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Nicolas Salazar Sutil

Back in 350 BC, the philosopher Aristotle beavered away in his studies on animal life. His interest in animal biology was not negligible. After all, he devoted a total of five books to animal science, and also dedicated considerable space to the 'animal' category over the remainder of his corpus. It was not only within an empirical materialist study of natural history, but also in his studies on politics that the category of the 'animal' served Aristotle. It enabled him to define the 'human' category through a fundamental schism. The 'human', according to Aristotelian dialectics, is a category that is held together only in opposition to the 'animal', and through a function of negation of the other. But to the extent that Aristotle also equated 'animal' with 'slave', and 'slave' was categorized alongside 'woman' and 'child',^[note]¹ the category of the 'animal' was also a benchmark against which to discriminate 'human' (that is, male and master) against its allegedly inferior other. It is not only the justification of a relationship of domination that is preposterous, but the fact that Aristotle's thinking remained an authority on these matters for many centuries. You could argue that a large chunk of Western philosophy is grounded on this fundamental schism.

Last Tuesday, as I sat idly on the sofa stroking my cat, and as Nacho purred away vigorously like an old Peugeot engine, I fished around for clues. Why is it that, despite efforts to the contrary, the Aristotelian schism has not been put to bed in recent neo-materialist thinking? If anything, the new materialist recognition of the agency or quasi-agency of the non-human ('animals' are typically included in this broad category), has been doggedly haunted by schisms (variously blamed on Plato, Descartes, Hegel, empiricism, Darwinism and so forth). Categories like 'post-human', 'non-human', 'inhuman', 'more-than-human' or 'other-than-human' continue to leech on to 'humanism' as a negative antecedent that needs to be exposed or overcome. It is necessary to develop

conceptualizations that do not refer to the 'human' at all, and that start from another basis, where schisms will no longer be rejected or queried, but quite simply, ducked. Nacho purred on, inure to my preoccupations.

New materialists have given themselves a title to unmark their work from dialectical materialism in the Marxist sense, which concerns a social schism. However, although the new materialist wave has been most effective in opening up ethical debate concerning other-than-human beings (things, objects, animals, technologies and so forth) neo-materialists have offered no substitute to Marx's practico-critical approach. No consolidated implementation of a non-human ethics has been put forward at the level of praxis. 'Turning Animal' is a major contribution to new materialist thinking across performance and embodied arts practice, particularly through the worming away of a practico-critical ethos. While new materialism has been most effective in giving the non-human a priority, the non-human turn has also provoked an armchair ethical philosophy that refuses to burst its theoretical bubble. The chief defect of existing materialism, according to Marx, is that 'sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous activity and practice' (1972: 121). New materialism has advanced a conceptual agenda that is hugely significant at the ethical level. One step forward, however, is also a step back.

The purring gave me the idea for what is, arguably, the core contribution of this issue. It has become necessary to consider practico-critical efforts that seek to develop a seamless 'earthling' ontology, which tries to supersede the negative (anti-humanist) critique. As a substitute for 'schism' I propose 'jism', a word that denotes sensuous forms of material knowledge, which are implemented not at the level of political action, but at the level of life praxis, arts praxis or life-as-art praxis. It is important to add that no word or method can fully describe the force that tethers different species in sensuous co-existence. Theoretical discourse is trapped within representation, which is why sensuous praxis is absolutely

necessary as a direct means to grasp matter. As Jane Bennett puts it: 'What method could possibly be appropriate for the task of speaking a word for vibrant matter? How to describe without thereby erasing the independence of things? How to acknowledge the obscure but ubiquitous intensity ...?' (2010: xiii) New materialism has been most effective in raising concerns about the shortcomings of language and discourse (for example, words, terms and concepts), particularly when it comes to accessing matter, and the substance or force that animates matter. Going back to Nacho, physical touch is where both of us, cat and sapiens, turn on a wordless sensuality we share.

