the new Deleuzian subject, one who does not cognize, measure, farm, and name the islands, but dreams them, yearns for them, and then creates them.

In this regard, the desert island enjoys a contradictory ontological status, for only the subject who first invented it can subsequently face its pre-human facticity. Although Deleuze unequivocally asserts, “Islands are either from before or for after humankind,”⁵⁷ they still, paradoxically, require an artistic, literary, and creative excess on the part of the human being to be able to claim true independence from humanity:

In certain conditions which attach them to the very movement of things, humans do not put an end to desertedness, they make it sacred. Those people who come to the island indeed occupy and populate it; but in reality, were they sufficiently separate, sufficiently creative, they would give the island only a dynamic image of itself, a consciousness of the movement which produced the island, such that through them the island would in the end become conscious of itself as deserted and unpeopled.⁵⁸

It is as if solitary islands lured human beings, because it is only through them that they could make their own solitude explicit. No matter how cryptic Deleuze’s writing is, one thing seems obvious: the relationship between the human being and the island can no longer be constituted by the operations of mediation, appropriation, and totalization. Instead, it is an instance of a singular symmetry between the emancipated extremes, seeing that man repeats by himself what the inhuman island has accomplished long ago:

While it is true that the movement of humans toward and on the island takes up the movement of the island prior to humankind, *some* people can occupy the island—it is still deserted, all the more so, provided they are sufficiently, that is, absolutely separate, and provided they are sufficient, absolute creators.⁵⁹

The new correlates standing opposite each other are creativity and facticity. It is a relation where both sides are so thoroughly disengaged from one another that they form an unexpected equipoise. The human subject can never incorporate the inhuman island; he can only coincide with it. To find words for this new subject-object relation, Deleuze must engage with a different sort of semantics, that of dreams, literature, art, amnesia, and the divine:

The island would be only the dream of humans, and humans, the pure consciousness of the island. . . . To that question so dear to the old explorers—‘which creatures live on deserted islands?’—one could only answer: human beings live there already, but uncommon humans, they are absolutely separate, absolute creators, in short, an Idea of humanity, a prototype, a man who would almost be a god, a woman who would be a goddess, a great Amnesiac, a pure Artist, a consciousness of Earth and Ocean, an enormous hurricane, a beautiful witch, a statue from the Easter Islands.⁶⁰

The new man resides in the domain of the magical, timeless, divine, statuesque. More importantly, he is no longer the traditional centric subject with a particular personal identity, but rather an amnesiac, a “prototype of the collective soul.”⁶¹ And his authentic medium is a truth relation that transcends the bond of the subject actualizing himself in the object. Instead, it is an entirely imaginary accord between the creation of ideality and the disclosure of reality: “The unity of the deserted island and its inhabitant is thus not actual, only imaginary, like the idea of looking behind the curtain when one is not behind it.”⁶²

These puzzling, overblown, but nonetheless refined balances are perhaps more accurately dealt with and disentangled in “Michel Tournier and the World without Others.” The essay’s main topic is literally the nature of the object-relation in the case of the subject falling out of the social structure. What does an island represent in the eyes of a castaway? What is the object-correlate of a man who has remained alone? In Deleuze’s view, it is solely within an established and functioning field of intersubjectivity that the world can be settled with deep, sharp, contrasting things. The gaze of another subject is vital for the world to assume the form of totality:

As for the objects behind my back, I sense them coming together and forming a world, precisely because they are visible to, and are seen by, Others.⁶³

Along these lines, the narrative of Tournier’s novel *Friday, or, The Other Island* shows Robinson initially still embodying the inertia of intersubjectivity and extending, by aid of clocks and timetables, his mastery over things from the continent to this tropical reef. However, Robinson’s fundamental experience is that, when others are missing from the structure of the world, the things gradually become inhuman: “[W]e discover then wickedness which is no longer that of man.”⁶⁴ And soon he realizes that his own subjection to the savagery of nature is the only authentic object-relation. Deleuze here almost repeats the *Causes et raisons*:

Consciousness ceases to be a light cast upon objects in order to become a pure phosphorescence of things in themselves. Robinson is but the consciousness of the island, but the consciousness of the island is the consciousness the island has of itself—it is the island in itself. We understand thus the paradox of the deserted isle: the one who is shipwrecked, if he is alone, if he has lost the structure-Other, disturbs nothing of the desert isle; rather, he consecrates it.⁶⁵

Once the intersubjective “economic” totalization of the world has been left behind, the thing-in-itself shines through. In Tournier’s novel, this in-itself assumes the form of the

island being redoubled and becoming the fiery, etheric version of itself. And the emergence of the “other island”⁶⁶ is only possible under the premise of the subject himself becoming two. Robinson is thus duplicated into himself and Friday, so that it is ultimately Friday who gives the book its title and is its actual hero:

He alone is able to guide and complete the metamorphosis that Robinson began and to reveal to him its sense and its aim. . . . It is Friday who destroys the economic and moral order that Robinson had established on the island. . . .

