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CHAPTER 12

Generative Futures:
On Affirmative Ethics

Rosi Braidotti

Introduction: After Foucault

One of Foucault's greatest insights was that the bio-political cuts both ways. Philosophically, this produced a multi-faceted vision of power as both restrictive or coercive (*potestas*) and empowering or productive (*potentia*) that is intended as a critique of and an alternative to the binary dialectical schemes and their resolutely negative vision of power. The core conceptual issue is precisely that of the negative and its relation to the constitution of ethical and political subjectivity.¹ The main political aim, on the other hand, is to focus on bio-power as a way of highlighting the complex and contradictory mechanisms of care and control, empowerment and entrapment that lie at the core of the political economy of liberal democracies and their 'welfare' states.

This multi-layered vision of bio-power resulted in a second bifurcation, this time in relation to political activism and the very notion of politics. Foucault and Deleuze posited a crucial distinction between politics (*LA politique*) and the political (*LE politique*).² Politics focuses on the protocols of management of civil society and its institutions, the political on the transformative experimentations with new arts of resistance and existence. In other words, politics is made of progressive emancipatory measures predicated on chronological continuity, whereas the political is driven by transformative collective actions that require the non-linear time of critical praxis.

Foucault's bio-political approach combines the analysis of the web-like circulation of discursive practices with attention to the material grounding of such production, notably the social and institutional structures that sustain it. What primarily interests Foucault, however, is the practice of subject-formation as a discursive and material process of negotiation with the multi-layered and multi-directional structures

of power. Becoming-a-subject (*assujétissement*) in and through *potestas* and *potentia* consists of a number of heterogeneous and potentially contradictory steps and elements. The idea of the bio-political functions within this process as an analytical tool that Foucault employs to examine the combination of care and control, discipline and punishment, stimulation and regulation, through which liberal democracies dispense their allegedly benevolent political economy to the citizens. The subject as an embodied and embedded relational entity is framed by these complex discursive and material mechanisms of care and control. Foucauldian discourse analysis rests on the assumption that these complex discursive and material mechanisms join forces to co-construct specific polemical targets or bio-political functions that are then deemed as essential to well-functioning subjects at different moments in history. Thus, an 'object' of scholarly enquiry does not precede the process that constitutes it. It rather emerges from the enmeshment with institutional, legal, political, economic and cultural conditions. The critical approach consequently consists in asking genealogical questions. For Foucault they are: what is this 'Man' whose humanistic era is now proving to be over? How do the classical humanities disciplines relate to the 'death of Man'? And what comes after this discursive death?

Genealogical questions are both critical and generative; they construct the thinker as a geologist, a genealogist, a clinician and a critical subject. For instance, Foucault focused on issues such as medical and mental health and hygiene, demography, biology and sexuality as the main objects of both discursive production and material control. In so doing Foucault redefines the meaning of critique itself by dis-engaging it from the Kantian tradition of unitary and transcendental consciousness.

This approach has important methodological implications. Foucault goes through different experimental phases of thought: from the archeology of knowledge, to a more systematic genealogical approach that grounds discursive practice upon the analysis of the conditions of possibility for their emergence. This produces a new cartographic method in critical thought that aims precisely to turn critique into an account – in equal parts genealogical as well as political – of the gradation and scale of the subjects' inscription into the web-like workings of power and knowledge, entrapment and empowerment, *potestas* and *potentia*. This internally contradictory set of negotiations is for Foucault the core of the bio-political management of both human and non-human life in advanced democracies.

It is worth stressing therefore that Foucault's bio-political work was essentially an analysis of the political economy of liberal democracies

and the notion of moralised liberal individualism they produce. Foucault's analysis exposes the instrumental use made of human capacities and bodily abilities in a political system that celebrates and over-values individualism but does not prioritise social justice between individuals. Foucault strikes a radical note by connecting these bio-political systems of both individualisation and control to the universalist, humanistic idea of the 'Man of reason'.³ This humanistic interpretation of the human subject defines 'Man' as the unitary, mortal being endowed with self-regulating rationality and universal moral goodness. The hermeneutics of suspicion towards individualism, which Foucault helps to develop, therefore also calls to task humanism, as elucidated in *The Order of Things*.⁴ This double-cutting edge results in the critique of unitary subjectivity on the one hand, and the suspension of belief in the unfulfilled promises of the Enlightenment-based vision of the human as rational consciousness on the other. The humanistic Man of reason was pulled down from his pedestal, situated both geopolitically and historically within the Eurocentric tradition and made accountable for his deeds.

