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Towards a Philosophy of Metacrisology

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Abstract

Here we develop the concept of metacrisology – a way of thinking shaped by crisis that examines the nature of crisis itself – by engaging with philosophers in the context of climate change, technological acceleration and symbolic misery. Beginning with a traumatic childhood experience of cosmic finitude, we reconceive crisis not merely as a path toward inevitable disaster but, in Kostas Axelos's Heraclitean sense, as an improbable imperative that challenges passive acceptance. Drawing on Bernard Stiegler's interpretation of *krisis* as a decisive moment, we argue that the metacrisis is fundamentally a crisis of time deprived of care. Yet against survivalist resignation, we advocate a pedagogy of the unexpected (*anelpiston*) that cultivates openness to the unprecedented as such. For this we search for a new experimental language to explain the situation. Byung-chul Han's critique of Heidegger and his revival of the sublime also informs our discussion of beauty as a temporal suspension that resists the rush of technical time. We critique the fetishisation of wounds, whether symbolic or ecological, that forecloses futures and instead argue for a destructive aesthetics that can generate the untimely catastrophe from which, in Deleuze's sense, a people-to-come might emerge.

Keywords: Deleuze; Guattari; Byung-Chul Han; Stiegler; Axelos

Introduction

For me, philosophy has always been a terrain for the elaboration of citizenship. It is not for nothing that philosophy was born in the Greek polis. The little book I wrote called *Acting Out* refers a great deal to Socrates. And what defines Socrates' position is citizenship. Socrates does not consider himself a philosopher, but above all a citizen who wants to be radically so. Socrates says the city develops knowledge and needs knowledge to unfold because it must always make decisions. For me, a philosophy that is not fundamentally engaged with the problems of the city, with the biosphere that will soon have eight billion inhabitants, *that is not philosophy* (Stiegler, 2020).

When we look at the climate change models, economic forecasts, demographic trends expected in the 21st century (Deutloff *et al.*, 2025; Ripple *et al.*, 2024; Krüger, 2017), pessimism often permeates our thinking as it appears that the accelerating trajectory of human societies, both rich and poor, is inevitably bound for some cataclysmic, apocalyptic, nay even nihilistic terminus.

This is the metacrisis which confronts us.¹ With this in mind, we might ask what emerges from this terminal trend? Refusal as a form of determination, a striving to slow, *re-arc* or reorient this trajectory? Somehow to spiral away from a terminal state? To challenge its inevitability? For us this crisisology demands a new language.² Perhaps what we are responding to in this metastasis is not

¹The metacrisis names a condition in which multiple, overlapping crises, ecological collapse, technological acceleration, political fragmentation, cultural exhaustion, and epistemic instability, interact and intensify one another, producing not simply a series of discrete emergencies but a profound crisis of understanding, imagination, and existential care. We can see it as encompassing crisis narratives and speculative imaginaries that fail to name futurity under conditions of trauma, extinction, and cultural mourning. This disrupts extant models of subjectivity, identity, and agency. The metacrisis thus calls for an experimental philosophical form, and alternative theoretical methodologies capable of responding to technological disruption and anachronistic humanistic and religious frameworks.

²Inspired by Rosi Braidotti (2016), one can argue that appeals to ordinary language or indeed ordinary language philosophy are inconsistent with the contours of the metacrisis, since writers must find and create a new language capable of expressing the novelty of our situation. If it were truly possible to articulate these untimely ideas in ordinary language, then the truth of the interpretation, and indeed the truth of the historical moment itself, would simply be drawn out of that language. It seems to us that, in this profound moment of crisis, a new form of experimentation is necessitated.

The very point of writing in this way is to extract from the historical moment, and from within the crisis itself, a decision (*krinein*) to think *futurally* about what is to come. Ordinary language simply cannot make sense of a crisis that has become so acute that it must now be understood *qua* metacrisis. If ordinary language were sufficient to grasp the historical moment and respond meaningfully to the crisis, then there would be no problem in the first place. We would simply say, this is what must be done and proceed accordingly.

The very emergence of the metacrisis signals that ordinary language no longer satisfies the requirements of explanation. It cannot meet the demands posed by a crisis of this magnitude by following the ordinary rules of the game. One cannot gain comprehension of the incomprehensible in the time of the metacrisis. Braidotti puts this more forcefully: writing in a particular way, in a defamiliarising way, is necessary precisely in order to put language to work. As she argues (2016):

"I do find the fake shallow so-called transparency or neoliberal prose infinitely more obtuse and more impenetrable and more dangerous than the generous experimentation in language that serious critical thinkers are engaging in. We were trained not to write clearly. To write clearly means to be absolutely penetrable by infinite relations of power. Put up a fight. If people want to read, you make them think. That's the point, and that's the encounter when all of a sudden you are actually coming out of the general zombification which is what we call higher education today."

And again:

"The question that we have learned from reading Foucault's The Order of Things is that a category of thought emerges at the moment of its disappearance, that there is a correlation between becoming thinkable and entering a state of crisis."

One can utilise Deleuze here on the question of jargon, for Deleuze suggests that one may transform stupidity or idiocy into the idiosyncrasies of a new style of thinking. The movement here is clear: one writes contra the dogmatic image of thought: from a highly idiosyncratic vocabulary and idiom, through to idiocy and the idiosyncrasy of jargon itself. Others too agree with the need for specialist language. While recognising that jargon must be attentive to its readership, Brian Massumi (2024) nevertheless argues, following Whitehead, that philosophy must produce it in order to move beyond the commonplaces of ordinary language. Creating concepts is a process of creating new language, which, once put to work, allows thinking to expand. Massumi argues:

"I think we really should respect and resuscitate jargon. Whitehead says that the job of philosophy is to move beyond the common places of ordinary language and to create concepts that require the creation of new language, and then to set that new language into usage that allows thinking to expand with it."

"I get very impatient with notions of jargon as if it were merely something obscuring. I have the sense that people are saying, 'just give me something I have already thought so I can recognise it, and so I am not going to be too strenuously challenged by the reading.' I am not necessarily to be challenged in the way I have encapsulated things in the past. That is a refusal to leave the level of already established general ideas, or of common sense, which continues to operate according to the same logical form."

