

## Editorial Introduction

### Luke Moffat, Christine Mortimer and Maria Luján Escalante

There are five intertwining moments, somewhere between the years of 1867 and 2021, that led to the creation of this special issue. Each of these moments is woven into the philosophical and creative histories of speculation in a specifically generative way. Beneath this weaving and intertwining, however, it's all Kant's fault.

It is in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/7) that Kant formulates the skeletal structure of speculative philosophy. The speculative use of our Reason, Kant says, can reveal fundamental, transcendental, truths about the nature of our knowledge, how we experience the world, and what we should do as a result. Speculation is a tool for safely establishing the limits of our knowledge. Its role is strict, and yet, enlarging. A new space is opened, a small insight into the 'metaphysical fog' that plagues philosophy. We can suddenly see deeper, and more profoundly, than we previously thought.

This leads to the first of these intertwined moments. Friedrich Schelling, a German philosopher, sought to pierce and move beyond Kant's strict concept of speculation. For Schelling, speculation is something even more powerful than Kant admitted. It is a special, and cosmological force, one which allows us to commune with the thorough interconnectedness of all things. In his time, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was speculative thought that would help unite Philosophy with the Sciences, and form a new period of intellectual inquiry. Schelling calls this Speculative Physics, a discipline that reveals connectedness, like a mycorrhizal network, of biology, physics, chemistry, geology, botany, and philosophy. There is something with which all these disciplines identify, which, in Schelling's view, is Nature.

The second moment occurs when, in 1867, American Philosopher and Lexographer William Torrey Harris introduces the newly founded *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, which is still published today. In a short article simply called 'The Speculative', Harris outlines the grounding principles of the newly established journal. Harris writes that thinking speculatively is 'the thinking of things under the form of eternity' (1867, p. 2). In the Preface to the same issue, Harris goes into more detail:

"To think, in the highest sense, is to transcend all natural limits, such, for example, as national peculiarities, defects in culture, distinctions in Race, habits, and modes of living to be universal, so that one can dissolve away the external hull and seize the substance itself" (ibid)

In the same article, Harris speaks about a new way of doing academic practice, which combines study with cultural and artistic production, and political mobilisation. It is a utopian ambition, one that was

highly criticised as naïve in Harris' own time. And yet, it seems somewhat apt for today's academic climate of multi, inter and trans-disciplinary research cultures.

The third moment happened in 2007, when four continental philosophers met at Goldsmiths in London, for a conference called 'Speculative Realism' (SR). Iain Grant, Ray Brassier, Graham Harman and Quentin Meillassoux, all offered their versions of SR, this strange breed of philosophy which pulled at strands of Quantum Physics and Geology, to build a theory which could capture the thorough weirdness and ungraspability of the universe, when understood in a quantum – nonhuman- manner. From this initial encounter, several iterations of SR emerged, including Harman's Object-Oriented-Ontology, and Grant's Nature-Philosophy. While fascinating in their own right, these iterations of speculation are somewhat tribal in their disagreements and are more preoccupied with ontological and methodological grievances than positive critique. Something of Harris' spirit seems lost in this contemporary iteration of speculative philosophy.

The fourth moment, is a humble one, it grew out of all the previous three, into a two day workshop at Halton Mill, Lancashire, in 2018, the event which gave its name to the special issue you are currently reading. The aim of the workshop was to bring together different perspectives and practices concerning speculation, across disciplines, and in collaboration with practitioners. The resonances and dissonances were unpredictable, and it was this unpredictability that helped catalyse the first working collaborations, some of which have been brought to fruition in the pages ahead.

The questions of what speculation is, what it means, and what it is for, touch and trouble the pieces of work in this issue. As nature begins to "speak back" at our various misdemeanours, exploitations, and violences, the urgency of tackling the messy, unpredictable, volatile and multiple materials of possible futures is thrown into stark relief. The utopian ambitions of Harris and his co-founders, must necessarily remain, a stubborn visibility, amid all the visible and invisible problems presented by seriously researching the world. The work that has been shared here, and the conversations, projects, missions and stories that they will continue to nourish, all extend a branch, a semi-visible rope, into the strange and unpredictable world of speculative thought. Far from Kant's sombre reflections, this issue is also somehow near to them, as the task of revealing, un-concealing, via the speculative work of our reason, the processes, mechanics, and ethics of our knowledge, is still ongoing.