Allusions to an erotic materialism are timely, not least because there are 'real' (that is, material) physical forces that can tether bodies to a larger flesh, akin to what David Abram calls the 'erotic creativity of matter' (2010: 10). Jism is sensual and sexual potency—a magnetism that brings bodies together and connects corpo-realities across age, ability, gender, sex, and even species. Jism is a knowledge of animated life that comes not from the hedonistic act of fucking, but from our inescapable sexuation as living animals—that is, from a creaturely co-existence possessed with shared anima (spirit, soul, energy, chi, affect, call it what you will). Tim Ingold calls it 'animacy' (2011: 68), a vital force that compels life to physical movement and stillness, action and rest. Animacy is what animates and animalizes the living—giving the animal, plant or mineral an impulse to become (with) other. Deleuze calls it quite simply 'a life': 'pure immanence' (2001). With every attempt at naming, discourse picks up on a particular aspect of that complex affective substance within matter. Jism focuses on the sensuality, sexuality and desire behind the coming together of matter, as well as the emergence found in moments of mixing and merging—what I call, based on Karen Barad's notion of intra-action, the 'intra-course'. Jism is pure mixing of substances: a mixing of blood, spit, vaginal secretion and semen.

The term is laden with vernacular lore. But 'jism' is not simply an old American slang word for 'semen', apparently used in offensive contexts. The etymology pries open excavations into all sorts of places, for instance, the world of jazz performance. Jazz music originated, according to a number of music historians, in the world of late nineteenth-century Southern hornblowers who played brothels and live sex houses (see Zelade 2015 or Cooke and Horn 2003). To have music played and to perform sex may have been deemed coterminous in this cultural context, hence the possible derivation of jazz from 'jism', meaning spirit or energy in the form of spunk. Like the term 'jazz' (formerly 'jasm', apparently), jism holds a now-obsolete connotation meaning 'vigor, speed, animation, and excitement' (Wentworth and Flexner 1960: 292). Jism is a corporeal atmosphere that exudes from 'intra-course'. Emergence occurs, according to Barad (2007), not because of an intersubjectivity, that is, not as a result of one living subject that acts upon another (one human acting upon another, or one machine acting upon another). Intra-action is the gap that lies in-between subjectivity, which leads to emergence. Similarly, intra-course is the effervescence emerging between two co-animated bodies sleeping, love-making, jazzing or even eating each other (see Deller, this issue). Jism is expressed in entangled movements and animated noises of encounter. It is also found in animated matter that remains powerfully still and silent in order to fade into living surroundings (see Gibson, this issue). Jism is not found in the differentiation and individuation of physical entities. As a space of in-betweenness that is 'smooth', in the Deleuzoguattarian parlance, jism only accepts continuity, for instance from human to bison, from bison to rock, from rock to phallus, from phallus to sound, from sound to vibrant silence. Jism is where semen and spirit meet.

This is not a question of associating the 'animal' category with the beast inside or letting the dog, the foxy lady or the bitch out. Libido does not make me less 'human' and more 'animal', in the Aristotelian sense. There is no animal inside the human. The animal is inside and outside. By "animal" I mean the ontological

condition of being anima, or “substance”. In the vital materialist sense, “animality” can be synonymous with immanence or “a life”, in Deleuzian terms (2001). The “human” category, by contrast, exists only as a transcendental being that has broken out of that plane of pure immanence in some religiously upheld Aristotelian schism. As someone who is averse to such schisms, I consider myself to be ‘humanimal’ (see Kawa, this issue). Turning the animal on does not mean to get horny or blow horn. It is a consciousness of the activity and responsiveness that emerges between one body and another (like Spinoza’s “affect”), or between one species and another, which can be acquiescent or violent, creative or destructive. When experienced beyond a purely self-gratifying act, that is, beyond what Freud famously called the ‘pleasure principle’ (2003), sexual and sensual forces bulldozer differentiation. Jism triggers an excess at the bodily level spilling beyond the confinement of the ego. Turning the animal on does not refer to the pornography of explicit sex objects, which a pleasure-seeking subject consumes without substance. What is at stake here is not sensuality and sex for voyeuristic and onanistic delight, but a practice that can induce loss of subjectivity and objectivity in the affective coming-together with the body of another. Like Lacan’s idea of jouissance, jism even exceeds a phenomenological sense of bodily self, or lived-in ‘I’. Jism sees no distinction between subject and object; it is an independent substance that connects all animals, all sexuated plants, all attractive and repulsive mineral and chemical copulators, within a shared animic ontology. Jism is why Nacho and I spend hours in physically tethered intra-course. It is the sensuality and vigour of co-bodily contact that brings us two animals together.

