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The Contingent Nature of Life

*Bioethics and the Limits
of Human Extension*



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The Contingent Nature of Life

Bioethics and Limits of Human Existence

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Of Poststructuralist Ethics and Nomadic Subjects

Rosi Braidotti

1 Introduction

This chapter rests on a number of assumptions that need to be clarified from the outset. The first point is that I approach the question of ethics from the background of Continental, notably modern French philosophy. It is therefore important to clear the grounds of the on-going polemic regarding French theory in general and post-structuralism in particular. More specifically for the purpose of this collection, I want to dispel from the start any association between poststructuralist ethics and the charges of moral relativism, of a-moral anarchy or romantic radicalism that are often moved against it (Sokal and Bricmont 1998).

These negative charges are allegedly motivated by the emphasis post-structuralism has placed on questioning, deconstructing and de-territorializing the unitary vision of the subject, which postulates the coincidence of the subject with his conscious, rational and reflexive self, in keeping with a humanist idea of the individual. The systematic critique of this implicit or explicit humanist assumption by Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze or Irigaray – to name but a few – has fuelled an over-defensive reaction on the part of those who believe that only a centralized, rationally-based and consciousness-driven notion of the subject – as in the traditional notion of liberal individualism – can guarantee ethical and political agency and a sense of responsibility. One may want to argue that a great deal of this reaction can be read as expressing the fear of loss of cognitive and political mastery on the part of professional philosophers. Such a polemic, however, falls outside the scope of my paper, hence my desire to clear it out from the very start. Rather than falling into reductive simplifications that equate post-structuralism with relativism, I would like to focus on the specific contribution this tradition of thought can make to the debates on ethics in general and bio-ethics in particular.

The charges of moral relativism are incorrect, both historically and conceptually: conceptually, French philosophy does not correspond to postmodernism, but rather refers back to a rich and established tradition of materialism and practical ethics.

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One only has to look across the field of contemporary French thought: Deleuze's ethics of *amor fati* (1992; 1995), Irigaray's ethics of sexual difference (1984), Foucault's search for the ethical relationship (1976; 1977; 1984a,b), Derrida's (2001) and Levinas (1969) emphasis on a non-appropriative ethics of otherness which acknowledges the receding horizons of alterity (Critchley 1992), to realize that one is immersed in ethical concerns. Of great relevance is also the established tradition of Lacanian ethics of psychoanalysis, which defends intersubjectivity, while it also posits a split or process-oriented self and defends a radical form of scepticism towards any foundational notion of truth and unified understanding of the subject.

It is therefore the case that ethics in poststructuralist philosophy is not confined to the realm of Rights, distributive justice, or the Law, but it rather bears close links with the notion of political agency and the management of power and of power-relations. Issues of responsibility are dealt with in terms of alterity or the relationship to others, but are also infused by a commitment to accountability, situatedness and cartographic accuracy (Braidotti 2002). The main thesis of this paper is that a poststructuralist ethical position, far from thinking that a liberal individual definition of the subject is the necessary pre-condition for ethics, argues that such a definition hinders the development of modes of ethical behaviour that respond to the contradictions of our era.

The prejudice against poststructuralist ethics is also inaccurate historically. The historical condition of post-modernity as analyzed by Bauman (1993; 1998) and Deleuze (1972a and b and Deleuze and Guattari 1980) calls for a rigorous assessment of the shortcomings of modernist or humanist ethical values. It is important to stress the point that poststructuralism constitutes a form of critical assessment of high modernism and of the project of modernity. This critical stand has crucial implications for the discussion on ethics; philosophy is about accounting in a cartographic manner for the actual conditions of our present historical location. This embedded form of materialism and respect for history as well as the high level of accountability are all the more relevant in view of historical events such as the Holocaust and other genocides; the devastation caused by development enforced on a colonialist model and the terror introduced in our social and moral universe by the nuclear predicament. Foucault's work on bio-power is of the greatest relevance to this discussion (Foucault 1976; 1977; 1984a; 1984b) as he famously challenges the ideals of the Enlightenment (Foucault 1975; 1997). The question of how to assess their broken promises lies at the heart of poststructuralist ethics.

In other words, post-modernity as an event marks the historical decline of some of the fundamental premises of the Enlightenment, notably the progress of mankind through a self-regulatory and teleological use of reason and of scientific rationality allegedly aimed at the perfectibility of man. According to poststructuralist analysis, we have entered a post-humanistic era as a result of the effects of our own historical development. Post-humanism is a factor of our own historicity (Haraway 1997 and Braidotti 2006) and technology has played a key role in engendering this situation.