Such writing obliges the reader to engage in praxis of theory. Adorno made a similar argument, and we agree with all of these ideas. There is a style of thinking that responds to crisis *qua* crisis. In such moments, one requires a new language capable of responding to that which utterly resists comprehension. This kind of writing is a bid to make sense of what appears fundamentally senseless, namely, the metacrisis itself.

merely the trend itself, but the *improbable possibility*, the imperative to think *against* this trend to reimagine a future that seems utterly impossible. And it is precisely *amidst* this impossibility, face to face with it as it were and liberated from our *ἴδιος κόσμος* (*idios kosmos*) that thinking is compelled to begin again. The imperative to think, to struggle, to challenge, is renewed. Even to attack, as Nietzsche exhorts in lecture IV of his *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*: “We *should* provoke terror, the philosopher said, not just wonder; we must attack, he advised, not timidly flee” (Nietzsche, 2016, p. 40).

Here, it is important to suggest a pedagogical message, a steadfast educational vision, if you like, grounded in our uttermost personal abject experience. Often, memories are birthplaces of deep-seated existential traumas. Bradley one of the authors of this piece, shares his own traumatic memory, from when he was a five-year-old boy attending a state primary school in Bolton, in northern England. He recalls an art class where he and his fellow students were painting. This was to become the start of an unchosen existential journey. With enthusiasm, Bradley painted a bright, proud yellow sun, above trees and human figures:

“The teacher, whose name I don’t recall, walked around the class, commenting on our work. When she saw my painting, she said, matter-of-factly: ‘Do you know that one day the sun will die? Do you know that one day the Earth will die? That the solar system will die? That the universe will die? That everything we know and love, everything we care for, will no longer be here?’”

To a young boy without a care in the world, she inspired the thought of what he will come to later know as the solar death, “pure event,” “disaster” of which Lyotard speaks (1992, p. 11). Any young boy would immediately worry about his family, his friends, his dog, everything dear to his heart:

“Seeing the concern on my face, the teacher quickly added: ‘Don’t worry. This won’t happen for billions of years. We’ll be long gone by then.’”

The fact remains that this was a kind of final summons, a revelation seared into the memory of a young boy. One might well wonder: why did she say such a thing to minds so impressionable? What gives any adult the right to introduce a child to such a bleak vision of cosmic collapse? Bring this question to someone versed in Nietzsche, who says precisely the same thing when face to face with the knowledge of the second law of thermodynamics, though in his inimitably matter-of-fact way, namely, that the universe will one day perish along with everything in it. That mature human being, one imagines, after having already seen so much of life unravel in its down-going, would not bat an eyelid. Nietzsche’s words seduce and intrigue an adult mind, conversant with the notion of cosmological entropic demise, but why impose that burden on a mind full of hope, possibility and optimism about the future? For the sake of our collective *schadenfreude* and *solastalgia*, here is the Nietzschean parable in question. In a letter to Cosima Wagner, dated Christmas Day 1872, Nietzsche writes:

“In some far corner of the universe lost in the scintillations of innumerable solar systems, there was one day a star upon which animals endowed with intelligence invented knowledge. It was the proudest and most deceptive moment of universal history, but it was only a moment. Nature had hardly had time to breathe when that star froze over, and the intelligent animals had to die. Indeed their time had come, for though they had flattered themselves that they had already accumulated vast knowledge, they came, to their great disappointment, to discover that at bottom all their knowledge was false. They perished and disappeared with the death of truth. Such was the lot of those animals doomed to despair, who had invented knowledge.” (Nietzsche, 1973, pp. 253–254).

Here, by grounding our initial inquiry in personal experience, rather than treating this solely as an exercise in logic chopping or continental philosophy speculation, we move beyond abstract climate data to address the existential burdens faced by children. Our aim is to transform environmental education of the metacrisis from a model of survivalist resignation, which depends on fear-based approaches, toward what we term a pedagogy of the unexpected (*anelpiston*³). By doing this, we believe it is possible to foster the capacity to imagine alternative futures, even when prevailing models predict a catastrophic terminus.

The trauma depicted in the narrative about the teacher and a boy does not stem from the scientific reality of entropy and solar death; rather, it stems from how this information is conveyed, which puts solar death as a definitive death-in-life pronouncement, extinguishing the

³For us, a pedagogy of the unexpected must be concerned with the idiosyncrasy of thinking itself, for this alone constitutes an adequate response to the metacrisis. Our argument is that a metacrisology can confront the challenges of the present world order, but not in the way one might expect. Rather than philosophy operating *in vacuo*, we propose something closer to an experimental, transdisciplinary metamodeling, following Félix Guattari (2013), a form of thinking that works alongside writers, scientists, architects, sociologists, psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, and others. This represents a fundamentally different methodology. We think such an approach encourages thinkers to break out of a single paradigm and to learn to read, and think, otherwise, fundamentally and therefore radically. A different kind of language is crucial here, for it is through language that we must embrace the idiosyncratic, the singular, the unique, with respect to the peculiarity of thinking itself. In this regard, we follow American philosopher Alphonso Lingis (1994), who asks what it means to speak in one's own voice, to find a singular and unmistakable voice, the event of thinking itself, a *haecceity*.

We are therefore interested in the idiosyncrasy of thinking, and we contrast this with what we take to be the demoralising and disastrous emergence of what we call the idiosynchrony of AI-generated thought. This term names a form of linguistic entropy, an exhaustion of idiomatic expression, and a synchronisation of thought derived from our increasing dependence on AI systems. An adequate metacrisology must be the first to criticise this tendency, and to propose and practice an uncanny and provocative mode of comprehension that resists the idiomatic homogenisation produced through the synchronisation of styles and base economies of thought of algorithmic calculation.

