Anthropos Redux: A Defence of Monism in the Anthropocene Epoch

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ABSTRACT

This essay starts from the assumption that the historical situation of today is unprecedented in ecological, economic, socio-political, as well as affective terms. The era known as the Anthropocene requires new ways of thinking in order to account for new practices and discourses related to this situation. By offering a defence of Spinozist monism, this essay attempts to strike a critical balance between new and internally contradictory contemporary concerns, such as the fast technological developments on the one hand and the perpetuation of more familiar patterns of oppression, like structural economic inequalities, on the other. Both aspects of the present predicament will receive critical attention in the cartography of the Anthropocenic era that I will discuss here and which I read in terms of the posthuman condition.

About Monism

Monistic ontologies have had a hard time in critical thought. A "monistic universe," predicated upon the rejection of binary oppositions and dialectical negativity has often been misunderstood or dismissed. In this paper I will therefore challenge this knee-jerk reaction and defend monism by exploring some of its implications for a theory and practice of neo-material vitalist vision of political subjectivity. In the recently emerged framework of the Anthropocene,[1] a monistic approach to subjectivity can offer not only an escape from the dualistic foundations locatable in most ideological and political social structures, but also the starting-point of a new relational ecology that rejects violent hierarchies, is more compassionate, and actively de-centres anthropocentrism.

Monism refers to Spinoza's central concept that matter, the world, and humans themselves are not dualistic entities structured according to principles of internal or external opposition, but rather materially embedded subjects-in-process circulating within webs of relations. The obvious target of criticism here is Descartes's famous mind-body distinction, but for Spinoza the concept goes even further: matter is one and driven by the ontological desire for self-expression. Subjects are constituted as bound or individuated entities within a differential process ontology. This makes each individuated entity into the expression of a common innermost essence, which is the freedom to affect and be affected by others (*conatus*). All entities are therefore variations on a common theme and they express the fundamental desire to endure in their existence and to go on becoming.

Deleuze and Guattari re-cast this fundamental Spinozist insight by borrowing elements from Nietzsche and Simondon's philosophy of life. They place renewed emphasis on processes of constitution of entities through unfolding and enfolding of their power to endure relational forces. The constant flow of differential variations induced by the flows of relation is kept in check by moments of stasis, or partial re-territorialisation, which ensure some meta-stability. The monistic

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1. Nobel Prize winning chemist Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene F. Stoermer coined the term "Anthropocene" in 2000, to describe our current geological era. This term stresses both the technologically mediated power acquired by our species and its potentially lethal consequences for the sustainability of our planet as a whole.

process ontology locates the motor of individuation and evolution in the relational capacity of the different entities and their self-organising power. This implies the rejection of negativity and violent dialectical oppositions and because of this, it caused intense criticism of Spinoza on the part of Hegel and later by the Marxist-Hegelians who saw Spinoza's monistic worldview as politically ineffective and mystical at heart.

Fortunately, this situation changed dramatically in the 1970s in France, when a new wave of scholars rehabilitated Spinozist monism precisely as an antidote to some of the contradictions of Marxism and as a way of clarifying Hegel's relationship to Marx.[2] The main idea they proposed is to overcome dialectical oppositions, engendering non-dialectical understandings of materialism itself. This position is best expressed in the agenda-setting and monumental work of Deleuze and Guattari. The "Spinozist legacy" of this tradition therefore consists in a very active concept of monism, which allowed post-1968 modern French philosophers to define matter as vital and self-organising, thereby producing the staggering combination of "vitalist materialism." Because this approach rejects all forms of transcendentalism, it is also known as "radical immanence." Monism results in relocating difference outside the dialectical scheme, as a complex process of differing which is framed by both internal and external forces and is based on the centrality of the relation to multiple others. Such an updated version of Spinozism (Citton and Lordon) as a democratic move towards radically immanent forms of immanence promotes a kind of ontological pacifism, or an affirmative kind of politics.

