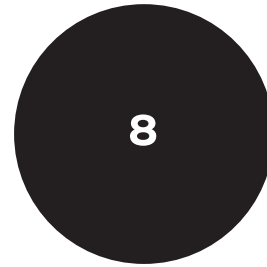




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## **View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture.**

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*Earth, World, and Globe: Phenomenological Considerations of the Contemporary Planetary Landscape*

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Max Symuleski

## **Earth, World, and Globe: Phenomenological Considerations of the Contemporary Planetary Landscape**

### I.

The photograph *Blue Marble* was taken in 1972. It was not the first image to be taken from space of the whole Earth, but it is probably the most widely published and reproduced, and it was the last widely distributed image of Earth to have been taken by a human being using a camera. It was taken about 5 hours after the launch of Apollo 17—the last lunar landing mission of the space race era—as Apollo left Earth’s orbit and traveled toward the moon at a distance of about 45,000 kilometers. No human being has since been far enough from low Earth orbit to see the Earth from such a perspective. In it, the Earth appears suspended in a black void, its atmosphere remarkably clear and much of the continent of Africa visible. As Apollo crewmember Eugene Cernan remarked when it was taken, “I suppose we’re seeing as 100 per cent full Earth as we’ll ever see, certainly as I’ve ever seen [...] it’s these kind of views— these kind of views that stick with you forever.”<sup>1</sup>

Released by NASA in December of 1972, during the fervent early days of the environmental movement, *Blue Marble* became a symbol for its attendant discourses of the earth’s fragility and uniqueness in the face of possible man-made environmental catastrophe. According to Benjamin Lazier, *Blue Marble* and other images of the whole earth from space are emblematic of an era in which images of the whole earth have come to “stand in for an idea of the whole earth itself.”<sup>2</sup> Lazier cites the proliferation of kinds of “globe-talk” circa the early 1970s—from the networked globe of the cybernetic

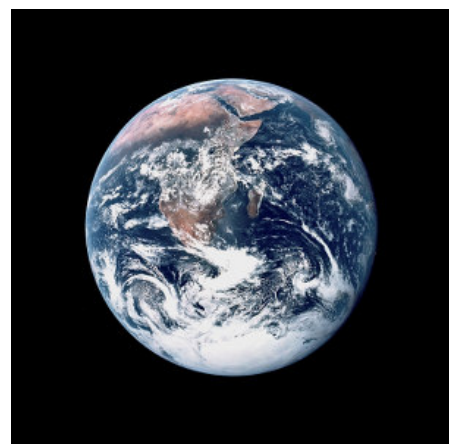


Fig. 1. *Blue Marble from the Apollo 17 mission, 1972* (NASA image AS17-148-22727)

imaginings of figures like Stewart Brand; to James Lovelock's globe-organism, Gaia; to the forces and discourses of economic globalization—as evidence of the fact that “thinking globally” is a fundamental element of a “modern condition,” in which our intuitions and ideas about inhabiting the Earth are now “mediated through images” of the Earth.<sup>3</sup>

Curator Anselm Franke has also remarked on the significance of images like *Earthrise* and *Blue Marble* to a very local set of discourses coming out of California in the late 1960s and early 1970s, merging environmentalism, ecology, and countercultural affirmations of personal freedom and anti-authoritarianism with cybernetics and information theory. Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog*, with *Earthrise* emblazoned on the front, is a key site for Franke of an elaboration of these discourses' main themes of universalism, networking, technological utopianism, and the synthesis of humans and nature into one symbiotic globe-organism, as approaches to addressing ecological crises and the cultural dislocations of globalization. Indeed in 1966, nearly a decade before *Blue Marble* was published, and two years before *Earthrise*, Stewart Brand saw fit to produce and distribute buttons asking the question, “why haven't we seen a picture of the whole earth yet?”, hoping to publicize the need for a new global imagery in acknowledgement of new global conditions. The *Catalog*, and the informational network it hoped to enact, acted as a sort of wish-fulfillment of this desire for a scene of planetary wholeness. In Franke's words, in the hands of the *Whole Earth* network, the “Blue Planet” becomes a “unification machine that appears to transcend all difference and ideology, that ought to be capable of generating boundless consensus.”<sup>4</sup>

For Lazier, this globe-talk is also marked by a certain set of anxieties about being modern, ones that hinge on dislocation and alienation, rather than a sense of planetary unity. To trace the intellectual history of these anxieties, Lazier looks to a German tradition on thinking about human culture and technology: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, and Hans Blumenberg.

