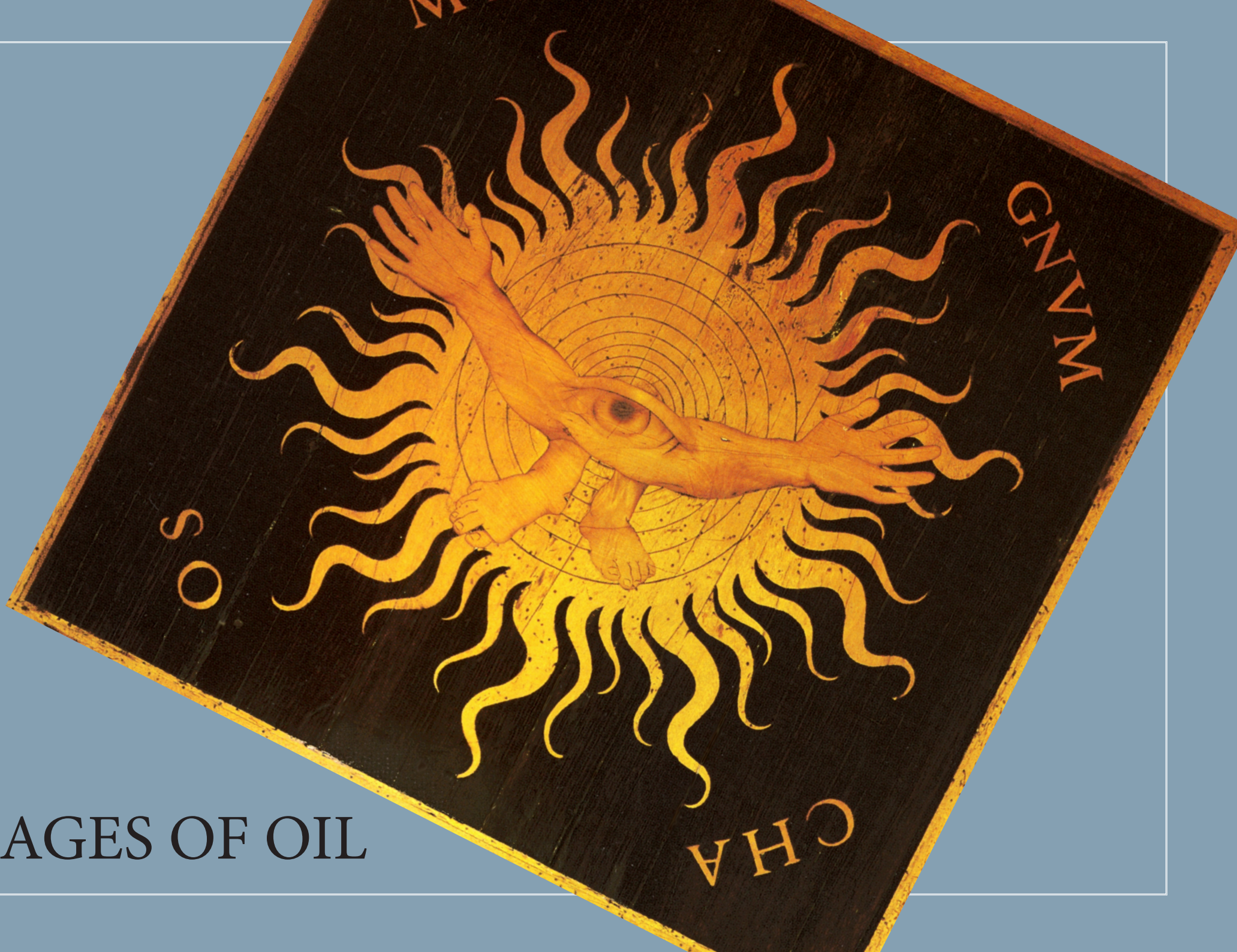


AGES OF OIL



What was energy, again?

The modern (fossil) view: The forces of nature (mechanical, electrical, chemical etc.) are forms of a single, universal energy that cannot be created or destroyed.

Normal definition: ability or potential to do work

Energy = exergy + anergy

Anergy: useless energy from the human point of view that cannot be converted back to exergy

Before the fossil era

Various conceptions of energy: eg. G. Bruno; continuous creation, Leibniz; vis vita, Goethe; morphological potential...

Energetics of life forms; organic life; heat is life

Energy in its non-human alterity

Enter thermodynamics

”[M]odern productivism – the belief that human society and nature are linked by the primacy and identity of all productive activity, arose from the conceptual revolution ushered in by nineteenth-century scientific discoveries, especially thermodynamics.

Of particular importance was the contributions of Hermann von Helmholtz who elaborated the universal law of the conservation of energy in 1847.” (Rabinbach 1992)

Thermodynamics as ideology

Energy is useful, usefulness is a good (and nothing besides) = energy as exergy

"The excess heat" must be neutralized in order to build better fossil machinery (c. 1860 → heat engines, then steam engines, later modern fuel engines)

Conceptions of energy follow the fossil dominant

Heat = life, no more

”Fossil subject”

Of solar origins: extremely homogenized form of stellar anergy

The mass scale subjectivation not possible without fossil fuels

Distinctions between subjects and objects and their static formation need huge energy inputs

No more better or emancipated subjects, or cooler (hyper)objects because their fossilized nature

”Fossil syntax”

Lacan`s famous dictum: “The unconscious is structured like a language.”

Compare: ”Dominant energy form (fossils) structure experience in a certain ”linguistic” way”;

”Fossil syntax”, ”fossil semantics”; filtering what meanings are adequate, possible and ”correct”...

Ergo

Modernity proper (c. 1870 →) is a phenomenon driven by cheap, high-end fossil fuels.
The fossil subject is the dominant subjectivity of modernity.

Climate change and energy

Earth's atmosphere and hydrosphere form a kind of heat engine (The Hadley system)

As energy was dissipated, climate change could come "as a surprise" – inability to deal with non-usable energy.

And the heat strikes back...

”Defossilization”

How to live despite fossil hegemony?

Both transition (economic, technological, social) and transformation (of experience; towards post fossil asubjectivities) needed

The process is not universal: encounter with local base matter and base matter of the Sun needed

Not in order to purify or assimilate but to contaminate, diversify, mutate, molecularize

Post-fossil experimentalisms

Grounding art to heterogeneous energetic solar origins: life-cycles, photosynthesis, bioregionalism, biotopes/habitats, organic birth and decay etc.

Meaning as a form of energetic energy that cannot be (scientifically) measured or harnessed

Works of art as means/media to transform psychic non-human energy, that is, meaning

Post-fossil experimentalisms II

Energy cannot be created nor destroyed: you have to negotiate

Artist as subject and art as object(s) dissolve

Surfing the anergetic: uselessness, formlessness, metamorphosis...

Against work, against productivism, against homogenic exergy

Active (aware) unaction