

Solarism Now!

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Difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse. Difference is not phenomenon but the noumenon closest to the phenomenon.

Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* [222]

Full STEAM ahead: Lem in the Age of Capitalist Connectivism

Throughout his years of writing, Stanisław Lem's array of artistic-conceptual inventions confronted the post-Thaw programme of the Scientific Technological Revolution, (STR) which marked a drastic change in attitude toward advances in science and technology¹. The change was apparent in the 1960 translation and publication – as *Cybernetyka i społeczeństwo* [Cybernetics and Society] – of the seminal 1950 publication by the pioneer of cy-

1 As David Crowley reminds us, STR was announced in 1956 by the Soviet premier Nikolai Bulganin. The First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, Władysław Gomułka, followed suit in 1959, adopting a similar attitude at the party's Third Congress [30].

bernetics Norbert Wiener titled *The Human Use of Human Beings*, banned under Stalinism². As I understand it, STR was developed as a programme of ideological capture of the future by the state³. The programme sought to banish contingency and change through an infinite telescoping forwards of the state-controlled present, whose parameters had already been demarcated, once and for all⁴. Lem's project of reclaiming the vast, incomprehensible, inhuman infinity of the cosmos from its representational and ideological capture by the state apparatus has become especially relevant today under capitalism – in the age of the STEAM research optics. The “STEAM” acronym stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics, at the same time alluding to the Age of Steam, hence the nineteenth-century industrial revolution. The STEAM programme is grounded on the principles of constant innovation, relationality, mobility and connectivity. Lem's experiments in turn resonate with the artistic practices of the Eastern European neo-avant-gardists such as Marek Konieczny, Natalia LL, Stano Filko and Július Koller. The artists forego pragmatic connectivi-

2 According to Wojciech Orliński, Lem read Wiener's book earlier, in the original [*Lem* 137].

3 A parallel argument is advanced by the art critic Jan Verwoert, who stresses the monopoly of the socialist state over imagining the future and at the same time charts techniques of resistance developed by the artists such as Stano Filko and Július Koller, whose chief preoccupation was with the excessive force of the cosmos [123-5].

4 Lem must have intuited this when he remarked in 1961, as quoted by Orliński, that the cosmic experience of Soviet astronaut Yuri Gagarin, the first human to travel into the outer space and orbit the Earth, did not cause any radical change. “There is only one thing that intrigues me in [Gagarin's] accounts of his flight – a description of the Earth seen from the height of 300km. What is striking is how much it conforms to our [pre-existing] notions. A blue globe in the black sky. Only this halo in the colours of the rainbow, passing from purple to red, is something new. But there is nothing new, nothing «cosmic» in the psyche of the first cosmonaut. [...] The giant leap he took did not cause him to detach himself from the game played here, down below [*Lem* 220; author's translation].

ty in favour of an affirmative non-relation with the infinity, unpredictability, radical inequality and contingency of the cosmos. As Andrew Culp, the author of *Dark Deleuze*, remarks, the contemporary connectivist logic surfacing in some strands of philosophy and cultural theory, and most notably in readings of Deleuze's process philosophy, fails to resist "Google's geopolitical strategy of global influence, which proceeds through a techno-affirmationist desire to annex everything" [116]⁵. Indeed, in the age of deep social, economic, political and environmental fault lines – including, looming vast and unthinkable, the horizon of human extinction – we are witnessing not so much a parcelling out of time and space, but a continuous modulation of access⁶ that goes hand in hand with a corporatization of the future (Elon Musk, financial instruments based on climate change predictions); the end of academia as founded upon the notion of independent enquiry, now held hostage by corporate stakeholders; and a corporatization of fear, life, death and life after death⁷. Against this capitalist connectivity and its attendant philosophies of relationality, a group of philosophers known as Speculative Realists (SR), at once influenced by and confronting Deleuze and Heidegger, have developed propositions that strive to affirm the necessity of contingency uncorrelated with human thought. In particular, Quentin Meillassoux has sought to attend to "the *great outdoors*, the *absolute*

5 Culp defines connectivism as "the world-building integration into an expanding web of things" [116].

6 As Deleuze demonstrated in his 1990 seminal commentary on Foucault ["Postscript" 3-7].

7 The corporatization of the afterlife is imagined, for example, in the TV series *The Good Place*, through its algorithmic computation of a deceased person's allocation to one of the two chambers of its binary Manichean afterlife—"the Good Place" or "The Bad Place".

outside of pre-critical thinkers: that outside which was not relative to us, and which was given as indifferent to its own givenness to be what it is, existing in itself regardless of whether we are thinking of it or not; that outside which thought could explore with the legitimate feeling of being on foreign territory – of being entirely elsewhere” [7].

This renewed interest in the noumenal realm⁸, the (thing-) in-itself, rather than its humanist pulverization into social, textual, linguistic and discursive phenomena, resonates with what Deleuze identifies in Nietzsche as the tragic affirmation of the play of “chance and the necessity of chance” [*Nietzsche* 222]⁹. What can Lem’s artistic-philosophical practice offer in this respect, thematizing as it does the issue of contact with the alien, excessive and inhuman force, and the status of human thought under the strain of radical contingency?

Nonhumanism without Thought: Lem and the contemporary theory of culture and media

Despite Wojciech Orliński’s characterization of Lem’s philosophical orientation in terms of a “misanthropic humanism”

8 Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman have identified this as “the speculative turn”, which has opened philosophy towards “speculating once more about the nature of reality independently of thought and of humanity more generally” [3].

9 Interestingly, Meillassoux accuses Nietzsche and Deleuze of a “strong correlationism” which cannot think being outside of thought and, what is more, absolutely correlates it with *the Will to Power and Life*, respectively [37]. As Jeffrey Bell argues, Meillassoux’s charges stem from his Badiouan misreading of the concept of Life in Deleuze as a virtual realm separate from the actual. Countering the Badiou–Meillassoux line of argumentation, Bell points out that the concept of the virtual in Deleuze can be understood in a Simondonian way as a metastable state, hence as something which “is not a determinate state but is rather the dynamic condition for the possibility of differentiating between determinately distinct states” [53]. My article follows Bell’s reading, arguing for a resonance between Lem’s work and Simondon’s philosophy of individuation, as well as with Meillassoux’s speculative materialism.

which cannot but keep diagnosing the despicable human [*Co to są sepulki?* 94-96], Lem's works have garnered interest of theorists of contemporary culture and media such as N. Katherine Hayles and Joanna Zylińska. Drawing on Lem's 1964 treatise *Summa Technologiae*, in 2014 Hayles coined the term "cognitive nonconscious" which designates a cognition without thought (for Hayles, thought is tied to consciousness) [201]. What is at stake here is an adaptive technogenetic capacity inhering in some material processes.

Encapsulated in the figure of a sieve, a termite mound or a beehive, the cognitive nonconscious is a kind of neural apparatus capable of performing complex tasks without the recourse to consciousness. The cognitive nonconscious is characterized by its capacity to select and display some behaviours according to the criteria of evolutionary fitness, adaptability, complexity, emergence and being "constraint-driven" [199-202]¹⁰. Hayles's formulation cuts across what is traditionally conceived as "natural", "cultural", or "technological" and thus affirms a single, singular continuum of both human and nonhuman entities. On the other hand, what the media theorist and translator of *Summa Technologiae* Joanna Zylińska has recently extracted from Lem's work is the idea of a parallelism between biological and technological evolution. Zylińska develops this insight further by suggesting a parallelism between biological extinction and technological obsolescence

¹⁰ What is equally important, the cognitive nonconscious displays a certain "intention toward something", i.e. an orientation toward the attainment of a specific common goal. This trait distinguishes the cognitive nonconscious from simple material processes lacking in adaptive capacity, as exemplified by the downward slide of a glacier [Hayles 201].

