

BIOPOLITICS AND COMMUNITY OF LIFE: BETWEEN NATURALISM AND ANIMISM

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INTRODUCTION

This essay raises the question of “what is community?” and, more specifically, “what is a community of *living* beings?” In light of historical and contemporary attempts to address the notion of community, I want to ask once again: what is it that makes sharing among the *living* possible? How may the “sense” of being alive constitute community? In other words, is there such a phenomenon as a community of life and if so, then, what constitutes the community of *living* beings? To begin questioning this way, it is necessary to take into consideration the historical context from within which this question arises. In this respect, one cannot address the question of community or life without speaking to the biopolitical horizon that characterizes Western modernity. The biopolitical community of life, as I examine below, is an exclusionary community of care for the living (strictly defined through their *biological* life) relying on the distinction of the human population from its “natural” environment. The latter, in its turn, is objectified either as a sterilized space containing the population or as a threat of “wilderness” that must be secured. In this regard, there is a way in which the biopolitical community of life becomes reducible to humanity, conceptually foreclosing life’s openness to a non-human outside. In response to this closure, I want to put biopolitical theory into conversation with a radical phenomenology of life in order to think a community of life that is not marked by such a closure, but is rather open to a variety of human and non-human forms of living. Driven by this aim, the present essay firstly examines the notion of a biopolitical community of life and identifies its problematic, which, I propose, is not body but interiority or “soul.” Given this problematic, I argue that biopolitics is subject to a critique of naturalist bias, which consists in denying nonhumans the “privilege” of interiority or soul that lies at the basis of the biopolitical community of care for *human* life. Based on a deconstruction of naturalist ontology, this essay proposes that we might begin to think a community of life “beyond” biopolitics based on Roberto Esposito’s project of affirmative biopolitics as well as on animist thought, the kernel of which, I suggest, can be found in Michel Henry’s radical phenomenology of life. As a result, the aim of this essay is two-fold: the first is to trace the fate of interiority

or “soul” in contemporary biopolitical theory, and the second is to attempt to “redeem” this notion of “soul” through recourse to the animist principles found in a radical phenomenology of life, which opens to the possibility of thinking a community of life as shared interiority. The primary claim of this essay is that rethinking and affirming non-naturalist “soul” is one of the key strategies of resistance to modern biopolitics and the exclusionary mechanisms of its community.

This project unfolds at the intersection of four streams of research, all of which have significant presence in academic literature. Firstly, as it sets out to argue that the primary problematic of biopolitics is “soul,” it taps into and extends the work that has been accomplished by a number of post-Marxist, post-operaist or autonomist philosophers who, in most general terms, concern themselves with the questions of cognitive capitalism, and immaterial and affective labour.¹ The notion of “soul” appears in their work, however metaphorically, to mark the primary site of intervention of biopolitical government in late capitalist societies. The work of Franco Berardi in particular stands out in this regard, as he argues, following Foucault, that while during the formation of industrial societies the primacy was given to the disciplining and subsequent exploitation or subduing of the “body” by the machines of social production, with the rise of “semicapitalism,” the primary tools for the production of value become “the mind, language and creativity” or, simply put, the “soul.” The soul, according to Berardi’s materialistic definition, has nothing to do with spirit, but is “the vital breath that converts biological matter into an animated body.”² In other words, it is “animated, creative, linguistic, emotional corporeality.”³ This soul is put to work by semicapitalism, constituting a new form of alienation. Berardi concludes that with the rise of post-Fordist mode of production “[c]ontrol over the body is no longer exerted by molar mechanisms of constriction ... [but] by the modelling of the soul” through such mechanism as “psychopharmacology, mass communication and the predisposition of informatics interfaces.”⁴ While I agree with Berardi’s excellent analysis of the soul’s exploitation by semicapitalism, I suggest that control over the body through modelling of interiority is co-originary with emergence of biopolitics, coinciding with the process of industrialization. Through a reading of Foucault, I argue that the disciplining practices, which Berardi identifies as primarily corporeal, were already intimately connected with the work on the soul performed by the multiple apparatuses of social production. Furthermore, while Berardi’s analysis is focused on the ways in which the specifically *human* soul is modelled and exploited by capital, I want to illuminate the logic of exclusion of nonhuman, “soulless” life in the process of production of human, “ensouled” life that emerges as the primary object of biopolitical care. The second body of research relevant to the present essay revolves around Roberto Esposito’s genealogy and critique of “the dispositif of the person,” the biopolitical function of which consists in separating and excluding natural or animal aspects of life from the human domain indexed by the artifice of personhood. Esposito’s work on the person has gained significant recognition in recent, particularly post-humanist, scholarship that strives to examine the question of the constitutive relationship between humanity and animality. The aim and the logic of the argument of the present essay is very close to that of Esposito’s; however, in order to outline the biopolitical mechanism of distinction of the human population from its natural environment, I rely on the notion of “soul” rather than “person,” interpreting the former as a dispositif in its own right that has intersected with the latter throughout history, but became practically identical with it only after the Christianization of both notions, and especially with the emergence of Protestantism.⁵ Consequently, de-theologization of these notions may lead to their decoupling, resulting in two distinct conceptual complexes (“the living person” in Esposito’s case, and community of shared “soul” or interiority in mine), which equally index positions of resistance to the negative effects of biopolitics. The third stream of research that this essay speaks to and aspires to contribute to has recently become, under a general name of “animism” or “new animism,” an important tool of the decolonization of thought within such varied academic disciplines as anthropology, geography, political theory and philosophy.⁶ Lastly, instead of directly addressing indigenous animist beliefs and practices, which lie at the core of research on “new animism,” this essay attempts to illuminate an animist kernel in Michel Henry’s phenomenology of life and to show how his understanding of the community of life can be extended to non-human living beings, thus contributing to scholarship that integrates post-humanist aspirations with phenomenological inquiry focused on Henry’s philosophy.⁷

BIOPOLITICS OF BODIES AND SOULS

Michel Foucault has famously suggested that modernity is marked by a shift in political ontology: if once politics was only an additional capacity of a living human animal, modern politics places this animal's existence as a *living* being in question.⁸ Life itself becomes the primary object of power and its technologies that aim to study, measure, and control, enhance, multiply or simply care for it. This "life," however, is not just a neutral domain in which politics intervenes. Politics partakes in the construction of its own object: it invests life with a certain meaning that allows life's very politicization. As Foucault notes, modern "man" had to learn what it means to be alive, to be a living being: "[m]ethods of power and knowledge assumed responsibility for the life processes and undertook to control and modify them. Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world."⁹ That is, life was objectified as a property of "man" that had to be studied and analyzed.