In the Prologue to *The Human Condition*, which Hannah Arendt wrote just after the launch of Sputnik in 1957, she laments the human desire, that she sees exemplified in the satellite, for humans not to be Earth-bound. Arendt characterizes this setting forth for the skies as a kind of leaving the scene, one of broken conditions for

humans on Earth: living in the paradox of their artificiality, as the proliferation of artificial supports promise the eclipse of the natural, the scientific disciplines threaten to reduce man to a mere scientifically-defined organism amid machines. The result is a severance from what is "the very quintessence of the human condition," as something more than a mere organism, capable of sociality, but also of the Earth as a shared horizon of being. "For some time now," Arendt notes, "a great many scientific endeavors have been directed toward making life also 'artificial,' toward cutting the last tie through which even man belongs among the children of nature."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps no one other than Heidegger has more emphatically expressed these existentially dense anxieties about the role of technology in shaping human thought and action. Heidegger said of images of the earth from space, "This is no longer the earth on which man lives,"<sup>6</sup> quite rightly pointing to the lack of evidence of terrestrial inhabitation or human presence in such images. In his reading, images of the earth from space become part of a longer historical trajectory that is only radicalized by the new global views of the "age of the world picture." In such an age, as theorized by Heidegger in an essay bearing that title, "our natural and human-built worlds are pre-structured by a grasp of the world and everything in it as a picture, as something to survey and frame for our pleasure and use."<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, in "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger describes modern technology as embedded in a kind of sense-making structure ("Enframing") that he understands as a profoundly disordered way of making sense of the world. Through technology's Enframing, all of the real is ordered and taken by humans as a "standing-reserve" for their use, as, in his example, the hydroelectric dam turns the force of the river into useable energy, and in so doing impedes its course. Moreover, humans become both the driver and the object of this endless course of objectification, alienated from the world and themselves through their own technological supports. This is the paradox at the center of Enframing that Heidegger likely saw as emblematic in the image of the earth with no human presence:

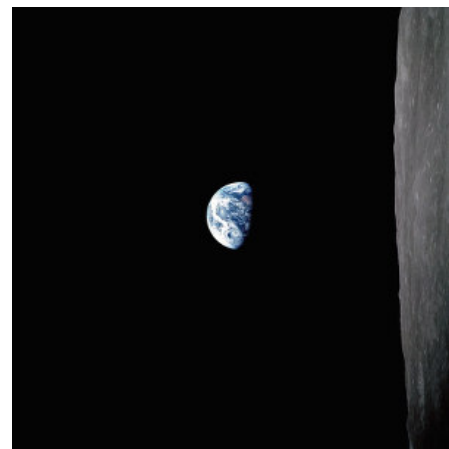


Fig. 2. *Earthrise* as it would have been seen during the Apollo 8 mission (NASA Image AS08-14-2383)

Meanwhile man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth. In this way the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself [...] *In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence.*<sup>8</sup>



Fig. 3. *Earthrise* as published

The lonely planet, with the human nowhere to be seen, available only through its technological reproducibility as image, illustrates perfectly for Heidegger the modern process of taking all of the real as object. It is no wonder that Heidegger has served as a particularly productive figure for philosophical approaches to ecology and environmentalism.<sup>9</sup>

The German philosopher and intellectual historian Hans Blumenberg functions in Lazier's discussion of Earth images to offer modes of thinking about the technological and the modern, without couching modern technology as particularly negative. For Blumenberg, images of the earth from space mark not the departure of humans from the scene of earth, nor necessarily the technological objectification of the earth as planet, but the force of turning back to a consideration of the earth as home. As Lazier puts it, "The Earth, it turns out, is lovely, and to see it is to wish to return."<sup>10</sup> Blumenberg considers these photographs not as a radical departure, but as within a long tradition of thinking beyond the earth from the earth, of imaging and imagining the cosmos in the course of attempting to describe them. He called this tradition "astronoetics" and for Lazier it begs the question, "Given the tradition of looking back on Earth by means of thought alone, what, if anything, makes the photographic sight of the earth any different?"<sup>11</sup> For Blumenberg the difference of seeing this pictorial fact of the planet hanging in a spatial void is also a realization of the earth as an eccentric, cosmic exception; a reminder that Earth is the only place we know.

Themes of alienation and instrumentalization as a result of human technological development, and leaving the common scene of the planet for the extra-terrestrial "out there," run thick through Heidegger's and Arendt's accounts of modernity,

whereas Blumenberg offers a possible resolution and the connection of *Earthrise* to a deeper human history. But these arguments also present the question: what kind of shift is it to have these remarkable images of a place that we know nothing other than, yet are unable ourselves to see as a whole? Is it enough to know it is possible? And what is the effect of this visual veridiction? Can *Blue Marble* actually be one and the same as the planet on which we live? In the following paragraphs I will approach these questions from a different tradition, looking instead to phenomenology for thinking through both the concern with our relationships to the technological, and issues of embodiment and spatiality that different images in this short visual history of viewing the Earth draw out. I will then consider the problem of the centrality of the visual in this encounter with Earth's image, asking questions about how that visuality may be displaced in a contemporary technological reality in which our encounters with terrestrial, extra-terrestrial, and orbital infrastructures may be mediated through other realms of sense entirely.

