

## LOCATING DELEUZE'S ECO-PHILOSOPHY BETWEEN BIO/ ZOE-POWER and NECRO-POLITICS.

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This chapter focuses on contemporary debates on the politics of life itself, with special emphasis on how nomadic philosophy of radical immanence results in shifting the boundaries between bio-power and necro-politics, life and death. This kind of vital politics is understood not only in the sense of the government of the living, but also with relation to practices of dying. I will refer to the vitalist force of life itself, which I shall term 'zoe', so as to point to its non-human structure. My argument is that both the concept of life and that of death need to be approached with more complexity and that Deleuze's vital materialism is of great assistance in this task. I will use the case of environmental justice as illustration.

### The Politics of Life as Bios/Zoe

The starting assumption of my argument is that we are witnessing today a proliferation of discourses that take life as a subject and not as the object of social and discursive practices. The discussion about bio-politics and bio-power can be considered as central to a number of discourses and practices which are reflected in this volume, namely: the Law, legal discourse and critical jurisprudence; social and political theory and policy-making in areas of governance, health, the environment and the management of diversity. Reflections of the changing structure of life, the nature-culture continuum and especially of the notion of the human have also been the focus of several interdisciplinary areas of analysis, like cultural studies, feminist theory, new media, and science and technology studies. They have developed original tools and methods which are of relevance to social theory today.

‘The politics of life’ refers to the extent to which the notion of bio-power has emerged as an organizing principle for the proliferating discourses and practices that make technologically mediated ‘life’ into a self-constituting entity (Rose, 2001). Living matter itself becomes the subject and not the object of enquiry and this shift towards a bio-centred perspective affects the formation of social subjects.

Contemporary science and technologies, supported by the bio-genetic structure of contemporary capitalism, have affected the very fibre and structure of living organisms. The convergence of information and communication with bio-technologies has allowed for the emergence of complex and self-organizing systems. These revolutionary changes have induced major dislocations of the classifications among species, categories and substances which had been hierarchically ordained and dialectically opposed.

Issues of power and power relations are consequently central to this discussion. The notion of ‘life itself’ lies at the heart of bio-genetic capitalism as a site of financial investments, scientific research and tradable commodities. The potential profit emerging from this web of interests is considerable. The next step of my argument however raises the hypothesis that these technological interventions neither suspend nor do they automatically improve the social relations of exclusion and inclusion that historically had been predicated along the axes of sexualization (women, gays and lesbians and sexual minorities), racialization (native, indigenous peoples, colonial others) and naturalization (animals, plants and earth-others). In some ways, the globally linked and technologically mediated structure of bio-genetic capitalism merely re-enforces and intensifies the traditional patterns of

discrimination and exploitation. Also denounced as 'bio-piracy' (Shiva, 1997), the on-going technological revolution targets all that lives, the planet as a whole, as the capital worthy of interest. In other words, we have all become the subjects of bio-power, but we differ considerably in the degrees and modes of actualisation of that very power. 'We' may be in this together, but we differ quite radically in terms of locations and allocations of power. Neither the category "we", nor this project can be assumed to be monolithic or static. Accounting for these power differentials in terms of processes, flows and complex relations is one of the challenges of contemporary critical theory.

My argument is that rising to the challenge of complexity entails a re-definition of the grounds of subjectivity. Social theory needs to shift the emphasis from the classical and highly formalized concept of 'bios' to 'zoe'. I want to draw a distinction between 'zoe', as vitalistic, pre-human and generative life, to 'bios', as a discursive and political discourse about social and political life.

'Bios' as the classical counterpart of 'Logos' traditionally refers to the self-reflexive control over discourses and practices of life, is a prerogative reserved for the humans. Given that this concept of 'the human' was colonized by phallogocentrism, it has come to be identified with male, white, heterosexual, Christian, property owning, standard language speaking citizens (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). Zoe marks the outside of this vision of the subject. Nomadic philosophy strikes a conceptual alliance with the efforts of evolutionary theory to strike a new relationship to the non-human. Contemporary scientific practices have forced us to touch the bottom of some inhumanity that connects to the human precisely in the immanence of its bodily materialism. With the genetic revolution we can speak of a generalized 'becoming infrahuman' of zoe. The category of

‘Life’ has cracked under the strain and has splintered into a web of interconnected effects.

This emphasis on life as bios-zoe opens up the eco-philosophical dimension of the problem, it inaugurates alternative ecologies of belonging and moves critical theory along the path of a geo-philosophy . It also and more importantly marks a shift away from anthropo-centrism, towards a new emphasis on the inextricable entanglement of human and non-human, bio-genetic and cultural forces in contemporary social theory. It points us towards a sort of bio-centred egalitarianism which, as Keith Ansell Pierson suggests, forces a reconsideration of the concept of subjectivity in terms of ‘life-forces’. This distinction supports the argument that the emergence of new discourses about ‘life’ results in the need for a shift of paradigm in political thought. This challenge calls for more social and intellectual creativity in both scientific and mainstream cultures, as Deleuze’s nomadic philosophy never ceases to remind us.

To advance the last step of my argument: contemporary post-human social and cultural theory ( Hayles, 1999; Wolfe, 2003) is addressing the dislocation of the classical boundaries between the human and his others, stressing the importance of: becoming animal, becoming other, becoming insect – trespassing the categorical metaphysical boundaries. A post-human eco-philosophy is emerging that challenges the anthropocentrism of so much social constructivist theory and of progressive political thought.

