

## Conclusion: Composite Diagram and Relations of Adjacency

### C.1 Composite diagram

As a conclusion to this book we might subtract the proper names – and indeed all the discursive material – and map out this book’s diagrammatic trajectory as in Figure 6.1.

We can picture this as a sequence of sorts – a processual image of the production of subjectivity: Chapter 1 diagrams the relation of the finite to the infinite and the possibility of a passageway between; with Chapter 2 the ‘content’ of the cone is telescoped ‘into’ the centre of the torus, an operation that might also be figured as the folding of the infinite into the finite; in Chapter 3 there is another folding in of the outside to produce an autopoietic nuclei around which a subjectivity might cohere; in Chapter 4 the cone is reintroduced, but, we might say, the third synthesis of time also names the pure surface of the base of the cone (it is diagrammed here as a ‘below’ the plane, in a nod to Badiou’s inconsistent multiplicity); and in Chapter 5, following this idea (and the diagram of Chapter 3) the collapsing of the cone is diagrammed as the concentric circles/spiral of the path of the subject on a pure surface.

### C.2 Relations of adjacency

Slavoj Žižek has remarked in a recent collection of writings on the so-called ‘Speculative Turn’ in continental philosophy that what the latter lacks is a theory of the subject (Žižek 2011, p. 415).<sup>1</sup> Although I would not claim that what I have laid out in this book amounts to the missing subject of this recent philosophical event (indeed, to a certain extent, the category of the subject is a necessary exclusion that determines this speculative turn), what I would say is that my own project – a work of

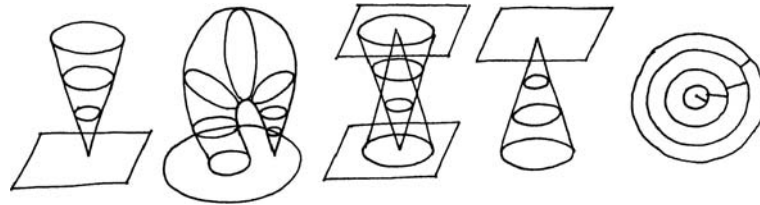


Figure 6.1 Five diagrams of the finite-infinite relation

commentary, but also a thinking through of a production of subjectivity that refuses the bar between the finite and the infinite – has some resonances with some of the thinkers associated with this particular strain of recent post-Kantian philosophy.

In this part of my conclusion I want then to briefly lay out some of the relations of adjacency – the distances and proximity – between some of the key thinkers associated with what has also become known as ‘Speculative Realism’ (although not all would now so associate themselves with this name) and the thinkers I have been looking at in the preceding chapters, especially around the finite-infinite relation, or simply the relation we might maintain to an outside of ourselves.<sup>2</sup> For many, although not all, of the thinkers associated with Speculative Realism, this involves, as with Badiou, recourse to a form of thought (often science), which operates, as it were, indifferent to a specifically human consciousness and experience. Indeed, Speculative Realism might be characterized as precisely anti-phenomenological when the latter names the experience of the typical subject in a world.<sup>3</sup>

In many ways my own book has been about attempting to define a subject beyond a certain kind of phenomenological account, at least when this remains tied to a centred subject that, ultimately, limits this experience. Nevertheless, I maintain the category of experience, but only if it is untethered from what I have been calling the subject-as-is. We might then call such a non-subject-subject specifically non-human insofar as the human is perhaps the founding name for the subject-as-is. (Indeed, looking back, Chapter 1 in its turn to Spinoza might be said to have concerned itself specifically with a kind of pre-human state; and, in the turn to Nietzsche, with a post-human one). This, in fact, sets up what seems to be the two non-anthropomorphic ideas of the subject at work in this book: the formal matheme and the passive synthesis.

As far as the first of these goes it is structure – we might even say science insofar as it is mathematical structure that is privileged – that characterizes the atypical subject. For the second of these two categories,

a kind of science, although perhaps not in the same sense, might well play a role, but other forms of thought also play their part. These other forms of thought, as Nietzsche shows us, are themselves determined by a body that goes far beyond our consciousness (or the subject-as-is). Indeed, this body and the thought of which it is capable are inextricably linked. Perhaps this is the most important lesson Spinoza's *Ethics* teaches us, echoed in Foucault's work, insofar as it implies that philosophy, to say it once more, is a way of life – a transformative practice – and, as such, that the subject's *modus operandi* cannot but be experimentation in the world (what am 'I' capable of becoming? What kinds of thought can 'I' think?). A crucial question here is whether Speculative Realism can itself produce this transformation in subjectivity given that its terrain of operation is, generally speaking, the object as thought precisely 'outside' of any subject.

### C.2.1 Quentin Meillassoux and the correlation

Quentin Meillassoux's definition of what we might call the circle of correlationism – 'that there are no objects, events, no laws, no beings which are not always-already correlated with a point of view, with a subjective access' – might be refigured, in the terms of the preceding chapters, as implying a gap between the finite (the subject and its point of view on the world) and the infinite (the world – or object – outside of this 'subjective access') (Meillassoux 2008a, p. 1). As such, rather than locating a crack, or break, in the logic of the correlation, I have been interested in those philosophies and practices that refuse the gap (the correlation), positing instead a continuum between the finite and the infinite, or subject and world.