The main contention of this essay is that phenomenology might provide other ways of thinking through this difference that takes off from a central assumption in Lazier's historical narrative, namely that a picture of the Earth could stand in for—and thus contend with—an idea of the “whole Earth” at all. Within this intellectual history of discourse about globe, Earth, and world, how does the “world picture” work as an entity? Phenomenologically, grasping the “whole” Earth on account of its picturing might be a messier entanglement than Lazier intends to spell out in the direct opposition he structures between an image such as *Earthrise* “grasping” the Earth “all at once as a whole,” and the localism of our terrestrial realities.<sup>12</sup> It is no less an interesting one. And one that could possibly be seen as an extension of the injunction at the end of Lazier's discussion, to find meaning in and come to an understanding of what these emergent globalisms and their attendant practices represent for us, the Earth-bound, “for whom the *Earthrise* era is no astronautic adventure but an astro-noetic one.”<sup>13</sup>

I will now consider this question phenomenologically, turning first to earlier work by Heidegger, who in *Being and Time* describes the meaning-making structure of Dasein's encounter with the earth as an essential part of Dasein's “Being-in-the-world.” Two complications will then be added through Husserl's thought, with the concept of adumbrations in his theory of perception and the rejection of the Copernican worldview in a phenomenologically rigorous science. The work of

Renaud Barbaras and Jan Patočka inserts into our problem the question of perception and the living body in manifesting the world as lived experience. Images will be our place markers throughout, reminding us that this question of a “world picture” is also a highly mediated one.

## II.

*Earthrise* itself serves as an entry into thinking the particularly phenomenological problematics of an image of the “whole” Earth. It was taken during the Apollo 8 mission while the spacecraft was in lunar orbit. The familiar orientation at left is the published version, at right is the “original” in its filmic version, showing how the shot would have been positioned relative to the spacecraft and the body of the astronaut who took it, looking around the moon as Apollo completed its orbit. The difference in visual effect is striking.

The original orientation is the same as that of the images that Heidegger would have had access to at the time he made his observations about the Earth “on which man no longer lives,” those taken from the first lunar orbiter in 1966 (Fig. 4).<sup>14</sup> The view here is unlike most published images of the planet from space, one without any sense of bodily orientation, except that supplied by the position of the viewfinder.<sup>15</sup> The low-quality rendering of the raster-data in the image makes a caption a necessary support for its reading, and speaks to the image’s

technical production. The barren surface of the moon looms vertiginously in the foreground, beyond which the Earth appears as a semi-sphere, largely shrouded in darkness. Lazier speculates that this quality and orientation is why Heidegger may have found the published images of the earth from space so alienating.<sup>16</sup> This is a seemingly completely disembodied perspective photographically. It is a view without an earthly horizon, and one that also depends entirely on a complex infrastructure of technological supports, taken by a machine from a place that is nowhere.

Moving back in Heidegger’s oeuvre from his more mystically and technophobic-ally inflected later work on dwelling, in *Being and Time* he presents a more nuanced



Fig. 4. Lunar Orbiter 1's *Earthrise* image, as published in LIFE Magazine in 1966

understanding of Dasein as space-constituting through the conjoined notions of “de-severance” and “directionality.” Heidegger starts from a critique of Cartesian notions of spatiality, understood as location in terms of coordinate space: the measurement of the distance of points from one another, that consistently holds for rational calculation. This is rendered as the objective view of space in science and mathematics, referred to by Heidegger as an understanding of the world as merely “present-at-hand.” Dasein’s authentic encounter with space, on the other hand, as “de-severance,” is diametrically opposed to such an understanding, and “cannot signify anything like occurrence at a position in ‘world-space’ nor can it signify Being-ready-to-hand at some place.”<sup>17</sup> Dasein does not authentically encounter the spatiality of the world as a set of objects, but rather through the structure of “de-severance” as “bringing close,” which is to say that Dasein encounters the world through a process of meaning making that pre-structures its spatiality. In his words, “Being-in-the-world [is] an essential structure of Dasein.”<sup>18</sup> Heidegger places our intentional concerns for what we encounter in the world before any notion of the world as a set of objects positioned in space. Dasein’s oriented de-severance in the world sets up the very possibility of intelligibility, prior to any scientific understanding of space as volume and distance.

