

Mapping the Light Atlas: A Phenomenological Parable on the Human Perception of Spacetime in the Anthropocene

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What is spacetime? How do we perceive this medium? How can we fit it into our everyday linear lives? How can we situate ourselves within it in our post-industrial worldview, in an unsustainable world? This philosophical essay adopts a phenomenological method to interrogate the meaning of this fundamental dimension of reality. Spacetime is interpreted not merely as a physical structure but as a plastic field whose instability shapes inner and social life. Yet the contemporary human condition is marked by a profound alienation, much of which derives from a self-inflicted existential disorientation: I once chose exile and moved to a remote island in the Atlantic Ocean, becoming my own research material. In search of genuine contact with nature, the nonverbal appeared as a necessity. I turned to music as an archetypal language, in the Romantic sense of a medium offering pre-conceptual access to the real. I composed *Light Atlas*, a six-movement work aiming to capture the flight of seagulls and the eternal struggle between light and darkness. This led me back to physics, to my original question: the lived perception of spacetime.

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Koyaanisqatsi

This story begins with a small ferry crossing the ocean, sailing from Brest, Brittany, to the remote island of Ushant in mid-August 2011. The sea, so often ill-reputed in these places, lies calm beneath a bright summer sky. The crossing is smooth. The ferry is packed with tourists: hikers, families, and beer-drinking youngsters. The islanders are few and easy to spot among this cheerful crowd. Plainly dressed, rough-faced, they stare coldly at those who come, season after season, to occupy their home sea-land.

My wife, my three-year-old son, and I are on this ferry. Strangely enough, we go completely unnoticed, maybe because we stand outside both groups. We take no part in this silent confrontation. We are not tourists. We do not belong there. We do not belong anywhere at the moment. This gives us an existential lightness. Little do I know that this in-between state, so intelligently described in Schrödinger's (1967) famous thought experiment, is here to stay: perpetual indeterminacy without a perceived ending. Over the years, it will acquire an Alcibiadean depth, a brilliance shadowed by restlessness, a promise haunted by its own ambiguity.

We have packed all our belongings into two suitcases and two backpacks. We have left silently the lives we had settled into in our late thirties and the two-thousand-year-old city that gave birth to democracy and debtocracy: Athens, Greece. I even found the courage to let go of the few thousand books I owned. I had long considered them a Borgesian labyrinth leading to my inner self. This maze of ideas, imagined places, and identities had once felt like home. Giving them away, I realized they had become a prison of the mind.

We set out on a voyage of no return.

First stop: Ushant.

Length of stay: Unknown.

Life plans: None.

It is strange how life's most decisive moments can be so quiet. Like a smooth summer sail. A gentle crossing from somewhere to nowhere. From a clearly defined then to uchrony.

The "Prophecies" of the Hopi (Native American), minimalistically recreated by Philip Glass (1983), cross my mind while remembering this moment. Ancient chants marry gently with the electric piano's enchanting, ascending modal patterns, while searching for Bach's lost celestial harmony (see Barth, 1986). In vain. In the gap created from this loss comes the diagnosis of a world on the edge of environmental, social, and financial collapse. The Hopi warnings acquire all the depth of their meaning. "God is dead", as Nietzsche (1974) had written. Bach can no longer convince us otherwise. A sacred word is sung repeatedly like a mantra: Koyaanisqatsi. Existentially profound as Heidegger's *Dasein* (1962), our grounding-in-spacetime and the necessity to be—here and now. World-historical as Hegel's *Weltgeist* (1977), the Ghost eternal in History's machine, the reason it comes in crushing waves. Ethically powerful as Aristotle's *Entelechy* (2006), the realisation of a being's potential and the moral responsibility to attain it. Koyaanisqatsi conveys the three dimensions: Detached from our *Dasein*, we lose our *Entelechy*, and now are haunted by a terrifying *Weltgeist*. While starting its descent to a minor tune, the piano has definitely turned its back on Bach's teleological harmony, that which once had the power to convince us that God still exists. It welcomes us, in Žižek's terms (2002), to the *Desert of the Real*: confrontation with a form of life radically out of balance.

