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**NOMADISM:
AGAINST METHODOLOGICAL NATIONALISM**

“Something in the world forces us to think.”

Deleuze & Guattari (1994, p. 139)

THE SUBJECT AS MULTIPLICITY, PROCESS AND BECOMING

The theoretical core of a nomadic philosophy of the subject consists of a firm stand against the traditional image of thought and the pedagogical practices that assume a unitary vision of the self. This humanistic subject claims to be structured and ordained along the axis of self-reflexive individualism and scientific rationality, which are indexed on a linear and progressive temporal line. Nomadic subjectivity on the contrary moves beyond identitarian categories and it rests on a process ontology that challenges the traditional equation of subjectivity with rational consciousness and resists the reduction of both to a linear vision of progress. Thus, instead of deference to the authority of the past, we have the fleeting co-presence of multiple time-zones, in a continuum that activates and de-territorializes stable identities. This dynamic vision of the subject enlists the creative resources of the imagination to the task of enacting transformative relations and actions in the present. This ontological non-linearity rests on a Spinozist ethics of affirmation and becoming that predicates the positivity of difference. I will return to this later on in the essay.

The nomadic vision of the subject as a time continuum and a collective assemblage implies a double commitment, on the one hand to processes of change and on the other to a strong sense of community—of our being in *this* together. Our co-presence, that is to say the simultaneity of our being in the world together sets the tune for the ethics of our interaction. Our ethical relation requires us to synchronize the perception and anticipation of our shared, common condition. A collectively distributed consciousness emerges from this—i.e.: a transversal form of non-synthetic understanding of the relational bond that connects us. This places the relation at the centre of both the ethics and the epistemic structures and strategies of the subject.

This vision of a collectively assembled, externally-related and multi-layered subject that acts in a time-continuum clashes frontally with the established view of the European subject of knowledge. Following the critical premises of post-structuralist critiques of humanism by Foucault (1966), Deleuze and Guattari (1972, 1980), Derrida (1991) and Irigaray (1977), nomadic thought questions the classical vision of the philosophical subject as the quintessential European citizen. ‘Europe’ stands in this discussion for a tacit consensus about the self-evidence of the universalizing powers of self-reflexive and self-correcting reason. This flattering rendition of philosophical ‘European-ness’ transforms Europe from a concrete geo-

political location and a specifically grounded history, into an abstract concept and a normative ideal that can be implemented across space and time, provided the right pre-conditions are met. Europe as the symbol of universal self-consciousness posits itself as the site of origin of reason and self-designates itself as the motor of the world-historical unfolding of the philosophical *ratio*. This titanic sense of entitlement rests structurally on the claim to universality and also on a hierarchical and dialectical vision of Otherness or difference.

A binary logic of self-other opposition is at work in this oppositional model, which results in reducing ‘difference’ to pejoration, disqualification and exclusion. Subjectivity is postulated on the basis of sameness, i.e. as coinciding with the dominant image of thought and representation of the subject. Deleuze and Guattari offer the perfect synthesis of this dominant image of the subject as masculine/white/heterosexual/speaking a standard language/property-pwning/urbanized. This paradigm equates the subject with rationality, consciousness, moral and cognitive universalism. This vision of the ‘knowing subject’—or the ‘Man’ of humanism—constructs itself as much by what it includes within the circle of his entitlements, as in what it excludes. Otherness is excluded by definition. This makes the others into structural and constitutive elements of the subject, albeit by negation.

Throughout Western philosophy, Otherness has been constructed with distressing regularity along the intertwined axes of sexualisation, racialisation and naturalization (Braidotti, 2002; 2006). The others—women or sexual minorities; natives and non-Europeans and earth or animal others—have been marginalized, excluded, exploited and disposed of accordingly. The epistemic and world-historical violence engendered by the claim to universalism and by the oppositional view of consciousness, lies at the heart of methodological nationalism or conceptual euro-centrism.

