

COMPARATIVE POSTHUMANISMS - THE HUMAN: A FAILED EVOLUTION?

(Trans)humanist nihilism and metahumanist affirmation of becoming

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I will propose a critique of the conservative values implicit in contemporary notions of enhancement, as continuation and expansion of given values within a capitalistic and positivistic regime of preemption, quantification and control. In opposition I will propose an ontology of becoming where transformation and movement are not predictable, whereby the distinction proposed by Deleuze between the virtual and the possible becomes crucial. Radical pluralism and becoming imply the emergence of what is not yet thinkable, therefore not quantifiable in terms of the Good, or of an increase of the Good with regard to *given values*. Emergent reality implies emergent values that are not quantifiable in terms of the Good: a **transductive** field of emergence, that generates its own changing conditions.

Constant change as it appears to happen in capitalistic flows, is the denial of becoming, whereby capitalization operates through capturing the open potentials of movements within a transcendent field that places truth in capitalistic growth per se, radically instrumentalizing movement and concealing behind the appearance of constant change a conservative nihilistic set of values. Open-ended becoming cannot be subdued to transcendental networks of preemption. Capitalism's transcendence is doubly problematic since it appears to be, and operates as, an immanent, selfregulated, modulating field that makes it necessary to rethink politics beyond ideological oppositions and resistance.

I thus expand Nietzsche's critique of the nihilism implicit in the platonic and christian tradition, to positivism, rationalism, capitalism, information, and its contemporary transhumanist expressions. In this light the human, with its negation of becoming, with its will to fix and control the incipient movement of multiplicity, appears to be a failed branch of evolution that is bringing itself close to complete extermination.

Transhumanist quests of individual immortality, and projects like the Quantified Self, actually conceal new modes of control which operate through distributed non human agencies, distributed ecologies of control, modular networks of capitalization, of which liberal subjectivity has become instrumental as technology for affective and desire production, that effectively hides the non-human or posthuman technologies of control operating at deeper levels of the networks. We thus need to confront urgently a transformation towards a *metahumanist* ontology and ethics of becoming.

COMPARATIVE (POST)HUMANISMS - Clarifying definitions

The confusion between the transhumanist notion of the posthuman and the one stemming from critical posthumanism is usual, and goes along a plethora of other less established definitions, which makes it necessary to establish a *comparative field of study*.

Firstly, we will study **Humanism** not as the characterization or definition of a species, but as construct, as process of *production of the human*, as contested definition of boundaries, a political-ontological process in which *the perception of the human is generated at two levels* at least: the perception that the human has of the world, and of itself. This binary distinction between world and self, as a perceptual construct, is indeed a cornerstone of the production of the human as autonomous, superior, rational being endowed with free will.

Secondly, **Transhumanism** points to a future superhuman/posthuman utopia along a temporal linearity of evolution, within a capitalistic expansion of the quantifiable capacities of the humanistic self-centered human in the context of an implicit eugenics and a dualistic culture of disembodiment in which individual immortality through mind uploading is the most archetypal dream. Transhumanism thus appears to be a **hyperhumanism**.

Thirdly, **critical posthumanism**, as grounded on the work of feminist thinkers such as Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, or Rosi Braidotti, is a revision of the humanistic perspective/perception which leads to the conclusion that we have always been posthuman/we have never been human in the context of a postmodern critique and of political contestation.

Along these, different conceptions of Antihumanism, the panhuman, the non human, the a-human, the higher human, the new human, the last human, the superhuman, etc., have emerged, especially since Nietzsche, that would need a more detailed investigation elsewhere.

In this context, **Metahumanism** arrives as a proposal that expands critical posthumanism in the direction of a *radical ontology of becoming*, an ethics and politics of movement that brings together *plurality, perspectivism and emergence* in the crossroads of an ongoing transformation of perception-relationality-movement-affects thereby *blurring the limits of the species*: the radical relationist approach focuses in the transductive, intra-active character of the relations out of which we emerge, where "the human" appears on the one hand as result of certain technologies of perception, on the other as radically entangled with what it perceives to be non-human.

