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TRANSCENDENTAL EXTINCTION: A PHILOSOPHICAL RESPONSE TO THE ANTHROPOCENE

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The main thesis of this paper is that the philosophical response to the Anthropocene entails employing rather a transcendental than an empirical or practical approach. In response to new attacks on transcendental philosophy by speculative realists, I defend a certain type of transcendentalism, which can be called transcendental realism. Gilles Deleuze's reading of the ancient Stoics would be the best example of an effort to keep transcendentalism while taking a realist or even a materialist stand. In this regard, I examine the concept of extinction as the central idea of the Anthropocene. I refer to two contemporary philosophers, namely Catherine Malabou and Ray Brassier, who, reacting to the Dipesh Chakrabarty's and Quentin Meillassoux's demands to abandon the transcendental philosophy, direct their analyses towards a unificatory view, which is the core characteristic of the version of the transcendental approach applied in this paper. Malabou's unificatory tool is her notion of "the brain of history", which will be discussed together with Deleuze's idea of the agency of death. Brassier's method to connect ancestry and the "here and now", or the idea that the absolute extinction has already happened, will be considered as a feature of his transcendentalism. Ultimately, I conclude that as both Malabou and Brassier, despite their materialism, have to incorporate the transcendental approach into their theories, a philosophical response to the Anthropocene must view the transcendental extinction as its problematic.

KEYWORDS: extinction, Deleuze, the transcendental, agency.

Introduction: Erewhon

When something urgent happens, a common reaction to philosophers' claims usually takes a form of accusation: "It's urgent! Stop philosophizing!" The apparent presumption here is that philosophy is needed only when everything is fine and there are no practical problems requiring immediate reaction or attention. On other occasions, when there are no serious problems to solve, philosophers appear to amuse the spectators by theorizing.

Let us try to re-theorize the relationship between philosophy and urgency. My claim, which is based on Nietzsche's idea of *untimeliness*, is that the task of philosophy, beside amusement, is to reveal the urgency we are not aware of, or to make urgent something that does not seem to be so. Thus, it seems natural for philosophers to appear indifferent toward what is commonly regarded as urgent, because they search for a different type of urgency. When everyone mentions the urgency of something, the philosopher might reply that there is an urgency hidden beneath the apparent one.

This is my take of what Gilles Deleuze in the first pages of his *Difference and Repetition*, referring to Samuel Butler, calls "erewhon" (Deleuze 1994: xxi). What is urgent usually denotes the living present. For example, in the contemporary debates on climate change, people would repeat: "It's urgent! It isn't a problem for future generations; we must solve it right now! Here and now!" They keep on: "Recent scientific studies show that we have only eighty days to save the Earth! We have to do something *HERE* and *NOW!*" The philosopher would respond: "We have to do something *EREWHON*" – and the latter is a modified version of "nowhere". Erewhon is a conceptual tool to extend the present to what looks very far; to insist on the urgency of what seems to be abstract and "just" a philosophical matter.

I would like to consider this distinction between the philosophical treatment of problems and the practical treatment, which could be conceptualized as the distinction between the transcendental and the empirical. The task of philosophy is, of course, not to provide solutions for practical problems, but rather to figure out the condition of their possibility and, as a result, to change the very nature of the problems by merging them with their conditions. Using a purely empirical instrument usually results in a repetition of what is already known. A transcendental approach tries to change the nature of the problem and provides us with a new context, in which the urgency receives a new meaning.

