

The Posthuman

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for systems that obey pre-defined rules rather than decision-making systems. Secondly, when ethical systems are embedded in robots, the judgements they make need to be ones that seem right to most people. The techniques of experimental philosophy, which studies how people respond to ethical dilemmas, should be able to help. Thirdly, new interdisciplinary collaboration is required between engineers, ethicists, lawyers and policy-makers, all of whom would draw up very different rules if left to their own devices. They all stand to gain by working with each other.

What is posthuman about the situation outlined in *The Economist* is that it does not assume a human, individualized self as the deciding factor of main subject. It rather envisages what I would call a transversal inter-connection or an 'assemblage' of human and non-human actors, not unlike Latour's Actor Network Theory (Law and Hassard, 1999). It is significant that a rather cautious and conservative journal like *The Economist*, faced with the challenge of the posthuman powers of the technologies we have developed, does not call for a return to humanist values, but for pragmatic experimentation. This prompts three comments on my part: firstly, that I could not agree more that this is no time for nostalgic longings for the humanist past, but for forward-looking experiments with new forms of subjectivity. Secondly, I want to emphasize the normatively neutral structure of contemporary technologies: they are not endowed with intrinsic humanistic agency. Thirdly, I note that the advocates of advanced capitalism seem to be faster in grasping the creative potential of the posthuman than some of the well-meaning and progressive neo-humanist opponents of this system. I will return in the next chapter to the opportunist brand of the posthuman developed in the contemporary market economy.

Critical Posthumanism

The third strand of posthuman thought, my own variation, shows no conceptual or normative ambivalence towards posthumanism. I want to move beyond analytic posthumanism and develop affirmative perspectives on the posthuman subject. My inspiration for taking the jump into critical post-

humanism comes from my anti-humanist roots, of course. More specifically, the current of thought that has gone further in unfolding the productive potential of the posthuman predicament can be genealogically traced back to the post-structuralists, the anti-universalism of feminism and the anti-colonial phenomenology of Frantz Fanon (1967) and of his teacher Aimé Césaire (1955). What they have in common in a sustained commitment to work out the implications of posthumanism for our shared understandings of the human subject and of humanity as a whole.

The work of post-colonial and race theorists displays a situated cosmopolitan posthumanism that is supported as much by the European tradition as by non-Western sources of moral and intellectual inspiration. The examples are manifold and deserve more in-depth analysis than I can grant them here; for now, let me pick out the main gist of it.⁸

Edward Said (1978) was among the first to alert critical theorists in the West to the need to develop a reasoned scholarly account of Enlightenment-based secular Humanism, which would take into account the colonial experience, its violent abuses and structural injustice, as well as post-colonial existence. Post-colonial theory developed this insight into the notion that ideals of reason, secular tolerance, equality under the Law and democratic rule, need not be, and indeed historically have not been, mutually exclusive with European practices of violent domination, exclusion and systematic and instrumental use of terror. Acknowledging that reason and barbarism are not self-contradictory, nor are Enlightenment and horror, need not result in either cultural relativism, or in moral nihilism, but rather in a radical critique of the notion of Humanism and its link with both democratic criticism and secularism. Edward Said defends the idea that:

⁸ Significant examples are: Avtar Brah's diasporic ethics (1996) echoes Vandana Shiva's anti-global neo-Humanism (1997). African Humanism or Ubuntu is receiving more attention, from Patricia Hill Collins (1991) to Drucilla Cornell (2002). In a more nomadic vein, Edouard Glissant's politics of relations (1997) inscribed multi-lingual hybridity at the heart of the contemporary posthuman condition. Homi Bhabha's 'subaltern secularism' (1994) builds on the huge legacy of Edward Said.

It is possible to be critical of Humanism in the name of Humanism and that, schooled in its abuses by the experience of Eurocentrism and empire, one could fashion a different kind of Humanism that was cosmopolitan and text-and-language bound in ways that absorbed the great lessons of the past [. . .] and still remain attuned to the emergent voices and currents of the present, many of them exilic extraterritorial and unhoused. (2004: 11)

Fighting for such subaltern secular spaces is a priority for a posthuman quest for what is known in some quarters as a 'global ethic for global politics and economics' (Kung, 1998).