Feminist thinkers like Luce Irigaray – a contemporary of Foucault's – pointed out that the allegedly universal ideal of 'Man' as a humanist symbol is, in fact, very much a male of the species.⁵ Moreover, he is white, European, handsome and able-bodied. Feminist critiques of patriarchal posturing through abstract masculinity⁶ and triumphant whiteness⁷ argued that this Humanist universalism is objectionable on both epistemological and political grounds. Anti-colonial thinkers adopted a similar but distinct critical stance by questioning the implicit assumption of whiteness in the humanist ideal of 'Man'. Re-grounding the lofty humanist claims in the violent history of colonialism, anti-racist and post-colonial thinkers explicitly questioned the relevance of this ideal, in view of the obvious contradictions imposed by its Eurocentric assumptions. They also held Europeans accountable for the uses and abuses of this ideal by looking at colonial history and the violent domination of other cultures. These radical critiques of the Enlightenment ideal constitute the core of critical theory around and after Foucault and a necessary supplement to his discourse analysis.

So far, so good, but the essential problem with Foucault's bio-political project is that it is unfinished and incomplete, which means that his brilliant intuitions were not fully worked out and consequently have left a mixed legacy. In contemporary scholarship, the notion of the bio-political has been stretched beyond measure. Take, for instance, the flagrant contradictions between the two main contemporary schools of

bio-political thought. First, the thanato-political reading of Foucault proposed by Agamben⁸ presents the bio-political management of the living in terms of a 'bare life' that can be left to die.⁹ The cartography of subjectivity produced here is entirely negative and power is exclusively bound to *potestas* (that is, a regulatory control system of domination and exclusion). Foucault's emphasis on the materiality of the subjects becomes in Agamben's work the source of a fundamental vulnerability to techno-industrial exploitation that exposes the self to the abuses of political regimes. Agamben translates this vulnerability into a full-scale indictment of the project of modernity as a whole.

Second, there is a neo-Kantian school of scholars that focuses on a variety of modes of 'bio-political citizenship', as an instance of liberal governmentality.¹⁰ This line of thinking takes Foucault's work on the technologies of the self mostly as a relational ethics – rather than a complex grid of power relations. It argues that this ethics can assist in the emancipatory process of resisting the instrumental aspects of bio-political management of Life in advanced capitalism. In addition to these two well-established traditions of post-Foucauldian thought, multiple other renditions of the term bio-politics are circulating today. This proliferation of contradictory theoretical developments around the same term leads me to conclude that the bio-political has lost its critical edge and become another 'buzz' word.¹¹

In my assessment, the first theoretical drawback of Foucault's unfinished anatomy of the bio-political is that it produces the analytics of a system of governmentality at the apex of its evolution and hence on the edge of implosion. Considering the fast rate of bio-political transformations propelled by contemporary technologies and the challenges they throw to the sovereign status of the human, Foucault's work has been criticised, notably by Haraway, for relying on an outdated vision of these very same technologies.¹² Haraway suggests that Foucault's bio-power provides the cartography of a world that no longer exists, in so far as the bio-political has mutated into the informatics of domination. Some of the most significant developments in bio-political analysis emerge from other strands of critical theory, notably feminist and queer,¹³ environmentalist¹⁴ and race theorists,¹⁵ who have addressed the shifting status of embodiment and difference in advanced capitalism in a manner that reflects the complexities of global power relations.

The second major drawback of the Foucauldian method is that it remains firmly inscribed in an anthropocentric tradition. In the rest of this essay I want to explore this aspect further and develop an alternative case for vital neo-Spinozist materialism inspired by Deleuze and

Guattari's philosophy. My argument is that it offers a more adequate paradigm and a sharper methodology to deal with the multiple unfoldings of contemporary power formations. Deleuzian analyses based on the radical immanence of vital matter empower us to explore the political economy of advanced capitalism in ways that move beyond the anatomies of bio-political control. Let me expand on this.

From Bio to *Zoe*-politics, Or: Vital Materialism

Deleuze takes off from the same qualitative distinction between politics and the political as Foucault did, but he goes further into developing an alternative and well-structured political ontology. This is based on an ethological coding of political passions that emphasises the difference between the reactive and centralised, that is: majoritarian, and agonistic character of politics (*LA politique*) and the active or minor/minoritarian, nomadic, character of the political (*LE politique*). Politics is the management of what there is (Machiavellians – pretending to be pragmatists – would say 'the art of what is possible'), whereas the political is about qualitative transformations. This ethical distinction is replicated at the level of time and the forms of relational affectivity that different temporalities may engender. Thus, politics is postulated on *Chronos* – the linear time of institutional deployment of norms and protocols. It is a reactive and majority-bound enterprise that is often made of flat repetitions and reversals that may alter the balance and the agents but leave basically untouched the structure of power. The political, on the other hand, is postulated on the axis of *Aion* – the non-linear time of becoming and of affirmative critical practice. It is minoritarian and it aims at the counter-actualisation of alternative states of affairs in relation to the present. An example of the latter is nomad thought, as a *zoe*-centred¹⁶ form of material vitalism¹⁷ that sets the desire for transformations in the sense of becoming-ethical/nomadic at the centre of the theoretical but also the political agenda.

