

331–332), and finally an index of names (pp. 337–341), making any purposeful search for texts easier. The volume offers a new insight into biographical traces and stages of thought, historical contexts, interpersonal moods and even displeasure, previously unknown even to experts. From a philosophical point of view, the reader wishes that the two had discussed and even argued more about the topics that were particularly close to their hearts. Questions of nature, technology, freedom and what makes us the human being would have provided ample material for discussion.

**Marcus Knaup**

**Peter Sloterdijk**

## **Out of the World (Cultural Memory in the Present)**

**Stanford University Press,**  
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The renowned, but controversial, European philosopher Peter Sloterdijk re-published one of his early books, *Out of the World*. Interestingly enough, the book was originally penned in 1993, even though it deals with topics that are of our current reality. Sloterdijk investigates how people seek to escape reality across cultures and historical periods, culminating in the escapism of today's terminally-online culture. As elaborate and eloquent as always, he presents a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary reflection on humanity's inclination to reject the world. Laying the groundwork for his theory – some have strangely enough called it anthropotechnics, suggesting that there are ethics that are not human or in reference to human experience – Sloterdijk explores consciousness as a medium that has been shaped and reshaped throughout technological and social history. Even without it being explicitly said, we can guess that the *leitmotif* of the discussion is the flux of technologically mediated experience of the world that occurs and reoccurs only through technological means – vicious circle of abandonment of the “humane”, to establish ourselves as humans. His focus is on the *Weltfremdheit*, the foreignness of the *sapient* to Nature, the “world-alien” aspect of human nature once formalized within religious institutions but

now increasingly addressed through modern psychotherapy. Sloterdijk delves into artificial environments and intoxicating experiences, ranging from early Christian monks in the desert to modern psychedelic-infused pharmacology. True to his style, he reinterprets concepts from ancient Greek philosophy to Heidegger, creating a strikingly relevant philosophical anthropology. The book consists of eight chapters poised as questions, the answers to these questions lead us to even more questions – sometimes the right questions are worth more than superficial answers.

The first chapter of the book, “Why is this happening to me? Guesswork concerning the animal that stumbles upon itself, that makes great plans, that often does not move from the spot, and that sometimes is fed up with everything” starts with this Heideggerian notion of anthropology:

“Anthropology is that interpretation of man that already knows fundamentally what man is and hence can never ask who he may be. For with this question it would have to confess itself shaken and overcome. But how can this be expected of anthropology when the latter has expressly to achieve nothing less than the securing consequent upon the self-secureness of the *subiectum*?” (P. 1.)

The first question for Sloterdijk becomes one of identifying oneself as a subject, borrowing from Ernst Bloch autobiographical notes, meeting one's *ego*.

“One day, as a child of perhaps ten years, out of the blue he felt his ego; it rushed into him like a thunderbolt that he was truly and irrevocably himself, and that he could no longer escape himself and his body alive. Such terrifying enlightenments occur only episodically. No discourse and no practice leads to this panicked self-experience of being-there.” (P. 2.)

Understanding this notion leads to the question asked in the chapter title, or as Sloterdijk writes:

“I am – and now I know it – no stone, no plant, no animal, no machine, no spirit, no god. With this sixfold denial I circumscribe the uncanniest of all spaces. Whoever is human lives in a place that absolutely stands out to itself. From then on I am only the scene of a question. My life is a theater of trembling over the fact that I have to be different from everything that enjoys the comfort of being a thing among things, a being among beings. Why is this happening to me?” (P. 2–3.)

This is the point Sloterdijk chose to start his investigation at, and it takes him through the notions of *Seins im Ichsein* and *Dasein*, but the answers remain few and the existential dread the history of philosophy has recorded doesn't help us to deal with these issues in the slightest. His attempts at defining the issues even lead to humorous remarks:

“Neither theory nor alcohol can guarantee a fool-proof contraception of *Dasein*. Safer thinking, safer

*drinking* – that doesn't help in every case. Even someone who regularly jogs in the woods, and from age thirty onward has regular doctors' checkups, cannot preclude that existence will break in during the night." (P. 3)

The path to any conclusion or experience we might call "safe" might as well be a lie, therefore Sloterdijk investigates religious ideas in the western and eastern traditions, eventually going back to Nietzsche and Fichte (p. 21). If humans are trapped in their circumstances, then the trap becomes the *World* (p. 23), and our "histories" are tools to help us understand this relationship, be it through notions of destiny, *askesis*, *ekpyrosis* or Freud (pp. 25–31).