ON ACCOUNTABILITY

Nomadic philosophies have targeted this lethal oppositional logic for criticism and have called it to accountability. So have radical epistemologies such as feminism, environmentalism, postcolonial, race and critical legal theories. They are formulated as a response to concrete world historical events, such as colonialism, fascism, the Holocaust and communist totalitarianism, which exemplify some of the crimes that were committed in the name of Europe’s alleged universal civilizing mission. These historical events are set off against the self-aggrandizing narratives. The juxtaposition highlights new critical and creative modes of addressing subjectivity and ethics, which de-bunk methodological nationalism.

Both the critique of a-historical Euro-centrism and the quest for alternative genealogies of thought express a form of ethical and political accountability that requires adequate understandings of one’s specific location, that is to say one’s embedded and embodied perspectives. Michel Foucault’s cartographies of power (1977) provide a conceptual and methodological example of this approach, as does Deleuze’s concept of radical immanence (1995).

The feminist method of the politics of location is also central to this debate, in that it provides both the means to explore and the creative force to experiment with alternative representations of the knowing subject. The politics of location, first developed (Rich, 1985) as a way of making sense of diversity among women within the category of gender of sexual difference, became the cornerstone of feminist situated epistemologies (Haraway, 1988). In its nomadic variable, it can be extended into a cartographic method of accounting for multiple differences within any subject position (Braidotti, 1994). These degrees of differentiation are explored and rendered as analyses of power-locations and power-relations. This method aims at achieving epistemological and political accountability by unveiling the power locations which one inevitably inhabits as the site of one's subject-position. A cartography is a theoretically-based and politically-informed reading of the present. As such it responds to my two main requirements: namely, to account for one's locations in terms both of space (geo-political or ecological dimension) and time (historical and geneological dimension); and to provide alternative figurations or schemes of representation for these locations, in terms of power as restrictive (*potestas*) but also empowering or affirmative (*potentia*). I consider this cartographic gesture to be the first methodological move towards a vision of subjectivity as ethically accountable and politically empowering.

The practice of accountability (for one's embodied and embedded locations) as a relational, collective activity of undoing power differentials is linked to two crucial notions: memory and narratives. They activate the process of bringing into discursive representation, that which by definition escapes self-representation and can only be disclosed by the active intervention of others. Accounts of these 'politics of locations' are cartographies of power that go beyond geneological self-narratives and express a view of subjectivity that is relational and outside-directed. In nomadic philosophy, this vision is expressed through conceptual personae, or figurations. These are ways of situating and framing the subject position and its political and epistemological practices which produce an array of creative counter-images of the subject. Examples are: feminist/womanist/queer/cyborg/diasporic/nomadic/native—as subject positions. These are figurations for specific geo-political and historical locations. To mistake them for mere metaphors would be to miss the point altogether.

Figurations are forms of literal expression that bring into representation that which the system had declared off-limits. There are situated practices that require the awareness of the limitations as well as the specificity of one's locations. A figuration renders our image of thought in terms of a decentered and multi-layered vision of the subject as a dynamic and changing entity; as such it can be taken as a dramatisation of processes of becoming. This process assumes that identity takes place in-between nature/technology; male/female; black/white; local/global; present/past - in the spaces that flow and connect such seeming binaries. We live in permanent processes of transition, hybridization and nomadization. And these in-between states and stages defy the established modes of theoretical representation, precisely because they are zig-zagging, not linear and process-oriented, not concept-driven. Critique

and creation strike a new deal in actualizing the practice of conceptual personae or figuration as the active pursuit of affirmative alternatives to the dominant vision of the subject.

In this critical perspective, to stress the situated structure of philosophical discourse—and thus reject universalism—also means to recognize the partial or limited nature of all claims to knowledge. The immediate consequence of this acknowledgment is both ethical and methodological. It requires a specific form of accountability for the production of philosophical ideas. The critique of both universalism and of liberal individualism are fundamental starting points to re-think the inter-connection between the self and society in an accountable manner.

