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## Geophilosophy, For What?

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Revisiting the Idea of Sustainable Living and Development

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# Geophilosophy, For What?

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## Abstract

Geo-philosophy, born from the fusion of “geo” and “philosophy,” bears a productive ambiguity: spanning geography, geology, and something even more expansive: a super-massive, unclassifiable rhizome. It invites us to untangle the entwinement of human and non-human life, confronting the wreckage of modernity’s legacy. The Enlightenment’s blind optimism birthed the myth of human exceptionalism—a myth that now teeters on the brink of planetary collapse. In this delusional world, the messiah complex thrives, embodied by billionaires like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, whose fantasies of off-world salvation mask the ongoing commodification and destruction of Earth. This is called as geo-fetishism, and masquerading as hope: the heroic gesture of saving the world while devouring it. As we descend deeper into the Dark Anthropocene, the human merges with the non-human in uncanny proximity, dissolving boundaries and unsettling species hierarchies. Also, posthumanism arises not as liberation, but as a symptom of collapse, blurring the borders of world-systems and natural kinds amid thickening ecological dread. Here, geophilosophy reveals its radical edge, yet also its tragic limitation. It speaks not to the triumphant, but to the defeated, to those who live in the ruins, haunted by extinction, carrying the crisis of being like a wound. In this “wonderful” ruin of a world, I challenge geo-philosophy, for whom, and for what? Unfortunately, it is limited only for the oppressed, the defeated, the marginalized beings. Only they can grasp its “essence”—those haunted by death, who carry the crisis of existence like a love-hate companion. It is for the lost, whose struggle is etched into the very bones of the Earth, enduring until their final breath, in the name of extinction nihilism.

## Keywords

geophilosophy, dark anthropocene, extinction nihilism, dead labour.

## 1 First Reflection

In 2023, I had the opportunity to meet Rick Dolphijn for the first time at the *Critical Island* conference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Our exchange of ideas was simple yet insightful. I learned a great deal from his presentation on new materialism and archipelagic thinking. After his presentation, I asked him to sign and leave a note in the book I was reading at the time, entitled *What is Philosophy?* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1994). Rick wrote something along these lines: “*Hope you find a way to read Geophilosophy otherwise—new concept, new practice, and new geophilosophy.*” Accidentally, that moment inspires me to rethinking my own geophilosophy and bring my question also about: Geophilosophy, for what?

Geophilosophy, emerging from the fusion of “geo” and “philosophy,” carries an inherent ambiguity, navigating between the realms of geography and geology, or perhaps extending beyond them into something even more vast. It can be envisioned as an expansive, super-massive rhizome that resists fixed categorization. At times, we consider the [E]arth as part of *geo/logy*, while at other times, we think of the [W]orld as part of *geo/graphy*. This fluidity makes geophilosophy a concept that is both ambiguous and indeterminate. At its core, geophilosophy is *Earth-thinking*: it emerges in moments of contingency rather than as a universal framework.

As articulated in *What is Philosophy?*, philosophy functions as the mode of abstraction (thought) as a machine, creates concepts through the relation between territory and earth (particular milieu) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). Geophilosophy, in this sense, is not merely a spatial operation but represents a distinct, transversal mode of philosophy: one that diverges from conventional understandings of space and geography. Rather than mapping fixed locations, it engages with the dynamic processes of thought, territory, and conceptual creation.

Building on this perspective, *geophilosophy in the making* challenges the traditional image of thought as a purely dualistic activity confined to the subject-object relationship. Instead of reinforcing this separation, geophilosophy continuously engages in processes of *de/re/territorialization*, reshaping and unsettling the frameworks through which thought is conceived. Conventional philosophical discourse often appeals to transcendent rationalities, limiting thought to the internal reflections of an individual contemplating an external world (Keating & Williams, 2022). In contrast, geophilosophy in the making recognizes that thinking is not restricted to scientific-empirical milieus but is also produced within the rhizomatic flux of contingent, non-philosophical dimensions. This approach embraces thought as an emergent, dynamic process shaped by its entanglements with the material and conceptual terrains it traverses.