In other words, contemporary neo-Spinozist monism goes beyond Foucault's idea of the bio-political in that it implies a notion of subjectivity as vital and self-organising matter, that is to say an embedded form of 'matter-realism'.¹⁸ This vital materialism¹⁹ is intrinsically connected to the post-human definition of Life as *zoe*, or dynamic and generative post-anthropocentric force.²⁰ Vitalist materialism and its monistic political ontology engender a transversal and trans-species relational ethics that entails significant changes in the status and structure of what counts as human. The central discrepancy between Foucault's notion

of bio-power and contemporary posthuman political structures, therefore, has to do with the displacement of anthropocentrism.

This point is extremely important in the light of another crucial element for a cartography of the present, namely the technologically mediated structure of advanced capitalism, also known as 'cognitive capitalism'.²¹ This is built on the convergence between different and previously differentiated branches of technology, notably biotechnologies and information technologies. More specifically, what the neoliberal market forces are after and what they financially invest in, is the informational codes of living matter itself – bio-genetic and computational codes. The opportunistic political economy of bio-genetic capitalism has also turned *Life/zoe* – that is to say human and non-human intelligent matter – into yet another commodity for trade and profit. Advanced capitalism both invests and profits from the scientific and economic control and the commodification of all that lives – both human and non-human organisms. I have argued that this political economy displaces the centrality of *Anthropos* and produces a paradoxical and rather opportunistic form of post-anthropocentrism on the part of market forces that happily trade on all that lives. Data banks of bio-genetic, neural and media information about individuals are the true capital today.²²

In the same frame of reference, Patricia Clough provides an impressive list of the concrete techniques employed to test and monitor the capacities of affective or 'bio-mediated' bodies: DNA testing, brain fingerprinting, neural imaging, body heat detection and iris or hand recognition.²³ These also double up as the contemporary forms of electronic surveillance: big data and i-clouds functioning at a speed that our brains cannot match. They go well beyond the sites of confinement that Foucault analysed in the political economy of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century techniques of discipline and punishment. This is indeed an instance of what Haraway calls 'the informatics of domination'.²⁴

Furthermore, the capitalisation of living matter across all species produces a new political economy based on 'the politics of life itself'.²⁵ It introduces discursive and material political techniques of both individual self-management and population control of a very different order from the administration of demographics, which preoccupied Foucault's work on bio-political governmentality. Today, we are undertaking 'risk analyses' not only of individual propensities but also of entire sections of the population in the world risk society.²⁶ Moreover, we are subjecting such data to the imperatives of a market economy that turns informational codes into capital, in a manner that Melinda Cooper calls 'Life as surplus'.²⁷

This high degree of technological mediation, however, does not mean that traditional patterns of exploitation and oppression are resolved, far from it. Multiple forms of new 'clinical labour'²⁸ are still preying upon the corporeal forces and abilities of contemporary embodied subjects. They are marked off for a new range of 'risk analyses' and also left open to profit-indexed labour market practices that include a significant amount of exploitation. Think, for instance, of the digital hubs that stand side-by-side to e-waste dumping sites²⁹ and the slums that house the e-proletarians who have to disassemble our dead electronic devices. Another example is the call-centre labourers in off-shore information hubs, who provide material and immaterial services on a 24/7 basis, for sub-standard wages. The mechanisms of capture of these new bio-labourers, or the digital proletariat, still penalise the sexualised and racialised 'others' in emerging or declining economies. Think, for example, of the global chain of care³⁰ and other, more extreme cases of bodily commerce, in sexuality and sex-work, reproduction and surrogacy, medical and health practices, organ 'donation' and transplants and others. This combination of high-tech advances and low-life survival is one of the most problematic political aspects of advanced capitalism, namely its necro-political face. Because these flagrant internal contradictions in the system of advanced capitalism are not accidental but structural, they benefit from being analysed within a vital materialist political philosophy. This allows for a mind-body and nature-culture continuum to be brought to bear on the analysis of the power relations of advanced capitalism.

Necro-politics

The death-bound, destructive aspects of advanced capitalism come under sharper scrutiny in a vital materialist perspective that concentrates on the complexity of Life as *zoe*. We saw in the previous section that 'advanced' capitalism is a misnomer in many respects, in that technological advances co-exist with brutal power relations: not only is basic access to advanced technologies unevenly distributed worldwide (with only one-third of the world's households actually having electricity), but so is access to the benefits of bio-genetic capitalism.