To apply this to the issue of methodological nationalism: a new agenda needs to be set, which is no longer that of European or Euro-centric identity, but rather a radical transformation of it, in a process of rupture from Europe's imperial, fascistic and undemocratic past. If the fundamental question, as Deleuze teaches us, is now about who we are, but rather about what we are capable of becoming, then methodological nationalism must give way of self-criticism and self-transformation on the basis of accountability for our complex history. As Balibar (2001) and Bauman (2004) have argued recently, contemporary European subjects of knowledge must meet the ethical obligation to be accountable for their past history and the long shadow it casts on its present-day politics. The new mission that Europe has to embrace entails the criticism of narrow-minded self-interests, intolerance, and xenophobic rejection of otherness. Symbolic of this closure of the European mind is the fate of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, who bear the brunt of racism in contemporary Europe. Multiple counter-definitions of cosmopolitan values constitute the site of resistance to this mind-set.

This process-oriented vision of the subject is capable of a universalistic reach, though it rejects moral universalism. It expresses a grounded, partial form of accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity and relationally. The fact that “we” are in *this* together results in a renewed claim to community and belonging by singular subjects. This results in a proliferation of locally situated micro-universalist claims, which G. Lloyd called: ‘a collaborative morality’ (Lloyd, 1996, p. 74).

One evident and illuminating example of this alternative approach is the brand of situated cosmopolitan neo-humanism that has emerged as a powerful ethical claim in the work of postcolonial and race theorists, as well as in feminist theories. Examples are: Paul Gilroy's planetary cosmopolitanism (2000); Avtar Brah's diasporic ethics (1996); Edouard Glissant's politics of relations (1990); Ernesto Laclau's micro-universal claims (1995); Homi Bhabha's ‘subaltern secularism’ (1994); Vandana Shiva's anti-global neo-humanism (1997); African-American spirituality, as bell hooks (1990) and Cornell West (1994) demonstrate, as well as the rising wave of interest in African humanism or Ubuntu, from Patricia Hill Collins (1991) to Drucilla Cornell (2004).

Thus, the anti-humanism of social and cultural critics within a Western poststructuralist perspective can be read alongside the cosmopolitan neo-humanism of contemporary race, post-colonial or non-Western critics. Both these positions,

all other differences notwithstanding, produce inclusive alternatives—locations and figurations—that enlarged and go beyond humanist individualism. Without wishing to flatten out structural differences, nor of drawing easy analogies between them, I want to stress the resonances between their efforts and respective political aims and passions. Western post-humanism on the one hand and non-western neo-humanism on the other transpose hybridity, nomadism, diasporas, creolisation processes into means of re-grounding claims to connections and alliances among different constituencies. They bring strong evidence to support the claim that methodological nationalism and theoretical euro-centrism are of hindrance, rather than assistance, in trying to redefine the cosmopolitan and inter-connected nature of the contemporary subject. This alternative vision of the subject combines critical elements, like the rejection of Euro-universalism, with creative elements, like the re-composition of a new ethical sense of pan-humanity. In both cases the transformative element is of crucial importance.

ON DIS-IDENTIFICATIONS

Transformative projects involve a radical repositioning on the part of the knowing subject, which is neither self-evident, nor free of pain. No process of consciousness-raising ever is. In post-structuralist feminism, this project has also been implemented methodologically through the practice of dis-identification from familiar and hence comforting values and identities (De Lauretis, 1986; Braidotti, 1994).

Dis-identification involves the loss of cherished habits of thought and representation, which can also produce fear, sense of insecurity and nostalgia. Change is certainly a painful process, but this does not warrant the politically conservative position that chastises all change as dangerous. The point in stressing the difficulties and pain involved in the quest for transformative processes is rather to raise an awareness of both the complexities involved and the paradoxes that lie in store.

Changes that affect one's sense of identity are especially delicate. Given that identifications constitute an inner scaffolding that supports one's sense of identity, shifting our imaginary identifications is not as simple as casting away a used garment. Psychoanalysis taught us that imaginary re-location are complex and as time-consuming as shedding an old skin. Moreover, changes of this qualitative kind happen more easily at the molecular or subjective level and their translation into a public discourse and shared social experiences is a complex and risk-ridden affair. In a more positive vein, Spinozist feminist political thinkers like Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens (1999) argue that such socially embedded and historically grounded changes are the result of 'collective imaginings'—a shared desire for certain transformations to be actualised as a collaborative effort.