Meta- is thereby exposed in its multiple resonances, thus being a more appropriate prefix than post-:

- **Change, mutation, incipient, emergent, becoming**: points to a radical ontology of becoming, an emergence that never actualises into form.
- **In between, relationality, together with, becoming with, movement across**: points to a relational, situated, pluralistic, perspectival ontology; relationality as ontogenetic movement in between given categories.
- **Exceeding, embracing, beyond, coming after**: points to a double critical ontology, a critique of the critique, a perceptual-kinetic ontology-genealogy of discourse-thinking-becoming, a movement that not only comes after the humanist, but exceeds it.

Contradictions of the (Hyper)Humanistic vision

1. Anthropocentrism attempts to place the human at the centre of the worldview through **placing truth elsewhere: in a transcendent reality** of ideas, reason, machines or information.
2. **The human as always already posthuman: The human as technological being is the offspring of complex Technogenetic spirals** in which the technologies s/he produces produce him/her in return.
 - i. **The human is the offspring of complex Epigenetic modulations: a** Perceptual genesis of the human that generates a dualist ontology through:
 - Fixation of Movement (the perceiver is fixed with regard to the perspectival window)
 - Masculinist domination: Binary Sex in Plato (Plato's ontology of form as related to being and man, and the amorphous to non-being and woman, is crucially related to a masculinist misogynist ontology)
 - Reason understood as distributed, perceptual, spatio-temporal, architectural and kinetic linearity.

Fallacies of the (Hyper)Humanistic vision

The humanistic fictions of the free will and individualistic autonomy crucially conceal the processes of affective and desiring production, especially within contemporary capitalism. A relational ontology is necessary to unveil these processes, whereby an understanding is needed of the way in which affects-desires and perceptions-relations emerge in complex relational and kinetic processes. Markets operate through the belief of consumers in the free will, while creating those desires in the consumers, or capturing emergent desires.

The Genealogy of philosophy is outside philosophy

The conditions of possibility of thinking are related to specific but changing kinetic alignments, to specific forms of embedded and distributed relations, whereby thinking is always distributed, not only between humans, but in the environment at large and in complex temporalities of kinetic interaction with the world.

There is a perceptual genesis of thinking in which the **Birth of Dualism** is *not to be found in philosophical discourse*, but in technogenetic spirals that generate the perceptual conditions for that ontology, whereby one can see long-term processes in which

- a. from the 8th Century b.c. the greek polis generates the conditions for the gathering of dionysian choruses, giving birth to the architecture of the Greek Theatre around the 6th Century b.c., *two centuries before Plato's dualist ontology*. The theatre is a grand *perceptual machine* that generates, all in one, *linearity, circularity and dualism* as the grounds of a spectacular ontology. Why is the theatre rather than other architectures the greatest perceptual machine of ancient Greece? Because through it the dionysian forces of the orgiastic, non-dualistic, nomadic choruses were captured and tamed, thus having a crucial role in the emergence of dualism.

- b. a similar process happens with the formalization of Renaissance perspective that gives birth to the rationalisation of vision and the firm establishment of a dualistic visual ontology over *two centuries before Descartes formulates the subject-object dualism* within philosophical discourse. I suggest that the birth of perspectival vision was a crucial antecedent of the Cartesian dualism: it generated the conditions of possibility for it.
- c. More recently processes accelerate and strata intermingle more quickly, with the interplay of Industrialization and the Mechanistic worldview, and more recently of non-linear dynamics and Information/Cybernetics.

Moving boundaries of philosophy

- a. This doesn't imply a causality between exterior forces of thinking and thinking itself. Rather it points to how *there is no "thinking itself"*: thinking being a mode of movement is always part of larger kinetic contexts of relations, within complex non linear dynamics.
- b. The movement of thinking is not essentially different from other modes of movement, it relates and transforms in relation to other modes of movement. Thinking is never to be regarded as a disembodied or incorporeal process, it is always corporeal or embodied.