In the time of the metacrisis and the Anthropocene, this task must cultivate a form of *parrhesia*, truth-telling, and this, again, necessitates a new form of writing, a new voice. For us, ordinary language, or ordinary language philosophy, remains tied to the status quo and cannot speak or speculate beyond it. It is a ruse of ordinary language philosophy, its greatest sleight of hand, to believe that ordinary expression can think the extraordinary. Philosophy therefore requires a new vocabulary contrary to the status quo.

Here we are guided by Bernard Stiegler, who insists that knowledge has fallen into disarray, into a profound crisis, a metacrisis, because technological acceleration relentlessly outpaces our educational institutions, and because data science and analytics increasingly replace science as such. In the time of the metacrisis, we therefore require invention, or rather the reinvention of thinking itself. It is clear that an intelligible language capable of addressing the metacrisis requires far greater effort to comprehend. This is not a demand to write in so-called “ordinary” language or ordinary language philosophy. Rather, it signals something closer to a praxis of theory in the sense articulated by Theodor Adorno. Metacrisology is thus a discipline that requires sustained effort, for to submit to a terminological and logical discipline is to construct meaning that is inaugural. In other words, we may well have to produce a great deal of new vocabulary and neologisms. Yet this must be done in a transdisciplinary and metamodelizing manner. As Stiegler states frankly (2020), we are living through an immense crisis of knowledge, one that stems from the fact that knowledge has been overtaken by disruption, that is, by the acceleration of the rhythms of technological transformation. In this sense, the philosophical language of metacrisology, or of a pedagogy of the unexpected, demands an apprenticeship in the production of new forms of expression.

One may rightly insist that philosophy should be accessible to all, especially to those newly entering the discipline. Yet accessibility does not exclude discipline and rigour. Our writing therefore deliberately runs counter to neoliberal discourses of communication that demand transparency, immediacy, and frictionless intelligibility. In the time of the metacrisis, we argue that nothing of genuine interest can be produced under such conditions. A metacrisology thinks beyond the status quo. We may put this as follows: Within entropic becoming (*devenir*), what Heraclitus calls *anelpiston*, the unexpected or unhopd-for, befits the plane of *différance* that designates an unpredictable future (*avenir*). As Stiegler reminds us, entropic becoming is where “everything will inescapably return to dust” (2019, p. 19). Against this, the plane of *différance* functions as a form of negentropy, constituting a temporal deferral and a spatial differentiation of entropy itself. Of course, such a worldview might still reside in the unconscious, embedded in the very language we use, since worldviews always inhere in language. For example, the copula “is” already implies a metaphysical stance. Again, Nietzsche teaches us that worldviews in language reside long after they have been overlaid by others. That, in a sense, may be one way of understanding what a metacrisology might be. It is a *post festum* thought that understands the traces and excesses of previous worldviews, but which nevertheless searches for a new language or new model to express our situation.

child's expectation in the absence of a framework for care. This scenario serves as a cautionary example for environmental educators: describing climate catastrophe as an unavoidable anticipated event, whether framed as occurring over billions of years risks causing an unnecessary existential wound. In this light, metacrisology calls for pedagogical approaches that recognise the reality of human finitude while also fostering the improbable possibility of a future.

Having learned this lesson from an early age, a mature teacher would do well to make a commitment not to inflict philosophical harm or existential care on a young person's imagination with his own worldview. This might be to teach *without a worldview*. We believe that even in our stark historical moment, there persists an *improbable recalcitrant possibility*, a veritable imperative to reimagine the future. But what is the nature of this imperative? Is it ethical? Political? Social? Human? Our metacrisology is bound by the Latin maxim *Nemo Moriturus Praesumitur Mentire* which means "no one at the point of death is presumed to lie". We interpret this to mean that when faced with the existential threat to humankind, which is climate change, one must simply tell the truth. In a state of exhaustion, all possibility is exhausted and as such we become Beckettian – "I can't go on, I must go on." The Latin maxim reveals the secret behind the distinction between exhaustion and tiredness in Deleuze (1995). Again, this is the pedagogical message of this piece of scholarship – a performative ethics of parrhesia (παρρησία). One must speak the truth to conjure what Derrida calls *l'arrivant* – the unexpected arrival, the *incalculable* event. That, we think, impossibly, improbably, incalculably, is the ethics of metacrisology. It is a concern for all living beings, from bacteria to bees and worms, giant sequoias to giant squids, elephants and tigers to the stars and the gift-giving sun and its radiant excess. A pedagogy lies in the inhuman *imperative* itself (Lingis, 1998). It is a *pedagogical imperative*: to embrace the improbable possibility. This is the pedagogy of Heraclitus: to teach ἀνέλπιστον (*anelpiston*), that is, "the unexpected," that which is without hope or expectation, and to cultivate a resolve, a determined effort, even to reimagine the possibility of a *people-to-come* in the Deleuzian sense. Metacrisis thus suggests negentropic knowledge (Stiegler, 2018), absolute deterritorialisation (Bradley & Argenton, 2025), and even *negen-u-topic* becoming⁴ (Bradley 2019, 2020, 2022). It challenges pessimism in the belief that humanity is unable to become Humanity (*c'est la crise de l'humanité qui n'arrive pas à devenir Humanité*) (Morin, 2024).

Recognising crisology: A Stieglerian clue

Fast forward to the present, the climate change crisis, together with the looming prospect of a technological singularity disseminated by extropian thinkers,⁵ continues to confound the imagination. For the last three or four decades, this prospect has led some climate specialists and policy researchers to believe that the world is beyond its tipping point.

Indeed, the existential prospect for future generations is without expectation (*elpis*). Crushed by cosmic finitude, many a young person like Florian in Bernard Stiegler's *What Is Called "Panser"? 1. The Immense Regression* says we are the last generation (Stiegler, 2015). Among the few who are critical of this terrifying image of the future, Stiegler writes committedly to counter such despair. Stiegler is one philosopher who consistently analyses the 'state of shock' emergent from the global "proletarianisation of decision" (2013, pp. 37–54). For him, such a state of shock produces an *impasse* on the capacity of generations to recognise and respond to the *crisis* of knowledge, desire

⁴Negen-u-topic becoming is an idea developed by Bradley regarding the power of anarchist thought to shape young people's belief systems in an era shaped by digital and cognitive capitalism, as diagnosed by Bernard Stiegler.