Paul Gilroy's planetary cosmopolitanism (2000) also proposes a productive form of contemporary critical posthumanism. Gilroy holds Europe and the Europeans accountable for our collective failure in implementing the ideals of the humanist Enlightenment. Like the feminists, race theorists are suspicious of deconstructing a subject-position, which historically they never gained the right to. Gilroy considers colonialism and fascism as a betrayal of the European ideal of the Enlightenment, which he is determined to defend, holding Europeans accountable for their ethical and political failings. Racism splits common humanity and disengages whites from any ethical sensibility, reducing them to an inhuman moral status. It also reduces non-whites to a subhuman ontological status that exposes them to murderous violence. Taking a strong stand against the return of fundamentalist appeals to ethnic differences by a variety of white, black, Serbian, Rwandan, Texan and other nationalists, Gilroy denounces what Deleuze calls 'micro-fascisms' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) as the epidemics of our globalized times. He locates the site of the ethical transformation in the critique of each nationalistic category, not in the assertion of a new dominant one. He sets diasporic mobility and the transcultural interconnections up against the forces of nationalism. This is a theory of mixture, hybridity and cosmopolitanism that is resolutely non-racial. Against the enduring power of nation states, Gilroy posits instead the affirmative politics of transversal movements, such as anti-slavery, feminism, *Médécins sans frontières* and the like.

An altogether different and powerful source of inspiration for contemporary re-configurations of critical posthumanism

is ecology and environmentalism. They rest on an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others. This practice of relating to others requires and is enhanced by the rejection of self-centred individualism. It produces a new way of combining self-interests with the well-being of an enlarged community, based on environmental inter-connections.

Environmental theory stresses the link between the humanistic emphasis on Man as the measure of all things and the domination and exploitation of nature and condemns the abuses of science and technology. Both of them involve epistemic and physical violence over the structural 'others' and are related to the European Enlightenment ideal of 'reason'. The worldview which equated Mastery with rational scientific control over 'others' also militated against the respect for the diversity of living matters and of human cultures (Mies and Shiva, 1993). The environmental alternative is a new holistic approach that combines cosmology with anthropology and post-secular, mostly feminist spirituality, to assert the need for loving respect for diversity in both its human and non-human forms. Significantly, Shiva and Mies stress the importance of life-sustaining spirituality in this struggle for new concrete forms of universality: a reverence for the sacredness of life, of deeply seated respect for all that lives. This attitude is opposed to Western Humanism and to the West's investment in rationality and secularity as the pre-condition for development through science and technology. In a holistic perspective, they call for the 're-enchantment of the world' (1993: 18), or for healing the Earth and that which has been so cruelly disconnected. Instead of the emphasis on emancipation from the realm of natural necessity, Shiva pleads for a form of emancipation that occurs within that realm and in harmony with it. From this shift of perspective there follows a critique of the ideal of equality as the emulation of masculine modes of behaviour and also the rejection of the model of development that is built upon this ideal and is compatible with world-wide forms of market domination.

Although ecological posthumanists like Shiva take great care to distance themselves from anything that is even remotely related to 'post'-modernism, post-colonialism, or post-feminism, paradoxically, they share in the epistemic

premises of posthuman critiques. For instance, they agree with the post-structuralist generation on the critique of the homogenization of cultures under the effects of globalized advanced capitalism. They propose as an alternative a robust type of environmentalism, based on non-Western neo-humanism. What matters for Mies and Shiva is the reassertion of the need for new universal values in the sense of interconnectedness among humans, on a worldwide scale. Thus, universal needs are amalgamated to universal rights and they cover as much basic and concrete necessities, such as food, shelter, health, safety, as higher cultural needs, like education, identity, dignity, knowledge, affection, joy and care. These constitute the material grounding of the situated claims to new ethical values.

A new ecological posthumanism thus raises issues of power and entitlement in the age of globalization and calls for self-reflexivity on the part of the subjects who occupy the former humanist centre, but also those who dwell in one of the many scattered centres of power of advanced post-modernity (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994).