My position is therefore pragmatic: we need schemes of thought and figurations that enable us to account accurately for the complexities of our historicity. For instance, most of us already live in emancipated (i.e.: post-feminist), multicultural

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(i.e.: post-eurocentric), technologically driven (i.e.: post-natural) societies with high degrees of mediation and global interconnections. These are neither simple, nor linear events, but rather multi-layered and internally contradictory phenomena that combine elements of ultra-modernity with splinters of neo-archaism: high tech advances and neo-primitivism at the same time. The simultaneity of radically opposite social effects that defy the logic of excluded middle throws a challenge to critical theory: how to bring these non-linear processes into adequate theoretical representations is a challenge not only of the methodological, but also of the conceptual kind. Contemporary culture shows a remarkable lack of imagination in addressing this challenge; it favors instead the predictably plaintive refrains about the end of ideologies, run concurrently with the apology of the 'new'. Nostalgia and hyper-consumerism are two faces of the same coin of neo-liberal restoration. In opposition to this I want to argue that we need cartographies of subjectivity, which adequately reflect the processes of flows, fragmentation, mutual interdependence, and mutations that mark our era. In ethics, as in social and political theory, we need to learn to think differently about ourselves and our systems of values, starting with the accounts of our embodied and embedded subjectivity.

I propose a non-unitary vision of the subject as not coinciding with rational consciousness, but rather as a dynamic, time-bound, embodied and embedded subject in process: a nomadic or rhizomic subjectivity. As I have argued (Braidotti 2002; 2006) the nomadic subject is not a prescriptive but rather a cartographic figuration; it evokes a conceptual form of self-reflexivity, which is specifically addressed to the subjects that occupy the center – one of the many centers that dot the web of the scattered hegemonic powers of advanced post-modernity. Speaking from my own location, paraphrasing Deleuze (1978) I would define the hegemonic vision of the subject as: 'male, white, heterosexual, educated, able-bodied, speaking a standard language, living in an urban center and owning property'. To reflect this specific location in the age of global flows and transformations requires that we shift the priority from concepts to processes. The fact that nomadic thought is an activity that reflects the spaces in-between does not, however, make it a view from nowhere in either spatial or temporal terms. Quite on the contrary, my nomadic subject is strictly connected to the issue of locations and to the forms of self-reflexivity and accountability that they entail. Locations are not only topological sites, but also temporal zones: embodied memories that can be activated against the grain of the dominant and traditional visions of the subject. The interaction between these two aspects of locations constitutes the site of co-production of the subject as a spatial and temporal process of interaction and exchanges.

2 Flows and Processes of Becoming

A poststructuralist position therefore assumes: a break from modernist visions of the unitary subject; a break from the teleological view of history; a break from Eurocentric modes of reading modernity and development. The emancipatory project of

modernity entailed a view of the 'knowing subject' (Lloyd 1985) which excluded a number of structural others: the sexualized other, or women; the racialized ethnic or native others and the natural environment as a whole – animals and plants. They constitute the three inter-connected facets of structural otherness that posit difference as pejoration and as such they play an important specular role in defining the norm, the normal and the normative view of the dominant subject. Their exclusion from the enlightened circle of reason has been instrumental to the institution of masculine, euro-centric self-assertion (Braidotti 2006).

To say that the structural others of modern subject re-emerge in post-modernity amounts to making them into a paradoxical and polyvalent site. They are simultaneously the symptom of the crisis of the subject – and for the conservatives allegedly even its 'cause' – but they also express positive alternatives. It is a historical fact that the great emancipatory movements of post-modernity are driven and fuelled by the resurgent 'others': the women's rights movement; the anti-racism and decolonization movements; the anti-nuclear, pacifist and pro-environment movements are the voices of the structural others. Their emergence therefore inevitably marks the crisis of the former 'center' or dominant subject position. In the language of philosophical nomadology which I analyzed elsewhere (Braidotti 2002), they express both the crisis of the majority and the patterns of becoming-minoritarian of both the majority and of its margins. The rejection of dualism, specifically the mind/body culture/nature dichotomy is replaced in fact by Deleuze (1962; 1968), by a Spinozist political ontology of monism which posits a notion of Being as univocal and immanent. As a consequence, the relation of the majority to its margins is unhinged from any dialectical oppositional logic and becomes a matter of fluctuations and mutual specifications in processes of flow and exchange. The challenge consists in being able to tell the difference between qualitatively different flows or lines of motion. The criteria by which such differences can be coded and established are a matter of forces and values and hence of ethics. I shall return this in the next section.