Transcendental philosophy is accused by a new generation of philosophers (mostly by the Speculative Realism movement) of being trapped within the circle

of Correlation, that is to say, it fails to account for the reality that would be absolutely distinct from subjectivity. If this is the case, transcendental philosophy would fall short to deal with any reality beyond our illusionary subjective issues. My claim at this point is that it is possible to criticize subjectivism and to transgress beyond the circle of correlation, while keeping a transcendental approach. Such an approach could be identified with Gilles Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, which, regarding his emphasis on the conditions of *real experience* instead of *possible experience* in defining the transcendental, can be also called transcendental realism. Viewed from this perspective, Deleuze's early philosophy aims to consider the transcendental as an immanent or real field, or what he later calls the pure plane of immanence. In what follows, I keep using the transcendental/empirical distinction and by the transcendental I mean the Deleuzian version of this term, which is the result of his critiques of the tradition of the transcendental philosophy, mostly of Kant, Husserl, and Sartre.

Oxygen Holocaust

In the following, I will claim that the philosophical response to the Anthropocene entails a transcendental approach that ultimately changes the meaning of the Anthropocene's urgency. The Anthropocene is a name for an epoch, in which the effect of humans on the environment becomes irreversible or out of control. The detrimental influence of the Anthropocene on the environment may result in the extinction of human life as well as life on Earth in general. Therefore, it is obvious that it marks an urgency. The philosophical treatment of the latter, and the transition from a practical approach to the Anthropocene towards a transcendental one, will lead us to the idea of the transcendental extinction.

The first question to be answered is whether the effects of the Anthropocene are really so detrimental that they would inevitably lead to a total extinction of life? And, if so, what does 'a total extinction' mean? Also, what is life? Human beings always change their environment, and, of course, they themselves change as the external changes occur. One can conclude from this that if the change in the environment is expected to be drastic, the result would be, not extinction, as we tend to think of it, but rather a radical transformation. As an example of this radical transformation, let us take a look at what biologists call oxygen catastrophe. *Lapham's Quarterly* provides the following explanation:

The first mass extinction on Earth occurred around 2.5 billion years ago, when a photosynthesizing bacterium appeared and released so much oxygen into the atmosphere

that anaerobic life was largely wiped out. This is often called the Great Oxygenation Event, the Oxygen Catastrophe, or the Oxygen Holocaust¹.

The aforementioned oxygen catastrophe can be considered as the material condition of the possibility of the emergence of forms of life on Earth that are different from that of anaerobic bacteria. The distinction between aerobic and anaerobic life would be controversial for any philosophy that takes a distinction between organic and inorganic reality for granted, which is the case in the initial definition of the Anthropocene. Oxygen as an innate component of a form of life was just produced by anaerobic bacteria as nothing but waste. An increase in the population of these bacteria lead to a catastrophic increase in the amount of oxygen in the atmosphere and resulted in their extinction. Interestingly, this extinction of the existing form of life about 2.5 billion years ago was a necessary condition for the emergence of a totally different, oxygen-dependent form of life.

Therefore, what is dangerous for us perhaps is not so dangerous for what may come after us. If the natural evolution is contingent, the formation of a form of life is absolutely unpredictable. The conclusion would be the impossibility of the idea of the absolute extinction of life because it has no pre-defined and stable form. The fact we learn from the Oxygen Catastrophe is that the boundary between organic and inorganic realities is blurry, which makes the idea of the absolute extinction of life, which is an inherent component of the Anthropocene, problematic.

This conclusion can be considered as the result of a transcendental approach, which is, following Markus Gabriel, the result of “the argument from facticity”². Facticity, in simple terms, means that the agent that changes a system changes itself together with the system. Or, in other words, a law governing a change is itself subject to change (although they change with different rhythms and this difference defines one of the series as “laws”). The argument from facticity in the case of the Anthropocene would be an effort to confront the problem beyond the distinction between the subject and the object, nature and culture, passivity and activity, or even human and inhuman. Facticity, which is an integral part of the immanent transcendental approach (or a “transcendental ontology”), entails the study of cultural events based on natural phenomena, but, more importantly, the study of nature as what evolves through the laws that are very different from what the humanistic and positivistic natural sciences depict. Therefore, the transcendental encounter with the problem of the Anthropocene leads to a need for an agency

¹ “Oxygen Catastrophe”, *Lapham's Quarterly, Disaster* 9 (2), 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.lapham-quarterly.org/disaster/miscellany/oxygen-catastrophe> [Accessed 17 October 2019].