What is essential, however, is that Friday does not function at all like a rediscovered Other. It is too late for that, the structure has disappeared. Sometimes he functions as a bizarre object, sometimes as a strange accomplice. Robinson sometimes treats him as a slave . . . Sometimes he treats him almost like an object or an animal, sometimes as if Friday were a “beyond” with respect to himself, a “beyond” Friday, his own double or image. Sometimes he treats him as if he were falling short of the Other, sometimes as if he were transcending the other.⁶⁷

What we call “secondary subjectivity,” is expounded here both obscurely and most remarkably, almost meticulously. Friday introduces a higher, emergent, ideal dimension of subjectivity. His precarious social status, or lack thereof, implicates that his function is merely to stand for the essential substitutability of Robinson; he is, in a way, what the *Übermensch* was to Zarathustra. Although Robinson at first enslaves him and tries to educate him, he then grants him freedom, begins to treat him as a brother, and even regards himself as his pupil. It is an affiliation beyond the hierarchies of continental intersubjectivity. Only through Friday does Robinson reach his final, “sunny,” “blazing” phase, in which the island can finally be experienced as a thing-in-itself.⁶⁸

In short, the very same logic pervades both of Deleuze’s accounts. The ultimate epiphany of the island is only possible against the backdrop of juxtaposing the double objectivation, which distinguishes between the continent and the island, with the double subjectivation, in which the moralizing proprietor exchanges his identity with that of a dreamer, and Robinson with the playful savage Friday. Deleuze’s hermetic texts can thus be read as a precise confirmation of the matrix of two correlations:

Waking Human – Continent
Dreamer – Desert Island

V Conclusion

It was certainly not the intention of this chapter to succumb to the metaphorical tricks of Fichte, Nietzsche, Heidegger, or Deleuze. Instead, the island was throughout envisaged as a mere token of the truth relation that philosophy was still incapable of conceptualizing. After all, this kind of “philosophical poetry” is itself one of the great syndromes of philosophy and, as such, requires elucidation. When reasoning tends to become vague and self-indulgent in its figurative inspirations, it may well have reached a limit and is short of a new paradigm to account for its doing. In philosophy, even

pretentiousness should not be underestimated, as it usually hints at the opening of new logical spaces, the theory of which must first be invented. Let us then try to think the “desert island” as a *suppressed logical function* and determine the conditions of its possibility. Our attempt of “de-sublimation” of this geographical entity will be explicated as a series of seven theses.

1. *The desert island is a symptom of the already conquered and occupied world.* As the case study has shown beyond much doubt, the allusions to and exploitations of the image of the (desert) island in the philosophical literature stand, by way of contrast, for an overpopulated and entirely distributed earth. In Fichte and Marx the island epitomizes an exception to the already appropriated and belabored surface of the planet; in Nietzsche it represents a refuge from the profanity of the crowded lands; in Heidegger a retreat from the calculating civilization; and in Deleuze an alternative to the economy of the continent. Thus, it is a phantasy object that is strictly negative to the totalizing pretense of the optimist subject of world-occupation. In its essential negativity, its function is to question the very form with which the subject holds the entire world captive. To put it more simply, if the island is an antipode of the totalized world, then its outward, apostate existence indicates a certain quandary of the idea of inwardness as something total and whole. Therefore, in order to understand the role of the island as a violation of a certain basic claim of modernity, one must first shed light on the origins of the operation of totalization.

2. *The subjective excess is a symptom of the original spontaneity of the modern man.* The cases from Fichte to Deleuze have displayed a similar structure, in which the correlate of the island was some form of “subjectivity in excess,” as it were. At the other side of the “absolute Outside” of the island, the “absolute Inside” of the subject was put in the balance. In the vein of Kant upgrading his theoretical subject with the “transcendentally free” agent, the post-Kantians also tended to supplement the initial, secular subject with a self-possessed or even self-referential, almost sacred version of himself: the proprietor with conscience, labor with unceasing creation, man with the overman, the *Ge-Stell* with the *Ereignis* of *Aletheia*, Robinson with Friday, etc. But what is the reason for the outburst of this subjective overflow, this self-congratulatory closure?

It seems that, at this stage of modernity, there occurred a crucial shift in the way *truth* had to legitimize its place in the world. The traces of the subject having to actively construct his knowledge might go back as far as Descartes.⁶⁹ But, before Kant, the truth-form was still defined by the invariant, parallel correspondence between the order of ideas and the order of things. Thus, reality was cut at the joints of the ideas being directly embodied in *modi* and *monads*, or the ideas originated by being immediately reproduced from perceptions. On this ground, the subject in Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, or Berkeley, could aspire to the ultimate adequacy between the idea in his mind and the thing of the outside world; it was a relation enacted by God himself. However, toward the end of the early-modern era, most notably with Hume, the basic form of truth as immediate correspondence was still there, but the boundaries of things and processes began relinquishing their lawful, substantial contours. Along with the slow farewell of God, the world could no longer maintain the ability to supply the subject with consistent forms, those of substance, cause, effect, etc., that bestow discriminate qualities to things, states, and events. On the

grounds of this disintegrating world of late empiricism, Kant's revolution consisted in the insight that the subject is the only impetus left to impress his binding and necessary concepts upon reality.

