

Decolonizing the Imagination in Times of Crisis. Gestures for Speculative Thinking- Feeling: Interview with Martin Savransky

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by Martin Tironi through Zoom
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Interview

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Diseña

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Martin Savransky is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Goldsmiths (University of London), where he coordinates the master's program 'Ecology, Culture & Society' and directs 'Unit of Play', a transdisciplinary unit dedicated to the collective promotion of exploratory forms of engagement. He is the author of *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds: Politics of the Pluriverse* (Duke University Press, 2021) and *The Adventure of Relevance: An Ethics of Social Inquiry* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Along with having co-edited *Speculative Research: The Lure of Possible Futures* (Routledge, 2017), Savransky served as guest-editor of "Isabelle Stengers and the Dramatization of Philosophy" (*Sub-Stance*, Vol. 47, Issue 1) and "Problematizing the Problematic" (*Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 38, Issue 2).

In this interview, Savransky analyzes the implications of *thinking* and *creating* through a pragmatist perspective aiming at the challenges that experimental research faces in the turbulent times we live in. Through key concepts and authors that have marked his intellectual work, he invites us to conceive thinking exercises as practices of experimentality, through which the uncertain and unstable situations of current problems would raise new questions rather than closed answers.

You are trained as a sociologist, but your most important works are in pragmatist philosophy. Moreover, you also have an interesting relationship with the worlds of art and design. Could you tell us what role these disciplinary crossovers or ‘undisciplined acts’ play in the way you approach problems or questions?

I have a very mixed background and approach, indeed. Very demanding, not always comfortable, but immensely rewarding. I would not know how to do it any other way. That is to say, I have always been uncomfortably sitting between several disciplines. And the reason is that I have been unable to resist the urge to work on the most interesting and provocative questions, the ones that make me think, because they are the ones that force me to do so. For better or ill, those questions usually come from diverse disciplines or emerge in the interstices between disciplines. Therefore, I have always found it difficult to reconcile myself with the expectation of identifying with a discipline and its history, and conceiving of the work as a contribution to that disciplinary history. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with conceiving of one’s work in disciplinary terms. But the questions that interest me often lie in the interstices, and my work consists in putting them in a conversation in a generative, problematizing way, without subterfuge: acquiescing to the fact that each practice imposes its own demands and that these cannot be ignored or dismissed in the name of ‘interdisciplinarity’. In other words, my work is less interdisciplinary than undisciplined.

But the important thing is that this indiscipline —which I inevitably practice— must also be cultivated, and cultivating it requires not only accepting its intrinsic demands but also appreciating those of others. In this sense, philosophy, which has always been my great companion, precisely functions as an indisciplinary vector, as a minor practice that opens a space from which certain questions, which emerge within more empirical and concrete practices, can take flight and gain potential, and articulate themselves thanks to problematics, concepts, and propositions that are relevant to them even if not theirs. This is how I have been trying to inhabit and activate this border space between philosophy, humanities, and social sciences, regardless of the department in which I work at any given time, or the particular studies I may have undertaken formally. Fortunately, I now find myself in an institutional context that allows some space for this kind of work, or at least where it goes relatively unnoticed! Because contemporary universities do not usually make this mode of interstitial work easy at all.

Regarding the dialogues you establish with different sub-communities within the humanities and social sciences, we could say that you have established a particular dialogue with what is called Science and Technology Studies (STS). Why have you found greater resonance in that community? Is it still the case or have you started to experience certain frustrations?

The relationship with STS was fertile in a period in which I found that some of the most interesting questions at that time were gestated, distilled, and brewed there: questions associated with the politics of knowledge, the links that knowledge-practices establish with the worlds that concern them, and how certain ways of knowing and learning end up being objects of disqualification and mockery. At the same time, what was at stake in these kinds of issues were deep-rooted philosophical, political, and ethical questions —which have always interested and concerned me— about how we inhabit the world and relate to others.

For a time, both the philosophy of science and social studies of scientific practices were very important because they allowed us to displace the tremendous and extremely dangerous general abstractions with which epistemology is concerned. Instead, they invited us to ask ourselves, in a much more concrete and specific way, what kinds of relationships are established with others (humans, animals, plants, stones, atomic particles, etc.) when it comes to learning something new, to establishing some kind of relationship out of which “knowledge” might grow, as well as to delve into the question of what challenges and risks are associated with the cultivation of these links.

