



COMMISSION ON PLANETARY AGES

Decision CC87966424/49

The Onomatophore of the Anthropocene

TO ALL TO WHOM THIS NEWS SHALL COME, BE IT KNOWN:

that there appeared before the Commission on Planetary Ages a creature of the species called Anthropos, a species which has achieved the fourth of the thirty six known levels of sentience;

and that this creature announced that the world in which it has its origin, known as Earth, has entered a new stage in its journey from the nothing that was, through the something that is, to the nothing that will be;

and that the creature proclaimed that its kind was starting to understand the laws governing the becoming of worlds, and that these have revealed the role they have played in moving the Earth to a new state;

and that the creature laid a claim before the Commission, on behalf of all its kind, asserting that the new age of its world should therefore be named 'the Anthropocene', after its own kind;

and that this creature thereby claimed for its whole species the status of the onomatophore, the name-bearer, of their planetary age;

and when it had finished speaking, it struck its chest once, a sign which in some of our cultures signifies truth, in others pride, in others shame;

Planetary ages

and having regard to the powers granted to this Commission to determine the names of the ages of all worlds throughout the galaxy, according to the principles of endokairology, the science of the times that grow within self-organising things, and that out of this growth produce other times from within themselves, thus generating the lacework of times that connect the 10,000 things;

and having regard to the first law of endokairology, which states that a world or any other self-positing thing generates its own time out of its particular way of enduring, and that this time is not the time of chronos, the extensive time of mere succession, but the time of kairos, the intensive time of singularities and qualities;

and having regard to the second law of this science, which means that planetary ages are determined not by the visible signs that are written on the face of a world, but by the hidden signs and communication

within it, between mantle and crust, crust and ocean, ocean and atmosphere, atmosphere and life;

and having regard to the third law, which means that the immanent time that a world generates through its own mode of becoming folds back on itself, so that the way a world changes changes, that a world undergoes radical leaps in its mode of becoming;

and having regard to the fourth law, which means that the immanent time of worlds has other immanent times curled within them – that within the aeons of a world, whose edges mark the great changes in planetary becoming when time begins anew, lie the eras of that world, and within the eras lie the periods, and within the periods the epochs, and so on;

and having regard to the consequence of the first three laws that the ages of a world cannot be laid side by side – that because the time of worlds is produced from within, and because each age has its own internal time, there is no time which can comprehend all the ages of a world; each age starts but never finishes; the time of each age is finite but eternal, which means that it can make itself felt long after other ages have started;

and having regard to the relationship of the Commission on Planetary Ages with those lower commissions responsible for the times of ecosystems, species and organisms, of objects, molecules and atoms, of bosons, leptons and quarks; and with those higher commissions responsible for the times of planetary systems, of galaxies, clusters, superclusters and filaments, of cosmoses and multiverses;

Onomatophores

and having regard to the regulations on onomatophores, which recognise that, while all agents in a planetary age are named by that age, one agent can have a special relationship to that age, and its name to the name of that age, and this is because they are the 'cause' or subject of that age, and this agent is known as the onomatophore or 'name-bearer' of that age;

and having regard to the powers granted to this Commission to determine the onomatophores of the ages of all worlds throughout the galaxy;

and recognising that to be decreed an onomatophore the agent must be the 'cause' of an age in the sense of at least one of the nine

recognised kinds of cause:

- the forward cause that pushes from the earlier or
- the backward cause that pulls towards the later,
- the upward cause of part to whole or
- the downward cause of whole to part,
- the first cause that initiates or
- the last cause that completes,
- the universal cause that is always or
- the singular cause that is now, or
- the emblematic cause that summarises;

and recognising that being a cause is always relative to a particular age; that each age of a world defines and distributes agency in particular ways; and that transitions between ages redefine what an agent is and how it can act;

and having regard to the duty of the Commission, when presented with a claim by a potential onomatophore, to inform all other agents of the age under consideration that a claim has been lodged, and to consider any counterclaims received;