Unlike the Earth to which Heidegger was bound, and to the understanding of a poetics of being to which he was unwaveringly committed, the first mechanical images of the Earth from space must have rendered it paradoxically *visually* present and yet alien. It is a view that contains no familiar artifactual marks of Dasein’s presence, and yet presents a view of Earth as an objective totality. If it is the earthly planet that is figured in the image from Lunar Orbiter I, we are, in a sense, “just looking at it”:

When space is discovered non-circumspectively by just looking at it, the environmental regions get neutralized to pure dimensions. [...] The spatiality of what is ready-to-hand within-the-world loses its involvement-character, and so does the ready-to-hand. The world loses its specific roundness; the environment becomes the world of Nature. The ‘world’, as a totality of equipment ready-to-hand, becomes spatialized to a context of extended Things which are just present-at-hand and no more. The homogenous space of Nature shows itself only when the entities we encounter are discovered in such a way that the worldly character of the



ready-to-hand gets specifically deprived of its world-hood.<sup>19</sup>

Provisionally, we could say that, following Heidegger, *Blue Marble* and *Earthrise* offer us a view of the globe deprived of the earth-bound reality of the world as interactive and interpersonal. It is an Earth devoid of the world. It is present to us totally as a mere thing, stripped of its character of in-ness that Heidegger's notion of Dasein's Being-in-the-world implies.

Moreover, the shift in view, the "correction" in the published *Earthrise*, could be read as a gesture to return some sense of orientation to the image, to put a guise on its disorientation, and try to return to it some bodily sense as a view that we can inhabit. It places us, the viewer, at an orientation that is a wholly impossible vantage point, as if standing on the moon, looking back at the Earth. The suggestion of our familiar orientation looking out over a horizon reminds us of the conditioning role of that orientation, and that experience in the world is always a sort of comportment. I think this is where the structures of space-making in Heidegger's account are useful for our purposes. Technology as Enframing in Heidegger's account is a sort of comportment that tends to hide its machinations and our own embeddedness in them. NASA saw fit, for whatever reason, to make *Earthrise* a little more intuitively familiar by adding a horizon.

### III.

The material body itself is rarely mentioned in Heidegger's account of space in *Being and Time*, though it arguably must be taken for granted in his description of "Being-in-the-world."<sup>20</sup> There are just a few references in the section on spatiality to Dasein's "bodily nature," which, according to Heidegger, "provides a whole problematic of its own."<sup>21</sup> Still, an understanding of bodily sense and perception, and proprioception, seated at the core of the phenomenological project is unarticulated in Heidegger's account of experience. For this we will need to take a different course through Husserl's account of perception and some contributions to thematizing lived corporeality by Patočka and Barbaras.

Husserl's account of the phenomenological origin of the spatiality of nature similarly starts from a critique of the natural-scientific understanding of the space of nature, which he refers to here as the "Copernican worldview," and takes particular aim at the idea that the Earth could be conceived as a body in space. He sets up this view

as that which has been taken to be the scientifically established universal, and locates in it the impossible conjunction of the Earth as a body that must be taken for granted for the abstract objective calculations of physics, and the fact of the Earth as a body that can only be established phenomenologically, that is, *in* experience, as the synthesis of a multitude of single experiences:

The earth is not the 'whole of Nature'; it is one of the stars in the infinite world-space. The earth is a globe-shaped body, certainly not perceivable in its wholeness all at once and by one person; rather it is perceived in a primordial synthesis as a unity of mutually connected single experiences. Yet, it is a body! Although for us it is the experiential basis for all bodies in the experiential genesis of our idea of the world.<sup>22</sup>

If we are to take the Copernican view that the earth is a body and that space is an infinite extension seriously, how can we establish on that basis a notion of movement—particularly the movement of the Earth? In perception, the earth as space is only available as a series of experiential acts in which I can move in one direction, and now in another, and my movement is relative to the "ark of the earth" and as my bodily self as "living organism." Still, it is clearly scientifically evident that the earth does in fact move in a space surrounded by other planetary bodies in its place among them.

For Husserl, there must be something more primal that establishes movement as such as a phenomenological fact of experience, only after which the scientific understanding of movement can be established. He uses the example of motion on earth with a non-moving support—an automobile or a train moving relative to a landscape—to illustrate. If I am riding on that vehicle and I look out the window, I see the landscape moving past. It is moving relative to my bodily organism, but I know that in fact the vehicle itself is moving because of my experience of moving vehicles as an earth-bound observer. I can also then extrapolate on the movement of bodies relative to one another, and it makes sense when I understand that the Earth itself on which I am often stationary moves relative to other astronomical objects. Thus I use my center as living organism,

as a basis to which all experience of bodies and hence all experience of continuing to be at rest or in motion is related. [...] in order to be able to conceive, indeed, to conceive the earth at all as a body in the original

sense, i.e., to acquire a possible intuition of the earth in which its possibility as being a body can be directly evident.<sup>23</sup>

All we have as a basis for conceiving of movement is our experience as beings for which earth-bound directionality of movement is a primordial fact, and for Husserl all natural sciences are grounded in this as primordial fact.