You explore some of this in your book *The Adventure of Relevance*.

Indeed, that is how I ended up exploring some of these issues, in a slightly eccentric way perhaps, in *The Adventure of Relevance*. The social sciences are constantly being urged to demonstrate what they are for; in what way their knowledge is relevant. In this context, what interested me was precisely to question what this event we call ‘relevance’ consists of: what kinds of relationships it requires, what risks it involves, what consequences it entails. But what concerned me was not the question of how these knowledge practices communicate their results to ‘the public’, which is how the term ‘relevance’ is normally deployed to question the value (even monetary) of what the social

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sciences do. Conversely, my purpose was to take this word away from the economy of knowledge in order to try to take it seriously.

The experiment consisted of exploring how a knowledge-practice can become capable of establishing a relationship with that which it studies, and to do so in a way that allows this practice to become interested in what matters to those who are studied. In my work, therefore, the notion of relevance concerns above all our arts of knowing, the relationships we establish with those from whom we seek to learn something new, and does not serve to judge the relative success or failure with which the social sciences demonstrate their value in the knowledge market.

In your recent works, we see a very interesting use of anthropological narratives. Could you explain under what modality have you approached anthropology and what effects this has had on your work?

My relationship with anthropology has intensified a lot in recent years. In fact, my latest book, *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds: Politics of the Pluriverse*, is an attempt to establish another boundary space between philosophy, contemporary cultural anthropology, postcolonial studies, and a host of other areas such as religious studies and the ecological humanities. There is a very simple reason why anthropology, and in particular what anthropologists call 'ethnographic theory', has been central to this project: in a way, the book pursues the possibility of turning metaphysics —the area of philosophy concerned with the nature of reality— into an empirical, experimental, pragmatic task, divorced from any general principle. Instead of offering a general theory about the nature of the real, it proposes to associate the work of metaphysics with the question that precedes any of these theories: what is reality capable of? And instead of answering in the abstract, to finally draw the line between what is real and what is not, the proposal is to go out and see what answers the world itself proffers. In this sense, there are no better allies than those ethnographers who, for their own reasons, have given the worlds they study the capacity to provide responses to this question.

For many of us, you might be a representative of the 'new wave' of what is called contemporary pragmatism. Not only do you dialogue with Isabelle Stengers to go through the questions of pragmatism, but you have also stood out for working in the light of authors

such as William James, Charles S. Peirce, Alfred North Whitehead, etc. Tell us a little more about your interest in pragmatic philosophy, why reenact those figures to think about contemporary problems? In the same direction, and to make the question even more complex, what differentiates your speculative pragmatism from liberal pragmatism, for example?

I am glad you asked about that distinction because pragmatism, taken in general terms, is always susceptible to become a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the term sounds very familiar: everyone has heard the word and used it, sometimes as an insult, sometimes as a defense that no folly is being proposed. But this familiarity associated with the term sometimes becomes a curse: that notion of pragmatism that we all know does a disservice to the tradition of early twentieth-century American pragmatism, which is the one that interests me, particularly that of someone like William James. That pragmatism was not born of any conciliatory spirit, nor did it position itself as a kind of ‘third way’ aimed at resolving differences and building consensus. On the contrary, pragmatism was, and still can be, a very radical, controversial, and challenging tradition, which proposed to strip philosophy of its traditional authority in order to activate new ideas and put them to the test, experimenting with a fragile, unfinished, changing reality, which permanently demands us to rethink and relearn, transforming our ways of inhabiting the world. And that is the gesture that I call ‘pragmatist’, and that I am trying to recover.

And to complicate things further, the tradition that is traced from this gesture is a heterodox one that includes William James and then continues with Alfred North Whitehead and Gilles Deleuze, and even someone like Étienne Souriau, and is more recently inherited by someone like Isabelle Stengers. It is from this winding lineage that my philosophical affinities have somehow been forged.