The starting point for this vital materialist approach remains the nature-culture continuum, which is best expressed by Genevieve Lloyd's assertion that we are all "part of nature" (*Part of Nature*). This statement can be perceived as threatening or counter-intuitive only if we maintain a categorical separation between natural entities and manufactured artefacts. Spinoza himself challenges such a separation

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2. The group around Althusser started the debate in the mid-1960s; Deleuze's path-breaking study of Spinoza, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, dates from 1968 (English in 1990); Macherey's Hegel-Spinoza analysis *Hegel ou Spinoza* came out in 1977 (English in 2011); Negri's work on the imagination in Spinoza, *L'anomalia selvaggia: saggio su potere et potenze in Baruch Spinoza*, in 1981 (English in 1991).

by proposing a classification of all entities—things, objects, and human organisms included—in terms of their forces and affective impact upon other entities in the world. Deleuze and Guattari radicalise this insight by arguing that ethics is an ethology of forces which, being variations within a common matter, produce a displacement of anthropocentric visions and value systems. This insight, which is challenging enough, is further complicated in the third millennium by the awareness that we actually inhabit a nature-culture continuum which is both technologically mediated and globally interlinked. This thought expresses a complex and fundamental idea, namely that all living matter today is mediated along multiple axes: as Patricia Clough puts it, we have become "biomediated" bodies (3).

By extension, such emphasis on both digital and bio-genetic mediation means that we cannot assume a theory of subjectivity that takes for granted naturalistic foundationalism. Nor can we rely on a purely social constructivist and hence dualistic methodology, which disavows the ecological dimension of the process of subject formation. Instead, critical theory needs to fulfil the multiple—and potentially contradictory—requirements of a monistic ontology. It is crucial for instance to see the interconnections among the greenhouse effect, the depletion of biodiversity, the global status of women and LBGTQIAs, racism, xenophobia, and frantic consumerism. We must not stop at any fragmented portions of these realities, but rather trace transversal interconnections among them. A monistic approach, supporting a process ontology, is the best way to ground and sustain these relational links—particularly now that the context of the Anthropocene appears to gain a broader scientific consensus and reach the mainstream consciousness globally.[3]

The essential advantage of monism consists in its political implications. More specifically, in terms of feminist and anti-racist perspectives, a monistic approach enhances two main notions. The first is the emphasis on the embodied and embedded nature of the subject, which produces a trustful relationship to "Life," living systems and to lived experience. This translates in turn into the "politics of location"

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3.   During the recent International Geological Congress in Cape Town in August 2016, experts decided to support the official declaration of the Anthropocene epoch (Carrington, "The Anthropocene epoch").

(Rich), also known as "situated knowledges" (Haraway), which is the central epistemological insight of radical social movements like feminism.

The second major implication of a monistic approach is a focus on the dynamic interaction of Sameness and Difference outside the scheme of dialectical opposition. A point of clarification: "Difference" is not a neutral category, but a term that indexes exclusion from the entitlements to subjectivity; to be different-from means to be "worth less-than." Within dialectical thinking, the equation of Difference with pejoration is built into the tradition which defines the Subject as coinciding with or being the same as dominant consciousness, rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour. This hierarchy of social values results in making entire sections of living beings into marginal and disposable bodies: these are the sexualised, racialised, and naturalised others who carry negative difference on their backs. A monistic neo-materialist approach allows us to de-link these "others" from the oppositional relation to the dominant subject and to explore and express the positivity of the difference they embody. This results in a different understanding of political resistance, which I express as the nomadic politics of "becoming-minoritarian." It also produces a politics of affirmation that acknowledges and honours human and non-human vulnerability, the pain of social and planetary marginalisation, but couples it with an a-personal analysis of and resistance to power. The latter is defined not dialectically, within a social constructivist method of dualistic oppositions—self/society, nature/culture etc.—but in a multi-layered and multi-directional relational manner.

