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Philosophical, Political, and Performative Strategies

Edited by
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2 Posthuman Affirmative Politics

Rosi Braidotti

INTRODUCTION

My argument in this paper is that the concept of the biopolitical, in its classical Foucauldian inception, is currently challenged by the joint impact of contemporary neo-materialism (or rather: "matter-realism") and the posthuman turn. The paper will explain these two notions and go on to argue that they call for a novel approach that challenges the idea of the biopolitical on both conceptual and political grounds. The current conditions of advanced capitalism push the logic of the biopolitical beyond anthropocentrism and pay renewed attention to the necropolitical dimensions of the politics of "Life." I will conclude by emphasizing affirmative ethics as a force capable of redefining politics as living complexity.

ON THE POLITICAL

I concur with Thomas Lemke (2011, 1) that the notion of the biopolitical has become somewhat of a "buzzword." In its original Foucauldian inception, however, this concept aimed to sharpen the edges of the political analyses and to move them beyond dialectical thinking in the turbulent context of 1970s Europe. In their conversation on intellectuals, for instance, Deleuze and Foucault (1977) offer a multifaceted rendition of power as both restrictive or coercive (*potestas*) and empowering or productive (*potential*). This approach is intended as a critique of the traditional Marxist idea of politics, that is to say as a move away from binary dialectical schemes and their resolutely negative vision of power. The core conceptual issue is precisely that of the negative and its relation to politics.

Foucault and Deleuze then go on to postulate an equally crucial distinction between politics (*LA politique*) and the political (*LE politique*). Politics focuses on the management of civil society and its institutions, the political on the transformative experimentations with new arts of existence and ethical relations. Politics is made of progressive emancipatory measures, predicated on chronological continuity, whereas the political is the radical

self-styling that requires the circular time of critical praxis. Both Foucault and Deleuze emphasize the difference between the centralized—i.e., majoritarian and agonistic—character of politics and the minor or minoritarian, dynamic, affirmative character of the political. Activism as an affirmative political praxis consists in connecting critical theory not so much to *LA politique*—i.e., organized or majoritarian politics, or "politics as usual"—as to *LE politique*—i.e., the political in its nomadic and transformative forms of becoming.

On the political issue, as on that of rethinking subjectivity after dialectics, however, Deleuze goes much further than Foucault. The qualitative distinction between politics and the political is replicated at the level of the philosophy of time and the form of relational affectivity that a time-continuum may engender. 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 predictable reversals that may alter the balance but leave the structure of power basically untouched. 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-actualization of alternative states of affairs in relation to the present. Nomad thought as a *zoē*-centered (Braidotti 2006) form of material vitalism (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) sets the desire for transformations in the sense of becoming ethico-political at the centre of the theoretical agenda.

In so doing, nomadic neo-materialism (Braidotti 1991; 2011a; 2011b), also known as "matter-realism" (Fraser, Kember and Lury 2006) or "vital materialism" (Bennett 2010, 17), has produced also a critique of classical biopolitics. This critique is multiple. To start with it is worth remembering that Foucault's biopolitical work was essentially an analysis of the political economy of liberal democracies, of the welfare state and the notion of moralized liberal individualism they combined to produce. To what extent this analysis can be extended to cover advanced capitalism is a critical question.

Foucault attacked the liberal individualistic vision of the subject not only in terms of a critique of possessive individualism (MacPherson 1962), but also more conceptually. He proposes a biopolitical analysis that concentrates not only on the production of discourse and the multidirectional circulation of discursive practices, but also on the material grounds of such production and the social and institutional structures that sustain them. The focus is firmly held throughout on the constitution of subjectivity as a discursive and material process that combines a number of heterogeneous elements. A pertinent example of this combinatory process is the correlation firmly established between the care dispensed by the welfare system to its citizens and the mechanisms that control, regulate, and monitor them. Techniques of embodied and embedded discipline and punishment, surveillance and incarceration, constitute a crucial element of an allegedly benevolent political economy. The embodied subject, or rather the subject as embodied

matter, emerges at the intersection of these mechanisms of control, which tend to target essential vital functions—such as reproduction, sexuality, health—medical and mental—and hygiene, as the main objects of discursive and material control.

In this regard, Foucault's biopolitical analysis explicitly critiques a liberal vision of the political subject that is assumed to function according to the universalist, humanistic idea of inbuilt rationality, moral goodness, and self-regulating judgment. Foucault articulates his suspicion toward humanism in his masterful *The Order of Things* (1970) in order to declare the humanist project historically, politically, and ethically over. This skepticism goes hand-in-hand with the suspension of belief in the intrinsic value of Enlightenment-based rationality and the self-correcting powers of human reason. This complex anti-humanist argument constitutes for me one of the roots of contemporary posthumanism (Braidotti 2013).

A second and equally important line of criticism, however, runs through Foucault's analysis of the biopolitical: it concerns the role of violence in relation to politics and the political. As a thinker and an activist on the left of the political spectrum, Foucault resisted the naturalization of violence traditionally proposed by right-wing ideologies. He was also critical of the allegedly peace-loving disposition of humanism and openly discussed the compatibility between humanistic reason and the uses of terror and violence (Foucault 1977). Historical examples are, for instance, colonialism, but also the social campaigns against deviants, vagabonds, delinquents, and other undesirables. This critical analysis of humanism is clearly linked to the critique of universal reason.

Foucault, like Deleuze, was also critical, however, of the dogmatism and the authoritarian tendencies of the political left, throughout the 1970s but also beyond. This second line of attack criticizes the aspiration to revolutionary purity of the left, the utopian drive which historically resulted in totalitarian regimes like the USSR and the People's Republic of China and in genocides like Pol-Pot's in Cambodia. Deleuze and Foucault targeted the utopian elements of the Marxist-Leninist and also of the Maoist projects and did so on two main and interrelated grounds. The first is precisely the location of violence within these political projects and the second is the definition of the role of intellectuals as the alleged representatives of the masses.