At the same time, geophilosophy can also be understood as a form of *metaphilosophy* (a philosophy of philosophy) that interrogates the very nature, boundaries, methodologies, and goals of philosophical inquiry. Rather than seeking an absolute foundation for thought, geophilosophy engages in self-reflective questioning, much like the inquiries posed by Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* (1994). Here, philosophy is not treated as a system of fixed truths but as an evolving, experimental practice that questions its own conditions of possibility. Ultimately, geophilosophy does not position the world of thought as an orientation toward absolute truth but instead challenges the fundamental question of how philosophy is possible and why it matters.

## 2 For What? From Geophilosophy to Anthropocene?

The Anthropocene is a moment of becoming that represents a transformative phase in collective existence. Humans are now regarded as both a geological force and a new agency on geological time scale trajectory. In March 2024, the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) officially declares that the Anthropocene is an ongoing geological ‘event’, not a new geological epoch after 15 years debates (Witze, 2024). At this point, the critical discourse surrounding the ratification of the Anthropocene is still debatable across various multidisciplinary disciplines (Thomas et al., 2020; Zalasiewicz et al., 2019). One interesting aspect gleaned from this debate is the emergence of various sub-disciplines, concepts, and philosophical thoughts that contribute to our understanding of the Anthropocene. Bobbette and Donovan (2019) encourage a new emerging subdiscipline in political geology concerned with the interconnectedness of geological processes, power, governance, matter, politics, and other relevant diverse disciplines.

Political geology also focuses on the theme of geosocial formation in the Anthropocene (Yusoff, 2017), planetary social life and inhuman potentialities (Clark & Szerszynski, 2020), and geo-cosmological thinking around the modern world (Bashford et al., 2023). Similarly, Angela Kallhoff and Eva Liedauer (2024) suggested the idea of *greentopia* in exploring the complexity of human nature in the Anthropocene and encouraged our critical imagination as a new form of utopianism to address the environmental crises of our time.

Indeed, I believe that the Anthropocene also possible serves as a philosophical canvas for our new understanding of the status of humanity in experiencing their world-life in flux. However, a growing body of philosophical literature in the Anthropocene is still very limited; some ranges of philosophical themes only concerned either the value or ethics of the Anthropocene. In this essay, I would like to present several critical studies on philosophy, especially in the new materialism and speculative turn for investigating and questioning the status of human agency in the Anthropocene. For example, Thomas Nail (2021) challenges us to reconsider a new geological stratum made of human waste, and it links with a new proposal in the broader perspective of the kinetic ethics movement with a new materialist approach. Moreover, I assume in the very first reason to submit an idea that an ontological account should presuppose a question of *what the world must be like* for the Anthropocene to be possible.

In some aspects, at least arriving the Anthropocene ideas in social theory can be divided into three conceptual narratives: the ‘good’ Anthropocene supported by ecomodernists; the ‘bad’ Anthropocene or Capitalocene, examined by eco-Marxist; and the ‘uncanny’ Anthropocene, conceived by new materialism (Ejsing, 2023). The three narratives not only vary in their understanding of the Anthropocene but also give rise to distinct political reactions. Furthermore, I highlight a third discourse by formulating weird, strange, and uncanny dimensions in a new reading of the Anthropocene (see. Mahaswa et al., 2025). This point encourages the unusual and marginalised experience from subjectivity to become a unique way to uncover the differentiation of Anthropocene objects.

The uncanny of the Anthropocene directs a philosophical view of the geology of the future. The Anthropocene is nothing if it no longer exists in the future. This means that humans are objectified by

geological deep time (Heringman, 2015). The trace of human footprints is essential in the process of finding when and where the Anthropocene transition occurred, and it has historically created a high demand for the accumulation of anthropogenic waste. And, subjectivity is no longer in modern terms of dualism, specifically in the time of the planetary crisis that is constructed by the self, the other, and the world (Vivaldi, 2021). By this moment, speaking of the Anthropocene is not only related to confirmation of the Earth's dominance, but is also considered as a life-world feature embedded with human enterprises.