⁵Extropianism is often described as a form of libertarian transhumanism which promotes an optimistic technology and science-driven future oriented toward self-improvement, technological acceleration, and the overcoming of biological and cognitive limits, which sometimes includes death itself. Associated with the Extropy Institute, founded by Max More and Tom Morrow, the movement brought together a diverse group of thinkers including Ray Kurzweil, Nick Bostrom, Eric Drexler, Marvin Minsky and others including Julian Assange.

and taste. Drawing from Hippocrates's concept of *krisis*, he identifies a pharmacological opportunity for a crisis to "[respond] to a question arising from a challenge" (2013, p. 126).

We can understand this as follows: in the context of disease, there is a critical moment of decision (*krinein*) or judgment. When a judgment is made regarding an illness, *krisis* creates a crucial disturbance, a form of controlled chaos in the course of an unknown predicament. Based on the external chaos produced, a decision is made regarding a medical intervention or treatment. As the concept of *krisis* may be expanded beyond medical practice, let us here consider the entire planet as a self-enclosed organic system, where every part is interconnected and prone to disorder. *Krisis* allows us to recognise a sense of danger in terms of our broader existential condition, posed by the climate change crisis, prompted by the overabundance of technical models putting a heavy strain on planetary resources.

In acknowledging a crisis, one is faced, at first glance and for the most part, with the complex question of subjectivity and individuation. To us, this question lies at the core of metacrisology. The question reveals the organological structure of the human condition at present, which can determine whether humanity can still pursue a form of life *beyond brute entropic demise* which is rich with symbolic-existential implications. The question that looms large: Is humanity still capable of transvaluating in the Nietzschean sense what has become a seemingly irreversible pattern of its failure to keep disorder at bay? What is beyond the prevalent nihilism of the contemporary moment?

By and large, our entropic, accelerant mode of life is brought about by capitalism's hyperactive relation to technical systems. In recent years, this history has redrawn the terms of the debate, for instance, over the planetary climate crisis, that it is, after all, *a crisis of technics* (Stiegler, 2018, p. 238). As Stiegler argues, under the present circumstances, our ability to transvaluate in the Nietzschean sense, or, to maintain a symbolic existence, has been lost to the production of an "artefact by technoscience" (Stiegler, 2014, p. 5). This artefact continues to evolve through the industrial exteriorisation of the aesthetic nature of human experience by a "successive series of disadjustments" (2014, p. 5). No less than the body becomes the central focus of this structural procedure. This is the body that is supposed to experience time in itself, the felt experience of time passing, not as an abstract concept or eternal present, but as lived duration. Verily, in terms of today's digital technology, we are talking about the body-artefact.

What happens when experience is externalised by technoscience into impersonal, autonomous systems? Following Stiegler's framework, this externalisation operates through the "permanent and daily production of an industrial control," *via* what he called "flux industries" [*industries dites de flux*] (2014, p. 92), augmented by the modern production and consumption of digital texts and images. Simply put, these are the digital and industrial systems – social media, algorithmic feeds and now generative AI – that control the flow of information and images. As Simondon argues, experience is the constitutive effect of 'associated milieus' of progress (2017, p. 79), whose relational nature is also indicative of the symbolic values of objects that co-constitute human undertakings. In this context, flux industries generate symbolic misery by substituting personal, embodied experiences of time with prepackaged, instantaneous consumption. As a result, the unconscious or collective memory of learners is eroded, which impedes the development of slow, critical thinking necessary for effective environmental stewardship.

All these, in turn, generate a temporal default, encompassing all domains of human activity; specifically, a default in the form of symbolic time. In this state of default, the body – the locus of *krisis* – becomes subordinated to a depersonalised industry that disassociates the body from consciousness. In this sense, the body is *dis*-positioned from its fundamental groundedness in time as it suffers the cruel consequences of dislocation, isolated and detached from temporality.

This is what Kant (1998) had already identified as the loss of the sensible form of temporal intuition. Flux industries deal with large-scale, impersonal processes controlling the flow of materials, information and goods; industries that circulate them, not only in terms of their ubiquitous presence in our daily lives but also of their symbolic values. What is called the

transcendental aesthetic – the aesthetic intuition of time and space – allows us to experience these two forms of intuition before we ever formally think of them; hence, they are the conditions of possibility of perception. Accordingly, the control exerted by flux industries over our intuitive capabilities leads to a significant loss of our power of transcendental aesthetic, eroding our capacity for embodied experience of time and replacing it with industrial and technical memory.

It is not surprising that this form of time has become exploitable under the subsumption of modern algorithms, and most recently, by large language models (LLMs) with emphasis on attention protocols (Vashwani *et al.*, 2017), exploiting the absence of context, and thus, of meaning and shared memory. With a deterritorialised space, the time of technology knows no interruption or pause, making the “real disappear” (Han, 2015, p. 43), if we mean by the Real as the space of symbolic unconscious, or, social language or memory. Memory exceeds individual awareness, but which sets the condition for care, critical thinking and open dialogue – the reason delay or interruption in decision making and judgement is crucial for a society to grow.

Yet, the real is brute forced to become conscious in the sense that we can now possess language, rather than being possessed by it, which, by all means, signifies its death (language) and the unconscious as well (the Real) that we commonly share. The death of language in today’s language industries portends a society that is losing a collective memory, becoming more susceptible to viewing the ‘other’ through a distorted prism. Indeed, no social phenomenon could better explain the intensified resurgence of global populism and neofascism, concerning issues of race, gender and ethnic diversity, than the advent of language industries that give us a glimpse of tomorrow’s AGI (artificial general intelligence), if it is not already upon us.

Pedagogy of the unexpected: *Anelpiston* in practice

We have used *anelpiston* – Heraclitus’s word for the unexpected – as a key idea in metacrisology. But what does teaching based on the unexpected really involve? In the same vein, how can this teaching resonate with environmental educators’ task to help students cultivate openness to new possibilities when most stories vacillate between optimism in technology and fear of disaster?