Such a system is not only inherently discriminatory, but also racist at some basic level of the term, as Foucault first understood. The new interconnections between forms of political governance and the farming, retrieving and evaluating of genetic predispositions or risk factors, constitute a technique that Foucault defined as racism. It configures – and

actually engenders as 'raced' – entire populations in a hierarchical scale, not determined this time by pigmentation, but by other bio-genetic characteristics or dispositions. Because the aim of this economic and political exercise is to estimate a given (human and non-human) population's chance of survival or of extinction, the bio-political management of the living is inherently linked to death. As it operates transversally across many species, it is not restricted to human life (*bios*) but also encompasses non-human life (*zoe*). Thus, we are confronted by a number of schizoid features: the uncritical and instrumental post-anthropocentrism created by bio-genetic capitalism opens up some kind of posthuman perspectives, but its high necro-political charge mostly makes it into an inhuman(e) system. This encourages a confusion between posthuman and inhuman actions – including violence, devastation and extinction – that does not do justice to the complexity of the issues involved in a monistic understanding of Life, or critical materialist vitalism. This means that equal attention needs to be given to the novelty of the posthuman predicament, but also to the perpetuation of traditional forms of marginalisation and oppression within it. I have argued that structural injustices,³¹ far from being eliminated by the conditions of advanced bio-genetic capitalism and its opportunistic margins of posthuman access, are currently intensified and exacerbated.

This opportunistic dimension of the contemporary political economy and management of posthuman 'Life' in cognitive capitalism can be exposed by looking, for instance, at the public debates on the availability of pharmaceutical drugs against human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), or large-scale vaccines against malaria. A whole under-class of genetically over-exposed and socially under-insured disposable bodies is engendered in this process, both within the Western world and in the emerging global economies.³² Another example is the high levels of forced mobility, due to war, climate change and poverty and how they create patterns of global migration that are structural, not incidental: the global city and the refugee camps are two sides of the same coin.³³ This political economy of forced eviction and under-paid inclusion in the technological revolution calls for a population control that goes beyond Foucault's analysis of the bio-political. It does not function by techniques of discipline and control, but rather by necro-political neglect, bio-genetic farming of data, commercialisation of informational data and by 'bio-piracy'.³⁴ As Mark Halsey put it: 'Where once the sole objective was to control the insane, the young, the feminine, the vagrant and the deviant, the objective in recent times has been to arrest the nonhuman, the inorganic, the inert – in short, the so-called

“natural world”.³⁵ This is posthuman *zoe*-politics, not bio-political governmentality.

The next element that needs to be added to a cartography of contemporary power is mediation. The political management of embodied subjects nowadays can no longer be understood within the visual economy of bio-politics in Foucault's sense of the term.³⁶ The representation of embodied subjects is not visual in the sense of being scopic, as in the post-Platonic notion of the simulacrum. Nor is it specular, as in the psychoanalytic mode of redefining vision within a dialectical scheme of oppositional recognition of self and/as other. The representation of embodied subjects has been replaced by simulation and has become schizoid, or internally disjointed: on the one hand it enhances the vital capacities of the body. On the other it also tends to be spectral, structurally connected to practices of dying and culturally fascinated by corpses, vampires and zombies.³⁷ The contemporary social management of ‘Life itself’ has immersed carnal matters – bodies and their derivatives – in a logic of boundless circulation, that is multi-layered. Bio-mediated bodies are caught in the commodification of all that lives, but are also suspended somewhere beyond the life and death cycle, becoming an image of themselves. The bio-genetic economy has consequently become forensic in its relationship to the body as virtual corpse and in the quest to control a life that cannot be contained within anthropomorphic parameters. But is it also spectral in being haunted by self-representation or the doubling up of bodies as images. It follows that contemporary embodied subjects have to be accounted for in terms of their surplus value as bio-genetic containers on the one hand, and as visual commodities circulating in a global media circuit of cash flow on the other. They are therefore doubly mediated by both bio-genetic and informational codes. In conclusion, the central insight of Foucault's political anatomy remains valid: bio-power also involves the management of dying and the question of the governance of life contains that of extinction as well. But in order to deploy the full ethical and political potential of this brilliant insight, however, we do need to move conceptually in a different direction.

Monism and Complexity

A monistic philosophy of critical vital materialism is my preferred alternative to the opportunistically posthuman management of ‘Life’ that marks the axiomatic mode of governance of advanced capitalism. An axiomatic system³⁸ refuses to provide definitions of the terms it works

with, but prefers to order certain domains into existence with the addition or subtraction of certain norms or commands, their objects being treated as purely functional. Axioms operate by emptying flows of their specific meaning in their coded context and thus by decoding them. This produces both deformations of received meanings and the despotic imposition of groundless variations on them. Think, for instance, of the uses and abuses of the term ‘freedom’ by authoritarian and nationalistic political parties in Europe.³⁹ The aim of this political economy, operating on a larger scale through processes of overcoding pre-existent regimes of signs, is to decode and subject them to a centralising hierarchical machine that turns activity into labour, territories into land and surplus value into profit.⁴⁰ The political process of nomadic becoming, on the other hand, encourages flows or diagrams of subversion, without the insertion of axioms. Nomadic neo-materialist thought rejects the ways in which capitalism captures and arrests qualitative flows of becoming. It defines political praxis as the ethically driven collective construction of alternative models of actualising what bodies are capable of becoming.