This analysis of our historical condition also raises serious methodological issues in trying to deal with the illogical, non-linear and often quite simply irrational structures of advanced, post-industrial systems and their networks of power. It is a challenge that seriously tests the resources and the methodological stamina of social critics, like the poststructuralists, who are committed to provide adequate cartographies of contemporary culture. Meeting such a challenge requires some creative efforts that go beyond the traditional call of methodological duties: it also involves the creative quest for more adequate representations for the kinds of subjects we are becoming.

One of the forms taken by this analysis is bringing to the fore a political economy of affects in advanced post-modernity. Massumi (1992) has argued, for instance, that a state of perennial fear of an imminent catastrophe or a fatal accident is central to the affective economy of contemporary post-industrial, terror-crazed societies. The social imaginary surrounding the imminent threat has shifted from the nuclear to the ecological disaster, with special emphasis on the fear of genetic mutation or immunity breakdown. This state of constant anticipation of a bio-accident that is due to happen and whose unfolding is only a question of time, introduces high levels of

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anxiety in our societies not only about the present, but also about the possibility of actually sustaining a future. I want to argue that it is important to acknowledge this insight without precipitating into the manic-depressive mode favored by contemporary culture: the mixture of paranoia and frenzy, which express the *modus vivendi* of capitalism as schizophrenia (Deleuze and Guattari 1972; 1980). An ethical stance has to combine a lucid analysis with a commitment to action, as I will outline in the next section.

The first partial conclusion however is that, to confront the challenges of our historicity requires creativity, as well as intellectual and moral courage. It forces us to take seriously the conditions of our historicity, thus resisting the traditional move that disconnects philosophy from its immediate context. This move entails the assumption of responsibility or accountability so that one can engage actively with the social and cultural conditions that define one's location. Only such a process of full immersion into one's here and now, actual present location can offer the spaces of elaboration of possible modes of resistance to the schizoid logic of our time. The next step, however, consists in elaborating powerful alternatives to the dominant schizoid political economy of affects and thus resists both the neo-determinism of biogenetic capitalism and the techno-utopianism of the converted. This is the project of an ethics of sustainability.

The humanistic notion of the subject, as well as the logocentric vision of consciousness, which hinges on the sovereignty of the 'I', have been displaced. It can no longer be safely assumed that consciousness coincides with subjectivity, nor that either of them is in charge of the course of historical events. Both liberal individualism and classical humanism are disrupted at their very foundations by the social and symbolic transformations induced by our historical condition. Far from being merely a 'crisis' of values, I think this situation confronts us with a formidable set of new opportunities. Renewed conceptual creativity and a leap of the social imaginary are needed in order to meet the challenge. I want to argue that classical humanism, with its rationalistic and anthropocentric assumptions is of hindrance, rather than of assistance, in this process. I propose a post-humanistic brand of non-anthropocentric vitalism, inspired by philosophical nomadism, as one possible response to this challenge. My quarrel with humanism, in such a context, has to do with the limitations of its applicability and hence relevance in the present historical context.

3 Steps Towards a Nomadic Ethics

The moment the issue of ethics is posited in these terms, within a monistic view, the question on non-human, pre-human and post-human forces must be raised. The flows, exchanges and relations a subject encounters in his/her patterns of becoming encompass not only the social domain, but also the whole of the natural environment. As Lloyd put it in her commentary on Spinoza: we are all part of nature (Lloyd 1994). This opens up an eco-philosophical dimension, which inaugurates alternative ecologies of belonging. More importantly, it adds another layer to the post-human

condition mentioned above, namely it marks a shift away from anthropo-centrism, towards a new emphasis on the inextricable entanglement of material, bio-cultural and symbolic forces that co-produce the subject. This post-human twist has implications for the discussion of ethics in that it forces a re-consideration of bio-centered egalitarianism (Ansell-Pearson 1997b), of 'the politics of life itself' (Rose 2001) and of planetary political and ethical agency (Guattari 1992).

