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Pharmakos: A Body of Filth and a Site of Radically Novel Politics¹

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1. Political Sovereignty of the Prelingual

In *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben proposes a genealogy of the concept of political sovereignty, namely of the one pertaining to the European civilization. (Agamben 1998) Beginning with Roman Antiquity, Agamben's genealogical account of the European cultural invention of political sovereignty enables a discovery which is of critical importance for the argument we are making here. We will attempt to demonstrate that Agamben's genealogy of the notion of political sovereignty unravels the immanently pre-discursive grounding of the latter. Namely, his analysis, specifically in *Homo Sacer*, shows that sovereignty is based upon the founding act of sacrifice of "bare life." This is the primal sacrificial institution which represents initialization into and of (European) civilization. Life itself, sheer life defined by its physicality and voiceless labor of staying-in-life, has to be sacrificially killed in order to be transformed into an *eikon*, into an image and a linguistic sign, in order to constitute a political universe.

¹ This essay is a revised excerpt from the book *Lived Revolution: Solidarity with the Body in Pain as the New Political Universal* published in 2010

In every case, sacred life cannot dwell in the city of men: for the surviving devotee, the imaginary funeral functions as a vicarious fulfillment of the consecration that gives the individual back to normal life; for the emperor, the double funeral makes it possible to fasten onto the sacred life, which must be gathered and divinized in the apotheosis; for *homo sacer*, finally, we are confronted with a residual and irreducible bare life, which must be excluded and exposed to a death that no rite and no sacrifice can redeem. (Agamben 1998: 100)

Indeed the “irreducible bare life which must be excluded and exposed to death” cannot be redeemed by any rite or sacrifice. Bare life is precisely what has been sacrificed in the name of the Symbolic. It is the necessary subject to sacrifice so that “the World” is established. The “bare life” of a *homo sacer* or of the medieval king is the sacrificial animal, the organism, the body that ought to be sacrificed in order for the political universe to come into being. It is the Real that must be annihilated for the Sign to arrive in its place. In order for the Signifier-of-Sovereignty to be produced, the bare life of the political subject that embodies the Sovereignty has to be sacrificed: it may be the embodied life of a king or of the citizen/s (= “the nation”). As Agamben shows, from Roman Antiquity – and, referring to the institution of *pharmakos*, I would extend back to Greek Antiquity – to the globalized European invention of the modern nation-state, political sovereignty is realized only on the basis of derealization of the embodied life of its subjects. Life as body, life as the pulsating bloody mess that the human animal’s organism is, has to be annulled for the Signifier of Sovereignty to emerge in that void left behind by the departing Real. The former is the Signifier that will enable the transformation of bare Life into pure (political) Meaning. In order for human life to possess meaning, life at its most radical – as bare life or nothing-but-life – must be effaced. The process of effacement, however, *always already* fails to be executed without a remainder. The remainder that always eludes the process of signification is bare life – precisely that which should have been saturated with meaning in the first place.

The political (of the European Civilization) has been but an incessant process of signification of life in its radical immanence (life-in-its-aspect-of the Real) – an endless process of an always already failed process of taming the uncanny of Life by way of Meaning. Today, it is clear that the Political is about controlling, exploiting – *transcending* the “biological.”

The fact is that one and the same affirmation of bare life leads in, in bourgeois democracy, to a primacy of the private over the public and of individual liberties over collective obligations and yet becomes, in totalitarian states, the decisive political criterion and the exemplary realm of sovereign decisions. And only because biological life and its needs had become the *politically* decisive fact is it possible to understand the otherwise incomprehensible rapidity with which twentieth-century parliamentary democracies were able to turn into totalitarian states and with which this century’s totalitarian states were able to be converted, almost without interruption, into parliamentary democracies. In both cases, these transformations were produced in a context in which for quite some time politics had already turned into biopolitics, and in which the only real question to be decided was which form of organization would be best suited to the task of assuring the care, control, and use of bare life. (Agamben 1998: 121-2)