I thank you for calling me a ‘representative’, but I prefer not to accept that responsibility. I would rather say that they are my friends, with whom I think and from whom I have learned enormously. For me, a fundamental element of that pragmatist tradition is that to think (which is to say ‘to live’) is to experiment, to take risks, in situations that one has not chosen but that pose problems and questions that demand an answer, and where that answer must be invented. It is not a matter of ‘applying’ theories but of trying to respond conceptually to the questions that the world and its various situations raise, and to do so by thinking about

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the possible consequences, the possible transformations that each conceptual response is likely to generate, the new dimensions it might be capable of adding to a situation. That is why pragmatism is an art of consequences: if one accepts an unfinished world, at all times subject to addition and liable to loss, the question for everyone who creates (concepts, things, gestures, designs, etc.) is precisely what the effects of that creation might be, what new possibilities might be opened, what stories might end up destroyed. Are the additions worthy or unworthy? Do they enrich or impoverish the world? This underground tradition of pragmatism, so to speak, always connects the act of thinking and experimenting in thought with something dramatic, and in that sense, it has nothing to do with the use of the word 'pragmatism' that frequently circulates, or with that liberal tradition that grows out of American pragmatism and remains in the United States.

Are you thinking of authors like Richard Rorty?

Like Rorty, yes. Those who relate the term 'pragmatism' to a more or less contemporary philosophical movement would often associate it with Rorty. And I have to say that I have no great affinity with Rorty's work because, there, pragmatism becomes a rather gratuitous gesture, devoid of any drama, of any necessity. But, as I was saying, in this other intercontinental, heterodox tradition, what is at stake is precisely the exercise of thinking exclusively in terms of experimentation, and of thinking in the presence of concrete practices and situations that *force* us to experiment. The key, let us say, consists in asking of every philosophical concept, of every idea, of every theory, that they attend to the possible consequences and differences that they might be liable to make. These differences can be as intellectual as they are concrete and practical. But, as James said at the time, if a philosophy is incapable of showing how my life would be different if an idea were true, then the idea has no meaning, and we are all wasting our time. Of course, it is often not possible to anticipate what the consequences will be or what differences will be produced, but it is precisely in this way that pragmatism becomes as practical as it is speculative: weaving a mode of experimentation without guarantees, which has no other rationale than the demand to respond to a specific situation that forces us to think; and which always accepts the risk of fabricating an answer that wagers on a *perhaps*. It is a matter, then, of accepting the adventure of thinking *from* and *with* concrete practices and situations, and of giving to these practices and situations the power to conjure the concepts they might need so that the

possibilities and potentialities generated in them can become perceptible, can be intensified, can be articulated, and can resonate.

For James, this is what distinguishes a pragmatist from someone who is not: while the anti-pragmatist postulates a pre-existing reality that our ideas must imitate, the pragmatist experiments with a reality our ideas could become true of. Thus, what interests me is precisely how this pragmatic gesture is capable of treating ideas with a certain degree of humor and with a certain degree of care, which is the care of those who genuinely work with ideas as living beings that inhabit the world and contribute to carve it (for better and ill), and not of those who work with them as someone in possession of the would-be most rational principles, those that everyone must accept.

When you refer to ideas as living beings, with the capacity to reconfigure the world we inhabit, you are challenging the distinction between thinking and doing, between reflection and action. Could you elaborate a little more on this point?

The problem is that this distinction does not hold when one accepts that the world is 'imperfect': not in the sense that it is not as good as one would like it to be, but in the sense that it is always ongoing and unfinished, indeterminate, to be made. If its becoming depends on everything that happens in it, on everything that is done in it, thinking is also a way of doing. Even when thinking stands in opposition to doing, this opposition also carries its consequences, it also precipitates a certain becoming. Of course, it is not at all a question of saying that writing a philosophical essay, engaging in a ritual, or risking one's body in collective action are the same thing. Not at all. But what distinguishes them is not an opposition between reflection and action, but between different modes, of acting and thinking, of connecting with the world, modes that do not even have to be opposed (quite the contrary), but that are specific: each mode creates certain possibilities and undoes others. The point, as far as I am concerned, is to do everything possible so that they nurture each other. Nietzsche said that we always have the thoughts, values, and beliefs that we deserve given our modes of being and our ways of living. I love this expression because, despite appearances, it is not a life sentence. On the contrary, if we always have the thoughts, values, and beliefs that we deserve according to how we live, this implies that it is never enough to think our way into other modes of living, but it is also necessary to live our way into other modes of thinking.