The second chapter delves deeper into issues found throughout the history of human thought, hence its title "Where do monks go? On world-flight from an anthropological perspective". The idea of *metoikesis* that Sloterdijk wants to examine in this chapter will take its full meaning in later chapters (p. 39). Presenting us with the "historical" account of Socrates final moments in *Phaedo* he tells us the story of "resettlement" (*metoikesis*),

"...rehousing, resettlement, translation into another form of being-with-oneself, understood as a metaphor of death and title of the final metamorphosis, contains a reference to the depth-mobility of human existence, which entails more than a displacement on the same level and in the same element." (P. 40.)

Furthermore, there is a need to elaborate on this further so the notion of "resettlement" as Socrates understands it isn't interpreted as dying, or "moving on to the next world".

"The essence of the philosophically interpreted soul includes a three-phase process of entry into the physical world, passage through it, and exit from the same. Pre-existence, existence, and post-existence are the three great stages of the being of the soul that *metoikesis* has to mutually mediate. Thus, while the original context of the expression *metoikesis* may give the impression that it is exclusively a metaphor of death, a second glance reveals that the word is not only a metaphor but also a concept, and also, it not only refers to the final transition but rather concerns the twists and turns of humankind's depth-mobility as a whole." (P. 41.)

The third chapter, "What are drugs for? On the dialectic of world-flight and world-addiction", focuses on philosophical inquiry as the tool we use to "sober up".

"This work of sobering up proceeds *grosso modo* in three great phases. In the first, rational ecstasy forms a self-interpretation with help from metaphysics as theological ontology; (...) In the second phase, further sobered-up reason destroys its metaphysical high-rises and finally converges in a total abstinence from high theses – now it no longer wants to differentiate itself from a clarified everyday thinking. Only thus is it possible that what began with Parmenides ends with Wittgenstein." (P. 63.)

Sloterdijk's exploration of our tendencies leads him to the conclusion that there is a modern association between drugs and addiction and it could only have arisen through the interaction of three major events in the history of subjectivity, each taking up a developmental space of several millennia.

"I would like to name three major subjectivity-historical trends that promise to inform our addiction- and drug-theoretical reflections.

- A. The falling silent of the gods.
- B. The deritualization of the overwhelming.
- C. The becoming-explicit of the will to nonbeing.

I will try to sketch the relationship of these psycho-historical factors and to indicate their addiction-dynamical implications. It should thereby become clear how the three tendencies merge in a story of individual consciousness stepping out into a neutral, prosaic, overt, and ultimately meaningless world. Jointly would emerge a story about the becoming-untenable [*Haltloswerden*] of subjectivity and the metaphysical homelessness of modernized human beings." (P. 71.)

If we are to follow the logic of the previous chapters, we can see that there is a link between the search for higher meaning, disenchanting of the sacred and abandoning one's self.

"When ecstasy becomes uninformative because the gods are tired of revelation and the figures of intoxication lose the sharpness of their profiles, a blunt and deritualized handling of the mighty substances asserts itself. As soon as the ritual brackets that support the subject's spine in the presence of sacred drugs fall away, the subject finds itself in an unshielded direct relation to what all experience indicates is stronger than the profane self. One of the tragic lessons of the drug is that it forbids the human to build a private relationship with the overwhelming." (P. 73.)

But how to we turn back towards the existence-affirming notions in the history of philosophy or history of thought? Sloterdijk writes

"... addicts' private and uninformative ecstasies are all about. In addiction we are faced with an individualized – that is, split from the complicity [*Mitwissen*] of cultural membership – revolt against the imposition of being-there. The deritualized, private use of drugs allows the subject to so to speak blaze itself a wild trail back into inexistence." (P. 76.)

As he has noted in the last two chapter, it is only human to flee from the world. The *condicio humana* dictates both "being of the world" and "being 'against' the world", or as we noted before, world-foreign. Existentialism must remain monocular and pathetic as long as it fails to reflect itself in an inexistentialism as its necessary counterpart. Only existentialism and inexistentialism together afford a stereoscopic view of man's ambivalent inhabitation of the world that meets the requirements of a philosophical depth-psychology.

“The latter acknowledges that not only does the conscious rest upon an unconscious, but also that world-inclined being-there [*Dasein*] is correlated with a world-averse and worldless being-gone [*Fortsein*].” (P. 76.)