Let me give you a series of concrete examples of how dis-identifications from dominant models of subject-formation can be productive and creative events. First of all, feminist theory is based on a radical dis-engagement from the dominant institutions and representations of femininity and masculinity, to enter the process of

becoming-minoritarian or of transforming gender. In so doing feminism combines critique with creation of alternative ways of embodying and experiencing our sexualised selves

Secondly, in race discourse, the awareness of the persistence of racial discrimination and of white privilege has led to serious disruptions of our accepted views of what constitutes a subject. This has resulted on the one hand in the critical re-appraisal of blackness (Gilroy, 2000; Hill Collins, 1991) and on the other to radical relocations of whiteness (Ware, 1992; Griffin & Braidotti, 2002). Specifically, I would like to refer to Edgar Morin's account of how he relinquished Marxist cosmopolitanism to embrace a more 'humble' perspective as a European (Morin, 1987). This process includes both positive and negative affects: disappointment with the unfulfilled promises of Marxism is matched by compassion for the uneasy, struggling and marginal position of post-war Europe, squashed between the USA and the USSR. This produces a renewed sense of care and accountability that leads Morin to embrace a post-nationalistic redefinition of Europe as the site of mediation and transformation of its own history, which I discussed above.

The positive benefits aspects of this dis-identification are epistemological but extend beyond; they include a more adequate cartography of our real-life conditions and hence less pathos-ridden accounts. Becoming free of the topos that equates the efforts for identity changes with suffering results in a more adequate level of self-knowledge and therefore clears the grounds for more adequate and sustainable relations to the others who are crucial to the transformative project.

Methodologically, this vision allows us to replace linearity with a more rhizomatic and dynamic style of thinking. The basic method is that of creative repetitions, i.e.: re-telling, re-configuring and re-visiting the concept, phenomenon, event, or location from different angles. This is akin to Spinozist perspectivism, but infuses it with a nomadic spin which establishes multiple connections and lines of interaction. The following factors are central to this methodological approach. Firstly, the notion of repetition as the internal return of difference, not of sameness. It is creative mimesis, not static repetition. Re-visiting the same idea or project or location from different angles is therefore not merely a quantitative multiplication of options, but rather a qualitative leap of perspective. This leap takes the form of a hybrid mixture of codes, genres, or modes of apprehension of the idea, event or phenomenon in question. One of the ways in which this can be accounted for is through an intensive or affective mapping of how each of us relates to and interacts with the ideas/events/codes as processes. I shall return to the affective element below. Ethically, each researcher or writer has to negotiate the often dramatic shifts of perspective and location which are required for the implementation of a process-oriented—as opposed to concept-based and system driven-thought.

The key methodological feature that emerges clearly from this is an intense form of inter-disciplinarity, trans-versality and boundary-crossings among a range of discourses. More specifically, nomadic transpositions constitute a way of re-working the inter-relation among different axes of difference: sexualization, racialisation, naturalization. All these share a passionate commitment to dislodge 'difference' from

its hegemonic position as an instrument of world-historical systems of domination, exclusion and dis-qualification, as I argued before.

Linearity is especially problematic on the methodological front for radical epistemologies and marginal discourses. The question is how to implement a coherent but non hierarchical system of knowledge transfer and the transmission of the cultural and political memory of a past that is often not recognized by official institutional culture. A poignant example of this is the transmission of the cultural and political capital of a centuries-old movement such as feminism. Linearity is a very inadequate way of accounting for intergenerational relations among women who belong to different historical phases of the women's movement. Nowadays, with a third feminist wave in full swing (Henry, 2004) it is difficult to avoid both the hierarchical oedipal narrative of mothers and daughters of the feminist revolution and the negative passions that inevitably accompany such narratives. It is not always easy to challenge the hierarchical relationships that are socially predicated on differences ordained along a chronological scale. The best antidote to it is an anti-oedipal approach to the question of inter-generational ethics. It results in the need to find adequate accounts for the zig-zagging nature of feminist intellectual and cultural memories, as well as their political genealogies.