Differentiation through sexuation does not justify genital, gender and species division, a la Aristotle. In other words, although sexuation implies anatomical difference, this does not presuppose a system of domination or normativization (heterosexual or anthroposexual). There is no such thing as de-humanization due to consented sex, as though humans existed in some kind of moral pedestal above so-called non-human animals. The question of gender is only

meaningful if you define yourself in terms of a categorically fixed subjectivity, without accepting the slippery possibilities of becoming (with) other (see Deller, this issue). There is no word that can describe the atmosphere and common corporeality that appears when two or more bodies are entangled in the act of sexual intra-course. There is no word for the common body that appears when a human strokes a cat and the two are caught up in jismic affect. Whether sex is homo or hetero or zoophilic does not make a difference to jismic affect. On the contrary, jism liberates sexuality from genital sex, from gender or from species specificity. What jism recognizes is the force that animalizes all sexuated beings, all beings liable to love and hate, attraction and repulsion, neikon and phylia. As Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out,

the two sexes imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each to the animal, the plant, etc.: a thousand tiny sexes. (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 213)

Jism is the tethering of material differentiation and individuation into identities knotted together. A well-known example of this would be 'Brangelina' (now broken up into the divorced identities of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie). Not long ago, a husband-and-wife identity saw these two people in one, at least in the eyes of the media. Jism establishes identitary 'syzygies', to borrow the term from Alfred Jarry,³ in the form of man–woman, husband–wife, boyfriend–girlfriend, boyfriend–boyfriend, husband–husband, wife–wife, girlfriend–girlfriend, human–pet, woman–dog, man–cat, bull–man and so on. A thousand tiny sexes, all driven by a conative force that tethers opposites. Jism makes all living beings prey to a desiring matter. 'There are only inhumanities,' added Deleuze and Guattari,

humans are made exclusively of inhumanities, but very different ones, of very different natures and speeds. Primitive inhumanity, prefacial

inhumanity, has all the polyvocality of a semiotic in which the head is a part of the body, a body that is already deterritorialized relatively and plugged into becomings—spiritual/animal. (Deleuze and Guattari 2015: 190)

One critical point made by Deleuze and Guattari, which various contributors to this issue and I myself ape in our work, is that there is no position of fixed phenomenological humanity from where to start. There is no phenomenological 'I' from where to launch a subjectivity, but only a process of 'real' material change or becoming other.

Becoming animal is then the key conceptual problem bugging many of the authors who have contributed to this issue (see Kubiak, Grum, and Bianco). In a Deleuzoguattarian sense, 'becoming' is a force driven towards otherness. What this impulsion leaves in its wake is a 'reality', which is always material. I call it 'matter-reality' or 'corpo-reality'. Because the body is inhuman or earthling at the material stratum, it is driven towards its otherness either through wild evolution, or through technological means of becoming (that is, through becoming cyborg, becoming avatar, becoming alien, becoming hybrid, becoming chimera, and so on). There is an ontological difference, however, between vital and artificial life. If I stroke my car, my television set or my iPhone, there will be no response other than through gesture-recognition or some other paradigm of control. Every one of these technologized 'humanimal' becomings forge a different material 'reality', which raises questions about the tension between vital and artificial life (see Stojnic, Bianco, and Spiess and Strecker, this issue).