In fact, this is not just an abstract philosophical decision – and task – but has implications for, and indeed might be said to be tested in, practice. As Foucault perhaps most directly demonstrates, the accessing of the infinite (truth) by a finite subject involves a prior preparation by that subject who is then transformed through that very access. The transformation of the subject-as-is is then both the means and the ends of Foucault's technologies of the self. In a sense Meillassoux's account and critique of the correlation ignores this mutability of the subject, the way in which the latter might approximate further and further to the 'great outdoors'. We might go further than this and suggest that Meillassoux, despite his critique, remains a correlationist insofar as he holds to the subject-object split as the determining problem of philosophy. He remains Kantian. For myself, following Deleuze and Guattari, subject and object are not necessarily 'fixed' in this sense.

Indeed, to repeat the quote from Chapter 5: 'Subject and object give a poor approximation of thought. Thinking is neither a line drawn between subject and object nor a revolving of one around the other' (*WP*, p. 85).

The medium, as it were, of this continuum is the body – Spinoza's body which, as yet, we have not fully fathomed. Indeed, this is a body that extends far beyond our conception of it. A body that is more intelligent than an 'I' that only apparently governs it, and which is very much part of the world (after all, what else could it be?). On one level then we might say that the intensities – or affects – of the body *are* the world, or the 'great outdoors', to the extent that they are of 'us' but also not of us. Following Deleuze and Guattari, we might say that the body without organs names this strange intensive other body that accompanies our typical sense of self and subjectivity but that cannot be reduced to it. The subject then, insofar as they have a body (in this expanded sense), is, we might say, already object. Again, this experience is not available to the subject-as-is but must necessarily involve a practice and a transformation. It is then only the subject-as-is that is caught in the correlationist circle, or, following Bergson, caught in certain illusions about themselves and their world – but, and this has been the stake of this book, this does not preclude the possibility of the production of different kinds of subjectivity that are not so constrained and contained.

For Meillassoux, precisely, it is not possible for any kind of subject to experience the 'great outdoors' (anything that a subject experiences, in Meillassoux's terms is always already indoors as it were), *but* it can be thought, ultimately, as with Badiou, through mathematics, which can think this outside independently of the correlation itself. Indeed, this, for Meillassoux in *After Finitude*, is the 'Gallilean–Copernican decentring wrought by science': 'what is mathematizable cannot be reduced to a correlate of thought' (Meillassoux 2008b, p. 117). For Meillassoux this Copernican revolution – and the concomitant radical decentring of 'man' that it implies – was then subject to a counter-revolution with Kant (the 'Kantian catastrophe') – with the instalment of the correlation:

Even as thought realized for the first time that it possessed in modern science the capacity to actually uncover knowledge of a world that is indifferent to any relation to the world, transcendental philosophy insisted that the condition for the conceivability of physical science consisted in revoking all non-correlational knowledge of this same world. (Meillassoux 2008b, p. 118)

But, we might ask, are these the only two options: a truly scientific, mathematizable 'knowledge' of the object (speculative), or a knowledge that is always determined by the subject (the correlation)? Indeed, we might ask, is knowledge really the best way to think our relation or access to an outside (insofar as knowledge itself presumes the correlation – the subject–object split – insofar as it is a knowledge 'of')? Along side Meillassoux's speculative materialism we might then posit a speculative subjectivity that does not 'access' the outside through knowledge, mathematics or otherwise, but, again, through practice. We might think here of Bergson's mystic who foregrounds this practice – as transformative – over and above an intelligence, that, in fact, stymies this transformative potential. For Bergson, prior to this action it is intuition that accesses this larger experience of the world. But, in fact, we make a mistake if we presume this is a purely subjective technology, still part, as it were, of the correlation, insofar as intuition might also be thought of as the world *devoid* of a subjective perspective (which is to say, intelligence). We might say something similar in relation to Spinoza and the intuitive third kind of Knowledge. It is not a knowledge that 'I' have 'about' the world, but, as it were, a state of being in which the distinction between myself and the world no longer holds. A veritable becoming-world of the subject (or, a becoming-subject of the world). In fact, following these extremes, we might ask where, exactly, thought itself takes place? For, as Bergson demonstrates, and Deleuze pushes to the extreme, thought might itself be said to take place in the world and not 'within' a subject that is barred from the latter (thought, for this latter subject is simply *doxa* or opinion). In fact, as both Bergson and Deleuze suggest, a certain kind of thought – contemplation and contraction (passive synthesis) – takes place in the world independent of a subject that only comes after, as a retroactive cohering mechanism (and a limiting one at that).

Indeed, the question of our relation to an outside, in this sense, is less one of access as it were, than one of opening up to an outside that is paradoxically also an inside. This, what we might call the infinite nature of the subject, is folded into the very body – it is the body's virtual aspect. Here, Deleuze's reciprocal determination of the actual and virtual can be pitched against any mathematic formalism which the body might support, as it were, but from which it is ultimately independent – and against the bar between the finite and the infinite that is thus instantiated by this very formalism.