Like the one I was living in Athens. The life of a radical independent publisher producing books that interested a few hundred readers, waging imaginary wars, living in the illusion that the world changes when words get printed on paper. In my brave decision to let it all go (and let myself go), to leave everything behind in the promise of inhabiting a dreamed place, this haunted island in the Atlantic I was about to set my feet on, Glass's music had played a profound role, not because it had helped me discover the deep imbalance of late Western civilisation. Early environmentalist, Ph.D. pioneer in sustainable development (it cost me dearly, getting specialised in a science of the future), the structural problems of capitalistic exponential growth and the depth of our existential crisis held no secrets from me. I was about to discover that I, too, was living in Koyaanisqatsi—a life full of disorder, uneven confrontations, and successive disappointments. It was a life of disoriented ethos, wasted pathos, and distorted logos, disillusion born of vainly fighting the wrong fights, in the wrong arenas, at the wrong moment, in front of the wrong crowds (however scarce they were), and against the wrong opponents.

I was being consumed by Wétiko—the disease of civilizational cannibalism described by Forbes (1979). My hunger for justice was devouring me from within. In trying to solve a problem, I had become entangled in it. For a long time, I had tried to bear the weight of the world on my shoulders. I abandoned all hope of catharsis with bitterness ("Abandon all hope, all ye who enter here", as in the inscription over the gate of Dante's *Inferno* (1984)). I acknowledged that total redemption was an illusion as strong and vain as the belief in God. All that I had left undone in Athens would remain unfinished, probably forever. It deeply hurt my pride. But it was high time I faced my own problems.

They were existential.

Tabula Rasa

In 1977, Arvo Pärt composed *Tabula Rasa* at the request of violinist Gidon Kremer. The work was conceived as a double concerto for two violins, string orchestra, and prepared piano, an unusual instrumentation. It premiered in Tallinn in 1977, with Kremer and Tatiana Grindenko as soloists, at a moment when Pärt was still officially present in the Soviet Union but already artistically estranged from it. This work marks, for him, a symbolic and practical reboot, anticipating his exile. Three years later, in 1980, he left Soviet Estonia after a long, bureaucratic process. He did so because he was effectively marginalized. His openly spiritual music conflicted with Soviet cultural policy. Performances were rare. Official support had dried up. *Tabula Rasa* functions as a deliberate clearing of the past, a farewell to the ideological, aesthetic, and political constraints that had made his earlier career untenable (Pärt, 2012).

By analogy, I had left Athens for similar reasons. I had felt marginalized in my work as a publisher defending Romantic aesthetic values in a context shaped by instrumental rationality and an ambient cynicism (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002), as a writer of futuristic novels in a period when realism prevailed, and as a scientist of sustainable mobility in an environment dominated by car ideology. I went to Ushant to explore a *tabula rasa* state, a new beginning. I had imagined a period of peace, calm, and solitary contemplation of a sublime land and seascape, cliffs facing the immensity of the Atlantic Ocean.

I was wrong. I thought this scenery would lift one's soul above realism and matter. It revealed itself as a harsh and violent reality. Very soon, practical problems arose. They were incredibly more difficult to resolve than when living in a city. This was a place for the agony of the soul: a perfect limbo. A Schrödinger thought experiment (Schrödinger, 1967) somatized. Small technical details that one would normally overlook took on immense proportions. The elements prevailed. The wind entered the precarious human dwellings. Fearsome lightning bolts deprived us of telephone and internet connection for days. Rusted, suffering vehicles always broke down. Power cuts time-travelled us to the 19th century for an entire weekend. The weather was harsh. *You could only venture outside for brief periods—mostly in spring or summer. It felt like living on a boat, adrift in the middle of the ocean.* Crossing the sea in winter was a nightmare unless one was immune to seasickness. The natural violence of the elements translated into intense daily psychic pain. Even breathing became heavy.

Tabula Rasa perfectly fits the emotional state I was in, as a would-be islander. Movements come in waves of triads, as storms break violently on the island. They decompose and reconstruct a minimalist Western harmony, just like my soul was split in parts, wondering where I had gone wrong (or where I had not). Often, they leave space for nothingness (as I felt). The listener is left alone to cope with this unbearable silence, as was I. The Western tradition of string ensembles is present; comforting as it is, it cannot save us from the turbulent waves of history we have endured since the 20th century, and the ones I faced deliberately following what might be described, in a Hegelian sense (Hegel, 1977), as self-attributed heroic ideals. A deep search for lost spirituality inhabits the piece. One can faintly overhear the distant echo of fading Gregorian chants. The music is marked by the tintinnabuli style Pärt invented, a radically reduced musical language based on triads, silence, and strict compositional rules. It seems it was born of necessity, like my reclusion. It maps the great upheavals of the inner and outer world, the void created between the individual and the collective.

