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NOMADIC THEORY

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INTRODUCTION

> It's not enough simply to say concepts possess movement; you also have to construct intellectually mobile concepts.
>
> —GILLES DELEUZE, *NEGOTIATIONS*

This volume of selected essays presents an ongoing project in nomadic theory, with the aim of analyzing, illustrating, and assessing the relevance of nomadic thought today. It constitutes the companion to *Nomadic Subjects*, which has just been published in a revised and expanded second edition (Braidotti 2011). The two books are sequential and interlinked, though each is autonomous and stands on its own: *Nomadic Theory* is in some ways the application of the fundamental principles outlined in the previous volume. Being single and multiple, independent and interconnected, *Nomadic Subjects* and *Nomadic Theory* form a complex singularity or a nondualistic assemblage. They frame and actualize a nomadology that instills movement and mobility at the heart of thinking. My aim in this book is to explore from a variety of locations the method, structure, and the practical applications of nomadic theory. This volume argues that thinking today is structurally nomadic. There are at least three ways to illustrate this principle: conceptually, politically, and contextually. Let me address each one of these in order, by way of an introduction.

CONCEPT

Conceptually, nomadic thought stresses the idea of embodiment and the embodied and embedded material structure of what we commonly call thinking. It is a materialism of the flesh that unifies mind and body in a new approach that blurs all boundaries. The embodiment of the mind and the embrainment of the body (Marks 1998) are a more apt formulation for nomadic thought than Cartesian or other forms of dualism. Nomadic thought builds on the insights of psychoanalysis by stressing the dynamic and self-organizing structure of thought processes. The space of nomadic thinking is framed by perceptions, concepts, and imaginings that cannot be reduced to human, rational consciousness. In a vitalist materialist way, nomadic thought invests all that lives, even inorganic matter, with the power of consciousness in the sense of self-affection. Not only does consciousness not coincide with mere rationality, but it is not even the prerogative of humans. This emphasis on affect and extended consciousness, however, is not the same as the Freudian unconscious.

Nomadic thought rejects the psychoanalytic idea of repression and the negative definition of desire as lack inherited from Hegelian dialectics. It borrows instead from Spinoza a positive notion of desire as an ontological force of becoming. This achieves an important goal: it makes all thinking into an affirmative activity that aims at the production of concepts, precepts, and affects in the relational motion of approaching multiple others. Thinking is about tracing lines of flight and zigzagging patterns that undo dominant representations. Dynamic and outward bound, nomadic thought undoes the static authority of the past and redefines memory as the faculty that decodes residual traces of half-effaced presences; it retrieves archives of leftover sensations and accesses afterthoughts, flashbacks, and mnemonic traces. Philosophical thought especially is a form of self-reflexivity unfolding in perpetual motion in a continuous present that is project oriented and intrapersonal.

The emphasis nomadic thought places on bodily materialism goes far in dispelling the transcendental assumptions of classical philosophy. It emphasises the machinic yet vibrant quality of the lived body, for instance by stressing how the mind is affected by the dynamic nature of perception and the data inscription relayed by complex neural networks in the brain. Even

the loftiest of philosophical dialogues relies on the movements of the vocal chords and lips of speaking subjects engaged in that specific mode of relation. The motions and passions of the cognitive, perceptive, and affective faculties engender creative leaps of the imagination that animate the mind, illuminate the senses, and connect transversally well beyond the frame of the individual self. Nomadic philosophy is the discursive practice with the highest degree of affinity to the mobility of intelligence: it is both physical, material, and yet speculative and ethereal. The dialogue itself is a movement of exchange between two consenting antagonists, such as friends, opponents, or traveling companions. Philosophical thought is the martial art of the mind in that it frames and choreographs the space in between self and other with the aim to figure out, contain, and anticipate each other's reactions. Philosophical thought is structurally nomadic.

This materialist approach to philosophy rests on a monistic vision of matter in opposition to dichotomous and dualistic ways of thought. A nomadic concept offers a strong alternative not only to liberal individualism discourses but also to the branch of poststructurally inflected linguistically based theories that overemphasize melancholia and the work of mourning (Derrida 2001). Nomadic theory foregrounds the force of affirmation as the empowering mode for both critical theory and political praxis. This is a crucial and incisive distinction: whereas the linguistic turn produces a negative form of social constructivism—matter being formatted and regulated by a master code—nomadic thought conceptualizes matter as self-organized and relational in its very structures. This means that each nomadic connection offers at least the possibility of an ethical relation of opening out toward an empowering connection to others. Each relation is therefore an ethical project indexed on affirmation and mutual specification, not on the dialectics of recognition and lack.

POLITICS

Politically, nomadic thought is the expression of a nonunitary vision of the subject, defined by motion in a complex manner that is densely material. It invites us to rethink the structures and boundaries of the self by tackling the deeper conceptual roots of issues of identity. It is particularly important not to confuse the process of nomadic subjectivity with individualism or

particularity. Whereas identity is a bounded, ego-indexed habit of fixing and capitalizing on one's selfhood, subjectivity is a socially mediated process of relations and negotiations with multiple others and with multilayered social structures.

Consequently, the emergence of social subjects is always a collective enterprise, "external" to the self, while it also mobilizes the self's in-depth structures. Issues of subjectivity raise questions of entitlement, in terms of power as restrictive (*potestas*) but also as empowering or affirmative (*potentia*). Power relations act simultaneously as the most "external," collective, social phenomenon and also as the most intimate or "internal" one. Or, rather, power is the process that flows incessantly in between the most "internal" and the most "external" forces. As Foucault taught us, power is a situation or a process, not an object or an essence. Subjectivity is the effect of these constant flows of in-between power connections. This produces a methodology that is very important for nomadic thought: the cartographic method. A cartography is a theoretically based and politically informed reading of the process of power relations. It fulfills the function of providing both exegetical tools and creative theoretical alternatives, so as to assess the impact of material and discursive conditions upon our embodied and embedded subjectivity.

As early as the 1970s, Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze and Guattari 1972), while targeting the inertia and structural injustice of the political establishment as a primary concern, also pointed out the limitations of the liberatory potential of Marxism and especially of the violence and authoritarianism of *gauchiste* or left-wing political groups. He was equally suspicious, however, of the humanistic assumptions of the claim to universal human rights or the Kantian idea of the universal and self-correcting validity of human reason. He stressed instead the need to unveil power relations where they are simultaneously most effective and most invisible: in the specific locations of one's own intellectual and social practice. I took this to imply that one has to start from micro-instances of embodied and embedded self and the complex web of social relations that compose subject positions. As feminists say: one has to think global, but act local.

This cartographic approach and the grounded philosophical accountability it entails is more relevant than ever nowadays. Poststructuralist philosophies have produced an array of alternative concepts and practices of nonunitary political subjectivity. From the "split subject" of psychoanalysis

to the subject-in-process of Foucault, the "sexed subject which is not one" of Irigaray and the rhizomatic complex of Deleuze and Guattari, multiplicity and complexity have been widely debated in Continental philosophy. After the decline of postmodernism—reductively associated with cognitive and moral relativism—those experimental approaches to the question of the subject raise some skeptical eyebrows. What exactly is the advantage of these alternative notions and practices of the subject? What are the values—ethical and political—they can offer? What good are they to anybody? And how much fun are they? This volume is an attempt to answer these crucial questions by producing an adequate cartography of our historical situation as well as to expose the logic of the new power relations operative today.

CONTEXT

To give the readers of this volume the context for nomadic thought, we need to turn to the philosophies of difference that have emerged in France and the U.S. since the 1980s. Nomadic theory belongs to the branch of poststructuralist philosophy that is less influenced by the "linguistic turn" of semiotics, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction than by a school of political theory, science, and epistemology studies that stretches back to the eighteenth century. It is related to the tradition of "enchanted materialism" that is one of the distinctive traits of French philosophy.

This distinction between different strands of poststructuralist thought is very important, considering that in the U.S. poststructuralism is identified with the linguistic turn. This has led to violent dismissal of the linguistic school on the part of realist Deleuzians like De Landa (2002, 2006). Nomadic thought is more nuanced and less hasty in dismissing others. It is undeniable that the primacy of structures in the process of subject formation is one of the aspects of high structuralism that both Lacan and Derrida retain, albeit in their own original variations. The psychoanalystic emphasis on the role of the symbolic—or the phallologocentric code in Derrida or the heterosexist matrix in Butler—posits a master code, or a single central grid that formats and produces the subject. This social constructivist grid leaves little room for negotiation and instills loss and melancholia at the core of the subject.

Nomadic thought takes a very different route—by positing the primacy of intelligent, sexed, and self-organizing matter, it approaches the process of subject formation in a distributive, dispersed, and multiple manner. Modulations or processes of differing within a common matter rely on a definition of power as both productive and restrictive and strike an affirmative route between empowerment and entrapment. As a consequence, nomadic thought rejects melancholia in favor of the politics of affirmation and mutual specification of self and other in sets of relations or assemblages.

Central to the nomadic subject is the emphasis on the intimate connection between critique and creation. Critique is consequently not only a sterile opposition but also an active engagement of the conceptual imagination in the task of producing sustainable alternatives (see part 4, "Powers of Affirmation," both chapters 10, "Powers of Affirmation," 11, "Sustainable Ethics and the Body in Pain").

Nomadic theory grows from these fundamental assumptions. It critiques the self-interest, the repressive tolerance, and the deeply seated conservatism of the institutions that are officially in charge of knowledge production, especially the university but also the media and the law. Foucault (1975) explicitly singles out for criticism the pretension of classical philosophy to be a master discipline that supervises and organizes other discourses and opposes to this abstract and universalistic mission the idea that philosophy is just a toolbox.

What this means is that the aim of philosophy as nomadic critical theory is the production of pragmatic and localized tools of analysis for the power relations at work in society at large and more specifically within its own practice. The philosopher becomes no more than a provider of analytic services: a technician of knowledge. In the same spirit, Deleuze (1953, 1962) redefines philosophy in the "problematic" mode as the constant questioning of the dominant "image of thought" at work in most of our ideas with the purpose of destabilizing them in the "nomadic" mode. In my own work on nomadic thought I adopt a creative redefinition of thinking that links philosophy to the creation of new forms of subjectivity and collective experiments with ways of actualizing them.

This results in a critique of representational regimes that focus especially on the dominant image of thought as the expression of a white, masculine, adult, heterosexual, urban-dwelling, property-owning subject. Deleuze and Guattari label this dominant subject as the Majority, or the Molar formation; Irigaray calls it the Logic of the Same. For nomadic thought, this replication of sameness is counteracted by creative efforts aimed at activating the positivity of differences as affirmative praxis (see part 1, "Metamorphoses," especially chapters 1, "Transposing Differences," and 2, "Meta(l)morphoses"). Replacing the metaphysics of being with a process ontology bent on becoming, that is to say, subversive moves of detachment from the dominant system of representation. Nomadic theory combines potentially contradictory elements: it is materialist and vitalist, fluid and accountable and it remains resolutely pragmatic throughout. The central tenet of nomadic thought is to reassert the dynamic nature of thinking and the need to reinstate movement at the heart of thought by actualizing a nonunitary vision of the thinking subject.

These genealogical considerations get exacerbated in the present context. Whether as a result of the demise of postmodernist skepticism or as a generalized fatigue of the deconstructive project—a "posttheory" frame of mind has become the doxa of the globalized world. Propped up by the neoliberal ethos that assesses everything—including scientific ideas, philosophical concepts, and human worth—in narrowly economical terms, theory fatigue has merged into a contemporary social landscape that combines populist appeals to neorealism with traditional anti-intellectualism.

The post-1989, post-9/11, postpeace context we inhabit since the official start of perennial warfare against foreign and home-grown "terrorists," and the spread of generalized governance by fear, plays a crucial role. Collectively unable to produce an analysis of globalization that is "worthy" of the present—free of nostalgia but also of tendentious euphoria—advanced liberal societies have replaced critique with acquiescence and doubts with apathy. We are told with no degree of uncertainty that we live in postpostmodern, postsecular, postfeminist, postcommunist, postindustrial times. What all the *posts* point to, however—let alone what they may have in common—is never clarified. One thing is clear, though: all these *posts* are just the pretext for the populist dismissal of high theory.

After the official end of the cold war, all the radical movements of the twentieth century have lost credibility and been discarded, including socialism and feminism. No wonder, then, that the proliferation of *posts* carries on unchallenged and that post-theory is on the social agenda as a necessary prelude to anti-intellectualism. As an antidote to the escalating use of dismissive prefixes—nomadic thought accomplishes a double aim. The first

is genealogical or cartographic: it turns to the sources of European critical theory in an inspirational manner. The second is conceptual: it seeks for sustainable alternatives and affirmative modes of engagement in the present by linking the act of thinking to the creation of new concepts and critique to creation. This volume attempts to discuss both these aspects.