As to the former, Foucault is an anti-metaphysical thinker who defines power not as an ontological precondition of the political, but rather as a complex strategic situation we all inhabit. As such, power analyses require context-specific, historicized accounts of how such strategic situations were constituted in the first place and by which discursive and material conditions they became structured. The genealogical method, in other words, makes for highly specific and historically grounded analyses of how certain power formations have come into being and how they impact upon our self-representation as subjects. By extension this means that no universalizing generalization about power is possible for Foucault; he stresses instead

the need for a change of scale, to unveil power relations where they are most effective and invisible: in the specific locations of one's own discursive and social practice. One has to start from micro-instances of the embodied and embedded self and the complex web of social relations that compose the self. By extension this means that there is no transhistorical political ontology and therefore also no logical necessity for political violence, or for instrumental violence, as the defining feature of the political. It is rather the other way around, namely that ontology itself is, as Oksala (2012, 6) cogently puts it, "the outcome of political practice: it is politics that has forgotten itself."

This position against the ontological necessity for violence also affects Foucault's redefinition of the role of intellectuals. Wisely removed from grandiose visions of the philosopher as revolutionary leader, Foucault actively promoted instead the "specific" intellectual, as distinct also from the Hegelian universal philosopher and the Gramscian organic intellectual. He foregrounds instead the genealogical structure of intellectual work in terms of discourse analysis, which in turn stresses the relational nature and the political responsibility of intellectuals. Power analyses entail both critique and creativity and therefore are not solely oppositional. The critical thinker is neither a transcendental consciousness nor an atomized entity, but rather a non-unitary relational subject, which in my terms is nomadic, accountable, and outward-bound (Braidotti 2013). This vision of subjectivity leads to an increased awareness of the shared vulnerability of embodied subjects, in so far as they are all caught in strategic relations of power, and it results in subtler and more effective analyses of how power works in and through the body. This double emphasis on fragility on the one hand and the critique of despotic power relations on the other is crucial to a nomadic vision of the political thinker and her actions.

ZOĒ/POSTHUMAN LIFE AND MONISTIC MATERIALISM

Deleuze and Guattari push this argument even further and go beyond the biopolitical premises laid out by Foucault, embracing Spinozist monism fully. That radical immanent thought promotes both the necessity of creativity as the counterpart of critique (Braidotti 2006) and also a kind of ontological pacifism, which sustains a democratic move. It moreover calls for post-anthropocentric approaches that move beyond the assumption of transcendental consciousness as the key to human exceptionalism. More on both these concepts later. Contemporary neo-Spinozist monism goes beyond Foucault's idea of the biopolitical in that it implies a notion of subjectivity as vital and self-organizing matter, an embedded form of "matter-realism" that is intrinsically connected to the posthuman definition of Life as *zoē*, or a dynamic and generative non-human force. Radical monistic relationality stresses the ethical aspects of subjectivity and allows us to bypass both the pitfalls of binary thinking and the ontologization of political violence.

Moreover, monistic neo-materialism is a practice of affirmation, not of negativity, and this commitment to the positive 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 (Braidotti 2006). 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 (Connolly 1999). 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 analyzing negative social and discursive conditions, in order to better 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, counteraction, or transcendence (Foucault 1977). The "wounded attachments" (Brown 1993; 2006) 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: it is an auto-poietic praxis based on a positive definition of the subject as a process-driven "di-vidual". A subject's ethical core is clearly not her moral intentionality, as much as it is the effects of power (as repressive—*potestas*—and positive—*potentia*) her actions are likely to have upon the world. It is a process of engendering empowering modes of becoming (Braidotti 2006; Deleuze 1968).

Here is the punchline of contemporary *zoē*/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 actualizes 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 toward 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 also implies 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 mobilizing resources that have been left untapped in the present, including our desires and imagination. They are the driving forces that concretize actual, material relations and can thus constitute a network, web, or rhizome of interconnection with others.

Zoē/posthuman monistic vitalism stresses a constitutive sense of intimacy with the world and a sense of entanglement in a web of immanent and ever-shifting relations and perpetual becoming. Georges Bataille's agnostic spirituality is of great inspiration for nomadic thought, in that it leads to a nontheistic form of naturalism that rejects all transcendental mystifications (Bataille 1988) and honors what Bryden calls "a dynamism of the void" (2001, 5). The idea that we are all "part of nature", as Lloyd put it (1994; 1996), 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 (Braidotti 2006). Relational nomadic subjects engage in transversal connections with—Haraway speaks of "becoming-with" (2007)—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 ecosophically interconnected categories. Relationality consists of a deep sense of negotiations with the multiple ecologies—social, environmental, and psychic (Guattari 2000), 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 continuum (Haraway 1997) which marks our era.

Theoretically and politically, neo-Spinozist material vitalism stands against the emphasis on political theology that, adapted from Carl Schmitt (1996), shaped the thinking of Leo Strauss and the American neocons through the Bush Jr years (Norton 2004). The difference between the two approaches is that political theology in its classical enunciation as well as in the contemporary reinterpretation by Agamben (1998) reduces modern

political theories to the secularized version of theological concepts. This fundamentally authoritarian reduction overemphasizes the ruthlessly dichotomous ("friend or enemy") and polarizing nature ("you are with us or against us") of the political relation. By stressing the antagonistic dimension as the defining core of politics (Mouffe 2005), this approach ends up endorsing negativity and the necessity of violence. It also expresses an indictment of Western modernity and the democratic process as being structurally flawed.

Materialist vital ethics, on the other hand, while being resolutely atheistic, is ontologically pacifist. Deleuze's concept of the univocity of being and the immanence of matter is a vitalist anti-theology. The recognition of our intimacy with the world provides the conceptual grounds to assert a non-unitary ethical subject immersed in the intelligent and self-organizing 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 (Braidotti 2006; 2013). That is to say that events, phenomena, and subject-formations are approached as actualizations of differential modes of becoming within a monistic universe. The univocity of being means that we have to deal with one matter, which is intelligent, embedded, embodied, and affective. It requires a subtler analysis of differential variations in the process of subjectivation in order to account for the actualization of transversal subject formations, also known as "assemblages" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980).