The void I had fallen into.

Become Ocean

We settled into a remote summer cottage near a lighthouse and began our island life. We did not even look for work at first. Adapting to the island was demanding enough. Our dwelling lay far from the only village. Walking to the grocery store to buy a few necessities, to meet a soul or two, was already a journey. Most of the time, we stayed inside, asking ourselves what we were doing there. I was certain that I had to be there (*Dasein*), but of nothing else. Bit by bit, most certainties faded away, carried off by the wind.

My nights were uneasy. I followed *Swann's Way* (Proust, 1981) unwillingly. Sleep came only with difficulty. For the first time in my life, I was seized by claustrophobia. When I closed my eyes, I imagined myself trapped in a place surrounded by the sea (one of the rare times my imagination did not contradict reality).

I soon realized that neither a simple stroll nor owning a car would grant me freedom. I had not yet bought one of the island's wrecks. Little did I know that having one would become a source of regret. Even the best cars were unreliable (islanders used to say they were sent there to die). You could not go wherever you wanted; you could only circle the island. That realization was oppressive. This feeling reached my three-year-old son. He often woke at night and called me by name. His frightened voice pierced me so vividly that even now, remembering it, I feel its weight—one of those precious moments that will never return.

When I finally fell asleep, it never lasted long. I woke up in the night, without knowing where I was or what time it was, because of my son's cries or my own uneasiness. In the darkness, I would glance at the little attic window. I would realize that I was on the island. Claustrophobia would close in on me again. And so on.

Afternoons were harder. The nice summer weather quickly gave way to the oceanic climate. Howling winds, constant showers, fog, and rain came to stay. One would expect to feel happy at home (better say sheltered; this was no home) in this weather. In our little cottage, as the evening fell, the thin walls seemed to swell. I would shout if I could. I felt a deep sadness, like a child who had lost his favorite toy. My social identity had slipped away. Most of the time, we exist through others. Their thoughts nourish us. We draw confidence from their attention and interest. Suddenly, nobody even bothered to know how we were doing. I realized that I was flattered by my social image in Athens. Suddenly, I was nobody.

Who was I? What remains of a person when the superposition of constructed selves collapses?

There was only one way out: through the door.

I crossed it. I began courageous strolls on the island's shores through storms and rain. I became ocean.

Become Ocean by John Luther Adams premiered in 2013. The first time I heard it, I did not live on Ushant anymore. It was as if the Atlantic's roar, just beyond my walls, was coming back to haunt me. This is not music in a classical sense. It feels like a rising tide. Modal-like waves create a compelling, ominous background. Harmony is not sought. We are well past Western tradition. There is no resolution. No real beginning or ending. Just this raw oceanic power that draws near, dissolving you into the awareness of your own inexistence, facing the elements. Just as I felt while walking along the cliffs of Ushant, looking down at the waves crashing against the brave rocks with tremendous intensity, then my gaze would fix on the horizon to take a glimpse of what eternity might look like, or feel. This raw power of nature reminds us of lost divinity and sacredness. Adams's music resembles a natural event to be experienced. But it cannot describe what it felt like as the sea gradually grew inside me.

Glass

One day, we woke up to find the island covered in fog. We set out on our trek to the nearby village. We went out as usual. We stopped. A thick veil surrounded us immediately. We had barely a meter of visibility. Then we heard it. At first, we did not know what it was. It came out of nowhere. It felt like the island itself was exhaling a single and enormous breath. The sound was low and slow, as if the air had thickened and begun to vibrate. It was a long, rounded moan, rising progressively out of silence and sinking back into it. It seemed older than any machine, closer to something geological or animalistic, like an ancient sea beast, a call made by the sea itself. We looked around, trying to locate its source. We could not trace it in the mist. It filled the space with an imminent threat. Reluctantly, we decided to cancel our daily expedition to the village. It was dangerous to walk along the road. Movement itself seemed uncertain. The mystery of this sound made things even more unsettling (we would later find out that it was the island's foghorn that would sometimes accompany us for days).