You co-edited *Speculative Research*, an important contribution to interdisciplinary thinking, to thinking from the crossroads of the social sciences, the humanities, arts, and design. In this sense, what contributions do you see in the humanities, the arts, design, or architecture to generate problematic situations, of radical empiricism, or to extend, as you call it, a ‘speculative pragmatics of thought’? In other words, is the speculative challenge an exclusive task of the social sciences and philosophy or is it something that should be extended to other project practices such as design?

It is a very good question and I have a bit of a strange answer. On the one hand, I would say “no”: in no way is this work restricted to the social sciences. It is something that has more to do with a certain gesture and a certain sensibility, which consists precisely in articulating practices of knowing and thinking in terms of an *art*. Therefore, this work does not necessarily have to be restricted to social sciences. But, on the other hand, this does not mean that the speculative affects these diverse practices in the same way. That is, what this gesture presupposes is the question of how each practice, as well as each situation to which each practice responds, can become mutually capable of entertaining, exploring, and intensifying the possibilities that are engendered in it. But this is a question whose answer must come from each practice, engaged in its own form of experimentation, and not a formula that someone else can determine or a method that one will simply apply.

When it comes to methods (and not just methods), I am an anarchist: whatever works. What matters to me is that what is put into play responds to what each given situation demands, and is not a response to the latest theory in circulation. Instead of worrying about applying the theory or following the methodology, the pragmatic and speculative gesture consists of asking oneself how to learn something new, to learn how to make what is engendered in a specific situation become the vector of novelty, the vector of provocation, of theoretical transformation, of methodological transformation. Your work linked to design and the speculative role that prototypes can play in organizing urban life is a good example of this! In this sense, I also find very interesting those proposals that are associated with the idea of ‘undesign’, which do not seek to respond to the consequences of the ubiquity of design in the construction of modern public life by ‘designing’ ever new ‘solutions’ capable of prolonging the present, but that seek instead to

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mobilize the tools and problems associated with design to *complicate* the present, to add dimensions that problematize and alter its becoming. The point is that, in both cases, these tools and modalities have to be invented, tested, put into play. There are no guarantees. If we ask ourselves what concepts, what stories, what devices, what approaches this specific situation may require, we will hardly find the answer in a methodology book, whether in social sciences or design.

How do you manage, in your process of pragmatist approach, to generate that intimacy with the problems, with the concrete situation, with the question that grips and challenges you, considering that you are located rather on a philosophical layer? How do you manage to identify or intensify that concrete situation that mobilizes you to think, that radical immanence, that empiricism, considering that you are rather on the layer of ideas, not of fieldwork?

It is an excellent question, which from time to time generates some tension, because it is true that we usually determine whether a text is philosophical or not by evaluating how abstract and general it is. But this leads to terrible mistakes. The best books in philosophy are neither abstract nor general. Virtually all of William James' work, for example, is composed of experiments arising from very concrete situations and questions. But even a work of hardcore metaphysics such as Whitehead's *Process and Reality* is abstract and general only at first glance. We could also mention a whole series of profoundly *philosophical* works that have, however, a purely ethnographic, descriptive, or even literary character. For my part, that immanence, that intimacy, as you rightly suggested, primarily happens when thinking very closely with practices, stories, and tales. In many cases, due to affinities and personal interests in certain questions that interest me now, many of those stories are anthropological and ethnographic, as is the case of my last book, but they are sometimes also written by historians, writers, etc.

What kind of material do you gather, for example, from anthropological work?

I have been working with some stories told by anthropologists and their works. And I do it precisely to interrogate, in what they have been able to make perceptible, certain elements that perhaps may have not belonged to their own questions, but that resonate not only

with the questions lurking in my mind at a given moment but also with questions that I find looming across a multiplicity of different stories. So, in a way, I play a different role. I am not an ethnographer or an anthropologist, and I do not pretend to be one. Rather, my job is to read across a multiplicity of stories and narratives from diverse places and try to apprehend certain transversal questions that resonate between these different worlds. And it is with those questions that I try to pose problems of a more philosophical nature, which is not to say general at all. Again, that has been my central work in this latest book, *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds*: working with William James and a long series of anthropologists and their stories.