The Deleuzian position shares the same commitment to overturning the dialectical model of intersubjectivity as the linguistic tradition of semiotics, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction, but takes a different road. It assumes the defamiliarization or relative deterritorialization of established values and habits of thought as a starting point to explore and experiment with alternative forms of subjectivity. This qualitative shift engages our collective imaginings (Gatens and Lloyd 1999) and desire (Braidotti 2011b)—in response to world-historical structural transformations. The nomadic subject is a materially embodied and historically embedded "di-vidual" in that it is a bound instantiation of a common and ever-shifting matter. Each singular self is an actualized and temporarily bound expression of the ongoing process of becoming. Matter is intelligent and self-organizing; specific forms of individuation are carved out of this vital material, according to the monistic vision of matter. In the specific case of the human organism, it implies the embrainment of the body as well as the embodiment of the mind (Marks 1998). 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 individuation (Simondon 2012) and auto-poietic self-styling.

DIFFERENT CARTOGRAPHIES OF ADVANCED CAPITALISM

As I suggested earlier, the drawback of Foucault's anatomy of the biopolitical is that it describes a system of governmentality at the apex of its evolution and thus ends up producing an analytic of the present conditions, which accounts only partially for the actual situation. This feature becomes all the more salient in the aftermath of Foucault's pioneering work.

Several distinct trends can be detected in contemporary thinking about the biopolitical management of life and death. To start with, a school of biopolitical citizenship has emerged, with emphasis on the ethical implications of "biopower" as an instance of governmentality that is as empowering as it is confining (Esposito 2008; Rabinow 2003; Rose 2007). This school of thought locates the political moment in the relational and self-regulating accountability of a bioethical subject that takes full responsibility for her biological and genetic existence, including illness, depression, and other aspects of one's embodiment. This position allows for a residual type of Kantianism to emerge around the last phase of Foucault's work, with emphasis on individual responsibility for the self-management of one's health and lifestyle. The advantage of this position is that it calls for a higher degree of lucidity about posthuman bio-organic existence, which means that the naturalist paradigm is definitely abandoned. The disadvantage of this position, however, is that it redirects the notion of responsibility toward individualism; in a political context of neoliberal dismantling of the British National Health Service, a pillar of the welfare state, and increasing privatization, bioethical citizenship indexes access to and responsibility for the cost of basic social services like health care to an individual's manifest ability to act responsibly by reducing the risks and exertions linked to the wrong lifestyle. In other words, here bioethical agency means taking adequate care of one's own genetic capital. The recent government campaigns against smoking, excessive drinking, and obesity constitute evidence of this neoliberal normative trend that supports hyperindividualism.

This approach raises in my eyes serious theoretical questions about the notion of biopower itself. Considering the fast rate of progress and change undergone by contemporary biotechnologies and the challenges they throw to the status of the human, Foucault's work has been criticized, notably by Haraway (1997), for relying on an outdated vision of contemporary technology. Haraway suggests that Foucault's biopower provides the cartography of a world that no longer exists, in so far as we have now entered the age of the informatics of domination. Other critical theories come closer to the target, notably feminist and queer (Barad 2003; Braidotti 2002; Butler 2004; Grosz 2004), environmentalist (Shiva 1997), and race theorists (Gilroy 2000), who have addressed the shifting status of embodiment and difference in advanced capitalism in a manner that reflects the complexity of global social relations.

A second school of contemporary biopolitical reflection led by Giorgio Agamben (1998) has taken what I call a "forensic turn" in social theory and addresses the contemporary status of the human as *Anthropos*. Agamben brings back the *bíos-zoē* distinction, that is to say the distinction between human and non-human life, but retains a negative definition of the latter. Focussing on the dehumanizing effects of biopower as the result of the lethal intervention of sovereign power onto the embodied subject, Agamben argues that the subject is reduced to "bare life", that is to say an inhuman status of extreme vulnerability, bordering on extinction. Biopower for Agamben means "thanatopolitic"—a distinction which Foucault himself had already introduced in the early phases of his biopolitical analyses. For Agamben, however, the purpose of this distinction is to sustain an indictment of the project of industrialized modernity in view of its dehumanizing effects. There is more than a residual dose of Heideggerian suspicion of technology in this argument. The victims of concentration camps and of colonial plantations are the prototype of this murderous political economy. The enslaved, dehumanized human, exemplified today in illegal migrants and asylum seekers, is almost the epitome of the bare life of *Homo Sacer* (Agamben 1998). This insight results in drawing intrinsic links between modernization and violence, modernity and terror, sovereignty and murder.

The inhuman for Agamben, not unlike Lyotard, is the effect of modernization, but he also learned from Hannah Arendt (1951) to look at phenomena of totalitarianism as the ultimate denial of the humanity of the other. Arendt, however, constructed a powerful alternative to these political extremes by stressing the necessity of human rights for all, even and especially the dehumanized "others". In Seyla Benhabib's brilliant formulation, Arendt is "a reluctant modernist" (1996), but a creative one, whereas I would argue that Agamben is less innovative. He perpetuates the philosophical habit that consists in ontologizing the relation between politics and violence and in taking mortality, or finitude, as the transhistorical horizon for discussions of "life". For him, "bare life" does not express generative vitality, but rather the constitutive vulnerability of the human subject, which sovereign power can kill. "Life" is that which makes the body into disposable matter in the hands of the despotic force of unchecked power. This is linked to Heidegger's theory of being as deriving its force from the annihilation of animal life. Finitude is introduced as a constitutive element within the framework of subjectivity, which also fuels an affective political economy of loss and melancholia at the heart of the subject.