In 2018, at Halton Mill, nobody speculating into the future could have imagined the intervening two years. This edition finally makes it to publication in the midst of a global pandemic and in the context of sustained waves of lockdowns that mark the fifth intertwining moment. Some of the news remains the same, US president being impeached (again!) and the pandemic continuing, and building up momentum. The process of bringing this edition to publication has taken us from 'the time before',

when the USA came close to war with Iran, news from China that there was a pneumonia virus spreading through Wuhan and UK lecturers going on strike. Suddenly in March the world changed before our eyes, and a pandemic ripped across the globe. However, through all, the authors, reviewers, collaborators continued to work with us on this special edition. In 2020, we experienced the worst forest fires that Australia and the USA have seen, reminding us all that environmental challenges are still present. The human world came together again through the Black Lives Matter campaign, reminding us all, that inequality within the human world was still a challenge. At a personal level, contributors succeeded in gaining their PhD's, had babies and together this special edition has made it publication, demonstrating that aspects of life continue in the face of adversity. The work in this edition, covers many aspects of speculating the future and follows themes of inequality, the human-centeredness of our view of the world, how we engage with the planet, the myriad dimensions of technological development, and what sort of world we could, between us all, develop.

Part One of this special edition provides us with the scaffolding needed to piece together the rich, multi-disciplinary world that we can speculate in. Introduced by Laura Forlano (Forlano, 2021), the four articles, 'Speculating with Glitches: Keeping the Future Moving' (Bodden & Ross, 2021), 'Investment in the Imaginary' (Jackman & Jablonowski 2021), 'Dystopias for Discourse' (McCraken, 2021) and 'New Images of Thought' (Kleinherenbrink, 2021), take us to a place where technology, philosophy and the positive nature of 'glitches' in the system something that we all have become familiar with over the past year) come together. The 'conversational' responses from Stuart Sims (Sims, 2021) and Angela Piccini (Piccini, 2021), helps us to question the philosophical ideas embedded within Speculation before we even start to speculate about the future. The reviews of Lorraine Daston's book 'Against Nature' (Coyne, 2021; Griffiths, 2021; Hauskeller, 2021; Lewis, 2021) and Lorraine Daston's response (Daston, 2021), continue this engagement outside of this special edition offering a philosophical anthropology of how the human-world look to nature as a source of norms for human behaviour.

Joe Deville's (Deville, 2021) response to Shawn Bodden and Jen Ross's 'Speculating with Glitches: Keeping the Future Moving' (Bodden & Ross, 2021) brings the idea of 'glitches' right up to date, with a discussion on Covid-19 as a 'glitch' in the system, but which system: the tightly coupled global systems or the modern world built upon human-centred systems. Paul Cureton (Cureton, 2021) in his reply to Anna Jackman and Maximilian Jablonowski's 'Investment in the Imaginary' (Jackman & Jablonowski, 2021), continues the discussion of technology and its place or not, in building a better future. To 'build back better' we need to shift our collective critical capabilities to speculating on what kind of relationship we want to have on a personal, communal and planetarian scale. Nik Bearten in his Afterword, from a practitioner's perspective, calls up the very crucial question of how do we

engage in this speculation if we do not develop new language to discuss new ideas, we need to consider building 'new worlds out of new words' (Bearten, 2021).

Part Two, 'More-than-human Worlds', is introduced by Anne Galloway (of course). Anne Galloway carefully let slip a formulation of the speculative aporia, that is primarily involved in the more-than-human worlding that comes from human imagination or creativity, and the political charge and the responsibility of researchers and practitioners that engage with it (Galloway, 2021). One dimension of the paradox, is to do with the representational triage, discussed in particularly fertile terms by Kaya Barry, Michelle Duffy, Michelle Lobo, in their article 'Speculative listening: Melting sea ice, and new methods of listening with the planet' (Barry, Duffy & Lobo, 2021), and response by Bronislaw Szerszynski (Szerszynski, 2021). And that, among 3 decks of tarot, Georgina Voss (Voss, 2021) in her Afterword, refers to it as the impossibility of renouncing representation even whilst trying to speculate out of it. This aporia refers to the distance or the separation of what is represented, the representation and the reader. Bronislaw Szerszynski (2021) offers us a marvellous plea to stay with the trouble of this, he resorts to the 'pli' or the techno-logical *fold*; this triage is not static, it curls in itself to form a milieu, and emerging from this pliage, is the world itself, a world constantly folding to breed multiple coexisting of worlds, more-than-human worlds (Szerszynski, 2021). With this, representations of other ways of knowing are rescued in their role of nurturing and moistening this generative compost, from which more-than-human speculations emerged, playful, critical, reflective, collaborative, inviting; like a handmade line offers to connect us with others as in Michelle Westerlaken's 'It Matters what Designs Design Designs: Speculations on Multispecies Worlding' (Westerlaken, 2021), like a house of cards in Marketa Dolejšová's, 'Edible Speculations: Designing Everyday Oracles for Food Futures' (Dolejšová, 2021) or like the music of our own extinction (Barry, Duffy and Lobo, 2021).