This situation will be a new debate on the philosophy of the Anthropocene, because there are two possibilities between *earthing the world* or *worlding the earth*. Earthing the world means the geo-landscape powers changing the social and cultural world in terms of geological changes. Worlding the earth means that by using scientific power and technological engineering, humans can alter geo-landscapes. Intuitively, philosophy is concerned with the creativity of humankind, and it means philosophy is possible to be more-human than human, because it possesses to transverse the established world (Woodard, 2013).

In addition, it makes sense that the conquest of the Earth, being an essential issue, is then understandable. As mentioned in *What is Philosophy?* (1994, p. 85) that "...thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth...". It then presents a profound perspective on human-nonhuman entanglement, offering a departure from the traditional subject-object divide. Similarly, in Anthropocene subjectivity, the reposition of human subjectivity is established by a multi-scalar nature-culture relationality, expressed as: '*we-are-(all)-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the-same*', as Rosi Braidotti (2019) mentioned. Anthropocene subjectivity defines 'we' as the result of a collective praxis between the composition of subject, others, and world entanglement, as well as a strong sense of difference and togetherness. In this reimagined framework, agency is shared between humans and the nonhuman world, and their coexistence influences the landscape of the earth and vice versa.

### 3 One Earth or Many Worlds?

During the last decade, we have seen at least the development of philosophy of the Anthropocene notions in responding to the status of *anthropos*, for instance as an anthropocentrism tendency in human turn (Raffnsøe, 2016); fate and human destiny (Hamilton, 2015; Szerszynski, 2012); and human condition, existence, and future (Chernilo, 2017; Hoelle & Kawa, 2021; Wilmer & Žukauskaitė, 2023). Furthermore, this research is projected to develop an argument that an evolving philosophical approach in the Anthropocene explanation is important to strengthen the multiple-realisation of the local/global implication of the planetary crisis in more pluralistic views (Mahaswa & Purbandani, 2023). Based on previous findings, this research tends to strengthen philosophical analysis with several empirical cases and updated literature studies. Thus, this reason offers a speculative turn in the geology of the future by inviting several possibilities of worlding of many worlds (i.e. indigenous people, marginalised groups, and more-than-human worlds) whereby ontological justification for the future of epoch can be found in situatedness of their subjectivity experiences, particularly in the more-than-human worlds realm.

This argument can be explained in three ways. *First*, considering the Anthropocene in onto-epistemological distinction between two contexts: Anthropocene as the life-world(s) (social constructivism) and/or the Earth (geological state), it would not manifest the Anthropocene as fixed and against universal assumption. Hence, the Anthropocene is becoming an active commitment to reshape unlimited geo-stories that depend on shared-experiences of subjectivity, speculatively situated from below. This point is inspired by Tarja Knuutila (2014) that scientific representation, facts, and objects were possible constructed in actual scientific practice, yet they approach them as essential mediators of knowledge about the real world.

*Second*, reading the Anthropocene from a philosophical standpoint also offers new geophilosophy in terms of emerging new archipelagic thinking (Stephens & Martínez-San Miguel, 2020). Placing archipelagic imaginaries of *Nusantara* and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Simarmata et al., 2023), for example, as ambiguous state ideology in Indonesia, in-between "unity and diversity" have been understood as syncretic idea and it probably different in the case of the pluriverse of Amazonian people (Kawa, 2016) and Caribbean island (Sheller, 2020). Thus, the idea of pluriverse as ontological politics during the Anthropocene circumstance is formed through the slow sedimentation of influences, mixing and melding, and assembling of different traditions.

Moreover, the emergence of many worlds would propose the philosophy of deep time. As Ted Toadvine (2024) mentioned that a phenomenological description of deep time challenges an essential structure of human temporality experience. The deep time lies behind *the memory of the world* for addressing the

entanglement of the deep past with the experience of lived time and possible to speculate the future projections.