Meillassoux's properly philosophical project is then to demonstrate a kind of thought that 'can access reality as it is in itself, independently

of any act of subjectivity' (Meillassoux 2008a, p. 2). As Meillassoux continues in the essay 'Time Without Becoming': 'In other words, I maintain the absolute – i.e. a reality absolutely separate *from* the subject – can be thought *by* the subject' (Meillassoux 2008a, p. 2). The key term here, once more, is thought. Thought, for Meillassoux, can access that which lies beyond the subject. Thought is, in this sense, inhuman and a-subjective, but it is also, again, specifically incorporeal and mathematical (as we shall see in a moment, Ray Brassier's anti-correlationist project follows similar lines).

Meillassoux begins his own assault on correlationism by foregrounding what he sees as an aporia for the correlation: the arche-fossil, and more specifically, scientific statements about the latter. This arche-fossil is an object which, as it were, evidences a time before man, and thus also before any human subject that might witness it. As such, the 'distance' which the arche-fossil evidences is, in fact, a more profound 'anteriority in time' since the archefossil 'designates an event *anterior* to terrestrial life and hence *anterior to givenness itself*' (Meillassoux 2008b, p. 20). Because this event is nevertheless thinkable by science, it produces a problem for the correlation, for, in order that scientific statements are to have meaning the arche-fossil must have a certain truth to it outside the correlation (the alternative is an extreme relativism that empties science out of any truthful content).

We might say that the arche-fossil operates a little like Badiou's forcing (albeit to an extreme past rather than to a future): from within a given world determined by a given set of knowledges (the encyclopaedia/the correlation) it demonstrates that there is something outside the given, or, in Meillassoux's terms, it allows us 'to know what there is when we are not' (Meillassoux 2008a, p. 7).<sup>4</sup>

The arche-fossil, as a problem for the correlation is, however, also one that instates a certain line of demarcation between the living and the non-living. It disrupts one binary – between subject and object – but only through setting up another. In fact, contrary to the logic of the archefossil, and following Deleuze–Bergson, we might claim that the non-living object, to the extent that it is still in the universe, continues to interact – to 'contemplate and contract' – other elements of that universe. From another perspective, this time Deleuze–Nietzsche, we might say that life itself, insofar as it is made up of these passive syntheses, already contains within it a myriad of molecular deaths. Meillassoux's argument about the non-living (and, indeed non-dead) matter of the universe demonstrating a non-human outdoors misses the point about this inorganic life that permeates the universe.<sup>5</sup> Another way of putting

this is that, in a sense, the body *is* the arche-fossil insofar, as the cliché has it, we are made of the same stuff as stars. In a sense then the correlationist problem – that is, knowledge ‘of’ this outside – becomes a mind-body issue. As far as this goes it is Spinoza who most directly answers Meillassoux insofar as the body determines the mind, but is, in turn, determined by the idea that the mind has of it, and, in the third kind of knowledge, it is, we might say, the world as body–mind thinking *through* us.

Meillassoux’s own argument for a ‘break’ in the correlationist circle involves a series of conceptual manoeuvres in which Meillassoux demonstrates that the not knowing what, if anything, lies outside the correlationist circle – once it has been absolutized – suggests, in fact, a break in the correlation itself insofar as it demonstrates that there is a radical contingency outside the circle, that is, a-maybe-something-a-maybe-nothing. The ‘we do not know what lies outside the circle’ is less a question of ignorance and more a question of the ‘nature’ of what, actually, ‘is’ outside.

In this sense Meillassoux has found the secret of the outside hidden in the very lack of certainty about an outside. In *After Finitude* Meillassoux puts his rationale thus:

For if we can succeed in demonstrating that the capacity-to-be-other of everything is the absolute presupposed by the circle itself, then we will have succeeded in demonstrating that one cannot de-absolutize contingency without incurring the self-destruction of the circle – which is another way of saying that contingency will turn out to have been immunized against the operation whereby correlationism relativizes the *in-itself* to the *for-us*. (Meillassoux 2008b, pp. 54–5)

This ‘capacity-to-be-other’ is indeed presupposed by correlationism as a way of defending the integrity of its own thesis. If this outside is, in fact, posited as non-contingent (that is, we affirm or indeed deny the existence of an outside) then we will, as the quote above suggests, have destroyed ‘our’ own correlationist thesis (simply put, that we cannot know an outside to the correlation).

A kind of radical undecideability is then ‘the absolute whose reality is thinkable as that of the in-itself as such in its indifference to thought’ (Meillassoux 2008b, p. 257). Or, the absolute is ‘*the absolute necessity of everything’s non-necessity*’, or, precisely, ‘the absolute necessity of the contingency of everything’ (Meillassoux 2008b, p. 62). Meillassoux names this contingency, this ‘unreason’: hyper-chaos.

In many ways this is just the beginning of Meillassoux's larger project – incredibly ambitious and audacious – which is to attempt to articulate the properties of the figures that might inhabit this strange outdoors (and, especially to know the properties of our world that is produced in and by hyper-chaos independent of our own subjectivity). In the essay mentioned above, for example, Meillassoux demonstrates that such a figure must obey the law of non-contradiction, for otherwise it would both be what it is and what it is not, thus denying the possibility of change, and thus denying the 'rule' of the absolute contingency of hyper-chaos.