What a pity we had to return to the cottage. The glances we exchanged with islanders when visiting the village were our only everyday comfort—even if some were not even friendly.

The day was long and scary. The small cottage was more oppressive than ever. Now the strange vibration penetrated the thin walls and echoed directly inside every minute or so, increasing my *Angst*. We managed to occupy ourselves (it was during my island life, deprived of easy distractions, that I discovered that we all have those bad days, and there is nothing you can do about it). We played with our son, and we took a nap.

The afternoon came. The usual heaviness took hold of me, my afternoon spleen. I had to go out. I said to my wife that I would take a hike. She looked at me warily. Outside, the mist had thickened. Once we had opened the window, we discovered thick, shadowy veils entering the room. We closed it immediately, but it took them several minutes to disappear. To reassure her, I said I would take our son with me, in his all-terrain stroller, which we had bought in Brest. I do not know if the idea of my taking our son also to the cliffs made her feel comfortable or even more uneasy. In any case, she accepted.

I left the house. I started pushing the stroller and running in the mist. I knew where I was heading and the way to get there; I took this path every day. It seemed to me that the fog was clearing. My son was laughing and enjoying the ride. For a brief moment, I felt a bit lighter.

Then we arrived. It was a special place. A natural granite platform facing the English Channel, welcoming, like a sofa, with clifftop heath around, as if nature had shaped it for human rest. I wanted to behold that wavelike eternity. I had grown dependent on this habit, measuring waves and wind slaps. It had become my quiet lesson of humility. With the stroller, I stepped onto the stone and stopped.

Suddenly, mist was all around us. I could not even see my son. A deep, intense, and abrupt sensation of fear and disorientation penetrated me. I suddenly wanted to go home. I had no idea which direction to take. If I pushed the stroller, I might even throw my son off the cliff. I needed to move, to act. But I should not. I stayed there, immobile, my glance fixed in front of me, my body shaking with the periodic foghorn blast, hoping the air would clear up.

I had entered my favorite painting: Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (1818; see Koerner, 1990). I had imagined this Romantic experience less haunting.

At this moment, the sea entered inside me.

It was as if I displaced my *epithymetikon*—the Platonic seat of desire—outside my body. I could instantly see myself from a point above my head. There I was, in the middle of nowhere at my own will, experiencing a

collapse of Cartesian coordinates and reason. I had a close look, “just as through a glass darkly; but then face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12). I plunged inside myself. What was I but a temporary part of all this vast sea surrounding me? What would I become (very quickly, in geological time scale) other than a nameless drop of this very sea?

I discovered *Glass* by Hania Rani (2019) much later. The first time I listened to it, the music poured into my ears and soul. It flourished in this distant memory, providing me comfort and hope. There is no clear melody, as if we lost it as a means of storytelling. We excelled unconsciously in exalting divinity but did not anticipate its quiet vanishing from our lives. In its place, modal, minimalist piano patterns create a fragile, temporary space. It is welcoming and warm. It invites you to rest, breathe, and dream. Maybe gender studies in music composition will sometime argue that Rani’s contribution to minimalism is analogous to that of Virginia Woolf in literary modernism: Woolf’s novels like *To the Lighthouse* occupy a parallel position with the canonical works of the genre (*Ulysses* by James Joyce, *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust), but maybe treat the crisis of reason and the end of collective narratives with finesse, interiority, and sensibility.

Spring

Spring finally came. Never in my life have I experienced such joy at the changing of a season. The days grew longer. The wind calmed down. Even the rain became gentler. All nature had awakened. A Vivaldian joy overwhelmed us, like an ephemeral melodic haven. It seemed as if time had stopped a long time ago. A giant clock—the island clock—was starting to resonate again.