Post-anthropocentrism raises a number of questions, not the least of which is the vital politics of an enlarged sense of our environmental inter-connections. Ultimately, this shift of perspective leads to a serious re-consideration of what counts as the ultimate ‘other’ of life itself – that is to say death as a process. Aspects of life that go by the name of death are on the social agenda, as an integral part of the bios/zoe process; they

introduce differentiations internal to the category of life, which add further complexity. The post-anthropocentric approach allows for a non-binary way of positing the relationship between same and other, between different categories of living beings and ultimately between life and death. The emphasis and hence the mark of ‘difference’ now falls on the ‘other’ of the living body (following its humanistic definition): thanatos – the dead body, the corpse or spectral other.

In the rest of the chapter I will expand the different steps of this argument, using Deleuze and Guattari’s eco-philosophy of multiplicity as the leading light. I will start by illustrating the claim of the emergence of bios-zoe with a number of selected and inter-related examples, which aim at exploring the contemporary politics of life and death and challenging the classical definition of ‘life’ and argue the need for a more transversal, hybrid and post-human approach to this question. The chapter will then progress towards a redefinition of death, using our dying environment as the main point of reference.

### Bio-genetic capitalism

The defining feature of contemporary genetic-driven capitalist market economies is the extent to which they euphorically associate the genetic code or DNA to marketable brand names (Franklin, 2000). The genetic materials (like stem cells) become data banks of potentially profitable information and are commercialised as such. The very widespread practice of patenting and enforcing intellectual property rights as a standard way of doing scientific research demonstrate the point. What this means concretely is that scientific research, which is still reputed and funded as ‘fundamental’, results in applied technological innovations. The case of genetically modified organism in food production is a glaring example of this practice.

Bio-genetic capitalism, however, cuts two ways and if “nature” has been transformed by technology, then the contamination also works in reverse. Thus, contemporary car and computer engineering, for instance, is visually marketed in a genetic format, which stresses the industrial transmission of inherited traits through careful selection and manufacturing of strengths and weaknesses. This commercialised version of social Darwinism adds a touch of irony to the widespread idea of the ‘next generation’ of electronic gadgets, computers, cars or whatever. The basic equation at work in the social genetic imaginary is that the DNA results in marketable brand names, so that your genes are, literally, your capital.

The new bio-technologies of ‘Life’ (as both bios and zoe) are expanding fast: they also structure the labour force and forms of production, mostly through enforced flexibility. The whole planet is caught in this new mode of eco-capitalisation: agriculture, grains and seeds; food-production and animal-breeding; the new frontiers of medicine, including genetic and foetal medical interventions; the widespread phenomenon of the traffic in organs and body-parts, and the growing industry of genetic engineering and farming of organic tissues and cells are part of this phenomenon. The new technologies consequently have a direct impact on the most intimate aspects of existence in the so-called ‘advanced world’, from technologically assisted reproduction to the unsustainable levels of consumerism and the commercial exploitation of genetic data for the purpose of health and other types of insurance. Last, but not least are the implications for contemporary warfare and the death machine.

### The paradoxes of immaterial labour

Another example of the politics of bio-genetic capitalism is the extent to which contemporary capital takes over living matter is the analysis of the labour and economic politics, in terms of global migration, growing stateless-ness and the rise of “the emerging digital proletariat that underpins the new world economy”(Raqs Media Collective, 2003:85). The case I want to evoke is that of workers in call centres that cater for the information society by processing phone inquiries from selected locations miles away from the callers’ home. Denounced strongly by Arundati Roy (2001) these ‘call centres’ or data outsourcing agencies are a multi billion dollar industry which has attracted a great deal of critical attention both in mainstream<sup>1</sup> and in alternative media. Workers in these centres answer queries on a wide range of subjects; crucial to the success of the work of these ethnic, indigenous workers is their ability to simulate the Westerns consumers’ accents, attitudes and interests. The heart of this business is never to let the caller as much as suspect that his/her call is being processed in Delhi: reproducing a simulacrum of proximity and familiarity is what one is paid for.

This kind of labour presents a number of features that innovate on exploitation of what a body can do. The strategy is not mere impersonation, for there is no visual or physical contact between the parties involved. Nor can it be seen as a form of identification, as the worker need not feel or experience herself as being from a different culture/nation in order to fulfil her contractual obligations. It rather resembles the logistics of carefully orchestrated simulation. As such, it requires a radical “Othering” of oneself, or a mild form of schizophrenia, which is not a masquerade, in the ironical sense of self-exploration, but reification of the worker’s own life-world. Not unlike characters in a chat

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance Luke Harding “Delhi calling”, Guardian Weekly, March 15-21, 2001.

room, the call-centre worker performs her labour market persona – at one tenth of her Western counterpart's wages.