And something similar happens in philosophical exegesis. It is not simply a matter of analyzing a series of ideas or phrases of a dead philosopher and evaluating how coherent they are. It is rather a matter of trying to approach a certain vision, a singular gesture that a given text or author dramatizes, and to give it new life not only through analysis but also through an act of imagination. Thus, even in those texts that explore ideas almost exclusively, there is a certain work of trying to engage with ideas as beings capable of provoking us and of inspiring certain feelings and doings in us, but also to learn to relate to them as profoundly dangerous beings capable of hypnotizing us, of hiding their own consequences and of inviting us to forget the power of their own abstractions. James somewhere has a very nice phrase that, in this case, could work like this: ideas are not what we think, but what makes us think. Which is to say that thinking means entering a bond with ideas and learning to connect with beings that are very special, singular, and powerful, but also magical and transformative at times.

We are experiencing a kind of proliferation of (speculative, materialist, feminist, etc.) ‘turns’ and now and then new movements emerge that shake up the debate. Where do you stand regarding these turns, and in particular when it comes to the speculative turn?

First, I get on badly with so-called ‘turns’. When we talk about a ‘turn’, we are talking about a project that is usually quite concerted, aimed at stamping a mark in an economy of knowledge. That is why it is not by chance that, as you say, there is a proliferation of ‘turns’: everyone wants to set up their little shop. On the other hand, it is also worth noting that, although there is undoubtedly a certain profusion of proposals, with various kinds of resonances, they do not necessarily

reveal a common foundation that puts them all on the same plane. The book we edited with Alex Wilkie and Marsha Rosengarten, *Speculative Research: The Lure of Possible Futures*, sought to generate a series of proposals, cases, and experiments in the intercontinental pragmatist tradition mentioned earlier. The book brings together some researchers and practitioners who work in more empirical or more methodologically innovative and experimental areas, from the humanities, arts, and design to philosophy and social sciences. But here the speculative has to do precisely with the rejection of general principles and with thinking and knowing as permanent experimentation. This has very little to do with the project of 'speculative realism', although the version of the speculative in *Speculative Research* could also be realist.

In some of your recent works, you have developed the concept of 'decolonial imagination'. Could you elaborate on it and explain what potentialities you see for decolonial thought or imagination, considering it from the global South?

This is related, on the one hand, to what we discussed earlier, that question of the interstices where genuinely interesting questions with great transformative potential begin to emerge. On the other hand, it of course relates to the question of the politics of knowledge and, even more radically, of the politics of worlds. For many years I have been interested in questions concerning difference, which is to say *radical* difference, the question of alterity and otherness. And given our histories of colonialism and extractivism, of capitalism and developmentalism, to pose the question of difference today is to attend to a politics of divergent worlds. Indeed, the history of the last 500 years is a history of the devastation of differences, of what I call a 'world without others'. Therefore, one of the things that have interested me in recent years is to think about some dimensions of this devastation of differences, one associated with the devastation of divergent forms of thought, and of our own political imaginations. And that article, which I entitled 'A Decolonial Imagination', sought to question certain political imaginations that accompany a good part of postcolonial and decolonial studies, an image according to which the decolonial horizon fundamentally implies the pluralization and decolonization of epistemology, of our ways of knowing. There, I made an attempt, which I later continued somewhat differently in the latest book, to complicate a bit this passion for epistemology in the debates on decolonization: where does it come from, what image of the plural does

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it evoke? There is no doubt that one of the modalities of colonization has been through the destruction, subsumption, and re-appropriation of knowledges. But when all attention is focused on the question of knowledge, what sometimes happens is that we end up universalizing the very problem of epistemology, of the uncertain relationships between our cognition and the world. There is nothing universal about this problem of how we know what we know: the problem itself is part of our colonial history. Therefore, one of my intentions was to propose that this very image of the plural can itself be decolonized. And this opens up a task to be done, another gesture to be made, which is the gesture of decolonizing the imagination, to be able to affirm the possibility that epistemology is not a universal problem, and to understand that the problem of otherness is often a problematic that exceeds and goes beyond the question of knowledge, and forces us to ask ourselves what reality is capable of.