But what if I'm an astronaut, who has a set of singular experiences of the movement of the earth from a place in space? Husserl, astonishingly, begins to furnish a sort of answer to this question by imagining the case of an individual born on a vehicle in space. That individual, Husserl reasons, would have its own bodily orientation to its place-boundness, and further, that at the very least this is only proof that place-boundness is a transcendental fact, one that still must condition its encounter with motion relative to its place. And for all of us earth-born living organisms "the earth is a *basis* and not a body in the complete sense."<sup>24</sup>

The conclusion to be recognized here for Husserl in a way affirms Lazier's consideration, through the philosophy of Blumenberg, of earthly being as "eccentric." He describes the "totality of the We" as, in this special sense, "earthly."<sup>25</sup> Any natural science must take this earthly orientation as a fundamental fact. And natural science,

must not perpetrate the absurdity of then seeing human history, the history of the species anthropologically and psychologically within the evolution of the individual and people, the cultivation of science and the interpretation of the world as an obviously accidental event on the earth which might just as well have occurred on Venus or Mars.<sup>26</sup>

This is not so much because it could not have happened, but because it didn't. The fact that it didn't is foundational for the possibility of any human experience, and thus for any scientific inquiry. Scientific inquiry presupposes humanity, and "there is only one humanity and one earth—all fragments belong to it which have been detached from it."<sup>27</sup> Husserl doesn't reject the Copernican worldview, just any conception that allows the Copernican universe as the *foundation* of all experience. Rather, it is the other way around. In this view, that globe suspended in space, and its motion relative to its surroundings can only be comprehended as a body from a prior rootedness of all human organisms on the terrestrial earth.

There is still a fundamental separation here between the bodily and the eidetic, which stages a retreat from the world into inner consciousness as ultimately transcendent. This is clear in Husserl's general account of perception, as the phenomenological epochē's severance from the "natural attitude" becomes a particularly thorny issue for the problem of perception. This account, however, will be fundamental for us in that it sets up the concept of *adumbration* as a primary aspect of perception's spatiality. As Husserl notes, perception in experience is first of all situated in space from a certain position: "the phenomenon of space as the kind of space that appears with "here and there," "in front and in back", "right and left." Husserl goes on, "Each person has around himself the same world and perhaps sees the same thing, the same segment of the world. But each has his thing-appearance: the same thing appears for each in a different way in accordance with the different place in space."<sup>28</sup> This is why, in the phenomenon of space, locomotion is central. "When a lived body switches its objective spatial spot with another, the appearings that the relevant I's have of their experienced things change continuously."<sup>29</sup> Thus a spatialized perception is both situated and changing in its situation. We also understand this as an intersubjective fact – that other experiencing I's have the same mode of experience through perception of objects from this side and then another. "The I's come to an understanding about this or, as we say, among themselves humans come to an understanding of such matters."<sup>30</sup> But objectively we judge not about these appearings, or this fact of appearance in perception, but about *things*. This Husserl describes as the 'natural attitude', "insofar as the world is the world of experience, which, as such, refers back to I's, which in turn, like all other I's, experientially fit into the world."<sup>31</sup> The world of experience is established from the finitude of a multiplicity of possible perceptions, conceived as a whole only in the abstract.

We could then perhaps consider an image like Figure 5 to be a sort of demonstration of the concept of the world as a thing in the sense that Husserl means. *Blue Marble: Next Generation*, like most contemporary renderings we now encounter of the "whole Earth," is an accumulation of Earth images composed over a period of about 100 days (these are from 2002), from individual images and readings taken of the Earth's surface by the Terra Satellite. It is probably familiar to many as the default background on all Apple iPhones. These images were stitched together in a 2-dimensional version, from which all of the cloud cover was removed.

Other satellite data provided information for rendering the texture of the surface of the oceans, and a different set of images captured over another period of time provided a map of weather formations that was layered back on to the rendering. This image was then layered over the curve of a digitally imaged 3-dimensional sphere. It provides an idealized and impossible view of the surface of planet, color corrected and in high resolution, from every possible angle. Moreover, *Blue Marble Next Generation* and similar composites may consist necessarily of series, but series rendered as 3-dimensional objects which may therefore be animated, and appear, like we know the Earth does, to move.