Within a monistic materialist and vitalist universe, phenomena and subject-formations are approached as actualisations of different ethical forces and differential modes of becoming. The univocity of being, theorised by Deleuze, means that we have to deal – relationally – with one matter, which is intelligent, embedded, embodied and affective. In order to account for the actualisation of transversal subject formations, also known as ‘assemblages’,⁴¹ we require a subtler analysis of differential variations in the process of subjectivation. These differences are not quantitative but rather qualitative; they are ethological variations, not normative judgements: they have to do with relational forces and degrees of intensity.

As I have often argued, the nomadic subject is a materially embodied and historically embedded entity, in that it is a bound instantiation of a common and ever-shifting matter.⁴² Each singular self is an actualised and temporarily bound expression of the on-going process of becoming. According to the monistic vision, matter is intelligent and self-organising; specific forms of individuation are carved out of this vital material. In the specific case of human individuation that is anthropomorphic, monism implies the ‘embrainment’ of the body as well as the embodiment of the mind.⁴³ Neo-Spinozist vital materialism defies the oppositional character of dialectical thought and posits a pacifist ontology of mutual specification as the motor of processes of individuation⁴⁴ and auto-poietic self-styling. Working within a Spinozist framework,

I propose an affirmative emphasis on critical vitalism as a relentlessly generative force.⁴⁵ This requires an interrogation of the shifting inter-relations between human and non-human entities. *Zoe/Posthuman* monistic vitalism stresses a constitutive sense of ontological pacifism and a sense of entanglement in a web of immanent and ever-shifting relations in perpetual becoming. Georges Bataille's agnostic spirituality is of great inspiration for posthuman nomadic thought, in that it leads to a non-theistic form of naturalism that rejects all transcendental mystifications⁴⁶ and honours what Bryden calls 'a dynamism of the void'.⁴⁷ The idea that we are all 'part of nature', as Lloyd put it,⁴⁸ generates not only vital monism, but also alternative visions of how matter and mind interact and join forces to co-create affirmative becomings. Intimacy with the world speaks of our ability to re-collect it and re-connect to it and hence of our capacity to find our 'homes' within it, in the pursuit of nomadic sustainable relations.⁴⁹ Relational nomadic subjects engage in transversal connections with – Haraway speaks of 'becoming-with'⁵⁰ – multiple human and non-human others. Such webs of connections and negotiations define belonging not as attachment to static identity lines but as dynamic transversal moves across eco-sophically inter-connected categories. Relationality consists of a deep sense of negotiations with the multiple ecologies – social, environmental and psychic,⁵¹ that constitute us. A sense of familiarity with the world flows from the simple fact that we are the products of such ecological interconnections and notably of the nature–culture continuum⁵² that marks our era.

Deleuze's monistic idea of the radical immanence of embodied brain and embrained matter is a vitalist anti-theology. It provides the conceptual grounds to assert a non-unitary ethical subject immersed in the intelligent and self-organising structure of Life itself. It therefore infuses affect and endurance at the heart of the embodied and embedded materialism of the subject and of matter itself as a nature–culture continuum. The proposed methodology is not social constructivism, but rather neo-Spinozist expressionism.⁵³

Moreover, monistic neo-materialism is a practice of affirmation, not of negativity and this commitment to positive passions constitutes not only its core ethical value, but also its political force. Neo-Spinozist monism places a different emphasis on the affective elements of human subjectivity under advanced capitalism and on the process of political subject-formation. Rejecting the Lacanian conceptual structure and terminology, vital neo-materialist thinkers stress the generative importance of affects and connect them to a positive view of desire as plenitude, not as Lack.⁵⁴ The unconscious drives, instead of being played

back upon a sort of negative filter linked to the 'black box' of desire as Lack with its corollary of negative passions like envy, resentment and perennial frustration, are approached affirmatively. Affects are the autonomous visceral elements of our allegedly rational belief system.⁵⁵ What they express is the profoundly relational nature of human subjectivity and its constitutive drive for the freedom of expression of its powers (*potentia*).

By way of contrast, the Hegelian-Marxist school of dialectics of consciousness equates critical political subjectivity with negative, oppositional or 'unhappy' consciousness. Such reactive vision of the subject banks on negativity and even requires it, because it builds on the assumption that the critical position consists in analysing negative social and discursive conditions, in order the better to overthrow them. In other words, it is the same conditions that construct the negative moment – for instance, the experience of oppression, marginality, injury or trauma – and also the possibility of overturning them. The same analytic premises provide both the damages and the possibility of positive resistance, counter-action or transcendence.⁵⁶ The 'wounded attachments'⁵⁷ that trigger and at the same time are engendered by this process of vulnerability and resistance constitute the paradoxical core of oppositional consciousness.