Contemporary, embodied and embedded subjects are both techno and eco-logical units. Like all other living organisms, they are marked by the interdependence with their environment through a structure of mutual flows and data transfer that is best configured by the notion of symbiotic relations, viral contaminations (Ansell-Pearson 1997b), or intensive inter-connectedness. This nomadic eco-philosophy of belonging is complex and multi-layered, but also very materialist and concretely situated.

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

Last but not least, the specific temporality of the subject needs to be re-thought. The subject is an evolutionary engine, endowed with her or his own embodied temporality, both in the sense of the specific timing of the genetic code and the more genealogical time of individualized memories. If the embodied subject of bio-power is a complex molecular organism, a bio-chemical factory of steady and jumping genes, an evolutionary entity endowed with its own navigational tools and an in-built temporality, then we need a form of ethical values and political agency that reflects this high degree of complexity.

To defend this position, I start from the concept of a sustainable self that aims at endurance. Endurance has a temporal dimension: it has to do with lasting in time – hence duration and self-perpetuation (traces of Bergson, here). But it also has a spatial side to do with the space of the body as an enfolded field of actualisation of passions or forces. It evolves affectivity and joy (traces of Spinoza), as in the capacity for being affected by these forces, to the point of pain or extreme pleasure – which comes to the same. It means putting up with hardship and physical pain.

Apart from providing the key to aetiology of forces, endurance is also an ethical principle of affirmation of the positivity of the intensive subject. Endurance is the joyful affirmation as *potentia*. The subject is a spatio-temporal compound that frames the boundaries of processes of becoming. This works by transforming

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negative into positive passions through the power of an understanding that is no longer indexed upon a phallogocentric¹ set of standards, but is rather unhinged and therefore affective. This sort of turning of the tide of negativity is the transformative process of achieving freedom of understanding, through the awareness of our limits, of our bondage. This results in the freedom to affirm one's essence as joy, through encounters and mingling with other bodies, entities, beings and forces. Ethics means faithfulness to this *potentia*, which is my definition of the desire to become.

Affectivity is intrinsically understood as positive. It is the force that aims at fulfilling the subject's capacity for inter-action and freedom. Affectivity is Spinoza's *conatus* or the notion of *potentia* as the affirmative aspect of power. It is joyful and pleasure-prone and it is immanent in that it coincides with the terms and modes of its expression. This means concretely that ethical behaviour confirms, facilitates and enhances the subject's *potentia*, as the capacity to express her/his freedom. The positivity of this desire to express one's innermost and constitutive freedom is conducive to ethical behaviour. However, it only leads to ethical behaviour if the subject is capable of making the positivity of desire to last and endure, thus allowing it to sustain its own *potentia*. Unethical behaviour achieves quite the opposite: it denies, hinders and diminishes that *potentia*. Thus, unethical behaviour is unable to sustain becoming.

This introduces a temporal dimension into the discussion that leads to the very conditions of possibility of the future, to futurity as such. For an ethics of sustainability, the expression of positive affects is that which makes the subject last or endure: it is like a source of long-term energy at the affective core of subjectivity.

Deleuze's 'nomadology' (1972; 1980) as a philosophy of immanence rests on the idea of sustainability as a principle of containment and tolerable development of a subject's resources, understood environmentally, affectively and cognitively. A subject thus constituted inhabits a time that is the active tense of continuous 'becoming'. Deleuze defines the latter with reference to Bergson's concept of 'duration', thus proposing the notion of the subject as an entity that lasts, that is to say that endures sustainable changes and transformation and enacts them around him/herself in a community or collectivity. Deleuze disengages the notion of 'endurance' from the metaphysical tradition that associates it to the idea of essence, and hence also of permanence and links it instead to a form of transcendental empiricism or of anti-essentialist vitalism. In this perspective, even the Earth/Gaia is posited as a partner in a community that it still to come, to be constructed by subjects who will interact with the Earth differently. This is in some ways close to 'deep ecology', but radically anti-essentialist in its understanding of the structure and location of the human within it.

3.1 *What, Then, is this Sustainable Subject?*

It is a slice of living, sensible matter. A self-sustaining system activated by a fundamental drive to life: a *potentia* (rather than *potestas*) – neither by the will of God nor the secret encryption of the genetic code. Yet, this subject is psychologically

embedded in the corporeal materiality of the self. The enfolded intensive or nomadic subject is rather an in-between: a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding-outwards of affects. A mobile entity – in space and time – an enfolded kind of memory, this subject is in process, but is also capable of lasting through sets of discontinuous variations, while remaining extraordinarily faithful to itself.