Post also evokes the prospect of a looming apocalypse—as if we had indeed reached the end of time (Fukuyama 1989, 2002). Coming after the great theoretical exuberance and sheer genius of the masters and mistresses of poststructuralism, we appear to have entered some sort of afterlife. The spectral dimension of our historicity is felt strongly in Continental philosophy, where disquisitions about mortality and species or environmental extinction have grown into a full-fledged necropolitical field of analysis (see chapter 12, "Forensic Futures"). Nomadic theory strikes its own note in this debate on behalf of the affirmative force of nonhuman life—zoe—and its posthuman potential. I explore especially the ethical implications of affirmation (see chapter 5, "Matter-Realist Feminism," and chapter 6, "Intensive Genre and the Demise of Gender"). In my view, *post* does not spell the end, but the generative start of a new phase of the fundamental idea of nomadic affirmative politics and the empowering feminism, antiracism, and environmentalism it sustains. Nomadic subjects require and produce nonunitary, multiple, and complex politics.

WHY NOMADIC THOUGHT?

In these times of accelerating changes, many traditional points of reference and age-old habits are being recomposed, albeit in contradictory ways. At such a time more conceptual creativity is necessary—a theoretical effort is needed to bring about the conceptual leap across the contemporary social landscape. Nomadic thought is a response to this challenge. This includes the schizoid affective economy of inertia, nostalgia, paranoia, and other forms of critical *stasis*, on the one hand, and overzealous excitement, on the other, that is induced by the contradictory conditions of advanced capitalism. In such a context, we need to learn to think differently about ourselves and the ongoing processes of deep-seated transformation.

A major concern of this book is consequently the deficit in the scale of representation that accompanies the structural transformations of subjectivity in the social, cultural, and political spheres of late postindustrial culture. Accounting adequately for changes is a challenge that shakes up long-established habits of thought. In order to produce grounded accounts and more subtle differentiation in the kind of different nomadic flows at work in our world, we need more conceptual creativity. More ethical courage is also needed and deeper theoretical efforts to sustain the qualitative shift of perspective that may help us confront the complexities of our era (see chapter 7, "Postsecular Paradoxes").

This book aims at providing singular cartographies of some of the political and cultural forces operative in contemporary globalized societies. On that basis, I will present a number of my own variations on nomadic thought, while surveying the state of contemporary feminist philosophies of the subject in general (part 2, "Feminist Transpositions") and of the nomadic subject in particular (part 4 "Powers of Affirmation"), with special focus on the analysis of contemporary culture (part 1, "Metamorphoses"). I will also offer readings of some of the more striking aspects of contemporary political culture, especially the powerful lure of neonationalism and Euro-centric xenophobia (part 3 "Nomadic Citizenship"). The logic of this sequence is partly chronological, building up from earlier to more recent essays, partly conceptual. The book builds up gradually to a political punch line, and the movement flows from more critical pieces to more affirmative ones, as if to demonstrate the necessity of a practice of affirmation. Of course it is my hope that readers may open the book at any one point and be able to start reading it almost at random, in keeping with nomadic habits. Let me briefly introduce each main part of the book.

METAMORPHOSES

Part 1 presents a cartography of the changing social conditions of advanced capitalism. It starts from the acknowledgment that the project of linking thought to movement is centuries-old, and therefore the task of decoding contemporary variations on this theme is quite urgent. Since its pre-Socratic origins, philosophical thought has enjoyed a privileged relationship to movement, mobility, and motion. Closer to physical training than to cerebral ruminations, classical philosophy was conceptualized as gymnastics of the soul, fitness of the wits, robustness of judgment coupled with specula-

tive stamina. From the deliberative steps taken by free men on the Greek agora (women, blacks, non-Europeans, and children need not apply) to the peripatetic pilgrimages of the medieval students across the ancient European universities, most Continental philosophers actually thought on their feet, Emmanuel Kant's punctual daily walk around town being emblematic of this tradition.

European thought, however, is also marked by hostile moves and antagonistic relations. Over the centuries, the scientific and intellectual motions of the European mind have expressed themselves in the violent expulsion of ethnically marked undesirables from the heart of the continent. Since the dawn of modernity, the staunch belief in a "white man's burden" propelled the movement of European colonial expansions across the oceans of the globe. The enforced enslavement of natives, particularly across the transatlantic route, pioneered a new kind of coercive mobility and new levels of brutality in the crossing.

Back in the metropolis, the ponderous yet lazy gaze of the nineteenth-century flaneurs theorized the art of walking as a leisurely literary stroll round town. This endowed the continental urban landscape with the mystery and seduction often reserved for faraway places—a domestic variation on the exotic. Orientalism and Occidentalism proceed hand in hand on the motorways of modernity. A high degree of speeding power is central to the new forms of mobility propelled by technological mediation, all the way to the contemporary information highways. It's on the road again and again for Continental philosophy, yet not all passages are voluntary, freely chosen, or ethically sustainable. Accounting both spatially and temporally or historically for these dramatically different forms of mobility is one of the key ethical challenges of nomadic critical theory today. The aim to construct intellectually mobile concepts requires an ethics of differential coding for the various modes and forms of mobility.

Our historical context has intensified the issue of mobility and multiplied its complexities. The contradictions engendered by globalization confront us in fact with new conceptual, methodological, and political challenges. These are strange times, and strange things are happening. Times of ever expanding, yet spasmodic waves of transformation that engender the simultaneous occurrence of contradictory effects. Times of fast-moving changes that do not wipe out the brutality of power relations, but in many

ways intensify them and bring them to the point of implosion (chapter 1, "Transposing Differences"). Living in such times of rapid changes may be alternatively—or simultaneously—exhilarating and exhausting, yet the task of representing these changes to ourselves and engaging productively with the contradictions, paradoxes, and injustices they engender is a perennial challenge. How to account for fast-changing conditions is hard work; how to escape the velocity of change is even harder (chapter 2, "Meta(l)morphoses: Women, Aliens, and Machines"). Unless one likes complexity, one cannot feel at home in the twenty-first century. Transformations, metamorphoses, mutations, processes of change amidst dissonant power relations have become familiar patterns in the lives of most contemporary subjects (chapter 3, "Animals and Other Anomalies"). They are also vital concerns, however, for critical theory and the social and political institutions that are expected to come to terms with them.

A contemporary volume about nomadic theory appearing in a portable edition, moreover, should be able to rejoice in the creative and nonvicious circularity it expresses, since it can hardly avoid it. There is pride in circularity, especially if one is trying to instill movement into thought. Short of abandoning the Gutenberg galaxy altogether and declaring the book form obsolete, a portable book of nomadic critical theory today needs to reflect on its specific forms of mobility and on the material and discursive conditions that support it. More to the point: how can nomadic thought *not* be portable and in what ways can the readers of this specific book expect to be transported into the genre of critical theory and not lose touch with the immediate social-cultural conditions of their lived experience? The desire that sustains this book is to provide ideas that may function as navigational tools to sharpen our understanding of the material conditions of our existence in a fast-changing, technologically mediated world. Nomadic theory rests on politically invested cartographies of the present conditions of mobility in a globalized context. More specifically, it aims at pointing out the various power differences between distinct forms, categories, and practices of movement for both humans and nonhuman mobile units (chapter 4, "The Cosmic Buzz of Insects"). Telling the difference among these different differences is the key question. Language cracks under the strain.

Let us hang on, therefore, to the circular pride of nomadic theory in portable format: what does it tell us about the political economy of mean-

ings and ideas in advanced, globalized, technologically mediated societies? Firstly, it focuses on the paradoxes of dematerialized materiality that lie at the core of our technologically mediated culture, including academic culture. Embracing electronic publishing as the most mobile media and hence the fastest way forward for contemporary thought in some ways begs the question of nomadic theory. Even if all paper-based books were to turn into "Kindles," they would remain just as firmly attached to the material premises that produced them. Kindle, by any other name, is just as bookish as its Gutenberg ancestors. Virtual reality is in fact densely material, and the digital is just the social by another name.

Nomadic theory, especially in a portable format, is mobile because it foregrounds the materialist and vitalist structure of thought. That, however, does not make it any less grounded or ethically accountable. It just relocates the materiality of the technological artifact in a different medium, that is to say, a different social practice, which engenders specific social relations and interactions. The ideas of this book will not be any less portable for those who download it from the Internet or into their Kindles or other electronic readers. It would only become otherwise nomadic in the process. As a consequence, mobility does not necessarily equate digital media or information networks and the electronic Web may not be the most effective means of accessing ideas today. Hence a new set of questions that emerge as central to the concerns of this book: what is the best way to access ideas today? What is the activity of critical thinking like, well into the third millennium?

The social and discursive metamorphoses of our times impose the need to reflect on the perverse temporality at work in the different modes of mobility we experience. We inhabit paradoxical time frames structured by the simultaneity of internally contradictory social effects: the oversaturated (Baudrillard 1993) and the hypervoid (Augé 1995) or the archaic (Gutenberg press) and the hypermodern (electronic books). In this context, contradictory social effects not only coincide and coexist in space and time but also strengthen and support each other. This produces slightly schizophrenic results and locates readers in a permanent state of oscillation between paradoxical options that they seldom had any say in creating in the first place. Moreover, considering the persistence of social—that is to say, genderized, sexualized, racialized, and naturalized—power differences, the fundamental tension that emerges is between spectacular new versions of age-old questions of domination and exclusion.

FEMINIST TRANSPOSITIONS

In part 2 of this volume I will apply some of my key concepts to the production of alternative interventions in the present contextual conditions. Given the complex and internally contradictory nature of the globalized system, feminist critical theory needs to innovate in its very tools of analysis. The current cultural paradoxes: on the one hand, rising conservatism, on the other, fascination with changes and mutant and nonunitary others, express both a deep anxiety about the fast rate of transformation of identities and also the poverty of our social imaginary to cope creatively with the ongoing transformations. In rising to this challenge, feminist theory engages with contemporary scientific advances and new understandings of the structure of bodies and matter (see chapter 5, "Matter-Realist Feminism").

Feminism is the social and theoretical movement that, more than any other, expressed a double-edged vision that combined creativity with critique. Although it is critical in political orientation, feminist nomadic thought is never negative; on the contrary, it makes an explicit case for affirmative politics. The ongoing processes of transformation require alternative figurations to express the kind of internally contradictory multifaceted subjects we have become. There is a noticeable gap between how we live—in emancipated or postfeminist, multiethnic global societies, with high technologies and telecommunication, allegedly free borders, and increased security controls as well as a state of warfare—and how we represent to ourselves this lived familiarity. This belies an imaginative poverty that can be partly read as the "jet lag" problem of living simultaneously in different time zones. The schizophrenic mode that is characteristic of our historical era creates methodological difficulties of representation. I propose transdisciplinarity and the method of transpositions and nonlinearity as ways of addressing these challenges (see especially chapter 8).

It is urgent to both explore the need and to provide illustrations for new figurations, i.e., alternative representations and social locations for the kind of hybrid, sexualized nomadic subjects we are becoming. Figurations are not figurative ways of thinking, but rather more materialistic mappings of situated, embedded, and embodied positions. They derive from the feminist method of the "politics of location" and build it into a discursive strategy.

Figurations are ways of expressing different situated subject positions. A figuration renders the nonunitary image of a multilayered subject. Feminist theories since postmodernism demonstrated that the definition of identities takes place between the polarized duality of: nature/technology; male/female; black/white—in the spaces that flow and connect in between. We live in permanent processes of transition, hybridization, and nomadization (see chapter 6, "Intensive Genre and the Politics of Gender"). And these in-between states and stages defy established modes of theoretical representation. The figuration of nomadic subjects, however, should never be taken as a new universal metaphor for the human or posthuman condition. As I argued in the companion volume, *Nomadic Subjects* (Braidotti, 2011), we need to provide, instead, accurate cartographies of the different politics of location for subjects-in-becoming.

A figuration is a living map, a transformative account of the self—it's no metaphor. It fulfills the purpose of finding suitable situated locations to make the difference between different locations. Being nomadic, homeless, a migrant, an exile, a refugee, a tourist, a rape-in-war victim, an itinerant migrant, an illegal immigrant, an expatriate, a mail-order bride, a foreign caretaker of the young or the elderly of the economically developed world, a global venture financial expert, a humanitarian relief worker in the UN global system, a citizen of a country that no longer exists (Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union)—these are no metaphors, but social locations.

Having no passport or having too many of them is neither equivalent nor is it merely metaphorical, as some feminist critics of nomadic subjectivity have suggested. These are highly specific geopolitical and historical locations—it's history tattooed on your body. One may be empowered or beautified by it, but most people are not; some just die of it. Figurations attempt to draw a cartography of the power relations that define these respective positions. They don't just embellish or metaphorize: they rather express different socioeconomic and symbolic locations. Situated locations draw a cartographic map of power relations and thus can also help identify possible sites and strategies of resistance. In other words, the project of finding adequate representations, which was raised to new heights by the poststructuralist generation, is neither a retreat into self-referential textuality, nor is it a form of apolitical resignation. Nonlinearity and a nonunitary vision of the subject do not necessarily result in either cognitive or moral relativism, let

alone social anarchy. I rather see them as significant sites for reconfiguring feminist political practice and redefining political subjectivity.