Perhaps, the crux of the matter is that even critical thinking, which enframes the direction of contemporary environmental education, often assumes we are always already cognisant of the systems of oppression and freedom. This is the opposite of metacrisis thinking which rejects the way of expecting things within a binary frame.

Recall the childhood story at the start of this paper. Although, the teacher’s sudden talk about the end of the universe was awkward and even upsetting, it did something rather important: it interrupted the familiar way of thinking about the future. The boy’s world – sun, family, dog – suddenly seemed limited, fragile and new. This is what *anelpiston* is about: Making things feel strange and defamiliarised to open up new ways of thinking and conceiving imaginaries beyond binarised expectations.

Thus, we suggest that a pedagogy oriented toward the unexpected must operate through four interrelated aspects:

1. Environmental education cannot work well in a time shaped by flux industries. It needs what Stiegler (2018) calls a delay, a pause that allows for care and deep thinking, or thoughtful activities that push back against the rush. In short, this requires breaking away from the accelerating pace of modernity. Educands should be taught to be mindful of today’s techno-industries, which force them to correlate life to technology, mostly, via systems that control their attention.
2. Environmental education can expand a new experience of beauty. Following Han (whose ideas we will expand more in the latter discussions), we say that experiencing beauty can stop people from getting lost in the endless rush of technical temporality. Beauty is a way to

slow down time, and, therefore, possesses a power to keep us grounded, not swayed by the flux industries.

3. Teaching for the unexpected means stubbornly facing the possible collapse of society. This is not about sharing trauma. Rather, it is about telling the truth as *parrhesiasts* in a way that, as Foucault argued (2005), is fraught with danger, while also holding the capacity to transform both the speaker and the listener, thereby opening up new political possibilities. This means readiness for what Deleuze (1994) calls the *people to come* – new communities that can respond to new situations.
4. Lastly, we might rethink Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1996), in which the Czech philosopher argues that philosophy begins precisely after catastrophe. For this Czech philosopher, the creation of the "new" emerges in the wake of historical catastrophe and, as such, preserves the fundamental dimension of the *care of the soul*. Philosophy here faces the reality of the human night, the experience of historical rupture, loss and meaninglessness. This is to share what Patočka called the solidarity of the shaken. Those who are "shaken" are without metaphysical guarantee and as such are forced to confront finitude, responsibility and freedom *without illusion*. For us, this is to think beyond lived personal experience toward a community of souls, a common world, a κοινὸς κόσμος (koinos kosmos).

Survivalism or hope?

Returning to Stiegler: inventing a people – the question of general subjectivity – requires an "intergenerational social contract," or what he calls a careful "arrangement of technical [pharmacological] narratives" (Stiegler, 2015, p. 256). Peoples are invented through these contracts, emerging from individual and collective circuits of individuation (Simondon, 2009, p. 8) that, by their hold on memory, leave a "material and artefactual" trace (Stiegler, 2009, p. 33).

Unfortunately, today, this trace is deterritorialised into automated processes of individuation in a system of capture that subordinates them to attention systems, harvesting digital footprints to convert them to synthetic retentionality; hence, the automatism of memory. In simpler terms, flux industries capture these digital traces to convert them into artificial records of who we are. We are no longer capable of differentiating ourselves from synthetic memory. The algorithms replace human reflexivity to differentiate themselves from its past, which is now handled by automatic systems, and thus, they lose self-awareness.

In relation to flux industries, this allows cloud computing to replace what Simondon would define as the 'preindividual nature' of individuation (Simondon, 2020, p. 8) with the *presentism* of attentional consciousness, whereby time loses its *singularity*, replaced by the *instantaneity* of a mouse click. Instantaneous time renders memory accessible, reduced to the immediacy of attention. In this regard, social symbolic memory loses its soft 'transcendent' power over the present. Synthetic memory can build a stable "source for future metastable states from which new individuations can emerge" (Simondon, 2009, p. 8). Time is replaced by the singularity of artificial intelligence. This process, therefore, reveals what could occur at the end of a deterritorialised space of memory now overseen by algorithms. We are looking at the unfortunate condition of social memory or language: a crutch *without* a foundational memory.

From here on, we are looking at a sense of crisis more expansive than Deleuze's concept; a metacrisis inhering in the prosthetic default of time, remaining *impersonally* metastable across various forms and degrees of intentions, modulations, and techniques of birthing, all the more crucial at this point in that interrupting the flux instituted by emancipated time is out of the question. The arrow of time does not move backward.

Thus, for Stiegler, this is more than an existential-ontological question that exceeds the general question of subjectivity. His criticism of Heidegger's later appeal to 'a god' that can save the

human condition is meant to show how this form of crisisology, a Heideggerian metacrisology, *exacerbates* the cost of the “[un]thinkability” both politically and apolitically” of the “question of the loss of individuation” (Stiegler, 2009, p. 54). Stiegler locates the heart of the crisis in the symbolic space where individuation is either present or erased, which is the challenge that faced both of his intellectual influences, namely, Heidegger and Simondon.

On the one hand, Heidegger ignored the prosthetic structure of the history of being, though he initially discovered its fundamental problem in the question of technology, but as a discourse of mastery, *Gestell*, in which a universal principle is believed to be behind technical domination. On the other hand, Simondon identified the human agent or controller as essential for redirecting the cybernetic question of feedback toward a dynamic concept of individuation. This perspective reflects Simondon’s partial inheritance of Bergson’s emphasis on the lived, and, overall, the classical metaphysics of subjectivity at the expense of the nonlived, the unregulated, the absent.

Stiegler’s alternative is to shift the focus from the master discourse to the possibility of the rebirth of the symbolic as shared memory, which varies from one generational contract to another. This temporal transmission supports what he calls *mystagogical* institutions by virtue of their propagations of symbolic life, and their preservation of “transformative, aesthetic mystery” (Stiegler, 2017, p. 31), such as schools and cultural productions, against the dominance of algorithms and above all, the Deleuzianism of the crisis of time and individuation. However, its possibility in the face of an all-embracing technicalisation of drives under societies of control, along with the ongoing crisis of climate change, foreshadows widespread fatigue than hope.