These issues are further explored in the sub-chapter titled “Of the human potential for withdrawal”, where we must admit that we are “living in the wake of an almost three-thousand-year history of grand world-negations” (p. 84). The negation is always mediated by *techniques* we claim helps us explore, or mediate the *stimuli*.

The fourth chapter of the book, “How was the ‘death drive’ discovered? Toward a theory of the soul’s end goals, with continual references to Socrates, Jesus, and Freud” elaborates on some of the intricacies of already explored issues. We met all the dominant figures (Socrates, Jesus, and Freud), we spoke about the implications of their doctrines and now we are exploring different *strata* of the issues we already faced, the psychological aspects. Sloterdijk’s theoretical struggle starts with Freuds *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*,

“The goal of all life is death, and, casting back: The inanimate was there before the animate.” (P. 88.)

Eventually leading him to a conclusion the Freudian “pseudobiological ‘death drive’” is an ominous monument to this embarrassment. It is a reminder of the cost of thinking the soul, with its obscure, exuberant, and body-fleeing tendencies, as a bodily effect” (p. 94). To further this debate Sloterdijk shows us a history of religious debate that moves past death as something that happens to the body and shifts the focus towards life and living. The final question being one he undertook more than ones in his other works, the “urge to learn how to live” (p. 114).

“What gives us pause for thought today is not an ominous death drive innate to life itself; what alarms us is the urgent seriousness of the adventure of intelligence through the species as a whole. (P. 114.)

The conclusion of the fourth chapter opens the debate towards the second aspect of being human, the relationship with the world. The chapter “Is the world negatable? On Indian spirit and Occidental gnosis” starts with a humours remark about philosophical endeavours, “It is one of the confidences of the philosophical profession that where ultimate knowledge is spoken of in positive tones, madness is often not far off.” Not only does he call the big philosophical movements, like German idealism, *manic*, he accuses them of being “historicizing and systematizing research enterprise that has dismissed truth seeking like an infantile disorder of mankind” (p. 116). But also, by accepting the pragmatic side of contemporary sciences philosophy

and metaphysics are being disciplined into something they are not, psychology or meta-psychology. The metaphysics know to “contingental” philosophy has been replaced.

“The modern world at large has defeated smallpox and metaphysics. Only in exceptional cases does an author become notable as a patient of great ideas. Nothing characterizes the current situation of metaphysical thought better than the diagnosis that the contagious effect of classical sentences has been largely eliminated among intellectual populations; it seems that collective immune systems are now almost completely resistant to metaphysics. [...] There are strong intellectual-historical and civilizational reasons for this general recession of metaphysical consciousness, of which only the decisive one is to be mentioned here. With the emergence of depth-psychological ways of thinking, interested parties have at their disposal a second tongue in which to rearticulate the passion of being-in-the-world whose initial high-cultural formulation took shape as metaphysics and religious thought. In this second tongue – sharpened especially by Nietzsche – an aggressive resistance to the entire Platonic and “ontotheological” complex takes place.” (P. 116.)

The language of Plato and Aristotle has been replaced by moder language and new dictates of proper intellectual discourse. One might ask, “What have we lost?” What does Sloterdijk see in the loss that eludes us?

In the sixth chapter of the book “What does it mean to take oneself over? Experiment in affirmation” Sloterdijk explores the strained relationship between philosophy and psychology, highlighting their shortcomings in addressing the human experience. Philosophy, traditionally concerned with wisdom, struggles to acknowledge individual existence beyond conceptual frameworks, while psychology inadequately connects individuals’ thinking to their lived reality. Both fields, in their institutional forms, fail to fully grasp the complexity of human existence. The text delves into Immanuel Kant’s role in uniting philosophy and psychology in the 18th century, when both fields briefly aligned in addressing humanity’s potential for reason. Kant’s pragmatic anthropology views humans as beings in transition, capable of becoming more rational over time. This led to the development of psychotherapy, seen as re-education for individuals with maladjusted souls. Sloterdijk also touches on Kant’s views on maturity, linking it to personal autonomy and moral reasoning. A mature person, in Kantian terms, is one who uses their mind independently, without guidance. However, Kant acknowledges the tension between the finite human condition and the infinite demands of morality, positioning the philosopher as a mediator between empirical human existence and moral ideals.

“A mature person, we said, is one who is able to speak for him or herself. But because people start infantile, that is, non-speaking, for a long time their

maturity can only be assumed as a future chance [275]. From a psychological point of view, the date of maturation cannot be fixed in advance, and it is not certain that there will be such a date in the life of every individual.” (P. 152.)