² See “the argument from facticity” in Gabriel 2015: 15–17 and Gabriel 2011: xvii–xviii.

different from a human agency, an agency that is collective and unconscious, rather than individual and conscious. Reading the Anthropocene as “the dawn of extinction” ascribes an agency to humans, which makes them turn against themselves and other living entities. The example of the Oxygen Catastrophe clearly illustrates that all advertisements and demonstrations against climate change, attempting to tackle such issues as the increase in the population of humans on Earth and their current lifestyle, are doomed to fail because they target a wrong agency. Thus, the question: what is the proper agency of the Anthropocene?

The Agency of Death

Catherine Malabou in her study titled “The Brain of History or the Mentality of the Anthropocene” provides an account of what I call facticity in the context of the Anthropocene and history. In this paper, she puts forward the idea of “the profound interaction between the sociological and the ecological, understanding them as parts of the same metabolism” (Malabou 2017: 39). According to Malabou, the Anthropocene is a concept that demands the study of the interaction between historical events and the biological or geological phenomena. History for her is human, the story of human events since its emergence on Earth, and studying the interaction between history and biology or history and geology is in fact the examination of something similar to the connection between aerobic and anaerobic life, or between the current human life and what comes after its extinction.

Malabou traces this reference back to two professors of history, namely Dipesh Chakrabarty and Daniel Smail, who associate this interaction with a geological history in the first case, and a biological one in the second. In so doing, she tries to search for a connection between human history and geology or biology. According to her, while Smail searches for a biological condition of the formation of history, Chakrabarty insists that the source should be a more ancient one, existing before the biological, namely the geological. Malabou compares Chakrabarty with Meillassoux, who believes in an absolute gap between what is accessible to human subjectivity and the ancestrality, in other words: a gap that is necessary in order to avoid what he calls ‘correlationism’, which is the reduction of reality to the conditions of subjectivity. Chakrabarty’s position appears to be similar because he insists on non-phenomenalizability of the geological.

Malabou rightly criticizes the necessity of this gap, and brings forward the idea of the brain (which is not limited to the human brain) as a missing component that fills the gap: “Is not the brain, on which Chakrabarty remains totally silent, an essential intermediary between the historical, the biological, and the geological?”

The site of experience we are looking for?” (Malabou 2017: 45). Then, she goes on to discuss the interaction between the brain and the environment based on “*the theory of addiction*” that she borrows from Smail, after which she concludes that “human practices alter or affect brain-body chemistry, and in return, brain-body chemistry alters or affects human practices” (Malabou 2017:46). Obviously, it is similar to our idea of facticity.

There would be an equilibrium or “autotropic and allotropic addictive processes” as the result of the so-called interactions, and in the case of the current climate change problem, she claims that we need “new addictions” (“eating differently, travelling differently, dressing differently...”) in order to lessen (or “partly counter”) the effects of climate change (Malabou 2017: 47). In simpler terms, it does not seem to be enough to decide either to eat differently or to do it individually; we need a different system of addictions: we need to be different entities forming a different equilibrium with the environment. It is the collective unconscious that must change.

Even though this explanation may seem appealing, Malabou is herself well aware that it does not really appear to be helpful. The concept of responsibility vanishes when everything is construed in terms of addictions. Furthermore, trying to read human history as a geological (or natural) history amounts to neutralization and numbness of human agents, an indifference that leaves no place for responsibility. For example, if one is a vegetarian, they are not at all morally better than the non-vegetarians; they might either be an illustrative example of a certain species having developed the new addiction or just a temporal follower of those in power who are trying in vain to deviate the natural history, which leads (or may not lead) to our extinction. Responsibility is just a superficial effect, as much as freedom is a superficial feeling. What resides beneath the surface is deep history that harbors a different agency, which, in its turn, entails a different sense of freedom and responsibility.