Lastly, the Anthropocene oriented philosophy maps a critical positionality to the pretext, with what we cannot say in experiencing the unspoken world and *terra incognita* in the crisis of the new climate regime. A recent debate aligns with the transvaluation critique (Chandler, 2019), abyssal thought with paraontology (Pugh & Chandler, 2023), general ontology (Hamilton, 2020), ecocentric ontology (Heikkurinen et al., 2016), and historical hyperobject (Rueda, 2022). Here, we can see that the geophilosophy of the Anthropocene can provoke the future of capital, the future of geology, human-nature relations, and even the idea of the end of the world.

#### 4 Conclusion: Local Reflection?

In the wake of modernity's failures and the disillusionment of the Enlightenment's promises, geophilosophy emerges as a speculative refusal, an invitation to rethink the entanglements of human and non-human existence beyond the Western-centric paradigms of knowledge. The so-called saviors of the Anthropocene, embodied by billionaire technocrats, perpetuate a cruel irony: while they dream of escaping Earth through interplanetary colonization, they simultaneously accelerate its destruction. This messianic complex, driven by capitalist monumentality, reflects a broader crisis: one where human exceptionalism reaches its breaking point. In this twilight of the Anthropocene, geophilosophy does not offer redemption; instead, it forces us to confront the terrifying reality of planetary ruination. It asks, for whom and for what does thought persist when the future itself collapses? If geophilosophy is to mean anything, it must not merely be a theoretical gesture, but a mode of thought that arises from the ruins, from the voices of the oppressed, the marginalized, and the defeated who inhabit the last desert islands of existence.

Yet, geophilosophy cannot be reduced to a universal framework dictated by the Global North. Southeast Asia, and Indonesia in particular, possess their own geophilosophical trajectories, what can be called *archipelagic thinking*. Unlike the continental traditions of thought that presume fixed boundaries, archipelagic thinking emerges from the fluid, shifting realities of island life. The polemic of *Nusantara*, the case of Indonesian Islands, as an ambiguous heritage, the rhizomatic formations of local knowledge in Critical Island Studies, and the desiring-machines of postcolonial identity all point to a distinct mode of thought that refuses simple territorialization.

Here, philosophy does not operate through static categories but moves through assemblages, multiplicities, and parastrata—echoing the fractured, archipelagic landscape itself. This is not a philosophy of abstraction alone but one deeply entangled with lived histories, colonial legacies, and the ever-present instability of land and sea. For instance, in the Indonesian socio-natural landscape, Nusantara is often portrayed as a static archipelagic state, epistemological frozen in romanticizing the past time, rather than redefined as a dynamic-state, evolving the possible of many world(s) entities. The structure of (same) feeling under the colonialism thus many main islands considered to be "Indonesia" after 1928, and from the early days of Independence in 1945, no longer holds in this era of contemporary crisis. There is only geo-poetics or geo-story. Indeed, the looming climate catastrophe threatens to disrupt Indonesia's idealized natural world. The glorifying of the storytelling for biggest Southeast Asian biodiversity will be vanished soon and the replication of story is ironically digitalized by Artificial Intelligence.

Thus, if geophilosophy is to be more than an extension of Western metaphysics, it must recognize the Earth not as a passive backdrop to human thought, but as an active force in shaping philosophical inquiry. In the archipelagic world, where islands rise and fall, where identities are formed through movement rather than fixity, thought must follow suit. Geophilosophy, in this sense, is not just a critique of the Anthropocene but a demand to think from within the shifting, precarious conditions of existence itself. It is a call to reject the universalist ambitions of Northern theory and to embrace the multiplicity of thought emerging from the Global South. As a reflection, geophilosophy is not geopolitics. If geopolitics offers a law of border, geophilosophy should embrace the relation of spaces. Again and again, here, philosophy is never outside the Earth—it is of the Earth, as fragile, impermanent, and contested as many islands-by-themselves.

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