In Antiquity, both Roman and Greek, it has been life in its bareness – as the body, the animal, or the “biological” – that had to be sacrificed (sacrificially killed) for the political order to emerge. In Ancient Greece, the purpose of the blood sacrifice, the *hiereia* (ἱερεῖα) is precisely the maintenance of the *polis*. It is to the Olympic gods that the *hiereia* are offered. (Burkert 1977) And the Olympic gods represent, install and maintain order. The *enagisma* (ἐνάγισμα), on the other hand, the offerings of wine, honey, water, dried fruits and intended for the dead and the infernal gods. (Alexiou 2002: 9-10, 16, 32; Moulinier 1950: 209, 210, 73, 111, 80-1,

109) The *hiereia* always yields into a *holocaustos* (ὀλόκαυστος) – burning of the sacrificed, dead animal that can be, in the mythology, also human. This is a clean, unpolluted and non-polluting sacrifice – it brings in the light or reason, the logos and the polis. This is a sacrifice of annihilation, effacement, burning to the ashes of the bloody mess of the biological life. Upon the plane of pure meaning that is left behind after the incineration of the sacrificially killed embodied life, Logos that equals Polis is built. (Vernant 1982: 50)

The *enagisma*, the offerings in liquids and food to the dead and to the gods of death, normally performed by women, is related to burial and mourning rituals that are by definition related to pollution and defilement. (Alexiou 2002: 10) The term *enagisma* (ἐνάγισμα) is derived from the word *agos* (ἄγος) which means defilement that is owe-provoking, a negative taboo, moral pollution that is the result of crime. (Liddell and Scott 1968; Parker 1983: 5, 18, 322-3) The opposite meaning contained in the word *hagnos* (ἄγνός) – sacred and pure – is derived from the word *agos* (ἄγος); and so is *enagisma*, a word which means moral, god-observing practice of due sacrifice to the chthonic powers. (Moulinier 1950: 9, 16)

Clearly there is ambivalence in the notion of sacred which is contained precisely in the word *hagnos* (ἄγνός). The ambivalence in question consists in the fact that *hagnos* (ἄγνός) is derived from the *agos* (ἄγος) or *hagos* (ἄγος) which refers to a specific type of defilement and transgression. The latter relates to being in touch with a dead body or being in touch with those affected by mourning, to giving birth or being in touch with members of a household where a birth took place, to violating temples and to braking of the great taboos of incest, murder or parricide. In other words, the defilement of (*h*)*agos* is related to the transgression of the boundaries that define civilization, stepping across the lines of exclusion of everything that destabilizes sense and order, i.e., the established normality.

(H)agos is, in fact, about transgressing the boundaries of reason, of Law, of the translucent Transcendental – stepping across the threshold of Meaning and Order. Chaos is provoked by the blurring of boundaries that are guaranteed by the observance of taboos. Destabilization of the boundaries that ground the Law and the Symbolic Order takes place as the result of closeness to or being in touch with the “biological” – or of the Real – of Life in occasions of funeral, wedding and birth. The rites – i.e., the practices of inscription into the Symbolic – of marking and making sense of the three types of events have virtually the same structure and terminology to name the components of the structure. (Rehm 1994: 22ff) For example, the word *kêdeia* means both funeral and alliance (through marriage) and parenthood, whereas *kêdenô* means to tend a bride or a corpse but also to establish an alliance through marriage. (Alexiou 2002: 10) Funeral, wedding and birth are instances of direct encounter with that which always already escapes symbolization – which provokes awe and disgust at the same time, which is on the border of violence and the bloody brutality of the beginning and end of life.