In my own work, I define the critical posthuman subject within an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity, that is to say a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable. Posthuman subjectivity expresses an embodied and embedded and hence partial form of accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity, relationality and hence community building.

My position is in favour of complexity and promotes radical posthuman subjectivity, resting on the ethics of becoming, as we shall see in the next chapter. The focus is shifted accordingly from unitary to nomadic subjectivity, thus running against the grain of high humanism and its contemporary variations. This view rejects individualism, but also asserts an equally strong distance from relativism or nihilistic defeatism. It promotes 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. A posthuman 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. As we saw earlier, contemporary bio-genetic capitalism generates a global form of reactive mutual inter-dependence of all living organisms, including non-humans. This sort of unity tends to be of the negative kind, as a shared form of vulnerability, that is to say a global sense of inter-connection between the human and the non-human environment in the face of common threats. The posthuman recomposition of human interaction that I propose is not the same as the reactive bond of vulnerability, but is an affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others.

As we shall see in the next chapter, for me there is a necessary link between critical posthumanism and the move beyond anthropocentrism. I refer to this move as expanding the notion of Life towards the non-human or *zoe*. This results in radical posthumanism as a position that transposes hybridity, nomadism, diasporas and creolization processes into means of re-grounding claims to subjectivity, connections and community among subjects of the human and the non-human kind. This is the next step of the argument, which I will outline in chapter 2.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced my own itinerary out of the multiple possible genealogies of the posthuman, including the rise of alternative forms of critical posthumanism. These new formations are postulated on the demise of that ‘Man’ – the former measure of all things. Eurocentrism, masculinism and anthropocentrism are exposed accordingly as complex and internally differentiated phenomena. This alone is in keeping with the highly complex character of the concept of Humanism itself. There are in fact many Humanisms and my own itinerary, generationally and geo-politically, struggles essentially with one specific genealogical line:

The romantic and positivistic Humanisms through which the European bourgeoisies established their hegemonies over (modernity), the revolutionary Humanism that shook the world and the liberal Humanism that sought to tame it, the

Humanism of the Nazis and the Humanisms of their victims and opponents, the antihumanist Humanism of Heidegger and the humanist antihumanism of Foucault and Althusser, the secularist Humanism of Huxley and Dawkins or the post-humanism of Gibson and Haraway. (Davies, 1997: 141)

The fact that these different humanisms cannot be reduced to one linear narrative is part of the problem and the paradoxes involved in attempting to overcome Humanism. What seems absolutely clear to me is the historical, ethical and political necessity to overcome this notion, in the light of its history of unfulfilled promises and unacknowledged brutality. A key methodological and tactical measure to support this process is to practise the politics of location, or situated and accountable knowledge practices.

Let me conclude with three crucial remarks: firstly, that we do need a new theory of the subject that takes stock of the posthuman turn and hence acknowledges the decline of Humanism. Secondly, as shown by the proliferation of critical posthuman positions both within and outside the Western philosophical tradition, the end of classical Humanism is not a crisis, but entails positive consequences. Thirdly, advanced capitalism has been quick in sensing and exploiting the opportunities opened by the decline of western Humanism and the processes of cultural hybridization induced by globalization. I will address the latter in the next chapter, so let me say something briefly about the other two points.

Firstly, we need to work out the implications of the posthuman predicament in the sense of the decline of European Humanism in order to develop a robust foundation for ethical and political subjectivity. The posthuman era is ripe with contradictions as we shall see in the next two chapters. These call for ethical evaluation, political intervention and normative action. It follows therefore that the posthuman subject is not postmodern, that is to say it is not anti-foundationalist. Nor is it deconstructivist, because it is not linguistically framed. The posthuman subjectivity I advocate is rather materialist and vitalist, embodied and embedded, firmly located somewhere, according to the feminist 'politics of location', which I have stressed throughout this chapter. Why do I stress so much the issue of the subject? Because a theory

of subjectivity as both materialist and relational, ‘nature-cultural’ and self-organizing is crucial in order to elaborate critical tools suited to the complexity and contradictions of our times. A merely analytical form of posthuman thought does not go far enough. More especially, a serious concern for the subject allows us to take into account the elements of creativity and imagination, desire, hopes and aspirations (Moore, 2011) without which we simply cannot make sense of contemporary global culture and its posthuman overtones. We need a vision of the subject that is ‘worthy of the present’.