This shift of the root of all logical forms from (God-created) universal correspondences to the inside of the subject has a very definite terminological name in Kant; it is called "spontaneity," the capacity of producing concepts. Pre-Kantian subjects were, to put it in simplified terms, still "theoretical," i.e., they strived to be in tune with the universe, and perhaps exhibited the tendency to become self-transparent, punctual, static, and, to an extent, passive. The Cartesian subject was a self-evidence, Leibniz's was a monad, Locke's was a *tabula rasa*, Hume's was a theatre of the mind. With Kant, however, an originally spontaneous, performative, "thetical" energy inhabits and constitutes the form of subjectivity. And with this shift a new concept of truth begins to evolve and establish itself, one that surpasses the frame of the simple *adaequatio rei*. Truth henceforth assumes the function of surplus over the given world. It ceases to unfold within the medium of discriminate, determinate, progressively infinitesimal consonances in the manner of Malebranche's occasionalist interventions of God, Spinoza's parallelisms of ideas and things, Leibniz's pre-established harmony between the two, or Berkeley's divine gaze on immaterial phenomena, where to every part of reality an ideal "quantum" of truth always already corresponds. Instead, the impulse of truth now surfaces unpredictably, almost miraculously, thus completely altering its ontological status: *truth is no longer derivable from reality but can only emerge within it*. Accordingly, the Fichtean I posits himself and persists only by virtue of this act; in Hegel, truth is not a "minted coin" and does not exist before it is made; in Nietzsche, truth is an illusion, projected upon the world; in Heidegger, truth is not expressed in the proposition but in the "locus of proposition," i.e., in *Dasein's* concern, while in his later period, the concept of "truth" assumes increasingly fateful, self-justifying, and erratic traits; the structuralist universe is made entirely of *thesei* as opposed to *physei*, so that, for instance in Deleuze, "sense"⁷⁰ no longer poses as an origin, a principle, but rather as an emergent, surface effect of nonsensical components. And with this, the age of immoderateness seems to commence. The early-modern subject of Descartes or Locke already showed some cracks in his alignment with the natural *telos*, and consequently had to generate his knowledge, construct his character, and uplift his mastery over things, although he did it in moderation and only sought for his rightful place in the order of being. After Kant, however, there is emphatically no order and no place left, and the subject feels entitled to take over the world.

In short, it is no exaggeration to speak of the *essentially spontaneous character of truth* in modernity. This new form of truth, on the one hand, still aspires to be filled out with reality, which is why it condemns the subject to the hard labor of constantly vanquishing the world.⁷¹ But, on the other hand, it also provokes experiences where the spontaneity *celebrates itself*, so to speak, in the intermittent episodes of pure excess that no longer abide by the totalizing form. Along with the renegade object of the "desert island," it is therefore this "subjectivity in excess" that might unveil the true reasons behind the seemingly natural and self-explanatory operation of totalization.

3. *Spontaneity is a mark of the modern man having lost the certitude of predestination.* There is a historical context to Kant's invention of spontaneity. Already at the outset of

the modern age a certain paradox comes forth: at the very moment when science began considering man to be cosmically infinitesimal, Descartes urged us to *nous rendre comme maîtres & possesseurs de la Nature*, “make ourselves, as it were, lords and masters of nature.”⁷² Nonetheless, before Kant, there was still a God who knew how and where to place the subject into the world, so that he could mirror it in the parallel, adequate, pre-established manner. By contrast, the post-Kantian subject is becoming painfully aware that he is not the bearer of any creatural necessity. Epistemologically, no preprogrammed correspondence between his inner and his outer world can be vouchsafed, and ontologically, no predetermined “natural place” subsists that he must assume. He may crop up anywhere, or, what is more, he might not appear at all. It is the very essence of Fichte’s subject that he is not deducible from any fact of the world, as he stands and falls with the act of his own self-positing; he is not a *Tatsache* but a *Tathandlung*. Therefore, it is a somewhat overlooked, but central and constitutional quality of the Fichtean I that he could well not have occurred. This non-derivable *causa sui* sets the criteria for the subjects to come: Hegel’s spirit, Marx’s laborer, Nietzsche’s will, Heidegger’s *Dasein* (as well as, to a degree, the poststructuralist “processual concepts” of drive, event, power, and sense) are all entities that justify their emergence and prove their existence solely by virtue of their own activity.

4. *The practical totalization of the world is the “fallacious” medium of the theoretical spontaneity of the modern subject.* From Fichte’s I onward, the subject exercises his right to “actively,” and somewhat strenuously, incorporate his outside. Fichte’s *Verichlichung* and, more narrowly defined, his property, Marx’s labor and production, Nietzsche’s power and overpowering, Heidegger’s care and, negatively, technique, seem to be impulses designed to absorb all absolute otherness; even Deleuze’s concepts of univocal ontology are forms of imperative immanence, of a certain vitalist pervasion of being.

