

*Koyaanisqatsi* (Life out of Balance), dir. Godfrey Reggio (1982), is the first film in a trilogy that also includes *Powaqqatsi* (Life in Transformation, 1988) and *Naqoyqatsi* (Life as War, 2002). The music was composed by Philip Glass (1937-).

koyaanisqatsi: corrupted life

David Leedom Shaul, *A Concise Hopi and English Lexicon* (1985)

Other translations proposed by the filmmaker: life out of balance; crazy life; life in turmoil; life disintegrating; a state of life that calls for another way of living

Translation of the Hopi prophecies sung in the film:

If we dig precious things from the land, we will invite disaster.

Near the Day of Purification, there will be cobwebs spun back and forth in the sky.

A container of ashes might one day be thrown from the sky which could burn the land and boil the oceans.

KOYAANISQATSI attempts to reveal the beauty of the beast! We usually perceive our world, our way of living, as beautiful because there is nothing else to perceive. If one lives in this world, the globalized world of high technology, all one can see is one layer of commodity piled upon another. In our world the "original" is the proliferation of the standardized. Copies are copies of copies. There seems to be no ability to see beyond, to see that we have encased ourselves in an artificial environment that has remarkably replaced the original, nature itself. We do not live with nature any longer; we live above it, off of it as it were. Nature has become the resource to keep this artificial or new nature alive. ... The film's role is to provoke, to raise questions that only the audience can answer.

Godfrey Reggio

These notions made me see that it is possible to arrive at knowledge that would be very useful in life and that, in place of that speculative philosophy taught in the schools, it is possible to find a practical philosophy, by means of which, knowing the force and the actions of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies that surround us, just as distinctly as we know the various skills of our craftsmen, we might be able, in the same way, to use them for all the purposes for which they are appropriate, and thus render ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature.

René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1637)

The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging, which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such. ... A tract of land is challenged into the putting out of coal and ore. The earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit. ... Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry. ... The hydroelectric plant is set into the current of the Rhine. It sets the Rhine to supplying its hydraulic pressure, which then sets the turbines turning. ... What the river is now, namely, a water power supplier, derives from out of the essence of the power station. ... But, it will be replied, the Rhine is still a river in the landscape, is it not? Perhaps. But how? In no other way than as an object on call for inspection by a tour group ordered there by the vacation industry. ...

Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve. ...

Man ... comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. 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.

Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" (1955)