Therefore, the result of Malabou’s study is the emergence of the notion of a new agency: not necessarily human but, instead, the one that is at the same time human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic, historical and geological. It is an agency that has nothing to do with control. What I conclude from her debates is that, unlike Meillassoux and Chakrabarty, a transcendental philosopher who believes in the idea of facticity would claim that this agency is also present in humans and organic beings. Therefore, in order to discover this agency, we need not go far toward ancestry or arche-fossils, but we need to carry out a transcendental examination of our experience. Indeed, there is something in our experience that opens us toward absolute exteriority. This is a position that Malabou expresses in

“Can We Relinquish the Transcendental?”, which is her response to Meillassoux’s speculative turn. There, she concludes that not only is it impossible to relinquish the transcendental, but also there is no need for this relinquishment, even in order to satisfy Meillassoux’s requirements (Malabou 2014: 247–254). Therefore, Malabou’s thought can be considered as a contribution in a philosophical movement initiated by Deleuze, whose main task is making the transcendental real or immanent.

The brain of history is not centralized in the human brain but is extended as ‘deep history’. The complexity of deep history juxtaposed with the known history is comparable with the complexity of the brain juxtaposed with consciousness. The Cartesian sharp gap, suggested by Meillassoux to avoid any correlation, is internalized in the idea of the brain, which marks an implosion instead of the Cartesian explosion. This suggests the disintegration of the distinction between human and nature, as if the brain of deep history marks the geological source of consciousness. Malabou reminds us that the Anthropocene indicates that we can drastically change nature because we are a part of it. Humans are a force of nature, sometimes a destructive force, like an asteroid that can start an ice age. It is not the case that there is no critical change in nature, that natural history is slow and monotone; humans and asteroids are evidence of that. And the oxygen catastrophe demonstrates that nature evolves also because of its destructive forces.

Thus, while the empirical approach helps to figure out how we could survive the climate change, the transcendental approach can help us imagine the very experience of extinction. It is an empirical thought that can help us to save ourselves as individuals or a species on Earth, or even to save the Earth itself. But the very act of thinking about the extinction of life on Earth demands a transcendental thought. I do not intend to speculate on the world without human beings or any form of life. Instead, my claim is that the transcendental thought of extinction, the very idea of total destruction, is itself what separates us from within and at the same time connects us to the bare reality or, if you like, the absolute exteriority. The agency of the Anthropocene indicates the destructive power of life as the agency of death in life – or what Freud calls the death drive. It is wrong to say that the power of organic being is always constructive and destruction comes from something exterior to life. Life itself is the most destructive power, more destructive than asteroids or ice ages.

At this point, I would like to refer to Deleuze’s reading of the ancient Stoics in *The Logic of Sense* to provide a close examination of this dialectic of life and death, the agency of death, and the ethics of the Anthropocene. First, let me insist

that it is wrong to read Deleuze as a vitalist if vitalism means focusing on the constructive living forces and neglecting the opposing destructive non-living forces. Meillassoux's accusation of Deleuze's subjectalism in "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition" is an example of such an interpretation (Meillassoux 2016: 121–124). In contrast, I find David Lapoujade's reading of Deleuze more convincing. He states that Deleuze's "most 'vitalist' texts are always at the same time texts concerned with death, with what life puts to death in us in order to liberate its forces [...]. Life isn't restricted in Deleuze to producing organisms, nor does it invariably take organic form. Aberrant movements partake of an 'inorganic life' that permeates organisms and undermines their integrity [...]" (Lapoujade 2017: 36).