[130]. Zylinska deploys such a line of argumentation to ground her nonhuman understanding of photography as “a light-induced process of fossilization occurring across different media” [10], hence in the real. This real, material fossilization records the Huttonian geologic “deep time” which goes beyond the human scale. Photography thus reveals the wider inhuman planetary “photographic condition” [69] whereby rocks and other things might be said to photograph themselves.

Solarism: A proposal for the Future of Art and Philosophy

Lem’s works therefore prove useful in diagnosing the complexities of the contemporary world, offering fodder for speculation on life after the human. As I see it, it is Lem’s 1961 novel *Solaris* that unfurls a particularly compelling vision of an encounter of excessive, nonhuman force, or *event*. Lem’s speculative art-work successfully fails to translate a radical exteriority into a set of formal components and their qualities; to define it through an allocation of determinate functions, or to reduce it to the level of (inter)subjectivity and signification. Lem’s vision resonates both with Deleuzo-guattarian philosophy and SR. Hence, I would like to propose, as extracted from *Solaris*, the category of *solarism* as an operative concept relevant for the diagnosis and discussion of certain specific developments in contemporary art and philosophy. Solarism is a speculative proposal for the future of art and philosophy beyond the Anthropocene. In this respect, I will be building on insights from Deleuze and Simondon. My proposed analysis of *Solaris* draws out two fundamental aspects of solarism:

ahumanism¹¹ and inhumanism which, at the same time, frame the two respective sections that follow. In turn, this specific understanding of a logic at play in *Solaris* sets the direction for the analysis of the phenomena of contemporary cinema, using David Lynch's *Twin Peaks: The Return* and Alex Garland's *Annihilation* as examples. The two brief case studies set out to discern the symptoms of solarist aesthetics in the world of contemporary artistic production, without aiming at full-fledged interpretations.

Speculation 1: Solarism | Ahumanism. Towards a Repetition that Makes a Difference

Let us start with a brief outline of the book. It was in *Solaris* that Lem introduced the motif of the eponymous metamorphic ocean of plasma. As Lem reminisced back in 2002, "I wanted to create a vision of a human encounter with something that certainly exists, in a mighty manner perhaps, but cannot be reduced to human concepts, ideas or images" ["The Solaris"]. The novel charts the journey of the psychologist Kelvin, who travels to a research sta-

11 The term "ahumanism" came to be during my conversation with the philosopher of art Prof. Anne Sauvagnargues, which took place during the Deleuze Studies conference at Mumbai's Tata Institute of Social Sciences in 2017. Prof. Sauvagnargues pointed towards her parallel concept of the "anomalous human," referring me to her publication *Deleuze. L'empirisme transcendantal*. According to the scholar, "it is not a case of abstractly destroying [the category of] the human, but of moving past it, showing that it only has a transitory historical existence, capable of 'dying', i.e. of changing, and therefore also of metamorphosing itself. [...] [What is at stake here is] an anomalous variation which transforms and goes beyond [the category of] the human but does not surpass it in a hierarchical sense" [205, author's translation]. It was only recently that I discovered that the scholar Patricia MacCormack coined the term "ahuman" back in 2014. According to MacCormack, inspired by the thought of Michel Serres, the concept reconfigures the status of the human in the context of Animal Studies and is related to the postulate of the absolute abolition of the all human use of animals. As the scholar sees it, "the nonhuman animal and the ahuman are thus close in proximity but absolutely extricated from each other simultaneously" [20].

tion hovering over the ocean only to find one of its crew members (Gibarian) committed suicide while the two others (Snaut and Sartorius) remain in a state approximating borderline psychosis. The ocean ceaselessly spawns “guests”, otherwise termed “G-formations” (pl. *twory F*) where “G” stands for the word “ghost” (pl. *fantom*). These are material images of the crew’s past psychological traumas, materialised in the shape of important others from their past. Accordingly, Kelvin encounters an avatar of his long-dead partner Harey, who commits suicide upon gaining awareness of its/her simulacric status. In the final scene, Kelvin reaches the surface of the ocean, submitting himself to whatever the future and its “time of cruel wonders” [*Solaris* 268], might hold. *Solaris* also importantly presents solariana, i.e. accounts of previous exploratory journeys to the eponymous oceanic planet, as well as a compendium of knowledge about it.

Solaris is a novel of repetitions. Consecutive crews arrive on the planet in order to probe the ocean and experiment on it. The ocean itself repeats the human shapes (with surgical precision), along with the human psychic interior and its traumatic sore spots, as well as (less accurately, and in a “bizarre” way [24]¹²) the material technical devices which have always accompanied and propagated the human civilization, thus expressing its inherently technical condition.

12 The narrator describes a set of tools duplicated by the ocean as follows: “I saw compartments filled with bizarre exhibits: a host of implements similar to those in the cabinets, but in approximate or distorted versions in dark metal. None of them were of any use: they were misshapen, blunted, half-melted, as if they’d been in a fire” [*Solaris* 24].

Lem's *Solaris* formulates a fundamental problem: can there be any communication between the two heterogenous, disparate series – the human and the oceanic – without falling back on the categories of identity, opposition, similarity and meaning and their mutual transactions? Paraphrasing Deleuze's 1968 *Difference and Repetition*, one might elaborate the question further: can the two series enter into an internal resonance which might bring about change? Can there momentarily flash a repetition which makes a (qualitative) difference? Can this ever happen: an encounter with "that by which the given is given" [222], with "a «something» which simultaneously cannot be sensed (from the point of view of the empirical exercise) and can only be sensed (from the point of view of the transcendental exercise)" [236]? In the novel, the problem of contact and its relation to repetition is expressly thematized in Kelvin's descent onto the surface of the planet and an encounter which takes place on the shore of an old mimoid. Mimoids are oceanic formations corresponding to the specific mode of its functioning as a mimetic repeater of encountered shapes. It is worth noting here that the mimoid works as an ontogenetic perforator, cutting across – messily, haphazardly, indiscriminately – and *modulating*¹³ the opposition of "real" and "imagined", "human"

13 I understand the concept of modulation in Simondon as going beyond the traditional understanding of the relation between form and matter according to the abstract hylemorphic schema whereby active form is imposed from without onto passive, amorphous matter, for example a mold gives shape to clay, giving rise to a brick. Simondon opposes the hylemorphic model of individuation to modulation understood as the mutual assumption of form through "continuous temporal molding" [Simondon 41]. Individuation in this sense is not therefore a single, fully visible act during which an already constituted form, bestowed with agency, imposes itself on a homogenous, constituted once and for all, objectified matter, but a series of processes. Clay and mold generate a heterogenous system in the state of disparation whereby between the properties of the material and the action of formation there occurs a state of tension or internal resonance that Simondon calls 'information'. A brick is the result of resolving this problematic disparity. See [Simondon 27-50, 222-238, 267-291].

and “nonhuman”, “organic” and “non-organic”, “essential” and “circumstantial”, “content” and “expression”, “matter” and “form”. The ocean’s power of repetition, encapsulated in the mimoid, spawns Harey alongside her dress, but the dress is lacking a zip. Such a dress cannot be taken off without cutting it open. The ocean’s lack of interest in the zip ruptures the latter’s hylemorphic operation. After all, the zipper can be understood in Simondonian terms as a technical object which regulates and delimits, and in this sense moulds, the matter of the woman’s body in a way that cannot be separated from its associated milieu. One element of this milieu is the muscular force of the human hand required for the zip’s use. Furthermore, the zip constitutes an element of the Mumfordian social machine where it regulates the question of sex in a patriarchal way. As Deleuze remarks, “machines are social before being technical” [Foucault 39]. In this sense, one can say the dress is non-functional without the zip. The zip, or rather: *the zip effect*, however, performs at the same time a singular informal function. By generating a problem, this incongruous Baroque detail thus diagnoses the particularities of oceanic production. It does so in a way incomprehensible to humans and yet in such a way that cannot be separated from the world of human technics.