The unsymbolizable is that which participates directly in the Uncanny, in the Real; the Glimpse at this “World-beyond-Imagination,” in which there is no Language, no Sign or *Eikon*, inspires a paralyzing awe. It is that stance of staring into the bare eye of full reality. It is the blinding gaze into the Real – the instance when signification fails, a *topos* that can be inhabited only by gods. That is why in Greek (vase) painting Dionysus or the Gorgon or a person devoid of reason (be it a drunk person or a madman) is always presented en-face whereas the normal representation is always in profile. (Vernant 1990; Vernant 1995) This realm beyond the reach of mortals and a territory upon which the light of reason is never cast, this place that is a non-place, in Greek religion, is usually the place of the dead, of the chthonic gods and of the god of transgression Dionysus. And it is to these divine powers that the *enagismata* are offered, while the blood sacrifices, i.e., the *hierieia*, remain reserved for the Olympic gods. The latter also stand in awe in the face of this domain of the divine. The

center of the world in Greek Antiquity is, as Burkert reminds us, the Omphalos Stone in Delphi – and this is a place of libations, i.e., of *enagismata* offerings. (Burkert 1977: 125)

Agamben is puzzled by the double sense of the notion of “sacer” in the case of the Roman religious-political institution of “homo sacer.” (Agamben 1998: 71-4) *Homo sacer* is a man marked by the pollution of transgressing the boundaries of humanity as stipulated by the divine authority: through committing a crime that implies a violation of a taboo (such as a murder), he has stepped into a territory that can only belong to the gods. He is defiled by the sacred that is the inaccessible, the unutterable and the unthinkable. Transgression of the boundaries of human and defilement by; coming into contact with the realm of the divine is the highest form of crime and pollution since the sacred is the *adyton* or *abaton*, the inaccessible, and the *arrheton*, the unutterable.² The one who acquires the status of “homo sacer” has been polluted by the crime of stepping into the *agos* – into the *topos* beyond reason, the impossible place beyond Language, since he/she has committed an unutterable crime and an act permitted only to the immortals. In other words, he/she has stepped into the territory of the sacred.

Coming into the prohibited direct contact – i.e., through crime – with the sacred provokes destabilization of the boundaries between mortal and immortal. The marvel of blurring the boundaries between the two worlds is in itself an awe-provoking manifestation of the sacred (that is, its incursion into the world of the mortals). This sort of instantiation of the sacred is called *agos*. *Enagisma* is a term derived from *agos*. Let us remind ourselves, it refers to a ritual offering consecrated to the chthonic gods and to the dead. Apart from the libations traditionally offered to the dead and to the gods related to death and resurrection, to some chthonic gods other offerings were submitted as well. For example, at the crossroads of

² Burkert, *Griechische Religion*, 403.

Athens women left sweepings from the house of all sorts of refuse as to Hekate. (Alexiou 2002: 16) That which lies at the border between “clean” and “dirty,” between orderly and disorderly, that whose exclusion represents an act of delineation between sense and beyond-sense is what women used to submit as *enagisma* to the goddess of black magic – Hekate. Libations or *enagismata* to the dead and to the chthonic divinities were acts of ritual sacrifice which were by definition performed by women, whereas the blood sacrifice offered to the Olympians was performed by men exclusively.

The *agos* relates to the abyss of the divine – to that black hole of the unthinkable that devours the mortals. *Agos* is the point at which even the logos-bringing gods of Olympus stop in awe; Aeschylus’ *Orestia* speaks about the exclusive authority the pre-Olympic divinities had over transgressions of *agos* such as e.g. matricide (and of the political struggle of the Olympians to gain a share of this authority). Through committing a murder, incest or a parricide one does not become a mere criminal, one becomes an incarnation of defilement beyond words. *Homo sacer* is somebody defiled by *agos*. He is polluted. Hence he cannot be offered as a sacrifice to the gods. On the other hand, he is sacred: he bears the traces of *agos* upon himself; moreover, he has become himself the trace of it.

Murdering a *homo sacer* is beyond punishment because the one who would kill a sacred person would himself already be polluted by the *agos*. But also because his life on the earth is a bare life, a human life stripped of humanity. His soul has been invaded by the *agos*. It has undergone a monstrous transformation – it is no longer a human psyche. Through the violation of the sacred, just like Oedipus in Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*, the *homo sacer* has already been consecrated to the gods; the sacred he has come to bear as a constitutive part of himself is the *agos*. Therefore, he cannot be subject to *hiereia*, to a blood sacrifice offered to the Olympians. As a living *agos* among the living, as the instantiation of that-which-is-beyond-human-reason wandering under the sun that illuminates the polis, he has no other

role than to be the flux (an *enagisma*) of dehumanized human suffering offered to the gods. Through the act of consecration of the *agos*, the transgressor has been transformed into a redeemer, a cure of human souls – a *pharmakos*. (Sophocles 1912: 21:12)

Apart from the role of a *pharmakos* invaded by *agos*, *homo sacer* is a wounded body and a wounded soul stripped of human form. He is a wandering, wounded and vulnerable bare life devoid of humanity.