This objectification of life is based on a specific development in the 19th century—the establishment of "the conditions of possibility of a *biology*"—a rigorous scientific approach to life.¹⁰ It is possible to discern some important aspects of Foucault's analysis that illuminate the process of emergence of biopolitics (which became the primary object of his work in the 1970's and 1980's) in *The Order of Things*, Foucault's early archaeological work of 1966. There Foucault shows how the transition from the Classical to the Modern episteme is marked by a shift from a "taxonomic" to a "synthetic" notion of life, and it is the latter that established the ground for the emergence of modern *biology* and *biopolitics*. According to Foucault, the "synthetic" notion refers to life as the invisible "unity" that reconciles and draws together "the great dispersion of visible differences" of living organisms. If the taxonomic notion of life was based on a tabular representation of the multiplicity of beings, the synthetic notion of life aims to establish transcendental continuity between visible beings or empirically observable living organisms. However, while living organisms can be easily accessed by scientific techniques and subjected to experimentation, life itself, the "enigmatic" centre of identity supposedly shared by these organisms, receives no essential definition, it is rendered "non-perceptible" and "purely functional." As such, it can be experienced, perceived or known only through the observation of the multiple "plans" for its maintenance. "Life withdraws into the enigma of a force inaccessible in its essence, apprehendable only in the efforts it makes here and there to manifest and maintain itself."¹¹ The life of an organism is thought of as a synthesis of the functions of its own maintenance; as such life is paradoxically excluded from its own field, which is instead occupied by the visible *bodies* that share in the universality of something called "life," in the power that moves them but itself remains absent. In sum, from the perspective of modern biology, the only way life can be manifest is *as* living *organisms*; and so, the modern notion of life develops in correlation with the visible domain of the living body. This objectification of life's "essence" through organismic representation bears real consequences for politics: it allows this "life" to become a field that can be governed, ordered and cared for by means of scientific knowledge. Biopolitics, in governing life, has no need to speculate about the essence of life, but only to know life—to constantly incite the production of new hard evidence of what it means to be a living body, which can be then applied to the ordering of populations.

What are the domains of knowledge upon which biopolitics relies in its government of life? The first domain is biology, as noted above, and the related scientific disciplines that take upon themselves the study of life and its functions. The second is the domain of human and social sciences that, far more often than biology, mediate the relationship between politics and "life." The reason for this is that biopolitics aims to care not for all life equally, but singles out *human* populations as its primary site of intervention. In a way, biopolitics, in its government of living bodies, relies upon the centuries old distinction between a body and a soul and, consequently, relates differently to those bodies that presumably are endowed with "soul" (i.e., human bodies) and those that possess inferior kinds of "soul" or lack it altogether (i.e. animals, plants, inorganic objects, etc.). In other words, the site of biopolitical care is the living body; however, a body indexed by soul is the *privileged* body of this care. As a result, the human and social sciences emerge to address this modern need to know human life—the life of an organism that has interiority or "soul"—and practically replace previously dominant Christian practices of pastoral care for the soul. In sum, the modern biopolitical government of human populations occurs through

the mediation of the human sciences, while the non-human living mass can be ordered and governed based on the evidence produced by the natural sciences.

It is my contention that the production of knowledge about "life" by the human sciences conceals the void, which life necessarily remains for biology, and creates an impression of power's control over "life" by filling this void with knowledge about human "soul," mind, consciousness or interiority. As Foucault notes, when "biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate ... [but] passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention."¹² What this effectively amounts to is that the human sciences make bodily regulation available to politics via the work they perform on "soul." This important aspect of biopolitical care has remained obscured in Foucaultian scholarship due to Foucault's own continuing emphasis on the material or bodily aspect of biopolitical power-knowledge relations. As Simona Forti similarly notes, for many scholars the notion of "the biopolitics of souls" would appear as an oxymoron, since biopolitics is generally used to describe a "politics of the body."¹³ However, as already noted above, the question of soul has captured attention of such thinkers of affective and immaterial labour as Berardi, Hardt and Negri, Lazzarato, and Virno, who suggest that in post-Fordist societies the production of value is derived through the exploitation of the souls of the new class of intellectual workers or "cognitariat" (i.e. their communicative capacities, imagination, affects, etc.) The work of Nikolas Rose is also remarkable in this regard. In *Governing the Soul* he presents an excellent analysis of how the human sciences and "human technologies" that developed in the twentieth century "have played a constitutive role in shaping the ways in which we think of ourselves and act upon ourselves."¹⁴ Specifically, he shows how in liberal and neoliberal societies the citizens' "souls," i.e. thoughts, feelings, actions, intelligence, and personality, are socially organized and managed in minute particulars. That is, he points to the way in which conduct is regulated by governments by acting upon citizens' mental capacities and propensities through various complex apparatuses, such as the military, the school, the family and the justice system. Most importantly, Rose shows how the modern "government of the soul depends upon our recognition of ourselves as ideally and potentially certain sorts of person, the unease generated by a normative judgement of what we are and could become, and the incitement offered to overcome this discrepancy by following the advice of experts in the management of the self."¹⁵

In a similar vein, I want to suggest, without denying the fact that the body *is* the ultimate object of biopolitical regulation, that it is not *any* body or *any* biological entity that is equally cared for, but rather the specifically *human* body, which is a body that is thought to be endowed with "soul." While biology studies the hidden depths of the body in total disregard for its real or fictitious interiority, the human sciences address the privileged site of biopolitical government or intervention—variously identified as the soul, interiority, mind or consciousness. Thus, what we witness in this "division of labour" between the natural and the human sciences is the establishment of life as the all-inclusive biological continuum *and* the simultaneous fragmentation of this continuum into non-human existence, which is either completely soulless or animated by an inferior "kind" of soul, and the pliable material of human life that can be politicized through an intervention into its "soul" by means of rational knowledge.

But what is this "soul" of biopolitics? It is surely not the soul of theologians, not a pre-existing God-given substance, but an effect of power. It is an instrumental invention, a meta-fiction that provides access to the body. Foucault writes:

the soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body. ... This real, non-corporal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the *effects* of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the *machinery* by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power.¹⁶

While earlier forms of government relied on the violent dictum of the sovereign, who had the "right to *take* life or *let* live,"¹⁷ modern biopolitics relies on the more "gentle" practice of "conducting conduct."¹⁸ From a slightly different angle, modern biopolitics operates by "governing the soul," based on various practices of

subjectivation, i.e. cultivation of certain kinds of selfhood, subjectivity or interiority. As Rose puts it, “the ‘soul’ of the citizen has entered directly into political discourse and the practice of government.”¹⁹ I believe that in his later works, Foucault returns to the question of “soul” as the primary site of both intervention of biopolitical governmentality and of resistance or freedom. Such notions as “technologies of the self” as well as “care of the self” can be interpreted as indicative of Foucault’s lasting interest in the role of something like interiority in power relations.