Another significant example of the same phenomenon is the extensive reliance of the computer games industry on test-players drawn from mostly male youth in former Eastern Europe. Playing computer games up to fifteen hours a day at a time – in an industry that operates continuously, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week – for wages of about 130 US Dollars a month, these digital workers have invented the virtual sweatshop.<sup>2</sup>

This is today's variation on the theme of physical exploitation, which fits into the global marketing of both material commodities and of immaterial Western life-styles, cultures and accents. Hardt and Negri (2000) stress the immaterial and affective nature of this labour force which trades phonetic skills, linguistic ability and proper accents services, as well as requiring attention, concentration and great care. This tour de force by the digital workers of the new global economy rests on an acute awareness of one's location in space and time and yet it functions through border crossings, nomadic shifts and paths of deterritorialisation. It exposes the material foundations of a cyber-culture that prides itself in its allegedly ethereal nature. It foregrounds both the collapse of the binary opposition of centre-periphery, in a new fluctuating continuum between discrete spaces in the global economy. But it also emphasizes the growing power dissymmetry between those locations and the disturbing racialised and sexualised structure of the new digital proletariat.

### Bio-piracy

Vandana Shiva's plea for bio-diversity in global culture focuses on a different facet of the same problem and criticizes the practice of

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<sup>2</sup> See: The Guardian Weekly, March 25-31, 2005, p. 17



patenting seeds, plants and other bio-technological products. This is an environmental crime which she labels 'bio-piracy' (Shiva, 1997). In an interesting foucauldian shift, Shiva connects this practice to European empire building over the last 500 years and sees a continuum between them and the policies of the WTO and the World Bank. She also links bio-piracy to the individualistic philosophies of Locke, Hume and other fathers of British liberalism. Shiva argues that their theoretical works both reflect and legitimate capitalist appropriation of the world's resources and the eviction of others. These theories are still operational in contemporary practices such as Intellectual property rights and the policies of the World trade Organization and the GATT apparatus. What marks specifically the present historical era, argues Shiva, is the fact that the target of capitalist looting has shifted from the former colonies to the 'new frontiers', or the 'natural resources' represented by human genetics in general, and women's reproductive powers in particular. Capital is the generative powers of living matter and the resilient vitality of "Life". The self-generative power of living matter is both denied and enhanced by patenting and branding for the sake of corporate profit. Bios/zoe as actualised in seeds and cells, is cash.

In Shiva's assessment, 'bio-piracy' as the ultimate colonization of the interior of living organisms, not only destroys bio-diversity, endangering the many species that used to live on this planet. It also damages human diversity by depleting the capital of human knowledge through the devalorisation of local knowledge and value systems. On top of legitimating theft, in other words, these practices also devalue indigenous forms of knowledge, cultural and legal systems, spreading mono-cultures and homogenisation in both natural and social systems. The strategy of resistance proposed by Shiva is radical eco-feminism and indigenous land-rights.

In a significant convergence of political opinion with Vandana Shiva, in spite of theoretical divergences, Stacey, Lury and Franklin (2000) analyse the 'seed' not as the site of resistance, but rather as one of the agents of the global economy. As a privatised icon for commercialised biodiversity the seed connects the old universalist idea of 'nature' to the financial reality of global culture. Just as the Humans have their Genome project, plants have their Heritage Seed catalogue, which patents a number of seeds. They are advertised as organic, home-grown, but also ancient and as such the repository of old lore and cultural authenticity. In other words, there is a holistic ethos at work in the parallel claims to human and natural bio-diversity, the perpetuation of species and the preservation of cultural diversity. What we are faced with is a new global compound of nature/culture that is naturalised and commercialised simultaneously.

In other words, there is a profound ambiguity in the notion of diversity in the era of globalisation. Diversity, even in the form of indigenous or local knowledge systems, has become a highly valuable and marketable commodity. In its commercialised form it has increased the uniformity of consumers' habits, while sponsoring the proliferation of 'local' differences or micro-diversities. The global market is fuelled by 'differences' because the 'local' is a political space constructed by the global flows of capital (Hardt and Negri, 2000). Because the proliferation of local differences for the sake of marketability is one of the features of the global economy, globalisation functions through the incorporation of otherness. Therefore, one must beware of taking any claim to cultural identity and diversity at face value. All identities are in process and consequently are inherently contradictory. They are best approached in an open-ended and contested manner, as complex and internally contradictory phenomena (Braidotti 2006).

### The plight of animals

The dislocation of the categorical divide between humans and animals is another crucial element of our globalised world. Animals (mice, sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, rabbits, birds, poultry and cats) are bred in industrial farming, locked up in battery-cage production units reminiscent of torture chambers. Paradoxically, however, because they are an integral part of the bio-technological industrial complex, some animals enjoy peculiar privileges. Thus, livestock in the European Union receives subsidy to the tune of 803 US Dollars per cow. This is not so remarkable, when compared to the 1,057 US Dollars that is granted to each American cow and 2,555 US Dollars given to each cow in Japan. These figures look quite different when compared to the Gross National Income per capita in countries like Ethiopia (120 US Dollars), Bangladesh (360 US Dollars), Angola (660 US Dollars) or Honduras (920 US Dollars).<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, animals provide living material for scientific experiments. They are manipulated, mistreated, tortured and genetically recombined in ways that are productive for our bio-technological agriculture, the cosmetics industry, drugs and pharmaceutical industries and other sectors of the economy. The monitoring group “Gene Watch Outs” their numbers at half a million a year; other animals, like pigs, are genetically modified to produce organs for humans in xeno-transplantation experiments<sup>4</sup>. The category of ‘class’ is accordingly linked to that of tradable disposable bodies of all categories and species, in a global mode of post human exploitation. Animals are also sold as exotic commodities and constitute the third largest illegal trade in the