This brings us to my second concluding remark: the issue of Eurocentrism in terms of ‘methodological nationalism’ (Beck, 2007) and its long-standing bond to Humanism. Contemporary European subjects of knowledge must meet the ethical obligation to be accountable for their past history and the long shadow it casts on their present-day politics.⁹ The new mission that Europe has to embrace entails the criticism of narrow-minded self-interests, intolerance and xenophobic rejection of otherness. Symbolic of the closure of the European mind is the fate of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers who bear the brunt of racism in contemporary Europe.

A new agenda needs to be set, which is no longer that of European or Eurocentric universal, rational subjectivity, but rather a radical transformation of it, in a break from Europe’s imperial, fascistic and undemocratic tendencies. As I stated earlier on in this chapter, since the second half of the twentieth century, the crisis of philosophical Humanism – also known as the death of ‘Man’ – both reflected and amplified larger concerns about the decline of the geo-political status of Europe as an imperial world-power. Theory and world-historical phenomena work in tandem when it comes to the question of European Humanism. Because of this resonance between the two dimensions, critical theory has a unique contribution to make to the debate on Europe.

I believe that the posthuman condition can facilitate the task of redefining a new role for Europe in an age where global capitalism is both triumphant and clearly deficient in

⁹ As Morin (1987), Passerini (1998), Balibar (2004) and Bauman (2004) have also argued.

terms of sustainability and social justice (Holland, 2011). This hopeful belief rests on the post-nationalist approach (Habermas, 2001; Braidotti, 2006) which expresses the decline of Eurocentrism as a historical event and calls for a qualitative shift of perspective in our collective sense of identity. Seyla Benhabib, in her brilliant work on alternative cosmopolitanism (2007), addresses the question of Europe as a site of transformation. Her emphasis on a pluralist cosmopolitan practice and her commitment to the rights of refugees and stateless people, as well as migrants, innovates on classical universalist notions of cosmopolitanism and calls for situated and context-specific practices. This resonates positively with my situated posthuman ethics. A primary task for posthuman critical theory therefore is to draw accurate and precise cartographies for these different subject positions as spring-boards towards posthuman recompositions of a pan-human cosmopolitan bond.

More specifically, I would like to push the case further than Habermas' social democratic aspiration and argue for a post-human project of 'becoming-minoritarian' or becoming-nomad of Europe (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Braidotti, 2008). This is a way of by-passing a number of binary pitfalls, for instance between a globalized and culturally diverse Europe on the one hand, and the narrow and xenophobic definitions of European identity on the other. The becoming-nomad of Europe entails resistance against nationalism, xenophobia and racism, bad habits of the old imperial Europe. As such, it is the opposite of the grandiose and aggressive universalism of the past, which is replaced by a situated and accountable perspective. It embraces a new political and ethical project, by taking a firm stand also against the 'Fortress Europe' syndrome and reviving tolerance as a tool of social justice (Brown, 2006).

The posthuman turn can support and enhance this project in so far as it displaces the exclusive focus on the idea of Europe as the cradle of Humanism, driven by a form of universalism that endows it with a unique sense of historical purpose. The process of becoming-minoritarian or becoming-nomad of Europe involves the rejection of the self-appointed missionary role of Europe as the alleged centre of the world. If it is the case that a socio-cultural mutation is taking place

in the direction of a multi-ethnic, multi-media society, then the transformation cannot affect only the pole of 'the others'. It must equally dislocate the position and the prerogative of 'the same', the former centre. The project of developing a new kind of post-nationalist nomadic European identity is certainly challenging in that it requires dis-identification from established, nation-bound identities. This project is political at heart, but it has a strong affective core made of convictions, vision and active desire for change. We can collectively empower these alternative becomings.