If the only constant in the third millennium is change, then the challenge lies in how to think about processes rather than concepts. This is neither a simple nor a particularly welcome task in the theoretical language and conventions that have become the norm in social and political theory as well as cultural critique. In spite of the sustained efforts of many radical critics, the mental habit of linearity and objectivity persists in its hegemonic hold over our thinking. Thus, it is by far simpler to think about the concept A or B or of B as non A, rather than the process of what goes on in between A and B. Thinking through flows and interconnections remains a difficult challenge. The fact that theoretical reason is concept bound and fastened upon essential notions makes it difficult to find adequate representations for processes, fluid in-between flows of data, experience, and information. They tend to get frozen in spatial, metaphorical modes of representation that itemize them as "problems."

How to represent mutations, changes, transformations, rather than Being in its classical modes, is the challenge for those who are committed to engendering and enjoying changes and the great source of anxiety for those who are not. This is one of the issues that the feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray (1985) addresses, notably in her praise of the "mechanic of fluids" against the fixity and lethal inertia of conceptual thinking (also known as the phallocentric logic of masculine self-representation). Gilles Deleuze (1962, 1968) also takes up this challenge by loosening the conceptual ties that have kept philosophy fastened on some semireligiously held beliefs about reason, logos, the metaphysics of presence, and the logic of the Same (also known as molar, sedentary, majority).

The relocation of difference and of the self-other relation constitutes one of the main themes of this book. The perverse spin of globalized capitalism has altered the status and interrelation of the anthropological differences that preoccupied high poststructuralism back in the 1980s. The sexualized, racialized, and naturalized difference embodied in the "constitutive others" of modernity has entered into the spinning effects of global proliferation and commodification. The deterritorialization process results in the relocation of what used to be called difference and of the dialectical relationship between self and others. These have shifted along the axes of contemporary biogenetic capitalism. What emerges today as a result of these transforma-

tions, both social and scientific, is the biopolitical relevance of Life itself as a nonhuman force. This posthuman horizon is one of the great paradoxes of our times—caught as we are in the schizophrenic mode of overdevelopment and underexperimentation, euphoria and melancholia, scientific revolutions and political restoration. My code name for the posthuman dimension is zoe—nonhuman life, which will play a major role in this book (see especially chapter 7, "Postsecular Paradoxes").

NOMADIC CITIZENSHIP

In part 3 I will explore more specifically the consequences of the ongoing changes for the theory and practice of active citizenship. The contemporary world has changed considerably since the days when the poststructuralist philosophers put "difference" on the theoretical and political agenda. The ideological climate has turned to new forms of essentialism with a vengeance. The return of biological naturalism, under the cover of genetics, molecular biology, evolutionary theories, and the despotic authority of the DNA has caused both an inflation and a reification of the notion of "difference" and a reductive view of matter. In scientific culture, on the other hand, the understanding of "matter" has evolved dramatically since the days of historical materialism: a new brand of "materialism" is current in our scientific practices, which reinstates the vital, self-organizing capacities of what was previously seen as inert matter (see especially chapter 5, "Matter-Realist Feminism"). As a result, the dualistic mode of thinking supported by social constructivism is no longer sufficient, though it remains a necessary hermeneutical key to the analysis of the present. The process-oriented structure of vital materialism is one of the strengths of nomadic thought, supported by its Spinozist monistic philosophy. Vital materialism is both in tune with the great scientific discovery of our age—biogenetics, new evolutionary theories, neural and cognitive sciences—and with the ethical imperative to engage with the present and be worthy of it (see chapter 10, "Powers of Affirmation").

The political repercussions, however, are often problematic. After the official end of the cold war in 1989, rhetorical celebrations of the superiority of capitalism as the optimal form of human evolution (Fukuyama 1989) have become a new master-narrative. Rising right-wing populism across the

European Union promotes cultural essentialism, racism, and Islamophobia. Resting on fixed notions of one's cultural parameters and territory, their ideas of "cultural difference" are deterministic, oppositional, and hence exclusive as well as both intrinsically and explicitly xenophobic. The deportation of unwanted people is a reality in most Western societies today. The Berlin Wall may have come down, but new ones have gone up just as speedily: on the U.S.-Mexican border, in the occupied territories in Palestine, and all around the edges of "Fortress Europe."

In the contemporary political context, *difference* functions as a negative term indexed on a hierarchy of values governed by binary oppositions: it conveys power relations and structural patterns of exclusion at the national, regional, provincial, or even more local level. Like a historical process of sedimentation, or a progressive accumulation of toxins, the concept of difference has been poisoned and has become the equivalent of inferiority: to be different from means to be worth less than. How can difference be cleansed of this negative charge? Is the positivity of difference, sometimes called "pure difference," thinkable? What are the conditions that may facilitate the thinkability of positive difference? What is the specific contribution of nomadic theory to these questions? It is precisely because of what I consider the political and social regression of this essentialist notion of difference that I find it important to reset the concept of difference in the direction of a nomadic, nonhierarchical, multidirectional social and discursive practice of multiplicity (see chapter 8, "Against Methodological Nationalism").

Again, the complexities multiply: advanced capitalism has mutated into a "difference engine" (Ansell-Pearson 1999) that functions through a proliferation of quantitative differences for the sake of commodification and profit. What seems to surface amidst the quantitative proliferation of differences, moreover, is the distinct absence of a qualitative shift of perspectives that may alter the rules of the game and challenge the master code, that is to say, the dominant axiom. Theoretical care is needed here because advanced capitalism is the great nomad par excellence in that it is propelled by the mobility of goods, data, and finances for the sake of profit and commodification. This profit-oriented, perverse nomadism translates into socioeconomic terms in the so-called flexibility of the working force: interim, untenured, substandard, underpaid work has become the norm in most advanced liberal economies. This negative and exploitative form of social mobility engenders transnational flows of migration and precariousness of

actual working conditions, which produce categories of transitory citizens, temporary settlers, and resident foreigners. A global ideology of allegedly free mobility coexists alongside frozen borders and increasing discrimination and exclusion of multiple "disposable" others. In another paradoxical twist, therefore, the deterritorializations induced by the hypermobility of capitalism and the forms of migration and human mobility they entail, instead of challenging the hegemony of nation-states, strengthen their hold not only over territory and social space but also over identity and cultural memory. European racism today targets these alien others, migrants, and postcolonial subjects, as well as refuges and asylum seekers, for discriminatory practices and socioeconomic marginalization. Reductive reterritorializations form an integral part of the resurgence of nationalism as a knee-jerk reaction against globalized mobility. Centerless, but highly controlled in its all-pervasive global surveillance system, advanced capitalism installs a political economy of fear and suspicion, not only among the new geopolitical blocks that have emerged at the end of the cold war but also within them.

The analysis of this perverse political economy was already provided by Deleuze and Guattari (1972, 1980) and is still extraordinarily apt, accurate, and to the point today. So much so, that nomadic practices are still extremely popular nowadays in organizational management, corporate dynamics, and business administration. What might appear as a congruence of capitalism with nomadic theory verging on complicity, however, is also the means to identify ways of exceeding this system by setting it in motion from within. My practice of nomadic theory aims at cartographic accuracy, at providing qualitative analyses of the present that are in tune with the times but also adequately account for the brutality and the violence of our times as well as for their creative potential.

By extension, social and cultural critique is neither a matter of opposition in a dialectical and confrontational mode, nor just the lame quest for angles of resistance. It requires a robust praxis of collective engagement with the specific conditions of our times—for instance, the proliferation of quantitative differences and the erasure of qualitative shifts in ethical and political accountability. Furthermore, nomadic thought engages with the present not oppositionally but rather affirmatively and does so not out of acquiescence but rather out of the pragmatic conviction that the conditions that engender qualitative shifts will not emerge dialectically from a direct and violent confrontation with the present. They can only be actualized as praxis from

conditions that are not there yet: they are virtual, that is to say, they need to be counteractualized, created, and brought about in a collective effort. The productive engagement with the present engenders sustainable futures (as I argue in chapters 11 and 12).

More specifically, in this volume I will explore possible models of nomadic citizenship (chapter 9, "Nomadic European Citizenship"). These are based on delinking the three basic components of the liberal view of citizenship: ethnic origin, national identity, and political agency. They also recompose them in new packages of rights and entitlements that require flexibility and hence multiple ecologies of belonging.

Thus, while being critically aware of the fact that nomadism is very much the thought of our age—in a way that had Foucault admitting that "one day our century will be Deleuzian"—I see this parallelism as a way of synchronizing critical theory with the present, which offers optimal conditions for the production of social alternatives. It is precisely because of the sharpness of the navigational tools provided by nomadic thought that we can assert the necessity of engaging with the present—being worthy of all that happens to us—in order to affect qualitative changes. What I propose is to work critically from within in order to exceed the present frame, while resisting nostalgic calls from worn-out formulae about "overthrowing the system." These dialectical formulations are both conceptually and politically inadequate to the perverse political economy of schizoid repetitions, internal contradictions, and ruthless executions of human and nonhuman disposable others that is the core of advanced, biogenetic capitalism.

As a consequence, I want to resist both the gravitational pull of a self-perpetuating replication of sameness on the part of the center and its dominant subject positions and also the reduction of the center to mere inertia and incurable melancholia. I am convinced that a new vital political role needs to be devised for the many "centers" punctuating the global economy and that this should aim at instilling processes of qualitative change at the very heart of the system. Margins and centers are relocated so as to destabilize each other in parallel, albeit dissymmetrical ways. The main objective is, through nomadic interventions, to deterritorialize dogmatic and hegemonic exclusionary power structures at the heart of the scattered hegemonic centers of the contemporary global world.

Considering the extent of the mutations taking place in our globalized world, it is clear that these transformations don't affect only the pole of the

"others" but also dislocate the position and the prerogatives of the same, the dominant subject. The customary standard-bearers of Eurocentric phallocentrism no longer hold in a civil society that has become sexed female, male, and in between, multicultural and not inevitably or exclusively Christian. New emerging subject positions not only challenge this normative view of what counts as the subject but also trace alternative processes of becoming in an affirmative manner. Nomadic theory therefore addresses the issue of what may be the specific political and ethical initiative of the former center in order to rebalance and counteract contemporary power differentials.

In other words, the center needs to be set in motion toward a becoming-minoritarian that requires qualitative changes in the very structures of its subjectivity, but so do the margins. For there is no uncontaminated location free of power. Nor is there a subject—collective or individual—that can rightfully pretend to be the motor of the development of world history—in spite of unwarranted claims by self-appointed champions of leftist nostalgia. We need more humility and more pragmatism, if we are to invent a left-wing politics worthy of the third millennium. Much could be learned from political movements such as those espousing feminism, against racism, for gay rights, against war, and for the environmental. These movements made the critique of metadiscourse into a political priority and resisted the siren calls of overarching discourses about world revolution. Situated politics of locations is the best way to proceed: we need to think global but act local, in the situated here and now of our lived experience.

POWERS OF AFFIRMATION

In part 4 I will expose the vision of nomadic politics as affirmation and the construction of robust alternatives. Against the various liberal discourses on rights, but also in opposition to the aporias of a poststructuralist stance that wallows in melancholic self-pity and nostalgic longings, nomadic theory posits the politics of affirmation as a significant alternative for both critical theory and political praxis (chapter 10, "Powers of Affirmation"). Hence one of my key concerns in his book: how can qualitative shifts be framed and actualised, in clear dissonance from the pluralistic proliferation of quantified and commodified differences, which is the axiom of advanced

capitalism? What forms of ethical and political practices of subjectivity are best suited to the task?

In opposition to the dominant practice of aporetic politics or reactive melancholia, this volume pleads for a more joyful perspective that stresses the role of thought as the creation of new concepts and the importance of politics in making such transmutations of values possible. It is only fitting, therefore, that this collection centers around essays on the forces of affirmation, inspired by Spinoza's ontological theories of desire. In opposition to the entropic and negative theory of desire in Hegel, Freud, and Lacan, I want to draw on a notion of desire that is not built on lack but rather constitutes a powerful force in itself: vitalism as "the politics of life itself" (Rose 2001). This is not a naive position of avoidance of pain or negativity (see chapter 11, "Sustainable Ethics and the Body in Pain") but rather the conviction that ethics is about the transformation of negative into affirmative passions. The aim of the ethical transmutations of values is to construct social horizons of hope and sustainable futures (chapter 12, "Forensic Futures").