I am perturbed by this fixation on *Thanatos* that Nietzsche criticized over a century ago, and which is still very present in critical debates today. It often produces a gloomy and pessimistic vision not only of power, but also of the technological developments that propel the regimes of biopower. My understanding of "life" as *zoē*-ethics of sustainable transformations (Braidotti 2006) differs considerably from what Agamben calls "bare life" or negative *zoē*. I reject the habit that favors the deployment of the problem of *zoē* on the horizon of death, or on liminal states of nonlife. This over-emphasis on mortality and perishability, which is characteristic of the forensic strand of contemporary social and cultural theory, reinserts the specter of human extinction and is haunted by the limitations of the project of western modernity. I find the emphasis on violence and death as the basic term of reference inadequate to the vital politics of our era. I therefore want to turn to another significant community of scholars who work within a Spinozist framework,[1] and prefer to emphasize the politics of life itself as a relentlessly generative force. This requires an interrogation of the shifting interrelations between human and non-human forces.

Moreover, speaking from the position of an embodied and embedded female subject, capable of reproducing the future and the species, I find the metaphysics of finitude to be a myopic way of asking about the limits of what we call "life". At the heart of my research project lies an ethics that respects vulnerability while actively constructing social horizons of hope. I shall return to this in my conclusion.

CAPITALISM AND SCHIZOPHRENIA

In the previous section I have argued that Foucault's biopolitical analysis describes a system at the moment of its implosion and thus does not fully confront the contradictions of our historicity. A Deleuzian analysis, based on the radical immanence of vital matter-realism, on the other hand, empowers us to analyze the perverse political economy of advanced capitalism in ways that move beyond the anatomies of biopolitical powers. Let me outline now the defining features of this system.

Firstly, advanced capitalism functions by a schizoid logic that defies the principle of excluded middle and sustains the simultaneity of internally contradictory social effects. The growing disparities in access to resources—of ecological, technological, social, and financial kinds—are the most obvious aspect of the structural inequalities engendered by the global economy. On the one hand we see the worldwide spread of economic and cultural processes, which engender increasing conformity in lifestyle, telecommunication, and consumerism. On the other hand, we also witness the fragmentation of these processes, with the concomitant effects of increased structural injustices, the marginalization of large sections of the population, and the resurgence of regional, local, ethnic, and cultural differences not only between the geopolitical blocks, but also within them (Eisenstein 1998).

Advanced capitalism has also instilled a one-way political message at the discursive level (Touraine 2001), by celebrating the so-called "end of ideologies" as one of the strongest ideological formations of our times. It triumphantly asserts the end of the quest for social justice in contemporary neoliberal societies and thus fulfils the conservative fantasy of an immutable

"human nature", which allegedly coincides with the ethos of advanced capitalism itself (Fukuyama 2002). This political neoconservatism gets compensated in public discourse by overemphasis on moral issues, which in turn produces an escalating notion of the range of social services for which individuals are expected to take financial responsibility. Muehlebach (2012) calls this ideological discourse "the moral neoliberal." Thus, the potentially innovative, deterritorializing impact of genuinely new developments, in society as in technology, are reterritorialized and tuned down by the reassertion of the gravitational pull of old consumeristic values: interactivity has just become another word for shopping.

Secondly, and as a consequence of the above, advanced capitalism is a differential engine in that it promotes the quantitative proliferation of multiple options in consumer goods. It is a multiplier of deterritorialized differences, a spinning machine that actively produces differences for the sake of commodification. As Eugene Holland (2011) points out, advanced capitalism displays clear entropic and self-destructive tendencies in that it erodes the very foundations that sustain it. It consequently exposes and endangers the very sources of its wealth and power in ways that are unmatched by other economic systems, which kept their resources hidden or protected. Advanced capitalism operates on contemporary decoded or deterritorialized flows of change and reterritorializes or stratifies them for the sake of profit.

Given that the political economy of global capitalism consists in multiplying and distributing differences for the sake of profit, it produces ever-shifting waves of genderization and sexualization, racialization and naturalization of multiple "others". It has thus effectively disrupted the traditional dialectical relationship between the dominant subject and the empirical referents of Otherness—which historically are women and LGBT (sexualized others), indigenous or native populations (racialized others), and animals, plants, and the earth-based organisms (naturalized others) (Braidotti 2002; 2006).

Once this dialectical bond between the dominant subject and his "others" is unhinged, advanced capitalism looks like a system that has the capacity to evacuate meaning from most signifiers. It 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, cash flow without money, ecology without nature. Capitalism as schizophrenia is not as playful as this list may suggest; it is rather a ruthless system of recodification of signifying systems in the service of commodification (Deleuze and Guattari 1977; 1980).

Thirdly, in advanced capitalism, time is structurally out of joint, in keeping with the overemphasis on short-term profits alone. Our temporality is determined by the perverse logic of commodity fetishism, which short-circuits the present. The saturation of the social space with commodities results in immobility and sedentary accumulation. The speedy turnover of available commodities, however, induces a state of jetlag, or temporal

disjunction. Capitalism induces a perverse logic of desire based on deferral of fulfilment of pleasure to the "next generation" of technological commodities and gadgets, or "infotainment" and popular culture packages based on sequels and instalments that become obsolete at the speed of light. These are legalized but forceful forms of addiction that titillate without providing release and induce dependency without taking responsibility. This mixture of dependency and dissatisfaction constitutes power as a nucleus of negative passions, such as resentment, frustration, envy, and bitterness. The commodity's function as both attractor and perpetual threat to its fulfilment encapsulates a sort of contraction of space and time: it is therefore caught in the spectral economy of the presence-absence of fulfilment, which is addictive and as such it haunts us. The commodity embodies futurity, as Massumi (1992) argues, following Deleuze, and it has become coextensive with the inner space of subjectivity, as well as the outer space of the market economy.