In sum, I argue that there are two major aspects of modern biopolitics: first, it relies on the biological (i.e., scientific) objectification of life; and second, it constructs or “models the soul,” to use Berardi’s phrase, as the site of governmental intervention directed at the body. This has a direct effect on the kind of community that biopolitics produces. The simplest way to think of this biopolitical community is biological, meaning that the community of life is merely the sum total of all organisms that “qualify” as living according to the scientific method. That is, membership in the community of life depends on meeting the requirements of the lowest common denominator that distinguishes the living from the non-living (metabolism, growth, response to stimuli, reproduction, etc.). However, this is not the case in practice, since, as suggested above, biopolitics depends on an added quality of interiority. Consequently, the biopolitical community of life, of care for the living, is centred on humanity, insofar as it is only humanity that is endowed with “soul” in the “naturalist ontology” of modernity. But what defines this naturalist horizon within which biopolitics emerges and operates?

“THE CERTAINTIES OF NATURALISM”: NEUTERED NATURE AND IMMUNIZED COMMUNITY

Contemporary French anthropologist Philippe Descola, in an attempt to denaturalize the commonsensical distinction between “culture” and “nature” characteristic of Western modernity, suggests that once we step outside the Western world we will, in fact, encounter alternative ontologies, not all of which subscribe to this dualistic worldview. Nevertheless, he proposes that despite noticeable local differences, it is possible to discern a universal “syntax for the composition of the world” that is shared by all the civilizations about which we have learned something from ethnography and history.²⁰ This syntax is defined by a combination of two particular factors or levels of experience that serve as the tools of identification and categorization of beings and things that humans encounter in their environment. This “mechanism of ontological discrimination,” of the establishment of continuities and discontinuities among various beings and things, relies on the attribution or denial to them of the qualities of “physicality” and “interiority.”²¹ The latter refers to what we generally call “the mind, the soul, or consciousness,” and the former “concerns external form, substance, the physiological, perceptive and sensorimotor processes, even a being’s constitution and way of acting in the world.”²² Descola addresses possible criticisms of the universal projection of this distinction and suggests that binary oppositions are not a Western invention but are widely used by all peoples. They constitute “a system of elementary contrast” and, consequently, it is not its “form” that must be questioned but “rather the suggested universality of [its] content.”²³ That is, the *formal* distinction of interiority from the physical exterior does not predefine the *content* of these interior and exterior worlds. While, for instance, the limits of self or person (as “a single unit of experience”) in the Western world would, at least in the majority of cases, coincide with the limits of a “body,” many examples from other ontological systems suggest that the “inner person” is not necessarily limited to a single body, but can be fragmented into many units and distributed among various human or nonhuman elements in the environment.²⁴ However, Descola argues, this fact of variation in the content of “self” is not enough to dismiss the universality of its formal appearance across all known peoples or civilizations.

Peoples attribute the characteristics of interiority and physicality differently to human and non-human entities in their environments, resulting in the constitution of “four major types of ontology”—“totemism,” “animism,” “animism,” and “naturalism.” Descola explains:

Faced with some other entity, human or nonhuman, I can assume either that it possesses elements of physicality and interiority identical to my own [totemism], that both its interiority and its physicality are distinct

from mine [analogism], that we have similar interiorities and different physicalities [animism], or, finally, that our interiorities are different and our physicalities are analogous [naturalism].²⁵

We can observe different ways of “patterning of the world” based on the selective assignment or denial of the attributes of interiority and physicality to other existing things. Importantly, these systems of attribution “in turn provide anchoring points for sociocosmic forms of aggregation and conceptions of self and non-self.”²⁶ In other words, they outline the various conditions of possibility of community.

Naturalist ontology is most relevant for my purposes since it is prevalent in Western modernity. From a naturalist perspective, humans are similar to non-humans because they possess shared materiality, they emerge from the same “nature”: “since Descartes and above all Darwin, we have no hesitation in recognizing that the physical component of our humanity places us in a material continuum within which we do not appear to be unique creatures any more significant than any other organized being.”²⁷ However, at the very same time, humanity is distinguished from nonhumans through mind, soul, subjectivity, and language, etc. This ambivalence is a symptom of “an essential paradox of modern naturalism”: it regards a nonhuman, especially an animal, “either as the lowest common denominator of a universal image of humanity or else as the perfect counterexample that makes it possible to define the specific nature of that humanity.”²⁸ Even though this paradox is inherent to naturalism, it is the latter attitude that has dominated the West: the material continuum of life is endlessly disrupted or relegated to the background through an emphasis on “the exceptional nature of the internal attributes by which humans are distinguishable from other existing beings.”²⁹ Biopolitics is a product of this naturalist horizon, particularly insofar as it depends on the objectification of life through biology—the establishment of the “material continuum” of life (“nature”)—and, simultaneously, on the distinction between basically “soulless” existence and a domain of human artifice (“culture”), marked by the activity of conscious persons or subjects. What position does the naturalist exterior of “nature” occupy in relation to the human domain of “culture”? Through the advance of scientific knowledge and technology, the mathematization of space, and the invention of “new tools for making reality visible” (e.g. the emergence of landscape painting and the new rules of *perspective artificialis*, the invention of the microscope and the telescope, etc.), mastery over wild nature finally becomes possible. In Descola’s words, “nature, now dumb, odor-free, and intangible, had been left devoid of life. Gentle Mother Nature was forgotten, and Nature the cruel stepmother had disappeared; all that remained was a ventriloquist’s dummy, of which man could make himself, as it were, the lord and master.”³⁰ Thus, nature has not been discovered through the efforts of a cohort of great minds, but has been rather “constructed little by little as an ontological tool of a particular kind, designed to serve as the foundation of the cosmogenesis of modernity.”³¹ And in this modern cosmos, a human subject, one who “knows” and who, presumably, “acts” out of free will (a product of “soul”), is assigned the responsibility to understand and control the nonhuman. The modern continuum of life emerges as essentially split into subjective life, the primary object of biopolitical mastery and normalization, and “dumb” life or “nature” that comes to the attention of politics as a domain that has to be sterilized or neutralized in order to secure the well-being of human populations. The nonhuman domain has no significant agency and as such it is only a part of the environment, the “interests” of which can be represented only *by* humanity and for the sake *of* humanity.