The Palace of the Ages

and having regard to the Palace of the Ages, where all onomatophores abide;

and recognising that this palace has many dwelling places, each of which correspond to a single age of one or other kind of body or assemblage, and that these dwelling places are arranged in ranks and lines and layers:

- from the time of the smallest particle to the time of the multiverse,
- and for each of these, from the shortest class of ages to the longest class,
- and for each of these, from the first of ages to the last of ages;

and that each of these dwelling places, one for each unit of time, is a throne;

and recognising that to become an onomatophore is to be elevated to one of these thrones alongside the other geological forces and events that determine the ages of a world – alongside magma, comets and tides; eruptions, collisions and evolutionary leaps – and alongside all the forces and events that determine the ages of every kind of body and assemblage;

and that for a being to be enthroned in the Palace of the Ages is to be made **ΑΙΩΝΟΝ** [aionon], 'of the ages', which means to belong not just to the time of that being but also to an age of deep, planetary time;

and that being enthroned in the Palace of the Ages is also to be made **ΑΙΩΝΙΟΣ** [aionios], which means 'eternal', beyond time, because each age has its own time that begins but does not end;

so that to be made onomatophore is to be placed beyond time, beyond normal agency and responsibility;

The Earth's specific planetary endokairology

and noting that the creature's world is so far following what is called the 'main sequence', the most common trajectory in the development of rocky worlds;

and noting that the Earth has thereby exhibited the radical transitions in its mode of becoming which mark the bounds between the great **aeons** of a world, such as the establishing of continents that are not pulled down into the magma, or the taking of control over the chemical and thermodynamic balance of the world by living things;

and that the long aeons of the Earth so far number four, and are called by Anthropos the Hadean, the Archaean, the Proterozoic and the Phanerozoic;

and noting that, within a given aeon, transitions between **eras** such as the emergence of an atmosphere with free oxygen, or the rise of the terrible lizards, are the result of a dialogue between the balancing of intensive forces within a world and forcings from outside;

and that at the finer kairological level of **periods** a world moves between different points of stability within an era – often between times of great heat and of unimaginable cold;

and that at the even finer level of **epochs** a world, pressed by intensive gradients and forcings, explores the different possible states that are available to it within a given period;

and noting that the Earth has recently undergone significant changes: that the surfaces of the continents and the floors of the oceans have been profoundly altered; that the planet's subsystems, the flows of sunlight, water and nitrogen, have been captured and directed into the house of the Anthropos; that layers laid down in earlier periods have been mined and spread around the world or vented into its atmosphere; that the gifting of heat between sun and earth and space has been transformed, so that the world is warming;

and noting also that the way that the Earth's own distinctive time emerges from its internal intensive differences is also changing; that just as Proterozoic life learnt how to take the inorganic systems of the Earth up into itself, and to move the world far from equilibrium, so too have the complex organisms of Phanerozoic life learned how to take assemblages of inorganic matter and give them their own kind of life – are creating what are known as technics or machines, and that these are altering the processes through which the Earth organises itself;

The Anthropos

and noting that at the heart of these changes is the species of the claimant, known as Anthr-*opos*, which means 'that with the face of a human';

and noting furthermore that the claim of the claimant has been challenged: that alternative onomatophores, other beings and forces which also claim the status of the name-bearer of the new planetary age of the Earth – have presented themselves to the receiving chambers of the Commission:

- the coal which laid itself down in the Carboniferous period;
- but also the fungi which held back their appearance in the Earth and permitted the coal to accumulate;
- the machines, those excrescences of vitality whose needs drive the transformation of the Earth;
- but also the economies that drive the needs of the machines

and many more candidate causes of the new epoch, of all nine kinds of 'cause';

and noting that the species of the claimant has many members and that some of these – the poor, the different, the not yet born – say that they have not been cause of the new epoch in any of the nine senses of 'cause', and that they do not pretend the title of onomatophore;