Thinking about what design can do, what kind of operations or displacements could be thought of or projected to decolonize the imagination?

As we said before, there are certain gestures amongst designers, no matter how minor, that are already participating in this. Not least by beginning, precisely, with a problematization of what we imagine design to be: what it consists of, what it is for, who it serves, who is capable of carrying it out, etc. And given the ubiquity of design in collective life, if the experiments that you and others are doing encourage us to imagine design otherwise, we may quickly find ourselves in a situation in which it becomes possible to imagine our collective forms of life in other ways, not only by critically questioning what lives and forms of life design has facilitated and promoted, but also by exploring what modes of living it could still engender. The counterexample to this is what many of us have witnessed during this horrific last year of the pandemic: an overwhelming proliferation of all sorts of devices and platforms specifically designed to do everything possible to prevent life (especially the so-called 'productive' life of a certain privileged proportion of society) from being radically problematized, and to do this *despite* the radical rupture that epidemiological control measures –lockdowns, for example– have entailed.

I remember, when this started, an early period in which many were gleefully fantasizing about how wonderful the world 'after COVID' would be like. I confess that I never quite understood what they were referring to, because they imagined a timeline that, explicitly or

implicitly, projected a future in which the virus would have disappeared. That world without COVID was the one we had! And it was clearly designed and built without the possibility of its presence. The world 'after COVID' began precisely at the very moment that the virus entered our lives, and there, amidst all those optimistic projections, we lacked some imagination, not only political but also technical: both to conceive and experiment with possible infrastructures that would allow us to cultivate other ways of living together, ways which do not go through isolation and digital communication platforms alone.

And of course, despite what psychologists say, the imagination is not a kind of innate faculty, an expression of pure individual genius: it is nourished, nourished by knowledge, techniques, affects, experiences and exchanges. To imagine other ways and other infrastructures of collective life; and more, to imagine infrastructures that might enable us to nourish those very exchanges and knowledges thanks to which those other ways of inhabiting the world with others could become more tangible; could that not be one of the functions of a speculative design, implicated not in the maintenance of the terms of order but in the 'perhaps' of another form of life? I cannot answer that question, but perhaps you can!

Let us go now to the terrain of your latest book, *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds: Politics of the Pluriverse*. There, you advocate for the need to develop a radical pluriverse amid ecological devastation and, in close dialogue with James, suggest clues for thinking about alternative ways of living and explore the idea of the art of living. Can you elaborate further on these ideas?

This book, *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds: Politics of the Pluriverse*, has been an attempt to experiment with another image of thought that could proffer a slightly more generous and generative relationship with what we call reality, and to do so through a close engagement with James, as well as with a host of anthropologists and ethnographers whose stories make visible the possibility of decolonizing the imagination. That is what, in the book, I call 'pluralistic realism'. And the reason why I try to articulate this has to do with the following diagnosis: one of the fundamental features of modernity as a project has been to attempt to deal with political problems by channeling, through extremely general and abstract questions, the very concrete questions and problems that the presence of others—or the relationship with others—generates.

And it has sought to do so by way of a very particular operation, one that consists in drawing a line between what is real and what is not, and of mobilizing that distinction so as to disqualify other collectives and in the process ‘solve’ the many cosmological, political, ethical, ecological, and geopolitical problems that their very presence poses.

Following this gesture of the decolonization of the imagination that we mentioned, the book articulates an experiment based on a short phrase that appears in the middle of a long book by James, *The Principles of Psychology*, which is this: “Reality, the sense of reality, feels like itself”. And the aim is precisely to experiment with how we think about the question of alterity if we disable this weapon that modernity bestowed upon us, if we discard this weapon that then turns against us and prevents us from relating to others differently. What would happen if we resist this permanent operation that seeks to distinguish between reality and belief, myth, confusion, stupidity, backwardness, lack of development, etc. Not, mind you, in order to get rid of the idea of reality, because that is a path already traveled and, in my opinion, mistaken. Quite on the contrary: to explore what might happen if we assign more reality to the many worlds that make up the world. What interests me about this possibility is that, in this way, the presence of an other cannot be compartmentalized; it cannot be explained or reincorporated through some schema that leaves our way of inhabiting the world untouched. What kind of questions —about how we live, about how we understand the world, about our own foundations, presuppositions, and institutions, about our images of thought, about what thinking well, living well mean— might this encounter with an other whose alterity makes us think generate? What is reality capable of if it includes not only *beliefs* in gods, spirits, and ghosts, but also gods, spirits, and ghosts? This is, in a nutshell, the project of the book: an experiment in responding to the challenges and possibilities of what, with James, we might call a ‘pluriverse’. For me, however, the pluriverse cannot be ‘developed’. As we said before regarding ideas, the pluriverse is not the name of a world we dream of, but what makes us dream. It is an insistence, more than an existence. And approaching it in this way makes possible a pluralism that is rather different from what we are perhaps accustomed to: radicalized, more anarchist than cosmopolitan, interested not so much in composing a cosmology in which everything fits than in learning from that which always escapes.