4. Vulnerability as a Universal in the Last Instance

In *Precarious Life* and in *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler tackles the question of the mute suffering of the ones whose lives, whose “loves and losses” have been rendered “unreal.” (Butler 2004: 27; Butler 2006: 36) The silent suffering and the ensuing sense of derealization is the result of the fact that these are people precluded from “universally” legible mediation of their experiences. They do not have access to the linguistic means of the globally dominant discourses that would render their personal narratives universally communicable. These human losses have suffered de-realization by the dominant discourses within which they do not succeed to gain meaning, claims Butler. (Butler 2004: 25, 27) The loves and the losses for which it remains impossible to provide articulation within the universally communicable discourses are the loves and losses of the not-completely-universally-human experiences, these are anomalous lives of love and suffering (Butler 2006: 33-4); the latter represents a *topos* inhabited by a variety of embodied lives that disrupt and elude what institutes itself as the Normal, a diverse group of “abnormal” embodied agencies that include queer people as well as the countless and nameless Palestinian victims. (Butler 2006: 35-6)

The structural laws of the “intelligible discourses” render these losses meaningless, since they cannot be *named* – and, hence, ascribed value – in a legible way of the universally (i.e., globally)

dominant discourses, that is, the discourses of normality. The “intelligible” is that which is thought and thinkable according to the globally dominant model of Normativity. This means that the “intelligible” and the “normal” can also be “sensitive to the cultural difference” since the dominant norm can decide to integrate within itself “the respect for difference.” Still the grief for the killed Palestinians *cannot be named* because the ones who speak from the instance of the dominant discourses, on behalf of the universally understandable *cannot name* the victims. The sound of these names is unrecognizable, indiscernible – these are names “one forgets,” these names are difficult (*hard*) to pronounce by those who can speak on behalf of all of us. These are hardly “real names.”

The sense of living a life that is deprived of meaning even in its most ecstatic and most dramatic moments, of being absent from “What-Makes-Sense” even when one is at the peak of a lifetime accomplishment or in the pit of a life’s most serious downfall is an experience of being deprived of reality. Meaningless is unreal in the inescapably eikonically constituted reality. These losses and grief are not represented, they are not talked of, and it is impossible to publicly mourn them, claims Butler – they are not inscribed into the collective narrative (Butler 2006: 37-9). They have no place in the imaginable reality. They are banned access from the reality that can be imagined and talked of. By not naming them they have been rendered unreal. The oppression is not only political. At this point it becomes ontological.

In order to gain access to reality one ought to gain access to the “universally”, i.e., dominantly and normatively, legible discourses. One’s voicing about one’s pain, grief and loss ought to acquire legibility within the existing normal/normative discourses in order render meaningful and legitimize one’s dissonant (“subaltern”) narrative.

In the Chapter titled “Violence, Mourning, Politics” of *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler writes:

So when we say that every infant is surely vulnerable, that is clearly true; but it is true, in part, precisely because our utterance enacts the very recognition of vulnerability and so shows the importance of recognition itself [...] This framework, by which norms of recognition are essential to the constitution of vulnerability as a precondition of the “human,” is important precisely for this reason, namely, that we need and want those norms to be in place, that we struggle for their establishment, and that we value their continuing and expanded operation. (Butler 2006: 43)

Recognition is *always already* an operation of language: it is an operation of the eikon, of the sign (visual or verbal/textual). It is the result of signification assigning significance. According to the quoted paragraph, one’s vulnerability and one’s wound, one’s grief and loss ought to gain access into the widely and dominantly legible discourse/s in order to obtain legitimacy to be considered as such. In fact, in order to acquire the status of a vulnerable being one has to translate one’s own vulnerability into a language that is spoken by those who constitute the field of reality – i.e., what is *recognized* as reality which is the world of normality. In other words, reality is constituted upon an act of recognition. This is a point that Butler clearly makes in the paragraph just quoted.