It follows, therefore, that advanced capitalism is an unsustainable "future eater" (Flannery 1994), driven by the all-consuming entropic energy of addictive and enjoyment-frustrating consumerism. Devoid of the capacity for genuine creativity, which would require higher degrees of self-criticism, global capital promotes an addictive logic that creates hunger where it most feeds, thus erecting the entropy of Lack to the level of a Law that wraps us up in persistent anxiety about the future. Various brands of discourses about extinction are for instance circulating today, in a context of economic and ecological crises. In a schizophrenic double pull of euphoria and paranoia, which confirms Deleuze and Guattari's analyses (1977; 1980), the consumerist political economy highjacks our desires and indexes them on the pursuit of commodities. The vitalistic ecosophy proposed by Deleuze and Guattari critiques capitalist consumerism and the greedy consumption of resources.

Fourthly, advanced capitalism functions through tightly controlled mobility, or a "striated" social space subjected to constant surveillance. It works like the great nomad, the organizer of the mobility of commodified products. A generalized practice of "free circulation" pertains almost exclusively to the domain of goods and commodities, data and capital. People do not circulate nearly as freely (Braidotti 2011a; 2011b). Real-life mobility through migration, for instance, or diasporic movements, is kept in check by relations of class, ethnicity, citizenship, gender, and age, to name but a few crucial variables. The global system of the postindustrial world produces scattered and polycentered, profit-oriented power relations. It is therefore crucial to expose the perverse nomadism of a logic of economic exploitation that equates capitalist flows and flux with profit-minded circulation of commodities, and to provide accurate political cartographies of qualitatively different lines of nomadic flows (Braidotti 2006).

Fifthly comes the technologically mediated structure of schizoid advanced capitalism. It is built on the convergence between different and previously differentiated branches of technology, notably biotechnologies and

information technologies. The opportunistic political economy of biogenetic capitalism has also turned Life/*zoē*—that is to say human and non-human intelligent matter—into a commodity for trade and profit. Advanced capitalism both invests in and profits from the scientific and economic control and the commodification of all that lives. I have argued (Braidotti 2006; 2013) that this context produces a paradoxical and rather opportunistic form of post-anthropocentrism on the part of market forces which happily trade on Life itself (see also Rose 2001).

More specifically, what the neoliberal market forces are after, and what they financially invest in, is the informational power of living matter itself. The capitalization of living matter produces a new political economy, which Melinda Cooper (2008) calls "Life as surplus." It introduces discursive and material political techniques of population control of a very different order from the administration of demographics, which preoccupied Foucault's work on biopolitical governmentality. Today, we are undertaking "risk analyses" not only of entire social and national systems, but also of whole sections of the population in the world risk society (Beck 1999). Databanks of biogenetic and neural information about individuals are the true capital today (Braidotti 2013).

This does not mean, however, that traditional patterns of exploitation and oppression are resolved, far from it. With reference to Cooper and Waldby's *Clinical Labor: Tissue Donors and Research Subjects in the Global Bioeconomy*, I would like to coin the term bio-labor as latching onto the corporeal matter of contemporary bodies, marking them off for menial and exploitative tasks. The mechanisms for capture of these bio-laborers, also known as the digital proletariat, follow the classical lines of anthropomorphic difference: the sexualized and racialized "others", as mentioned above, constitute the core of these new underclasses. Think for example of the global chain of care (Hochschild 2000) and other, more extreme cases of bodily commerce, in sexuality and sex-work, reproduction and surrogacy, medical and health practices, organ transplants and other forms of "clinical labour" (Cooper and Waldby 2014). This combination of high-tech advances and low-life survival is one of the most problematic political aspects of advanced capitalism.

Vital matter-realism alters our understanding of embodied or corporeal matter as well. Patricia Clough, for instance, provides an impressive list of the concrete techniques employed by "cognitive capitalism" (Moulier-Butang 2012) 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. These are the contemporary forms of control that go beyond the sites of confinement that Foucault analyzed in the political economy of the nineteenth and early twentieth century techniques of *Discipline and Punish*. Contemporary surveillance techniques hang on "the cloud" that scan the essence of our informational capital at posthuman speed.

All these are also immediately operationalized as surveillance techniques both in civil society and in the War on Terror. What Deleuze and Guattari teach us is that the "virtual" character of technologically mediated power relations today is not ethereal but materially grounded and hence embodied and embedded. Deleuze's speculations on the "control societies" he saw emerging, and Guattari's writings on the post-media age and on Integrated World Capitalism, which were all written at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, already told us that there is no such thing as a purely virtual cyberspace (Guattari 2000; Deleuze 1992; Braidotti 2002).

Last but not least comes the axiomatic character of advanced capitalism. An axiomatic system, as Toscano (2005) pointed out, 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. As Protevi (2009) puts it, through processes of overcoding, preexistent regimes of signs are decoded and subjected to the aims of a centralizing hierarchical machine that turns activity into labor, land into territories, and surplus value into profit.

Being fundamentally meaningless, the decoded flows of capitalism are purely operational modes of regulation. They can get attached to any type of social organization—slave plantations as well as factories—and to different state structures—socialism as well as liberal democracies. As such, the axioms of capitalism are extremely adaptable, capable of great internal variation, and structured around a perverse sort of opportunism. Such flexibility and multiple realizability constitute a formidable apparatus of domination or capture. In the same vein, nomadic theory argues that no freedom is possible within capitalism because the axiom of money and profit knows no limit. Advanced capitalism never attains absolute deterritorializations and always engenders social subjection.

Nomadic theory opposes to the political economy of axiomatic despotism the diagrammatic process of nomadic becoming, which encourages flows without the insertion of axioms. It rejects the ways in which capitalism axiomatizes and captures subjectivity, in order to subject it to the imperatives of surplus value, and defines political praxis as the construction of alternative models of subjectivity. Deleuze's ecosophy of radical immanence and intensive transformative subjects is an affirmative answer to the unsustainable logic and internal contradictions of advanced capitalism. The Deleuzian body is in fact an ecological unit. This *bíos-zoē-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 interconnectedness. This ecology of belonging is complex and multilayered. 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: we need to learn to think differently about who we are in the process of becoming.