What this implies is disheartening for those supportive, like us, of Stiegler’s suggestible optimism. His pharmacological narrative appears to be deliberately confined to surviving a postapocalypse (Featherstone, 2020, p. 416). This is the survival of the symbolic in terms of our individual capacity to forge pharmacological narratives with others, especially in the context of ecological collapse.

L’après-coup de l’événement

Stumbling through desolate ecological landscapes, devoid of pharmacological (curative and therapeutic) narratives, we find ourselves in spaces or milieus where life is left obliterated. These are spaces we no longer know how to navigate or circumscribe. Time here is dead: endless waiting, boredom, a time *without hope*. A nature without expectation. One feels an endless pulverising weight, waiting for something, anything, to happen. Boredom is the experience of metacrisis *par excellence*. One can only await the impossible possibility. We are bored to death by our ecological reality. And only *pulverising boredom* helps us to cope.

In *The Spirit of Hope* (2023), Byung-Chul Han traipses through these theoretical and *desolate* frameworks typically employed by utopian thinkers, positioning hope as somehow the opening up to the futural, the opening up to the *not yet*, or what Derrida would call *l’avenir* (Derrida, 2002, p. 256). The opening up to the futural may seem to offer a positive vision of the future, where the future still has a symbolic weight upon the present. However, stripped of its metaphysical trappings, this perspective belongs to a broader discourse on metacrisis, which, unfortunately, even Stiegler is partly entangled in.

Rather than following Stiegler’s ambiguous survivalist approach, we propose the priority of the *unexpected*, an event beyond calculation or planning. A singular kind of possibility. This singular possibility represents a departure from the nihilistic discourse characterised by *solastalgia* and homesickness, depriving hope of *action* and theory of *praxis*. As Han asserts, the future still embodies an “invigorating, encouraging and inspiring” concept (Han, 2023).

Han’s reexamination of metacrisis criticises those metaphysicians who purposely or mistakenly negate the viability of *l’avenir*, nullifying its potential by reducing it to a negative iteration, a superficial game of aporia in the name of justice to come, not without the usual theological

suspension of the *not yet* through a messianic projection of a promised salvation (which Derrida is also somewhat guilty of inspiring). This makes one reconsider (as we did in the previous sections) Deleuze's concept of becoming and Han's subsequent critique of Heidegger. Han argues that Heidegger can never get past what is past, that Heidegger has no concept of the future as such. As he points out, Heidegger cannot account for unprecedented possibilities or the unexpected because his ontology, despite his criticism of traditional metaphysics, is still bound to the notion of being and essence. (This somehow bears an uncanny affinity with Deleuze's liberation of time from space, whose outcome he might not have hoped to occur in real history devolving into pure presentism that no longer evolves).

At the heart of Han's critique of Heidegger, especially the later Heidegger, is his idea of Being that withdraws from the comprehension of the subject, let alone from the question of technology whose essence is linked to freedom, but freedom not as a property of man, but rather the reverse: "man is at best the property of freedom" (Heidegger, 1985, p. 9). Freedom is, thus, the impersonal, self-withdrawal of Being. It is here that, in Heidegger's perspective, the question of individuation, which is supposed to give us a way to relate to Being, to become responsible to its unfolding, finds neither issue nor ground, and, technically, no future.

Throughout time, this self-withdrawal of Being convenes, without outside limitations, into a form of *Gestell* on the plane of human history, or the self-enframing of Being whose essence humans would later intimate through the question concerning technology. Nonetheless, this clearly promotes an inevitable regressive destiny, and with it, the necessary condition of humanity as a mere recipient of the appearances of the self-projection of Being.

Unfortunately, we can only access these appearances from the past, not the present. The secret is to constantly return to the past to reexamine the historical appearances of prior events and pre-established essences – traces of Being buried in the poetic flair of the ancients where we might find *immanent meaning*, where we might find the future *for this world and only this life*.

Futural colour beyond metacrisis

Contra Deleuze, especially in regard to the function of the Hegelian negative that he criticised in favour of the multiple and the 'event of the phantasm' that refuses identity and essence, Han sought to restore the Hegelian negative in service of an open interpretation of the dialectic, no longer as the power of difference bound to the aporetic circle of being and nonbeing, or being and its appropriated other (nonbeing), but rather to a notion of the Other as unmediated by the dialectic, beyond the power of difference. Han is opening Hegel to an interpretation other than the necessary demand of the dialectic borne by the master-slave relation; a notion of the Other deflative of the power of the dialectic to condense it into a project – an existential venture of power (between two opposing subjectivities) by maintaining a threshold or boundary of self-projection that the logic of difference sustains.

However, Han is not predisposed to repeat the mistake of Heidegger by invoking what lies beyond this difference, which Heidegger took to be of the essence of the ontological, hence, beyond the ontological difference that makes no room for individuation. Rather, he seeks the beyond that emerges from out of the split of the ontological difference from itself, from the collapse of the self-projection of the other under the totalising weight of the modern world.

This falling to pieces is the outcome of the agony of subjectivity, which, according to Han, in a "technical-symbolic-existential world . . . [debilitates] rather than [fortifies] and [sustains] the human subject . . . prevents the encounter with the Other . . . and [reduces] the human subject to empty forms of paroxysmal destruction" (Knepper *et al.*, 2024, p. 91). For Han, this unhappy subject may still be open to the prospect of individuation in terms of its non-optional, *de rigueur* encounter with the outside: "[F]or without an Against one falls hard on oneself" (Han, 2018a, p. 43).

This happens in terms of the singular encounter with what Han calls “disastrous events, *events of emptiness* that empty the ego, de-subjectify it and take it away from its inwardness, thus making it happy” (2018a, p. 42). Han is here talking about the encounter with beauty and the sublime, “in which time is . . . in a stand-still” (2018a, p. 68). Beauty or the sublime fortifies the subject from becoming fully deterritorialized into a Deleuzian flow of time.