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<sup>3</sup> *The Guardian Weekly*, September 11-17, 2003, p. 5

<sup>4</sup> *The Guardian Weekly*, May 23-29, 2002, p.10.

world today, after drugs and arms but ahead of women; this industry is estimated to be worth \$ 15 billion a year.<sup>5</sup>

Cloning the animals is now an established practice: Oncomouse and Dolly the sheep are already part of history ( Franklin, 2007). These developments are in keeping with the complex and dynamic logic of contemporary genetics, stem-cell research and transgenic species experiments. Globalisation means the commercialisation of planet earth in all its forms, through a series of inter-related modes of appropriation. Because of the techno-military proliferation of micro-conflicts on a global scale, we cannot even assert anymore that the sky is the limit: the sustainability of the planet as a whole may be the last frontier, or rather; the sustainability of human survival within a planet thus capitalised.

### The schizoid structure of advanced capitalism

These selected examples show how the political economy of global capitalism consists in multiplying and distributing differences for the sake of profit. It produces ever-shifting waves of genderisation and sexualisation, racialisation and naturalisation of multiple 'others'. It has thus effectively disrupted the traditional dialectical relationship between the empirical referents of Otherness – women, natives and animal or earth others – and the processes of discursive formation of genderisation/racialisation/naturalisation. Once this dialectical bond is unhinged, advanced capitalism looks like a system that promotes feminism without women, racism without races, natural laws without nature, reproduction without sex, sexuality without genders, multiculturalism without ending racism, economic growth without development, and cash flow without money. Late capitalism also produces fat-free ice creams and alcohol-free beer next to genetically

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<sup>5</sup> *The Guardian Weekly*, December 27 2001- January 2, 2002.

modified health food, companion species alongside computer viruses, new animal and human immunity breakdowns and deficiencies, and the increased longevity of these who inhabit the advanced world. This is indeed capitalism as schizophrenia.

The sheer scale of this expansion alters the terms of classical biopolitical through as postulated by Foucault, who demonstrated not only the constructed structure of what we call “human nature”, but also its relatively recent appearance on the historical scene, which makes it co-extensive with forms of social control and disciplining. Donna Haraway’s analyses move further and assume that contemporary science has moved beyond Foucault’s bio-power and has already entered the age of ‘the informatics of domination’, which is a different regime of visualisation and control, as “a system to be managed, a field of operations constituted by scientists, artists, cartoonists, community activists, mothers, anthropologists, fathers, publishers, engineers, legislators, ethicists, industrialists, bankers, doctors, genetic counsellors, judges, insurers, priests, and all their relatives – has a very recent pedigree” (Haraway, 1997: 174).

This also means that the political representation of embodied subjects nowadays can no longer be understood within the visual economy of bio-politics in Foucault’s (1976) sense of the term. The representation of embodied subjects is no longer visual in the sense of being scopic, as in the post-Platonic sense 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. It has rather become schizoid, or internally disjointed. It is spectral: the body is represented as a self-replicating system that is caught in a visual economy of endless circulation. The contemporary social imaginary is immersed in this logic of boundless circulation and thus is suspended somewhere

beyond the life and death cycle of the imaged self. The social imaginary led by genetics has consequently become forensic in its quest for traces of a life that it no longer controls. Contemporary embodied subjects have to be accounted for in terms of their surplus value as genetic containers on the one hand, and as visual commodities circulating in a global circuit of cash flow on the other hand. Much of this information is not knowledge-driven, but rather media-inflated and thus indistinguishable from sheer entertainment. Today's capital is spectral and our gaze forensic.

### Deleuze's contribution to the analysis of schizoid capitalism

In this section I will argue that Deleuze's main contribution to this debate rests on the concepts of radical immanence and non-deterministic vitalism, which unfold onto an affirmative ethics of bio-egalitarianism. The schizoid logic of bio-genetic capitalism both expresses and exploits the simultaneously materialist and vitalist force of life itself, zoe as the generative power that flows across all species. Ansell Pearson takes it as a prompt to "begin to map non-human becomings of life" (1997: 109). The becoming-earth axis of transformation entails the displacement of anthropocentrism and the recognition of trans-species solidarity on the basis of 'our' being in this together. That is to say: environmentally-based, embodied, embedded and in symbiosis with each other. Bio-centred egalitarianism is a philosophy of radical immanence and affirmative becoming, which activates a nomadic subject into sustainable processes of transformation.

This organic or corporeal brand of materialism lays the foundations for a system of ethical values where 'life' stands central. Life is not sacralized as a pre-established given, but rather posited as process, interactive and open-ended. 'Life' is far from being codified as the exclusive property or the unalienable right of one species - the human-

over all others. As I stated earlier, the old hierarchy that privileged bios – discursive, intelligent, social life – over zoe - brutal ‘animal’ life – has to be reconsidered. Zoe as generative vitality is a major transversal force that cuts across and reconnects previously segregated domains. Bio-centred egalitarianism is a materialist, secular, precise and unsentimental response to transversal, trans-species structural re-connections.