My posthuman sensibility may come across as visionary and even impatient, but it is very pro-active or, to use my favourite term: affirmative. Affirmative politics combines critique with creativity in the pursuit of alternative visions and projects. As far as I am concerned, the challenge of the post-human condition consists in grabbing the opportunities offered by the decline of the unitary subject position upheld by Humanism, which has mutated in a number of complex directions. For instance: the cultural inter-mixity already available within our post-industrial ethno-scapes and the recompositions of genders and sexualities sizzling under the apparently sedate image of equal opportunities, far from being indicators of a crisis, are productive events. They are the new starting points that bring into play untapped possibilities for bonding, community building and empowerment. Similarly, the current scientific revolution, led by contemporary bio-genetic, environmental, neural and other sciences, creates powerful alternatives to established practices and definitions of subjectivity. Instead of falling back on the sedimented habits of thought that the humanist past has institutionalized, the posthuman predicament encourages us to undertake a leap forward into the complexities and paradoxes of our times. To meet this task, new conceptual creativity is needed.

anthropocentric humanism, which predicates the sovereignty of Sameness in a falsely universalistic mode, my sex fell on the side of ‘Otherness’, understood as pejorative difference, or as being-worth-less-than. The becoming-posthuman speaks to my feminist self, partly because my sex, historically speaking, never quite made it into full humanity, so my allegiance to that category is at best negotiable and never to be taken for granted.

The Posthuman as Becoming-earth

The displacement of anthropocentrism results in a drastic restructuring of humans’ relation to animals, but critical theory may be able to adjust itself to the challenge, mostly by building on the multiple imaginary and affective ties that have consolidated human–animal interaction. The post-anthropocentric shift towards a planetary, geo-centred perspective, however, is a conceptual earthquake of an altogether different scale than the becoming-animal of Man. This event is sending seismic waves across the field of the Humanities and critical theory. Claire Colebrook, with her customary wit, calls it a ‘critical climate change’.⁵

In the age of anthropocene, the phenomenon known as ‘geo-morphism’ is usually expressed in negative terms, as environmental crisis, climate change and ecological sustainability. Yet, there is also a more positive dimension to it in the sense of reconfiguring the relationship to our complex habitat, which we used to call ‘nature’. The earth or planetary dimension of the environmental issue is indeed not a concern like any other. It is rather the issue that is immanent to all others, in so far as the earth is our middle and common ground. This is the ‘milieu’ for all of us, human and non-human inhabitant of this particular planet, in this particular era. The planetary opens onto the cosmic in an immanent materialist dimension. My argument is that, again, this change of perspective is rich in alternatives for a renewal of subjectivity. What would a geo-centred subject look like?

⁵ This is the title of the on-line book series that Colebrook edits for the Open Humanities Press.

The starting point for me remains the nature–culture continuum, but by now we need to insert into this framework the monistic insight that, as Lloyd put it, we are all ‘part of nature’ (1994). This statement, which she frames in a monistic ontology based on Spinoza’s philosophy, is sobering as well as inspiring. It is further complicated, for us citizens of the third millennium, by the fact that we actually inhabit a nature–culture continuum which is both technologically mediated and globally enforced. This means that we cannot assume a theory of subjectivity that takes for granted naturalistic foundationalism, nor can we rely on a social constructivist and hence dualistic theory of the subject which disavows the ecological dimension. Instead, critical theory needs to fulfil potentially contradictory requirements.

The first is to develop a dynamic and sustainable notion of vitalist, self-organizing materiality; the second is to enlarge the frame and scope of subjectivity along the transversal lines of post-anthropocentric relations I outlined in the previous section. The idea of subjectivity as an assemblage that includes non-human agents has a number of consequences. Firstly, it implies that subjectivity is not the exclusive prerogative of *anthropos*; secondly, that it is not linked to transcendental reason; thirdly, that it is unhinged from the dialectics of recognition; and lastly, that it is based on the immanence of relations. The challenge for critical theory is momentous: we need to visualize the subject as a transversal entity encompassing the human, our genetic neighbours the animals and the earth as a whole, and to do so within an understandable language.

Let us pause on the latter for a minute, as it raises the issue of representation, which is crucial for the Humanities and for critical theory. Finding an adequate language for post-anthropocentrism means that the resources of the imagination, as well as the tools of critical intelligence, need to be enlisted for this task. The collapse of the nature–culture divide requires that we need to devise a new vocabulary, with new figurations to refer to the elements of our posthuman embodied and embedded subjectivity. The limitations of the social constructivist method show up here 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 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 green politics.