Jerzy Jarzębski sees the ocean as a mirroring surface that, ultimately merely projects the image of human quandaries back to humans [240-241]. Understood in that way, the ocean would therefore constitute a case of both material and mental mirror reflections which could only reveal the human to the human. Such framing of the problem effectively reduces the ocean to a phenomenon; to the

thing as it (only) appears to us; to an apparition in our consciousness. We are thus forever barred from the infinite by our own finitude, which only ever spawns a repetition *for us*. Expanding Jarzębski's line of thought, one might say that what the current crew of the research station does in order to communicate with the ocean and understand its *modus operandi* – probing the ocean with signals which are recordings of its reactions to stimuli, bombarding the ocean with different kinds of radiation, performing an “aerial” survey of the planet through an exploratory flight over the ocean, as well as forensic examination of the planet surface – is a mere repetition of analogous failed attempts of the past human crews. What the ocean does in response to contact with humans on its surface in turn constitutes a repetition of its own past gestures, such as its lack of interest after a period of sustained interaction or a spawning of “guests’.

How can we break free from this circular time with its incessant repetition of the Same? As I see it, it is a matter of solarism. This solarist proposal demands a change of our perspective through a speculative attempt at thinking beyond the universe of human agency. Following *Difference and Repetition* we can distinguish three types of repetition in *Solaris*, which correspond to the Deleuzian three syntheses of time: unconscious, involuntary and sub-representative. The syntheses operate beneath representations which wish to turn them into the object of meaning and reflection of the subject. The “bare” material repetition of habit constitutes the empirical first passive synthesis of the “living present” [*Difference* 70-81].

Deleuze understands this repetition as a vital, “organic” contemplation on the level of “a primary sensitivity that we *are*” [73]. These “primary habits that we are; the thousands of passive syntheses of which we are organically composed” [74] select or draw (fr. *contracter*) from the milieu their necessary vital elements. This contractile “habit draws something new from repetition - namely, difference” [73]¹⁴. It is on this level that one can understand Zylinska’s auto-contemplative “nonhuman photography” which draws light from the world, thus diagnosing the planetary and cosmic ecological condition and at the same time filling itself with the image of the Huttonian inhuman “deep time”¹⁵. In turn, the “clothed” repetition of memory constitutes the second passive synthesis – the transcendental synthesis of the pure past, encapsulated in the inner spiritual/psychic life. As Deleuze points out, while “Habit is the originary synthesis of time, which constitutes the life of the passing present; Memory is the fundamental synthesis of time which constitutes the being of the past (that which causes the present to pass). [...] The former is a repetition of successive independent elements or instants; the latter is a repetition of the Whole on diverse coexisting levels” [80, 84].

14 As Deleuze remarks, “we are made of contracted water, earth, light and air - not merely prior to the recognition or representation of these, but prior to their being sensed. Every organism, in its receptive and perceptual elements, but also in its viscera, is a sum of contractions, of retentions and expectations. At the level of this primary vital sensibility, the lived present constitutes a past and a future in time. Need is the manner in which this future appears, as the organic form of expectation. The retained past appears in the form of cellular heredity” [*Difference* 73].

15 The concept of the “deep time” in turn can be speculatively framed in terms of the third, static synthesis, whose explanation follows below.

The second synthesis operates within the Bergsonian cone of time as processes of resonance between its virtually coexisting layers¹⁶, “as if the philosopher and the pig, the criminal and the saint, played out the same past at different levels of a gigantic cone” [83]. To put it simply, the second synthesis launches the principle of psychic interiority, which is at the same time a metempsychosis. Each present story repeats another, at another level, just as the same psychic life – the same role – repeats itself on the ever-different levels, assigned to different actors. The second synthesis ushers in the circular mythical, immemorial time.

The third synthesis of time¹⁷ in turn constitutes the future as a repetition in the Nietzschean eternal return, whereby time becomes a static “formal and empty order” [89], “a pure and empty form” [91], diagrammed as a straight line. This form of time affirms radical change because it is no longer subordinated to a measurement of movement. Repetition in the eternal return thus forgoes both the linear, empirical and metric, as well as the spiritual cardinal points of reference. This is the Hamletian “time (...) out of joint” [88]. Such time is launched by an excessive, inhuman event, “an act which is adequate to time as a whole” [89], whose symbolic image might be for example “to make the sun explode, to throw oneself into the volcano, to kill God” [89]. The caesura of such an immense, unprecedented-

16 As Deleuze explains, ‘The present can be the most contracted degree of the past which coexists with it only if the past first coexists with itself in an infinity of diverse degrees of relaxation and contraction at an infinity of levels’ [*Difference* 83].

17 See [*Difference* 88-94].

ed, unique event does not so much dynamically happen in time, as launches time as its two unequal parts, its singular “before” and “after”. The radical rupture of the event distributes the non-empirical, dimensions it generates – the past and the future – in a series of time. In other words, the third synthesis produces a burst of series. Proliferating serialisations bite into the linear, chronometric time correlated with the human subject, and also rupture the mythic cycles of metempsychosis. The first time in the series generated by the event designates a moment when the agent (the hero, the I, the self) orients her/himself towards the event as their limit-point but the imagined event still exceeds their capacity. The second time in the series is defined by the caesura which ushers in the present of metamorphosis, whereby the agent becomes equal to and capable of the event. In the third time in the series, which constitutes the future as a repetition in the eternal return, the agent’s act and the event enter into an internal resonance. The subject/agent becomes equal to the unequal, which brings about its death – perceived from the human point of view as the death of an already constituted, specific subject. This human death can be also understood as a fracture in the coherent I, in the proper, own self. At the same time, however, what is a stake here is an opening toward the unlife of a fundamental, formless difference¹⁸.

18 As Deleuze describes in a remarkable passage, the untimely event “smash[es] [the self] to pieces, as though the bearer of the new world were carried away and dispersed by the shock of the multiplicity to which it gives birth: what the self has become equal to is the unequal in itself” [*Difference* 89-90]. Furthermore, the third synthesis is “esoteric” in the sense that it is “a belief of the future, a belief in the future” [90]. Interestingly, Deleuze understands the eternal return of difference also in terms of art, since it generates “the autonomy of the product, the independence of the work,” a new world erasing its historical condition and the agent [90].

Deleuze understands such unlife in Simondonian terms as an individuating difference, i.e. a becoming that flashes through “pre-individual singularities” and “impersonal individuations”, and also in a Riemannian-Bergsonian way as a world of “intensive multiplicities”. As Deleuze has it, repetition in the eternal return can be diagrammed as a “decentred circle which displaces itself at the end of the straight line” [*Difference* 299]. The eternal return sets off a system of imperceptible, unpredictable resonances, which glimmer in the first and the second passive syntheses. Another avatar of this impersonal realm is the intensive embryonic morphogenetic processes occurring within an egg. Such processes can be also understood in terms of a functioning which goes beyond activities of the already constituted, specialised human organs and senses. This is the level of the Blanchotian “aleatory point” – “blind, acephalic, aphasic” [198-9]. What is at stake here is not a linear evolutionary development towards a progressively higher and higher specialisation which goes from simple to complex forms. Instead, it is a question of becoming understood in *A Thousand Plateaus* not as a regression, but “a contemporary, creative involution” [Deleuze and Guattari 164]¹⁹.

The Deleuzian conceptual apparatus allows us to discern in *Solaris* a complex system of repetitions pertaining to the passive syntheses, which come to be actively re-presented in the human consciousness of its scientists-narrators as an object of recognition and reflection.

19 Interestingly, the ocean in *Solaris* is speculatively presented as a leap across the canonical stages of the evolutionary phylogenetic development [*Solaris* 31].