This 'faithfulness to oneself' is not to be understood in the mode of the psychological or sentimental attachment to a personal 'identity' that often is little more than a social security number and a set of photo albums. Nor is it the mark of authenticity of a self ('me, myself and I') that is a clearinghouse for narcissism and paranoia, the great pillars on which Western identity predicates itself. It is rather the faithfulness of mutual sets of inter-dependence and inter-connections. The sustainable subject is thus made up of sets of relations and encounters. Those multiple relationships encompass all levels of one's multi-layered subjectivity, binding the cognitive to the emotional, the intellectual to the affective, and connecting them all to a socially embedded ethics of sustainability. Thus, the faithfulness that is at stake in nomadic ethics coincides with the awareness of one's condition of interaction with others; one's capacity to affect and to be affected. Translated into a temporal scale, this is the faithfulness of duration, the expression of one's continuing attachment to certain dynamic spatio-temporal coordinates.

In a philosophy of temporally inscribed radical immanence, subjects differ. But they differ along materially embedded coordinates: they come in different mileage, temperatures and beats. One can and does change gears and more across these coordinates, but cannot claim all of them, all of the time. The latitudinal and longitudinal forces that structure the subject have limits of sustainability. By latitudinal forces Deleuze means the affects a subject is capable of, following the degrees of intensity or potency: how intensely they run. By longitude is meant the span of extension: how far they can go. Sustainability is about how much of it a subject can take. Ethics can be understood as geometry of how much bodies are capable of.

3.2 *What, Then, is this Threshold and How Does it Get Fixed?*

A radically immanent intensive body is an assemblage of forces, or flows, intensities and passions that solidify – in space – and consolidate – in time – within the singular configuration commonly known as an 'individual' self. This intensive and dynamic entity does not coincide with the enumeration of inner rationalist laws, nor is it merely the unfolding of genetic data and information encrypted in the material structure of the embodied self. It is rather a portion of forces that is stable enough to sustain and to undergo constant, though, non-destructive, fluxes of transformation.

On all scores, it is the body's degrees and levels of affectivity that determine the modes of differentiation. Joyful or positive passions and the transcendence of reactive affects are the desirable mode. The emphasis on 'existence' implies a commitment to duration and conversely a rejection of self-destruction. Positivity is

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inbuilt into this programme through the idea of thresholds of sustainability. Thus, an ethically empowering option increases one's *potentia* and creates joyful energy in the process. The conditions which can encourage such a quest are not only historical; they all concern processes of self-transformation or self-fashioning in the direction of affirming positivity. Because all subjects share in this common nature, there is a common ground on which to negotiate the interests and the eventual conflicts.

So how does one know if one has reached the threshold of sustainability? By trial and error and by experiment. This is where the non-individualistic vision of the subject as embodied and hence affective and inter-relational is of major consequence. Your body will tell you if and when you have reached a threshold or a limit. The warning can take the form of opposing resistance by falling ill, feeling nauseous or by somatic manifestations, like fear, anxiety or a sense of insecurity. Whereas the semiotic-linguistic frame of psychoanalysis reduces these to symptoms awaiting interpretation, I see them as corporeal warning-signals or boundary-markers that express a clear message: 'too much!'. One of the reasons why Deleuze and Guattari are so interested in studying self-destructive or pathological modes of behaviours, such as schizophrenia, masochism, anorexia, various forms of addiction and the black hole of murderous violence, is precisely in order to explore their function as markers of thresholds. This assumes a qualitative distinction between on the one hand the desire that propels the subject's expression of her/his *conatus* – which in a neo-Spinozist perspective is implicitly positive in that it expresses the essential best of the subject – and on the other hand the constraints imposed by society. The specific, contextually determined conditions are the forms in which the desire is actualised or actually expressed. To find out about thresholds, you must experiment, necessarily, relationally or in encounters with others. We need new cognitive and sensorial mappings of the thresholds of sustainability for bodies-in-processes-of-transformation.