As if this mistrust of the natural were not enough, we also need to reconceptualize the relation to the technological artefact as something as intimate 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. Throughout this change of parameters, I also want to be ever mindful of the importance of the politics of locations and keep investigating who exactly is the 'we' who is positing all these queries in the first place. This new scheme for rethinking posthuman subjectivity is as rich as it is complex, but it is grounded in real-life, world-historical conditions that are confronting us with pressing urgency.

Dipesh Chakrabarty (2009) addresses some of these concerns by investigating the consequences of the climate change debate for the practice of history. He argues that the scholarship on climate change causes both spatial and temporal difficulties. It brings about a change of scale in our thinking, which now needs to encompass a planetary or geo-centred dimension, acknowledging that humans are larger than a biological entity and now wield a geological force. It also shifts the temporal parameters away from the expectation of continuity which sustains the discipline of history, to contemplate the idea of extinction, that is to say, a future without 'us'. Furthermore, these shifts in the basic parameters also affect the content of historical research, by 'destroying the artificial but time honoured distinction between natural and human histories' (Chakrabarty, 2009: 206). Although Chakrabarty does not take the post-anthropocentric path, he comes to the same conclusion as I do: the issue of geo-centred perspectives and the change of location of humans from mere biological to geological agents calls for recompositions of both subjectivity and community.

The geo-centred turn also has other serious political implications. The first concerns the limitations of classical Humanism in the Enlightenment model. Relying on post-colonial

theory, Chakrabarty points out that the ‘philosophers of freedom were mainly, and understandably, concerned with how humans would escape the injustice, oppression, inequality or even uniformity foisted on them by other humans or human-made systems’ (2009: 208). Their anthropocentrism, coupled with a culture-specific notion of Humanism, limits their relevance today. The climate change issue and the spectre of human extinction also affect ‘the analytic strategies that postcolonial and postimperial historians have deployed in the last two decades in response to the postwar scenario of decolonization and globalization’ (Chakrabarty, 2009: 198). I would add that the social constructivist approach of Marxist, feminist and post-colonial analyses does not completely equip them to deal with the change of spatial and temporal scale engendered by the post-anthropocentric or geo-centred shift. This insight is the core of the radical post-anthropocentric position I want to defend, which I see as a way of updating critical theory for the third millennium.

Many scholars are coming to the same conclusion, through different routes. For instance, post-anthropocentric neo-humanist traditions of socialist or of standpoint feminist theories (Harding, 1986) and of post-colonial theory (Shiva, 1997) have approached the issues of environmentalism in a post-anthropocentric, or at least non-androcentric, or non-male-dominated, manner, as we saw in the previous chapter. This critique of anthropocentrism is expressed in the name of ecological awareness, with strong emphasis on the experience of social minorities like women and of non-Western peoples. The recognition of multicultural perspectives and the critique of imperialism and ethnocentrism add a crucial aspect to the discussion on the becoming-earth, but nowadays they also fall in their own internal contradictions.

Let us take, for instance, the case of ‘deep ecology’. Arne Naess (1977a, 1977b) and James Lovelock’s ‘Gaia’ hypothesis (1979) are geo-centred theories that propose a return to holism and to the notion of the whole earth as a single, sacred organism. This holistic approach is rich in perspectives, but also quite problematic for a vitalist, materialist posthuman thinker. What is problematic about it is less the holistic part than the fact that it is based on a social constructivist dualistic method. This means that it opposes the earth to industrializa-

tion, nature to culture, the environment to society and comes down firmly on the side of the natural order. This results in a relevant political agenda that is critical of consumerism and possessive individualism, including a strong indictment of technocratic reason and technological culture. But this approach has two drawbacks. Firstly, its technophobic aspect is not particularly helpful in itself, considering the world we are living in. Secondly, it paradoxically reinstates the very categorical divide between the natural and the manufactured which it is attempting to overcome.