These ideal globe-renderings of course exist only as images. Thus, in spite of their presentation of a sense of geographical fact, they seem to throw us further from the conception of the “whole” from which we are first shunted by limited perspectival renderings like *Earthrise*. Or at least they position that whole onto the ideal side of the gulf opened by Husserl in the suspension of all of natural existence in the movement of the transcendental epochē.

#### IV.

Though Husserl’s understanding of the epochē ultimately appeals to the inner consciousness, Renaud Barbaras, for one, finds in his work a significant contribution to a phenomenological description of perceptual experience in the theory of adumbrations. In it, he sees a vindication of the autonomy of perception in intuition, as that which is given, and as “distinct from an adequate knowledge.”<sup>32</sup>

According to Husserl’s concept, in the perceptual encounter, the object before us “attains only partially.” To illustrate, Barbaras describes the experience of walking around a table, seeing it from different positions, and touching it. “I am always conscious of a single, identical table, of a thing that in itself remains unchanged. Such is the elementary situation that characterizes perception.” But, this is not so simple, as in presentation the object as single and identical is always in retreat:

[T]his manifestation remains an adumbration in that the table is presented from a certain point of view, from a certain angle, and not at all integrally,



Fig. 5. *Blue Marble: The Next Generation*

so that this manifestation is inscribed in an infinite series of other possible manifestations. On the one hand, the manifestation is nothing more than the table it presents; it is completely presentation, the very presence of the thing. On the other hand, the table itself is not distinct from this manifestation in which it appears and is given as this very manifestation.<sup>33</sup>

Barbaras locates this as a central tension at the core of Husserl's description of adumbration, in which unity can only exist as an "adumbrated unity," the wholeness of which is founded on its variations.<sup>34</sup> He thus sees a radical difference with regard to Husserl's description of the being of the *cogitatio*, which is characterized by an identity of being and appearance. This is what opens onto the eidetic abyss in his thought. Still, the complexity of Husserl's approach to perception has the power to eradicate this founding division, if only it can be sufficiently radicalized through a primary understanding of experience:

It is true that perception is access to the thing itself and not reception of data, but there is precisely access to the thing itself only in sensory adumbrations; to perceive the thing itself is to grasp it in the flesh. The capacity of perception to open upon a pole of identity is not achieved at the price of a degradation of sensory moments in appearances. Due to the double discovery of the difference between empty intentionality and fulfillment on the one hand and of givenness by adumbrations on the other, Husserl succeeds [...] in subscribing to the requirements of a philosophy of perception; in other words, he succeeds in conceiving the conditions of an experience that initiates us into being.<sup>35</sup>

To avoid recourse to an abstract conceptualism, we must establish an account of lived experience that is thus "reformed through its contact with perception."<sup>36</sup> With this in mind, were we to answer Stewart Brand's much-remarked inquiry of 1966, "Why haven't we seen a picture of the whole earth yet?" we could reply that it may not be possible to see a picture of a whole *anything*.<sup>37</sup>

For his part, Patočka's twist on the theory of adumbration is to generalize its consequences—variability and spatial orientation—as the very structuring mode of the perceptive encounter. The familiar and the unfamiliar, what is present to me and any other variability of view that I may have of it, or that of another, are conditioning factors presupposed by perception as such. This is because perception

is oriented in space and exists over time. Patočka calls this structuring horizon of the world “primordial orientedness.” For humans as beings oriented on the earth, this is thus a “global horizon.” It is a primordial basis for any mode of comportment to the whole as such, which is precisely not a mode of comportment that can claim relation to the whole in actuality: “I can never perceive the world, and no mind whatever can perceive it, translating everything whatsoever into actuality.”<sup>38</sup> For Patočka the living movement through which the world is structured through perception is distinct from the Earth as substrate: “The referent of our personal acting, realizing stream—which as a movement in the most primordial sense of the word, a movement lived from within—is the unmoving, constrainedt substrate—the earth. The immobility of the earth belongs to the primordial orientedness of the world.”<sup>39</sup> Patočka here repeats Husserl’s claim that, in this sense as a global horizon of perceptual orientation, the Earth does not move. Living beings, rather, exist as movement on the conditions of this Earth-boundness.