Such slow contemplation of beauty lays oneself open to injuries during the subject’s exposure to the acceleration of technical time. Consequently, this internal conflict takes a toll on the subject, both physically and psycho-noetically, as it grapples with the oscillation of the tempo, either speeding up or slowing down. However, beauty does more than that – it suspends the subject’s disappearance into the “future without end” (Han, 2017, p. 16).

Han’s thought, therefore, demands a reflection on Hegel’s image of the *Owl of Minerva*. This is the idea that philosophy is *incapable* of capturing *what is to come*. Philosophy always looks back in what was the past, engaging in “grey on grey,” which Han describes as, “the colour of beingness” (2023, np). Philosophy reflects but does not look forward. It cannot be prospective, only retrospective. The idea of hope remains tied to the possibility of that which is “not yet,” but Han talks of the *Owl of Minerva*, blind to “the dawning radiance of the new” (2023, np), a radiance that can somehow escape the logic of essence.

In this respect, metacrisis suggests the absence of colour, a time which demands one think *in the dark*. This is why our position is at odds with Han’s, because we believe we can and must think in the dark. Here, Han’s position is thus: *Dasein in the dark* is condemned to be without unprecedented possibilities of being. In the context of the metacrisis, this reflects a collectively anxious *Dasein*. *L’avenir* is closed off from anxiety-crippled *being-in-the-world*. *Dasein* is ill-at-ease. *Dasein* is marked by *mal-être*, ill being (Stiegler, 2011). Because of this our argument is that we must respond to it politically. As Deleuze says, without dreams, or to be pulverised by the dreams of others whose self-attention becomes contagious, humanity broods over the demise of things but dare not dream. We have become without *elpis* (expectation) and have only the damaged *mnemosyne* (memory) as our companion. In short, we are doomed – “*Méfiez-vous du rêve de l’autre, parce que si vous êtes pris dans le rêve de l’autre, vous êtes foutus*” – (Deleuze, 2003).

Fetishising the wound

Unfortunately, humans overemphasise damaged life by fixating on their scars and wounds, naively producing a logical counterpart. Faced with this damage, the experience evolves into secular faith in salvation – a techno-theology. This once led to extropianism and today has advanced into the transhumanist direction, inspired by the wealth and power of Silicon Valley.

What has changed since the last couple of decades is a dramatic shift in humanity’s existential orientation, from a failure to acknowledge a crisis (since climate science started to become aggressive in its global campaign, around the late 80s, warning world governments about carbon emissions) to a sort of hyper-acknowledgement of its inevitable consummation. This dramatic change coincides with the intensified *perversion of the symbolic space* in the global turn to neoliberal capitalism, which began with Thatcher in the UK, and perfected in the US by the Reaganite approach to economics and its geopolitical defaulting of a new form of capitalist hegemony.

Under neoliberalism, the absorption of surplus values has transformed the body-artefact into a pliable hive mind that has internalised its own repression, at the same time that it has lost the facility for aesthetic intuition. But this is only because the intensity and extent of repression were no longer immediately felt. Rather, repression is appropriated by and integrated into abstract systems of temporal consumption – the consumption of automatised (digital) values or content that appeal more to immediate life concerns than would the fear of real existential dangers. These systems pander to the human desire for immediate gratifications that feel more urgent than any long-term concerns. We have ceased investing our time in things of genuine, and lasting value.

Our desire for instant, low-value digital stimulation has become an existential norm. Complementing this situation is the overdetermination of surpluses of unfulfilled knowledge, reshaping the educational path of humanity in the way of incentivising stupidity, mediocrity, carelessness and impatience in the face of *difference*, or the *other* viewed as a menace – also, the other as *death-in-itself*. These dynamics of capital create a unified entropic direction – mass global poverty, the proletarianisation of peoples, and the risk of an irreversible collapse.

Within the global network run by algorithms, this direction has penetrated our sensible perception of *what kind of change has occurred*, corrupting human recognition and comprehension of the crisis we help exacerbate. We have made things worse *via* a default belief that it is beyond our control at a time when the idea of a unitary species has never been closer to realisation with the invention of the internet. Yet, in the pharmacological sense, this has also led to the inversion of social language, the Real, which has shaped the nature of the *krisis* that we face as a species of nature and culture, life and technics.

In the age of language industries, we have lost the Real when language becomes available to be possessed. We are told we can now possess the overwhelming force of language that no longer needs a fallible speaker, an erroneous idiom, or a syntactical anomaly that gave us poetry, literature, theatre, music, philosophy and science, and above all, the wisdom of the ages. With the algorithmic saturation of what used to be the human experience of the internet *as a space of the commons*, the Real has lost the usual affordances of its ambiguity through the fallibility and hesitation of the speaker to reify itself in a productive way. Action presupposes the ambiguity of the Real, whose nature suggests that its proneness to value orientations hints at the co-constitutedness of reality between bare life and technics.

For environmental educators, this explains why climate science often fails to resonate. Timothy Morton's (2013) concept of the hyperobject – things “massively distributed in time and space” whose “local manifestation” is never “directly the hyperobject” – illustrates the almost hysterical interference of the Real we have lost contact with. Morton argues hyperobjects “vividly demonstrate how things do not coincide with their appearance” (2013, p. 174). From a Deleuzian perspective, we become unwitting spectators in a theatre of appearances, caught in the self-differentiation of an inhospitable Other, and who knows if it is merely its dream!

This is only one example of how naming a scar or a lesion can lead to fetishising its inevitability, the irrevocability of its emergence as an event. Not that we can actually reverse the tide of time. But, with a fetish, inevitability gets a free pass to determine the future; a future tied to a sentimentalised memory trapped in a dead space – a rose-pink scrap of collagen fibres that turns into a keloid, numb to sensation, a muted space on the skin. This desensitisation prevents the cellular memory of an original design that covered a once-living skin. However, without fetishisation, the scar serves its function in the organism. It marks urgency, crisis, trauma, creating a boundary between past and present, injury and ongoing vitality, serving its purpose for time to mark off its edge, interval and duration.