Why do I not agree with this position? Because of two interrelated ideas: firstly, because of the nature–culture continuum and the subsequent rejection of the dualistic methodology of social constructivism – the post-anthropocentric neo-humanists end up reinstating this distinction, albeit with the best of intentions in relation to the natural order; secondly, because I am suspicious of the negative kind of bonding going on in the age of anthropocene between humans and non-humans. The trans-species embrace is based on the awareness of the impending catastrophe: the environmental crisis and the global warm/ning issue, not to speak of the militarization of space, reduce all species to a comparable degree of vulnerability. The problem with this position is that, in flagrant contradiction with its explicitly stated aims, it promotes full-scale humanization of the environment. This strikes me as a regressive move, reminiscent of the sentimentality of the Romantic phases of European culture. I concur therefore with Val Plumwood's (1993, 2003) assessment that deep ecology misreads the earth–cosmos nexus and merely expands the structures of possessive egoism and self-interests to include non-human agents.

Significantly, while the holistic approach also makes reference to Spinoza's monism, it steers clear of contemporary re-readings of Spinoza by the likes of Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault, or other radical branches of Continental philosophy. Spinoza's idea of the unity of mind and soul is applied in support of the belief that all that lives is holy and the greatest respect is due to it. This idolatry of the natural order is linked to Spinoza's vision of God and the unity between man and nature. It stresses the harmony between the human and the ecological habitat in order to propose a sort of syn-

thesis of the two. Deep ecology is therefore spiritually charged in an essentialist way. Because there are no boundaries and everything is interrelated, to hurt nature is ultimately to hurt ourselves. Thus, the earth environment as a whole deserves the same ethical and political consideration as humans. This position is helpful but it strikes me as a way of humanizing the environment, that is to say, as a well-meaning form of residual anthropomorphic normativity, applied to non-human planetary agents. Compensatory Humanism is a two-faced position.

In contrast with this position, but also building on some of its premises, I would like to propose an updated brand of Spinozism (Citton and Lordon, 2008). I see Spinozist monism, and the radical immanent forms of critique that rest upon it, as a democratic move that promotes a kind of ontological pacifism. 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. In my view, monistic relationality stresses instead the more compassionate aspect of subjectivity. A Spinozist approach, re-read with Deleuze and Guattari, allows us to by-pass the pitfalls of binary thinking and to address the environmental question in its full complexity. Contemporary monism implies a notion of vital and self-organizing matter, as we saw in the previous chapter, as well as a non-human definition of Life as *zoe*, or a dynamic and generative force. It is about ‘the embodiment of the mind and the embrainment of the body’ (Marks, 1998).

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, psychologized individualism on the other. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) also use the term ‘Chaos’ to refer to that ‘roar’ of cosmic energy which most of us would rather ignore. They are careful to point out, however, that Chaos is not chaotic, but it rather contains the infinite expanse of all virtual forces. These potentialities are real in so far as they call for actualization through pragmatic and sustainable practices. To mark this close connection between the virtual and the real, they turn to literature and borrow from James Joyce the neologism ‘chaosmos’. This is

a condensation of 'chaos' and 'cosmos' that expresses the source of eternal energy.

Again, the issue of language and representation comes up in this seemingly abstruse choice of terms. What I find praiseworthy on the part of my critical theory teachers is the extent to which they are willing to take the risk of ridicule by experimenting with language that shocks established habits and deliberately provokes imaginative and emotional reactions. The point of critical theory is to upset common opinion (*doxa*), not to confirm it. Although this approach has met with hostile reception in academia (as we shall see in chapter 4), I see it as a gesture of generous and deliberate risk-taking and hence as a statement in favour of academic freedom.

I consequently experiment with my own alternative figurations, ranging from the nomadic subject to other *conceptual personae* that help me navigate across the stormy waters of the post-anthropocentric predicament. Rigorously materialist, my own nomadic thought defends a post-individualistic notion of the subject, which is marked by a monistic, relational structure. Yet, it is not undifferentiated in terms of the social coordinates of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and race. Nomadic subjectivity is the social branch of complexity theory.