In addition to becoming animal, which is a strictly ontological and ultimately philosophical question, what we are working towards in this issue is the advancement of practical implementations of vital materialism through performances and body practices. The question is, what 'reality' is being materialized in these practico-critical implementations? Performance emerges

as a sensuous opportunity for various modes of ‘turning into’ and ‘turning on’, across a range of different stagings, some representational and some non-representational, some theatrical and some not. Personally, I am suspicious of the theatricalization of the animal, for instance as seen in animal guising, animal theatre, musical theatre, and animal performance more generally. This is a critical question we could not have ignored in this issue. Various authors query animal mimesis in the merely representational sense, across a range of case studies in performance art and the performing arts (see Parker-Starbuck and Orozco, Kirkkopelto, Katsouraki, Seitz, and Nachbar, this issue). As a non-representationalist, I prefer to turn the animal on. I feel Nacho’s pleasure, and his pleasure is also mine. The animacy, the power to animate and give lively motion to eroticized matter, is co-native (it is borne out of the intra-course found in-between our animal bodies). It is neither ‘his’ nor ‘mine’ in the same way that ‘a life’, in Deleuze’s final essay (2001), written shortly before committing suicide), is neither ‘yours’ nor ‘mine’, nor ‘his’. It is in itself.

* * *

Back in 1909, French paleontologist Charles Depéret wrote:

at the very moment when the species has reached the maximum of power, either by the dimensions of the body or by the perfection of offensive or defensive weapons which would seem to afford protection against all enemies, the species is on the eve of vanishing. (Depéret 1909: 236–7).

According to a report into mass extinction published by the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) in October 2016,^[note]4 the number of wild animals living on planet Earth is set to fall by nearly two-thirds by 2020—or 67 per cent to be precise. Faced with the brute facts, it seems proper to ask: if the age of the Anthropocene can be defined by ‘human’ control over every aspect of the

environment, is Depéret's idea that this pinnacle is in fact also the verge of an extinction a mere fatalism? A human species that stands alone, without wild animals in the immediate surrounding, is perhaps impoverished by intra-species relationships confined to humanized pets or 'pettified' humans (see Włodarczyk, and Mezur, this issue). Where does the journey of becoming other lie, if there is no wild sense of otherness left? In pure technological singularity?

Jism is not only a force of attraction, but also a force of repulsion. As I intimated earlier, 'a life' is ontologically different to techno-living and industrial-living, to the extent that it is synonymous with a more-than-individual process involving decay, death, and decomposition of the individual body. By contrast, technologically redesigned living is grounded on the idea of transcendentalism, the ultimate victory over death. Transcendence is the opposite of immanence, going back to Deleuze's ontology. 'Turning animal' and 'turning the animal on' are not triggers for extended living. 'Turning animal' will also imply ramming into death. Vitality will become extinguished in my body, if not extinct in my species. And yet, 'a life' will snake its way to become some other material reality. Turning animal is the letting go of individual life for the perpetuation of generative matter, a turning of the dead human into humus (that is, organic soil).

Jismic death is also the recognition of a final ecstasy, a fatal orgasm. The drive for life through death brings me back to the principles of 'Eros and Thanatos', as proposed by Sigmund Freud in his famous essay 'Beyond the pleasure principle', which I briefly acknowledged earlier. Freud famously acknowledged that it is not enough to look at pleasure and unpleasure in isolation, or sex impulses versus repression. Beyond the simple dichotomy of sex/repression, pleasure/unpleasure, immediate satisfaction/reality, lies the more fundamental tension between life and death. The same applies to jism. Jism is not confined to sexual impulses, but to self-conservation through warmth, protection, feeding, and other self-preservative instincts. The key point in Freud's analysis is that a life drive is not the dialectical opposite of death, which would invoke a schism,

but an ultimate aim. Freud defined instincts as “conservative”, inasmuch as instinctive drives are characterized by a tendency to return the individual back to an old state or “initial state from which the living entity has at one time or other departed, and to which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads.” Freud adds: “In the last resort what has left its mark on the development of organisms must be the history of the earth we live in... If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for internal reasons and becomes inorganic once again, then we shall be compelled to say that the aim of all life is death and, looking backwards, that inanimate things existed before living ones” (1961: 32).