Accordingly, the oceanic labour producing the perceived array of diverse, distinct formations already constitutes an active repetition that subsumes under the human consciousness something which might otherwise affirm an incomprehensible “primary sensitivity” [*Difference* 73] which generates in recording apparatuses changing “rhythms of discharges” [*Solaris* 34, my translation]. We can speculate that such captured discharges are for-es-signs emitted by the oceanic contractile power of shifting attention, of selective penetration of the human interior or of fleeing the subjectifying effect of surfaces of inscription such as the mirror or the face, whose faciality machine launches significance, produces a human subject and at once produces the body as a specific, fixed and hierarchical organisation²⁰. Hence, for Snaut, one of the crew members, the ocean remains blind to the subjectifying effect of the face. He speculates that “we don’t exist for it the way we do for each other. The surface of the face, of the body, which we see, means we encounter one another as individuals. For it, this is only a transparent screen. After all, it penetrated the inside of our brains” [302-303].

Solaris launches yet another mode of repetitions, pertaining to the second passive temporal synthesis diagrammed by Deleuze as the cone of Memory whereby the present is only the most contracted degree of the past.

20 There is a wealth of literature, both Marxist and psychoanalytical, on the subject of the face. Suffice to mention here the concept of “faciality” (*visagéité*) developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the Lacanian “mirror stage” (*stade du miroir*) or Althusser’s “ideological state apparatuses” (*appareils idéologiques d’État*).

Kelvin unconsciously repeats the trauma of unwittingly enabling the suicide of his terrestrial partner Harey – both in the psychological and the material sense, i.e. by leaving shots of a lethal substance in their apartment. Kelvin repeats this terrestrial situation twice on the Solaris station. Once, directly and consciously – by killing the first Harey G-formation; and another time: indirectly and unconsciously – through his finite human perspective which rejects something that goes beyond the existing binary categories; something that is deemed to have a secondary, derivative existence; something impossible to comprehend; something perceived as an unhomey, uncanny duplicate. Kelvin's anthropocentric stance, together with a recording of research notes recorded by the late scientist Gibarian *played back* by the second Harey G-formation, instils in it/her a human sense of guilt. Harey' thus gains consciousness of constituting a mere research instrument of the ocean. This consciousness leads her, or so we are led to believe, to a suicide attempt and subsequently, at her own request, her annihilation at the hands of Snaut and Sartorius. Consciously enabling the death of Harey, Snaut and Sartorius unconsciously repeat Kelvin's earlier unconscious, hence operating at another level, action. Snaut and Sartorius therefore ultimately play the same role as Kelvin – they act as a catalyst of Harey's death. The encounters with G-formations experienced by the members of the station's present crew replay analogous stories of the previous crews. One might say that all the crews replay at different levels one and the same story of unsuccessful contact. Kelvin's present story replays – and

hence *inscribes itself* into – an earlier story of the rescue flight of the reserve pilot André Berton, just as the surname “Berton” itself is an anagram of the surname of the surrealist André Breton. During the solarist expedition of Shannahan’s ship, Berton embarks on a search of the two missing members of the crew – Carucci and Fechner. During the flight, a G-formation in the shape of a gigantic baby appears to Berton, analogous to one that has previously materialised itself to Fechner. In this way Berton in a sense repeats Fechner’s trajectory. Kelvin–Gibarian–Berton–Fechner: all of them dance on the different levels of the cone of time, as if at the shifting play head of a giant tape recorder or in the skipping groove of a vinyl record. But let us go back to Kelvin’s personal story, which plays itself out at the level of the second passive synthesis of time as a repetition and recollection of the past. Such repetition yields the desire to relive the lost time or to make up for the time already passed. This simultaneous feeling of a personal loss and a sense of possibility of regaining the lost time traps Kelvin in the labyrinth of the different layers, the different materialisations of Harey within the Bergsonian cone of time. This situation can only breed the bitter resentment of the human subject, who anthropomorphises the “bad” ocean as a negatively constituted object of recognition. Such all-too-human resentment stands in the way of radical change.

As I see it, one can open the above deadlock for solarist speculation. After all, in *Solaris* radical change has already been happening, what is needed is only affirmation

of the necessity of contingency, the Nietzschean *amor fati*. Harey-formation is not a mimetic recollection of the terrestrial Harey, because this “completely different Harey” [93] has the power of an inhuman, blind obstinacy, for which an individual death constitutes but a sign of a different experience. Furthermore, it/she has the knowledge of the events that the “real” Harey could not have possibly known of because they only happened after her death. In this way, the secret unknowledge of Harey-formation abolishes the order of linear time along with its imperative of being. Ontologically one, together with its/her dress, Harey-formation is the Proustian reminiscence of “Combray [...] which was never present” [*Difference* 85] – a purely onto-aesthetic being; a new, incomprehensible “optical effect” [88]. This observation at the same time sets the direction for further solarist speculation. The ocean does not repeat with a mimetic accuracy that which had “really” happened, once and for all, but ceaselessly becomes through imperceptible metamorphoses. Spawning G-formations, the ocean has been already performing a topological conversion of the psychic interiority into the folds of cosmic matter. The Solaris crew members speculate that a plane where this conversion happens is the level of an unstable subatomic neutrino structure stabilised by a forcefield. This inhering neutrino sub-layer is shared both by the ocean and its G-formations. As Kelvin observes, the ocean “introduc[ed] into (...) [the] subatomic structure inconceivable changes which probably had something to do with the purposes that drove it” [*Solaris* 268]. Even well before his arrival at the planet, Kelvin must have already intuitively sensed the problem of change as

a topological conversion occurring between the psychic and the cosmic processes²¹. Symptomatically, his doctoral dissertation explored parallels between recordings of human cortical patterns corresponding to emotions and certain oscillations in the curves registering discharges of oceanic currents specific to, amongst others, certain parts of mimoids [273]. In this way, already during his stay on Earth Kelvin orients his interest and fascination towards the Solaris ocean – the Solaris event. In the book's opening scene, Kelvin's capsule is launched into space, landing at the research station located on the surface of the ocean. The scene is repeated in the final part of the novel whereby Kelvin descends to the surface of the ocean. What has happened in between, between the two times in the series? Somewhere along the way, imperceptibly, Kelvin becomes worthy and capable of the oceanic event. This metamorphosis makes Kelvin, in the final and ultimate scene, equal to the unequal. He becomes an anomalous human equal to a no-body who in his/its non-being becomes close to the inhuman. Kelvin describes his ineffable, excessive experience as follows: "I had never before been so aware of its vast presence, its powerful, inexorable silence breathing evenly through its waves. Staring in wonderment, I was descending to regions of inertia that might have seemed inaccessible, and in the gathering intensity of engrossment I was becoming one with this

21 Framed in this way, the fundamental problematics of the novel goes beyond the disjunctive alternative: either the ocean or the Kelvin-Harey relation, as Wojciech Orliński would have it. For Orliński, Lem ultimately subscribes to the second option. Orliński sees the ocean as an empty place (or a plot device) which does not matter on its own but only insofar as it propels the novel's story forward [*Lem* 205-208].

fluid unseeing colossus, as if—without the slightest effort, without words, without a single thought—I was forgiving it for everything” [319]. What is at stake here is a descent towards formlessness, and abandonment of memory of the past as the ground of time coupled with a fracture of the stable I which in its shattering opens towards the world of impersonal differences of intensity. As Deleuze frames it, “the ground has been superseded by a groundlessness, a universal ungrounding which turns upon itself and causes only the yet-to-come to return” [*Difference* 91]. Akin to Hamlet, Captain Ahab from *Moby Dick*²², or Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, Kelvin leaps into the unknown, the impersonal and pre-individual – something that cannot be signified or understood. He leaps into an inhuman future, certain only of its contingency, into “chance concealed in the future” [*Solaris* 321], sustained only by a belief in the “the time of cruel wonders” [321]. He plunges, disintegrating into a blind future that, as we might speculate, makes no discrimination between forces, humans, materials, tools, mimoids and G-formations.