BE IT KNOWN THAT THE COMMISSION HAS DECIDED:

that the world of the claimant is indeed entering a new age;

that the epoch of human civilisation, the Holocene, is closing: its time can never end, but it will no longer define the Earth, and the agents of the Earth;

but that the proposal to name the new age 'the Anthropocene', a denomination which would locate this closing as a mere shift of epoch within the Quaternary period, itself within the Cenozoic era, must be rejected;

because the closing of the Holocene to which the Anthropos testifies is also the closing of the Quaternary period, the end of the gentle oscillation of the Earth between glaciations and interglacials, which slow music will always echo down the ages of the Earth but will no longer determine them;

and the closing of the Quaternary period is also the closing of the era of mammals – the onomatophores of the Cenozoic, who did not push that era into being from the past, but willed it into being from the future – who will not die and will eternally be onomatophore but will no longer be emblematic, as their era has closed;

and that the closing of the Cenozoic era is also the closing of the Phanerozoic, the whole great aeon of visible life, as living matter starts to shed the limits of the organism: that multicellular organic life will continue, but will no longer be definitive of the time of the Earth;

and that the closing of the Phanerozoic aeon is also the opening of a new aeon in the Earth's immanent time, which the Commission decrees shall be called the Phanerotechnic – the aeon of technological life, of organised inorganic matter, which in the deep time of the main sequence will surely be succeeded by the Aoratotechnic, the aeon of invisible machinery, of pure organisation, when technology will finally shed its material form;

and that the opening of this new Phanerotechnic aeon is also the start of the first era of that aeon: the Proterotechnic, the era of early machines, still primitive, still tied to organic life for their purposes, not yet truly autonomous, not yet their own independent life;

and that the opening of the Proterotechnic era is also the start of the first period of that era, the period in which machine life will escape the Earth and refashion the planetary system of which it is a part, will capture the flows of energy from its sun, convert matter into energy and energy into information;

and that the opening of this period is also the start of the first epoch of that period, an epoch which is already seeing the refashioning of the home world, the enframing of its energies, the mining of its stocks, the capturing of its flows, the overturning of its layers, the fabrication of a new surface of the Earth, and the casting of a new machinic layer of the Earth far above that surface;

AND BE IT ALSO KNOWN THAT THE COMMISSION DECREES:

that the Anthropos, the species of the claimant, has indeed been cause and agent within these developments in the time of the Earth;

but that the Anthropos is only the last, the proximate cause in the pushing of the Earth into its new epoch, its new period, its new era and its new aeon, and that other agents have stronger claim to the status of onomatophore for these new units of Earth time;

and that this first new epoch that the Earth is entering feels the hand of the Carboniferous period, which closed 3,000,000 Earth years ago but whose time, like those of all past ages, still unravels in the becoming of the Earth; and that it is the machinic assemblages of engines, currencies and markets, that bring ages together, that bloom across the Earth and that govern its transformation;

and that neither will the Anthropos be emblematic of the new epoch of the Earth, though it may survive it;

but that the Anthropos is the onomatophore of the epoch that is closing, the last epoch of the Quaternary period and the Cenozoic era and the Phanerozoic aeon, for it has been the emblematic species of this closing chapter of the era of mammals and of the very aeon of complex life on the Earth;

and thus that the Holocene epoch, the epoch that is now closing, should henceforth be called the Anthropocene;

and that as one age is succeeded by the next, as the time of the world changes, as its becoming becomes, then agency itself is changing, and the agency of the human is changing; the Anthropos will always be onomatophore of the epoch which is closing, will be enthroned in the Palace of the Ages for ever, to the ages of the ages, so that the time of the Anthropos is eternal and its role not over; yet it is no longer the primary agent of Earth's becoming, since that role has passed to the machines.

The Commission is in now in communication with the higher commissions, to whose jurisdiction this case will now be passed.