The significant addition here is also the central importance of the concept of movement in Patočka’s account, which he opposes to an abstract, objectivizing totality, and further generalizes to all of the living. The horizon is the condition of a primordial movement, which is understood both as the act of physical movement and as the living movement “which we all are”:

Thus at the center of our world the whole point is to reach from a merely given life to the emergence of a true life, and that is achieved in the movement that shakes the objective rootedness and alienation in a role, in objectification—at first a purely negative movement, one that shakes our bondage to life, setting free without revealing anything further; then with a movement that positively presents the essential—as life universal, giving birth to all in all, evoking life in the other, a self-transcendence toward the other and with him again to infinity.<sup>40</sup>

It is clear in passages like the one cited above why Barbaras may have been concerned that this formulation of living movement risked slipping from the phenomenological into the cosmological. Patočka’s rendering of the movement-concept as primordial force in contradistinction to the objectification of the “rising ideal of modern science,” has technophobic undertones, only exacerbated by his description of the primordial nature of the earth as “she” which “sustains life.”<sup>41</sup>

At the same time, Barbaras points to an important dimension of Patočka's theory in that it could be radicalized to extend beyond the anthropocentric pull at the center of phenomenology's account of the philosophy of perception. He sees it in Patočka's adoption of an aspect of Heidegger's understanding of Dasein's Being-in-the-world as affective and intentional. Heidegger's understanding of intentionality through Dasein is a dynamic one. Dasein has a realizing, meaning-making orientation towards the world.<sup>42</sup> Patočka adds the corrective of considering this dynamism as necessarily corporeal. Corporeality has a structuring role in his understanding of movement, in that movement is considered as a living, manifesting horizon underlying all possible encounters in space and time. So Patočka's movement is fundamentally not "in the objective, scientific sense," but movement as "life in possibility."<sup>43</sup> In Barbaras' words:

[T]he movement of existence is only a case, undoubtedly eminent, of a general sense of movement as realization. What applies for the human person applies therefore also for what is not human, and it is because the movement of existence is eminently movement that it can constitute a way of privileged access to other movements"<sup>44</sup>

In Barbaras's understanding, "living movement" is an account of movement as an a-subjective and primordial structure of existence.<sup>45</sup> Thus, he worries, "does the cosmological monism outlined by Patočka by means of an unprecedented deepening of the human subject's sense of being threaten the phenomenological undertaking, or does it constitute its most radical accomplishment?"<sup>46</sup>

## V.

An answer to this question is beyond the purview of this essay. Still, Patočka's understanding of movement in the cosmological sense ("the movement of worldly being") that generalizes the possibility of phenomenological description onto movement as an ontological structure in which "the world and man are in *a mutual movement*" of "worldly being" opens onto one more thought experiment about how one might conceive of an earthly imaginary in the *Earthrise* era.<sup>47</sup> And for this we will need to add one more picture to our series of Earth images.

The image below (Fig. 6) is a rendering commissioned by the European Space Agency of the nearly 23,000 objects currently in earth's orbit, which the ESA tracks



and manages through a complex set of algorithms. This field of objects consists of a small percentage of active satellites and a much greater number of dead ones, space mission-related debris, and post-collision fragments.<sup>48</sup> It is thus largely a vast field of highly technical garbage. Some of these objects fall to earth from time to time, and are burned up upon re-entry into the atmosphere as their orbits degrade. They are rigorously tracked and the courses of their movements are probabilistically analyzed so as to predict and avoid overly destructive space collisions.

These objects also chart the course of where we have arrived since those views of the “whole Earth” that at the beginning of this essay were positioned as the opening of the *Earthrise* era. The image of the earth from space is very much a technologically inflected one, and the capabilities we have of viewing the earth, or parts of it, and rendering those views, are created based on the support of a huge data-collecting and imaging infrastructure. Ironically, perhaps we can now do away with Heidegger’s concern that a view of the Earth from space would somehow render invisible its human artifactuality.

The ways we might understand how we are oriented towards that infrastructure is also a question that moves beyond what an image will have us “see,” towards a more environmentally oriented understanding of sensing: forms of encounter with a kind of “whole Earth” experience through the Global Position System, and other locative media with which our movements, and the movements of the whole, are technically imbricated. Today our encounter with that whole is not simply mediated through images of the Earth, or even image-composites, but rather through ever-smaller devices and sensors that connect us informatically to the satellite array pictured here, in a relay of constant feedback based on our movements within a technical infrastructure that encompasses the whole.

The array pictured here is also just a part of a vast media assemblage with which we could associate the prefix geo-, and which is enacted through the merging of media-scapes and locational data. These assemblages go beyond the representational awareness we may have of the planet and its geography, and



Fig. 6. ESA rendering of the distribution of debris and objects in the vicinity of Earth

include developments from ever more accessible geographic information systems and their data; to RFID tagging of objects and spaces so that they can communicate wirelessly with our devices and the web; to geo-tagging of web-based media; to the creation of ephemeral and temporary local social networks through devices that communicate directly with one another, as we saw with the use of the FireChat App during the 2014 protests in Hong Kong.<sup>49</sup> We engage with these media both below the level of human sense and by actively augmenting our spaces with geo-referenced media through new techniques of interaction and display. And we engage through multiple and differential protocols on networks with varying levels of access and security. The situation Heidegger and Arendt described at the opening of this essay, of the eclipse of the human by its technology, symbolized in the photographic rendering of the empty planet in the void, could be updated through this infrastructure as an iconic moment in the ever more thorough mediation of lived spatial experience through the technological.