Deleuze finds the best account of this vitalism of death (or if you like, mortalism) in the Stoic cosmology. According to the ancient Stoics, cosmos is a conflagrant fire, in which the pieces burn each other, which generates effects that make the evolution of the whole possible. Burning, which at a limited scale looks like destruction, is constructive at the larger scale. Deleuze, in his reading of the Stoics, makes a distinction between existence and subsistence and considers the realm of existence as that of material causes and interactions among them that form different mixtures. Everything that exists is material and these material partial things are always in contact with each other through causality: they modify each other and form mixtures. The realm of existence is an eternal mutual modification of these pieces, which constructs a dynamic continuum and a whole, which, as it has been suggested, called a conflagrant fire.

The Stoics define the effect of the causality or the interaction between pieces as something which is not what acts as a cause or is influenced by causality, but rather the modification itself, something immaterial which does not exist but only subsists. This realm of subsistence defines the Stoic logic and makes language and meaning possible. By introducing the idea of the subsistence of effects, The Stoics elude spiritualism and remain materialist, although they still consider the incorporeal as the effects of causality.

This is an effort to form a materialistic view that considers the incorporeal as what subsists in matter without separating the organic and inorganic worlds. The conflagrant fire is dynamic and, in a sense, organic, but its organicity has no similarity to living organisms. In fact, living organisms are just some aspects of the material reality, which is itself living in a different sense. Yet what triggers the life of reality is burning, something destructive, what in our ordinary vocabulary is called death. If death did not exist, entities would remain what they are, and there would be no place for the evolution of reality or its life. In a paradoxical manner, reality is supported and maintained by the death of individuals. In this vein,

Deleuze, through the Stoics, provides us with a proper explanation of Nietzsche's expression from *The Gay Science*: "Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type" (Nietzsche 1974: 168). This view is absolutely different from the dualism of Chakrabarty and Meillassoux, who make a clear distinction between deep or ancestral history, which is graspable only through speculation, and the bio or human history, which can be subject to knowledge. Unlike dualists, the transcendental approach appears as a combination of knowledge and speculation, as its central claim is that even the correlationist knowledge "enjoys" material contingency.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze compares the Stoic "double causality" with the Epicurean "single causality" of bodies (Deleuze 1990: 94). According to him, the Epicurean materialism is unable to explain the dynamic and productive aspect of reality, which is successfully explained by the Stoics through the quasi-causality of incorporeal effects (those that do not exist but subsist in the corporeals). It is remarkable that for Meillassoux the Epicureans are the true materialists because their materialism is devoid of any organicity. In his turn, Deleuze finds a more dynamic materialism in the ancient Stoics, the one that is characterized by the idea of the conflagrant fire, which, by including double causality, has the capability of being the source of both minerals and organisms. In its totality, the Stoics' conflagrant fire exists anterior to any ancestral trace of life and has no resemblance to the organic life. This image sheds a new light on the organic life itself and presents it as devoid of any telos and spirituality. What defines life is nothing but death, what pushes the reality forward is destruction. Life is essentially contingent, an idea which is explained in Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense* through the notion of "fatality" (Deleuze 1990: 170)³.

This contingency is the distinctive aspect of the death instinct (*instinct du mort*), which stands against all the living instincts. In his reading of Freud on many occasions, Deleuze insists that the death instinct is not just an instinct among many others but is essentially different from them. Interestingly, in his reading of Zola's naturalism, "Zola and the Crack", which was published as an appendix to *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze, having mentioning different instincts of the personages in *la Bête humaine*, associates the death instinct with the figure of the train, indifferently carrying the drunk soldiers toward death (Deleuze 1990: 385–386). At the center of Deleuze's reading is the notion of crack (*fêlure*), which is an incorporeal affect that connects an individual to its ancestors in a far-reaching heredity or a deep history. It is never spiritual but cerebral, yet as crack it is distinguishable from

³ I elaborated this idea of fatality as contingency in: Parsa 2018: 39–52.

the material of the brain. In Deleuze's text, its symbol is the train, which is both the absolute exteriority and the death instinct. This crack is what is transportable through deep history. The brain of history is marked by a spider-like crack and its motor is death drive. The train, blind death drive, is what connects ancestry and extinction. The immanence of the transcendental in Deleuze's thought is nothing but the consideration of the cerebral crack, the death instinct as the transcendental. Hence, the real transcendental approach makes it possible to consider our history, the human history, based on deep history, on ancestry or extinction – a drive that is already at work here and now.