The most critical circumstance of the origin of this “practical totalization” is the fact that, in the historical perspective, the world was progressively incapable of delivering the form of truth and shifted this mandate onto man. At the end of the pre-Kantian era, reality forfeited its claim to exhibit constant and lawful regularities, thus forcing the subject to invent his own logical forms and impress them onto his outside. It is in this shift that the once orderly body of the world became a diffuse and formless reality, seemingly offering itself *in toto* to the subject as the only remaining source of truth. This means, of course, that the modern prerogative to take possession of everything does precisely *not* ensue from the world “belonging” to man originally, from its being innately well-rounded or even somehow pre-packaged for his appropriation, but rather from man’s gradual realization that reality is lacking any evidently discriminative, conceptual, logical, that is, human form. The origins of the operation of totalization lie ultimately in the fact that man is never *a subject of equal value* standing face to face with his “co-present” object, but is himself merely a marginal, contingent, negligible product of an infinitely larger objectivity.⁷³ In other words, the presumed *Zusammengehörigkeit* of man and the world is definitely not an expression of them being in any way equiprimordial. Rather, the first impulse of man’s mastery over the world lies in the fact that the world could not predict the late and accidental advent of man, his appearance against all odds. It is therefore not the case that reality has “always already” been within the subject, his mind, his spirit, his language, his culture. Quite the

opposite, the universe has so little need and regard for the subject that, when he nevertheless enters the stage, he somehow lets himself get carried away into mistaking the fact that the world has no desire to “embody” his conceptual truth for his pretense that it will offer no resistance to being overpowered by him.⁷⁴

Our main thesis is thus that the “verificational shift” from the theoretical to the practical disposition towards the world is one of the central fallacies of the modern condition. Its reasons could be reconstructed as follows. The modern subject is “an essentially unwanted child,” a cosmic orphan, so to speak, and it is against the backdrop of him losing his firm place in the order of being that he is compelled to self-invention, practical agency, and creation. As Kant realized, (pure) concepts cannot be derived or replicated from the given world, but must be *presupposed transcendentally*, which will later increasingly mean: be *created idealiter*. These concepts justified by spontaneity—extending from Kant’s categories all the way to Heidegger’s meaning and sense or any of the structuralist *thesei*—can no longer be verified in a traditional way; they refuse having any “incarnated” representatives among the things or facts of the world.⁷⁵ Needless to say, as empirically non-verifiable, they are also never to be directly falsified by the given world. And now comes the crucial turn. The essential *theoretical non-falsifiability* of the conditions of any truth in modernity is (arguably by a mistake in reasoning) transposed into the domain of their *practical auto-verifiability*. There is nothing about Fichte’s positing, Marx’s labor, Nietzsche’s will, Heidegger’s care (or Deleuze’s sense, for that matter) that the outside world could in any way “prove wrong” or rebut. And since the spontaneous energy of “truth” thus assumes the form of an ideal surplus, it can only lay claim to being true by *making itself true* by the sweat of its brow. To put it differently, after Kant, the concepts become aware that they have no ground beneath their feet, so they start filling the void at their core, the lack of any metaphysical guarantee, with their practical impetus. Or else, they misconstrue their being condemned to spontaneity as an entitlement to seize everything there is. And the subject as their vehicle, the cosmically degraded man, is promoted into a global master.

Nevertheless, this “practical fallacy” manifests a certain innate “unhappiness” of the antirealist stance, thereby betraying that it is, indeed, a falsehood. Here, the now popular diagnosis of “correlationism” can be called into question. The common name for what we call “totalization of reality” is either “antirealism” or, in recent times, “correlationism,” both serving as near-synonyms for the continental philosophy of Kant and after. The form of “correlation” is usually defined in absolute terms: since we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, our thought is eternally caught within its own *a priori* unsurpassable horizon. But if the bubble of the subject’s correlation to the world is as perfect as presumed, then he should be an entity of great happiness and gratification, for he could never take cognizance of anything that could enter it and falsify his beliefs. If the post-Kantian universe is so dense and impermeable, if the antirealist subject is structurally unfit to catch sight of anything “absolutely outside” of him, what, then, remains to make him feel bad about his alleged inadequacy? Inadequacy with regard to what? How could an antirealist even know that he is one?

The mistake in postulating antirealism as a *factum brutum* of modern subjectivity is that it fails to reconstruct its genesis and recognize that it is, in fact, a *myth* of the

modern condition. The form of correlation seems to have two concurrent aspects: first, the “happy” premise of correspondence, in which the entire object is posited within the subject; second, the “unhappy” effort of totalization, for in order to sustain its framework, the modern subject is convicted to some sort of coarse optimism and pragmatic megalomania. What some present-day realists neglect in their critique is all the hard work that correlation requires. Antirealism is not a given; it is not a theoretical but a practical endeavor, and one must toil incessantly to maintain it.⁷⁶ This raises a few questions. Why does the post-Kantian subject give the appearance of being a master sentenced to compulsory labor? Why does his seemingly inborn might not give him the right to idleness? Thus, in order to break the closure of correlation, the reasons of this *discontent of antirealism* should be unveiled.