Descola’s analysis of the split between culture and nature in naturalist ontology becomes even more relevant for the problem of political government when we compare it with Foucault’s analysis of the modern mechanisms of security, which broadly rely on management of the relation between the inside and outside, as well as between natural and artificial “milieus.” On many occasions, Foucault addresses the process of securing or protecting populations as an integral part of biopolitical care.³² Mechanisms of security are directed at controlling both external threats and internal dangers that arise within the social body itself. The practice of “racism,” for example, is inevitably linked to the need to protect society from the contaminated or impure elements in the social body. Racism introduces “a break into domain of life” between what may live and be protected and what must be eliminated or simply allowed to die.³³ Interestingly enough, many of these practices of racism might be better described as forms of “speciesism,” insofar as the threat that has to be eliminated is often presented in nonhuman or dehumanized form.³⁴

“Nature” primarily concerns biopolitics as a source of danger and impurity or as a source of vital resources necessary for the well-being of that “set of elements that form part of the general system of living beings” (population). The environment enters into relation with populations as pathogens, parasites and vermin that infest the city and that have to be eliminated and controlled, or as food or shelter, which, again, have to be decontaminated and sterilized for the sake of securing population’s good health. For example, a town, as a modern space of security, is constructed with a number of functions in mind, one of which is “hygiene”—a spatial arrangement that is supposed to allow for the proper circulation, “airing” and thus minimization of potential risks, inconveniences and “morbid miasmas.”³⁵

Foucault refers to this “field of intervention” of the apparatuses of security as their “milieu”—“the space in which a series of uncertain elements unfolds.”³⁶ These apparatuses fabricate, organize and plan a milieu in order to shape a population that inhabits it. Importantly, the milieu is a set of both “*natural* givens—rivers, marshes, hills” and “*artificial* givens—an agglomeration of individuals, of houses, etcetera.”³⁷ And political power is exercised at the point of their connection, “where nature, in the sense of physical elements, interferes with nature in the sense of the nature of the human species,”³⁸ that is, at the intersection of “nature” and “artifice.” As a result of this intervention, of acting on the milieu, it becomes possible for power to change the human species, i.e. to mould a population. We can once again notice how through the mechanisms of security human populations are distinguished from the general mass of living and nonliving beings, further exemplifying the naturalist fragmentation of life’s continuum. Biopolitical care for life is thus a practice of closure, of severing life’s connection to its own openness and (material) community. However, Foucault would insist that this closure is never permanent or stable insofar as a milieu is not a fixed set of elements that allow for perfect knowledge and control, but rather a space of uncertainty. In the end, the mechanisms of security rely only on “probabilities,” knowing full well that the risky and the inconvenient will never be completely suppressed. The aim of biopolitical government, then, is to ensure proper or effective circulation of the multiple elements in its milieu, and to prevent the accumulation of “morbid miasmas” rather than to eliminate them completely.

AFFIRMATIVE BIOPOLITICS AND CORRECTIVE NATURALISM: TOWARD POST-HUMANIST COMMUNITY

Roberto Esposito’s notion of “immunity” and his later notion of the “dispositif of the person” significantly further our understanding of the biopolitical mechanisms of security and, specifically, of their interaction with the milieu. Esposito’s examination of the process of immunization clarifies the connection between the naturalist ontology of the modern biopolitical regime and the kind of community it shapes. In a nutshell, according to Esposito, while community “breaks down the barriers of individual identity,” immunity is a way of constructing these barriers “in defensive and offensive forms, against any external element that threatens it.”³⁹ Immunity protects life from its communal element, from extending too far toward the insecure outside and at the same time keeps this outside from reaching inside. Immunity forms an impermeable membrane that aggressively regulates the relationship between the safe inside and the insecure outside. While immunity is necessary for the preservation of life, when it goes beyond a certain threshold, “it forces life into a sort of cage where not only our freedom gets lost but also the very meaning of our existence—that opening of existence outside itself that takes the name of *communitas*.”⁴⁰

If “life is the event, the situation, which by definition tends to escape its own confines—it tends to break down its own limits and turn itself inside out,”⁴¹ then immunization represents “the sacrifice of the living—of every qualified life, that is—for the sake of mere survival. It is the reduction of life to its bare biological matter.”⁴² As a result, politics that regulates and orders life is in direct contact only with biological life. However, as discussed above, biopolitics, despite its reduction of life to biology, requires access to a dimension of interiority for its operation. Life as “mere survival” or biological existence, then, is not a homogeneous substratum but is differentiated at least into two major forms: one that possesses interiority or soul and one that lacks it. Esposito addresses this question through the notion of “the dispositif of the person.”⁴³ He shows how in the West an attribution of personhood to certain forms of life results in their inclusion into an immunized community, such as a

community of law. In other words, life declared worthy of living is personal life, while biological mass lacking in the qualities of personhood can be easily ignored or even destroyed. What “survives” the process of immunization is the person, resulting in a hierarchical organization of different forms of life. I argue, in this respect, that what Esposito calls the dispositif of the person is analogous to a more general *dispositif of the soul*, upon which modern biopolitics cannot help but rely in its government of *human* bodies and populations. These two dispositifs have intersected throughout history and become practically indistinguishable in Christian thought, especially with the advent of Protestantism. As a result, it is possible to analyse the naturalist bias of *modern* biopolitics through both the notion of personhood as well as soul, however, their critical de-theologization (which is an explicit task of Esposito’s critique of the person) must also result in their decoupling. As such, I suggest that it is possible to speak of interiority in a non-spiritual, non-personal and non-immunized sense, thus reworking the biopolitical dispositif of the soul in positive terms that may outline a possibility of a non-exclusionary community of inner life.⁴⁴

In a similar way to Descola, who suggests that modern naturalist ontology prioritizes humanity over the non-human, confining the latter to exterior “nature,” Esposito shows how the modern mechanisms of immunity endeavour to keep at bay the “impersonal” elements present in any milieu by declaring them “threats” to the life of the human persons and populations. In the end, modern biopolitical community is a product of the ongoing process of exclusion and separation of the inside from the outside. It is essentially a community that is immune to life’s openness to the outside; it is immune to its own commonality. Biopolitical community, then, is nothing but auto-immunity. However, despite the similarities, what distinguishes Esposito’s analysis of immunity from Descola’s critique of naturalism is his insistence on the dialectical ambiguity of the immunitary dispositif. Esposito suggests that the negative or exclusionary operation of the latter simultaneously presents a condition of possibility of an opening toward a more inclusive community of life.

Esposito frames his solution to the problem of the negative effects of immunization in terms of “affirmative biopolitics,” which consists in conceptualizing “the function of immune systems in a different way, making them into relational filters between inside and outside instead of exclusionary barriers.”⁴⁵ In this respect, he identifies two fronts of action: the first is directed at “disabling the apparatuses of negative immunization” and the second at “enabling new spaces of the common.”⁴⁶ It is the latter task that guides Esposito’s current thought, suggesting a way of thinking community “beyond” the exclusionary model of modern biopolitics grounded, as I argued above, in naturalism. However, Esposito’s project of affirmative biopolitics, similarly to many new materialist philosophies, does not invent a new non-naturalist ontology, but rather reworks naturalism so as to bring out and affirm historically marginalized trends of thought that had recognized the material continuity of life as the ground of the common. In this framework, affirmative biopolitics creates an opening to life’s community through an embrace of the nonhuman outside or, rather, through a partial erasure of the limit between interiority and exteriority, through blurring the boundary between the human and the animal, and bringing out the inhuman within the human (while the role of biopolitics consists in repressing the inhuman).