The displacement of anthropocentrism is exposed by Deleuze and Guattari in the theory of becoming minoritarian/becoming-animal. This process of molecularization entails the redefinition of one's sense of attachment and connection to a shared world, a territorial space. It expresses multiple ecologies of belonging, while it enacts the transformation of human sensorial and perceptual co-ordinates, in order to acknowledge the collective nature and outward-bound direction of what we call the self. This ‘self’ is in fact a moveable assemblage within a common life-space which the subject never masters nor possesses, but merely inhabits, crosses, always in a community, a pack, a group, or a cluster. Becoming-animal marks the frame of an embodied subject, which is by no means suspended in an essential distance from the habitat/environment/territory, but is rather radically immanent to it. For philosophical nomadism, the subject is fully immersed in and immanent to a network of non-human (animal, vegetable, viral) relations. The zoe-centred embodied subject is shot through with relational linkages of the symbiotic, contaminating/viral kind which inter-connect it to a variety of others, starting from the environmental or eco-others.

This non-essentialist brand of vitalism reduces the hubris of rational consciousness, which far from being an act of vertical transcendence, is rather re-cast as a downwards push, a grounding exercise. It is an act of unfolding of the self onto the world and the enfolding within of the world. What if, by comparison with the immanent know-how of animals,

conscious self-representation were blighted by narcissistic delusions of transcendence and consequently blinded by its own aspirations to self-transparency? What if consciousness were ultimately incapable of coping with zoe, as an impersonal force that moves us without asking for our permission to do so?

The process ontology centred on life confronts this possibility lucidly, without making concessions to either moral panic or melancholia. It asserts an ethical drive to enter into modes of relation that enhance and sustain one's ability to renew and expand what consciousness can become. The ethical ideal is to actualize the cognitive, affective and sensorial means to cultivate higher degrees of empowerment and affirmation of one's interconnections to others in their complexity. Spinoza's lesson is crucial for Deleuze's ethical project. The selection of the affective forces that propel the process of becoming animal/minoritarian is regulated by an ethics of joy and affirmation that functions through the transformation of negative into positive passions.

In order to grasp this process it is important to de-psychologize it. What is positive about positive passions is not a 'feel good' sort of sentimentality, but rather a rigorous composition of forces and relations that converge upon the enhancement on one's conatus/potentia. That is the ability to express one's freedom as the ability to take in and sustain connectiveness to others. An expansion, acceleration or intensification of inter-relation. What is negative about negative passions is a decrease, a dimming or slowing down effect, a dampening of the intensity, which results in a loss of the capacity for inter-relations to others (and hence a decrease in the expression of conatus/potentia). Ethics is consequently about cultivating the kind of relations that compose and empower positive passions and avoid the negative ones.



Thus, the ethical relation is essentially a matter of affinity: being able to enter a relation with another entity whose elements encourage positive encounters. They express one's potentia and increase the subject's capacity to enter into further relations, grow and expand. This expansion is ecologically grounded and time-bound: by expressing and increasing its positive passions, the subject-in-becoming empowers itself to last, to endure, to continue through and in time. By entering into affirmative ethical relations, the processes of becoming/animal/minoritarian engender possible futures. They construct possible worlds through a web of sustainable inter-connections. This is the point of becoming: a collective assemblage of forces that coalesce around commonly shared elements and empower them to grow and to endure.

Very much a philosophy of the outside, of open spaces and embodied enactments, nomadic thought encourages us not to think in terms of within/without established categories, but rather as encounters with anomalous and unfamiliar forces, drives, yearnings or sensations. Becoming animal/minoritarian/anomalous/un-organic is a way to potentiate what embodied and embedded subjects are capable of doing. It is a way of living more intensely, by increasing one's potentia and with it, one's freedom and understanding of the complexities one inhabits in a world that in neither anthropocentric nor anthropomorphic, but rather geo-political, eco-philosophical and proudly bio-centred.

### Bios/Zoe Power and Necro-Politics

In this section I want to go on to argue that the management of life in the regime of bio-genetic globalised capitalism entails that of dying.

The examples to prove that 'Life' can be a threatening force abound: the revival of old and new epidemics; the spread of environmental

catastrophes that blur the distinction between the natural and the cultural dimensions are obvious examples. Another clear manifestation of the necro-politics folded within the bio-political management of life is provided by the new forms of warfare, the new 'intelligent' weapons on the one hand and the rawness of the bodies of suicide bombers on the other. Equally significant are the changes that have occurred in the political practice of bearing witness to the dead as a form of activism, which can be summarized as the shift from the Human Rights stance of the Argentinean Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo to the more brutal interventionism of the Chechnya war widows. The dislocation of gender roles in relation to death and killing is reflected in the image of women who kill, from recent stage productions of Medea and Hecuba to Lara Croft. The extent to which the killing of children plays a role in this shift of geopolitical belligerency deserves more space than I can grant it here.

From a post-human digital perspective comes the debate about the proliferation of viruses, from computers to humans, animals and back. Illness is clearly not only a privilege of organic entities, but a widespread practice of mutual contamination. A rather complex relationship has emerged in our cyber universe: one in which the mutual dependence between the flesh and the machine is symbiotic. This engenders some significant paradoxes, namely that the corporeal site of subjectivity is simultaneously denied, in a fantasy of escape, and re-enforced. Balsamo (1996) argues that it promotes dreams of immortality and control over life and death. "And yet, such beliefs about the technological future 'life' of the body are complemented by a palpable fear of death and annihilation from uncontrollable and spectacular body-threats: antibiotic-resistant viruses, random contamination, flesh-eating bacteria" (Balsamo 1996: 1-2).