5. *Antirealism is the mask of anti-verism.* While in the philosophy before Kant truth was still running in parallel with reality, with Kant, its emergence began to diverge from the given world. Kant is most often reprehended for having us plunged into the purgatory of antirealism, but there is another, overlooked, side to this reproach: he also made us enter the heavens of spontaneity of truth, its non-derivability, thus delineating the necessary surplus of the ideal over the real. However, this eruptive excess of truth prompted its first restriction, i.e., the Kantian prohibition of metaphysics, the banishment of pure idealities to the realm of dialectical agnosticism. The fact that the new truth was self-appointed, so to speak, was deemed scandalous enough to have its wings cut off by quickly bringing it back to the arms of reality. Kant’s spontaneity of the concepts requires to be filled out with the receptivity of the senses, or else it remains “empty.” And it is in the wake of this *re-realization of the ideal* that the post-Kantian subject is bound to get his hands dirty. Fichte’s I is thus doomed to ceaselessly cultivate the not-I, Marx’s laborer to exploit the earth, Nietzsche’s will to overpower, *Dasein* to engage in its environment of ready-to-hand equipment; even Deleuze’s virtuality must constantly be actualized. Hence, instead of accusing all these philosophers of antirealism *tout court*, one should rather try to define the reasons as to why they felt obliged to *restrain* the surplus of truth by insistently bringing it down to the ground of the senses, the land, the soil, the power, the tools, the everyday life, the singularities. Why must a genuine invention in the theoretical field be so resolutely practically neutralized? For it is this *suppression of spontaneity* that, in our view, represents the cardinal sin of having to aspire to own the world; it therefore stands at the beginning of the “discontent of antirealism.”

To illustrate this point, let us recall Napoleon, who, for want of any ancestral legitimation of his claim to dominance, was supposedly driven to infinitely expand his territories, thus engaging in ever-new wars that ultimately led to his decline. Similarly, the only way the modern subject can blindfold himself from the fact that he is a usurper, an uninvited guest to the world, an intruder, is to compensate for this loss of a predestined “natural place” by holding together truth and reality at least at the grandest possible scale, i.e., within the range of totality. The frame of totalization alone can still allow man to cling to the illusion of a “natural” congruence between him and the world.⁷⁷ In short, the compulsion of the modern subject to unremittingly gain knowledge, appropriate, overpower, and invest with meaning does not so much touch upon the nature of reality as betray a certain *elementary uneasiness in the*

relation he has with his own truth. It is thus not the case that reality, by its very nature, “fits” into the correlation with man’s thought. Rather, this total and transcendental “theoretical correlation” is to be construed as a “practical illusion” of the subject who is unwilling to face up to his own emergent truth, its pure ideality, the stain of his cosmic vagrancy.

In this sense, antirealism is not some transhistorical anthropological constant of presuming the world as one’s own, but a historical product of the subject becoming aware of the “extorted” spontaneity of truth, fallaciously interpreting it as something that aims at a deferred, but ultimately full correspondence with reality, and therefore feeling authorized to perpetually wrap his hands around it. As such, the doctrine of antirealism is merely the secondary manifestation of the more primary *impulse of anti-idealism*; it is the result of needing to offset one’s own surplus of truth. This is ultimately how an antirealist *knows* of his antirealism, a stance barred from the outset by dissatisfaction. For he himself has devised the frame of totality as a pool deep and large enough in which to drown the transgressions of truth, and must now graft all days to preserve the illusion of the ideal overlapping with the real at least in its consummate, either eternally postponed or mournfully accomplished horizons.

In sum, antirealism may prove to be an effect of a certain unresolved tension in the relation between truth and reality in modern times. While its origin lies in the impulse of truth diverging from the given reality, it only manifests itself by suppressing its origin, obfuscating this divergence, and letting truth reconcile with reality in the practical dimension. Instead of defining antirealism as some sort of “primitive” of the human condition, we have rather interpreted it as a mere mask of the *authentic anti-verism* of modern man, who, after God had abdicated the throne, could at first not carry the weight of being the sole author of truth, and hoped to scatter and obliterate its ideal impulses across the totality of the world. In contrast to this fallacy, we believe that a concept of “truth” is now needed which will dare to look into the eyes of its own surplus, withstand its ideality, abstain from “realizing” it, and leave the world as it is: a reality in its untruth.