In a sense then Meillassoux's difficult and philosophically demanding project is to construct and launch a conceptual probe into hyper-chaos that will allow a thinking of the absolute – and the *properties* of the absolute – independent of the subject (the world when we are not). The operating protocols of such a probe is thought, but in fact a specific type of rational, conceptual – mathematizeable – thought. In fact, it is the contention of my own book that a probe of sorts has already been sent in to the absolute and that the name of this probe is the subject when this is understood as specifically not the subject-as-is, but a speculative subject that is always in process, always, as it were, becoming-world.

### C.2.2 Reza Negarestani and affordance

In *Cyclonopedia*, the theory-fiction of Reza Negarestani, the correlation becomes affordance, with the subject caught in the same circle in which the world is only accessible if it affords the organism's survival. Negarestani's radical openness – making oneself a meal for the universe as he puts it in *Cyclonopedia* – is then a way of breaking this particular circle that in many senses determines all life.

There is then an interesting, and important, issue here in relation to Foucault, and indeed Spinoza, or in fact any account of an ethical programme for and of the subject – namely, are such 'programmes' themselves caught within a circle of affordance, to the extent that they can take the form of an openness to the other, or even to the outside: 'Affordance presents itself as preprogrammed openness, particularly on the inevitably secured plane of *being open* (as opposed to *being opened*)' (Negarestani 2008, p. 197). Ultimately, for Negarestani, this 'being open' to the world is about the organism's survival. In our terms we might say it is the survival of the subject-as-is through a kind of appropriation of the outside. For Negarestani, crucially, affirmation itself can be part of this affordability, or economics of survival.



Going further, and pre-empting some of my comments on Graham Harman below, we might ask to what extent Bergson's thesis – of contemplation and contraction – and Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming are not likewise caught in the circle of affordance insofar as becoming might be seen as a form of appropriation, a 'capture of codes': 'Participations, becomings, lines of tactics and communications must all be based on the meso-sphere of affordance and its survival mechanisms' (Negarestani 2008, p. 198). Negarestani instead suggests that:

Radical openness ... subverts the logic of capacity from within. Frequently referred to as sorcerous lines, awakenings, summonings, xeno-attractions, and triggers, strategic approaches unfold radical openness as an internal cut – gaseous, odorless, with the metallic wisdom of a scalpel. Openness emerges as radical butchery from within and without. (Negarestani 2008, p. 199)

We have here something akin to Badiou's thesis of the radical exteriority of the event. But we also have an anti-ethics of sorts if ethics is seen, via Spinoza and Foucault, as a programme – or practice – to access an outside (truth). For Negarestani, as with Badiou, there really is nothing a subject can do – intentionally as it were – to access the outside in this radical sense:

To become open or to experience the chemistry of openness is not possible through 'opening yourself' (a desire associated with boundary, capacity and survival economy which covers both you and your environment); but it can be affirmed by entrapping yourself within a strategic alignment with the outside, becoming a lure for its exterior forces. Radical openness can be invoked by becoming more of a target for the outside. (Negarestani 2008, 199)

Despite this stymieing of subjective intentionality there is then here still an idea of preparation in Negarestani, though needs be it is a preparation that is done in disguise as it were, a feint, as with the cult of *Druj* that produces ultra-hygienic bodies as a lure for the pestilence of the outside: 'Through this excessive paranoia, rigorous closure and survivalist vigilance, one becomes an ideal prey for the radical outside and its forces' (Negarestani 2008, p. 199). As the *Druj* suggest, one must make oneself into a 'Good meal' (Negarestani 2008, p. 200). With the notion of 'being opened' by the outside Negarestani follows Bataille's own dark ethics of sacrifice. A 'project against project' as it were, or what Negarestani calls a 'schizotragedy'.<sup>6</sup>

The question is then whether the strategies of opening to the outside that I have been laying out in the present book are indeed forms of 'being open' rather than 'being opened'. On the one hand, to take Foucault as example, there does seem to be what Negarestani calls 'subjectively affirmed modes of openness' at stake (Negarestani 2008, p. 201). *However*, technologies of the self often, in fact, involve a form of closure and withdrawal (meditation for example). Indeed, they are precisely not about being 'open to the other' as it were, that is to say about 'typical' human interaction – or, we might say, communication.

Furthermore such technologies aim less at the survival of the subject-as-is, but rather at the transformation of the latter. We might even say its death. In this sense it is not as if the truth – as radical outside – is appropriated, attached to the subject-as-is – that is, affordance – but rather that the subject becomes other in its exposure to this truth. Indeed, Negarestani's definition of the radical outside as a 'beyond all external environments which the subject can latch on to' (Negarestani 2008, p. 206), might well serve as a definition of Foucault's (and Deleuze's) outside, since some kind of surrender by the subject is required to 'access' it. This is also the case with Spinoza where the labour of the second kind of knowledge, the labour of the subject as it were, is ultimately replaced by a leap, which might also be figured as a form of grace insofar as, paradoxically, it is not a leap the subject-as-is can make, or, at least, not on their own. It requires help from outside of the subject.<sup>7</sup>

Negarestani's radical butchery, and with it the summoning of the Lovecraftian pestilence of the outside, might be seen then as a form of black or anti-grace. Here it is not the universe reaching down to the subject, but something coming from below, a beyond that is deep within the recesses of the earth, and, we might say, the corporeal body itself: 'a descent or dive into the subterranean realm, affirmation of what lies beyond is supplanted by the affirmation of what lies within' (Negarestani 2008, p. 204). Is this perhaps a Lacanian moment in Negarestani? Following the discussion of the *Ethics of Psychoanalysis* in Chapter 2 it is *das Ding*, the void, that lies at the very heart of this subject: a black infinity at the very centre of finitude. There is then, in fact, an affirmationism of sorts in Negarestani, but it is not an affirmation of life, when the latter is tied to the needs and survival of a particular being. Rather, following Chapter 1, we might say that it is a Nietzschean affirmation since it necessarily involves the death of the subject-as-is and a properly inhuman joy at this dissolution.