Where does this leave our becoming-earth? Actually, we are in the middle of it. Let us resume the argument from the idea of the posthuman subject. You may remember that the recomposition of a negatively indexed new idea of 'the human' as an endangered species, alongside other non-human categories, is currently celebrated by post-anthropocentric neo-humanists of all sorts, from animal rights activists to eco-feminists. They take the environmental crisis as evidence of the need to reinstate universal humanist values. I have no real quarrels with the moral aspiration that drives this process and share the same ethical longing. I am, however, seriously worried about the limitations of an uncritical reassertion of Humanism as the binding factor of this reactively assumed notion of a pan-human bond. I want to stress that the awareness of a new (negatively indexed) reconstruction of something we call 'humanity' must not be allowed to flatten out or dismiss all the power differentials that are still enacted and operationalized through the axes of sexualization/racializa-

tion/naturalization, just as they are being reshuffled by the spinning machine of advanced, bio-genetic capitalism. Critical theory needs to think simultaneously the blurring of categorical differences and their reassertion as new forms of bio-political, bio-mediated political economy, with familiar patterns of exclusion and domination. For instance, in his analysis of the double limitations of both classical Humanism and Marxist oriented and post-colonial theory, Dipesh Chakrabarty raises a very pertinent question: if you consider the difference in carbon print between richer and poorer nations, is it really fair to speak of the climate change crisis as a common 'human' concern? I would push this further and ask: is it not risky to accept the construction of a negative formation of humanity as a category that stretches to all human beings, *all other differences notwithstanding*? Those differences do exist and continue to matter, so what are we to make of them? The process of becoming-earth points to a qualitatively different planetary relation.

The question of differences leads us back to power and to the politics of locations and the necessity of an ethical-political theory of subjectivity, namely, who exactly is the 'we' of this pan-humanity bonded in fear of a common threat? Chakrabarty puts it lucidly: 'Species may indeed be the name of a pace-holder for an emergent, new universal history of humans that flashes up the moment of the danger that is climate change' (2009: 222). As a result, I would argue that critical theorists need to strike a rigorous and coherent note of resistance against the neutralization of difference that is induced by the perverse materiality and the tendentious mobility of advanced capitalism.

A more egalitarian road, in a *zoe*-centred way, requires a modicum of goodwill on the part of the dominant party, in this case *anthropos* himself, towards his non-human others. I am aware, of course, that this is asking a lot. The post-anthropocentric shift away from the hierarchical relations that had privileged 'Man' requires a form of estrangement and a radical repositioning on the part of the subject. The best method to accomplish this is through the strategy of defamiliarization or critical distance from the dominant vision of the subject. Dis-identification involves the loss of familiar habits of thought and representation in order to pave the way

for creative alternatives. Deleuze would call it an active 'deterritorialization'. Race and post-colonial theories have also made important contributions to the methodology and the political strategy of de-familiarization (Gilroy, 2005). I have defended this method as a dis-identification from familiar and hence normative values, such as the dominant institutions and representations of femininity and masculinity, so as to move sexual difference towards the process of becoming-minoritarian (Braidotti, 1994, 2011a). In a similar vein, Spinozist feminist thinkers like Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd (1999) argue that socially embedded and historically grounded changes require a qualitative shift of our 'collective imaginings', or a shared desire for transformations. The conceptual frame of reference I have adopted for the method of de-familiarization is monism. It implies the open-ended, inter-relational, multi-sexed and trans-species flows of becoming through interaction with multiple others. A posthuman subject thus constituted exceeds the boundaries of both anthropocentrism and of compensatory humanism, to acquire a planetary dimension.

The Posthuman as Becoming-machine

The issue of technology is central to the post-anthropocentric predicament and it has already come out several times in the previous sections. The relationship between the human and the technological other has shifted in the contemporary context, to reach unprecedented degrees of intimacy and intrusion. The posthuman predicament is such as to force a displacement of the lines of demarcation between structural differences, or ontological categories, for instance between the organic and the inorganic, the born and the manufactured, flesh and metal, electronic circuits and organic nervous systems.

As in the case of human-animal relations, the move is beyond metaphorization. The metaphorical or analogue function that machinery fulfilled in modernity, as an anthropocentric device that imitated embodied human capacities, is replaced today by a more complex political economy that connects bodies to machines more intimately, through simu-