BEYOND BIOPOLITICS

Let us start again from the insight that the politics of Life itself in advanced capitalism mobilizes not only generative forces, but also new and subtler degrees of death and extinction. My argument is that a focus on the vital and self-organizing powers of Life/*zoē* composes the notion of *zoē* as a posthuman yet affirmative lifeforce. Vitalist materialism and its monistic political ontology engender a transversal relational ethics to counteract the inhuman(e) aspects of our predicament. This entails significant changes in the status and structure of what counts as the human, dead and alive. Biopolitical analysis is central to this discussion, but in the current context it has moved beyond the premises articulated by Foucault himself.

The central discrepancy between Foucault's notion of biopower and contemporary posthuman political structures has to do with the displacement of anthropocentrism. I argued that the biogenetic structure of advanced capitalism reduces bodies to carriers of vital information, which get invested with financial value and capitalized. They provide the material for new classifications of entire populations on the basis of the genetic predispositions and vital capacities for self-organization. There is a structural isomorphism between economic and biological growth, which makes the power relations of contemporary neoliberal capitalism rawer and cruder than in the Fordist era (Cooper 2008).

Because genetic information, like psychological traits or neural features, is unevenly distributed, this system is not only inherently discriminatory but also racist at some basic level of the term. Patricia Clough (2008) explores this aspect of the contemporary political economy by analyzing the public debates on the availability of pharmaceutical drugs against HIV, or large-scale vaccines against malaria, to mention just a few contemporary examples of posthuman management of Life. A whole underclass of genetically overexposed and socially underinsured disposable bodies is engendered, both in the western world and within the emerging global economies. This kind of population control goes beyond Foucault's analysis of the biopolitical, as it does not function by techniques of discipline and control, but rather by biogenetic farming of data, and by "biopiracy" (Shiva 1997). As Mark Halsey puts 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." (2006, 15)

This is posthuman *zoē*-politics, not biopolitical governmentality.

Again, monistic posthuman philosophy is of great assistance to think through these challenging new historical conditions. Reading Deleuze through the lenses of Massumi, Clough studies the new mechanisms of capture, not of liberal individuals, but bio-genetic "dividuals"

> statistically configured in populations that surface as profiles of bodily capacities, indicating what a body can do now and [what capacities it might be able to unfold] in the future. The affective capacity of bodies, statistically simulated as risk factors, can be apprehended as such without the subject, even without the individual subject's body, [this results in] bringing forth competing bureaucratic procedures of control and political command in terms of securing the life of populations. (2008, 18)

The new interconnections between forms of political control and the estimation of genetic risk factors constitute a technique that Foucault defined as racism, as it configures—it engenders as "raced"—entire populations in a hierarchical scale, this time not determined by pigmentation, but by other genetic characteristics. Because the aim of this political exercise is to estimate a given population's chance of survival or of extinction, the biopolitical management of the living is not only transversal across species and *zoē*-driven, but also inherently linked to death. This is the death-bound or necropolitical face of post-anthropocentrism and the core of its inhuman(e) character: "it permits the healthy life of some populations to necessitate the death of others, marked as nature's degenerate or unhealthy ones" (Clough 2008, 18).

The political management of embodied subjects nowadays can no longer be understood within the visual economy of biopolitics in Foucault's (1978) sense of the term. The representation of embodied subjects is not 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. The representation of embodied subjects has been replaced by simulation and has become schizoid, or internally disjointed. Contemporary representation also tends to be spectral: the body doubles as the potential corpse it has always been, and is represented as a self-replicating system that is caught in a visual economy of endless circulation (Braidotti 2002). The contemporary social imaginary has immersed carnal matters—bodies and their derivatives—in a logic of boundless circulation, and thus suspended them somewhere beyond the life and death cycle of the image itself. The biogenetic 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. Contemporary embodied subjects have to be accounted for in terms of their surplus value as biogenetic containers on the one hand, and as visual commodities circulating in a global media circuit of cash flow on the other hand. They are therefore doubly mediated by biogenetic and by informational codes. The central insight of Foucault's political anatomy remains valid: biopower also involves the management of dying. In other words, the question of the governance of life contains that of extinction as well. In order to deploy the full ethical and political potential of this brilliant insight, however, we do need to move beyond Foucault.

NECROPOLITICS

Vital politics shifts the boundaries between life and death and consequently deals not only with the government of the living, but also with practices of dying. Most of these are linked to inhuman(e) social and political phenomena linked to advanced capitalism, such as poverty, famine, and homelessness, which Zillah Eisenstein aptly labels "global obscenities" (1998). Vandana Shiva (1997) stresses the extent to which biopower has already turned into a form of "biopiracy", which calls for very grounded and concrete political analyses. Thus, the bodies of the empirical subjects who signify difference (woman and LGBT; indigenous or native; animal, earth, or natural "others") have become the disposable bodies of the global economy.

Contemporary capitalism is indeed "biopolitical" in that it aims at controlling all that lives, but because Life is not the prerogative of humans only, it opens up a *zoē*-political or post-anthropocentric dimension. This inaugurates both a negative or reactive form of panhuman planetary bond, which recomposes humanity around a commonly shared bond of vulnerability, and also new modes of connection between humans and the other species. If solidarity and mutual dependence are the key terms for the latter, death and mutual destruction are the common denominators for the former assemblage.

Let me give you some examples of contemporary ways of dying, to illustrate this necropolitical economy. The posthuman aspects of globalization encompass many phenomena that, while not being a priori inhumane, still trigger significant destructive aspects. The postsecular condition, with the rise of religious extremism in a variety of forms, including Christian fundamentalism, entails a political regression of the rights of women, homosexuals, and all sexual minorities. Significant signs of this regression are the decline in reproductive rights and the rise of violence against women and LGBT people. The effect of global financial networks and unchecked hedge funds has been an increase in poverty, especially among women and the young, affected by the disparity in access to the new technologies. The status of children is a chapter apart; from forced labor to the child-soldier phenomenon, childhood has been violently inserted into infernal cycles

of exploitation. On a different score, bodily politics has shifted, with the simultaneous emergence of cyborgs on the one hand and renewed forms of vulnerability on the other. Thus, next to the proliferation of pandemics like SARS, Ebola, HIV, bird flu, and others, more familiar epidemics have also returned, notably malaria and tuberculosis, so much so that health has become a public policy issue as well as a human rights concern.