As an alternative, Deleuze and Guattari construct a non-Hegelian, monistic and vital-materialist account of the genesis of political subjectivity that foregrounds the relational, negotiation-driven and affirmative elements of this process. The political is sustained by a relational affirmative ethics that aims to cultivate collectively and produce the conditions of its own expression. The ethics of affirmation frame and generate the political: it is an auto-poietic praxis based on a positive definition of the subject as an ontologically positive and process-driven 'di-vidual'. A subject's ethical core is clearly not their moral intentionality, as much as the effects of power (as repressive – *potestas* – and positive – *potentia*) – their actions – are likely to have upon the world. It is a process of engendering empowering modes of becoming.⁵⁸

Here is the punchline of contemporary *zoe/posthuman* neo-spinozist materialist politics: affirmative ethics defines our politics. Given that the ethical good is equated with radical relationality aiming at affirmative empowerment, the ethical ideal is to increase one's ability to enter into modes of relation with multiple others. Oppositional consciousness as a reactive mode is replaced by affirmative praxis and political subjectivity is redefined as a process or assemblage that actualises this ethical propensity. This position aspires to the creation of affirmative

alternatives by working through the negative instances so as to collectively transform them into affirmative practices. The drive towards affirmation is a key feature of neo-spinozist nomadic political subjects.

This view of subjectivity does not condition the emergence of the subject on negation but on creative affirmation – not on loss but on vital generative forces. The rejection of the dialectical scheme implies also a shift of temporal gears. It means that the conditions for political and ethical agency are not dependent on the current state of the terrain: they are not oppositional and thus not tied to the present by negation. Instead, they are projected across time as affirmative praxis, geared to creating empowering relations aimed at possible futures. Ethical relations create possible worlds by mobilising resources that have been left untapped in the present, including our desires and imagination. They are the driving forces that concretise in actual, material relations and can thus constitute a network, web or rhizome of interconnection with others. This qualitative shift engages our collective imaginings⁵⁹ and desire⁶⁰ – in response to world-historical structural transformations.

Deleuze's eco-sophy of radical immanence and intensive transformative subjects is an affirmative answer to the unsustainable logic and internal contradictions of advanced capitalism. The vital materialist body is in fact an eco-logical unit. This *bios-zoe-technos*-body is marked by the interdependence with its environment, through a structure of mutual flows and data-transfer that is best configured by the notion of viral contamination, or intensive inter-connectedness. This ecology of belonging is complex and multi-layered. This environmentally bound intensive subject is a collective entity, an embodied affective and intelligent entity that captures, processes and transforms energies and forces. Being environmentally bound and territorially based, a rhizomatic embodied entity is immersed in fields of constant flows and transformations. Philosophy therefore needs to create forms of ethical and political agency that reflect this high degree of complexity.

Affirmative Politics

Affirmative politics is my answer to these challenges and contradictions. It indicates the process of transmuting negative passions into productive and sustainable praxis, which does not deny the reality of horrors, violence and destruction of our times but proposes a different way of dealing with them. What is positive in the ethics of affirmation is the belief that negative affects can be transformed. This implies a dynamic view of all affects, even the traumas that freeze us in pain,

horror or mourning. The slightly de-personalising effect of the negative or traumatic event involves a loss of ego boundaries, which is the source of both pain and potentially energetic reactions. Multi-locality and multi-directional memory⁶¹ are the affirmative translation of this negative sense of loss. Let me illustrate this controversial point with an example drawn from diasporic subjects.

Following Glissant,⁶² 'becoming-nomadic' marks the process of positive transformation of the pain of loss into the active production of multiple forms of belonging and complex allegiances. Every event contains within it the potential for being overcome and overtaken – its negative charge can be transposed. The moment of the actualisation is also the moment of its neutralisation. The ethical subject is the one with the ability to grasp the freedom to depersonalise the event and transform its negative charge. Affirmative ethics puts the motion back into e-motion and the active back into activism, introducing movement, process, becoming. This shift makes all the difference to the patterns of repetition of negative emotions. It also reopens the debate on secularity, in that it actually promotes an act of faith in our collective capacity to endure and to transform.

What is negative about negative affects is not a normative value judgement but rather the effect of arrest, blockage and rigidification, that comes as a result of a blow, a shock, an act of violence, betrayal, a trauma or just intense boredom. Negative passions do not merely destroy the self, but also harm the self's capacity to relate to others – both human and non-human others, and thus to grow in and through others. Negative affects diminish our capacity to express the high levels of inter-dependence, the vital reliance on others that is the key to both a non-unitary vision of the subject and to affirmative ethics. Again, the vitalist notion of Life as *zoe* is important here because it stresses that the Life I inhabit is not mine, it does not bear my name – it is a generative force of becoming, of individuation and differentiation: a-personal, indifferent and generative. What is negated by negative passions is the power of life itself – its *potentia* – as the dynamic force, vital flows of connections and becoming. And this is why they should neither be encouraged nor be rewarded for lingering around them too long. Negative passions are black holes.