While Esposito suggests that immunitary biopolitics primarily secures life from “an excess of community,” he does not fail to acknowledge a different side of this modern dispositif. It is this ambiguity of immunity that allows for an affirmation of life’s power. Biopolitics holds a dual potential: it can take the form of either “the self-destructive revolt of immunity against itself or an opening to its converse, community.”⁴⁷ The key to a positive function of immunity proceeds from a rethinking of the notion of the self (or the inside) that the immunitary mechanism is supposed to preserve. Relying on the findings of immunological research, Esposito brings to our attention the fact that, for example, such phenomenon as immunitary *tolerance* is not a failure of the immune system but rather its active product. And, consequently, “if tolerance is a product of the immune system itself, it means that, far from having a single-response repertoire, that of rejecting other-than-self, it includes the other within itself.”⁴⁸ As in the case of human pregnancy, the coexistence of the mother and the fetus depends on the strength of reaction of mother’s immune system as well as on genetic foreignness of the father: the mother’s immune system generates antibodies that “mask” the fetus and thus ensure the survival of this “alien” body of the fetus within mother’s body. This coexistence, then, is not a peaceful symbiosis, but a furious battle, in

which survival of the fetus directly depends on the strength of attack of the mother's immunity. But in the end, this fight is not to the death but "to life," which turns immunity into community and proves that difference and conflict are not necessarily destructive.⁴⁹ The immunitary mechanism, while it rejects an exterior threat to a body's integrity, essentially depends on the system's communication with its environment; in other words, despite its closure, immunity relies on exposure to the outside. This exposure is not accidental; it is an integral part of what defines the interiority of "self" in the first instance. In this respect, immunologists, such as Alfred Tauber, suggest that "organic integrity is only a secondary, derivative function of the immune system, while its main function is to define the identity of the subject," which is "the ever-changing product of a dynamic, competitive interaction with the environment rather than a definitive and inalterable given."⁵⁰ The self, thus, emerges at the intersection of the inside with the outside, as a result of the interaction between two different *series* of elements—human and nonhuman.

Immunity protects the self, but its limits are flexible: the "immunological self" is "permeable" or "semi-permeable." It is able to interact with human and nonhuman others, and its body is an "ecosystem" or "a social community" rather than a locus contained by the outer layer of the skin. The body is thus modifiable insofar as it enters into a symbiotic relationship with what is other than itself. "It bears within itself another body ... or an other-than-body: a thing, device, or machine."⁵¹ Due to its numberless "prostheses," the subject no longer coincides with its own "skin." In sum, Esposito argues that the balance or equilibrium that the immune system reaches is not the result of a mere reaction against something other than self, "but the joining line, or the point of convergence, between two divergent series."⁵² Similarly to the apparatuses of security that, as Foucault suggests, intervene at the intersection of the artificial and natural milieus, the immunitary dispositif functions at the point of convergence between the inside and outside, between the "interiority" of the human self and nonhuman "exteriority."

In this respect, Esposito's recourse to Deleuze's notion of "becoming-animal" is emblematic. Esposito, similarly to Foucault and Descola, observes that modern ontology is marked by the rejection of the material continuity of life, insofar as humanity continues to be defined through opposition to the animal. The figure of becoming-animal or, to use the term coined by Esposito, of "the living person" is "the vindication of animality as our most intimate nature ... The animal—in the human, of the human—means above all multiplicity, plurality, assemblage with what surrounds us and with what always dwells inside us."⁵³ It is a gesture that brings to the fore the material unity of embodied life and blurs the distinction between human personal life and the impersonal existence of nature. Contamination and metamorphosis rather than purification are the guiding principles of the relationships that a human self establishes with its nonhuman others. And unlike the dominant ontology of modernity, which separates and keeps at a distance the domains of humanity ("culture") and its mute counterpart ("nature"), the living person "brings into relationship completely heterogeneous terms—like a human being, an animal, and a micro-organism; but even a tree, a season, and an atmosphere: because what matters in the becoming-animal, even before its relationship with the animal, is especially the becoming of a life that only individuates itself by breaking the chains and prohibitions, the barriers and boundaries, that the human has etched within it."⁵⁴ The living person is coextensive with life and, as a result, the community of life is a community that is coextensive with the "living personhood" of the various elements of the heterogeneous multiplicity, which is in no way limited to humanity. The living person embraces immunity as an opening toward the outside rather than as a mechanism of closure. Its immunity merely mediates the unstable relationship between interiority and exteriority, thus constructing a dynamic space of "self" that embraces otherness. However, it remains unclear exactly how Esposito envisions the constitution of this inner self of the living personhood and its concrete phenomenality. It appears to be the most positive and at the same time most underdeveloped aspect of his otherwise powerful critique of the Western apparatus of personhood. I believe that if through "the living person" Esposito had presented a much needed elaboration of the nonhuman or impersonal interiority in more concrete and stronger terms, he might have provided a radical shift in our conception of community beyond naturalism and beyond biopolitics. But surprisingly, after a long elaboration of the problems of the Western dispositif of the person, the discussion of this novel impersonal, inhuman or living personhood remains practically absent in Esposito. It comes up on the last page of *Third Person* and remains covered in silence.

As a result, Esposito's affirmative biopolitics, I argue, lacks radicality and remains a project of *corrective* naturalism: Esposito rethinks the continuity of matter that held the failed "promise" of community for naturalism in terms of the living person, and precisely for this reason, community can now embrace all of nature. Interiority, in the sense of personhood, formerly an exclusively human attribute, is now dissolved into a general characteristic, although with variations, of multiple organisms and even natural phenomena. Differences in personal interiority between various beings, both human and non-human, become mere derivatives of the differences in physicality, and as such they are differences only of degree and not of nature. Through an affirmation of the material continuity of life (where visible differences express only a degree of general variation within life) interiority is dispersed across the multitude of beings and things as a function of physicality; and thus it is hard to distinguish this dispersion of interiority from its practical erasure. In this regard, the irrelevance of "soul" as a valid (and not a merely secondary or imaginary) space of sharing appears to have become an axiomatic premise of not only affirmative biopolitics, but also of many recent materialist philosophies.⁵⁵ In other words, corrective naturalism addresses the problem of the exclusionary nature of modern community primarily by way of rethinking the material continuity of life. The primacy of human personhood, interiority or soul, which has grounded the hierarchical organization of modern communities, has been dismissed in favour of the equalizing primacy of matter, which always conditions the emergence of any interiority. This new common is distinctively post-humanist, meaning that even as humanity belongs to it, it no longer occupies a privileged place. Interestingly, this raises the question of whether affirmative biopolitics prepares a space for a new kind of governmental intervention where, due to the dispersion of "soul" across life's unity (i.e. *weak* interiority), everything becomes an equal subject of regulation. From this point of view, government, ordering, and even the "free" movement of such diverse entities as a human being, an animal, and a rock, whether they possess similar "kind" of interiority or all lack it, must occur on equal footing or, rather, be based on the premises of "flat ontology."⁵⁶ It is my suggestion that Esposito's notion of "the living person" ultimately gives way to this sort of materialist flat ontology, insofar as he is unwilling to envision the interiority of living personhood by itself, and not as a mere derivative of materiality. In other words, it is my contention that, despite his strong emphasis on the fluidity of the relationship between human interiority or "self" and ecological exteriority, Esposito fails to develop a sense of *strong* post-humanist interiority (shared equally by humanity and the inhuman elements) that would effectively position his project beyond the philosophical reproduction of naturalist ontology, and that would enable a radical overcoming of the biopolitical closure of community.