The Extinction of the Transcendental or the Transcendence of Extinction?

But is it possible to think about the extinction of life as of the extinction of the productivity of death, the death of death? Ray Brassier in the last chapter of his *Nihil Unbound: Extinction and Enlightenment* investigates this possibility and proposes the idea of absolute extinction, which annihilates both the experience and its conditions. In his work, he oscillates between a transcendental and speculative (which in my reading is empirical) approach, but since he dedicates an extensive part of the book to criticizing what he calls vitalism, and, like Meillassoux, he views Deleuze as a vitalist, I tend to read his text as opposed to the transcendental approach that I defend.

Brassier's reading of Deleuze amounts to the claim that "being as such is nothing but differentiation" (Brassier 2007: 221). Hence, the priority of death over life in Deleuze would be nothing but a kind of metaphysics of life (vitalism), in which being as such differentiates itself through death. Deleuze's "intensive death" is called by Brassier the "spiritualization of death", which is merely a form of life (Brassier 2007: 222). I would claim that Deleuze is a transcendental philosopher, whose metaphysics entails only the immanence of the transcendental, which is to say, he migrates from the transcendental subject towards the conditions of experience in general. Here, immanence plays the role of what we called facticity, making the transcendental subsist at the surface of the empirical and hover over it; it is a cerebral crack. We enjoy experience and we can search for the ontological (and objective) conditions of this experience. Therefore, Deleuze's alleged spiritualization of death is a misreading that reverses his search for the traces of death within life as seeking life everywhere.

Deleuze's transcendentalism is tantamount to his structuralism in which he distinguishes the purely positional, nonsensical, differential and singular structure

from the empirical sense or effect. Yet as he explains in “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?,” it ought not to be confused with an imaginary “Gestalt” or a fixed pattern (Deleuze 2004: 173). In this text, Deleuze indicates how structuralism introduces a third realm distinct from the imaginary (subjective) ideas and the physical reality, associated with a much more complicated (structural) reality. The third realm determines subjects and physical objects without a pre-established determination. This structural transcendental modifies itself in interaction with the conditioned empirical. This is what the immanent transcendental means and this is how we should understand creativity, productivity and becoming in Deleuze. I insist that he is a special kind of transcendental philosopher and it would be a big mistake to believe that what is at stake in his philosophy is empirical creativity and becoming.

Therefore, my response to Brassier’s question, “if being is essentially active, affirmative, creative and productive, then why does it ever become alienated from itself in reactivity, negation, sterility, and representation?” (Brassier 2007: 220; he obviously refers to Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy*) is to repeat a question Deleuze asks in *Difference and Repetition*: “how is stupidity (and not error) possible?” (Deleuze 1994: 151) The difference between the productive and the representational being does not lie in two epochs of being, which means that first being was productive and then it becomes representative in consciousness. It is not an error at all. It is structural. The condition indeed subsists at the surface of the conditioned, but it does not mean that the transcendental (or the ontological) difference is reducible to a mere creative or productive matter. Deleuze’s becoming is not his account of being in itself, but rather it marks the ontological condition of the empirical appearance of being in language and thought. He does not search for being in itself beyond thought, but rather, being-in-itself in thought and as thought. Thus, being expresses itself in thought either through representation and recognition that mark a limited and reduced image or through affirmation and production that give us an absolute image.