“We didn’t believe you would last the winter”. A few locals opened up to us. We succeeded where most newcomers and would-be islanders had not (mostly retired Parisians). Things got better. We began seeing more of them. I developed an anthropological curiosity about them. They seemed at ease with silence among strangers and even among themselves. They did not seek the sea as I did; perhaps, in a sense, the sea was already inside them. We found employment. My wife, an art historian, was offered a job at the island’s gallery. I became a part-time postman and cemetery gardener. I rebooted my research. I sketched out roughly the way out of my conceptual dead end, my scientific burnout. It would be a path from sustainability to gravity (Vantis, 2024). I was beginning to explore the idea that what I considered a failed social paradigm—our inability to attain sustainability—should be treated as a problem of natural philosophy, not only because we had transgressed the planetary boundaries, but because we had not advanced enough in translating our physical knowledge of the world—relativistic spacetime—into a new worldview and subsequent social norms and economic behavior. I sensed that explaining gravity might be the key to understanding the world and finding a way forward. A strange seasonal harmony took hold of my family and me.

I began taking them to my favorite place—the platform on the edge of the cliffs facing the English Channel. It had transformed to welcome spring. The heath along the path to the cliffs was blooming with gorse, its yellow flowers glowing in the passing sunlight. The view was magnificent. The ocean was deep blue, and the foam at the edge of the waves was immaculate white. We made a habit of going there every Saturday for a picnic. During our visits, I never saw anybody else nearby. We would sit comfortably, sip our drinks, eat, and watch the ocean.

Then the seagulls entered our lives.

On the first Saturday, they were barely noticeable. They were flying around us, watching us from afar. The next time, they came closer. Soon, they began landing boldly on our plateau. They drew near. The boldest of

them claimed food—chips, and bread. Then others did the same. In the end, we were having lunch with seagulls around us.

Were they the same seagulls every time?

It is even more compelling to imagine that maybe not.

Well fed, they took off and flew before us over the sea, drawing wide horizontal spirals across the sky. Maybe they wanted to thank us, or just to show off. A thought came to my mind.

The seagulls are writing words that everybody forgot.

Which words? What were they trying to say?

If I transcribed their flights into musical modes, maybe I could discover their message. I had not played music for ages. I had trained for many years in a classical conservatory and later in a jazz conservatory. I had once been a talented musician, pianist, and composer. I had written countless songs and melodies. I had even formed bands. My family had urged me to abandon it. It was not compatible with my serious studies in a Polytechnic school, the career they had imagined for me.

Being on the island, with an already displaced identity, an absence of a clear course, which was becoming comforting, with no social attachments, no norms to contain my will, I said to myself, why not?

I ordered an electric piano and a MIDI keyboard online. I quickly learned how to use DAW software. I started composing music again. I wanted to find out what the seagulls meant. I did not know it then. I was sketching the final movement of the *Light Atlas*.

Light Atlas

I cannot easily describe the music I wrote. I chose a brass timbre, much heavier than my influences. The storm had left a physical imprint on me. Its violence found its way into the composition. The main theme (the second movement, *Seaside Light*) emerged with the force of a tempest, light fighting with the clouds, trying to pierce its way through. As if it wanted to travel, reach out to us, but extreme weather would not let it. This struggle unfolds across three circles, suspended planes in which shifting harmonic colours emerge, as light continues to find its way forward.

Then I thought, things do not start like this. Not in nature, nor in life. I composed an Isodos: the first movement, entitled *Seaside Light*. I recreated a distant memory. When I first came to the island, I used to walk by the main beach early in the morning. I would see the world become the day, the sea awakening by the gentle breeze, and distant sunbeams caressing the waves.

Afterwards, light traveled through the world. I was in the West, influenced by a Cartesian mentality, being reformed and reconstructed. I was undergoing a process of *becoming*, even if I did not know what or who at the time. In the third movement, *Oriental Light*, I took my modal harmonic patterns and sent them eastwards, where they originally belonged. It was exciting to unravel patterns that transform just by crossing boundaries.

Inspired by Eastern traditions, the music takes a turn resembling a gravitational blueshift. It opens into major in the central piece of the composition, the fourth movement. *Light Escaping From the Clouds* creates an ephemeral existential field where light has won the battle. Nothing can stop it from bringing warmth and joy.

The fifth movement, *Back to the North Atlantic*, emerged as a clear and inescapable return to the eternal fight between light and darkness. The suspended planes briefly revive, vibrating more strongly. The main theme takes off one last time, delivering its message of a Heraclitean world (Heraclitus, 1983): *πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς*—“conflict is the father of all things and the ruler of all”.