LIFE IN COMMON: ANIMIST SOUL AND AFFECTIVE COMMUNITY

Building on the achievements of the project of affirmative biopolitics and, simultaneously, diverging from it, I want to pursue a way of addressing the problematic, exclusionary nature of modern biopolitical community by explicitly turning toward an "animist" approach, which consists in thinking the possibility of a community of life as shared (strong) interiority rather than materiality. This turn to animism is not meant to preach or suggest the possibility of mass conversion to an indigenous "religion" of some kind, but is rather meant as a form of provocation that pushes both modern naturalism as well as the corrective naturalism of affirmative biopolitics slightly further than they seem to be willing to go. The former is challenged, again, to question its hierarchical organization and the exclusionary nature of its community based on the selective attribution of governable "soul" to humanity; and the latter is challenged to reflect on its lack of serious engagement with or rethinking of interiority on its own terms, and not as a mere effect of power or an extension of physicality (i.e. its lack of *strong* post-humanist interiority).

Descola uses the term "animism" to describe an ontology, commonly found in South and North America, in Siberia and in some parts of South-East Asia, which is based on a continuity of souls and a discontinuity of bodies. In this system of identification humans and non-humans are conceived as having the same type of interiority, but possess their own physicality. Importantly, in the animist worldview what is shared by most beings is "humanity" as a general condition, and not as a species. As a result, the attribution of analogous interiority to such entities as plants and animals "humanizes" them, because the soul with which they are endowed "allows them not only to behave in conformity with the social norms and ethical precepts of humans but also to

establish communicative relations both with humans and among themselves.⁵⁷ Importantly, this humanization of nonhumans is not an “anthropocentric” practice but is rather an “anthropogenic” one. The former, Descola notes, characterizes naturalism, insofar as it defines nonhumans through their lack of humanity and proclaims that humanity and its attributes “represent the paragon of moral dignity that other existing beings lack.” Anthropogenesis, on the other hand, presumes that humans and nonhumans share in the same condition, and the only “privilege” that humans have is their ability to “engage with nonhumans in relations founded upon common norms of conduct.” As a result, “animism is ... anthropogenic in that it derives from humans all that is necessary to make it possible for nonhumans to be treated as humans.”⁵⁸ In a way, humanity generates its own expansion not in order to dominate its otherness, but rather to embrace it as a part of its shared soul—a heterogeneous network of relations.⁵⁹

In this respect, an introduction of animist principles into the naturalist framework of identification of beings creates a breach in their exclusionary mode of aggregation. Accepting that some or all nonhuman entities may have *interiority* comparable to the kind humans possess may open up the horizon of modern biopolitical community. That is, insofar as in animism interiority is decisive, it presents the conceptual possibility of another community. Furthermore, if it was the notion of life that held the “promise” of community for naturalism (i.e. the continuity of matter), then by rethinking this notion we may rethink community as well. Consequently, the main question is: what is this shared *living interiority* that equally belongs to all beings? Inspired by the phenomenological work of Michel Henry, I suggest that *life itself* constitutes the shared interiority and thus community of human and nonhuman beings. Henry’s philosophy contains an animist kernel insofar as it admits of the community of life as shared interiority that is open to all beings that bear life, and so it undermines the biopolitical mechanisms of exclusion of non-human life from the common. Importantly, this animist life discussed by Henry is “unconscious,” defined not by the visibility of “nature,” but by the invisible experience of “self-sensing,” “self-affection” or self-suffering.⁶⁰ Henry argues that before a living being establishes a relation to the world, its life reveals itself to itself in the “solitude” of interiority through self-affection. In short, life is an immanent movement of self-revelation in self-affection. It is my contention that Henry’s understanding of life as an inner experience of self-affection available to all the living offers a notion of *strong* interiority that was lacking in Esposito’s project of affirmative biopolitics.

Henry’s rereading of Descartes on the *cogito* exemplifies his argument that life reveals itself in the interior movement of self-affection prior to any worldly manifestation. And consequently, as I will show below, the community of life consists in the shared materiality of interior affect rather than “biology.” Henry suggests that what Descartes discovers after he doubts everything (which is *epoché* or the phenomenological reduction) is not the certainty of thought, but rather the certainty of feeling or self-affection: “I sense that I think, therefore I am.”⁶¹ Sense appears before thought, and so the truth of feeling is prior to the truth of being. In the radical reduction of the world only the certainty of self-feeling remains, “the primal semblance.”⁶² As a result, this kind of interiority is not a fiction or a mere product of power relations (*weak* interiority), but a certainty of self-feeling or self-affection, the *reality* of which is not determined by an objective, worldly manifestation (*strong* interiority).

This acosmic self-feeling is essentially “suffering,” but not only in a negative sense of painful mental or physical experience, but rather as a mode of access to the truth of life, an inescapable experience of “bearing” oneself, of pathos and affectivity, in which life embraces all that lives. Life presents itself immediately to itself in suffering: life presses against itself and the living, and has to bear itself for as long as it lives. In suffering (as well as in joy), the self plunges into the power which established it, becomes submerged in “the intoxication of life.”⁶³ Life is not separate from the living, and a living being is all the life within it. As such, there is no separation or gap within life, it reveals only itself; life is “auto-revelation.”⁶⁴ Life is also immanence: it is anterior to the living, but there is also no life without the living as there is no living without life. “Life ... resides inside, in every living being, as that which causes it to live and never leaves it for as long as it lives.”⁶⁵ From the perspective of the living, this “primal suffering,” the submission to the power of life at each moment is “unfreedom” or “passivity” in regard to self. Life’s “hyperpower,” then, is impotence insofar as it is unable to be rid of itself.