This raises methodological issues of how to account for a different notion of time—not Chronos, but Aion, the dynamic and internally contradictory or circular time of becoming. A nomadic methodology posits active processes of becoming: we need flows of empowering desire that mobilise the subject and activate him/her out of the gravitational pull of envy, rivalry and ego-indexed claims to recognition. What gets reasserted in this effort is the need to work towards social sustainability and social horizons of hope. Hope aims at change and transformations and it longs for mobility and becomings—that is to say, for sustainable changes.

RESISTING THE PRESENT, WHILE BEING WORTHY OF IT

This argument about a creative approach to a critical redefinition of the subject and the quest for a balancing act between past traditions and present transformations through the method of dis-identification from dominant images of the subject engenders a paradox: how to engage both affirmatively and critically with the present? How to work towards the production of social horizons of hope, while at the same time doing Critical Theory, which means resisting the present? (Deleuze & Guattari, 1992). The relationship between creativity and critique is a problem that has confronted all critical theorists and radical pedagogues, namely how to balance the creative potential of critical thought with the necessary dose of negative criticism that is constitutive of oppositional consciousness. How to resist the injustice, violence and vulgarity of the times, while being worthy of our times, so as to engage with the present in a productively oppositional and affirmative manner? *Amor fati* is not fatalism, but the awareness of a bond of profound intimacy between ourselves and the world, the space-time we are living in. It is an acknowledgment that 'we' are in

this together. Again, the ethical dimension underscores the methodological issues and points to a solution.

Nomadic thought challenges the traditional equation between oppositional consciousness and resistance on the one hand and negativity on the other. The assumption that opposition is the same as a belligerent act of negation and even of destruction of present conditions has to be challenged. Whereas dialectical thought results in establishing negativity as a productive moment in the dialectical scheme which aims at overturning the negative conditions that produced it in the first place, nomadic thought proposes a change of perspective that aims at re-casting critique as affirmation.

This shift of perspective rests on Spinozist premises like philosophical monism and the emphasis on an ethical and affective component of subjectivity. A subject's ethical core is not his/her moral intentionality, as much as the effects of power (as repressive—*potestas*—and positive—*potentia*) his/her actions are likely to have upon the world (Deleuze, 1968). Given that in this view 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. Ethics is about the cultivation of affirmative relations. Oppositional consciousness and the political subjectivity or agency it engenders must actualize this ethical urge in the sense that they labour to create alternatives by cultivating the relations that are conducive to the transmutation of values.

In other words: opposition is not about negativity, but rather about the transformation of negative into positive passions and hence the production of affirmative alternatives. These do not emerge dialectically, ie: are not tied to the present by negation, but must be allowed to emerge out of a different set of premises, affects and conditions. In my terms, this is a project for social sustainability that aims at combining processes of radical transformation with the possibility of constructing sustainable futures. The sustainability of these futures consists in their being able to mobilize, actualize and deploy cognitive, affective and collective forces which had not so far been activated. How to assess and format these forces becomes a crucial issue for Critical Theory—in terms of an ethics of affirmation that is also an ethology of forces. These forces concretise in actual, material relations and can thus constitute a network, web or rhizome of interconnection with others. This is why Deleuze, paraphrasing Spinoza, argues that we have to learn to think differently about ourselves and we can only do so together.

To disengage the process of subject formation from negativity and to attach it to affirmative otherness means that reciprocity is redefined not as mutual recognition but rather as mutual definition or specification. 'We' are in this together in a vital political economy that is both trans-subjective and trans-versal its force. Thus, oppositional consciousness is central to political subjectivity but it is not the same as negativity and that Critical Theory is about creation and strategies of affirmation. Political subjectivity or agency therefore consists of multiple micro-political practices of daily activism or interventions in and on the world we inhabit. As Adrienne Rich puts it the political activist has to think 'in spite of the times' and hence also 'out

of my time', in tune with the present but resisting its murderous tendencies. This tension creates the conditions of possibility—of the future (2001, p. 159). Critical Theory is not about looking for easy reassurances but for evidence that others, here and now, are struggling with the same questions.