Popular culture and the infotainment industry are quick to pick up the trend. Relevant cultural practices that reflect this changing status of death can be traced in the success of forensic detectives in contemporary popular culture. The corpse is a daily presence in global media and journalistic news, while it is also an object of entertainment. The currency granted to both legal ( Ritalin, Prozac) and illegal drugs in contemporary culture blurs the boundaries between self-destruction and fashionable behaviour and forces a reconsideration of what is the value of 'life itself'. Last but not least assisted suicide and euthanasia practices are challenging the Law to rest on the tacit assumption of a self-evident value attributed to 'Life'. Social examples of this new necro-technology of the self are current health practices and the emphasis placed on the individual responsibility for the self-management of one's health and one's own lifestyle. This privatisation of good health is amplified by a social drive towards eternal youth, which is linked to the suspension of time in globally mediated societies and forms the counterpart of euthanasia and other social practices of assisted death. Spiritual death is part of the picture as well; contemporary embodied social practices that are often pathologized and never addressed fully are: addictions, eating disorders and melancholia, ranging from burnout to states of apathy or disaffection. Instead of being classified as self-destructive practices, these phenomena exemplify in a non normative manner the shifting social relations between living and dying in the era of the politics of 'life itself'.

In other words, the new practices of 'life' mobilize not only generative forces, but also new and subtler degrees of extinction. This type of vitality, unconcerned by clear-cut distinctions between living and dying, composes the notion of 'zoe' as a non-human yet affirmative life-force. This vitalist materialism has nothing in common with post-modern

moral relativism, resting solidly on a neo-Spinozist political ontology of monism and radical immanence.

### Deleuze on death

Life is cosmic energy, simultaneously empty chaos and absolute speed or movement. It is impersonal and inhuman in the monstrous, animal sense of radical alterity: zoe in all its powers. Zoe, or life as absolute vitality, however, is not above negativity and it can hurt. It is always too much for the specific slab of enfleshed existence that single subjects actualise. It is a constant challenge for us to raise to the occasion, to practice amor fati, to catch the wave of life's intensities and ride it on, exposing the boundaries or limits as we transgress them. We often crack in the process and just cannot take it anymore. Death is the ultimate transposition, though it is not final. Zoe carries on, relentlessly.

Death is a conceptual excess: the unrepresentable, the unthinkable, the unproductive black hole that we all fear, and also a creative synthesis of flows, energies and perpetual becomings. This unconventional approach rests on a preliminary and fundamental distinction between personal and impersonal death. The former is linked to the suppression of the individualized ego; the latter is beyond the ego: a death that is always ahead of me. It is the extreme form of my power to become other or something else. In other words, in a nomadic philosophical perspective the emphasis on the impersonality of life is echoed by an analogous reflection on death. Because humans are mortal, death, or the transience of life, is written at our core: it is the event that structures our time-lines and frames our time-zones. In so far as it is ever-present in our psychic and somatic landscapes, as the event that has always already happened. Death as a constitutive event is behind us, it has already taken place as a virtual potential that constructs everything we are. The full blast of the

awareness of the transitory nature of all that lives is the defining moment in our existence. It structures our becoming-subjects and the process of acquiring moral awareness. Being mortal, we all are “have beens”: the spectacle of our death is written obliquely into the script of our temporality.

We think to infinity, against the horror of the void, in the wilderness of non-human mental landscapes, with the shadow of death dangling in front of our eyes. Thought, however, is also a gesture of affirmation and hope for sustainability and endurance, of immanent relations and time-bound consistency. Moving beyond the paralysing effects of suspicion and pain, working across them is the key to ethics. It did not aim at mastery, but at the transformation of negative into positive passions.

Because Life is desire which essentially aims at expressing and hence extinguishing itself, by reaching its aim and then dissolving, the wish to die can consequently be seen as another way to express the desire to live intensely. The corollary is even more cheerful: not only is there no dialectical tension between Eros and Thanatos, but also these two entities are really just one life-force that aims to reach its own fulfilment. “Life”, or Zoe, aims essentially at self-perpetuation and then, after it has achieved its aim, at dissolution. It can be argued therefore that it also encompasses what we call “death”. As a result, what we humans most deeply aspire to is not so much to disappear, but rather to do so in the space of our own life and in our own way (Phillips, 1999). It is as if each of us wishes to die only in our own fashion. Our innermost desire is for a self-fashioned, a self-styled death. We thus pursue what we are ultimately trying to avoid, we are existential suicides, not from nihilism, but because it is our nature to die.

Of course it is a paradox: while at the conscious level all of us struggle for survival, at some deeper level of our unconscious structures, all we long for is to lie silently and let time wash over us in the stillness of non-life. Self-styling one's death is an act of affirmation; it means cultivating an approach, a 'style' of life that progressively and continuously fixes the modalities and the stage for the final act, leaving nothing un-attended. Pursuing a sort of seduction into immortality, the ethical life is life as virtual suicide. Life as virtual suicide is life as constant creation. Life lived so as to break the cycles of inert repetitions that usher in banality. Lest we delude ourselves with narcissistic pretences, we need to cultivate endurance, immortality within time, that is to say death in life.