Thus, by embracing the turn to Spinozist politics, Deleuze and Foucault (1977) take critical distance from the universalistic elements of Marxism, which identified the dialectics of power as the motor of world history. They stress 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 intellectual, discursive, and social practices. One has to start from micro-instances of the embodied and embedded self and the complex web of social relations that compose the self. This self is not an atomised entity, but a non-unitary, relational subject, nomadic and outward-bound, which is then read within a Spinozist monistic frame of reference. As I indicated above, this

means that matter is not dialectically opposed to mind, nor is nature opposed to culture and, with it nowadays, manufactured goods and technological artefacts, but rather continuous with them. In other words, the monistic understanding of "Life" as a symbiotic and material system of codepedence alters the terms of the nature-culture debate and of human interaction with what used to be called "matter." The latter now can be approached as the continuum of self-organising vital systems, of the environmental, technological, psychic, social, and other kinds.

These premises are for me the building blocks for a new general relational ecology that does not rely on classical humanism and carefully avoids anthropocentrism, while addressing the issue of techno-cultural mediation as the new or "second" nature for contemporary subjects. My position rests on the assumption that we are undergoing a posthuman turn, defined as a phenomenon emerging at the convergence of post-humanism on the one hand and post-anthropocentrism on the other. Post-humanism focuses on the critique of the Humanist ideal of "Man" as the universal representative of the human, while post-anthropocentrism criticises species hierarchy and human exceptionalism. The interactive convergence of these two strands is producing a dynamic new field of scholarship right now.

Mindful of the fact that the "human" has never been a neutral term, but rather a notion that indexes access to entitlements and power, a monistic approach also opens up for two other inter-related notions: the *non*-human and the *in*human. The non-human refers to the multiplicity of naturalised "others" whose existence has been cast outside the realm of anthropocentric thought and confined within non-human life (*zoe*). They are, historically, the members of vegetable, animal, and earth species and, by now, the genes and genomic codes that constitute the basic architecture of Life. The non-human also involves technologically manufactured "others"—both modernist objects and post-industrial "smart" things. The inhuman refers to the de-humanising effects of structural injustice upon entire sections of the human population who have not enjoyed the privileges of being considered fully human. It moreover refers to the violent and even murderous structure of contemporary geopolitical and social relations, including increasing economic polarisation and the expulsion of people from their homelands.

The posthuman condition redefines the terms of our interaction with non-human and inhuman actors and forces; the Anthropocene condition is the historical framework within which this post-anthropocentric and post-humanist paradigm change is taking place.

Contemporary monism implies a notion of vital and self-organising matter, as well as a non-human definition of Life as *zoe*, or dynamic and generative force. In terms of self-understanding, it is about "the embodiment of the mind and the embrainment of the body" (Marks, qtd. in Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 86). I have defined this as the posthuman predicament, best characterised by two parallel concepts: firstly, that there is no such thing as "originary humanicity" (Kirby), and secondly that there is only "originary technicity" (MacKenzie). We need to reconceptualise accordingly the relation to the technological artefact as something as close as "nature" used to be. The technological apparatus is our new "milieu" and this intimacy is far more complex and generative than the prosthetic, mechanical extension that modernity had made of it (Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*). Deleuze takes this aspect of Spinoza's ethics and combines it with Nietzsche's idea of the transmutation of values, to produce a relational ethics of becoming, based on the pursuit of affirmation. I want to push this process further, adding in feminist and anti-racist politics and framing them within a technologically mediated worldview.

On the Advantages of a Monistic Approach

Monism, by stressing the unity of all living matter, introduces a methodological kind of naturalism which also includes the displacement of anthropocentrism. I have argued that such a shift is conducive to a productive frame of reference for contemporary subjectivity, provided we are prepared to do some extra work ourselves. A contemporary Spinozist like Deleuze is very keen to stress the pro-active nature of critical thought; he defines thinking as the invention of new concepts, methods, and *conceptual personae*. This challenge enlists the resources of the imagination, as well as the tools of critical intelligence. The collapse of the nature-culture divide, for instance, requires that we need to devise a new vocabulary, with new figurations to refer to the kind of subjects we are in the process of becoming.