### C.2.3 Graham Harman and vicarious causation

For Graham Harman, in his essay on 'Vicarious Causation', it is less a question of breaking the correlation than of proliferating it, especially beyond the human subject. Objects do not just withdraw from the latter, but indeed, from each other also. There is, following Derrida's own reading of Heidegger, a kind of *différance* at work here: objects differ from one another but also differ/defer what might be called their true Being – their real presence. As such, Harman's object-orientated ontology has much in common with Badiou's own Greater logic in *Logics of Worlds* (see Chapter 4) insofar as both construct a transcendental logic of appearing indexically linked to an ontology of Being (although, crucially, for Badiou, such an account of objects is merely the stage set for the real business of the event and the concomitant production of the subject).

In Harman's ontology then objects are only in vicarious contact with one another:<sup>8</sup>

Dogs do not make contact with the full reality of bones, and neither do locusts with cornstalks, viruses with cells, rocks with windows, nor planets with moons. It is not human consciousness that distorts the reality of things, but relationality *per se*. (Harman 2007, p. 193)

We might turn back to Bergson here and to his account of contemplation: a plant contemplates air, water, sunlight – and then contracts these elements into its being. All else, we might say, remains hidden – withdrawn – from that plant (although, it must be said, this does not mean there is a mysterious thing-in-itself 'behind', or withdrawn, from these relations, only that the relations thus effectuated do not exhaust the relations *per se*). For Bergson this is not just the case with living things, for chemical processes are likewise involved in this contraction of elements (again, this is what Deleuze calls passive synthesis). When Harman claims then that: 'No one sees any way to speak about the interaction of fire and cotton, since philosophy remains preoccupied with the sole relational gap between humans and the world – even if only to deny such a gap' (Harman 2007, p. 188). We might answer that, in fact, Bergson has discussed this inorganic life of objects and the universe (although we would have to concur that our own project is involved in the gap Harman identifies, albeit in order to deny it).<sup>9</sup>

We might also note the connections with Guattari here: Harman's objects, strange agents in and of themselves, are animist – like the strange 'objectities-subjectities' of the first Assemblage we looked at in Chapter 3 (the voodoo 'object' legba for example). Indeed, it seems

to me that Bruno Latour, Harman's other philosophical touchstone (besides Heidegger), has much in common with Guattari in the notion of non-human networks, although it is less clear whether there is a theory of the production of subjectivity therein. Indeed, this seems also to be the key issue, at least from my own perspective, in Harman's particular philosophical vision of reality: what is it that differentiates the subject as a 'special' kind of object among others?

In order to answer this question one might turn to Badiou and to the account of an event that disrupts an objective world via the calling forth of such a subject, but one might also remain with objects and follow Bergson: the subject is in many ways a more stupid object, less open to that contact and communication in which all objects of the universe participate, at least to some degree. The subject is, as we have seen, a subtraction from the world in this sense (a centre of indetermination). We might make a claim then: in Harman's particular world of vicarious causation the subject is, in one sense, that which withdraws even further than the objects that surround it; but in another sense it is also, crucially, an object that can increase its realm of contact, or, following Spinoza, increase its capacity to affect and be affected. Indeed, it is this, it seems to me, that defines the strange object that the subject is: the possibility of its ongoing intentional transformation.

#### C.2.4 Ray Brassier and the manifest image

Alongside Meillassoux's critique of correlationism and Negarestani's critique of affordance we might place Ray Brassier's critique of the manifest image, understood as the self as it is presented to consciousness (again, what I have been calling the subject-as-is). Here Meillassoux's 'great outdoors' is also the 'great indoors' when this is thought as the reality of the organism and its 'sub-symbolic processes' outside of consciousness.

In the first chapter of his book *Nihil Unbound* Brassier suggests that it is possible to access this 'other place' (again, it is not some mysterious thing-in-itself inaccessible to thought). However, the means of access cannot be consciousness. Indeed, it is precisely the latter that prevents access through its assumption of the manifest image of the self. Science, instead, becomes the non-human probe insofar as the 'sub-symbolic reality of phenomenal consciousness' is, according to Brassier, amenable to mathematics. Indeed, this is Brassier's attraction to the radical and audacious project – what Brassier suggests is 'nothing short of a cultural revolution' – of Paul Churchland: 'the reconstruction of our manifest self-image in the light of a new scientific discourse' (Brassier 2007, p. 10). Brassier has his issues with Churchland (that amount to the latter

not being radical enough) but is clear in his support of Churchland's speculative materialism capable of accessing the 'sub-personal but perfectly objectifiable neurobiological processes' (Brassier 2007, p. 31).