This is an antithesis of the Kantian moral imperative to avoid pain, or to view pain as the obstacle to moral behaviour. It displaces the grounds on which Kantian negotiations of limits can take place. The imperative not to do on to others what you would not want done to you is not rejected as much as enlarged. In affirmative ethics, the harm you

do to others is immediately reflected on the harm you do to yourself, in terms of loss of *potentia*, positivity, capacity to relate and hence freedom. Affirmative ethics is not about the avoidance of pain, but rather about transcending the resignation and passivity that ensue from being hurt, lost and dispossessed. One has to become ethical, as opposed to applying moral rules and protocols as a form of self-protection: one has to endure. Endurance is the Spinozist code word for this process. Endurance has a spatial side to do with the space of the body as an enfolded field of actualisation of passions or forces. It evolves affectivity and joy, as in the capacity for being affected by these forces, to the point of pain or extreme pleasure. Endurance points to the struggle to sustain the pain without being annihilated by it and hence opens up to a temporal dimension, about duration in time.

Affirmative ethics is based on the praxis of enduring by constructing positivity, thus propelling new social conditions and relations into being, out of injury and pain. It actively constructs energy by transforming the negative charge of these experiences, even in intimate relationships where the dialectics of domination is at work.⁶³ We need to actively and collectively work towards a refusal of horror and violence – the inhuman aspects of our present – and to turn it into the construction of affirmative alternatives. Such an approach aims to bring affirmation to bear on undoing existing arrangements, so as to actualise productive alternatives.

As critical thinkers we are always trying to be worthy of the times, to interact with them, in order to resist them, that is to say differ from them. It is a form of *amor fati*, a way of living up to the intensities of life, so as to be worthy of all that happens to us – to live out our shared capacity to affect and to be affected. Beyond negative dialectics, we need to disengage the process of subject formation from negativity to attach it to affirmative otherness. This involves a change of conceptual references: reciprocity is no longer defined dialectically as the struggle for recognition, but rather auto-poietically as mutual definition or specification. Violence is bypassed by the ontological pacifism of a system based on monistic vital materialism and on the processes of differing that rest upon it.

Amor fati is not passive fatalism, but a pragmatic and liable engagement with the present in order to collectively construct conditions that transform and empower our capacity to act ethically and produce social horizons of hope, or sustainable futures. The ethical cultivation of positivity moreover does not exclude, either logically or practically, situations of antagonism or conflict. If we follow the Spinozist rule

and de-psychologise the discussion about affirmation and negativity, to cast it instead in terms of an ethics or an ethology of forces, it follows that some of the relations we are likely to establish with others may well be of the antagonistic kind. What matters – and this is the shift of perspective introduced by affirmative ethics – is to resist the habit of inscribing antagonistic relations in a logic of dialectical negativity. The transcendence of dialectics, in other words, has to be enacted in the inner structure of relations – of the inter-personal as well as the non-human kind. Antagonism need not be inscribed in the lethal logic of the dialectical struggle of consciousness. This habit of thought needs to be resisted and re-coded away from the necessity to establish negativity as the pre-condition for the process of subject-formation.

In other words, the 'worthiness' of an event – that that ethically compels us to engage with it, is not its intrinsic or explicit value according to given standards of moral or political evaluation, but rather the extent to which it contributes to conditions of becoming. It is a vital force to move beyond the negative. Protevi argues that in this nomadic view, the political is the non-reactive and the non-habitual response of reactive engagement with the events of one's life that can reshape one's becoming⁶⁴ – a sort of creative dis-organisation of the negative that aims at keeping life immanent, non-unitary and non-reified according to dominant codes and hegemonic traditions of both life and thought.

My ethical stance is that there is no logical necessity to link political subjectivity to oppositional consciousness and reduce them both to violence and negativity. Political activism can be all the more effective if it disengages the process of consciousness – raising from negativity and connects it instead to creative affirmation and the actualisation of virtual potentials. In this process, theoretically based and politically infused cartographies are of crucial importance not only to ground the practice of material and discursive critique, but also as ethical connectors across multiple human and non-human actors. If it is indeed the case that the collective construction of affirmative values requires the confrontation with but also transformation of the negativity of the present, cartographies fulfil a clinical as well as an ethical function. Because these transformative practices are by definition not contained in the present conditions and cannot emerge from them, they have to be brought about or generated creatively by a qualitative leap of the collective praxis and of our ethical imagination. We simply do not know what such a collectively sustained, ethically affirmative body-as-transversal-assemblage can actually do. To find out, we have to experiment with its intensities.