Moreover, the generative capacity of this 'Life' cannot be bound or confined to the single, human individual. It rather transversally trespasses all boundaries in the pursuit of its aim, which is the expression of its potency. It connects us trans-individually, trans-generationally and eco-philosophically. Just as the life in me is not mine or even individual, so the death in me is not mine, except in a very circumscribed sense of the term. In both cases all "I" can hope for is to craft both my life and my death in a mode, at a speed and fashion which can sustain all the intensity "I" is capable of. "I" can self-style this gesture auto-poietically, thus expressing its essence as the constitutive desire to endure: I call it potentia .

What we humans truly yearn for is to disappear by merging into this eternal flow of becomings, the precondition for which is the loss, disappearance and disruption of the atomised, individual self. The ideal would be to take only memories and to leave behind only footsteps. What we most truly desire is to surrender the self, preferably in the agony of ecstasy, thus choosing our own way of disappearing, our way of dying to

and as our self. This can be described also as the moment of ascetic dissolution of the subject; the moment of its merging with the web of non-human forces that frame him/her – the cosmos as a whole. Call it death, it has rather to do with radical immanence, with the totality of the moment in which, we finally coincide completely with our body in becoming at last what we will have been all along: a virtual corpse.

This is no Christian affirmation of Life or transcendental delegation of the meaning and value system to categories higher than the embodied self. Quite on the contrary, it is the intelligence of radically immanent flesh that states with every single breath that the life in you is not marked by any master signifier and it most certainly does not bear your name. The awareness of the absolute difference between intensive or incorporeal affects and the specific affected bodies that one happens to be is crucial to the ethics of choosing for death. Death is the unsustainable, but it is also virtual in that it has the generative capacity to engender the actual. Consequently, death is but an obvious manifestation of principles that are active in every aspect of life, namely: the pre-individual or impersonal power of potentia; the affirmation of multiplicity and not of one-sidedness and the interconnection with an 'outside' which is of cosmic dimension and infinite.

It is a temporal brand of vitalism that could not be further removed from the idea of death as the inanimate and indifferent state of matter, the entropic state to which the body is supposed to 'return'. It is desire as plenitude and over-flowing, not as lack, following the entropic model built into psychoanalytic theory. Death, on the contrary, is the becoming-imperceptible of the nomadic subject and as such it is part of the cycles of becoming, yet another form of inter-connectedness, a vital relationship that links one with other, multiple forces. The impersonal is life and death as bios/zoe in us - the ultimate outside as the frontier of the incorporeal.

The paradox of affirming life as *potentia*, energy, even in and through the suppression of the specific slice of life that 'I' inhabits is a way of pushing anti-humanism to the point of implosion. It dissolves death into ever-shifting processual changes, and thus disintegrates the ego, with its capital of narcissism, paranoia and negativity. Death from the specific and highly restricted viewpoint of the ego is of no significance whatsoever. This vision of death as process is linked to Deleuze's philosophy of time understood as endurance and sustainability and is indebted to Nietzsche as to Spinoza.

The generative capacity of *bios/zoe*, in other words, cannot be bound or confined to the single, human individual. It rather transversally trespasses such boundaries in the pursuit of its aim, which is self-perpetuation. "Life" is understood here as aiming essentially at self-perpetuation and then, after it has achieved its aim, at dissolution, it can be argued that it also encompasses what we usually call "death". Just as the life in me is not mine in the appropriative sense espoused by liberal individualism, but is rather a time-sharing device, so the death in me is not mine, except in a very circumscribed sense of the term. In both cases all "I" can hope for is to craft both my life and my death in a mode, at a speed and fashion which are sustainable and adequate: "I" can self-style them auto-poietically, thus expressing my essential entity as the constitutive desire to endure (*potentia*).

This, however, needs to be related to chaos as productive multiplicity, not to the technologies of the Self of the second Foucault. No residual Kantianism here, but rather Nietzschean affirmation. On this point Deleuze and Foucault part ways. The kind of 'self' that is 'styled' in and through such a process is not one, nor is it an anonymous multiplicity: it is an embedded and embodied sets of interrelations, constituted in and by the immanence of his/her expressions, acts and



interactions with others and held together by the powers of remembrance, i.e.: by continuity in time. I refer to this process in terms of sustainability and to stress the idea of continuity which it entails. Sustainability does assume faith in a future, and also a sense of responsibility for 'passing on' to future generations a world that is livable and worth living in. A present that endures is a sustainable model of the future.

Death, in such a framework, is merely a point; it is not the horizon against which the human drama is played out. The centre is taken by bios/zoe and their ever-recurring flows of vitality. In and through many deaths, bios/zoe lives on. Deleuze turns this also into a critique of the Heideggerian legacy which places mortality at the centre of philosophical speculation. It is against this self-glorifying image of a pretentious and egotistical narcissistic and paranoid consciousness, that philosophical nomadism unleashes the multiple dynamic forces of bios/zoe that do not coincide with the human, let alone with consciousness. These are non-essentialistic brands of vitalism.