As with Meillassoux then, it is science/mathematics that provides the tools of access to an outside that is barred from the subject insofar as they are the subject of typical consciousness. Indeed, these forms of thought, since they do not rely on first or second person accounts of the world, allow a different kind of knowledge to be produced (and, in this respect, we might say that Churchland, and Brassier himself, are very much part of the scientific revolution of the Enlightenment):

the primitive data of phenomenal consciousness are often epistemically and phenomenologically unavailable to the subject of consciousness. But this is precisely why the only hope for investigating sub-symbolic reality of phenomenal consciousness lies in using the formal and mathematical resources available to the third-person perspective. (Brassier 2007, p. 29)

However, we might want to ask whether the only alternative to this scientific enquiry is either the subject of 'manifest consciousness', as determinate of all possible knowledge, or obscurantist mysticism – a religiosity? What I have tried to show in the preceding chapters is that consciousness, the subject *per se*, is mutable and that, in fact, the breaking of the manifest image is not really a question of knowledge, scientific or otherwise, but, again, of practice (even when this might also be thought of as psychoanalytic practice).

In relation to this we might turn from philosophy to non-philosophy and specifically the tradition of introspection. For the biologist and meditator Francisco Varela – whose own work was picked up by Guattari – these subjective technologies can themselves 'access' the sub-symbolic realm. Introspection has the ability to 'isolate little patterns of experience' as demonstrated particularly in the Buddhist tradition of meditation understood as a 'pragmatic of human learning based on introspection' (Varela 2001, p. 67). In the interview from where these comments are taken Varela also refers to psychoanalysis as following a similar analytical thrust, and of the couch being 'another portable laboratory' of the self (Varela 2001, p. 67). In the interview Varela also questions the founding gesture of a science that lays claim to an objective purview at odds with subjective mutability: 'the whole point [of introspection] is in some sense to see that to set the experiential of the subjective in contrast to something where the real knowledge is, which

is the objective, is already a gesture, it's already having decided what you can do' (Varela 2001, p. 69)

For Varela, then, different forms of introspection are 'a pragmatic to have access to the mental processes, to a level of experience that normally is in the pre-reflective area', that in itself implies moving 'what is pre-reflective ... into the reflective' (Varela 2001, p. 73). This is especially the case in relation to developing an awareness of one's unconscious habits that precisely operate 'below' typical consciousness (indeed, following Buddhist ideas, the self is, for Varela, precisely a bundle of these habits).<sup>10</sup> For Varela this questioning of basic beliefs, and especially of a fixed self view (what Brassier and Churchland refer to as 'folk psychology'), has much in common with Western science, albeit it is a questioning of belief that can be explored by the subject themselves – that can be tested against experience to the extent that such experience is not necessarily limited to the subject-as-is. Subjectivity is experimental in this sense; it is not a given, nor an obstacle, but the very means of exploration. This is what Guattari means when he writes of the production of subjectivity as an ethico-aesthetic pursuit.

In the chapter on 'The I of the Storm' from the book *The Embodied Mind* Varela attends specifically to the belief that we have a fixed self. In Buddhist terms this conviction, and the grasping after a self, is precisely the cause of man's suffering (insofar as such grasping after a kind of substance – and for permanence – goes against the fundamental impermanence and insubstantiality of the world). As Varela remarks, sustained introspective analysis upsets this 'folk' conviction insofar as it reveals 'only discontinuous moments of feeling, perception, motivation, and awareness' (Varela *et al.* 1993, p. 72). Introspection shows us impermanence, not as an idea about the world but as a reality that is experienced. We might say, in Guattari's terms, that Varela is offering up a different modelization in which a centred self is absent, but also something more than a modelization since introspection allows a testing of the latter against experience (a testing which, in fact, also produces a transformation of the tester). Indeed, for Varela, and following his Buddhist leanings, it is a model that also implies a set of tools for analysis and for transformation. For Varela science can begin to describe aspects of this process, but it cannot explain the transformative nature of this introspection itself:

cognition and experience do not appear to have a truly existing self ... the habitual belief in such an egoself, the continual grasping to such a self, is the basis of the origin and continuation of human

suffering and habitual patterns. In our culture, science has contributed to the awakening of this sense of the lack of a fixed self but has only described it from afar. Science has shown us that a fixed self is not necessary for mind but has not provided any way of dealing with the basic fact that this no-longer-needed self is precisely the ego-self that everyone clings to and holds most dear. By remaining at the level of description, science has yet to awaken to the idea that the experience of mind, not merely without some impersonal, hypothetical, and theoretically construed self but without ego-self, can be profoundly transformative. (Varela 1993, pp. 80–1)

The key understanding here is that the ‘great outdoors’ (or, again, the ‘great indoors’) is accessible by the subject, not just through science, but actually through an experience that is in and of itself transformative. But, again, this is only the case if the category of subject is itself rethought – after all, it is not so much a subject-as-is that ‘has’ this experience, but rather, again, that the experience might afterwards be claimed by such a subject. We return here to the thesis of Deleuze and Guattari in which thought is not necessarily the thought of an already constituted subject, but is a more impersonal and specifically inhuman operation.