And since this radical powerlessness also applies to every living self, any relationship with an “other” originates only in life. The self cannot be the point of departure for relations with others: finding its origin in life, self can establish its relations with others only in life. Consequently, the passivity of self-suffering, the primal unity of life and the living, defines the community of life: vital intersubjective relations necessarily “put Life into play.”⁶⁶ That is, they emerge in life and through being alive: before being “placed” in being, in the world, everything living is “placed” in life, partaking in the community of life—a community of shared affective interiority. Community “occurs in us as an affect” and never as representation.⁶⁷ Each member of this community is related to “others” in life and since life escapes objectification and can only be experienced as pure affectivity, this “primal experience [of community] is barely conceivable.” It is “a subterranean affective layer” to which each living being has an immediate access, but “without knowledge and without distinguishing between the self, the other, and the basis [i.e. life].”⁶⁸ The experience of the in-common *occurs* as affect—the invisible experience of life’s relentless arrival into itself and so the arrival of each one into itself. The essence of the community of life, then, is not something that simply “is” but is always “becoming”: life “occurs and does not cease occurring. This incessant coming of life is its eternal coming forth in itself, a process without end, a constant movement.”⁶⁹ The constant movement of life is the movement of the in-common, where no living is separated from life’s movement of self-revelation. Since life is a process without end, the community of life also does not have an end, in the sense of both termination and goal. The “end” of the community of life is life itself. Furthermore, this community, I argue, is unpolitical because the affective layer never appears as such in the world of politics. The unpolitical community of life is in no way “pre-political,” meaning that it tends toward eventual politicization. Life and its community are rather positively *indifferent* to any political expression of its essential relationality, even though it always conditions this expression and forms its real content. As a result, the community of life cannot be lived out as politics but only as *ethos*. In this regard, the activation of new spaces of the common cannot occur through politics, but must engage the unpolitical space of ethics, which remains invisible and silent, beyond the reach of *political* action.

Importantly, the community of life is a community of living beings: life does not require the *human* but only the *living*, and the living is not reducible to “man.” As a result, community cannot be limited to humans alone, but “includes everything that is defined in itself by the primal suffering of life and thus by the possibility of suffering. We can suffer with everything that suffers. This pathos-with is the broadest form of every conceivable community.”⁷⁰ The primal suffering of life is the shared interiority equally available to humans and nonhumans; the shared pathos of life is the community of life open to nonhuman suffering. And this shared passion of living, of suffering oneself, is essentially *com-passion*: openness of life to every living defined by suffering or passivity in relation to life. This community of life cannot be *known* but remains intelligible or available to experience “on the basis of the primal intelligibility of pathos.”⁷¹ This implies equality of every living thing in its access to the single community of life through the primal suffering of life. In sum, the community of life as co-suffering, insofar as it is not a secondary operation of coming together or aggregation of a dispersed multitude but an a priori *disposition* of all the living, makes the processes of immunitary differentiation and closure impossible. Life cannot be separated from itself, it cannot be reduced to a lesser degree; consequently, its unity is discernible in each of its modalities. Com-passion (pathos-with), then, is community per se that precludes immunity, separation or distancing of the in-between. As Hannah Arendt puts it, “because compassion abolishes the distance, the worldly space between men where political matters, the whole realm of human affairs, are located, it remains, politically speaking, irrelevant and without consequence.”⁷² This political irrelevance, which I prefer to call indifference, is not a weakness but an act of affirmation. Affirmation of the community of life as com-passion is an unpolitical ethos that “remembers” life’s acosmic togetherness and accepts unpolitical responsibility for this primal sharing. Once again, this community of life is passive since it does not require a secondary act of establishing relationships between distinct self-feeling “individuals”: they do not share their *private* affective interiorities because they do not have ownership over life and only share it as a gift. As a result, their living in-dividuality is itself constituted as “dividual,” as shared by all the living.⁷³ Life understood as self-affection is community per se and not a merely subjective and unrepresentable *precondition* of community. Life, even though it can be *experienced* by all, can be *thought* only by humanity, and as such, the conception of the community of life as shared self-suffering relies on a projection of human experience of life onto non-

humans. However, this projection of human experience of life onto other *living* beings is not another form of anthropocentrism since humans themselves are not more than just *living*: they do not possess “more” life than other living beings but only *share* in the gift of life. This, then, is a form of anthropogenesis. Sharing in the gift of life constitutes the essence of every possible community: what is shared in common is the “original givenness as self-givenness,” “the internal experience that brings to life everything that is.”⁷⁴ As long as one is alive, one shares in the a priori community of life, which is not a secondary mechanism of aggregation of the multiplicity of beings but is given in the very fact of being alive, of being able to sense or bear oneself. Life is the interior experience of self-feeling and thus its community can be thought as shared interiority that cuts across the heterogeneous worldly manifestations or forms of life. In this respect, it is “animist” insofar as life admits variation in its worldly projections while embracing everything that lives in a community of shared interiority. It is worth noting that this understanding of community as shared affective interiority or soul does not constitute a new form of spiritualism since it is immanent, i.e., distinctively non-dualistic: there is no separation between body and soul insofar as self-affection of life is always an incarnation, an enflashed experience of living.

The community of life as shared interiority does not require “constructive” action insofar as we already live it. It rather requires recognition, affirmation or “remembering,” since modern naturalism constitutes merely a form of “forgetting” of life’s shared essence, but does not completely abolish it. Importantly, the forgetting and remembering are not temporal insofar as what is forgotten is life itself and not some past event or attitude. What is remembered, then, is life’s ahistorical self-revelation in the truth of affect and not some “thing” or a historical event. Furthermore, while modern biopolitical community relies on the exception of nonhuman forms of life from its field of care or on their subjugation to the needs of populations, and also instrumentalizes soul as both a field and a product of governmental intervention, an animist affirmation of the community of life as shared interiority of “pathos” blocks the operation of these exclusionary mechanisms of immunity. Moreover, it allows for a more inclusive and a more responsible community that embraces diverse human and nonhuman forms of life and that, without relying on political action, creates possibilities for transformation and enrichment of social relationships through compassion. Finally, the affirmation of an animist community of shared interiority or soul may also contribute to the task of resistance to biopolitical exploitation of the living by capital, offering a way of differentiating between the kind of “soul” or interiority that is modelled for the sake of extraction of value and a form of affectivity that remains beyond the reach of capitalist objectification, thus offering a conception of the common that may empower new subversive practices of cognitariat.