The implication of Freud’s analysis is an ontological tension between a life of immanence and a life of transcendence, which dupes the ego to seek after-life and heavenly existence above animal life and death. Beyond the transcendentalist idea that human beings can defeat death through transcendental means, is the affirmation of pure animal and earthly immanence. A life whose aim is death is also a life which humiliates and humidifies the humananimal, a life of becoming humus (organic soil). This consciousness finds practical implementations in naturecultural systems that do not seek technological and techno-religious singularity but which, conscious of that cyclical history of earth we live in, affirms the animal death, like a hunter’s consciousness of the need to kill or be killed for life (see O’Connor, Drum and Metuq, this issue).

The transcendentalist idea that non-animal humanity will be ‘saved’ by biotechnology and biomedical engineering must be critically probed here. It is only “living” that can be extended, not ‘a life’. The two poles are in tension, since technologized living gives priority to an individual who defers and circumvents death, and a species that does not want to become extinct. With a life instinct projected unto transcendental ideologies and techno-religion, the alienated human fails to recognize that it is only through death that ‘a life’, a humanimal

existence, is affirmed and returned (with the animal other) to the same inorganic base. Techno-living is not merely a Thanatos principle—a drive for death, but a drive for annihilation. The idea that the human species is not under threat, and that it is only the non-human animal who will be vanishing from the planet, clouds this annihilation principle in a quasi-theological fantasy of human deliverance through technology (see Spiess and Strecker, this issue). The safer future for our own species is not to be predicated on the idea that human life has priority over all other life forms, and that biotechnology and biomedicine will continue to improve and extend human living to the point of defeating extinction. Going back to Depéret, this human-only future reveals a species at the pinnacle of its power, just at the verge of its hubristic demise.

* * *

Back in January in 2015, I spent a day—my birthday—in an animal park outside the picturesque village of Santillana del Mar, in Northeast Spain. There were no other visitors in Parque Cuaternario that day, as there were serious flood warnings all over Cantabria due to recent heavy downpours. That morning the rain had stopped, and so I managed to spend a day in this small animal park on my own. Parque Cuaternario had opened, I would like to think, just for me: a grown-up child horsing around in the zoo.

The idea behind Parque Cuaternario is to show local visitors the animals that would have roamed the Northeastern Spanish hillsides during the last Ice Age and at the time of Altamira, the famous United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) listed prehistoric cave, which is located only a few miles from the park. In sum, the park is dedicated to animals that would have roamed the hills of Cantabria twenty thousand years ago, but which in the European subcontinent are now extinct in the wild. Many of them, I found, did not seek eye-contact. This applied to the lynx, the wolf, the bear and the lion. The meat-eating hunters did not want me there, nor did they recognize my

vain attempts at connecting. On the contrary, the meat-eaters seemed bugged and agitated, as they moved around in crabby stereotypies, forever caught in motionless movement. The bison, the wild horse and the reindeer did, however, react in all manner of jismic ways. The herbivores looked back, especially the bison. After hours of eye contact, the bison began to follow me around, and to seek me, pushing his big brown head in between the metal bars of his pen, asking perhaps for a caress, some food, a shared moment. I began to imagine myself like the character in Julio Cortázar's short story 'Axoloti' (1998: 161-5). After spending days watching salamanders in a Parisian aquarium, the man in Cortázar's story finally turns into one. Would I ever?