AFFECT, MEMORY AND THE IMAGINATION

Nomadic methodology works by empowering creative alternatives. This philosophical creativity operates a shift of paradigm towards a positive appraisal of differences, multiplicity and complexity not as an end in themselves but as steps in a process of recomposition of the coordinates of subjectivity. This has some important methodological implications for the role and function of Memory and the Imagination. The cartographic accounts of the subject of complexity and becoming, which I described before, entail a sort of affective mapping of the thinker's/reader's interaction with others: texts, ideas, concepts or artworks. This perceptive and conceptual engagement with bodies of work, by-passes the classical binary thought.

All radical pedagogies stress the crucial role played by the memory in the formation of politically active and ethically conscious subjects. Remembering the wound, the pain, the injustice—bearing witness to the missing people—to those who never managed to gain powers of discursive representation—is central to the radical ethics and politics of philosophical nomadism. Another important use of memory is connected to the affective dimension. Let me illustrate it with an example: what exactly is involved in 'working from memory' when one is writing commentaries on the history of philosophy or on other theoretical texts? The most notorious statement to this effect concerns Deleuze's two volume study of cinema, in which he states that he did not watch again any of the movies he was to discuss. He just wrote from the memory of the first time he watched those films, which often was years before. Most of his literary citations, however, bear the same style: they are rarely verbatim repetitions of the original texts. Nor are they 'close textual readings', following the dominant mode of teaching philosophy in the academic world today, where the repetition of 'his master's voice' is the name of the game. "Faithfulness" here equates flat repetition, or the replication of sameness.

Writing from memory, or 'by heart' involves a number of precise methodological steps. Firstly, it means that one is exempted from checking against the original, at least during the process of writing the actual commentary. This expresses the conviction that the 'truth' of a text is somehow never really 'written'. Neither is it contained within the signifying space of the book, nor is it about the authority of a proper noun, a signature, a tradition, a canon, let alone the prestige of a discipline. The authoritativeness of citation is discarded for an altogether different kind of accuracy. The 'truth' of a text resides rather in the affects, ie: the kind of outward-bound interconnections or relations that it enables, provokes, engenders and sustains. Thus, a text is a relay point between different moments in space and time, as well as

different levels, degrees, forms and configurations of the thinking process. Thinking, like breathing, is not held into the mould of linearity, or the confines of the printed page, but it happens outside, out of bounds, in webs of encounters with ideas, others, texts. The linguistic signifier is merely one of the points in a chain of effects, not its centre or its endgame.

Secondly, and as a consequence of the above, 'working from memory' implies respecting the specific, non-linear temporality of this intensive process of thinking. The notion of 'duration' is of crucial importance here. The active, minoritarian or nomadic memory triggers molecular becomings and thus works towards affirmation. In order to do so, however, it constantly reconnects to the virtual totality of a continuously recomposing block of past and present moments. In a synchronization exercise, moments in time coincide in the 'here and now' of actualising processes of heightened intensity or becoming.

When applied to the reading of theoretical, social and cultural texts, this means that one starts working from oral traces and affective imprints, i.e.: more viscerally. The focus is not on representation or citation, but on the affective traces, on what is left over, what remains, what has somehow caught and stuck around, the drags and the sediments of the reading and the cognitive process. This assumes that the focus does not fall on textual interiority and a detailed reproduction of the text's intentions, meanings and conceptual structures. Equally inadequate is the weight of Oedipal tradition and the veneration of the authority of the past as a support mechanism for the habit of faithful textual commentaries.

I prefer to think of this way of relating to memory in terms of nomadic transpositions, that is to say as creative and highly generative inter-connections which mix and match, mingle and multiply possibilities of expansion and growth among different units or entities. Transpositions require precision in terms of the co-ordinate of the encounters, but also a high charge of imaginative force. They may appear as random association to the naked eye, but in fact they are a specific and accurate topology of forces of attraction, which find their own modes of selection, combination and re-composition. Musical scores function by transpositions, much as the transmission of genetic information (Fox-Keller, 1983): they proceed by leaps and bounds, but this is neither anarchical, nor chaotic. The coherence of this system is the result of the affinity and empathy that allowed for the preliminary selection to be made in the first place, resulting in the storage of the data in/as memory. There is no spontaneity at work here, but rather a careful dosage of forces, a process of selective affinities.