The point of critical theory, after all, is to upset common opinion (*doxa*), not to confirm it. Although this approach has been met with some resistance in academia, I see it as a gesture of generous and deliberate risk-taking and hence as a statement in favour of academic freedom. The limitations of the social constructivist method show up in current debates about the Anthropocene and need to be compensated by more conceptual creativity. Most of us who were trained in social theory, however, have experienced at least some degree of discomfort at the return of naturalism and the thought that some elements of our subjectivity may not be totally socially constructed. Part of the legacy of the Marxist left consists in fact in a deeply rooted suspicion towards the "natural" order and holistic ecologies, including philosophical monism.

This means that, in order to activate monistic approaches to a general understanding of subjectivity, we need to be prepared to leave behind familiar territories and accepted notions, so as to embrace new navigational tools and alternative figurations (Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*). To achieve this nomadic and anti-Oedipal aim, a number of crucial theoretical steps need to be taken, starting from the issue of mediation: first of all, the Spinozist emphasis on the unity of all matter needs to be updated by adding a technologically mediated understanding of the self-organising or "smart" structure of both inherited and constructed matter. Secondly, neo-materialist theory moves away from the social constructivist methods and the deconstructive political strategies of post-structuralism, to embrace differential becoming and the actualisation of transversal alliances.

Thirdly, the vision of the relational subject becomes ontologically polyvocal. It rests on a plane of consistency including both the real that is already actualised, "territorialized existential territories," and the real that is still virtual, "deterritorialized incorporeal universes" (Guattari 26). For Deleuze and Guattari, the virtual is the universe of reference for ethical-political processes of becoming in the sense of the unfolding of transformative values. Guattari calls for a collective reappropriation of the production of subjectivity, through nomadic de-segregation of the different categories. A qualitative step forward is necessary if we want subjectivity to escape the regime of sedentarisation/commodification that is the dominant political economy of advanced capitalism and

experiment with virtual possibilities. A monistic ontology sustains the process of constitution of relational subjects as transformative entities within a commonly shared matter. Ethics consists in drawing our pleasure from an affirmative mode of relation, not from the perpetuation of familiar regimes and dominant values.

The shift to a monistic ontology, prompted by a return to Spinozist philosophy, results also in overcoming the classical opposition between materialism and idealism, moving instead toward a dynamic brand of "materialist vitalism," or relational vital politics. A materially embedded and embodied, material, affective, and relational approach offers not only the advantage of redefining old binary oppositions, such as nature/culture and human/non-human, as I argued above, but also paves the way for a non-hierarchical and more egalitarian relationship to and between the species.

A second significant advantage of monism, therefore, is that it introduces an inclusive post-anthropocentric vision of subjectivity as not being restricted to humans only but includes also non-human agents. Vital neo-materialist theories develop in this direction and lead to a more productive "eco-sophical approach," pioneered by Guattari. It works out the ethical implications of monistic ontology and the nature-culture continuum for a better understanding of the complex interaction of social, psychic, and natural factors in the construction of multiple ecologies of belonging. In other words, a vital materialist approach makes it impossible to separate ecological degradation from human activity, social interaction, and mental habits: it all hangs eco-sophically together.

This position has another important corollary, which has been at the heart of the many controversies that have surrounded the issue of monism, namely the issue of what constitutes appropriate political praxis. In the perspective of a monistic ontology, which assumes all subjects to be part of a common matter, a fundamental trust in what we could call, for lack of a better term, "the world" is a crucial part of the deal. Conceptually, this means that political subjectivity need not be postulated along dialectical axes of negativity, nor must it be critical in the oppositional sense of the term in order to ensure the production of counter-subjectivities.