My emphasis on zoe rather than bios also aims at discarding old, phallologocentric modes of thinking about life. Becoming-nomadic, therefore, is not a one-way street, but a multifaceted circuit. The subject is stripped of its old genderized, racialized, normalized straitjacket and relocated into patterns of different becomings: becoming-minoritarian, becoming-woman, becoming-insect, becoming-cyborg (see chapters 1–4). Never orthodox in any of my allegiances, in spite of a fundamental sense of loyalty to my sources, I do not conform to the rather oedipalized track of many contemporary Deleuzians, who either repeat or repudiate his master's voice. Truly nomadic, I paid my former teacher the utmost compliment of not agreeing with everything he taught me (chapter 13, "A Secular Prayer"). What matters is the itinerary of thought he inspired and in which I actively and creatively embed my own work. Thus my theories are strictly nomadic in a unique way, in that I use this nomadic dictum not only in a strictly philosophical sense but also to criticize socioeconomic issues such as capitalism and neoliberalism and to contemplate current developments in globalization, the EU, feminism, citizenship, and ethics. Critical but always close to the American school of gender, I insist on focusing on the European school of sexual difference as that which constitutes a subject in the process of differing from others and within itself. As a nomadic thinker however, I never link this dif-

ference to established normative heterosexual modes of thought and thus engage with queer theory as an important aspect of my nomadic work. This volume aims to illustrate the importance of using critical theory as a tool to develop all the *posts* not as an end, but into the seeds of new paths of thought here and now, in an affirmative engagement with the present that is neither acquiescent nor resigned, but rather pragmatic and praxis oriented.

I dedicated *Patterns of Dissonance* to the figuration of the acrobat walking a tightrope across the academic and political postmodern skeptical void. In *Nomadic Subjects* I ventured across a set of conceptual variations and territorial excursions. *Metamorphoses* ended up on the rope of a bungee jumper, dangling in a tantalizing way in the void, making quick excursions into it, but always bouncing back to safety. *Transpositions* enacted a number of musical and theoretical mutations across the boundaries of complexity and diversity, ending in a firm commitment to sustainable futures. This portable collection is neither a tightrope nor a web, but it does read like a navigation route across the idiosyncratic itineraries and paradoxical twists and turns of contemporary culture and politics. It is a map that draws the trajectory of changes, transformations, and becomings. This is a book of explorations and risks, of convictions and desires. For these are strange times, and strange things are happening.

METAMORPHOSES

PART ONE

10

POWERS OF AFFIRMATION

> A certain fragility has been discovered in the very bedrock of existence even, and perhaps above all, in those aspects of it that are most familiar, most solid and most intimately related to our bodies and to our everyday behaviour. But together with this sense of instability . . . one in fact discovers something that perhaps was not initially foreseen, something one might describe as precisely the inhibiting effect of global, totalitarian theories.
>
> —MICHEL FOUCAULT, *POWER/KNOWLEDGE*

This chapter addresses one of the paradoxes that has become central to my work: how to engage in affirmative politics, which entails the creation of sustainable alternatives geared to the construction of social horizons of hope, while at the same time doing critical theory, which implies resistance to the present. This is one of the issues Deleuze and Guattari discuss at length, notably in *What Is Philosophy?* (1992): the relationship between creation and critique. It is, however, a problem that has confronted all activists and critical theorists: how to balance the creative potential of critical thought with the dose of negative criticism and oppositional consciousness that such a stance necessarily entails.

Central to this debate is the question of how to resist the present, more specifically the injustice, violence, and vulgarity of the times, while being worthy of our times, so as to engage with them in a productive, albeit it oppositional and affirmative manner. I shall return to this issue in the final section of this chapter. There is a contextual and a conceptual side to this problem, and I will discuss each one of these and then examine some of their implications.

ON PUTTING THE ACTIVE BACK INTO ACTIVISM

Both by personal disposition and by philosophical training, I consider political activism to be the fundamental political passion as well as a sort of moral obligation for my generation. In defining activism as the process of becoming-political, Deleuze speaks of the European left of the 1960s and 1970s in terms of a specific sensibility, which he connects to a creative imaginary about possible futures. This desire for change clashes constitutionally with the guardians of the status quo: the judges and managers of truths and the clarity fetishists.[1] As eyewitnesses to the immediate events of the cold war in Europe and more specifically the Hungarian uprising of 1956 and the Czech and the Paris Spring revolt of 1968, Foucault and Deleuze (1972) distance themselves from the nefarious illusion of revolutionary purity, which engenders armed violence and repression. They are therefore critical of the universalist utopian element of Marxism, which inflated intellectuals to the role of representatives of the masses. They were equally suspicious, however, of the universalist humanistic assumptions and the claim to human rights or the self-correcting validity of human reason. 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 and social practice. One has to start from micro-instances of embodied and embedded self and the complex web of social relations that compose the self.

This leads to an increased awareness of the vulnerability of embodied subjects, which, however, results in subtler and more effective analyses of how power works in and through the body. This double emphasis on fragility, on the one hand, and despotic power relations, on the other, is crucial to a nomadic approach to the political. Activism as a frame of mind consists in connecting philosophy not so much to "LA politique" (organized or Majoritarian politics) as to "LE politique" (the political movement in its diffuse, nomadic, and rhizomic forms of becoming).

This distinction between politics and the political is of crucial importance; in the work of Michel Foucault it is postulated along the double axis of power as restrictive or coercive (potestas) and as empowering and productive (potentia). The former focuses on the management of civil society and its institutions, the latter on the transformative experimentation with new arts of existence and ethical relations. Politics is made of progressive emancipatory measures predicated on chronological continuity, whereas the political is the radical self-styling that requires the circular time of critical praxis.

In an even more grounded and ascetic tone, Deleuze and Guattari set the desire for transformations or becomings at the center of the agenda. The crucial distinction for nomadic theory is that of the axes of time and the form of affectivity they sustain. Politics is postulated on Chronos—the necessarily linear time of institutional deployment of norms and protocols. It is a reactive and majority-bound enterprise that is often made of flat repetitions and predictable reversals that may alter the balance but leave the structure of power basically untouched.

The political, on the other hand, is postulated on the axis of Aion—the time of becoming and of affirmative critical practice. It is minoritarian and it aims at the counteractualization of alternative states of affairs in relation to the present. Based on the principle that we do not know what a body can do (see chapter 12), the becoming-political ultimately aims at transformations in the very structures of subjectivity. It is about engendering and sustaining processes of "becoming-minoritarian." This specific sensibility combines a strong historical memory with consciousness and the desire for resistance. It rejects the sanctimonious, dogmatic tone of dominant ideologies, left or right of the political spectrum, in favor of the production of joyful acts of transformation. The spontaneous and creative aspects of this practice combine with a profound form of asceticism, that is to say, with an ethics of nonprofit to build upon micropolitical instances of activism, avoiding overarching generalizations. This humble yet experimental approach to changing our collective modes of relation to the environment, social and other, our cultural norms and values, our social imaginary, our bodies, ourselves, is the most pragmatic manifestation of the politics of radical immanence.

This philosophical critique of political subjectivity rests on two ideas I have addressed throughout this book. The first is the emphasis on the embodied and embedded nature of the subject, which results in unlimited confidence in lived experience. This translates into the politics of everyday life and renewed interest in the present. One has to think global, but act local. The second key argument is a focus on the dynamic interaction of Sameness and Difference. "Difference" is not a neutral category, but a term that indexes exclusion from entitlements to subjectivity. The equation of difference with pejoration is built into the tradition that defines the Subject as coinciding with/being the same as consciousness, rationality, and self-regulating ethical behavior. As I argued elsewhere in this volume, this results in making an entire section of living beings into marginal and disposable bodies: these are the sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others (Braidotti 2006).

The idea of the political produces a renewed concern for the fragility of existence and hence for multiple forms of human vulnerability, which is coupled with increased subtlety in the analysis of and resistance to power. This breaks with a Marxist tradition of taking some doses of revolutionary violence for granted and expresses renewed theoretical interest in processes and social practices of otherness, marginality, and exclusion. The negative charge attributed to difference marks both world-historical events such as European colonialism and fascism and also discursive events internal to the history of philosophy itself. This radically immanent materialist politics is no longer orthodox Marxist, but rather focused on embodiment and lived experience. It takes seriously affects, sexuality, pacifism, human rights, environmental isssues, and sustainable futures. The clearest expression of this politics is less the joyful insurrection of May '68 than the more reflexive biopolitical ethos of new activist movements that were initiated in its wake, like Amnesty International, S.O.S. Racism, and Médecins sans frontieres.

By extension, what is central to a nomadic theory of the political is the critique of the inertia, the repressive tolerance, and the deeply seated conservatism of the institutions that are officially in charge of knowledge production, especially the university, but also the media and the corporate sector. Foucault explicitly singles out for criticism the pretension of classical philosophy to be a master discipline that surveys and organizes other discourses. In his archaeological and later genealogical work, Foucault (1977b) opposes to this abstract and universalistic understanding the function of philosophy as a toolbox, a very pragmatic and localized analysis of power relations

within the exercise of philosophical reason. The philosopher becomes no more than a provider of analytic services: a technician of knowledge.

Deleuze (1953, 1962) redefines philosophy in the "problematic" mode as the constant questioning of the humanistic "image of thought" at work in most of our ideas with the aim to destabilize them in the "nomadic" mode. Arguing against its metadiscursive tendency, Deleuze redefines philosophy instead as a radical form of immanence. Thinking in the critical mode proposed by the French poststructuralists consists in locating the affects and especially the political passions that sustain the theoretical process. Both Foucault and Deleuze are critical of rationality as the dominant vision of the subject and as a human ideal, but they also reject the pitfall of cognitive and moral relativism by stressing that the crisis of classical subjectivity is not a catastrophe, but rather the expression of the irrepressible vitality of thought. Rejecting both the plaintive mode of nostalgia and the glorification of the aporetic, Deleuze proposes instead a radical redefinition of thinking as the activity that consists in the act of creation of new forms of thought and of collective experiments with ways of actualizing them.

This engagement with the present—and the spirit of the times—sets the political agenda in a variety of realms, ranging from sexuality and kinship system to religious and discursive practices. The analyses of these themes are transmitted through narratives—mythologies or fictions, which I have renamed as "figurations" (Braidotti 2002a, 2006) or cartographies of the present. A cartography is a politically informed map of one's historical and social locations, enabling the analysis of situated formations of power and hence the elaboration of adequate forms of resistance. Michel Foucault (1975) worked extensively on the notion of genealogy or countermemories as a tool to draw the "diagrams of the present" in his analysis of the microphysics of power in postindustrial societies. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1980) also stressed the importance of immanent analyses of the singular actualizations of concrete power formations.

Feminism also pioneered the practice of the politics of locations (Rich 1985) as a method for grounding activism. It also perfected the strategy of positive renaming and resignification of the subject. A location is an embedded and embodied memory: it is a set of countermemories, which are activated by resisting thinkers against the grain of the dominant social representations of subjectivity. A location is a materialist temporal and spatial site of coproduction of subjects in their diversity. Accounting for this complexity

is, therefore, anything but an instance of relativism. Locations provide the ground for political and ethical accountability. Remembrance, cartographies of locations, political (dis)identifications, and strategic reconfigurations are the tools for consciousness-raising that were devised by transformative epistemologies such as feminism and race theory (Passerini 1988; Haraway 1989; West 1994).

Both my practice and my concept of the political therefore pay tribute to this tradition of radical politics at a point in history where the general tendency is to dismiss it or deride it as a failed historical experiment. The main thesis I want to defend is that one of the most significant theoretical innovations it introduced is what later became known as "radical immanence" (Deleuze 1980). This includes the notions of political passions, affirmative ethics, and the rigorous vision of affectivity they entail.

ON POLITICAL PASSIONS

The emphasis on the politics of affectivity is therefore central to the conceptual structure of nomadic thought. Contrary to its detractors, to whom I shall return later, I see poststructuralist philosophies as building upon but also moving beyond the spirit of the 1970s and laying the foundations for future projects by opposing all totalitarian ideologies as well as the totalizing power of theories. This translates into two interrelated notions: the first is a general suspicion of the political class and of the state apparatus. The second is the theoretically daring notion that politics and the process of becoming-political neither require nor especially benefit from the existence of the state. Nomadic theory trusts autonomous but mutually connected communities or groups-multitudes (Hardt and Negri 2000) or complex singularities (Deleuze and Guattari 1986) engaged in the project of constituting aternative structures. These aim to become better attuned to resistance against the political economy of schizoid, difference-minded, commodifying advanced capitalism. This stateless condition is not a form of exile and nonbelonging, but rather an active experiment with the composition of sustainable communities, capable of sharing a common life and values, in the absence of a binding state structure. Let me explore this point further.

The poststructuralist generation made subjectivity into a real issue, which became all the more poignant and ethically urgent as a way of accounting

for the moral and political bankruptcy of recent events in European history. The first was the Second World War and the long shadow of fascism and widespread collaboration. Nazism also marked a violent disruption in the history of philosophy: it chased away, or brutally murdered, the thinkers who had developed critical theory, notably Marxists, psychoanalysts, and other opponents of Western supremacy. France in the 1970s marks the return of critical theories to a continent that had savagely eradicated them.