Speculation 2: Solarism | Inhumanism

As we have seen, *Solaris* concludes with an unverifiable speculation. The ocean produces an a-signifying, a-visual, ahuman experience “without a single thought” [319], one that operates at the level of differences of intensity. Lem’s characterisation of the ocean itself also obeys such non-representational, impersonal, intensive

²² Lem expressly acknowledged the affinity of *Solaris* with Melville’s *Moby Dick*. See [“The *Solaris*”].

logic. First of all, the descriptions of the ocean in the novel are not subject to the sovereign patriarchal privilege of authorial omniscience. The narrator, Kelvin, succumbs instead to a cacophony of disparate solarist positions. In this sense, one can say that the ocean desubjectivates the figure of the narrator, producing a vision of Solaris that functions akin to a vibrating, opaque crystal shot with insurmountable problems and paradoxes. As Kelvin sees it, “fragments of perhaps brilliant intellectual constructions, these fragments are mixed indiscriminately with the products of utter foolishness bordering on insanity” [38]. Despite the plethora of accumulated information, we still do not know what the ocean can do, and all we can sense in our empirical experience is that it goes beyond the human. Solarist knowledge is therefore holey, blind and headless. It opens up towards something within itself that eludes knowledge, proliferating the Deleuzoguattarian *zones of indiscernibility* between static categories. Let us survey this problematic field, extending the solarist archive to encompass the contributions of Deleuze and Simondon.

As one can glean from the book’s solariana, chiefly found in the “Solaricists”²³ chapter, the Solaris planet revolves around two suns: a red one and a blue one. The planet is inhabited by a “thinking” [38] ocean which somehow shapes – or rather, let’s speculate – *modulates* in the Si-

23 See [*Solaris* 27-39]. Solarist speculations also make up the lion’s share of the “Thinkers” chapter [257-274].

mondonian sense, and thus sustains its unstable²⁴ orbit.

24 The system generated by the ocean and the planetary orbit can be understood in terms of Simondon as “metastable” because it is neither stable nor unstable. It is therefore not a question of mutual opposition between the already constituted objects, but a state of disparation consisting in the existence of many mutually incompatible, non-communicating levels or dimensions of reality. As Deleuze explains, a metastable system “thus implies a fundamental difference, like a state of dissymmetry. It is nonetheless a system insofar as the *difference* therein is like *potential energy*, like a *difference of potential* distributed within certain limits” [“On Gilbert” 87]. The distribution of intensive differences does not give rise to individual forms, but corresponds to the existence of irreducible pre-individual singularities. An example of this is the process of crystallisation in a supersaturated saline solution. In such solution, comprising a pre-individual milieu, the introduction of a crystalline seed acts as a singularity. The seed becomes a catalyst which makes it possible to resolve the state of disparation of its milieu through an internal resonance between them. In this sense, the seed can be said to initiate a process of information understood as a communication between disparate realities. See [Simondon 93-115, 222-237]. See also Daniela Voss [“Simondon”] for her excellent analysis of Simondon’s notion of individuation. Interestingly, at the very beginning of writing *Solaris*, in one of his letters from 1959, Lem saw the ocean in parallel categories, additionally employing Wiener’s notion of “steering”, which relates both to the animal and the machine. As Lem wrote, “there exists some form of circulation of information, some internal steering processes. [...] This creature does not have any EXTERNAL language, because there is nobody with whom it might converse” [Lem quoted in Orliński, see Lem 206]. Returning to Simondon, the internal communication between the saline solution and the crystalline seed brings about individuation through the growth of layers on the surface of the seed [Simondon 95], hence through the establishment of a new level which resolves the problematic disparation [232-233]. For Simondon, metastability is a prerequisite for individuation across the whole natural-cultural continuum. As Deleuze summarises, metastability should be understood as “a mobile overlapping of incompatible wholes, almost similar, and yet disparate.” [“On Gilbert” 87]. Symptomatically, the final scene of *Solaris* contains the description of an encounter with a formation that merges out of an oceanic black wave. Lem describes it as follows: the wave “hesitated, withdrew, then flowed over my hand yet without touching it, in such a way that a narrow layer of air remained between the surface of my gauntlet and the inside of the covering, which instantly changed consistency, turning from liquid to almost fleshy” [*Solaris* 318]. Contact with the ocean is not presented here as assembling together two discrete, separate elements but a phenomenon of internal resonance between two disparate levels which brings about qualitative change. What is interesting, the solarist corpus in *Solaris* – in its deliberations on the nature of the ocean – also presents a competing, dialectical vision of the ocean’s development, making a reference to Le Châtelier’s principle, known in biology as the principle of homeostasis. According to this principle, derived from chemical thermodynamics, a system subject to an external factor counteracts it, striving towards equilibrium. As Kelvin summarises, “starting from its original form, that of a proto-ocean, a solution of sluggishly interacting chemical substances, under the pressure of conditions (meaning the orbital changes that threatened its existence) [...] it had been able to jump directly to the phase of a ‘homeostatic ocean’” [*Solaris* 31]. For Deleuze, Le Châtelier’s principle’s captures and cancels out the notion of difference of intensity: “difference is the sufficient reason of change only to the extent that the change tends to negate difference” [*Difference* 223].

Solaris also functions in Lem's novel both as the name of the research station that probes the ocean and as a corpus of scientific and philosophical thought (as "solariana") that the encounter of the ocean provokes. The novel problematizes its characterization of the ocean as a "thinking" entity. The ocean might be deemed as "thinking" only in a special sense, only insofar as "thinking without consciousness (...) [might be considered] possible" [39]. As Lem explained on his webpage, "one should not speak of a 'thinking' or a 'non-thinking Ocean, however the Ocean certainly was active, undertook some voluntary actions and was capable of doing things which were entirely alien to the human domain" ["The Solaris"]. The status of the ocean might as well be conceived in terms of material processes parallel to, and yet going beyond, inorganic geological processes such as rock formation and sedimentation, on the one hand, and to cancerous growth, on the other [39]²⁵. The ocean functions according to a specific, albeit inhuman, logic; a kind of rationality whose rules are, however, inaccessible to humans. Solaristics deems it a "plasmic machine", i.e. "a formation that in our sense might be devoid of life, but was capable of undertaking purposive actions on a scale that (...) was astronomical" [30]. This purposiveness is described elsewhere in the novel as

²⁵ Lem's account of the ocean in terms of a paradoxical proximity, opacity and indiscernibility between the vital, biological processes of individuation, on the one hand, and the inorganic, physical processes of individuation, on the other, sets *Solaris* apart from Simondon, who makes a sharp distinction between the two. As Deleuze summarizes, in Simondon "the physical individual creates and prolongs itself to the limit of the body – for example, crystal – whereas the living being grows from the interior and the exterior, with the whole content of its interior in contact 'topologically' with the content of exterior space" ["On Gilbert" 88].