Brassier’s suggestion is to bring a speculative approach by asking such questions as: “*How does thought think a world without thought? Or more urgently: How does thought think the death of thinking?*” (Brassier 2007: 223) The real question is: Is it possible to respond to these questions by migrating beyond the transcendental philosophy? It seems that, according to Brassier, the thought of extinction marks the vaporization of the transcendental and the (empirical) death of the intensive and productive death. This would mean the death of experience together with its conditions. He tells the story of this extinction in a dramatic way with clear implications of a religious idea of the day of reckoning:

But this is only to postpone the day of reckoning, because sooner or later both life and mind will have to reckon with the disintegration of the ultimate horizon, when, roughly one trillion, trillion, trillion (10^{1728}) years from now, the accelerating expansion of the universe will have disintegrated the fabric of matter itself, terminating the possibility of embodiment. Every star in the universe will have burnt out, plunging the cosmos into a state of absolute darkness and leaving behind nothing but spent husks of collapsed matter. All free matter, whether on planetary surfaces or in interstellar space, will have decayed, eradicating any remnants of life based in protons and chemistry, and erasing every vestige of sentience – irrespective of its physical basis. Finally, in a state cosmologists call ‘asymptopia’, the stellar corpses littering the empty universe will evaporate into a brief hailstorm of elementary particles. Atoms themselves will cease to exist. Only the implacable gravitational expansion will continue, driven by the currently inexplicable force called ‘dark energy’, which will keep pushing the extinguished universe deeper and deeper into an eternal and unfathomable blackness (Brassier 2007: 228).

Now that the Sun is going to die, philosophy must be speculative. Extinction hatches the death of correlation, of being-toward-death of Dasein and Deleuze’s intensive death. If it were just the death of Sun, the correlationist could say it would just be another prerequisite for cosmic life. But Brassier goes beyond the solar death and asks about a total and absolute extinction. What is absolute extinction? Is the extinction of life, the atomic structure, and the matter itself ‘absolute enough’ to be called so? Eventually, Brassier claims that absolute extinction would be the extinction of the transcendental. But he depicts it partially using a limited means of a scientific, empirical language. I claim that absolute extinction is only philosophizable transcendently, not as an empirical time that arrives in one trillion, trillion, trillion years from now, but as he himself notices, as what has already happened. I think this “being already happened” is a point in Brassier’s text that serves against his goal to relinquish the transcendental, and indicates a transcendental point in his thought because it marks a change in the linear and empirical image of time. The idea, on the one hand, is that since we are aware of the ultimate extinction, we cannot continue with transcendentalism. On the other hand, it means that, as it has already happened, it hovers over here and now, over the realm of existence, which makes it the transcendental realm of subsistence and indicates an immanent transcendental.

Hence, we can see how Brassier’s reference to the scientific previsions affects philosophical thought. In order to move from this empirical scientific approach to his philosophical idea of universal annihilation, he needs to take a further step and reckon the extinction of the dark energy itself, which is clearly beyond the capability of natural sciences. Thus the empirical absolute extinction is not possible, because absolutism belongs to transcendental philosophy. Through the thought of

empirical total extinction, he brings forward the relinquishment of the transcendental. Yet a further move toward an absolute extinction brings him back to the transcendental approach. If the time of extinction is not “a localizable spatiotemporal occurrence”, but “the extinction of space-time”, the extinction of cosmological physics, and it has already terminated the correlation, then what separates it from a transcendental look that hovers over what is going on here and now and makes it erewhon? (Brassier 2007: 230)

I would agree that, the posteriority of extinction is still a correlate “for us” because it is still a scientific narrative that can be used by transcendental philosophy. I respect Brassier’s effort to accentuate the thought of extinction, but he has to elaborate more on why “the thought of the absence of thought” is absolutely different from the other thoughts? Why this and only this thought is transformable into an object? (Brassier 2007: 229–230) Why the concept of extinction is the only concept which is objectifiable? Why posteriority of extinction, unlike the ancestry, is not reducible to the anthropocentric? Why it is not time, but the extinction of time, if our narrative takes its form from the empirical scientific evidence?