If we consider this series of examples—the earth first alone, pictured suspended in the void, or rendered as cosmological backdrop in a non-worldly perspective; then as the image of a globe, rendered from a multiplicity of perspectives over time; and finally in its artifactuality, as the world that has extended beyond the scene of the planetary earth, that projects back onto it and participates in its movement—the question of what changes the Earthrise era may have “inaugurated in the conditions of existence” is a phenomenologically dense one indeed.<sup>50</sup> And one that points to the multiple levels—visual, technical, sensory—through which we might conceive of the contemporary encounter with the Earth, the world, and the globe.

## Footnotes:

1 National Aeronautics and Space Administration, “Apollo 17: Technical Air-to-Ground Voice Transcription,” (Houston, TX: Manned Spacecraft Center, 1972), at 00:05:20:36. Available at [http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/history/mission\\_trans/apollo17.htm](http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/history/mission_trans/apollo17.htm).

2 Benjamin Lazier, “Earthrise; or, The Globalization of the World Picture,” *The American Historical Review*, 116 (3), (2011), 605–6.

3 Ibid.

4 Anselm Franke, "Earthrise and the Disappearance of the Outside," in *The Whole Earth. California and the Disappearance of the Outside*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 14.

5 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 2.

6 "'Only God Can Save Us': Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger" in Richard Wolin, ed. *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, MA: 1992), 106; quoted in Lazier, 604.

7 Lazier, 606.

8 Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2013), 27. Emphasis Heidegger's.

9 For a good discussion of Heidegger and arguments about whether or not Heidegger's work is a useful ground for eco-phenomenology and environmentalism see Michael E. Zimmermann, "Heidegger's Phenomenology and Contemporary Environmentalism," in *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself*, ed. Charles S. Brown and Ted Toadvine (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 73-102.

10 Lazier, 620.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 630.

13 Ibid.

14 Lazier points out that Heidegger's reference in the "Der Spiegel" interview was probably to the images from Lunar Orbiter 1.

15 Lazier, 609-10.

16 Ibid.

17 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), 138.

18 Ibid., 83.

19 Ibid., 147.

20 For a recent account of the role of the body in Heidegger's phenomenology see Kevin Aho, *Heidegger's Neglect of the Body* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009).

21 *Being and Time*, 143.

22 Edmund Husserl, "Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of the Spatiality of Nature," trans. Fred Kersten, in *Husserl: Shorter Works* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 222.

23 Ibid., 224.

24 Ibid., 226, emphasis added.

25 Ibid., 227.

26 Ibid., 230.

27 Ibid.

28 Edmund Husserl, *Edmund Husserl Collected Works*, trans. Ingo Farin and James G. Hart, vol. 12, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology: from the Lectures, Winter Semester, 1910-1911* (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer, ©2006), 7.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 8.

31 Ibid., 15.

32 Renaud Barbaras, *Desire and Distance: Introduction to a Phenomenology of Perception* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 12.

33 Ibid., 13-14.

34 Ibid., 15.

35 Ibid., 17.

36 Ibid., 18.

37 The story of how in 1966 Stewart Brand dropped some acid and found himself on a rooftop overlooking San Francisco, mulling over the fact that no image of the earth from space had yet been published—in spite of the fact that the U.S. space program had existed for a decade---then decided to make and distribute buttons emblazoned with the question, “Why haven’t we seen a picture of the whole earth yet?” is an oft-recounted one. The definitive account appears in Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 69.

38 Jan Patočka, “The ‘Natural’ World and Phenomenology,” in Erazim Kohak, *Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 253.

39 Ibid., 255.

40 Ibid., 263.

41 Ibid., 270 and Ibid., 256.

42 Barbaras, *Desire and Distance*, 141-2.

43 Ibid., 144.

44 Ibid., 148.

45 Barbaras, 148. Patočka, 270.

46 Barbaras, 150.

47 Patočka, 269.

48 The image and a description of space debris can be found at the ESA’s website Space Debris Operation website:

[http://www.esa.int/Our\\_Activities/Operations/Space\\_Debris/About\\_space\\_debris](http://www.esa.int/Our_Activities/Operations/Space_Debris/About_space_debris).

49 For a good discussion of recent developments in the field of geo-media studies see Tristan Thielmann, “Locative Media and Mediated Localities,” in *Aether: The Journal of Media Geography*, vol. 5A (March 2010), pp. 1-17.

50 Lazier, 608.