The final part considers Kant’s belief that human maturity involves retroactively affirming one’s existence, despite not choosing to be born. This tension forms the basis of a critical self-assessment, questioning whether humans can fully appropriate their creation and existence. Furthermore, Sloterdijk will extend these questions on humanity as a whole,

“... dissolution [Gelöstheit] in a pre-objective Being means serenity [Gelassenheit]: it means dwelling in a sphere that is more a soul globe than a world of crystallized, fragmentable objects. This mode of being remains possible for grown-up, conflict-hardened adults only insofar as they release themselves into the world as into a stream of ongoing birth. The stream of my coming-to-the-world flows steadily “forward”, just as the time-arrow of successful therapies must point unswervingly forward. The lucky natures – William James once called them the *once born* – step into this stream only once [*nur einmal*], the problematic natures twice or more. The more often one has to begin anew, the better one knows the reasons for rejecting existence [*Anstoß nehmen*]. The more a new beginning succeeds, the more likely an earlier failure becomes the catalyst [*Anstoß*] for another history.” (P. 163.)

The chapter before last asks “Where are we when we listen to music?”, a simple question but a confusing one.

“Philosophy knows a madness of which psychiatry knows nothing. Think of Hannah Arendt, otherwise famous for her sobriety, who in full earnestness wrote a treatise on the question ‘Where are we when we think?’, or of Valentinus and Basilides, the gnostic theologians of late antiquity, whose élan was directed toward finding an answer to the question ‘Where are we when we are in the world?’ Bizarre thoughts preclude noble forms as little as madness precludes method. But that reason also has something to gain from madness, beyond linguistic inversions – this could be one of the lessons to be drawn from depth-musicological reflections.” (P. 164.)

In this chapter Sloterdijk contrasts the experiences of seeing and hearing in relation to subjectivity and being-in-the-world. It critiques the Western emphasis on sight, which creates distance between subjects and the world, leading to a detached, observational mode of existence. In contrast, hearing is presented as an immersive experience where listeners are fully within the sound, suggesting a more intimate, engaged form of subjectivity. He also considers the act of listening to music as a form of “inhabitation” rather than simple object observation. It links listening to music with deeper philosophical ideas of self-reflection, internal voices, and the rhythm of being present and absent in the world. Drawing on Socrates and modern thinkers, it implies that music transports us between the

external world and our internal experiences, offering moments of escape, introspection, or retreat from the overwhelming nature of reality. Sloterdijk decided to finish the chapter on a Heideggerian note:

“That is why Heidegger cannot emphasize enough that the inauthentic life passes in noise and idle talk, while authentication involves anxiety before a terrifying silence: the originary anxiety in *Dasein* is usually repressed. Anxiety is there. It is only sleeping. Its breath quivers perpetually through *Dasein*. To its essence belongs a ‘peculiar calm,’ an ‘entranced calm,’ and the urge to drown out the ‘vacant silence.’” (P. 182.)

The last chapter of the book “How do we stir the sleep of the world? Conjectures on awakening”, might be the most intriguing one, and it surely is the best written one. The introductory part to the chapter, might be a masterpiece in itself.

“Again a morning takes care that there will be me. A light breeze moves through the half-darkness; in the room appear omens of a something that intimates itself through rustlings. This being – or whatever else what stirs there can be called – behaves not unlike parents who no longer bother to be quiet when the time has come for the kids to get up. The noises become aggressive, not to say inconsiderate. Thus, whatever else the world may be, all that is certain is that it’s something that starts running before I do. Flies of light land on the eyelids; they won’t stop administering their torments until they’ve forced the eyes to give up their resistance to the day. I am permeated with a sense of where the scene is heading. I have experienced what’s coming too often for there to be any misunderstanding about the outcome of the case. I know what they are up to – they intend to bring me, there’s no doubt about it, back to myself. Long have I understood that during the night the dark-clad bath attendants walk up and down between the sleeping-tubs and, toward morning, or whenever they think enough is enough, pull the plug [...]” (P. 184.)

And further:

“I am a child of the world – is this not proven by the fact that I trust it enough to accept its end without panic? Until tomorrow, I am immortal. The world, it will come back – like an old star and a new promise; it will arrive young, untouched, unprecedented, at once familiar and rediscovered, and in both cases the experienced heart will say, it is always like that, I know it, it was the first that touched me. How could I not have the affair of my life with it?” (P. 186.)