2. Nihilism of transcendence

- a. Plato's dualistic ontology of form/being/identity appears in this light as fixation/negation of the creative forces and movements of becoming whereby a transcendent ideal of pure forms is placed as the truth, disregarding the movements and changes of the world (potential *and* actual). This dualist ontology has a perceptual genealogy, effect of the partial fixation of an observer as external to the movements s/he fixes into patterns.
- b. From Plato, through christianity, humanism, enlightenment, rationalism, to Information we can trace a non-linear genealogy of transcendence in which Truth lies in an ideal world of pure forms/God/Reason/Information, operating through and allowing:
 - i. **a superalignment** of movements-affects-perceptions along trajectories that attempt to fix the observer and split it or abstract it from the observed.
 - ii. **reductionism of complexity** - Partial reduction of reality to quantifiable discrete patterns: Form/pattern as reductionism and capture of the movements of the world.
 - iii. **ONTOLOGY OF CONTROL – MILITARIZATION OF REALITY - reduction of movement to points, lines and planes/dimensions of capture** - The cartesian coordinates don't describe an extensive world, but produce the extensive world as perceptual onto-epistemology.
 - iv. **The process oscillates between two poles:**
 - 1. **prediction/preemption**: anticipatory production and capture of the new.
 - 2. **homogenisation/replication**: repetition of the given.
- c. **Reason thus appears as inferior capacity** – (the "*Small Reason*" in Nietzsche's Zarathustra, which is part and effect of the "larger reason" of the Body.)

Linearity of thinking appears to be a reductionism of the multidimensional, adimensional or metadimensional movements of the world.

A FAILED EVOLUTION

The Failure is not of a species, but of a construct, of a dominant conception of the human, that attempts to fix and control the creative forces of the world, superaligning them in transcendental, reductionist formations of dualistic, linear and circular character. The Failure becomes evident in the line of abolition, destruction, self-destruction that the dualistic ontology of transcendence implies and explicitly enacts in the world. Failure is implicit in the line of abolition even if the paradigm is so far a dominant one and may still be so for centuries ahead.

Transhumanism as a form of hyperhumanism perpetuates and expands the failed evolution.

- d. **enhancement is an implicitly nihilistic notion** that points to the quantification of the good in the frame of given values, rather than to transductive processes of emergent, non quantifiable values. A real transformation implies such a transductive process, in which an activity, according to Gilbert Simondon, generates its own conditions. Enhancement not only doesn't imply transduction, transformation or becoming, but conceals its conservative implications behind a fake façade of transformation. Human Enhancement projects such as *The Quantified Self* thus relate to a longstanding tradition of *state racism and implicit eugenics*, recodified in contemporary technologies of affective capitalism.
- e. a second form of nihilism appears in the expansion of a quest for individual immortality, a fixation of the movements of becoming in a individuated entity that wants to stay the same forever appears as the utmost nihilistic nightmare, and a highly unecological quest that expands colonial dreams to the infinite.
- f. Such desires, far from coming from an individual free will, are contagiously disseminated within a specific cultural ecology in which older myths of individuality and immortality are recodified within new capitalistic technologies of desire production that effectively and affectively conceal an unprecedented apparatus of control.
- g. Finally, transhumanism is an expression of the longstanding dualistic paradigm of disembodiment, the rationalistic nightmare of purely abstract minds that can be divorced from body and context and uploaded into other bodies forever: another nihilistic expression of transcendence and negation of life. This obsolete approach to cognition collides with contemporary notions of embodied cognition, according to which the dreams of mind uploading, on which the quest for immortality largely rely, could never work. But they nevertheless generate specific affects, ontologies and epistemologies of control.

Ontology of movement-becoming – ONTOKINETHICS / METAGENETHICS

The aforementioned streams of nihilism are grounded on a fixation and capture of movement along points, lines and planes which align perception to a dualistic machine, placing truth in a transcendent illusion of fixity (universal ideals, pure ideas, forms, patterns).

In order to overcome this tradition a new ontology of movement is needed, one that doesn't see movement as external property of an essentially immobile matter, one that, along the lines of ancient preplatonic, indian and chinese philosophy, as well as of Epicure, Lucretius, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Deleuze, sees movement as the intrinsic dynamics that constitutes all reality. There is no movement of things, but rather there are things that emerge from movement without ever being distinct from it. The *thingness* emerging from movement is never fully actualised, is never fully a thing, is always moving and becoming. Furthermore, movement *doesn't necessarily concretize into things. Thingness would not be a property of the world, but of a peculiar form of perception* that has become dominant since Plato through to contemporary global capitalism. How to generate a new perception of movement that exceeds formalization/actualization? How to exceed the actual-potential dualism focusing on the *more or less open* potentiality of movement?