We can see that speculation firstly, supplies us with a lexicon to reach futures, and this we named the scaffolding property of speculation, in Part One. But there is something contradictory, troubling, and this ontological aporia of speculation is discussed in Part Two. We are proposing that the third most important speculative affordance is an ethical one. In Part Three, James Fathers in his Forward moves Speculative Ethics away from moral judgements, escapes from the linear relation of cause and effect, separates from past social regrets and present desires to fix futures (Fathers, 2021). The ethical affordance of future speculations is not orderly arranged in a timeline, it stays in Donna Haraway's (2016) Kainos of the Chthulucene. Kainos, says Donna Haraway, does not have anything to do with conventional pasts, presents, or futures. Instead, Kainos, is 'full of inheritances, of remembering, and full of comings, or nurturing of what might be' (2). We see this conversation continuing in Paul Raven and Johannes Stripple's article 'Touring the carbon ruins: towards an ethics of speculative

decarbonisation' (Raven & Stripple, 2021) and Yannick Rumpala's 'Science fiction, reconfigured social theory and the Anthropocene Age' (Rumpala, 2021). The responses by Naomi Jacobs (Jacobs, 2021) and Luke Moffat (Moffat, 2021) add depth and human experience to this conversation. Maria Luján Escalante (Luján Escalante, 2021), in her response to Melanie Levick-Parkin's contribution 'Beyond Speculation: using speculative methods to surface ethics and positionality in design practice and pedagogy' (Levick-Parkin, 2021), invoked again the cybernetic fold, to connect with Kaino's (dis)continuous dynamic of a 'now' time that holds pasts and futures. In his response, Luke Moffat (2021), speaks of this manifold in terms of realities and fictions. Ursula Le Guin (1986) put it in a more accessible way using the figure of a 'carrier bag'. Alongside the conversations of this journal, the carrier bag was used by Christine Mortimer (Mortimer, 2021) and Anne Galloway (2021) to *figure* out the transductive relations of past, presents, and futures, realities and imaginations, memories and anticipations. In this bag or milieu, we are becoming-with-others, we are entangled and, as Bronislaw Szerszynski (2021) proposes, imPLIcated, comPLIcated, and in play. Vivienne Kuh (Kuh, 2021) in her practitioner Afterword on Speculating Ethics makes the point that it is in the ability to respond -or response-ability- to these dependencies and complexities from which the ethics in speculation transcends into useful insights for policy making and governing the uncertain and the complex in a climate of emergency.

The scaffolding of speculation, the more-than-human contradiction and its stake in contextual, creative and collaborative ethics, does not provide solutions or answers. Speculation rather, stirs up, disturbs and engages with the trouble. In this sense, as articulated by David Tyfield in his interview 'Governing Complexity and Reconceptualising Liberty' (Tyfield, 2021) it is not useful, but necessary, even more, speculation is urgent. This edition is coming together in a period that best explains ideas such as a carrier bag; 2020, mixed fears, pain, hope, values and beliefs, both real and imagined, both from pasts and futures. The dangers of this period are to awake Donna Haraway's (2016) two most common responses. These issues are addressed by firstly, the 'comic faux in techno-fixes'(4), we saw it the in naïve faith in apps, vaccines and online platforms, to sort out or substitute the caring human infrastructure and values of climate and social justice. The second of these dangerous responses, is 'game-over attitude' or the idea that it's too late and we are living in a dystopian speculative scenario, and there is nothing left to do. The latter is particularly dangerous, as it brings numbing polarizing politics of 'sublime despair and sublime indifference'(4). Instead, as discussed by Serena Pollastri in response to 'Edible Speculations: Designing Everyday Oracles for Food Futures' (Dolejšová, 2021), this edition is the beginning of taking human action (Pollastri, 2021). We have disturbed and stirred up, through the actions, words and thoughts of an incredible group of contributors from all extremes of

the world, in all of our extreme conditions, and from the extremes of our disciplinary spectrums. We stayed with the trouble of speculation, and stayed with this project to engage with trouble apart-together, or, together- apart in the troubles of the time.