A second aspect of European history that deeply affected the critical spirit of radical philosophies was colonialism. The self-aggrandizing and ethnocentric mystifications that surrounded French colonial history had been criticized by Fanon, Genet, Sartre, and Beauvoir—the postwar generation of critical thinkers. There is no question that the May '68 generation came of age politically during the Algerian liberation war and first experienced political violence in the anticolonialism movements (Hamon and Rotman 1988a). The persistence of the postcolonial question in the work of the poststructuralists is strong, as expressed in Julia Kristeva's idea of becoming "strangers to ourselves" (1991). This deconstructed vision of the European subject is active also in Irigaray's thought about Eastern philosophy (1997) and in Cixous's reappraisal of her Algerian Jewish roots (1997). Gayatri Spivak's vocal advocacy (1993) of new postcolonial subjects asserts the noncentrality of European hegemony, as did Foucault's enthusiastic reaction to the Iranian revolution. The work of Jacques Derrida (1997), Massimo Cacciari (1994), and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1980) points strongly in this direction as well.

The third world-historical manifestation of European domination that haunted the thinkers of May '68 was obviously Marxism, as I mentioned before. The generation that came of age politically in 1968 introduced—with Althusser—a radical critique of the orthodoxy of Marxism, upheld by the (Western) European communist parties that acted as the moral guardians of the legacy of antifascism. With Lacan, they also challenged the authority of the International Psychoanalytic Association, which managed Freud's legacy with great rigidity. The new forms of philosophical radicalism developed in France in the late 1960s are a vocal critique of the dogmatic structure of communist and psychoanalytic thought and practice. The generation of the poststructuralists appealed directly to the subversive potential of the texts of Marxism and psychoanalysis so as to recover their anti-institutional critical stance.

They did not reject the bulk of Marx and Freud, but rather endeavored to recover and develop the radical core. In their view, the crux of the problem was the theory of the subject, which is implicit in these theories: under the cover of the unconscious, or the bulk of historical materialism, the subject of critical European theory preserved a unitary, hegemonic, and royal place as the motor of human history. This is the implicit humanism that triggered the criticism of thinkers like Foucault and Deleuze. The rejection of humanistic assumptions therefore took the form of unhinging the subject, freeing it respectively from the dictatorship of a libido dominated by oedipal jealousy and from the linearity of a historical telos that had married reason to the revolution.

The philosophical generation that proclaimed the "death of man" was simultaneously antifascist, anticolonialist, postcommunist, and posthumanist. Moreover, they rejected Eurocentrism and the classical definition of European identity in terms of humanism, rationality, and the universal.

A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AFFECT

Considering the extent to which the post-1989 world order has resulted in the dismissal of radical politics, some reflection is needed on the nature of public representations of the political today. I have argued throughout this book that the contemporary form of globalized capitalism both harps upon affective and emotional layers, cultural memories and aspirations of subjects that are essentially constructed as consumers of identity-bound pleasures. Moods and yearnings are both publicly expressed and commodified, mostly for the sake of biopolitical governance and adequate consumption, which entails a significant amount of distortion and even of willful ignorance of the actual historical events. This calculated ignorance is also due to the perverse temporality at work in our globalized world: advanced capitalism is an unsustainable "future eater" (Flannery 1994), driven by all-consuming entropic energy. Devoid of the capacity for critical self-reflexion and genuine creativity, global capital merely promotes the recycling of spent hopes, repackaged in the rhetorical frame of the "new" and wrapped up in persistent anxiety about the future. In a schizophrenic double pull of euphoria and paranoia, which confirms Deleuze and Guattari's analyses (1972, 1980), the consumerist and socially enhanced faith in the new manages to

coexist alongside the complete social rejection of subversive change and radical transformations. The potential for creating alternative practices of subjectivity clashes with the reterritorialization of desires through the gravitational pull of established values bent on short-term profit. This achieves a disastrous double effect: it reasserts individualism as the norm while reducing it to consumerism.

The collective memories of the radical politics of the 1970s are inscribed in this social context and consequently partake of its perverse political economy. An example of the schizoid double pull is the contemporary popularity of images of 1970s icons in popular culture, cinema, fashion music, and the media. They range from the ubiquitous face of Che Guevara or the young Angela Davis, to the images of Marilyn Monroe, JFK, Martin Luther King, Baader-Meinhof and the Red Army Faction, and other political immortals. Their totemic function is sacred or at least postsecular in the sacrificial sense of the term ("they suffered so that we may be better off"). Their symbolic value, however, is clearly inscribed in the current market economy as the commodification of radical political culture through the hyperindividualistic branding of the faces of its celebrities. This phenomenon is postideological and border crossing: nowadays it also includes Nelson Mandela and Princess Diana in some quarters and resistance or guerrilla fighters and Islamist suicide bombers in others.

Following the schizoid social climate of our times, however, the fashionable currency of radical popular culture heroes coexists with endless celebrations of "the end of ideologies," especially those of the radical left of the 1960s. Since the fall of the Berlin wall, the public debate around the events of '68 has grown more heated and polemical. This has been especially acrimonious among French intellectuals, most of whom have seen it fit to replace their youthful radicalism with age-worn conservatism. Ranging from the revisionist style (Ferry and Renault 1985), to media-savvy glamour (Lévy 1977) to decent neohumanism (Todorov 2002). This movement, known as *les nouveaux philosophes*, peaked in Andre Glucksmann's (1976), Alain Finkielkraut's (1987) and Ferry and Renault's (1985) indictment of the events of 1968 as a symbol of left-wing authoritarianism. Adding insult to injury, they accused all poststructuralist philosophies of complicity with terror and mass murder.

Deleuze was one of the first to comment on this hasty and fallacious historical dismissal of critical radicalism in both politics and philosophy—

and a reduction of both to the events of 1968. Targeting the fame-seeking narcissism of the *nouveaux philosophes,* Deleuze (2002)—stressed its political conservatism, which results in the reassertion of the banality of individualistic self-interest as a lesser and necessary evil. This moral apathy is constitutive of the neoconservative political liberalism of our era and of the arrogance with which it proclaimed the "end of history" (Fukuyama 1992). Against the vanity of these media stars, Deleuze instead stressed how critical philosophers have tried to avoid this pitfall: "we've been trying to uncover creative functions which would no longer require an author-function for them to be active" (2002:139). Other leading figures of philosophical poststructuralism like Lyotard (1986) and Hocquenghem (1986) also take a clear stand against the trivialization and self-serving dismissal of the spirit of 1968.

The political movement that best exemplifies the affirmative spirit of nomadic politics is feminism. The second feminist wave of the 1970s was based not only on a critique of the false universality of the liberal democratic system and the failed promises of its exclusionary humanism. It also interrogated the entrenched masculinism of the allegedly radical left and its leaders. Of all the social movements of that period, the women's movement in particular illustrates the self-organizing capacity, the organizational energy, and the visionary force of a leaderless structure. Propelled by collectively shared aspirations to freedom, respect for diversity, desire for social and symbolic justice, and a "politics of everyday life," feminism was a passionate, humorous, and politically rigorous movement. Disrepectful of dominant norms, but aware of its responsibility for the masses of women whose rage and vision it embodied, the collective endeavor of the women's movement is one of the most succesful political experiments of the twentieth century.

I consequently find it difficult to understand why the radical experiment of feminism is seldom quoted or even mentioned in contemporary debates about the political. The deletion of the women's movement and the subsequent dismissal of feminism as a merely cultural phenomenon is mistaken on several accounts. Firstly, it does not do justice to the vast body of scholarship produced by the feminists themselves—which has been so influential as to change the disciplinary contours of many political debates, especially on citizenship and subjectivity. Secondly, it misunderstands the feminist politics of experience—summarized in the slogan: "The personal is the political." The 1970s feminism is build on the politics of desire as the positive affirmation of a collectively shared longing for plenitude and the actualization of one's politics, regardless of sex, race, class, or sexual preferences. A political form of felicity, this radical aspiration to freedom aimed to confront and demolish the established, institutionalized form of gender identities and the power relations they actualize.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the politics of happiness or of feeling at home in one's culture—far from being a regression into narcissism—is an incisive comment on the mindless confrontation of dominant morality and social order. As such it encourages the counteractualization of different political economies of affect and desire. The pursuit of political felicity is collective, not individualistic, and free of profit motives, being elevated to the gratuitous task of constructing social horizons of hope.

This combination of critical acumen and creative potency is what I value most in the post-'68 philosophies. Feminism put it clearly by voicing the need for a "double-edged vision" of critique and creativity (Kelly 1979) that goes beyond complaint and denunciation to offer empowering alternatives. Lenin's world-shattering slogan "what's to be done?" mirrors a lost world when the social consensus—at least in the political left—was that the philosopher's task had always been to interpret the world, but that point now was to change it. Much has happened to the world and to people's desire for change since such an imperative saw the red light of day. In the climate of fear and anxiety that marks the postindustrial societies of the global era since the end of the cold war in 1989, the question "what is to be done?" tends to acquire a far less imperial and definitely more pathetic tone. What can we do to cope with the fast rate of changes? With the crumbling of established certainties and values? The evaporation of dear and cherished habits? How far can we go in taking the changes? How far are we capable of stretching ourselves? Or, to paraphrase the neo-Spinozist teachings of Deleuze: how much can our bodies—our embodied and embedded selves—actually take?

The ethical lesson of May '68 is that there is no logical necessity to link political subjectivity to oppositional consciousness and reduce them both to negativity. Political activism can be all the more effective if it disengages the process of consciousness-raising from negativity and connects it instead to creative affirmation. In terms of the crucial relationship to sameness and difference, this means that the dialectical opposition is replaced by the recognition of the ways in which otherness prompts, mobilizes, and engenders actualization of virtual potentials. These are by definition not contained

in the present conditions and cannot emerge from them. They have to be brought about or generated creatively by a qualitative leap of the collective imaginary.

Because of the emphasis on the positivity of desire, it is impossible to understand the specific political economy of affects of nomadic political theory without reference to psychoanalytic politics. The main psychoanalytic insight concerns the importance of the emotional layering of the process of subject formation. This refers to the affective, unconscious, and visceral elements of our allegedly rational and discursive belief system (Connolly 1999). To put it bluntly: the political does not equate the rational and the revolution is not the same as the irrational. Religion may well be the opium of some masses, but politics is no less intoxicating, and science is the favorite addiction of many others.

The poststructuralist approach builds on the psychoanalytic notion of an open-ended or nonunitary subject activated by desire. Deleuze and Guattari especially take the instance of the unconscious not as the black box, or obscure god, of some guilt-ridden subject of Lack, but rather as a receptor and activator of gratuitous forms of unprogrammed orientations and interconnections. This situates sensuality, affectivity, empathy, and desire as core values in the discussion about the politics of contemporary nonunitary subjects. Equally central to this generation of philosophers is the focus on power as both restrictive (potestas) and productive (potentia) force. It also means that power formations are both monuments and documents, in that they are expressed in social institutions and in systems of representation, narratives, and modes of identification. These are neither coherent nor rational, and their makeshift nature, far from diminishing their effectiveness, is crucial to their hegemonic power. The awareness of unconscious processes translates into a recognition of the instability and lack of coherence of the narratives that compose the social text. Far from resulting in a suspension of political and moral action, this political sensibility becomes for the poststructuralists the starting point to elaborate sites of political resistance suited to the paradoxes of this historical condition.

THE CURRENT CONTEXT

As I have suggested before, the public debate on social and cultural theory over the last ten years shows a decline of interest in politics, whereas dis-

courses about ethics, religious norms, and values have become dominant. Some master narratives circulate, which reiterate familiar themes: one is the inevitability of capitalist market economies as the alleged historical apex of human progress (Fukuyama 1992, 2002). Another is a contemporary brand of biological essentialism, which exacerbates aggressive individualism under the cover of "the selfish gene" (Dawkins 1976) and new evolutionary psychology. Another resonant refrain is that God is not dead. Nietzsche's claim rings hollows across the spectrum of contemporary global politics, dominated by the clash of religiously defined civilizations and widespread xenophobia (see chapter 7).

The biopolitical concerns that fuel identity politics and the perennial warfare of our times also introduce a political economy of negative passions in our social context. This negative affective economy expresses our actual condition: we now live in a militarized social space, under pressure of increased security enforcement and escalating states of emergency. The binary oppositions of the cold war era have been replaced by all-pervasive paranoia: the constant threat of the impending catastrophe. From environmental disaster to terrorist attack, accidents are imminent and certain to materialize: it is only a question of time.