Starting from the definition of the political as the process of transformative becoming, monistic vital materialism rather defines political subjectivity as a process of collectively driven autopoiesis or transversal self-styling, which I define as becoming-nomadic. This process involves complex and continuous negotiations with power relations in the sense of both *potestas* and *potentia*, that is to say, with both dominant norms and values and with virtual possibilities. This also generates multiple forms of accountability (Braidotti, *Transpositions*) or a multi-layered and multi-directional frame of relationality.

We are indebted to Félix Guattari for broadening the principle of autopoiesis (originally coined by Varela to refer to biological organisms only) to cover also the machines or allopoietic systems of technological others. Another name for subjectivity, according to Guattari, is autopoietic subjectivation, or self-styling, which accounts both for living organisms, humans as self-organising systems, and also for inorganic matter, the machines. Ever since Guattari, the notion of "machinic autopoiesis" has been offered as an alternative to oppositional models of political subjectivity, thus establishing the qualitative link between organic matter and technological or machinic artefacts, which I described at the outset of this essay as a necessary precondition for a contemporary form of monistic political ontology. The process of autopoietic self-styling aims at self-organisation and meta-stability by embedding the subject in transversal technologically mediated relations, while avoiding all kinds of reductive thinking.

The double challenge of de-linking political subjectivity both from oppositional consciousness and from critique defined as negativity, is one of the main issues raised by a monistic approach to a general ecology of the subject. Not only is human subjectivity re-defined as an expanded relational self, which includes non-human others, but it also allows us to open up to the virtual forces of Life—which is what I have coded as *zoe* (Braidotti, *Transpositions*).

Deleuze also refers to this vital energy as the great animal, the cosmic "machine," not in any mechanistic or utilitarian way, but in order to avoid any reference to biological determinism on the one hand and overinflated, psychologised individualism on the other. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and

Guattari use the term "Chaos" to refer to the endless supply of cosmic energy. They are also careful to point out, however, that Chaos is not chaotic, but that it rather contains the infinity of all virtual forces. These potentialities are real insofar as they call for actualisation through pragmatic and sustainable practices, which require collective assemblages and praxis.

The challenge for a critical theory of general ecology, therefore, is first to develop a dynamic and sustainable notion of vitalist, self-organising materiality which encompasses technological mediation. Secondly, we need to strive to enlarge the frame and scope of subjectivity along the transversal lines of post-anthropocentric relations, or assemblages that include non-human agents. Thirdly, we need to cultivate the awareness that subjectivity is not the exclusive prerogative of anthropos; that it is not linked to transcendental reason and furthermore it is unhinged from the dialectics of recognition, being based on the immanence of relations.

In this frame of reference, an environmentally bound post-anthropocentric vision of the subject rests on the non-Kantian ethics of codetermination between self and other. The notion of codependence replaces that of recognition, much as the ethics of sustainability replaces the moral philosophy of rights. This move stresses the importance of situated and hence accountable perspectives and grounds a kind of *zoe*-centred egalitarianism, which I see as the ethical core of a monistic politics. I have defended it as a materialist and generative response to the opportunistic trans-species commodification of Life that is the logic of advanced capitalism (Braidotti, *The Posthuman*).

A Pragmatic Relational Ethics

The emphasis on the transversality of relations unifies material and symbolic, concrete and discursive, embedded and technological forces. Transversality actualises *zoe*-centred egalitarianism as an ethics and also as a method to account for forms of alternative subjectivity. An ethics based on the primacy of the relation, of interdependence, values *zoe* in itself, as the practice of "radical neo-materialism" (Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 132), neo-materialism (DeLanda), or

"matter-realism" (Fraser, Kember and Lury) and "vibrant matter" (Bennett). These vitalist ideas are supported by and intersect with changing understandings of the structure of matter itself, under the impact of contemporary bio-genetics and information technologies. Transversality actualises an ethics based on the primacy of the relation, of interdependence, which values non-human or a-personal life.