The model for this is the quick glance of the painter that captures the 'essence' of a landscape or the precise quality of the light upon it, in a fleeting moment and which is wrongly rendered in terms of 'insight'. It has nothing whatsoever to do with interiority, however, nor with inscrutable depths. It is rather related to external forces, their irresistible energy and mobility. Just like travellers can capture the 'essential lines' of landscape or of a place in the speed of crossing it, this is not superficiality, but a way of framing the longitudinal and latitudinal forces that structure a certain spatio-temporal 'moment'.

These multi-layered levels of affectivity are the building blocks for creative transpositions, which compose a plane of actualisation of relations, that is to say points of contact between self and surroundings. They are the mark of immanent, embodied and embedded relations. Capturing such forces is not dependent upon the supervising control of a conscious subject who centralizes and ordains the information according to a hierarchy of sensorial and cognitive data.

Moments like that—when the self is emptied out, dissolving into rawer and more elementary sensations—mark heightened levels of awareness and receptivity. In spiritual practices like meditation what is labelled as concentration is represented by deep vacuum. You look through reality to focus elsewhere. In fact, you are focussing on the ever-receding horizon of else-where-ness itself—that is, infinity. An intransitive gaze that marks the intensive state of becoming. What looks like absent-mindedness, on closer scrutiny reveals itself to be a qualitative leap towards a more focused, more precise, more accurate perception of one's own *potentia*, which is one's capacity to 'take in' the world, to encounter it, to go towards it. It is about respecting a creative void without forcefully imposing upon it a form that corresponds to the author's own intentions or desires—it is an opening-out towards the geo-philosophical or planetary dimension of 'chaosmosis' (Guattari, 1992). The form or the discursive event rather emerges from the creative encounter of the doer and the deed, or from the active process of becoming. This amounts to turning the self into the threshold of gratuitous (principle of non-profit), aimless (principle of mobility or flow) acts which express the vital energy of transformative becomings.

If the activity of thinking is represented along these lines, it then follows that the more self-reflexive *a posteriori* process of theorizing this activity requires methodological skills other than the ones that are usually praised, rewarded and perpetuated in academic circles. Notably, the key habit of 'faithfulness to the text' and of citation as repetition of the author's intended meaning, gets displaced. Instead what comes to the fore is the creative capacity that consists in being able to render the more striking lines, forces or affective charges of any given text or author. To do so, what one needs to be loyal to is neither the spurious depth of the text, nor the authors's latent or manifest intentionality and even less to the sovereignty of the phallic Master. Loyalty is instead required to the intensity of the affective forces that compose a text or a concept, so as to account for what a text can do, what it has done, how it has impacted upon one according to the affective coordinates I outlined above. Accounting backwards for the affective impact of various items or data upon oneself is the process of remembering. In Bergson as in Deleuze it has as much to do with the imagination, that is to say creative reworking, as with the passive repetition of chronologically prior, recorded and hence retrievable experiences. Memory is ongoing and forward looking precisely because it is a singular, yet complex subject that is always, already in motion and in process. This memory has to do with the capacity to endure, to 'sustain' the process of change or transformation. Duration and endurance are also ethical categories to do with sustainability, not just an aesthetic one. Sustainability emerges (again) as the guiding principle of these intensive methods of analysis.

Creativity is a nomadic process in that it entails the active displacement of dominant formations of identity, memory and identification. Becoming has to do with emptying out the self, opening it out to possible encounters with the ‘outside’. As Roy puts it: ‘the pragmatic purpose was to introduce a ‘swerve’ or deviation in the plane of taken-for-granted assumptions by means of which a new experiment of thought could be inserted in the interstices that might help teachers get an insight into the generative possibilities of the situation” (Roy, 2003, p. 2).

Remembering in the nomadic mode is the active reinvention of a self that is joyfully discontinuous, as opposed to being mournfully consistent, as programmed by phallogocentric culture. It destabilizes the sanctity of the past and the authority of experience. This is the tense of a virtual sense of potential. Memories need the imagination to empower the actualization of virtual possibilities in the subject. They allow the subject to differ from oneself as much as possible while remaining faithful to oneself, or in other words: enduring.