In this context a passion for political activism has been replaced by rituals of public collective mourning. Melancholia has become a dominant mood and mode of relation. There is, of course, much to be mournful about, given the pathos of our global politics: our social horizon is war ridden and death bound. The promises of globalization turned out to be deceitful, and their financial rewards disappointing. We live in a culture where religious-minded people kill in the name of "the right to life" and where mighty nations wage war for "humanitarian" reasons. The question of what exactly counts as the "human" and what constitutes the basic unit of reference for the human in the globalized world is more urgent than ever. Depression and burnout are constant features of our most "advanced" societies. Psychopharmaceutical management of the population results in widespread use of legal and illegal drugs, a narcotic subtext that is understudied. Bodily vulnerability is increased by the great epidemics: some new ones, like HIV, Ebola, SARS, or avian flu; others more traditional, like TB and malaria. Health has become more than a public policy issue: it is a human rights, immigration, and a national defense concern.

While new age remedies and lifelong coaching of all sorts proliferate, our political sensibility has become accustomed to daily doses of horror:

we have taken a "forensic" turn (Braidotti, Colebrook, and Hanafin 2009). Pushing this insight to its conceptual extreme, Giorgio Agamben (1998) argues that the reduction of some categories of humans to the status of "bare life" is the end result of the project of Western modernity. As a political ontology, it marks the liminal grounds of human destitution—calculated degrees of dying (more on this in chapter 13). At the same time developed cultures are obsessed with youth and longevity, as testified by the popularity of antiaging treatments and plastic surgery.

Among all these paradoxes, melancholia rules. Hal Foster (1996) describes our schizoid cultural politics in terms of "traumatic realism"—an obsession with wounds, pain, and suffering combined with the irresistable urge to display them in public. Proliferating medical panopticons produce a global pathography (Seltzer 1999): we go on television talk shows to make a public spectacle of our pain. This is almost a parodic confirmation of the diagnosis Michel Foucault made of the Western world's sexual and emotional impoverishment. In the first volume of his *History of Sexuality,* Foucault analyzes the paradox of a culture that verbalizes and visualizes to the utmost of its ability—the claim that it is sexually oppressed, miserable, and frustrated. We scream our pain at the top of our voices and publicly claim the right to be liberated from the invisible chains of our repression. Foucault's political program unfolds from this ironic premise into a full-scale critique of the theory and practice of sexual liberation. Arguing that there is no freedom to be gained through but only *from* sexuality, Foucault's work explores the possibility of developing different forms and relations of intimacy. How to undo the sovereignty of phallocentric sex in favor of multiple other connections is the ethical impulse that sustains Foucault's work on the technologies of self-other relations (Braidotti 2011). It is in this tradition of thought that I want to argue the case for the politics of affirmation.

In the same vein, nomadic theory argues that no freedom is possible within capitalism because the axiom of money and profit knows no limit. The system functions axiomatically, which means, as Toscano (2006) pointed out, that it refuses to provide definitions of the terms it works with, but prefers to order certain domains into existence with the addition or subtraction of certain norms or commands. Axioms operate by emptying flows of their specific meaning in their coded context and thus by decoding them. As Protevi puts it (Protevi and Patton 2003), through processes of overcoding preexistent regimes of signs are decoded and subjected to the aims of a centralizing hierarchical machine that turns activity into labor, territories into land, and surplus value into profit. Axioms simply need not be explained, and its terms of relation need not be defined, their objects being treated as purely functional—note the emphasis on the "new" and "the next generation of gadgets". Being fundamentally meaningless, the decoded flows of capitalism are purely operational modes of regulation. They can get attached to any type of social organization—slave plantations as well as factories—and to different state structures—socialism as well as liberal democracies.

As such, the axioms of capitalism are extremely adaptable, capable of great internal variation and structured around a perverse sort of opportunism. Such flexibility and multiple realizability constitute a formidable apparatus of domination or capture. As Eugene Holland points out (2006), however, there is an entropic and self-destructive element to advanced capitalism in that it exposes and endangers the very sources of its wealth and power, which previous systems kept hidden or protected. Advanced capitalism operates on contemporary decoded or deterritorialized flows of change and reterritorializes or stratifies them for the sake of profit. Royal science is the epistemic counterpart of this same political economy of stratification and systemic containment or consistency. Epistemologically, minor science opposes royal science by insisting on the problematic mode and the opening of the scientific field to what Manuel De Landa (2002) calls the intensive force of science.

Advanced capitalism never attains absolute deterritorializations and always engenders social subjection. Nomadic theory opposes to the axiom the diagrammatic process of schizoid becoming, which encourages flows without the insertion of axioms. Nomadic thought focuses on an ethological approach to analyze the ways in which capitalism axiomizes and captures subjectivity in order to subject it to the imperatives of surplus value. Political praxis focuses therefore on the construction of alternative models of subjectivity.

THE NEW BODILY MATERIALISM: OR, THE EMPIRICAL TRANSCENDENTAL

Throughout the different phases of his extraordinarily cohesive body of work, Deleuze never ceases to emphasize the empowering force of affirma-

tive passions and thus redefines the embodied subject as an empirical transcendental entity.

In so doing, Deleuze goes further than any social constructivist attack on the "myth" of human nature, while also moving beyond the ways in which psychoanalysis "sacralizes" the sexual body. Deleuze's philosophy aims instead at replacing both these views with what I would call a high-tech brand of vitalism, the respect for bio-organisms and also for biodiversity. This also engenders the "intensive" style of writing that is his trademark, to which I will return in a later section. This results in a project that aims at alternative figurations of human subjectivity and of its political and aesthetic expressions. Rhizomes, bodies-without-organs, nomads, processes of becoming, flows, intensities, and folds are part of this rainbow of alternative figurations that Deleuze throws our way.

For Deleuze thought is made of sense and value: it is the force, or level of intensity, that fixes the value of an idea, not its adequation to a preestablished normative model. An idea is a line of intensity marking a certain degree or variation in intensity. An idea is an active state of very high intensity, which opens up hitherto unsuspected possibilities of life and action. Thinking carries the affirmative power of life to a higher degree. The force of this notion is that it puts a stop to the traditional search for ideas or lines that are "just" (in theory and politics alike). For if ideas are projectiles launched into time they can be neither "just" nor "false." Or, rather, they can be either "just" or false depending on the degree and levels of intensity of the forces, affects, or passions that sustain them. Philosophy as critique of negative, reactive values is also the critique of the dogmatic image of thought they sustain. It expresses the thinking process in terms of a typology of forces (Nietzsche) or an ethology of passions (Spinoza). In other words, Deleuze's rhizomatic style brings to the fore the affective foundations of the thinking process. Thinking, in other words, is to a very large extent nonconscious, in that it expresses the desire to know, and this desire is that which cannot be adequately expressed in language, simply because it is that which sustains it. Through this intensive structure of the thinking process, Deleuze points to the prephilosophical foundations of philosophy: its embodied, fleshy starting block.

We are faced here with the problem of what is ontologically there but propositionally excluded by necessity in the philosophical utterance. There is the unspoken and the unspeakable desire for thought, the passion for

thinking, the epistemophilic substratum on which philosophy later erects its discursive monuments. This affective stratum makes it possible for Deleuze to speak of a prediscursive moment of thinking. Pursuing this insight in a Spinozist mode, Deleuze rejects the phantoms of negation, putting thought at the service of creation. In this perspective, we shall call philosophy all that expresses and enriches the positivity of the subject as an intensive, affective thinking entity.

Deleuze's analysis of thinking (especially in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*) point in fact to a sort of structural aporia in philosophical discourse. Philosophy is both logophilic and logophobic, as Foucault had already astutely remarked (Foucault 1977a). Discourse—the production of ideas, knowledge, texts, and sciences—is something that philosophy relates to and rests upon in order to codify it and systematize it; philosophy is therefore logophilic. Discourse being, however, a complex network of interrelated truth effects, it far exceeds philosophy's power of codification. So philosophy has to "run after" all sorts of new discourses, such as women, postcolonial subjects, the audiovisual media, and other new technologies, etc., in order to incorporate them into its way of thinking; in this respect philosophy is logophobic. It is thus doomed to accept processes of becoming or to perish.

The strength of this philosophy of immanence lies in its social and historical relevance. It assumes that the overcoming of dialectics of negativity is historically and politically necessary in the framework of a polycentered, posthumanist, and postindustrial world. I would also like to add that it is conceptually necessary to get over the built-in pessimism of a philosophy of eternal returns that does not trigger any margins of empowering difference. Whereas Derrida, confronted with the same challenges, ends up glorifying the aporetic circle of undecidability and endless reiteration; whereas Irigaray invests in the feminine as the sole force that can break the eternal return of the Same and its classical Others, rhizomatic thinking empowers subjectivity as a multiplicity and along multiple axes. Only such a qualitative leap can accomplish that creative overturning of the melancholia of negativity, bad conscience, law, and lack. This brand of vitalistic pragmatism is an instigation to empower positively the difference nomadic subjects can make. It has nothing to do with voluntarism and all to do with a shift of grounds, a change of rhythms, a different set of conceptual relations and affective colors. Resonances, harmonies, and hues intermingle to paint an altogether

different landscape of a self that, not being One, functions as a relay point for many sets of intensive intersections and encounters with multiple others. Moreover, not being burdened by being One, such a subject can envisage forms of resistance and political agency that are multilayered and complex. It is an empirical transcendental site of becoming.

Resting on Spinoza, whom he decidedly recasts out of the Hegelian mold, Deleuze opens a whole dimension to the debate about the politics of desire and the desirability of an enfleshed subject who may actually yearn for change and transformation. Not happy with accommodation, and well beyond the libidinal economy of compensation, this subject that is not one actively desires processes of metamorphosis of the self, society, and of its modes of cultural representation. This project of undoing the Hegelian trap that consists in associating desire with lack and negativity results in a radical new ethics of enfleshed, sustainable subjects.

The point about virtuality is that it aims at actualizations through radical forms of empirical pragmatism. The force of the virtual is to stress that the "real," and hence the grounds for the political, does not coincide with present conditions but rather with the virtual dimension of incorporeal events. The virtual itself can bring about actualizations but never just coincide with them. Cosmos is another term for this self-ordering and emergence-producing capacity of the universe (Protevi and Patton 2003).

Chaos is formless but not undifferentiated: infinite speed linked to the eternal return that selects simulacra for their divergence. This infinite speed constitutes the outside of philosophy, and it is both a threat and a resource to philosophical thought, which has to strike a balance between the infinite speed and some sort of consistency. According to Deleuze, this is achieved through drawing the planes of immanence, the invention of conceptual personae, and the creation of concepts. In this respect nomadic theory can be described as an ethics of chaos or of virtual creativity.

Boundas (2007b) stresses that the virtual strikes a time line of its own, which is neither the immemorial past nor the apocalyptic or messianic future. We need to think the time of becoming, without reifying either the past or the future, so as to safeguard nondetermining and antiteleological tendencies. In other words, the virtual is the "untimely"—the impassive and dynamic aspects of multiplicities in the process of actualization. The political needs to be attached to the untimely as well. This is accomplished through a series of balancing acts or assemblages—to be out of joint but also engaged with the times, to be vowed to the future but active in the here and now, and to actualize sustainable systems while staying tuned and loyal to the force of the virtual.

OPPOSITIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The conceptual case of my argument rests on the rejection of the traditional equation between political subjectivity and critical oppositional consciousness and the reduction of both to negativity, as I argued in the previous chapter. There is an implicit assumption that political subjectivity or agency is about resistance, and that resistance means the negation of the negativity of the present. A positive is supposed to be engendered by this double negative. Being against implies a belligerent act of negation, the erasure of present conditions.

This assumption shares in a long-constituted history of thought, which in Continental philosophy is best exemplified by Hegel. The legacy of Hegelian-Marxist dialectics of consciousness is such that it positions negativity as a necessary structural element of thought. This means that the rejection of conditions or premises that are considered unsatisfactory, unfair, or offensive—on either ethical or political grounds—is the necessary precondition for their critique. A paradoxical concomitance is thus posited between the conditions one rejects and the discursive practice of critical philosophy and subsequent actions. This paradox results in establishing negativity as a productive moment in the dialectical scheme, which fundamentally aims at overturning the conditions that produced it in the first place. Thus, critical theory banks on negativity and, in a perverse way, even requires it. The corollary of this assumption is that the same material and discursive conditions that create the negative moment—the experience of oppression, marginality, injury, or trauma—are also the condition of their overturning. The material that damages is also that which engenders positive resistance, counteraction, or transcendence (Foucault 1977a). The process of consciousness-raising is crucial to the process of overturning or overcoding the negative instance. What triggers and at the same time is engendered by the process of resistance is collective oppositional consciousness. There is consequently a political necessity to elaborate adequate understandings and suitable representations of our real-life conditions. The negative experience can be turned into the matter that critical theory has to engage with. In this process, it turns into the productive source of countertruths and values, which aim

at overcoding the original negative instance. Epistemology therefore clears the ground for the ethical transformation that sustains political action.