6. *The desert island as a “reality without ideality” serves to bring to light the subject as an “ideality without reality.”* Perhaps the most beautiful corroboration for the claim that post-Kantian philosophy is not just one of explicit antirealism, but, before that and more fundamentally, one of disavowed and repressed anti-verism, lies in the two ultimate phantasms of these totalizing philosophies: first, in the inevitable experiences of the transcendence of truth, its subjective excess; second, in the scarce apparitions of the absolute outside of reality, its objective residue. We have seen how the paradox of reality being both narrower than the subject and infinitely larger than him develops its symptoms. Between the osmosis of inwardness and the entropy of outwardness, an utterly a-subjective object, an island, appears here and there before the gaze of man. However, the crucial point is the relation of this object to the subjective pole of the balance. In the cases discussed above, it has never been the purpose of the “island” to represent forthrightly “reality-in-itself”; there was nothing intrinsically profound and interesting about the barren matter of the small land in the sea. Its function was rather to make, by way of contrast, the “truth-in-itself” visible for the first time, i.e., to specify a certain unsolicited character of “truth” on the part of the subject, and let it be seen as

what it is: a mere idea hanging in the air. Insofar as there exists a part of the world whose absolute resistance demonstrates that it is not ideally predetermined, the ideal correlate itself must renounce the pretense of its total underpinning in reality and reconcile itself with its surplus status. The island, as the ground upon which no human foot has ever been set, represents the correlate of a man whose feet do not extend all the way to the ground. It is on precisely this account that, in Nietzsche and Deleuze, the isles are populated with such arcane and ethereal creatures. It is a soil whereupon only creatures with no heavy feet can tread; Deleuze keeps repeating that the inhabitants of the island do not abolish its desertedness. For the rare islanders, barely touching the island trails, are not “realized ideas,” but rather ideas with no need for realization. The island is not the material, the body, the property of conscience, the *Übermensch*, *Aletheia*, or Friday, but a physical symbol of their *irreducible ideality*. The relation between the subject-correlate and the object-correlate is thus altogether negative; it is a coincidence of emancipated extremes. In its defiant apparition, the island merely exhibits the fact that the subject has brought something to the world to which the world can offer no material support.

7. *Only truth in its irreducibility to reality can become an organ of realism.* These scattered, unsystematic accounts on desert islands gave us at least a glimpse into the original ideal surplus of truth, suppressed under the form of the totalization of reality. They finally illuminate the emergent and excessive quality of truth, which no longer projects itself onto the world, conquers, and circumscribes it, but opens a horizon that reaches beyond the boundaries of totalization. The most valuable lesson desert islands can teach us is that the cause of realism can never be promoted by simply delving into reality frontally and immediately. There is no head-on way to the revelation of reality in itself; rather, its “veridical” counterpart, the emergent production of truth, must be taken into account. Nonetheless, these metaphors and anecdotes indicate only obscure notions of truth and reality, manifesting itself by way of two displacements. First, the idea of truth not having sufficient reason in reality is dislocated into the domain of another, suspended, postponed, and idealized subject. As we have seen, the ultimate subject of truth has always been “disjointed,” assuming the form of the voice from the other world, a future collective, an ideal, a fateful event, a dream. Second, the idea of an independent world—ultimately, the idea of a universe older and larger than us—was neutralized by having to put on the mask of a small desert island. The equilibrium of excessive subjects and residual objects is still caught within the frame of antirealist totalization, since it only deals with intuitive balances of its symptomatic remainders. Hence, to surpass the limitations of totalization entirely, the displacement of objects into islands and subjects into ideals must be undone. Instead of aerial creatures almost floating over the ground of desert islands, a new relation of truth to reality could be conceived. It is our contention that the moment truth recognizes its irreducible spontaneity and absolute surplus, it will no longer pose as a practical imperative to seize the world, but will be able to think the world beyond the subjective constraints of totalization, thus disclosing reality in its realism. In other words, the true goal of realism might be to develop the concept of “truth” spoken out in the here and now, and the concept of “reality” is no longer obliged to hide itself behind the image of a desert island.⁷⁸

Notes

- 1 The research included in this chapter was funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS) under the research project "Language and Science: The Possibility of Realism in Modern Philosophy" (J6-7364).
- 2 Since this chapter is an implicit critique of Western anthropomorphism, we can afford to treat the modern subject, the "man," as male: we will recount "his" story. As will be shown, however, his "surplus-form" is sometimes female, as, for instance, with Heidegger's *Aletheia*, Deleuze's goddess and beautiful witch, and, metaphorically, even Nietzsche's Zarathustra, insofar as he is "pregnant" with the future overman.
- 3 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 283, (A 158/B 197).
- 4 Johann Gottlob Fichte, *The System of Ethics: According to the Principles of Wissenschaftlehre*, trans. Daniel Breazeale and Günter Zöller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 217.
- 5 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 140.
- 6 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1982), 285.
- 7 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, trans. Kate Surge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 148; *Kritische Studienaufgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Massimo Montinari, 15 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 12: 9 (41). Hereafter cited as KSA.
- 8 Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 40.
- 9 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Russell (New York: Criterion Books, 1961), 23–24.
- 10 Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Practical Reason," in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), (hereafter cited as *KpV*).
- 11 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publication, 1966), 2: 3.
- 12 Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lying in a Non-moral Sense," in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 141.
- 13 Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 4–5.
- 14 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 397.
- 15 This "secular" symmetry was once articulated by Schopenhauer, but still with the positive twist of the world existing only in man's representation: "The vastness of the world, which previously disturbed our peace of mind, now rests within us; our dependence on it is now annulled by its dependence on us" (Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 1: 205). As we will see, it is possible to reverse this narrative: only after the entire determinacy of the world has proved to be a mere projection of man will he be able to afford to recognize his worldly nothingness.
- 16 It is also worth noting that a structurally analogous scene is then enacted in the third *Critique* when the subject faces the sublime object.
- 17 Johann Gottlob Fichte, "Beiträge zur Berichtigung der Urtheile des Publicums über die französische Revolution, 1793," in *Fichtes Werke*, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, vol. 6 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 117 (hereafter translation mine).
- 18 *Ibid.*, 127.