Ontokinethics or Metagenethics is the provisional name for an ontology of movement, at the same time an epistemology and an ethics, which proposes to think Movement-perception as:

- i. Ontogenetic: propelling new becomings
- ii. Incipient/emergent, virtual/potential, plural/differential: always moving towards the not-yet actualised, towards yet unthinkable potentials, of a multiplicity to come, a differential difference happening in-between emergent movements, rather than actualised entities.
- iii. Relational – immanent – intra-active – transductive - metaformative: generating affections in which no absolute exteriority is possible; constituting and transforming its own conditions, its own perceptions, its own relations and the terms that relate, its own ontology-epistemology-ethics.
- iv. Non teleological, not oriented towards emergence of being/form/pattern: **AMORPHOGENESIS/METAMERGENCE** points to a radical ontology of becoming that doesn't rely altogether in the emergence of actualised patterns of existence, but focuses radically in the non-actualised. No "thing", pattern or form emerges. No visual centralized perspective is available that allows to fix movement into patterns. Infinite affections constitute the bodies that enter the relations of movement. *Densities of an infinitely diffuse movement* that disseminate or align into more or less diffuse trails.

Metamergence exceeds the dualism actual-potential in considering each movement not with regard to abstract planes of potentiality or actuality, but with regard to the degree of openness or alignment of movement, the way in which movement opens up to infinite potential affections or forecloses potentials in trajectories of capture.

We must distinguish here between *foreclosure through repetition and foreclosure through preemption*. Both represent forms of *violence*. The degree of actualisation or alignment of a movement can be seen as a degree of violence that imposes trajectories on the potentials, or captures potentials in networks of capitalization.

Relational ontology and affective politics - the panchoreographic - affective-cognitive capitalism

Capitalism and the digital world constitute a paradigm of preemption in which perception is captured along complex apparatuses (interfaces) in a genealogy dating back to Renaissance perspective, euclidean geometry and other perceptual machines.

This novel paradigm is not only working in the realm of control through repetition or replication, but is also anticipating the emergence of novelty by producing novelty and by registering tiny movements of the bodies within a modular network that adapts to the changes almost immediately.

Repetition, adaptation, prediction and preemption are thus strata of a complex control metasystem in which movement is captured along lines, planes and points of perception and affection.

In order to understand the fully productive nature of these processes, as **affective/desiring and cognitive/perceptual production**, we need a metahumanist relational ontology that exceeds humanistic notions of free will, and understands how our affects and desires intra-actively and transductively emerge in kinetic relational processes. We need a new ontology of movement in order to set to motion a *new politics of movement* that is able to deal with the ontological problems implicit in contemporary society of control.

How are given actualised trajectories of movement-becoming (violently) reinstated? How do these act as attractors of diffuse potentials of movement? How do perceptual attractors (affordances, such as interfaces) generate movement alignments that foreclose potentiality?

In this control paradigm the superalignment of perception along the lines and planes of perceptual machines is crucial for capitalization. *Behind the apparent fluidity of capitalistic flows there is a highly complex perceptual machine that captures movement along discrete lines and planes of control, a modular selforganizing system, a highly structured fluidity.*

Metaformance deals with this formation of perception as ontological process.

The problem cannot be solved by thinking movement as happening between two abstract planes of potentiality and actuality. How is movement always open to potentials and always aligned with trajectories that foreclose the potentials? Rather than thinking in between two abstract planes of potentiality and actuality, i propose to think from movement as being always more or less open, more or less aligned. The question is thus *only* about potentiality and its degree of openness, *actualization being the very perceptual fiction that forecloses movement.*

Pragmatics – METABODY Project

The Metabody project - <http://metabody.eu> is an attempt to set to motion a pragmatics for the onto-ethical issues raised above.

1. How to open highly aligned forms of movement to an infinite horizon of potential, Amorphogenesis or Metamergence?
2. How to disalign bodies from given perceptual machines in such ways that no collapse happens, but a productive constitution of affective ecologies takes place?
3. How to foreground the aspects of our relationalities that exceed meaning and form, the illegible or nearly legible, as a crucial aspect of our intra-
actions?