### Implications for environmental justice

The key implication for the Law of Deleuze's re-casting of the life-death distinction in terms of a vital continuum based on internal differentiations is the double overturning of individualism on the one hand – in favour of complex singularities- and of anthropocentrism on the other – in favour of multiplicities of flows and assemblages. Post-structuralism initiated this critique of subjectivity by declaring, with Foucault, the 'death of Man' defined as the humanistic subject of knowledge. Nowadays we are experiencing a further stage in this process and, as the rhizomic philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari point out, we are forced to confront the inbuilt anthropocentrism which prevents us

from relinquishing the categorical divide between bios and zoe and thus makes us cling to the superiority of consciousness in spite of our poststructuralist scepticism towards this very notion. The monist political ontology of Spinoza can rescue us from the anthropocentric contradiction and the marginalisation of non-human others, by pushing it to the point of implosion.

As I argued above, through the theory of nomadic becomings or plane of immanence, Deleuze dissolves and re-grounds the subject into an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings. This takes the form of a strong emphasis on the pre-human or even non-human elements that compose the web of forces, intensities and encounters that contribute to the making of nomadic subjectivity. The subject for Deleuze and Guattari is an ecological entity. Guattari (1995; 2000) follows Simondon and refers to this process as a transversal form of subjectivity or 'trans-individuality'. This mode of diffuse yet grounded subject position achieves a double aim: firstly it critiques individualism and secondly it supports a notion of subjectivity in the sense of qualitative, transversal and group-oriented agency. My point is that by adopting a different vision of the subject and with it a new notion of the nature-culture interaction, legal theory may be able to move beyond modernist and rather reductive conception of environmental justice and environmental crime as based only on harm and reparation. 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'. (Halsey, 2006:15).

Lest this be misunderstood for moral and cognitive anarchy, let me emphasize a number of features of this post-human turn. The first main point is that the legal subject of this regime of governmentality is in fact

an eco-logical unit. This zoe-driven-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 (Ansell Pearson, 1997), complex and intensive inter-connectedness.

Secondly, this environmentally-bound subject is a collective entity, moving beyond the parameters of classical humanism and anthropocentrism. The human organism is an in-between that is plugged into and connected to a variety of possible sources and forces. As such it is useful to define it as a machine, which does not mean an appliance or anything with a specifically utilitarian aim, but rather something that is simultaneously more abstract and more materially embedded. The minimalist definition of a body-machine is an embodied affective and intelligent entity that captures, processes and transforms energies and forces. Being environmentally-bound and territorially-based, an embodied entity feeds upon, incorporates and transforms its (natural, social, human, or technological) environment constantly. Being embodied in this high-tech ecological manner means being immersed in fields of constant flows and transformations. Not all of them are positive, of course, although in such a dynamic system this cannot be known or judged a priori. Thus we need to allow for a multiplicity of possible cartographies, ethical paths and lines of becoming.

Thirdly, such a subject of bios-zoe power raises questions of ethical urgency. Given the acceleration of processes of change, how can we tell the difference among the different flows of changes and transformations? Lines of molarity, molecularity and flight need to be accounted for and mapped out as a collective assemblage of possible paths of becoming. No monolithic or static model can provide an adequate answer: we need more complexity and open-endedness and a

diversification of possible strategies. The starting point is the relentless generative force of bios/zoe and the specific brand of trans-species egalitarianism, which they establish with the human. The ecological dimension of philosophical nomadism consequently becomes manifest and, with it, its potential ethical impact. It is a matter of forces as well as of ethology.

Fourthly, the specific temporality of the subject needs to be rethought. The subject is an evolutionary engine, endowed with her or his own embodied temporality, both in the sense of the specific timing of the genetic code and the more genealogical time of individualized memories. If the embodied subject of bio-power is a complex molecular organism, a bio-chemical factory of steady and jumping genes, an evolutionary entity endowed with its own navigational tools and an in-built temporality, then we need a form of ethical values and political agency that reflects this high degree of complexity.

Fifthly, and last, this ethical approach cannot be dissociated from considerations of power. The bios-zoe-centred vision of the technologically mediated subject of post-modernity or advanced capitalism is fraught with internal contradictions. Accounting for them is the cartographic task of critical theory and an integral part of this project is to account for the implications they entail for the historically situated vision of the subject (Braidotti 2002). The bios-zoe-centred egalitarianism that is potentially conveyed by the current technological transformations has dire consequences for the humanistic vision of the subject. The potency of bios-zoe, in other words, displaces the phallogocentric vision of consciousness, which hinges on the sovereignty of the 'I'. It can no longer be safely assumed that consciousness coincides with subjectivity, or that either of them is in charge of the course of historical events. Both liberal individualism and classical humanism are

disrupted at their very foundations by the social and symbolic transformations induced by our historical condition. Far from being merely a crisis of values, this situation confronts us with a formidable set of new opportunities. Renewed conceptual creativity and a leap of the social imaginary are needed in order to meet the challenge. Classical humanism, with its rationalistic and anthropocentric assumptions is of hindrance, rather than of assistance, in this process. Therefore, as one possible response to this challenge, we should consider the post-humanistic brand of non-anthropocentric vitalism best exemplified by Deleuze and Guattari critique of arborescent models of Law and Life.

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