The point is that Life/*zoē* can be a threatening force, as well as a generative one. A great deal of health and environmental concerns, as well as geopolitical issues, simply blur the distinction between life and death. In the era of biogenetic capitalism and nature-culture continuum, *zoē* has become an infrahuman force and all the attention is now drawn to the emergency of disappearing nature. For instance, the public discourse about environmental catastrophes or "natural" disasters—the Fukushima nuclear plant and the Japanese tsunami, the Australian bushfires, hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, etc.—accomplishes a significant double-bind: it expresses a new ecological awareness, while reinserting the distinction between nature and culture. As Protevi argues (2009), this results in the paradoxical renaturalization of our biotechnologically mediated environment. The geopolitical forces are simultaneously renaturalized and subjected to the old hierarchical power relations determined by the dominant politics of the anthropomorphic subject. Public discourse has become simultaneously moralistic about the inhuman forces of the environment and quite hypocritical in perpetuating anthropocentric arrogance. This position results in the denial of the manmade structure of the catastrophes that we continue to attribute to forces beyond our collective control, like the earth, the cosmos or "nature". Our public morality is simply not up to the challenge of the scale and the complexity of damages engendered by our technological advances. This gives rise to a double ethical urgency: firstly, how to turn anxiety and the tendency to mourn the loss of the natural order into effective social and political action. Secondly, how to ground such an action in the responsibility for future generations, in the spirit of social sustainability which I have also explored elsewhere (Braidotti 2006).

Contemporary politics has more than its fair share of cruelty to account for. New scholarship has concentrated on the brutality of today's wars and the renewed expressions of violence targeted not only at the government of the living, but also multiple practices of dying. Biopower and necropolitics are two sides of the same coin, as Achille Mbembe (2003) brilliantly argues. The explosion of discursive interest in the politics of life itself, in other words, affects also the geopolitical dimension of death and of killing. Mbembe expands Foucault's insight in the direction of a more grounded analysis of the biopolitical management of survival. Aptly renaming it "necropolitics", he defines this power essentially as the administration of death: "*the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*" (Mbembe 2003, 14). And *not* only human, I might add, but also planetary.

The post-Cold War world has seen not only a dramatic increase in warfare, but also a profound transformation of the practice of war as such. New forms of warfare entail simultaneously the breath-taking efficiency of "intelligent", unmanned, technological weaponry on the one hand, and the rawness of dismembered and humiliated human bodies on the other. Posthuman wars breed new forms of inhumanity. The implications of this approach to necro-power are radical: it is not up to the rationality of the Law and the universalism of moral values to structure the exercise of power, but rather the unleashing of the unrestricted sovereign right to kill, maim, rape, and destroy the life of others. This political economy structures the attribution of different degrees of "humanity" according to hierarchies that are disengaged from the old dialectics and unhinged from biopolitical logic. They fulfil instead a more instrumental, narrow logic of opportunistic exploitation of the life in each body, which is generic and not only individual.

Contemporary necropolitics has extended the politics of death on a global scale. The new forms of industrial-scale warfare rest upon the commercial privatization of the army and the global reach of conflicts, which deterritorialize the use of and the rationale for armed service. Reduced to "*infrastructural warfare*" (Mbembe 2003, 29), and to a large-scale logistical operation (Virilio 2002), war aims at the destruction of all the services that allow civil society to function: roads, electricity lines, airports, hospitals, and other necessities. The old-fashioned army has now mutated into "[u]rban militias, private armies, armies of regional lords, private security firms, and state armies all claim[ing] the right to exercise violence or to kill" (Mbembe 2003, 32). As a result, as a political category, the "population" has also become disaggregated into: "rebels, child soldiers, victims or refugees, or civilians incapacitated by mutilation or massacred on the model of ancient sacrifices, while the 'survivors', after a horrific exodus, are confined to camps and zones of exception" (Mbembe 2003, 34). Many contemporary wars, led by western coalitions under the cover of "humanitarian aid," are often neocolonial exercises aimed at protecting mineral extraction and other essential geophysical resources needed by the global economy. In this respect, the "new" wars look more like privatized conflicts and guerrilla or terrorist attacks, than the traditional confrontation of enlisted and nationally indexed armies.

Arjun Appadurai has also provided incisive analyses of the new "ethnocidal violence" of the new forms of warfare which involve friends, kinsmen, and neighbors, and expresses his horror at the indignity of these conflicts

> involving mutilation, cannibalism, rape, sexual abuse, and violence against civilian spaces and populations. Put simply, the focus here is on bodily brutality perpetrated by ordinary persons against other persons with whom they may have—or could have—previously lived in relative amity. (1998, 907)

Chomsky (quoted in Davies 2008, 134) broadens this analysis by looking at the configuration of contemporary global wars, and he comments shrewdly on a political economy that he labels "the new military humanism" of the humanitarian interventions:

> armed with the technology of global devastation and the jargon of pulp fiction, tabloid headlines and Playstation games: the War on terror, the Clash of Civilisations, the Axis of Evil, Operation "Shock and Awe." Those adventures set out to save the civilised world (*"homo humanus"*) from its enemies (*"homo barbarus"*) under the venerable banners of liberty, decency and democracy.

This deployment of technologically mediated violence—through Western new drone technology for instance—cannot be adequately described in terms of disciplining the body, fighting the enemy, or even as the techniques of a society of control. We have rather entered the era of orchestrated and instrumental massacres, a new "semiosis of killing", leading to the creation of multiple and parallel "*death-worlds*" (Mbembe 2003, 37, 40). These necropolitical modes of governance also circulate as infotainment in global media circuits, according to the logic of double mediation, which combines the body-politics of control and physical elimination with unprecedented degrees of media exposure.