“mechanical”, but this should not be understood in the sense of the teleological logic of the human mechanism that *serves for* something. As Kelvin explains it, a class of the ocean’s creations (‘symmetriads’) “produces in its interior things that are often called ‘momentary machines,’ though these formations bear no resemblance to machines constructed by people—the term only refers to a relatively narrow, and by virtue of this as if ‘mechanical’, purposiveness of operation” [182, modified translation]. Such purposiveness belongs more to the realm of technology than the field of biological life. Or, perhaps, it simply reformulates the very opposition between the “biological” and the “technological” pointing towards the ocean’s processes individuation as technical operations. Paradoxically, the ocean is also described solaristically as “living”, but not in the canonical sense of a biological organism bestowed with a nervous, cellular or protein structure and with a patterned response to stimuli, because it has none of those attributes [37]. Interestingly, it is the G-formations who possess those features, but only – as the members of the Solaris crew speculate – as a “camouflage”, “mask,” or supercopy” [156] and hence, as a façade or an effect which ultimately refers to the fundamental, imperceptible and invisible, subatomic plane of incomprehensible neutrino metamorphoses²⁶. The ocean is a plasmic, contractile and ever-mutating gelatinous “amorphous ooze” [31], changing its shapes, colours and phases. But at the same time this mucous formation is not spectral

26 See [*Solaris* 156-158].

or disembodied; instead, its black waves have the definite animal character of muscles [314], resonating perhaps with the might of the eponymous Melvillian *Moby Dick*. The ocean is traversed with the incomprehensible electrical, magnetic and gravitational impulses whose intensive thresholds effect changes in its shapes, colours, textures and phases. The ocean is “living” in the sense of a “parabiological” [30] formation that operates at the level of fields of cosmic forces, whose metabolism modulates and stabilizes the unstable gravitational pull of its planetary orbit. As the narrator remarks, “the living ocean certainly does act – it’s just that it does so according to notions other than those of humans” [38]. What is at stake in the ocean’s plasmic functioning is not a sensorimotor action-reaction occurring within the already constituted time and space. It is rather the case of actions at a distance performed on a scale of an unthinkable magnitude through a system of hidden internal resonances. Such actions not so much happen in time and space as generate them, opening themselves up to the logic of the Deleuzian third synthesis and its repetition in the Eternal Return. As Lem’s narrator points out, the ocean “was capable of directly modeling space-time specifications” [32]. What is exactly the ocean’s mode of operation? One of the solarist hypotheses explains that it “occupies itself with thousand-fold transformations—’ontological autometamorphosis’” [38]. As I see it, the ocean is a differentiator, not so much in the sense of qualitative diversity of it (de)formations but, most of all, as an informal operator of cosmic, planetary and astronomical differential forces.

What implications for the problem of contact with the radical Outside stem from the formulation of the ocean presented in *Solaris*? The metamorphic ocean can be speculatively understood as a torsion in the field of matter-force which modulates and individuates that which is enveloped by its penetrating radiation. It operates as a metastable system possessing many heterogenous and disparate levels, between which flash the discharges of imperceptible resonances bringing about change. The ocean is both at once an individual and its own “*environment of individuation*” [“On Gilbert” 86]. What Lem’s artistic and philosophical experiment presents us with is the gift of a “cosmopolitical proposal”²⁷ in the sense of Isabelle Stengers: how does one make contact with that which does not, or does necessarily wish to, have a voice, at least not on the anthropocentric, human, humane, humanist or other pre-existing, externally imposed terms? According to some solarists in Lem’s novel, the ocean’s unfathomable vectors of operation merit its designation as an “oceanic idiot” [*Solaris* 38]. Such formulation resonates with the Stengersian figure of the idiot who “demands that we slow down, that we don’t consider ourselves authorized to believe we possess the meaning of what we know” [1995].

Both the *Solaris*-book and the Solaris-ocean constitute an artistic-philosophical – or, rather, an *onto-aesthetic* – proposal which not so much shows as launches a certain mode of individuation, whose intensity goes beyond the human, beyond life as we know it. Through its formations, which reso-

27 See [Stengers 994-1003].

nate with such non-Euclidean formations as “Lobachevsky’s cones and Riemann’s negative curvatures” [*Solaris* 183], the ocean generates an unlife of intensive multiplicities²⁸. Such multiplicities dissolve the fixed position of the subject and its psychological/oedipal axioms, or rather *givens*. What is at stake here is the specific vision of an encounter of the Outside, of which one can speculate that it functions as a differential movement of multiplicities. An avatar of these changes can be found in the ocean’s productions-destructions, foundations-terminations, stabilisations-destabilisations of shapes, which are signs-symptoms of metamorphoses of invisible forces. To be precise, this oceanic productivity can be understood immanently as an in-formal, auto-generative material sign-force. Oceanic formations are expressive traits which do not express a meaning external to the level of matter-forces. Lem unfurls a veritable ethology of the ocean’s (de)formations, which constitute modes of its functioning. He gifts us with dendromountains, extensors, megamushrooms, mimoids, symmetriads, asymmetriads, vertebrids and rapidos [171-172]²⁹. The ocean’s heterogenous

28 Drawing on Bergson and Riemann, in his 1966 *Bergsonism* Deleuze develops the notion of virtual multiplicity, later on also called intensive multiplicity, defined as that which “does not divide up without changing in kind, [that which] changes in kind in the process of dividing up” [Bergsonism 42]. The concept of virtual multiplicity / intensive quantity is subsequently elaborated in Deleuze’s doctoral thesis (*Difference and Repetition*). As Deleuze explains, “an intensive quantity may be divided, but not without changing its nature. In a sense, it is therefore indivisible, but only because no part exists prior to the division and no part retains the same nature after division” [*Difference* 237]. Such a formulation corresponds to the Simondonian vision of individuation.

29 Given that *Solaris* was written in Zakopane in southern Poland, Orliński sees in these topographies shards of Zakopane’s mountain landscape [*Lem* 215]. Regardless of whether one accepts the validity of biographical criticism, such insight places *Solaris* alongside the novel *Nietota: The Secret Book of the Tatra Mountains* published in 1910 by the Young Poland poet and playwright Tadeusz Miciński. In the novel, the mountainous Tatra ecologies are considered in the field of biological (the eponymous northern firmoss: *Huperzia selago*), physical (processes of mountain formation), psychic (the protagonist Arjaman) and collective (the resurfacing of the Polish collectivity) individuation.

formations are designated by one of the novel's solarist hypotheses as singular "works of art" [34]. Specific ways of entanglement of intensive forces have affinities with particular styles of art – ancient Babylonian, classical Greek and Roman, Gothic, Baroque, Abstract – making resonance with musical, architectural, visual or cinematic compositions³⁰. On the other hand, the ocean engenders absurd biological classifications "**Type: Polytheria, Order: Syncytialia, Class: Metamorpha**" [33], and yet it is the sole member of its class; it is auto-comparative. Interestingly, in his descriptions of oceanic processes, Lem's narrator equates their aesthetic dimension with the material processes of individuation: "the morphogenetic processes – the making of successive architectures" [187, modified translation]. In this way Lem approaches the Deleuzoguattarian transcendental-empirical understanding of art as an ontogenesis in the Real, whose tenets I will outline shortly. As I mentioned earlier, the "idiotic" mode of the ocean's operation goes beyond the human sensorimotor schema of stimulus-response. The ocean chips away at the schema with, on the one hand, a childlike clumsiness³¹, curiosity and spirit of experimentation, but, on the other hand, with its lack of reaction to stimuli, motor deceleration, acceleration or a complete failure of func-

30 See [*Solaris* 184-7].

31 The narrator of *Solaris* expressly frames the ocean's functioning in terms of "the mind of a small child" [312]. The child's lack of motor coordination refers back to the Lacanian mirror stage which establishes an artificial, symbolic plane of identification – in the shape of a mirror surface or a verbal repetition – for the still motorically uncoordinated infant. In *Solaris*, the gigantic materialisation of Fechner's child, as encountered by Berton, does not grasp the process of hylemorphic formation as encapsulated in the mirror stage. Its lack of coordination has its own internal, rigid serial logic. As Berton describes it, "in general it gave the impression of a living child; it was just those movements, as if someone were attempting. . . as if someone were trying them out. [...] The movements were unnatural. [...] made no sense. Normally any movement has some meaning, it serves some purpose. . ." [128-129].

tioning, and at the same time with what, from the human vantage point, appears as a *breakdown* in the functioning of senses. Symptoms of such perceived sensory breakdown are the ocean's aphasic silence or its ostensible blindness. Kelvin diagnoses the ocean's overcoming of the sensorimotor schema with his vision of the ocean as "a cripple God, who always desires more than he's able to have" [310]³².