This process is too often rendered in purely functional terms as the equation of political creativity/agency with negativity or unhappy consciousness. I want to suggest, however, that much is to be gained by adopting a non-Hegelian analysis that foregrounds instead the creative or affirmative elements of this process. This shift of perspective assumes philosophical monism and the recognition of an ethical and affective component of subjectivity; it is thus both an antidualistic and antirationalist position. A subject's ethical core is not his/her moral intentionality so much as the effects of power (as repressive—potestas—and positive—potentia) her actions are likely to have upon the world. It is a process of engendering empowering modes of becoming (Deleuze 1968). Given that, in this neovitalist view, the ethical good is equated with radical relationality aiming at affirmative empowerment, the ethical ideal is to increase one's ability to enter into modes of relation with multiple others. Oppositional consciousness and the political subjectivity or agency it engenders are processes or assemblages that actualize this ethical urge. This position is affirmative in the sense that it actively works toward the creation of alternatives by working through the negative instance and cultivating relations that are conducive to the ethical transmutation of values.

What this means practically is that the conditions for political and ethical agency are not dependent on the current state of the terrain. They are not oppositional and thus not tied to the present by negation; instead they are affirmative and geared to creating possible futures. Ethical and political relations create possible worlds by mobilizing resources that have been left untapped, including our desires and imagination. The work of critique must focus on creating the conditions for overturning of negativity precisely because they are not immediately available in the present. Moving beyond the dialectical scheme of thought means abandoning oppositional thinking so as to index activity in the present on the task of sustainable possible futures. The sustainability of the future rests on our ability to mobilize, actualize, and deploy cognitive, affective, and ethical forces that had not been activated thus far. These driving forces concretize in actual, material relations and can thus constitute a network, web, or rhizome of interconnection with others. We have to learn to think differently about ourselves. To think means to create new conceptual tools that may enable us to both come to terms and

actively interact with empowering others. The ethical gesture is the actualization of our increased ability to act and interact in the world.

To disengage the process of subject formation from negativity to attach it to affirmative otherness means that reciprocity is redefined not as mutual recognition but rather as mutual definition or specification. We are in *this* together in a vital political economy of becoming that is both transsubjective in structure and transhuman in force. Such a nomadic vision of the subject, moreover, does not restrict the ethical instance within the limits of human otherness, but also opens it up to interrelations with nonhuman, posthuman, and inhuman forces. The emphasis on nonhuman ethical relations can also be described as a geopolitics or an ecophilosophy in that it values one's reliance on the environment in the broadest sense of the term. Felix Guattari's idea of the three ecologies: the social, the psychic, and the environmental, is very relevant to this discussion. I discussed this in chapter 4. Considering the extent of our technological development, emphasis on the ecophilosophical aspects is not to be mistaken for biological determinism. It rather posits a nature-culture continuum (Haraway 1997; Guattari 1995, 2000) within which subjects cultivate and construct multiple ethical relations. The concepts of immanence, multiple ecologies, and oneo-vital politics become relevant here.

I have argued so far that oppositional consciousness is central to political subjectivity, but it is not the same as negativity, and that, as a consequence, critical theory is about strategies and relations of affirmation. Political subjectivity or agency therefore consists of multiple micropolitical practices of daily activism or interventions in and on the world we inhabit for ourselves and for future generations. As Rich put it in her recent essays, the political activist has to think "in spite of the times" and hence "out of my time," thus creating the analytics—the conditions of possibility—of the future (2001:159). Critical theory occurs somewhere between the no longer and the not yet, not looking for easy reassurances but for evidence that others are struggling with the same questions. Consequently, "we" are in *this* together indeed.

WHAT IS AFFIRMATION?

In order to understand the kind of transmutation of values I am defending here, it is important to depsychologize this discussion about positivity, nega-

tivity, and affirmation and approach it instead in more conceptual terms. We can then see how common and familiar this transmutation of values actually is. The distinction between good and evil is replaced by that between affirmation and negation or positive and negative affects.

What is positive in the ethics of affirmation is the belief that negative affects can be transformed. This implies a dynamic view of all affects, even those that freeze us in pain, horror, or mourning. The slightly depersonalizing effect of the negative or traumatic event involves a loss of ego-indexes perception, which allows for energetic forms of reaction. Clinical psychological research on trauma testifies to this, but I cannot pursue this angle here. Diasporic subjects of all kinds express the same insight. Multilocality is the affirmative translation of this negative sense of loss. Following Glissant (1990), the becoming-nomadic marks the process of positive transformation of the pain of loss into the active production of multiple forms of belonging and complex allegiances. Every event contains within it the potential for being overcome and overtaken—its negative charge can be transposed. The moment of actualization is also the moment of its neutralization. The ethical subject is the one with the ability to grasp the freedom to depersonalize the event and transform its negative charge. Affirmative ethics puts the motion back into emotion and the active back into activism, introducing movement, process, becoming. This shift makes all the difference to the patterns of repetition of negative emotions. It also reopens the debate on secularity in that it actually promotes an act of faith in our collective capacity to endure and to transform.

What is negative about negative affects is not a normative value judgment but rather the effect of arrest, blockage, rigidification, that comes as a result of a blow, a shock, an act of violence, betrayal, trauma, or just intense boredom. Negative passions do not merely destroy the self but also harm the self's capacity to relate to others—both human and nonhuman others—and thus to grow in and through others. Negative affects diminish our capacity to express the high levels of interdependence, the vital reliance on others that is key to both a nonunitary vision of the subject and to affirmative ethics. Again, the vitalist notion of life as zoe is important here because it stresses that the life I inhabit is not mine, it does not bear my name—it is a generative force of becoming, of individuation and differentiation: apersonal, indifferent, and generative. What is negated by negative passions is

the power of life itself—its potentia—as dynamic force, vital flows of connections, and becoming. And this is why they should neither be encouraged, nor should we be rewarded for lingering around them too long. Negative passions are black holes.

This is an antithesis of the Kantian moral imperative to avoid pain or to view pain as the obstacle to moral behavior. It displaces the grounds on which Kantian negotiations of limits can take place. The imperative not to do onto others what you would not want done to you is not rejected as much as enlarged. In affirmative ethics, the harm you do to others is immediately reflected in the harm you do to yourself, in terms of loss of potentia, positivity, capacity to relate, and hence freedom. Affirmative ethics is not about the avoidance of pain, but rather about transcending the resignation and passivity that ensue from being hurt, lost, and dispossessed. One has to become ethical, as opposed to applying moral rules and protocols as a form of self-protection: one has to endure.

Endurance is the Spinozist code word for this process. Endurance has a spatial side to do with the space of the body as an enfleshed field of actualization of passions or forces. It evolves affectivity and joy, as in the capacity for being affected by these forces to the point of pain or extreme pleasure. Endurance points to the struggle to sustain the pain without being annihilated by it. Endurance also has a temporal dimension about duration in time. This is linked to memory: intense pain, a wrong, a betrayal, a wound are hard to forget. The traumatic impact of painful events fixes them in a rigid eternal present tense out of which it is difficult to emerge. This is the eternal return of that which precisely cannot be endured and, as such, returns precisely in the mode of the unwanted, the untimely, the unassimilated, or inappropriate/d. They are also, however, paradoxically difficult to remember, insofar as re-membering entails retrieval and repetition of the pain itself.

Psychoanalysis, of course, has been here before (Laplanche 1976). The notion of the return of the repressed is the key to the logic of unconscious remembrance, but it is a secret and somewhat invisible key: it condenses space into the spasm of the symptom and time into a short-circuit that mines the very thinkability of the present. Kristeva's notion of the abject (1982) expresses clearly the temporality involved in psychoanalysis—by stressing the structural function played by the negative, by the incomprehensible, the

unthinkable, the other of understandable knowledge. Later Kristeva (1991) describes this as a form of structural dissociation within the self that makes us strangers to ourselves.

Deleuze calls this alterity Chaos and defines it positively as the virtual formation of all possible form. Lacan, on the other hand—and Derrida with him, I would argue—defines Chaos epistemologically as that which precedes form, structure, language. This makes for two radically divergent conceptions of time and—more importantly for me here—of negativity. That which is incomprehensible for Lacan—following Hegel—is the virtual for Deleuze, following Spinoza, Bergson, and Leibniz. This produces a number of significant shifts: from negative to affirmative affects, from entropic to generative desire, from incomprehensible to virtual events to be actualized, from constitutive outsides to a geometry of affects that require mutual actualization and synchronization, from a melancholy and split to an open-ended weblike subject, from the epistemological to the ontological turn in philosophy.

Nietzsche has also been here before. The eternal return in Nietzsche is the repetition, not in the compulsive mode of neurosis, nor in the negative erasure that marks the traumatic event. It is the eternal return of and as positivity. In a nomadic, Deleuzian-Nietzschean perspective, ethics is essentially about transformation of negative into positive passions, i.e., moving beyond the pain. This does not mean denying the pain, but rather activating it, working it through. Again, the positivity here is not supposed to indicate a facile optimism or a careless dismissal of human suffering. It involves compassionate witnessing of the pain of others, as Zygmunt Bauman (1993) and Susan Sontag (2003) point out—in the mode of empathic copresence. More on this in the next chapter.

The emphasis on the pursuit and actualization of positive relations and the ethical value attributed to affirmation do not imply any avoidance or disavowal of conflict. The rather simplistic charge of pacifism pushed to the extremes of passitivity is often made against Spinozist nomadic thought and its Deleuzian spin-offs (Hallward 2006; Žižek 2003). Nothing could be further from the truth than these charges of apolitical holism. Two crucial points need to be raised here: firstly, that amor fati is not passive fatalism, but pragmatic and labile engagement with the present in order to collectively construct conditions that transform and empower our capacity to act ethically and produce social horizons of hope or sustainable futures.

Secondly, the ethical cultivation of positivity does not exclude, either logically or practically, situations of antagonism or conflict. Starting from the premise that we are dealing with a postidentitarian politics need to de-psychologize the discussion about positivity and posit it instead in terms of an ethnology of forces, it follows that some of the positive relations may well be of the antagonistic kind. What matters—and this is the shift of perspective introduced by affirmative ethics—is to resist the habit of inscribing antagonistic relations in a logic of dialectical negativity. The transcendence of dialectics, in other words, has to be enacted in the inner structure of relations—of the interpersonal as well as the nonhuman kind. Antagonism need not be inscribed in the lethal logic of the struggle of consciousness, which we have inherited from Hegel via Sartre, Beauvoir, and even Lacan—through Kojève. This habit of thought needs to be resisted and recoded away from the emphasis it places on the need for recognition by the other and hence the necessity of establishing negativity as the precondition for the process of subject -formation and the emergence of the Self.

Provided this conceptual shift is enacted, it becomes feasible, and for nomadic theory desirable, to engage in antagonistic relations within the framework of affirmative politics. Positivity does not imply mindless acceptance or acritical passivity. It rathers prioritizes the construction of frames for the transformation of negative passions and forces in the here and now of concrete relations. It is in this respect that Boundas defends Deleuze's notion of amor fati against the tendentious change of mystical surrender made by Peter Hallward. Boundas stresses the rigorous pragmatism of Deleuze's ethical position. He firmly rejects messianic deferrals of action, with clear emphasis placed on the ethical urgency to enact actualizations, and more especially counteractualizations, so as to defeat the pull of negativity.

BEING WORTHY OF WHAT HAPPENS TO US

One of the reasons negative associations linked to pain, especially in relation to political processes of change, are ideologically laden has to do with the force of habit. Starting from the assumption that a subject is a molar aggregate, that is to say, a sedimentation of established habits, these can be seen as patterns of repetitions that consolidate modes of relation and forces of interaction. Habits are the frame within which nonunitary or complex

subjects get reterritorialized, albeit temporarily. One of the established habits in our culture is to frame "pain" within a discourse and social practice of suffering that requires rightful compensation. Equally strong is the urge to understand and empathize with pain. People go to great lengths in order to ease all pain. Great distress follows from not knowing or not being able to articulate the source of one's suffering or from knowing it all too well, all the time. The yearning for solace, closure, and justice is understandable and worthy of respect.

This ethical dilemma was already posed by J. F. Lyotard (1983) and, much earlier, by Primo Levi (1958) about the survivors of Nazi concentration camps. Namely, that the kind of vulnerability we humans experience in the face of events on the scale of small or high horror is something for which no adequate compensation is even thinkable. It is just incommensurable: a hurt, or wound, beyond repair. This means that the notion of justice in the sense of a logic of rights and reparation is not applicable. For the poststructuralist Lyotard, ethics consists in accepting the impossibility of adequate compensation—and living with the open wound.