In fact, following Deleuze and Guattari in this sense, we might suggest that ultimately there is a limit of sorts to Varela’s phenomenology – and, as such, we might also return to some of Brassier’s terrain. After all, experience is limited to what we sense, but, as subjects, we can also deduce – and speculate – from that experience. As we saw in the second section of Chapter 5, access to the infinite is then also a constructive pursuit. It takes place through the concept – when this is figured as experimental, constructive *and* intensive – and through affect – understood as that virtual aspect of our individuality, but also as that which constitutes art as a composed thing in the world. Each of these, alongside science and its functives, involves the giving of consistency or shape to the infinite, allowing it to be thought (when thought itself is defined in this most decentred and abstract sense). Strictly speaking this has nothing to do with human experience when the latter remains on the level of opinion and *doxa*, but also insofar as such experience is determined by our habitual responses to the world. We have left the typical subject far behind here. The subject of this thought is these strange shapes and compositions themselves. A subject that is radically inhuman, but still coherent. Indeed, this, it seems to me, is what the production of subjectivity ultimately involves: the invention of new

compositions in and of the world. The subject-as-is is nothing more than a retroactive claiming and reduction of these prior and stranger subjectivities.

In a later chapter of *Nihil Unbound* Brassier attends to the thought of Francois Laruelle, criticizing the central claim of the latter that all philosophy is characterized by the same 'invariant', namely a certain 'decision'. Brassier points out that this criticism is in fact founded on an understanding of philosophy inherited by Heidegger and the history of being posited by the latter (the endless asking of the question: 'what is Being?'). Brassier's project is then a critique, but also a subtle re-using, of Laruelle's non-philosophy as itself a philosophical device – to pitch against certain kinds of philosophical claim. In relation to my own book, we might say that many of the thinkers I look at, not least those ancient philosophers and their 'spiritual exercises', see philosophy as less 'about' Being, but, once more, as a way of life (a practice) – but we might also go further and suggest that such philosophy as practice is also different, ultimately, to Brassier's scientific/mathematic thought that although not 'about' Being, is still a knowledge, at least of sorts, of the world.

Is this to bring my own selection of thinkers alongside non-philosophy in Laruelle's terms? For myself this question has to be deferred until I have a greater familiarity with the writings of the latter. Nevertheless, it does seem that Laruelle's non-philosophy is inevitably determined by what it differentiates itself from, namely, philosophy (it is marked, we might say, by the logic of its predecessor, deconstruction). The practices of the self – the production of subjectivity – might then be better described as what Badiou himself calls 'non-philosophy', that includes Lacan, Kierkegaard, and so on. Brassier's point, however, remains salient: the definition of any non-philosophy will always depend on a particular definition of philosophy – a particular 'reading' as it were of the history of philosophy: it is conducted, invariably, from the bias of a present view point, and ultimately ties non-philosophical thought to its philosophical other. Perhaps then the production of subjectivity might be better named as simply a pragmatics, which might use philosophical concepts, but is certainly not reducible to them.

### C.2.5 Iain Hamilton Grant and nature as subject

For Iain Hamilton Grant the issue of the correlation might be said to produce a set of false problems, premised as it is, for Grant, on a misunderstanding of nature, or the 'great outdoors', itself. Indeed, for Grant, Kant – the 'author' of the correlation – erected a prison of sorts



with his Critical philosophy which has since set the parameters, and the terms, for our encounter with nature. It might be said, in fact, that such an encounter, for Kant, is always with what we already know, an object perceived and determined by a subject. Grant's project then is to excavate and develop the 'consequences of exiting the Kantian framework which has held nature in its analogical grasp for the two hundred years since its inception' (Grant 2008, p. 19).

Grant finds the tools for such an endeavour in Schelling, and specifically his 'naturephilosophy'. For Schelling, a philosopher's proper terrain of operation is the infinite, the absolute, or what he also names the unconditioned. As Grant remarks, for philosophy to begin, rather, with the conditioned (or the finite) is then to always have the unconditioned determined by the conditioned. It is to perform an inversion:

If *what a given species thinks or can think* about nature were the limit of Schelling's naturephilosophy, then it would simply be a prototype of recent naturalized epistemologies. Moreover the philosophy of the unconditioned would then be conducted under the strict conditions imposed upon it by the neurophysiological constraints specific to that species, and would therefore a priori fail to be an unconditioned philosophy, forming instead just another conditioned philosophy of the unconditioned ... (Grant 2008, p. 2)

For Grant–Schelling nature, rather than the subject, must then be thought as *a priori*. We can see here how Schelling might be seen as a precursor of Deleuze and Guattari's thesis in *Anti-Oedipus*: there is a nature – a process of production – that comes before the subject and must be thought *contra* that subject. For Grant we make a grave mistake if we identify nature with what we can say about it, or, indeed, if we limit it to distinct recognizable entities: 'nature, extends beyond animality, or beyond *organized bodies in general*' (Grant 2008, p. 9). Importantly, Grant notes that this in itself disqualifies the opposition that Badiou posits between his – Badiou's – interest in formalism and Deleuze's interest in the body – namely animal versus number – insofar as nature, for Grant, might be seen to partake of both of these: 'both the formal critique of the organic and the organic critique of the formal, operate on a shared basis: the suppression of inorganic externality' (Grant 2008, p. 17).