Species equality in a post-anthropocentric world does urge us to question the violence and the hierarchical thinking that result from human arrogance and the assumption of transcendental human exceptionalism. Monistic relationality stresses instead the more compassionate aspect of subjectivity, allowing us to bypass the pitfalls of binary thinking and to address the environmental question in its full complexity, notably the proximity to animals, the planetary dimension, and the high level of technological mediation. Machinic autopoiesis means that the technological is a site of post-anthropocentric becoming, or the threshold to many possible worlds.

Because power is not a steady location operated by a single masterful owner, monistic politics identifies differential mechanisms of distribution of power effects at the core of subjectivity. Multiple mechanisms of capture also engender multiple forms of resistance. Power-formations are time-bound and consequently temporary and contingent upon social action and interaction. Movement and speed, lines of sedimentation and lines of flight are the main factors that affect the formation of non-unitary, neo-materialist subjects. They express political agency not in the critical and negative sense of dialectical oppositions, but rather rely instead on affirmation and the pursuit of counter-actualisations of the virtual. An activist embrace of *zoe* introduces a planetary dimension that involves not only continuous negotiations with dominant norms and values, but also the politics of co-production of affirmative and sustainable alternatives.

A materialist politics works by potential becomings that call for actualisation. It is immanent and pragmatic, though it often expresses itself in complicated language. The becoming-minor or nomadic is a counter-actualisation in that it strives to sustain processes of subject-formation that do not comply with the dominant norms. These counter-subjectivities are enacted through a collectively shared praxis and

support the process of re-composition of what is not yet there—or, as Deleuze calls a "missing" people in "Literature and Life" (228). Composing a community around the shared affects and concepts of becoming-minoritarian is the key to neo-materalist transformative politics. It expresses the affirmative, ethical dimension of vital politics as a gesture of collective self-styling, or mutual specification. It actualises a community that is not bound negatively by shared vulnerability (pace Levinas), the guilt of ancestral communal violence (pace Freud), or the melancholia of unpayable ontological debts (pace Lacan and Derrida), but rather by the compassionate acknowledgment of its interdependence with multiple others most of which, in the age of the Anthropocene, are quite simply not anthropomorphic.

I want to argue for a vitalist ethics for technologically bio-mediated others. We are becoming monistic—embodied and embedded, affective and relational—ethical subjects in our multiple capacities for relations of all sorts and modes of communications by codes that transcend the linguistic sign by exceeding it in many directions. At this particular point in our collective history we simply do not know what our enfleshed selves, minds and bodies as one, can actually do. We need to find out by embracing an ethics of experiment with intensities, in a form of ontological relationality. A sustainable ethics for non-unitary subjects rests on 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 on the one hand and the barriers of negativity on the other.

A neo-materialist vital subject combines ethical values with the well-being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes one's territorial or environmental interconnections. 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, or from the moral universalism of the Kantians and their reliance on extending Human Rights to all species, virtual entities, and cellular compositions (Nussbaum). The ethical relation is postulated on affirmative grounds as joint projects and activities, dynamic praxis, and collective imaginings (Gatens and Lloyd).

This process-oriented vision of the subject is capable of a universalistic reach, though it rejects moral and cognitive universalism. It expresses a grounded, partial form of accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity and relationality, which results in a renewed claim to community and belonging by singular subjects. Lloyd refers to these locally situated micro-universalist claims as "a collaborative morality" (74). The stated criteria for this new ethics include: non-profit, an emphasis on the collective, an acceptance of relationality and of viral contaminations, concerted efforts at experimenting with and actualising potential or virtual options, and a new link between theory and practice, including a central role for creativity. They are not moral injunctions, but dynamic frames for an ongoing experiment with intensities. They need to be enacted collectively, so as to produce effective cartographies of how much bodies can take, which is why I also call them thresholds of sustainability (Braidotti, *Transpositions*). They aim to create collective bonds, a new affective community or polity.