Notes

1. Noys, *Persistence of the Negative*.
2. Foucault and Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and Power'.
3. Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*.
4. Foucault, *The Order of Things*.
5. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman; This Sex Which Is Not One*.
6. Hartsock, 'The Feminist Standpoint'.
7. hooks, *Ain't I a Woman; Ware, Beyond the Pale*.
8. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.
9. Agamben's notion of 'bare life' has been taken to task by feminist scholars for his denial of feminist politics of natality and his fixation on mortality. See: Cooper, 'The Silent Scream'; Colebrook, 'Agamben: Aesthetics, Potentiality, Life'; Braidotti, *The Posthuman*.
10. See: Rose, *Politics of Life Itself*; Rabinow, *Anthropos Today*; Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*.
11. Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*.
12. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium*.
13. See Grewal et al., eds, *Scattered Hegemonies*; Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*; Butler, *Undoing Gender*; Grosz, *The Nick of Time*.
14. Shiva, *Biopiracy*.
15. See: Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*; Gilroy, *Against Race*.
16. Braidotti, *Transpositions*.
17. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.
18. Fraser et al., eds, *Inventive Life*.
19. See: Braidotti, *Transpositions*; Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.
20. See: Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*; Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*; Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*; Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*.
21. Moulner Boutang, *Cognitive Capitalism*.
22. Braidotti, *The Posthuman*.
23. Clough, 'The Affective Turn'.
24. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, p. 161.
25. Rose, 'The Politics of Life Itself'.
26. Beck, *World Risk Society*.
27. Cooper, *Life as Surplus*.
28. Cooper and Waldby, *Clinical Labour*.
29. Gabrys, *Digital Rubbish*.
30. Hochschild, 'Global Care Chains', p. 131.
31. Richest sixty-two people as wealthy as half of world's population. In: <<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/jan/18/richest-62-billionaires-wealthy-half-world-population-combined>> (accessed 12 April 2016).
32. Duffield, 'Global Civil War'.
33. See: Sassen, *The Global City*; Sassen, *Expulsions*; Diken, 'From Refugee Camps to Gated Communities'.
34. Shiva, *Biopiracy*.

35. Halsey, *Deleuze and Environmental Damage*, p. 15.
36. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*. Vol. I.
37. See: Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*; Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*.
38. Toscano, 'Axiomatic'.
39. Both Berlusconi in Italy and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands have called their movements 'Freedom Party'.
40. Protevi and Patton, eds, *Between Derrida and Deleuze*.
41. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.
42. Braidotti *Nomadic Subjects*; Braidotti *Nomadic Theory*.
43. Marks, *Deleuze: Vitalism and Multiplicity*.
44. Simondon, *Being and Technology*.
45. This includes: Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*; Guattari, *Chaosmosis*; Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*; Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*; Hardt and Negri, *Empire*.
46. See: Bataille, *The Accursed Share*; Braidotti, 'In Spite of the Times'.
47. Bryden, ed., *Deleuze and Religion*, p. 5.
48. See: Lloyd, *Part of Nature*; Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*.
49. Braidotti, *Transpositions*.
50. Haraway, *When Species Meet*.
51. Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*.
52. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium*.
53. Braidotti, *Transpositions*; Braidotti, *The Posthuman*.
54. Braidotti, *Transpositions*.
55. Connolly, *Why am I not a Secularist?*
56. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.
57. Brown, 'Wounded Attachments'.
58. See: Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*; Braidotti, *Transpositions*.
59. Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings*.
60. Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*.
61. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.
62. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*.
63. Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love*.
64. Protevi and Patton, eds, *Between Derrida and Deleuze*.

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NEW MATERIALISMS

SERIES EDITORS: IRIS VAN DER TUIN AND ROSI BRAIDOTTI

'This collection answers, through an impressive range of perspectives, the call of Nietzsche's "great health" – the health that "one does not merely have but also acquires continually", an impersonal health that traverses the whole of life. Displaying the unique ability to embody and map out those pulsing vitalities at the always more-than- and other-than-human intersections of architecture, robotics, medicine and philosophy, these chapters ultimately carry forward Deleuze's "critical and clinical" answer to Nietzsche's call. Enjoy this symptomatology!'

Gregory J. Seigworth, Millersville University (co-editor of *The Affect Theory Reader*)

Critical and Clinical Cartographies rethinks medical and design pedagogies in the context of both the Affective and Digital Turns that are occurring under the umbrella of New Materialism. This collection is framed through Deleuze's symptomological approach which creates the ideal terrain for architecture and medical technologies of care to meet with robotics, alongside the newly emerging 'materialist landscape'.

A number of questions emerge, which are addressed across the collection.

- What is the impact of the Digital Turn on the contemporary medical and architectural education and/or practice?
- How does the Posthuman Turn influence the possible convergence of medical and architectural education and/or practice?
- How has the biopolitical concept of care mutated under the proliferation of digital technology?
- How could medical research contribute to architectural design and how could design, in turn, contribute to the improvement of health care?

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