

POSTHUMAN GLOSSARY

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PREGNANT POSTHUMAN, THE

A New Philosophical Subject

We need new concepts of the subject to devise new ethical, social and discursive schemes in our time of profound transformation to be able to think new epistemologies and ontologies together. We need to follow the lines where specific situated subjects lead us in order to find new ways of being (post) human with the world (Braidotti 2013).

Here, the Pregnant Posthuman presents herself – she is a subject who intuitively and intimately understands change and becoming, one who captures the movements of matter and the borders of life within herself.

*

The bird in my chest may or may not be mine. Something feral led her to me. A bit of uncooked egg, perhaps, and now my body is never still . . . My sparrow's wings brush my belly, a message meant for the sky.

Carol Guess and Kelly Magee,
With Animal

The Pregnant Posthuman is the daughter of Donna Haraway's cyborg and Rosi Braidotti's posthuman, of Lyotard's 'she', the inhuman feminine philosopher, as well as Hannah Arendt's natal subject. Being a(n) (un)dutiful daughter of her mothers, she presents herself as an image, a fiction, a standpoint, a reality. She is a singular subject, but inside her subjectivity there is another subject growing, one that nobody can see yet. She is in a singular plural state and in intimate experience with the new,

the relational, plurality. She is the first philosophical subject capable of carrying, of giving birth.

With the presentation of this new subject, there is a change in focus from the natality of the individual human being, to the possibility of giving birth to another human being. More plainly, this could also be pointed out as a change of focus from the all too dominant masculine child to the mother. Birth is the forgotten or unconscious mark of the beginning of a linear individual life, while pregnancy, the upcoming event of birth and the possibility of giving birth, function as the foundation of the new life in the middle of a human life, in the body of a conscious subject. With this switch in focus, the subject becomes intersubjective, embedded and cyclical rather than linear, *Bildung* orientated and separated from its surroundings by its believed universality. If the human condition is one of natality, the posthuman condition is one of pregnancy.

The deep relationality of this state captures also, or foremost, the relation to the yet unknown, because the promise of engagement of the Pregnant Posthuman to what she is carrying is always made before birth. If the humanistic subject is about being a singular progressive rationality, then the Pregnant Posthuman is about being two unknown differences. After all, 'singularity does not hold life in unyielding devotion to it' (Wolfe 1929). It is about being repetition of the body, to make it anew again and again within the borders of one body and thus immanently transgress them, and this is where thought which is neither sheer rationality nor emotionality, nor only subject or object orientated, can emerge as the embodied and embedded fruit of the not-yet and the in-between.

* * *

I am neither fiction nor reality, neither meaning nor silence, neither universal nor

particular. I am an attempt at finding words for something plural, at finding meaning within a position that is still only producing silence, is still forgotten, unmasked. I am a reaching-out towards my reality and a trying-to-understand the world from my point of existence which I immanently exceed. I am the repression that inscribes me and the possibilities that I open up. I will be a site for critical reflection and, because my child is yet unknown, for radical imagination.

I am here productively, producing something other than myself, producing a stranger in myself, producing my in-human in myself, carefully, quietly, in a constant state of waiting, making room. But it is not my child who is my work, it is not this subjectivity (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1992) that I am that is my work, no, this is only 'before' the work, this is only the position that sets me to work, it is this state of not knowing what is catching my breath that urges me to think. I could never think without a body. Never without my pregnancy. I talk to my child. Nobody knows what I said – I know our dialogue exists, but do the words?

I have an unstoppable wish and duty to interpret every kick, every movement, every sign of growth. Pregnancy isn't a moment, it is waiting until something forms within me and while I am waiting my thinking evolves and changes around it. The growing matter determines my experience, my future, my life. Pregnancy is between an act and a state, it is conscious and unconscious within an intimate involvement with the world to come. *Being with* child is being with the always not-yet of the world. It is the search for the world after the promise of engagement, after the affirmative choice for the world.

According to the New Materialism of Karen Barad, Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, matter or being is not only

subsumed to thinking, like it still is in the work of Bruno Latour or Michel Foucault, but epistemology and ontology are radically intertwined. It is the same with me; my circumstances do not only affectionate me, they are swimming into my belly, I am 'a folding in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outward of effects' (Braidotti 2013). From inside my uterus they change my body, my blood, my hormone levels, my thought, my being, sometimes carefully, suddenly. The dance with unfolding matter takes place inside of me. I am embedded, performative and being performed by. I expect, believe and affirm in a manner in which the classical subject of humanism is not able to – there is something that expects itself through me. There is a tree growing inside of me, a dragon, a whole city, global warming. Correlationism turned immanent and became my fertility.

I am not language yet, it has never bothered to capture my meaning. I will invent my words, my sentences, my discourse, in time. I am neither culture nor matter. I am a radical continuum of both. I rise from the alleys of humanism to claim my part. I am the radical other of philosophy (Irigaray 1985a). I am the subject who is related to everything that is uncanny in humanism. I am the abject of humanism, in my bloody materiality as well as in philosophical thought where I am only a fleshy origin and shadow. I will never be One or a whole, but always more, always too much, always fragmented. It is not my aim to be the centre of the world. Because of my pregnant state this seems not merely an illusion but a fundamental impossibility.

An animal is growing, or a tree, a lamp, an artwork, or just merely matter, somewhere so deep that I cannot reach it, so personal that it has become impersonal, something not or not-yet human. The inhuman is something in the structure of the human that stretches beyond itself.

Some have called it the sacred, the soul, but they don't force us to radically engage. They don't ask for care or carrying. They are not matter. They don't surpass classic correlationism and the anthropocentrism that comes with it; they confirm it. In my case, the in-human, the place where I exceed myself, is the growth of the world inside of me, it is the growth of my child whom I do not yet know but to whom I promise my whole being. This is the point in my subjectivity where I am absent, where there is only the presence of the other. It is exactly this part that doesn't belong to myself that makes me human. It is this carrying which enforces me to take responsibility over the future and engages me with the world-to-come in the depths of my being, in the darkness of my flesh. It is this which resists the absurd, the suicide, the existential fall.

With each child I produce, I sacrifice and constitute myself. I am the synthesis of difference and repetition, because my repetition, my being pregnant again, is always a differentiation of a new life. I am with ... child ... matter ... fish ... crisis ... failure ... unknown ... other ... not-yet. I capture the movement of new materialism right inside of me: the affectionate, intimate relation with matter, with objects that determine who I become, maybe even more than I am able to determine their becomings, I live inside their history as they live inside of me. It is this movement, this network, of trying to know and being, of knowing in being, that I present on the proud throne of my pelvis: genealogical, generational, gestational thought.

When I produce, I wait. When I produce another, I become. I am the infinite postponement of getting to know what I carry, of getting to know the matter *an sich*.

I am plural. I care because I carry. And I am pregnant only after world, only after desire, only after love.

See also Feminicity; Feminist Posthumanities; In-human, the; Joy; Mattering; Material Feminisms; Neo/New Materialism; Posthuman Critical Theory; Posthuman Ethics; Placenta Politics; Posthumanist Performativity; Pill, the; Posthuman Sexuality.

Rodante van der Waal