After the opening contemplation Sloterdijk describes the evolution of human consciousness and awareness, suggesting that what we call “world” only exists for creatures that no longer live in constant fear of predators. Early humans, once free from immediate survival concerns, began to see their environment differently – transforming it into a place of beauty and meaning. This shift in perception allowed for the emergence of luxury, contemplation, and culture. Humans became more aware, attentive, and connected to their

surroundings, moving beyond mere survival. Sloterdijk claims that the rise of shared human consciousness also led to the creation of gods and higher beings, who were seen as eternal watchers, mirroring humanity's growing self-awareness. As human intelligence developed, this divine knowledge was understood as something that permeated human consciousness, allowing individuals to see themselves as part of a larger cosmic order. Taking part in this new order demands new way of facing the world, a global vigilance and attention in the face of evolving ecological and existential challenges. Sloterdijk argues that traditional imperial systems of global surveillance are no longer sufficient, and humanity must develop an enhanced state of awareness to navigate the complexities of planetary coexistence. The main conclusion for the later part of this chapter is that while humanity transitions from small familial groups to a broader planetary consciousness, the concept of "growing up" takes on new meaning. The *paidea* that once aimed at preparing individuals for life in cities and empires, now must guide them into a world fraught with environmental crises and political fragmentation. Ancient philosophies, which helped souls transition to more abstract, challenging realms, framed the world as a larger home.

However, today's ecological crisis challenges this "world-as-home" metaphor, as the planet now faces desolation due to human activity.

"Who could fail to see that what weighs upon the life of presentday intelligence is a megalopathic crisis? The habitability of the coming hypercomplex worlds is not proven, the steerability of political evolutions hardly more than a pious wish or pipe dream. What is in store? – a century of overtime, of doubt, of mass escape. But complaining counts for nothing, and it is indecent to belittle oneself. The duty to be happy applies more than ever in times like ours. The true realism of the species consists in expecting no less of its intelligence than is demanded of it." (P. 214.)

**Marko Kos**

**Oliver Hallich**

## **Besser, nicht geboren zu sein?**

### **Eine Verteidigung des Anti-Natalismus**

**J. B. Metzler, Springer-Verlag, Berlin 2022**

Spätestens mit der Existenzphilosophie wird das Befragen des Sinns oder Unsinns des Lebens in der neueren Philosophiegeschichte intensiviert. Angesichts der relativen Kürze seines Lebens, aber auch der widrigen Umstände, die es oft begleiten (Anfälligkeit durch Krankheiten, Phasen der Unzufriedenheit, Konflikte mit Mitmenschen, Langeweile, Erwartung des Todes o. dgl.), stellt sich das Individuum, selbst wenn es mit seinem Leben zufrieden ist, die Frage, warum es überhaupt da sei und ob sich in der Welt etwas ändern würde, wenn es überhaupt nicht da gewesen wäre. Freilich, all diese Fragen und Bedenken setzen voraus, dass man bereits *da* ist. In der Philosophie gehen die Fragen aber noch mehr in die Tiefe. Eigentlich kommt man zur Welt oder genauer: man wird *geboren*. Geht man einen Schritt weiter zurück, so ist klar, dass man zuallererst *gezeugt* werden muss, damit man überhaupt geboren wird. Letztlich geht die Frage nach dem Sinn des Daseins in die Frage über, warum man überhaupt gezeugt worden sei. Die Frage nach dem Sinn der Zeugung geht der Frage nach dem Sinn des Daseins voraus. Will man das Problem des Daseins zufriedenstellend behandeln, so muss man es buchstäblich an seiner Wurzel packen. Diesen Schritt wagt in der Philosophie der sog. *Anti-Natalismus*.

Der Anti-Natalismus ist keineswegs ein Standpunkt, der während der Philosophiegeschichte durchgehend vertreten und verteidigt worden ist. Man findet ihn öfter am Rande des philosophischen Diskurses als im Zentrum der hier geführten Debatten. Und dass die Zahl seiner Anhänger und Anhängerinnen überschaubar ist, hat seinen Grund darin, dass ihn meistens eher verkannte und umstrittene Autoren und Autorinnen vertreten haben: Philipp Mainländer, Peter Wessel, Emil Cioran. Allerdings ist ein erneutes Interesse am Anti-Natalismus in der Gegenwart dank der Abhandlung des südafrikanischen Philosophen David Benatar *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence* (2006) erwacht. Benatar setzt sich darin argumentativ, ohne Rückgriff auf starke metaphysische Annahmen, für