War and surveillance technologies operate without direct human intervention and, in this respect, can be seen as post-anthropocentric; they are also reshaping the practice of surveillance in the social field. Border controls of immigration and the smuggling of people are major aspects of the contemporary inhuman condition and central players in the necropolitical game. Diken (2004) argues that refugees and asylum seekers become another emblem of the contemporary necropower, because they are the perfect instantiation of the disposable humanity that preoccupies Agamben and thus constitute the ultimate necropolitical subject. The proliferation of detention and high-security camps and prisons within the once civic-minded space of European cities is an example of the inhuman face of Fortress Europe.

Duffield (2008, 149) pushes the necropolitical sociopolitical analysis further and makes a distinction between developed or insured humans and underdeveloped or uninsured humans: "Developed life is sustained primarily through regimes of social insurance and bureaucratic protection historically associated with industrial capitalism and the growth of welfare states." The distinction and the tensions between these two categories constitute the terrain for the "global civil war", which is Duffield's definition of globalized advanced capitalism. The link to colonialism is clear: decolonization created nation-states whose people, once subjected to colonial rule, in some cases enslaved and generally exploited, are now free to circulate globally.

These people constitute a large proportion of the unwanted immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who are contained and locked up across the developed world. In a twist not deprived of ironical force, world migration is perceived as a particular threat in Europe precisely because it endangers Europe's main social infrastructure: the welfare state. The growing range of warfare weapons and killing techniques raises critical questions about the status of death as an object of contemporary political analysis.

The broad range of ways of dying and the changing techniques of killing, which now combine sophisticated technological mediation with necropolitical brutality, indicate that death as a concept remains caught in a contradiction. On the one hand, death is central to political theory and practice, as exemplified by the new forms of surveillance, confinement, and killing that are at work within a fast-expanding technological context. Death is also, on the other hand, understated and underexamined as a term in critical theory; as a concept, it tends to be stuck in a metaphysical block, while the repertoire of new ideas and political insights around Life and biopower proliferates and diversifies our understanding.

Fortunately, new posthuman theory is filling this vacuum and making important contributions to rethinking the instance of death. Patrick Hanafin, for example, suggests that renewed interest in necropolitics, coupled with a transversal vision of posthuman subjectivity, may help us provide a political and ethical counternarrative to "the imposed bounded subject of liberal legalism" (2010, 132). For Hanafin, this involves a move from the traditional location of mortality as the defining, quasi-metaphysical horizon of being. The majoritarian masculine legal social contract is built on the desire to survive. This is not a politics of empowerment, but one of entrapment in an imagined natural order that in our system translates into a biopolitical regime of discipline and control of bodies. What this means is that we are recognized as full citizens only through the position of victims' loss and injury and the forms of reparation that come with it. Posthuman necropolitical political and legal theory raise the question of what political theory might look like if it were not based on the negative instances of wound and loss.

Hanafin proposes to take the necropolitical dimension seriously by shifting away from thinking of legal subjectivity as death bound to thinking about singularities without identity who relate intimately to one another and the environment in which they are located. This insight points towards a posthuman critical politics of rights. We see here how another fundamental binary of western philosophical thinking gets uncoupled: that of a political life qualified by death, as opposed to a political and legal philosophy which valorizes our mortal condition and creates a politics of survival. This is a post-identitarian position which encourages us, following Virginia Woolf, to adopt a mode of thinking "as if already gone", that is to say to think with and not against death. The emphasis on the death-life continuum may, according to Hanafin, constitute the ultimate threat to a legal system built on the confining horizon of the metaphysics of mortality.

William Connolly's "politics of becoming" (1999, ch. 2, "Suffering, Justice, and the Politics of Becoming") argues a similar case: against necropolitical destruction, we need to develop an "ethos of engagement" (ch. 6, "An Ethos of Engagement") with existing social and political givens—including the horrors of our times—in order to bring about counter-effects, that is to say, unexpected consequences and transformations. Critical theory needs to engage with the present, becoming "worthy of the times", while resisting the violence, horror, and injustices of the times (Braidotti 2013).

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 depersonalizing effect of the negative or traumatic event involves a loss of ego boundaries, which is the source of both pain and potentially energetic reactions. Multilocality and multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2009) 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 (1990), "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 actualization is also the moment of its neutralization. The ethical subject is the one with the ability to grasp the freedom to depersonalize 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 judgment but rather the effect of arrest, blockage, 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 interdependence, the vital reliance on others, that are the key to both a non-unitary vision of the subject and to affirmative ethics. Again, the vitalist notion of Life as *zoē* 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 *potential*—as the dynamic force, which unfolds through vital flows of connections and becoming. And this is why they should neither be encouraged nor should we 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 behavior. It displaces the grounds on which Kantian negotiations of limits can take place. The imperative not to do unto 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 enfleshed field of actualization of passions or forces. It produces 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, or 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 (Benjamin 1988). For Deleuze and Guattari, the timeline for this political activity is that of *Aion*, the continuous tense of becoming, which is different from working within or against the *Chronos* sequence of the hegemonic political order. We need to actively and collectively work toward a refusal of horror and violence—the inhuman aspects of our present—and to turn this into the construction of affirmative alternatives. Such an approach aims to bring affirmation to bear on undoing existing arrangements, so as to actualize 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 to 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-psychologize 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 interpersonal 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 recoded away from the necessity to establish negativity as the precondition for the process of subject-formation.

In other words, the "worthiness" of an event—that which 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 (2009) that in this nomadic view, the political is the nonreactive and the non-habitual response of reactive engagement with the events of one's life that can reshape one's becoming. A sort of creative disorganization of the negative 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 actualization of virtual potentials. Because these 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.

NOTE

1 This includes Deleuze and Guattari (1977; 1987), Guattari (1995), Glissant (1997), Balibar (2002), and Hardt and Negri (2000).

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