Conclusion

We might say that extinction has already happened, and the thought of extinction would radically change the nature of all of our empirical problems. Both Malabou and Brassier are amazed by the way Chakrabarty and Meillassoux attempt to distance an ecological and material realm. Yet, as they examine how this distancing modifies the ‘here and now’, whether by introducing a material brain or by rendering the extinction as ‘what has been already happened’, they both cannot help but remain in the realm of transcendental philosophy. In Brassier’s case, what Meillassoux demands in his *After Finitude* is to stop philosophizing and apply a purely mathematical approach that sets the philosophical language aside and employs the language of set theory. Brassier interprets this demand as a request for nihilism but he rightly does not stop philosophizing. He would rather reveal the nihilistic nature of philosophy in response to urgencies. This nihilistic nature means that the extinction has already happened. The same is true for Malabou, who, despite her worries about what happens with responsibility, still comes to the point of the vaporization of individual responsibilities, which sets the scene for philosophical nihilism: the powerful nihilism of death drive.

In these cases, the philosophical response to the Anthropocene entails engaging with the thought of ancestry and extinction in order to modify the sense of its urgency. According to Brassier, ancestry and extinction are not symmetrical

in regards to the anthropocentric. In fact, he tries to accomplish what Meillassoux did not succeed in doing, namely, to break up with the correlation completely. In my reading, what he achieves is a new form of transcendental philosophy, and not a speculative materialism (the thought of the death of thought). In Deleuzian terminology, one could say, the distinction between ancestrality and extinction is comparable to that between continuum and intensive difference. Meillassoux's project fails because he does not consider a middle term between subjectivist transcendentalism and speculative materialism: a transcendental materialism, which is embodied in the Deleuzian reading of the Stoics, or, in other words, Stoic materialism, standing against both Epicurean materialism and Platonic spiritualism.

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Mehdi Parsa

TRANSCENDENTALINIS IŠNYKIMAS: FILOSOFINIS ATSAKAS Į ANTROPOCENĄ

Santrauka

Straipsnyje teigiama, kad filosofinis atsakas į antropoceną reikalauja pasitelkti transcendentalinę, o ne empirinę ar praktinę prieigą. Atsakydamas į spekuliatyviųjų realistų anpuolius prieš transcendentalinę filosofiją, straipsnio autorius gina tam tikrą transcendentalizmo tipą, kurį vadina transcendentaliniu realizmu. Gilles'io Deleuze'o pateikta antiklos stoikų interpretacija būtų geriausias pavyzdys pastangos išlaikyti transcendentalizmą prisiimant realistinę ar net materialistinę poziciją. Šiuo atžvilgiu autorius nagrinėja išnykimo sąvoką kaip svarbiausią antropoceno idėją. Jis nurodo į du šiuolaikinius filosofus – Catherine Malabou and Ray'ų Brassier – kurie, reaguodami į Dipesho Chakrabarty's and Quentin Meillassoux's reikalavimus atmesti transcendentalinę filosofiją, savo analizes nukreipia į vienijantį požiūrį, esantį pagrindiniu bruožu tos transcendentalumo versijos, kuri pasitelkiama šiame straipsnyje. Malabou vienijantis įrankis yra jos „istorijos smegenų“ samprata, kuri straipsnyje diskutuojama kartu su Deleuze'o mirties veiksnio idėja. Brassier būdas sujungti ancestralumą su „čia ir dabar“, arba absoliutaus, jau įvykusio išnykimo idėja straipsnyje laikomas transcendentalizmo bruožu. Galiausiai, remdamasis tuo, kad tiek Malabou, tiek Brassier, nepaisant jų materializmo, turi į savo teorijas inkorporuoti transcendentalinę prieigą, autorius daro išvadą, jog filosofinis atsakas į antropoceną privalo matyti transcendentalinį išnykimą kaip savo problematiką.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: išnykimas, Deleuze'as, transcendentalumas, veiksnys.