Only then does the sixth movement make sense. It is earned: *Seagulls Chasing Light Back to the Seaside*. For a brief moment, I capture what it felt like to watch seagulls fly, their movement echoing in swift, lively triadic patterns. Then the circle closes violently, the same way it began.

Exodus

Exodus (Kilar, 1981) resonates deeply inside me in the last part of this journey. A single pulse, a harmonic field, no modulation in the classical sense, no clear destination, no directional growth, just a cyclically growing tension. Melodic in archaic ways, ritualistic in a pre-modernist sense, floating like a boat carried in the mist on an ever-rougher sea, with time dilating instead of progressing linearly, its elaborate modes constantly expanding and progressively taking on more intensity and a Bolero-like gravity in every circle, this is, by essence, music in search of lost spirituality. Its ambiguous meaning seems to me as inescapable as insinuated; due to the absence of harmonic development, we cannot predict where the boat is heading or how the story ends. Maybe the ultimate message (*Hallelujah*) carries the promise of a distant and uncertain salvation.

Maybe not.

This story ends with a small ferry crossing the ocean, sailing from the remote island of Ushant to Brest, Brittany, in mid-December 2013. The sea, so often ill-reputed, lives up to its promise. The crossing is bumpy and uncomfortable. The ferry is empty. The islanders are few and easy to spot among the empty seats: plainly dressed, rough-faced, untouched by seasickness, used to crossing this sea all their lives.

My wife, my five-year-old son, and I are on this ferry. Strangely enough, we go completely unnoticed. Maybe we were like seagulls who nested on the island temporarily. Maybe we were never meant to leave a trace in this God-forsaken place. Maybe nobody can. Perpetual indeterminacy without a perceived ending continues, but its ambiguity slowly softens. This time, our belongings do not fit into two suitcases and backpacks. Typical Westerners, we managed to acquire so much stuff (furniture, appliances, trinkets) in such a short time that we needed a whole container. We are moving to nearby Brest. What happened?

It seemed as if the island had woken one day and grown tired of our presence. It shook its back and sent us swiftly to the continent. It came as a surprise. I once believed I would never leave this rock. Everything changed suddenly. Not having a steady, well-paying job became difficult to bear and was psychologically tiring. When we set foot there, we had a baby in our arms. It had grown up into a little boy. He was beginning to wither. In the primary school, there were barely a dozen pupils. There was only one child at his age. This little girl would not play with him. My son would often raise his hand toward the port and say: "Boat! Let's take the boat!" In fact, the only times he was happy were when we made trips to Brest.

I had sacrificed my life and dedicated my work for the sake of future generations. What a hypocrite I would be if I did not take good care of my own child.

I felt lighthearted. I thought that my stay on Ushant had been a salvational catharsis. I had left behind everything that haunted me. A bright future was ahead of me. Confidence and hope filled me. I was convinced that everything would go smoothly from now on.

What a disillusion (hopefully the last of my life). Several years of struggle awaited me on the other side, across the sea. It would prove extremely difficult to find a decent job, to help our son adapt to the French school system, and to earn a place in society. I endured a lot of humiliations, those directed towards foreigners. Thankfully, the island had prepared me very well. My otherworldly experience had turned me into an outsider—an outlander. The link between me and the world of men was broken. I felt no attachment to social groups or

norms. I adapted to them by necessity, not reason. I accepted misfortunes like a Stoic, as long as they served my goal, getting my family back on the right track.

As soon as I had resolved these problems, even temporarily, I dedicated myself to physics and mathematics to study gravity. I came to understand relativity after years of work. Is it conceivable that spacetime is not fixed but plastic, capable of altering the pace at which time and gravity are experienced? Could our perception of this medium be derived from the way we inhabit particular places within it? I was putting theories and equations onto the bodily sensations I had experienced on Ushant.

I tried to communicate my findings to those I appreciated. Most bright and intelligent people I knew could not grasp this different conception of the world, as it questioned established reality. This saddened me. After years of silence, I was reaching outward again. But my message was not understood. After so much effort, I returned to solitude—alone, facing the ocean’s eternity.