It is worthwhile adding here, even though a detailed analysis would exceed the scope of the article, that the encounter of the ocean not only proceeds in *Solaris* via its solarist *mise en abîme*. The ocean's inhumanity also launches a singular, depersonalised narrative machine that, through its particular stylistic features, bulldozes narrative and representational clichés. Accordingly, *Solaris* is distinguished by its Beckettian dialogues full of ellipses and repetitions, which yield the vision of a hindered, slowed-down or invisible communication. *Solaris* is also characterised by its Baroque levelling of the difference between the figure and its background, or rather a singular Mannerist gesture whereby the novel's expressive stylistic traits liberate themselves from the yoke of the organic content of its plot³³. Such an effect is obtained through the dispassionate force of detailed description, whose playhead does not distinguish between humans,

32 Such a vision of God, as the constitutive difference of intensity, brings to mind Lurianic Kabbalah and its notion of *Tzimtzum*, i.e. the constitutive auto-limitation or contraction of G-d.

33 In this sense, *Solaris* makes resonance with the literature of Polish Baroque and in particular the vivid metamorphoses of expressive material in the epic poem of Samuel ze Skrzywny Twardowski from 1633 called *The Important Mission of His Grace Duke Krzysztof Zbaraski from Sigismund III to Sultan Mustafa*. The epic is an encounter of otherness, whereby its linear historical plot grounded in Polish identity succumbs to the force of the metre, chromatic effects and a dense texture of numerous Turkisms.

their tools, the minutiae of the equipment found on the station, as well as the ocean itself. Writing *Solaris* did not consist of the actualisation of a prior idea, but in the individuation and production of the writer in the technical process of writing³⁴.

Lem's vision resonates with the Deleuzian philosophical project of transcendental empiricism formulated in *Difference and Repetition*. This "superior empiricism" [*Difference* 57] is preoccupied with the problem of an experimental contact with the Outside, which in its incomprehensible excess has the characteristics of the work of art. As Deleuze explains, "the work of art leaves the domain of representation in order to become 'experience', transcendental empiricism or science of the sensible" [56]. The work of art does not therefore operate in the field of representation, but ontology, or rather, ontogenesis. What is at stake here is a creative sensing of the genetic conditions of – the conditions of possibility which have given rise to – the sensible, empirical experience. Deleuze frames the problem as follows: "something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*" [139]. It is an encounter of "difference, potential difference and difference of intensity as the reason behind qualitative diversity" [57]. The object of the encounter is "not a sensible being but the being *of* the sensible. It is not the given but that by which

34 As Lem reminisces, "when I led Kelvin to the Solaris station and made him see the frightened, drunken Snaut, I did not know myself what made him so anxious. I had no idea why Snaut was so afraid of a totally innocent stranger. At that time I didn't know – but soon I was to find out, because I kept on writing..." ["Solaris. Lem's Opinion"].

the given is given” [140]. Such encounter eludes sensory perception and can only be sensed³⁵. In Lem’s novel, to ethically encounter the ocean is not to attempt to conquer and qualify otherness in time and in space. Thought comes from the inaccessible Outside which cannot be captured via recognition and re-presentation or through memory understood as a reactivation of a past event. The living ocean unfolds a field of problems, akin to an expanding rip in the fabric. In the final moments of *Solaris*, when Kelvin lands on the shore of a mimoid on the surface of the ocean, the ocean does not inspire his hope for a specific outcome, such for example as the recovery of a lost love. Instead, Kelvin experiences the non-localisable sensation of permanent wait as an affirmation of radical contingency. The ocean has carried out Kelvin’s individuation, engendering a change in him. The protagonist opens up to the radical Outside whose operations cannot be fathomed or mastered, abandoning himself to its differential force: “I had never before been so aware of its vast presence, its powerful, inexorable silence breathing evenly through its waves” [*Solaris* 319]. The oceanic radiation of something that will remain inaccessible to senses and consciousness is the force of charismatic energy exuded by the abstract monochrome paintings by Mark Rothko adorning the walls of a minimalistic ecumenical chapel in Houston, whose encounter was movingly described Timothy Morton in *ArtReview* [Morton].

35 According to Deleuze, what is at stake here is “the paradoxical existence of a ‘something’ which simultaneously cannot be sensed (from the point of view of the empirical exercise) and can only be sensed (from the point of view of the transcendent exercise)” [*Difference* 236].

Speculation 3: Cine-solarism | *Twin Peaks: The Return and Annihilation*

Lem's vision of contact with imperceptible forces sketched above is particularly useful in capturing and diagnosing a number of singular characteristics of contemporary cinematic artistic strategies.

In particular, I see the solarist onto-aesthetics at work propelling the third season of David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* TV series released in 2017. The third season in the series forgoes the traditionally understood narration and representational structure in favour of transmission of the inhuman forces of crackling electricity and modulations of colour that deform and qualitatively change the protagonist, agent Dale "Coop" Cooper. Another element of the season's solarist logic is a proliferation of series, which can be observed in the decentering triplication of the main character (Coop, Mr. C, Dougie Jones); numerological variations on the theme of specific minutes, times, dates occurring on various levels through the series; compositional repetitions; incorporation of footage from concerts performed live at Twin Peak's Roadhouse pub by music groups who turn the irreducible singularity of the icon singer Julee Cruise, known from the previous seasons, into a burst of series of clones; compulsively repeated gestures and tics which impersonally individuate the host of the numerous characters that appear in the series. Solarism can also be encountered in a rupture, or a slowing down, of the sensory-motor schema of the cinematic image which, as Deleuze shows in his cine-books, has traditionally organised cinema's semiotics according

to the principle of reaction to a previous action, as exemplified by Hollywood's detective and police movies with their scenes of car chases. The character of *agent* Cooper, derived from film noir, as well as the figure of Kyle MacLachlan as an iconic Hollywood *actor* is a figure that diagnoses cinematic clichés, relaxing the feedback loop between action and reaction and its power of agency. This can be seen in the catatonic, sometimes also infantile, state endured by the protagonist, his aphasia, amnesia, as well as the mechanical rigidity of his bodily movements. The specific passive situation of the main character who does not act but who undergoes, endures, succumbs to an event – to whom something happens – can be plotted onto the larger solarist condition of the third season whereby the sensorimotor schema of functioning of the cine-image makes way for the purely chromatic, sonorous, haptic and gestural situations. This can be observed not only in the particular Lynchian characterisation of Coop's character but also in the scenes where one can hardly see what is happening – in the sense of progressing action – while at the same time the frame becomes filled with a stroboscopic pulsation of light that surveys zones of an almost inscrutable darkness. The season also employs techniques reminiscent of stop-motion animation, whose grating micro-delays and discontinuities overthrow cinema's subjection to the imperative of ensuring the illusion of movement. This is especially visible in the scene of Andy's vanishing in the forest in the fourteenth episode. Finally, the season fully develops the potential of the sound layer of the cine-image, treating its exaggerated sound design as a semiotic category