## References

- Baerten, N. (2021) 'Practitioner afterword: the debate', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI:
- Barry, K., Duffy, M. & Lobo, M. (2021) 'Speculative listening: Melting sea ice, and new methods of listening with the planet', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16032963659726
- Bodden, S. & Ross, J. (2021) 'Speculating with glitches: keeping the future moving', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16043719041171
- Cureton, P. (2021) 'Reply to Investment in the imaginary', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI:
- Coyne, L. (2021) 'Review of Against Nature by Lorraine Daston', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16007076213769
- Daston, L. (2021) 'Reply to Reviews of Against Nature by Lorraine Daston', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378921X16099483886705
- Deville, J. (2021) 'Reply to Speculating with glitches: keeping the future moving', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16058689822721
- Dolejšová, M. (2021) 'Edible Speculations: Designing Everyday Oracles for Food Futures', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16069559218265
- Fathers, J. (2021) 'Foreword to part 3: speculative ethics', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378921X16106635599049
- Forlano, L. (2021) 'Foreword', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378921X16098658918201
- Galloway, A. (2021) 'Foreword to part 2', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI:
- Griffiths, J. (2021) 'Review of Against Nature by Lorraine Daston', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16007072233879
- Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.
- Harris, W. T. [1867] (2000). The Speculative. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 14(1), 1-6.
- Hauskeller, M. (2021) 'Review of Against Nature by Lorraine Daston', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X15940577490149
- Jackman, A. & Jablonowski, M. (2021) 'Investment in the imaginary', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16067521422126
- Jacobs, N. (2021) 'Reply to Touring the carbon ruins: towards an ethics of speculative decarbonisation', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI:
- Kant, I. (2007) *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp-Smith, London: Palgrave
- Kleinherenbrink, A. (2021) 'New Images of Thought - On Two Kinds of Speculative Realism', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16031279484000
- Kuh, V. (2021) 'Practitioner afterword', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378921X16106636345337
- Le Guin, U.K. (1986) *The carrier bag theory of fiction*. <https://usa.anarchistlibraries.net/library/ursula-le-guin-the-carrier-bag-theory-of-fiction.lt.pdf>
- Levick-Parkin, M. (2021) 'Beyond Speculation: using speculative methods to surface ethics and positionality in design practice and pedagogy', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16055409420649
- Lewis, M. (2021) 'Review of Against Nature by Lorraine Daston', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16007073421914
- Luján Escalante, M. (2021) 'Reply to Beyond Speculation: using speculative methods to surface ethics and positionality in design practice and pedagogy', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI:

- McCracken, C. (2021) 'Dystopias for discourse', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378921X16103606047172
- Moffat, L. (2021) 'Reply to Science fiction, reconfigured social theory and the Anthropocene Age: Exploring and thinking about planetary futures through fictional imaginaries', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI:
- Moffat, L. Mortimer, C. & Luján Escalante, M. (2021) 'Foreword', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI:
- Mortimer, C. (2021) 'Reply to It Matters what Designs Design Designs: Speculations on Multispecies Worlding', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378921X16106636499977
- Piccini, A. (2021) 'Reply to Dystopias for discourse', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI:
- Pollastri, S. (2021) 'Reply to Edible Speculations: Designing Everyday Oracles for Food Futures', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI:
- Raven, P. G. & Stripple, J. (2021) 'Touring the carbon ruins: towards an ethics of speculative decarbonisation', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16052078001915
- Rumpala, Y. (2021) 'Science fiction, reconfigured social theory and the Anthropocene Age: Exploring and thinking about planetary futures through fictional imaginaries', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16050867405760
- Schelling, F. W. J. (2012). *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*. SUNY Press.
- Sim, S. (2021) 'Reply to New Images of Thought - On Two Kinds of Speculative Realism', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16064187321448
- Szerszynski, B. (2021) 'Reply to Speculative listening: Melting sea ice, and new methods of listening with the planet', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378921X16097452422318
- Tyfield, D. (2021) 'Interview: Governing Complexity and Reconceptualising Liberty', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI:
- Voss, G. (2021) 'Practitioner Afterword: Three Decks And More', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378921X16106636172447
- Westerlaken, M. (2021) 'It Matters what Designs Design Designs: Speculations on Multispecies Worlding', *Global Discourse*, 11:1-2, DOI: 10.1332/204378920X16032019312511