Like the Bison-Man of Cave of El Castillo, a bull-man hybrid drawn into a stalagmite in the nearby prehistoric cave of Monte Castillo, could I ever 'turn into' that bison, or could I ever turn him on? He most definitely turned me on. Take a look at the impressive body: the formidable legs, the strong hump, the matted beard, the muscular shoulders, the gentle black eyes. It is not surprising that every year the bachelors of Bielsa—a town located a hundred or so miles from El Castillo—dress up as bulls (or trangas) to badger, hump and dance with the bachelorettes of the town (dressed up in white dresses and coloured laces), thus performing an ancient seasonal ritual called 'Carnabal del Valle de Bielsa' perhaps in recognition of a vitalizing animal jism. As I put it in my own autoethnographic study of this event, the Bielsa carnival forces the visitor to 'mind the hump', that is, to have a mindful consciousness of a jism, an animated and excited affect, which is performed to suggest a spilling of jouissance even beyond the human species.{{note}}5

I have been hounded by those deep eyes. It has struck me quite profoundly that the very same expression in the bison of Parque Cuaternario is found in a painting contained inside the cave of Altamira, which is circa 17,000 years old. The eye of one of the many bison figures painted in the Hall of the Polychromes in Altamira Cave is immediately evocative, from my first-hand

observation,^{[note]7} of a jismic encounter that may have happened between hunter-gatherer and bull in the Upper Paleolithic era (see Kawa, and Kubiak, this issue).

As Derrida would have it, there is something akin to a 'transcendental instinct' (2008: 34) at work here, except that it is not transcendental at all, but immanent. The impetus for vital life and for the connection of a jismic anima across species is 'pure immanence' in the Deleuzian ontology (2001). Like death, vital life is a transhistorical imperative found both within and also outside, cutting across the bodies of two different species like water through a sponge. And yet, if instinct is another transhistorical imperative that determines how an animal behaves in the face of environmental change, and if indeed sapiens proved to have an instinctive capacity to survive in previous eras of climactic change (not least the Ice Age), then has this instinct been skewed in an age of global warming, where techno-humanity is prey to a Tanathos principle defined by the fantasy of transcendence? Instinct has succumbed to extinct life, and a humanistic idiocy that professes the killing of other species to secure the ever-lasting living of 'humans'. When a consciousness of that cross-species anima is awakened, even two hunters (sapiens and cat) can agree to stand before each other, and as they look into each other's eyes, and as the warmth wakes up, so they can decide to walk side by side, co-animated.

Notes

1 Aristotle conceived women as subject to men, but as higher than slaves. In Politics 1.12 Aristotle wrote: 'The slave is wholly lacking the deliberative element; the female has it but it lacks authority; the child has it but it is incomplete.' 'Plants', Aristotle also wrote, 'are created for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men.' An authority in these matters up until the Middle Ages at the very least, Aristotle's idea that humans are 'masters' of nature based on rational powers also had a lasting influence on Islamic thinking.

2 Abram also speaks of the 'eros between body and forests' (2010: 80).

3 In astrology, syzygy is a complementarity of opposites, the two-in-one. Syzygy is also a notion that Jarry developed from occultist literature. In this context, 'syzygy' often refers to the double identity of the man-woman, or what Jarry also called the Caesar-Antichrist (1965: 66).

4See: WWF. 2016. Living Planet Report 2016. Risk and resilience in a new era.

WWF International, Gland, Switzerland The full report is available online:

<http://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016->

[10/LPR_2016_full%20report_spread%20low%20res.pdf](http://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-10/LPR_2016_full%20report_spread%20low%20res.pdf)

5 For a critical account of this Pyrenean carnival, see Salazar Sutil (2008).

6 The expression is on loan from William Golding's The Inheritors (2011), a novel that depicts the fictional encounter of Sapiens and Neanderthal humans in prehistoric Europe. The story, told from the Neanderthalian perspective, evokes a number of notable expressions such as this. Golding considered this to be his finest work of fiction.

7 The Cave of Altamira, located in the region of Cantabria in North-eastern Spain, is strictly closed to the general public, who are only allowed to enter a life-size replica known as the Neocueva. In the framework of the Research Program for Preventive Conservation and Accessibility led by the board of the Museo Nacional y Centro de Investigación de Altamira (the National Museum and Research Centre of Altamira), I was granted special access to the original cave in January 2015.

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