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NOTES

1. In this regard, see, for example, Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*, trans. Francesca Cadel and Giuseppina Mecchia (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext, 2009); Andrea Fumagalli, “Twenty Theses on Contemporary Capitalism (cognitive Biocapitalism),” *Angelaki* 16, no. 3 (2011): 7–17; Michael Hardt, “Affective Labour,” *Boundary* 26, no. 2 (1999): 89–100; Maurizio Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labor,” in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 133–47; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004); Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. Isabella Bertolotti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext, 2004).
2. Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 21.
3. Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 109.
4. Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 200.
5. See Marcel Mauss, “A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self,” in *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, ed. Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, trans. W.D. Halls (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–25. Nikolas Rose comments in this regard: “Mauss argued that it was Christianity that furnished this juridical and political personality with an internal existence in the form of conscience, and a universality, through the relationship posited between each human and their God. The Christian soul unified body and soul, consciousness and act, culminating in *the Protestant identification of person, soul, self, and consciousness*” (Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Free Association Books, 1999), 221–22; italics added).
6. Among the names commonly associated with “new animism” are Irving Hallowell, Nurit Bird-David, Tim Ingold, Philippe Descola, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Rane Willerslev, Bruno Latour, and Graham Harvey. For a thorough discussion of the historical emergence of the notion of animism and its contemporary theoretical transformation from a derogatory to critical term, see Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 3–29. See also Nurit Bird-David, “‘Animism’ Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology,” *Current Anthropology* 40, no. S1 (1999): S67–S91; Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Anselm Franke and Sabine Folie, eds. *Animismus: Moderne Hinter Den Spiegeln [Animism: Modernity through the Looking Glass]* (Köln: Buchhandlung Walther König, 2011); Alfred Irving Hallowell, “Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior and World View,” in *Culture in History: Essays in Honor of Paul Radin*, ed. Stanley Diamond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 19–52; Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato, “Assemblages: Félix Guattari and Machinic Animism,” *E-Flux* 36 (July 2012), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/assemblages-felix-guattari-and-machinic-animism/>; Isabelle Stengers, “Reclaiming Animism,” *E-Flux* 36 (July 2012), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/reclaiming-animism/>; Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, no. 3 (1998): 469–88.
7. On the post-humanist import of Henry’s philosophy of life see Christina Gschwandtner, “What about Non-Human Life? An ‘Ecological’ Reading of Michel Henry’s Critique of Technology,” *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 20, no. 2 (2012): 116–38.
8. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction. Vol. 1* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 143.
9. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 142.
10. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 269.
11. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 272.
12. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 142.
13. Simona Forti, “The Biopolitics of Souls: Racism, Nazism, and Plato,” *Political Theory* 34, no. 1 (2006): 9.
14. Rose, *Governing the Soul*, vii.
15. Rose, *Governing the Soul*, 11.
16. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 29, 30; italics added.
17. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 136.
18. See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 193.
19. Rose, *Governing the Soul*, 2.
20. Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 116, 125.
21. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 115–16.
22. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 116.
23. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 121.

24. See, for example, Mark S. Mosko, “Motherless Sons: ‘Divine Kings’ and ‘Partible Persons’ in Melanesia and Polynesia,” *Man* 27, no. 4 (1992): 697–717; Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Roy Wagner, “The Fractal Person,” in *Big Men and Great Men: Personifications of Power in Melanesia*, ed. Maurice Godelier and Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 159–173.
25. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 121.
26. Philippe Descola, “Beyond Nature and Culture. Radcliffe-Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 139 (2005): 140.
27. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 173.
28. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 178.
29. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 178.
30. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 61.
31. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 63.
32. See, for instance, Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2004); Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*.
33. Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, 254.
34. My use of the notion of speciesism here is somewhat different from its more common understanding, as discussed, for instance, in Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (London: Cape, 1976). While I suggest that speciesism may indicate the process where a threat is *represented* in dehumanized form, it is more commonly understood as the exclusion of nonhuman animals from the human-centred system of morality, rights, and their protection.
35. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 18.
36. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 20.
37. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 21; italics added.
38. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 23.
39. Roberto Esposito, “Community, Immunity, Biopolitics,” *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 18, no. 3 (2013): 85.
40. Esposito, “Community, Immunity, Biopolitics,” 85.
41. Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011), 31.
42. Esposito, “Community, Immunity, Biopolitics,” 85.
43. See, for instance, Roberto Esposito, “The Dispositif of the Person,” *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2012): 17–30; Roberto Esposito, *Third Person: Politics of Life and Philosophy of the Impersonal* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012).
44. The critical task of rethinking interiority or soul in non-theological terms, rather than getting rid of it altogether, is similar in intention to Miguel Vatter’s recent project, which proposes a reconsideration of “eternal life” in radically materialist terms. He writes: “As Foucault details in *Security, Territory, Population*, liberal governmentality owes its enormous force to its incubation within Christianity. Christian pastoral and monastic practices are based on the belief that, in order to achieve eternal life, one must exercise government over the life of the soul and ascetic discipline over the body. For an affirmative biopolitics to stand in thoroughgoing opposition to the Christian ideal of eternal life it needs to develop for itself *a radically anti-Christian, strictly materialist conception of eternal life*” (Miguel Vatter, *The Republic of the Living: Biopolitics and the Critique of Civil Society* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 12; italics added).
45. Esposito, “Community, Immunity, Biopolitics,” 88.
46. Esposito, “Community, Immunity, Biopolitics,” 88.
47. Esposito, *Immunitas*, 141.
48. Esposito, *Immunitas*, 167.
49. Esposito, *Immunitas*, 171.
50. Esposito, *Immunitas*, 166.
51. Esposito, *Immunitas*, 149.
52. Esposito, *Immunitas*, 174.
53. Esposito, *Third Person*, 150.
54. Esposito, *Third Person*, 150.
55. See, for example, Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or, What It’s Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
56. Ian Bogost (following Levi Bryant, Manuel DeLanda, and Bruno Latour) describes “flat ontology” as a thought experi-

ment, in which we assume that “all things equally exist” and that among them “none exist differently from one another. The unicorn and the combine harvester, the color red and methyl alcohol, quarks and corrugated iron, Amelia Earhart and dyspepsia, all are fair game, none’s existence fundamentally different from another, none more primary nor more original” (Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology*, 11). Simply put, flat ontology grants all being and things the same ontological status based on their shared materiality.

57. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 129.

58. Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 258.

59. It is worth noting that Descola’s understanding of anthropogenesis is distinctly non-Western and so different from the currently famous interpretation of the term by Giorgio Agamben, who conceives of it as the function of the “anthropological machine” of Western biopolitics. For Agamben, anthropogenesis signifies “the becoming human of the living being” that results from “the caesura and articulation between human and animal,” that is, from the overcoming, suspension and capture of “animal *physis*” or animal life (Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 79–80). For Descola, on the contrary, anthropogenesis stands for the process of embracing the animal, of extending humanity toward non-humans in order to establish relationships with them, and which is commonly found, for example, in indigenous ontologies.

60. Michel Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 29.

61. Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 21.

62. Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 19.

63. Michel Henry, “Phenomenology of Life,” in *Transcendence and Phenomenology*, ed. Conor Cunningham and Peter M. Candler Jr. (London: SCM Press, 2007), 259.

64. Henry, “Phenomenology of Life,” 247.

65. Henry, “Phenomenology of Life,” 249.

66. Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 61.

67. Michel Henry, *Material Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 115.

68. Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 133.

69. Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 55.

70. Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 133–34.

71. Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 134.

72. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 86.

73. The concept of “dividual” individuality is commonly found in indigenous ontologies. In this regard, see, for instance, Mosko, “Motherless Sons,” and Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift*.

74. Henry, *Material Phenomenology*, 120.