The key notion in this ethics is the transcendence of negativity. What this means concretely is that 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, that is to say by mobilising resources and visions that have been left untapped and by actualising them in daily practices of interconnection with others. This project requires both a humble and pragmatic approach and energy, qualities which are neither especially in fashion in academic circles, nor highly valued scientifically in these times of coercive pursuit of globalised "excellence." 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 typified feminist theory as a double-edged vision, with a strong critical and an equally strong creative function. That creative dimension has been central ever since (Haraway, *Modest_Witness; Companion Species;* Rich), and it constitutes the affirmative and innovative core of the radical epistemologies of feminism, gender, race, and postcolonial studies. 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 embodied females have become.

A new practice of neo-material vital subjectivity emerges therefore as an empirical project that aims at experimenting with what contemporary, bio-technologically mediated bodies are capable of becoming. These non-profit experiments with alternative contemporary subjectivities are more necessary than ever in the age of the Anthropocene. They support the effort to actualise the virtual possibilities of an expanded, relational self that functions in a nature-culture continuum and is moreover technologically mediated: "naturecultures" (Haraway, *Modest_Witness*) have mutated into "media natures" (Parikka).

Provided that we accept a neo-materialist, vital, monistic conceptual framework as the grounds for a redefinition of posthuman subjectivity, do we in fact *need* to refer to the notion of the Anthropocene? How useful is the notion of the Anthropocene? How inclusive and how representative? This idea has already spawned several alternative terms, such as "Capitalocene," "Anthrop-obscene," "Chthulucene," but also "Plastic-ene" and "Mis-anthropocene."[4] Several alternative visions are emerging from the implosion of the category of the "human" and the explosion of multiple forms of inhuman, non-human, and posthuman subject positions. Such diversification is both quantitative and qualitative: it expresses geo-political and socio-economic differences while sustaining common concerns in a post-anthropocentric world order. My argument is that a monistic approach is the most productive and pragmatic framework to re-think both the terms of reference and the practice of becoming-subject in such a world.

Analyses of power formations are therefore more necessary than ever. Although there is no denying the global reach of the problems we are facing today, which indicates that "we" are in *this* anthropocenic crisis together, such awareness must not be allowed to flatten out the power differentials that sustain the collective subject ("we") and its endeavor (*this*). We need sharper analyses of the politics of our locations and adequate representations of their contradictions. Locations are

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4. See Moore; Haraway, *Staying*; and Parikka.

both social markers and frames for self-reflexive analyses; they mark both belonging and difference. Considering the broad range of in/non/post-human locations in contemporary scholarship, there may well be multiple and potentially contradictory projects at stake in the complex re-compositions of the human, inhuman, non-human, and posthuman at work right now. This is not a time for conformist and mono-logical schemes of thought, but rather for complexity and diversity in thinking as well as in society.

A non-profit, experimental approach to different practices of subjectivity within a monistic ontology runs against the spirit of contemporary capitalism. Under the cover of individualism, fuelled by a quantitative range of consumers' choices, that system effectively promotes uniformity and conformism to the dominant ideology of possessive individualism (MacPherson), tied to the profit principle. This is precisely the opposite direction from the non-profit experimentations with intensity, which I defend in my approach. We need to experiment with multiple intensities—within an understanding of life as *zoe*, that is, non-human—in order to find out what we are capable of becoming. This affirmative politics is monism's gift and it contributes to a general ecology by redefining one's sense of attachment and connection to a shared world, a territorial space: urban, social, psychic, ecological, technological, planetary as it may be. It expresses multiple ecologies of belonging, while it enacts the transformation of one's sensorial and perceptual co-ordinates, in order to acknowledge the collective nature and outward-bound direction of what we still call the self. This "self" is in fact a moveable assemblage within a common life-space which the subject never masters nor possesses, but merely inhabits, crosses, always in a community, a pack, a group, an assemblage, or a cluster. The subject is a transversal entity, fully immersed in and immanent to a network of human and non-human (animal, vegetable, viral) relations, which include the techno-sphere. Embedded and relational, affective and material, this vision of subjectivity combines transformation with ethical accountability, thus offering robust grounding to a new ecology of selves.

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