Because it is an undead time, a fetish lacks a capacity for pharmacological narratives. It cannot escape its internal stasis. Instead, entropy acts on it from the outside, accelerating its movement without internal resistance – the kind of resistance that is supposed to be the function of the *pharmakon* that operates only within living systems. Entropy metastasises its stubborn stillness into multiple undead forms. More so, since it knows no outside, no *life beyond bare life*, no ontogenesis, the fetish cannot die. It will remain immortal in its singularity.

Such is the fate of humanity when we fetishise the singularity of the technological future as inevitable, matched only by the irresolution that has engrossed humanity's hope in preventing a runaway climate change. Both, however, are no more than tales told without a speaker, pure speech concealing a code switch that masks their true textual structures and vitality.

Such is the pure speech of (LLMs): it hides what language actually is. For Stiegler, language is fundamentally an “idiotextual complex, the idiom always being a memory, and this memory, a text” (Stiegler, 2018, p. 56). This is what creates both thinking subjects and language as a technical

object. But LLMs mask this process. Like ontological saboteurs they mask their real ecological structure – what Guattari called the three ecologies (Guattari, 2000, pp. 27–34) – behind the abstract label artificial intelligence. Here, we should take into account the organological milieu that enables a technological regime – the infrastructure, the intellectual and manual labour necessary to extract components of nature to produce microchips, cable wires, etc. and above all, the amount of energy required to power the myriad facilities of a technical behemoth to generate social knowledge and goods. This is the organology of capital that pure speech conceals.

Conclusion

Hitherto metacrisologies have relied on a future that must remain abstract. For us to imagine a new metacrisology, this abstract future must be abandoned. From the standpoint of Stiegler, this abstraction is the consequence of the emphasis on the temporal schism between past and present, which prevents an understanding of time as, in Deleuze, a ‘disjunctive affirmation of both’, or the complication of time by “reciprocal causation” (Stiegler, 1998, p. 74). Here, we can return to Stiegler assuming we have already lost the world that we know to be bound by linearity. Indeed, we have lost that kind of world, and only on this premise can we go back to Stiegler’s spoiled optimism – the *sigh of the future*. Only when we admit that the world is gone can the future become a concrete promise.

With the collapse of the world, it is the time to create new ones among the ruins of disastrous events that are, however, far from the real events (of *beauty* and the *sublime*) that have dragged humanity to the world’s end. Perhaps, it is time these events are created, it is time we *think destructively with aesthetics* (Rivas, 2023), as the total disaster we can hope for as a post-apocalyptic species. We have been destroyed by the wrong catastrophes just as much as humanity has never been “so blinded, brutish and irresponsible” (Stiegler, 2021, p. 4). These *false disasters* – climate change and technological extropian anxieties – will play out their consequences for centuries to come. Today, we need a new *esprit de corps* that will, if, not for the first time, offer us the mortal sanctuary of beauty and the sublime, so that we can die from the crisis we can *finally* create.

Metacrisology offers environmental education a way out of the symbolic misery of the present. By treating the current crisis as a decisive moment (*krisis*) rather than a fixed, inevitable end, we can foster a pedagogy of the unexpected. This is not a call for blind optimism, but rather, for a ‘destructive aesthetics’ that clears away old, failed ways of thinking to allow a ‘people-to-come’ to emerge – students capable of building a world that is not yet lost. For environmental educators, this translates into concrete obligations:

1. Refusal of both optimism and pessimism. Metacrisology demands we think *through* crisis itself, not around it by developing sensitivity and careful awareness intrinsic to dwelling in the destructive beauty of collapse without surrendering to nihilism or fleeing to technoutopian fantasies.
2. Pedagogy of the unexpected. Forge classroom experiences that defamiliarised, that rupture industrial temporality, and that restore what Stiegler calls negentropic knowledge capable of countering entropy and the loss of the human capability to care, think and desire.
3. Praxiology of *parrhesia* with care. Like the teacher in our story, we must speak the truth about civilizational or organological collapse. But also unlike her, contemporary care-givers (in terms of Stiegler’s emphasis on pharmacological knowledge) must also provide resources for living and joyfully staying within the beauty of that truth. Stiegler insists thinking is always a question of caring – *penser et panser* (bandaging the wounds of time). To think is to care, and that means to care for not only ourselves (‘I’), but to care also for the Other as such (‘We’), and that means to care for *the world* as such. When one thinks as a philosopher, one

cares for the world and all that lies therein. This is what the pedagogy of the unexpected must principally care about (See Stiegler, 2018, 2020).

4. Priority of symbolic production over consumption. This suggests anything that exercises humanity's unique capacity for what Simondon calls individuation, the ongoing process of becoming through which we co-constitute reality with technical objects and natural processes.
5. Refusal to neglect the body. Against disembodiment by digital technologies and flux industries, learning must be re-grounded in embodied practices, re-establishing temporal intuition that algorithms have colonised.
6. Lastly, act as if the world is already lost. This means accepting collapse not as a fatalist strategy but rather as a precondition for creating the catastrophes we need capable of birthing new worlds.

In the classroom where a teacher once announced solar death to a frightened child, in the ruins of civilisations that mistake growth for progress, in the metacrisis that strips time of care and meaning – there, environmental education must forge new possibilities of learning. Certainly, not with Panglossian optimism but rather with the destructive inherence of truth. Not with wistful hope but with *anelpiston* – *the utterly unexpected expectation*. Not passively awaiting ecological catastrophe but actively creating the only kind of ending affirmative of the earth upon which we live so very briefly. In the final instance, metacrisology is the desperate struggle against melancholy and *mal-être* or ill-being. While it is a determination to escape the resignation of a melancholy science, in Adorno's sense, or what Jean-Luc Nancy calls “the irrepressible feeling of disaster and the feeling of existence” that we find in Stiegler (Buseyne, Tsagdis, & Willemarck, 2021, p. 30), metacrisology functions as a pedagogy of the unexpected. As a commitment to think *carefully* (*panser*) in the Anthropocene, metacrisology invokes the impossible-possibility of a “leap” capable of “piercing the blocked horizon” (Stiegler, 2018, p. 201) which we can say is the despondent black sun (*le soleil noir*) darkening our crisis-ridden present.

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