Deleuze's reading of Spinoza supports this. Another word for Spinoza's *conatus* is self-preservation, not in the liberal individualistic sense of the term, but rather as the actualisation of one's essence, that is to say of one's ontological drive to become. This is not an automatic, nor an intrinsically harmonious process, in so far as it involves interconnection with other forces and consequently also conflicts and clashes. Negotiations have to occur as steppingstones to sustainable flows of becoming. The bodily self's interaction with her/his environment can either increase or decrease that body's *conatus* or *potentia*. The mind as a sensor that prompts understanding can assist by helping to discern and choose those forces that increase its power of acting and its activity in both physical and mental terms. A higher form of self-knowledge by understanding the nature of one's affectivity is the key to a Spinozist ethics of empowerment. It includes a more adequate understanding of the inter-connections between the self and a multitude of other forces, and it thus undermines the liberal individual understanding of the subject. It also implies, however, the body's ability to comprehend and to physically sustain a greater number of complex inter-connections, and to deal with complexity without being overburdened. Thus, only an appreciation of complexity and of increasing degrees of complexity can guarantee the freedom of the mind in the awareness of its true, affective and

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dynamic nature. In this respect, sustainability is about decentring anthropocentrism and the ultimate implication is a displacement of the human in the new, complex compound of highly generative post-humanities.

4 Re-grounding Universalism

A non-unitary vision of the subject endorses a radical ethics of transformation, thus running against the grain of contemporary neo-liberal conservatism. This amounts essentially to a rejection of individualism, which however asserts an equally strong distance from relativism or nihilistic defeatism. A sustainable ethics for a non-unitary subject proposes an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism. This is not the same as absolute loss of values – as we shall see in the next section. It rather implies a new way of combining self-interests with the well being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes one's territorial or environmental inter-connections. This is an ethical bond of an altogether different sort from the self-interests of an individual subject, as defined along the canonical lines of classical humanism. It is a nomadic eco-philosophy of multiple belongings.

This position does not reject universalism, but rather expands it, to make it more inclusive. Contemporary science and biotechnologies affect the very fibre and structure of the living, creating a negative unity among humans. The Human genome project for instance unifies all the human species in the urgency to organize an opposition against commercially-owned and profit-minded technologies. Franklin, Lury and Stacey refer to this situation as 'panhumanity' (2000: 26), that is to say a global sense of inter-connection between the human and the non-human environment, as well as among the different sub-species within each category, which creates a web of intricate inter-dependences.

Most of this mutual dependence is of the negative kind: 'as a global population at shared risk of global environmental destruction and united by collective global images' Franklin, Lury and Stacey (2000: 26). There are also positive elements, however, to this form of post-modern human inter-connection. Franklin et al. argue that this re-universalization of one of the effects of the global economy and it is part of the recontextualization of the market economy currently under way. They also describe it in deleuzian terms, as the 'unlimited finitude', or a 'visualization without horizon' and see it as a potentially positive source of resistance.

The paradox of this new pan-humanity is not only the sense of shared and associated risks, but also the pride in technological achievements and in the wealth that comes with them. Nicholas Rose (2001) has written eloquently about the new forms of 'bio-sociality- and bio-citizenship' that are emerging from the shared recognition of the bio-political nature of contemporary subjectivity. We need to define the parameters of this new eco-philosophy of belonging in terms of shared ethical sensibility: a new zoe-ethics is in the making. In a more positive note, there is no doubt that 'we are in this together'. Any nomadic philosophy of sustainability worthy of

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its name will have value. The point is to say the community is a political ecology. Far from being a remanence of things, it is a new form of sociality to elaborate something that steers a course that is sustainable for the sake of resistance to global profit.

Note

¹ In spite of the material power that combines structurally connect

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its name will have to start from this assumption and re-iterate it as a fundamental value. The point, however, is to define the 'we' part and the 'this' content, that is to say the community in its relation to singular subjects and the norms and values for a political eco-philosophy of sustainability.

Far from being a symptom of relativism, I see them as asserting the radical immanence of the subject. They constitute the starting point for a web of intersecting forms of situated accountability, that is to say an ethics. The whole point is to elaborate sets of criteria for a new ethical system to be brought into being that steers a course between humanistic nostalgia and neo-liberal euphoria. An ethics of sustainable forces that takes life (as *bios* and as *zoe*) as the point of reference not for the sake of restoration of unitary norms, or the celebration of the master-narrative of global profit, but for the sake of sustainability.

Note

¹ In spite of the many bad jokes made around it, this term is actually quite useful to describe a form of power that combines the concepts of phallus and logos, which expresses the belief that such power is structurally connected to masculinity and hence bound up in male identity.

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