Indeed, for Grant, the subject/object – or freedom/nature – split goes back to this splitting of nature itself, into the organic and the inorganic: 'the basis of the two-worlds metaphysics lies in a two-worlds physics: the inert, inorganic world of external nature, and the organic

world' (Grant 2008, p. 15). For Schelling, in Grant's reading, this is a false split in the sense that the inorganic is, in fact, always already organized, just as the organic is itself just a higher level of the same operation. This is not simply to project the organic on to the inorganic, that is, to posit the dominance of the organism, but rather is to suggest that nature is itself always self-organizing: 'organic matter, organism – or organization – results simply from matter acting on its self-construction, or from increasingly complex organizations of the inorganic' (Grant 2008, p. 13). We can see here a further reason why Schelling is so important to Deleuze and Guattari's own attempts at laying out a philosophy of inorganic life (especially in *A Thousand Plateaus*) insofar as he gives a non-hylomorphic account of nature's self-organization in which the organic and inorganic are on a continuum.

Schelling will instead develop a thesis of nature itself as subject, that is to say, as generative and autonomous, independent of how it might appear in the mind. As Grant remarks:

the foundational relation, for Fichte [following Kant] of the absolute to the empirical I, is transformed in Schelling: on the one hand, the production of an empirical I is merely a conditioning of the unconditioned; on the other hand, the unconditioned I has a nature which, rather than empirical consciousness, corresponds to the self-acting of a *subjectnature*. (Grant 2008, p. 16)

In terms of my own thesis it is especially this idea of a different kind of subject, a subject of the unconditioned, or of the absolute, that is interesting. This subject is arrived at, as with Meillassoux, through philosophy – understood as a method for thinking the absolute outside of any determinant species which would only limit it. Philosophy is then intrinsically speculative, involving a 'successive unconditioning performed by thought-operations upon nature' (Grant 2008, p. 2).

This nature-as-subject, nature's own self-organization processes as it were, might be thought of as the process of desiring-production of Chapter 5, which is to say, it is not a subject in the usual sense (that is, as different to an object). Indeed, it is the subject *as* object; the subject *as* nature's own mode of self-organization: a larval subject before consciousness – and external to it. As Grant has it later on in his book:

Schellingian subjectivity is not therefore the eliminative subjectivism of its Kantian variant, but reinstates the objectivity of the subjective ... 'nature as subjectivity' means simply nature *itself*,

nature to *auto*, that owes more to repairing the Aristotelian rift in Platonic physics than to any post-Cartesian conception of subjectivity. (Grant 2008, p. 168)

It is, I would argue, a subjectivity to come as it were (or, indeed, a subject that has always already been), radically different to the subject-as-is (the Cartesian subject) insofar as the latter is one pole of a subject-object split that it helps to maintain. Grant's thesis might then be said to move in the opposite direction to Foucault's, that is, from the object to a subject (from the infinite to the finite), rather than from the subject to the object (from the finite to the infinite). It is a physics rather than an ethics. The net result, however, is the same: a collapsing of the subject-object split, and with it the correlationist circle (and, as such, also the physics/ethics split) that hitherto, at least from one perspective, had seemed to determine thought – and subjectivity – post-Kant.

So ends this brief sampling of recent continental philosophy, and my attempt to situate my project and cast of characters among, and sometimes against, the latter. Looking back over my own book, what seems to have been at stake in my philosophical and psychoanalytical commentaries and explorations – and in my different diagrams of the finite-infinite relation – is an attempt at thinking the production of subjectivity as speculative, but also as a pragmatic and creative practice. In fact, I want to finally conclude on this latter note, for it seems to me that if philosophy is in some senses a way of life, then a book dealing with the philosophy of the production of subjectivity needs to position itself in terms of this pragmatic and creative function. This is not, however, to transpose the philosophical and speculative into something more practical, for I would argue that the preceding arguments and diagrams are themselves a kind of practice (what else could they be?). It is, however, to suggest that there are limits to what is essentially a scholarly work – and that the production of subjectivity is itself predominantly an experimental business that necessarily also occurs away from the reading of texts (though these might be an important part of it). Perhaps then my key 'relation of adjacency', once again, is to Guattari's ethico-aesthetic paradigm, that foregrounds this pragmatic and creative aspect of subjectivity (hence my book's title) and in so doing also points to the importance of our relation – or adjacency – to an 'outside', however this might be thought.

Certainly my own writing, as I suggested in my Introduction, is motivated and given direction by certain problems of my life (not least the question of finitude), but it is also inspired by an outside, whether this

be an art practice, an interest in folk culture, Buddhism or in creative and collective practice more generally. I have touched on some of these areas in my book, and elsewhere more explicitly addressed my own production of subjectivity in relation to them.<sup>11</sup> It seems to me that these kinds of practices – of lived life as it were – are a necessary accompaniment to any speculation about the possibilities for our processual self-creation. What I want to say here, however, is that I hope my book, even in its most abstract parts, might operate in a reverse manner to this, that is, as itself an outside – or simply one point of inspiration – for others in their own lives and in their own project of the production of subjectivity.