19 Ibid., 120.

20 Ibid., 133.

21 As the kind anonymous reviewer pointed out, the argument of this chapter could be strengthened “by showing how metaphors of desert islands function differently in pre-Kantian philosophers.” Indeed, it seems that the vast majority of “islands” in the philosophical and pseudo-philosophical literature before Kant play a quite dissimilar, even opposite, role: they represent a perfect setting for the recreation of an ideal political state. Typically, these islands tend to be placed in a warm and mild climate, they are rich in raw materials and natural resources, their cities often exhibit an idealized geometrical architecture, etc. Such is, with some variation, the case with Plato’s Atlantis as depicted in *Timaeus* and *Critias*, Thomas Morus’ *Utopia*, Campanella’s *Civitas Solis*, Francis Bacon’s *Nova Atlantis*, Andreae’s *Christianopolis*, or the countless utopias of the French late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as Tiphaigne de la Roche’s Galligènes, Diderot’s *république sauvage* of Tahiti (in *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*), Denis Veiras’ Sevarambia, Fontenelle’s Ajao, and many more. These wealthy, fertile, well protected, isolated, fully populated isles are nothing but laboratories for the social utopias of various ideologies and worldviews; far from being nonhuman, they serve as drafting tables for a certain hyper-humanist enactment of society in its purest form: a Calvinist will find there a theocracy and a monarchy, as in the case of Sevarambia, and an atheist a communist democracy of sorts, as in Ajao.

Nevertheless, at some point, these heavens on earth seem to have gone out of fashion; it is perhaps of some interest that Kant himself spoke negatively of the ideal insular cities in a note to *The Contest of Faculties*, mentioning Plato’s Atlantis, More’s Utopia, Harrington’s Oceana, and Allais’ (that is, Veiras’) Sevarambia (see Immanuel Kant, “The Contest of Faculties,” in *Political Writings*, ed. H. S. Reiss [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 188.) Only after Kant, due to both the “logical prohibition” of the absolute Outside and, arguably, the historical circumstance of *terra incognita* disappearing from the maps of the world during the nineteenth century, the fantasy of the island changed its metaphorical value and became a small, barren, desolate, uninhabited, or, at the utmost, scarcely populated land. It would thus appear that the *utopian* island is the supreme pre-Kantian phantom, and the *desert* island the ultimate post-Kantian fantasy.

22 Fichte, “Beiträge zur Berichtigung der Urtheile des Publicums über die französische Revolution, 1793,” 116.

23 Ibid., 59.

24 Although, genetically, conscience is more “original” than the practical I.

25 For instance, in *The Vocation of Man*, Fichte calls the voice of conscience “the oracle of the Eternal World” (Johann Gottlob Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, trans. William Smith [London: John Chapman, 1848], 173).

26 G. W. F. Hegel, “Auszüge aus dem Tagebuch der Reise in die Berner Oberalpen (25. Juli bis August 1796),” in *Werke*, vol. 1: *Frühe Schriften*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 614–15 (hereafter translation mine).

27 Ibid., 618.

28 Karl Marx, “The German Ideology,” in *Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 191.

29 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 266.

- 30 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 14–15 (§ 15).
- 31 Our will might be almighty in its projective, perspectival, claim, but it is utterly moot in the face of its existential conditions; the creatural devaluation of man is an obsessive theme in Nietzsche's writings. To quote only two examples: "But how could we reproach or praise the universe! Let us beware of attributing to it heartlessness or unreason or their opposites: it is neither perfect, nor beautiful, nor noble, nor does it want to become any of these things; in no way does it strive to imitate man!" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josephine Nauckhoff [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 109 [§ 109]). And in his posthumous fragments, Nietzsche calls man "this little eccentric animal species," life on earth "a mere moment, an incident, an exception without consequence," and the Earth itself, "like every star, a hiatus between two nothingnesses" (Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente," in KSA 13: 16 (25). Translation mine).
- 32 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 330 (§ 616).
- 33 Friedrich Nietzsche, "Anti-Christ," in *Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 49 (§ 15).
- 34 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 536, (§ 1041).
- 35 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 128.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 66.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 38 Friedrich Nietzsche, "Dionysos-Dithyramben," in KSA 6: 393–4 (translation mine).
- 39 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 64.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 65.
- 41 Martin Heidegger, *Sojourns: The Journey to Greece*, trans. John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Albany: SUNY, 2005), 5.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 9–10.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 30.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 46 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), 172–3.
- 47 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 93.
- 48 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 158.
- 49 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Anette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1970), 107.
- 50 Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 262.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 398.
- 52 Barthes, *Mythologies*, 54.
- 53 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 46.
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 Gilles Deleuze, "Desert Islands," in *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953–1974*, trans. Michael Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 9.

- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid., 10.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid., 10–11.
- 61 Ibid., 13.
- 62 Ibid., 11.
- 63 Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), 305.
- 64 Ibid., 306.
- 65 Ibid., 311.
- 66 For the subtitle of the English translation of *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique* reads *The Other Island*.
- 67 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 315–16.
- 68 In the end the ship that Robinson longed for does arrive, but Friday embarks in his stead and leaves, while Robinson takes into care a young sailor to teach him the technique of staring into the sun. It could well be said that this young man now acts as a representative of the “ideal otherness” of Robinson.
- 69 It is Charles Taylor’s point that the modern, Cartesian mind is already “disengaged” from the given world and governs things “instrumentally.” The pre-modern reliance on the world embodying “ontic logos” is lost, and the suturing of ideas to things now requires additional effort: “Knowledge comes not from connecting the mind to the order of things we find but in framing a representation of reality according to the right canons” (Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989], 197). Nevertheless, these canons still conform to the strict correspondence between ideas and things, a form that, with Kant, becomes precarious, deferred, and even obsolete.
- 70 “Sense” being probably the closest concept to “truth” that the Deleuzian truth-scoring attitude can stand up for.
- 71 Or, in Deleuze’s case, where the concept of “subject” is largely obsolete, it is the universe that is only held together by the vitalist energy of perpetual production and creation.
- 72 René Descartes, “Discourse on Method,” in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 142–3.
- 73 It seems as if the world was transferred inside man the moment man realized that the world could do well without him. It may be a historical coincidence: hyperbolic theories of the subject appeared when science made man disappear in the farthest corners of the universe. In this light, realism and idealism are no longer in contradiction, but form a subtle equilibrium of man encapsulating the world within the “ideal order,” while simultaneously relinquishing his cosmic predestination and rolling toward the indiscernible edge of the “order of reality.”
- 74 After all, the devaluation of man’s creatural existence and the strictly correlative “practical” overvaluation of his claim and mission is a typical form of post-Kantian philosophy. Marx, for instance, was a Darwinian, regarding humanity as a historically late and dispensable species. This degradation of man, however, in itself served as a trigger of his projective hubris. The human body may be a bad coincidence, but that does not mean that the world cannot become too small for the efforts of man’s labor. In Heidegger, *Dasein* is so superfluous in the world that it is even *thrown* into it. But to this loss of the “organic” place in the cosmos man answers by being the only one capable of bestowing meaning to it.

- 75 This is ultimately what separates Kant from Hume and announces the dawn of a new era. Hume still at least pretended to set out to catch cause and effect “in the act,” so to speak. In Kant, however, the concepts, such as cause and effect, are transcendental “conditions of possibility” precisely because they do not even presume to be “verifiable” in an empiricist way.
- 76 This fetish of industry and growth also generates a certain inevitable remainder. In the philosophy before Kant, there was nothing “essentially unattainable” about the world; between Descartes and Hume, for instance, the concept of the “thing-in-itself” designated the quality of things that can only be grasped by acts of thought unbound by the senses. In Kant, however, it seems as if the world, confronted with the subject’s usurpation, began clinging to this minimal residue of independence and sovereignty. Even if post-Kantian philosophy was quick to dispose of the “thing-in-itself,” reality nevertheless put on the mask of some sort of constitutional gap and infinite withdrawal. The “irreducible remainder” either assumed the form of the infinite task of conquering reality, the asymptotic approach to something never fully present, and the mere approximation to the ultimate ground of things, or manifested itself as the torpor of the already accomplished task, the apathy of the world having surrendered its last secret, thus testifying *per negationem* to the innate “unhappiness” of the antirealist stance. It is almost ironic that the eternal receding of reality, or its inversion, the melancholy of the conquered earth, becomes so virulent precisely at the dawn of the antirealist age.
- 77 One might speculate that if the modern subject was a bit more certain of his place in the world, then the things outside him would get along just fine without his persistent efforts to incorporate them. Instead, he would sooner make the entire world his home than come to terms with his initial homelessness. To put it starkly, the world does not fit into the mind of the subject because he is almighty “by nature,” but because he was born a bastard, so he must perpetually swing and splash with his arms so as to hold his head above water.
- 78 It is this conception of truth as irreducible to reality that we have developed in our *The Untruth of Reality: The Unacknowledged Realism of Modern Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016).