Once upon an endless night, while I pondered why my ideas remained misunderstood, I unearthed my musical endeavours from my hard disk. Consumed as I was with my everyday problems, my efforts to fit into French society, and absorbed in my scientific research, I had long since forgotten my brief period as a composer. I started listening to the *Light Atlas* suite. I finally came to the sixth movement, *Seagulls Chasing Light Back to the Seaside*. Then I heard it. I focused closely on the phrases I had written, capturing the seagulls flying above me. My island years came back to me. My thoughts returned to my favorite place on Earth (and the most dreadful). In my mind, I saw the seagulls flying once more. I decoded what they were trying to say. I was able to theorize my experience of island life phenomenologically.

Tractatus Phenomenologicus

Hypothesis 1: Space is relative.

Experience: At first, when I hiked the cliffs and discovered the land and seascape, it all seemed eternal, always the same, like a timeless postcard. Day after day, I began to notice that it was not. It underwent perpetual Heraclitean change: a bush, some rock, some rabbit crossing my path, a seagull flying above me, the clouds shifting shape, the wind not always blowing from the same direction, the rain, and, more importantly, light: Light wrestling with the clouds altered the color palette by the minute. This was easily perceptible because the colors were vivid in this grey land. Their intensity shifted accordingly, and hidden details emerged.

Proposition 1: Space is relative, even in a place that appears phenomenologically unchanged by time.

Hypothesis 2: Time is relative.

Experience: the sensation of Time on the island. It felt as though it possessed a rhythm of its own—pulsating, like a foghorn sounding without end, souls resonating with it. Time accelerated and decelerated unpredictably. Light set the tempo. When clouds sealed the sky, greyness stretched into eternity, and everything felt heavy. Then, suddenly, even a few beams piercing through were enough for the world to quicken. Everything oscillated, and yet those moments always felt seconds long, precious instants during which Light Eternal alleviated the gravity of things—and of the human condition.

Proposition 2: Time is relative.

Hypothesis 3: Space is woven into time and vice versa, and it all comes to light.

Experience: On the island, light appeared and transformed space, sharpening contrasts, accelerating time, and creating sensations of buoyancy and resonance.

Experience: While perceiving this breathtaking plasticity, I recall some islanders asking me if I would ever go back to Athens. I said no. If I ever went back, it would not be the same place anymore. How could it be?

Proposition 3: Spacetime is relative.

Quantum leap: From the plasticity of spacetime to our Anthropocene reality.

Thus, years later, through music, I discovered what I had truly felt while living on Ushant: stepping into a spacetime that felt *less like a grid than a living, breathing field, oscillating according to the changing frequency of light*.

Proposition 4: We think that we live in a stable space under linear time. We wake up every morning bound to this collective illusion, like a mass hypnosis. It would even be closer to the truth to claim that when we wake up, we have been secretly transferred to a different place, as if our bodies or consciousness had moved during the night to Earth V.2, *where the coordinates of space and time have subtly shifted*.

The new reality we embrace every morning differs from the day before or a few months earlier. Someone might have died. Someone might have moved near us. Maybe a new shop has opened around the corner. The shoreline has shifted. Birds no longer pass where they used to, and the landscape looks slightly different. A forest may have burned somewhere. A species may have slipped into extinction. Yet, we cling to an imaginary set of fixed coordinates, as if the world around us were stable.

Hypothesis 4: Do days and dates measure real time, or do they merely function as collective conventions? Are we experiencing time moving forward, or merely projecting our beliefs onto a fictionalised spatial frame and an imaginary institution of society? Is the idea of linear progress still dominant?

If we conceived of the relativity and plasticity of space, we could bravely open Pandora's Box of Time and *unlock new ways of understanding it—ways that challenge our mechanistic assumptions of perpetual, unlimited growth*.

Who has never felt that human time perception is subjective, shaped by mood? What if time did not really flow, and events simply existed within a structured field? What if what we call "time" is the interpretative framework through which conscious beings navigate this structure? And what if existence itself is a superposition of different states of being with infinite coexisting possibilities, while we remain attached to the only trajectory we currently perceive—the one that may lead to our own self-extinction? What if we persist in adhering to a false reality, actually regressing while desperately sustaining a doomed technical civilisation, denying the material consequences of our actions in space and time, and compromising the lives of future generations?

Experience: Sometimes, on social occasions, I reveal that I once lived on Ushant. People ask me whether I miss it. I answer that the only thing I truly miss is the ocean's roar, the sound of the tide rising. Opening my back door in the middle of the night to check if the Atlantic was still there.

He was.

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