on its own. Such sonic figures compose the scene through their amplitude, timbre, acoustics and the temporal arrangement of the sequence. Frequently they seamlessly pass into live recordings of concerts performed at the series' Roadhouse bar. All the above features of the solarist inhumanity mesh together in a metastable way in a striking scene where the triplicated protagonist, operating on three different incommensurate planes simultaneously – as Coop, Mr. C and Dougie Jones, passes through a short-circuiting electrical socket, hence a socket in the critical situation of a difference of intensity. The internal resonance between the three figures produces an impersonal human dummy that materialises from the socket's holes out of the substance of a solidifying black smoke. As can be seen, *Twin Peaks: The Return* tackles the problem of change, which plays itself out on the level of the Deleuzian repetition in the Eternal Return, understood as a play of intensive multiplicities or, corresponding to it, the Simondonian account of individuation. The third season in the series is autothematic because it contemplates the ontological nature of its serialised genre. A TV series is ontologically one but at the same time it is many through the diversity of its seasons and episodes. Lynch has discovered the mystery of a burst of series in the Eternal Return as the ground of the phenomenon of the (TV) series' serialisation. *Twin Peaks: The Return* is the third time in the series launched by the *Twin Peaks* event. It cannot therefore be considered separately from the other two times in the series, the two previous seasons. In the first time of the series, agent Cooper orients himself towards a charming logging town in upstate Washington

close to the Canadian border. The Pacific Northwest, also known as Cascadia, fascinates with its forest and mountain topographies. This splendourous topography goes however beyond a quaint local charm, coexisting as it does with the animist plane of tracks and traces and their intensive metamorphoses of spirits and souls. The intensive passages of souls on the spiritual plane in turn corresponds to, and diagnoses, an ecology of metabolic and technical changes of trees/wood in the Twin Peaks area. In the second season, Cooper becomes capable of the Cascadian event, ultimately, in the season's last episode, disappearing in Black Lodge which forms one of the poles of the spiritual realm. The space of the third season is occupied by the caesura of the event; Coop's "I" breaks into a series of pieces, partaking in the intensive metamorphoses of a material-incorporeal world. A potent avatar of the inhuman event and the burst of series that characterises repetition in the Eternal Return can be found in *Twin Peaks. The Return* in the scene of denotation of the first atom bomb, which took place in 1945 in the Jornada del Muerto (The Working Day of the Dead) desert in the state of New Mexico. The third season also investigates the temporal caesura of the twenty-five years that have passed in the series since the events presented in the second season and at the same time the caesura of the twenty-five years that have passed "in real life" since the filming of the previous season. While the first two seasons explore personal stories of its main character, the third season shows the impossibility of regaining lost time, the impossibility of saving Laura Palmer, opening itself up to the caesura of cosmic infinity that penetrates Cooper's

brain. The third season also resonates with *Solaris* and its G-formations through its motif of the Tibetan *tulpa* – a material emanation of spiritual power.

Another solarist art-work is the 2018 film *Annihilation*, directed by Alex Garland. This sci-fi feature charts the journey of a group of scientists into the centre of an anomalous ecosystem, called The Shimmer, spawned by extra-terrestrial forces on the southern coast of the U.S. The anomaly acts like a prism that refracts, deforms and multiplies whatever material shape or genetic material it comes into contact with.

Time-wise, the bulk of the film is taken up by tiresome clichés of the genre. Accordingly, we have a crew of specialists sent on a mission to chart the unknown, a history of many unsuccessful past attempts at making contact, flashback cuts to personal backstories of the crew members, and mutated animals. The plot of *Annihilation* is very similar to *Solaris*. The story of *Annihilation*'s protagonists, Kane and Lena, recalls the story of Kelvin and Harey. The film's non-representational solarist logic does not, however, appear until its final scene, set in a lighthouse located in the epicentre of an anomalous coastal zone populated by fractal, crystalline formations. This qualitative diversity opens itself up to the ontogenetic, differentiating machine lodged in the basement of the lighthouse. The inhuman machine probes Lena, producing a metallic humanoid from a drop of her blood. In a close-up of the machine's inside, we can see how the processes of cellular individuation give way to a tight-knit crystalline structure

that ultimately makes up the humanoid. Lena confronts the newly individuated metallic humanoid who mimics her gestures. In an arresting scene, co-composed by the sterile, abstract, inhuman electronic music of Geoff Barrow and Ben Salisbury, the protagonist is locked in the embrace of the humanoid who copies her movements. This excruciating scene resonates with the paintings of Francis Bacon, depicting the struggles of coupled figures, akin to wrestlers on a boxing ring. This unbearable eternal simultaneity of movements, the instantaneous repetition of gestures, however, brings about an imperceptible qualitative change. We might speculate that what is at stake here is the Deleuzian “invisible, imperceptible *dark precursor*” [*Difference* 119] that flashes between two heterogeneous, disparate series and engenders internal resonance. The representational logic of narration breaks apart: the nightmarish choreography, which levels the human and the nonhuman, signifies nothing. The anomaly hence deforms the cine-image and turns it into a sonorous, haptic and chromatic situation that operates as a play of flashes on a metallic surface. This inhuman choreography heralds Lena’s death and her metamorphosis into, or being swapped by, the humanoid. Such death remains a death only from the point of view of the already constituted subjectivity. According to Deleuze, the rupture of the human “I” at the same time opens itself up to the world of pre-individual singularities. In Garland’s film, change is signalled by the metallic flash/lustre of Lena’s eyes in the final scene. It is at the same time the flash of a problem because it is impossible to know if the protagonist still remains her own self or has already become a phantom formation.

Solarism Now for Radical Contingency!

As I have demonstrated in the article, Lem's literary legacy has become the inspiration for contemporary deliberations concerning science, art, culture and media. This is especially important in the current times of profound ecological, economical and social changes going beyond the human scale and human understanding. Notions such as Katherine Hayles's "cognitive nonconscious" or Joanna Zylińska's "nonhuman photography" pragmatically insert Lem-inspired concepts into global circulation, problematising perceptual clichés regarding "media", "technology" and "nature". The outline of solarism sketched in the article is a speculative proposal for/towards the future of art and philosophy beyond the Anthropocene. Its ahumanism can be found in its influence on the human, also seen in terms of an empirical historical category, which orients itself towards ineffable event. Passing through a threshold of intensity, the human changes. Metamorphosis therefore always has its vector but at the same time it both diagnoses and goes beyond its milieu, both its "natural" and "social" environment. Undergoing change, the human ceases to be, but at the same time opens up to the world of invisible differences of intensity which can only be sensed non-sensorily. Inhumanism speaks to the irreducible character of the radical Outside which yields paradoxes and a spirit of speculation, and which also penetrates deep into works of art that resonate with its forces through their novel stylistic configurations. Irradiated with the Outside, the solarist aesthetics forgoes the traditional narration in favour of pure sonic and haptic situations. Framed in this way, the ahuman-inhuman solarism allows us to appreciate the uncanny intuition of the author

of *Solaris*, which – a half century after the book’s publication – still continues to draw new directions of thought and aesthetics. What is truly astonishing is the curious convergence of Lem’s philosophical orientation with Simondon, Deleuze, as well as speculative realism. Simondon defended his doctoral dissertation – in which he presented an exposition of his theory of individuation – in 1958, a year after before Lem started writing *Solaris*. *Solaris* affords an inspiration for a new reading of Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*, whence it extracts invaluable tropes of the Simondonian philosophy of individuation. What is more, Lem’s thought launches the project of ethical resistance against the ideological takeover of change and contingency by the state apparatus, which can be extended to the connectivist logic of global capitalism. All this leads me to the diagnosis that the time of Lem is yet to come upon us. It is not so much the case of Lem’s gift of anticipating contemporary technological solutions, as his vindication of the contingency of the cosmos and giving voice to the creative force of non-knowledge, smouldering slowly in the crevices of what is given and known. What is at issue here is to move with difficulty in the shadow of a falling planet. To strenuously wrestle with the Outside, bathing in the splendid excess of a planetary glow, akin to Justine in von Trier’s *Melancholia* or *Blessed Salomea* woven out of the mineral-vegetal imagination of Stanisław Wyspiański. To succumb to the radiation of the solarist planet. Let us therefore speak slowly, think and act with difficulty, for cosmic contingency – solarism now!

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