Desire as plenitude rather challenges the matrix of having and lacking access to recognition by Self and Other as transcendent categories. Becoming is molecular, in that it requires singular overthrowing of the internalized simulacra of the self, consolidated by habits and flat repetitions. The dynamic vision of the subject as assemblage is central to a vitalist, yet anti-essentialist theory of desire, which also prompts a new practice of sustainable ethics, which aims: “to open up the fastness in which thought takes refuge, provoking by that same parting novel, nonhumanist stirrings” (Roy, 2003, p. 1).

Desire is the propelling and compelling force that is driven by self-affirmation or the transformation of negative into positive passions. This is a desire not to preserve, but to change: it is a deep yearning for transformation or a process of affirmation. Empathy and compassion are key features of this nomadic yearning for in-depth transformation. Proximity, attraction or intellectual sympathy is both a topological and qualitative notion: it is a question of ethical temperature. It is an affective framing for the becoming of subjects as sensible or intelligent matter. The affectivity of the imagination is the motor for these encounters and of the conceptual creativity they trigger off. It is a transformative force that propels multiple, heterogeneous ‘becomings’ of the subject.

AFFIRMATIVE VISIONS

As I argued earlier, the conditions for renewed political and ethical agency cannot be drawn from the immediate context or the current state of the terrain. They have to be generated affirmatively and creatively by efforts geared to creating possible futures, by mobilizing resources and visions that have been left untapped and by actualizing them in daily practices of interconnection with others.

This project requires more visionary power or prophetic energy, qualities which are neither especially in fashion in academic circles, nor highly valued socially in

these times of commercial globalisation. Yet, the call for more vision is emerging from many quarters in Critical Theory. Feminists have a long and rich genealogy in terms of pleading for increased visionary insight. From the very early days, Joan Kelly (1979) typified feminist theory as a double-edged vision, with a strong critical and an equally strong creative function. Faith in the creative powers of the imagination is an integral part of feminists' appraisal of lived embodied experience and the bodily roots of subjectivity, which would express the complex singularities that feminist women have become. Donna Haraway's work (1997; 2003) provides the best example of this kind of respect for a dimension where creativity is unimaginable without some visionary fuel.

Prophetic or visionary minds are thinkers of the future. The future as an active object of desire propels us forth and motivates us to be active in the here and now of a continuous present that calls for resistance. The yearning for sustainable futures can construct a livable present. This is not a leap of faith, but an active transposition, a transformation at the in-depth level (Braidotti, 2006). A prophetic or visionary dimension is necessary in order to secure an affirmative hold over the present, as the launching pad for sustainable becoming or qualitative transformations. The future is the virtual unfolding of the affirmative aspect of the present, which honors our obligations to the generations to come.

The pursuit of practices of hope, rooted in the ordinary micro-practices of everyday life is a simple strategy to hold, sustain and map out sustainable transformations. The motivation for the social construction of hope is grounded in a profound sense of responsibility and accountability. A fundamental gratuitousness and a profound sense of hope is part of it. Hope is a way of dreaming up possible futures: an anticipatory virtue that permeates our lives and activates them. It is a powerful motivating force grounded not only in projects that aim at reconstructing the social imaginary, but also in the political economy of desires, affects and creativity. Contemporary nomadic practices of subjectivity—both in pedagogy and other areas of thought—work towards a more affirmative approach to Critical Theory. Beyond unitary visions of the self and teleological renditions of the processes of subject-formation, a nomadic philosophy can sustain the contemporary subjects in the efforts to synchronize themselves with the changing world in which they try to make a positive difference. Against the established tradition of methodological nationalism, a different image of thought can be activated that rejects Euro-universalism and trusts instead in the powers of diversity. It also enlists affectivity, memory and the imagination to the crucial task of inventing new figurations and new ways of representing the complex subjects we have become. The key method is an ethics of respect for diversity that produces co-synchronizations of the nomadic selves and thus constitutes communities across multiple locations and generations. This humble project of being worthy of the present while also resisting and of constructing together social horizons of hope and sustainability expresses an evolutionary talent that enables “us” to be in *this* together.

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