This interest in escape, in what flees even the most inclusive and well-intentioned proposals, which conceives the plural as a

“I also find very interesting those proposals that are associated with the idea of ‘undesign,’ which do not seek to respond to the consequences of the ubiquity of design in the construction of modern public life by ‘designing’ ever new ‘solutions’ capable of prolonging the present, but that seek instead to mobilize the tools and problems associated with design to complicate the present, to add dimensions that problematize and alter its becoming”

profusion of divergences and not as an economy of the diverse, persists (questions always persist!) in a new project that I am beginning about our political and ecological imaginations. Indeed, this new project consists of extending, as it were, certain gestures of the previous book to interrogate some dimensions of this environmental condition of destruction and ecological devastation. One of the things that I found very productive (in a very paradoxical and unexpected way) in my relationship with ecological problems, was precisely to accept, at least hypothetically, that ecological devastation does not have the same characteristics as a whole history of social and socio-political conflicts, from which we have thought, in whose key we have articulated categories of emancipation, categories of reconciliation, categories of redemption, and so on. On the contrary, what interests me today is to think from the irreversibility of the ecological disaster, from its somewhat irreparable character. Because this implies asking again some rather complicated questions about our political imagination. And since the political ultimately concerns the ways of composing collective life, of living with others, this also implies taking up again issues that were marginalized in modernity, associated with the methodologies of life, the art of living and dying, of cohabiting Earth, as a political problem and therefore as a problem that is irreducible to questions of a scientific, technical, or ethical nature, which today to a certain extent dominate the debates around the environmental debacle.

Interested in what escapes (in fugitive ideas and practices, in the profusion of divergence) and in the stories of those who have fled and are still fleeing (from the State, from slavery, from colonization, from what we have called 'civilization', from the promises of progress and modernity, from the dogmas of reason and good sense), I am exploring what possibilities might arise if we were to think the ecological (in its broadest sense, not only environmentally but also in terms of ways of cohabiting the Earth), from a fugitive perspective, from the perspective of escape and from the profusion of divergences.

It is curious because, with some exceptions, the history of ecological thought has tended to avoid this option, being interested rather in the formations of order, whether organic or technical, whether collaborative or competitive, whether it is to care for it, to maintain and conserve it, or to exploit it to the maximum. It seems to me that this history is still very much present today, both in a certain mode of environmental thinking and in the kind of imagination that shapes certain kinds of political ecology. And as colonial capitalism continues to destroy worlds and ways of life, this mode of ecological imagination is relevant.

But, like everything else, it carries its risks: it seems to me highly probable that soon (and indeed already today in many parts of the global South), the problem will not so much be that of the institutional lethargy in responding to climate and ecological problems, but that of a kind of eco-colonialism or eco-fascism which, mobilized by environmental urgency and authorized by a range of scientific knowledges, will set out to impose order left, right, and center, in the name of the planet and humanity. From that, I would certainly like to escape! So, I am interested in the possibility of imagining some of these issues in otherwise: to think the ecological, to think of possible ways of making life and cohabiting the Earth, starting from a fugitive politics, from an ecology of divergences. **D**

“The pluriverse is not the name of a world we dream of, but what makes us dream. It is an insistence, more than an existence. And approaching it in this way makes possible a pluralism that is rather different from what we are perhaps accustomed to: radicalized, more anarchist than cosmopolitan, interested not so much in composing a cosmology in which everything fits than in learning from that which always escapes”