This is the road to an ethics of affirmation, which respects the pain but suspends the quest for both claims and compensation and resists the logic of retribution of rights. This is achieved through a sort of depersonalization of the event, which is the ultimate ethical challenge. The displacement of the zoe-indexed reaction reveals the fundamental meaninglessness of the hurt, the injustice, or the injury one has suffered. "Why me?" is the refrain most commonly heard in a situation of extreme distress. This expresses rage as well as anguish at one's ill fate. The answer is plain: actually, for no reason at all. Examples of this are the banality of evil in large-scale genocides like the Holocaust (Arendt 1963), the randomness of surviving them. There is something intrinsically senseless about the pain, hurt, or injustice: lives are lost or saved for all reasons and for no reason at all. Why did some go to work in the WTC on 9/11 while others missed the train? Why did Frida Kahlo take that tram, which crashed so that she was impaled by a metal rod, and not the next one? For no reason at all. Reason has nothing to do with it. That's precisely the point. We need to unlink pain from the epistemological obsession that results in the quest for meaning and move beyond, to the next stage. That is the path to transformation of negative into positive passions.

This is not fatalism, and even less resignation, but rather a Nietzschean ethics of overturning the negative. Let us call it amor fati; we have to be worthy of what happens to us and rework it within an ethics of relation. Of course, repugnant and unbearable events do happen. Ethics consists, however, in reworking these events in the direction of positive relations. This is not carelessness or lack of compassion, but rather a form of lucidity that acknowledges the meaninglessness of pain and the futility of compensation. It also reasserts that the ethical instance is not one of retaliation or compensation but rather rests on active transformation of the negative.

Genevieve Lloyd (2008) provides a most illuminating account of the contrast between two different approaches to the nature of human freedom: "Descartes' account of the will as the locus of freedom and Spinoza's rival treatment of freedom as involving the capacity to shape a life in accordance with the recognition of necessity" (2008:1). Necessity is not passivity, but rather the creative acceptance of the potential of underlying tendencies that are already present. The convergence of freedom and necessity is the conceptual core of Spinozist ethics: "the joyful acceptance and appropriation of what must be" (Lloyd 2008:200).

This is related to the idea that, as humans, we are all part of nature and both animated and limited "by the causal determination exerted on us by the rest of the whole" (Lloyd 2008:213). This ontology of immanence is central to Spinoza's materialism; Deleuze develops it into a whole ethical system by stressing that we must not use the existing properties of actualized strata and conditions to predict what a body can do—the virtual multiplicities that sustain those strata or assemblages. This is the source of the nondeterministic vitalism of nomadic theory.

Paul Patton (2000) also stresses this affective dimension of the core of an ethic of critical human freedom that aims at transgressing the limits of what one is capable of becoming. For Constantin Boundas (2007b), the ability for individuation that is implied in this ontology of freedom connects it to the powers of the virtual : "Becoming worthy of the event . . . requires the ascesis of the counter-actualisation of the accidents that fill our lives and as a result our participation in the intensive, virtual event" (Boundas 2007:132b). In other words, the "worthiness" of an event—that which ethically compels us to engage with it—is not its intrinsic or explicit value according to given standards of moral or political evaluation, but rather the extent to which it contributes to conditions of becoming. It is a vital force to move beyond the negative.

Protevi argues (Protevi and Patton 2003) that, in this nomadic view, the political is the nonreactive and nonhabitual response of reactive engagement with the events of one's life that can reshape one's becoming. A sort of

creative disorganization of the negative that aims at keeping life immanent, nonunitary, and nonreified according to dominant codes and hegemonic traditions of both life and thought.

This requires a double shift. Firstly, the affect itself moves from the frozen or reactive effect of pain to proactive affirmation of its generative potential. Secondly, the line of questioning also shifts from the quest for the origin or source to a process of elaboration of the questions that express and enhance a subject's capacity to achieve freedom through the understanding of its limits.

What is an adequate ethical question? One that is capable of sustaining the subject in his quest for more interrelations with others, i.e., more "Life," motion, change, and transformation. The adequate ethical question provides the subject with a frame for interaction and change, growth and movement. It affirms life as difference-at-work and as endurance. An ethical question has to be adequate in relation to how much a body can take. How much can an embodied entity take in the mode of interrelations and connections, i.e., how much freedom of action can we endure? Affirmative ethics assumes, following Nietzsche, that humanity does not stem from freedom but rather that freedom is extracted from the awareness of limitations. Affirmation is about freedom from the burden of negativity, freedom through the understanding of our bondage.

CONCLUSION: IN SPITE OF THE TIMES

The real issue is conceptual: how do we develop a new postunitary vision of the subject, of ourselves, and how do we adopt a social imaginary that does justice to the complexity? Shifting an imaginary is not like casting away a used garment, but more like shedding an old skin. How do changes of this magnitude take place? It happens often enough at the molecular level, but in the social it is a painful experience, given that identifications constitute an inner scaffolding that supports one's sense of identity. Part of the answer lies in the formulation of the project: "we" are in *this* together. This is a collective activity, a group project that connects active, conscious, and desiring citizens. It points toward a virtual destination: postunitary nomadic identities, floating foundations, etc., but it is not utopian. As a project, it is historically grounded, socially embedded, and already partly actualized in

the joint endeavor, that is, the community, of those who are actively working toward it. If this be utopian, it is only in the sense of the positive affects that are mobilized in the process: the necessary dose of imagination, dreamlike vision, and bonding without which no social project can take off.

The ethical process of transforming negative into positive passions engenders a politics of affirmation in the sense of creating the conditions for endurance and hence for a sustainable future. Virtual futures grow out of sustainable presents and vice versa. Transformative politics takes on the future as the shared collective imagining that endures in processes of becoming. The ethical-political concept here is the necessity to think with the times and in spite of the times, not in a belligerent mode of oppositional consciousness, but as a humble and empowering gesture of coconstruction of social horizons of hope.

Several social critics (Massumi 1997; Bourke 2005) have pointed out that the political economy of advanced capitalism is one of fear, terror, and manic-depressive moods of alternating apocalyptic gloom and euphoria.[2] A culture of guilt and apathy has settled into a society that acts as if it was traumatized. The climate of international terror and warfare provides the opportunity to indulge in self-idealization, a process Gilroy describes as "post-colonial melancholia." Global terrorism has turned us all into victims, made suddenly and violently aware of our vulnerability. This excessive psychologization of historical traumas results in the incapacity to replace collective social action and active political imagination with the psychology of mourning and the logic of guilt, retaliation, and compensation. In opposition to this, nomadic theory proposes the powers of affirmation of a culture of ethical responsibility and activated historical memory. Hence the importance of vigilance and critical scrutiny and the analysis of the workings of the state and the government. This is in keeping with the Spinozist political ontology of ethics as the extraction of freedom from a clear understanding of our limitations.

The final aspect of affirmative politics I want to spell out is that of generational time lines, in the sense of the construction of social horizons of hope, that is, of sustainable futures. Modernity, as an ideology of progress, postulated boundless faith in the future as the ultimate destination of the human. Zygmunt Bauman quotes one of my favorite writers, Diderot, when stating that modern man is in love with posterity. Postmodernity, on the other hand, is death bound and sets as its horizon the globalization process

in terms of technological and economic interdependence. Capitalism had no built-in teleological purpose, historical logic, or structure, but is a self-imploding system that would not stop at anything in order to fulfill its aim: profit. This inherently self-destructive system feeds on, and thus destroys, the very conditions of its survival: it is omnivorous, and what it ultimately eats is the future itself. Being nothing more than this all-consuming entropic energy, capitalism lacks the ability to create anything new: it can merely promote the recycling of spent hopes, repackaged in the rhetorical frame of the "next generation of gadgets." Affirmative ethics expresses the desire to endure in time and thus clashes with the deadly spin of the present.

The future today is no longer the self-projection of the modernist subject, as I indicated in chapter 8. It is a basic and rather humble act of faith in the possibility of endurance (as duration or continuity) that honors our obligation to the generations to come. It involves the virtual unfolding of the affirmative aspect of what we manage to actualize in the here and now. Virtual futures grow out of sustainable presents and vice versa. This is how qualitative transformations can be actualized and transmitted along the genetic/time line. Transformative postsecular ethics takes on the future affirmatively, as the shared collective imagining that is a continual process of becoming, to effect multiple modes of interaction with heterogeneous others. This is what futurity is made of. It is a nonlinear evolution: an ethics that moves away from the paradigm of reciprocity and the logic of recognition and installs a rhizomatic relation of mutual affirmation.

Sustainability expresses the desire to endure in both space and time. In Spinozist-Deleuzian political terms, this sustainable idea of endurance is linked to the construction of possible futures, insofar as the future is the virtual unfolding of the affirmative aspect of the present. An equation is therefore drawn between the radical politics of disidentification, the formation of alternative subject positions, and the construction of social hope in the future. This equation rests on the strategy of transformation of negative passions into affirmative and empowering modes of relation to the conditions of our historicity.

In order to appreciate the full impact of this idea, we need to think back to the perverse temporality of advanced capitalism with which I started this essay. Insofar as the axioms of capitalism destroy sustainable futures, resistance entails the collective endeavor to construct social horizons of endurance, which is to say of hope and sustainability. It is a political practice of resistance to the present, which activates the past in producing the hope of change and the energy to actualize it. In so doing, it processes negative forces and enlists them to the empowering task of engaging with possible futures. Hope is an anticipatory virtue that activates powerful motivating forces: countermemories, imagination, dream work, religion, desire, and art. Hope constructs the future in that it opens the spaces onto which to project active desires; it gives us the force to process the negativity and emancipate ourselves from the inertia of everyday routines. It is a qualitative leap that carves out active trajectories of becoming and thus can respond to anxieties and uncertainties in a productive manner and negotiate transitions to sustainable futures.

By targeting those who come after us as the rightful ethical interlocutors and assessors of our own actions, we take seriously the implications of our own situated position. This form of intergenerational justice is crucial. This point about intragenerational fairness need not, however, be expressed or conceptualized in the social imaginary as an oedipal narrative. To be concerned about the future should not necessarily result in linearity, i.e., in restating the unity of space and time as the horizon of subjectivity. On the contrary, nonlinear genealogical models of intragenerational decency offer up one way of displacing the oedipal hierarchy. These models involve a becoming-minoritarian of the elderly, the senior, and the parental, but also a de-oedipalization of the bond of the young to those who preceded them. It calls for new ways of addressing and solving intergenerational conflicts—other than envy and rivalry—joining forces across the generational divide by working together toward sustainable futures. By practicing an ethics of nonreciprocity in the pursuit of affirmation.

An example: older feminists may feel the cruel pinch of aging, but some young ones suffer from 1970s envy. Middle-aged survivors of the second wave may feel like war veterans, but some of generation Y, as Iris van der Tuin taught me, call themselves "born-again baby boomers!" So who's envying whom?

"'We" are in *this* together, indeed. Those who go through life under the sign of the desire for change need accelerations that jolt them out of set habits; political thinkers of the postsecular era need to be visionary, prophetic, and upbeat—insofar as they are passionately committed to writing the pre-

history of the future. That is to say: to introduce change in the present so as to affect multiple modes of belonging through complex and heterogeneous relations. This is the horizon of sustainable futures.

Hope is a sort of "dreaming forward" that permeates our lives and activates them. It is a powerful motivating force grounded in our collective imaginings. They express very grounded concerns for the multitude of "anybody" that composes the human community. Lest our greed and selfishness destroy or diminish it for generations to come. Given that posterity per definition can never pay us back, this gesture is perfectly gratuitous.

Against the general lethargy, the rhetoric of selfish genes and possessive individualism, on the one hand, and the dominant ideology of melancholic lament, on the other, hope rests with an affirmative ethics of sustainable futures. A deep and careless generosity, the ethics of nonprofit at an ontological level. Why should one pursue this project? For no reason at all. Reason has nothing to do with this. Let's just do it for the hell of it—to be worthy of our times while resisting the times and for love of the world.

11

SUSTAINABLE ETHICS AND THE BODY IN PAIN

INTRODUCTION: AGAINST MORAL UNIVERSALISM

The fact that, in the climate of political restoration that marks our global context, interest in politics is in decline, whereas ethics triumphs in the public debate, is not necessarily an advantage. The charge of moral and cognitive relativism is in fact made against any project that shows a concerted effort at challenging or decentering the traditional, humanistic view of the moral subject. This overdefensive attitude asserts the belief in the necessity of strong foundations such as those that a classical liberal view of the rationalist subject can guarantee. Doxic consensus is set: without steady identities resting on firm grounds, basic elements of human decency, moral and political agency, and ethical probity are threatened. In opposition to this belief, which has little more than long-standing habits and the inertia of tradition on its side, I want to argue that a posthumanistic and nomadic vision of the subject is best suited to provide an alternative foundation for ethical and political subjectivity that respects the complexity of our times.

This argument is framed by a larger dispute, which I will not explore at length here—that of the thorny relationship between poststructuralist ethics in Continental philosophy, on the one hand, and the dominant, mostly Anglo-American traditions of moral philosophy, on the other. Todd May (1995) argued persuasively that moral philosophy as a discipline does not