5. Of a Politics Beyond the Procedures of Recognition (by the Owners of the Discourse of Normality)

Yet, there is another enunciation present in the cited paragraph that I am particularly interested in exploring. It is a statement which is obviously irrelevant for the thesis advanced by Butler, yet one worthwhile tackling for the point I am attempting to prove here. In the beginning of the citation there is a reference to what is considered a commonsensical self-evident truth, i.e., certain “goes without saying.” And it is precisely the status of a “goes-without-saying-true-hence-not-sufficiently-relevant-for-a-theoretical-investigation” which

provokes the question of how the quality of self-evidence of certain truths is established, legitimized and stabilized (but also destabilized). The self-evident truth which Butler states is the following: “So when we say that every infant is surely vulnerable, that is clearly true.” And she continues by claiming that “it is true, in part, precisely because our utterance enacts the very recognition of vulnerability and so shows the importance of recognition itself.”

So it is “clearly true.” It seems so self-evident that it does not deserve theoretical interrogation. “In part,” however, it is true also because of the enactment of recognition through language. It seems that, in our age of post-modernity, this “in part” has always been more important or more worthwhile politico-theoretical exploration than the “clearly true.” The “clearly true,” the “goes without saying” has been assigned the status of a commonsensical presupposition, residing within the realm of the moral constitution of the theorizing subject and its truthfulness is guaranteed and apophatically (de)legitimized by the moral subject of theorizing. In this way, the commonsensical truth is rendered “untheorizable.” However, this absence of recognition of theoretical relevance to a discursive phenomenon that formatively participates in the discourses that are subject to theorizing is telling. The commonsensical “clearly true” constitutes an important element of an argument, it is a statement which preconditions that very argument and yet remains discursively irrelevant or theoretically insignificant.

The commonsensical self-evidence does not receive the recognition of relevance in a way that would produce a theoretical narrative (of it). It is a form of discourse that gains no recognition by and within theory. It is theoretically unrecognizable, and illegible. Within the horizon of theoretical reality today, let us resort to Butler’s vocabulary, it is de-realized. The commonsensical “clearly true” is always and by definition absent from political theory. It is theoretically illegible. It is outside the theoretical discourses on subjection and political subjectivity that situate themselves beyond modernity in both temporal and epistemic sense.

It has no access to the theoretically recognized and recognizable reality, or it does not have the status of a theoretical real. Still, it is the very “material” which underlies the entire discursive structure – that which is never uttered, but always already presupposed, constitutes the very possibility of a particular discourse-power reality. So we have been taught by Foucault.

I would like to tackle this problem of theoretical de-realization, and in this respect, attempt to interrogate the contents of that “clearly true” as something that may have relevance to a theoretical investigation of the theme of the political subject formation and its aspects of responsibility and solidarity. What seems to be so “clearly true” that it does not deserve entry into discourse, as Butler seems to be saying, is not only the mere physical fact about children’s vulnerability, but also that vulnerability means something. The self-evident truth contains a certain signification, and it is a function of a discursive structure. Evidently, it is the discursive, linguistic rendition of vulnerability that needs to be recognized in order to gain reality. What needs to be recognized in order to be *realized* is “what it means to be vulnerable” and not the mere fact of physical vulnerability itself. The bare fact of vulnerability devoid of meaning (language) is not what preconditions humanity. The discursive category of vulnerability, the sign and signification of “vulnerability” is what needs recognition in order to precondition the “human.”

Building on this discourse advanced by Butler, I would like to take the discussion a step further and raise the question of whether bare life itself, that pre-discursive phenomenon of life exposed to the threat of violence can have a political meaning and/or value. Can we attribute political and ethical value to life and vulnerability of life prior to its attaining the status of a sign/signifier, prior to acquiring a meaning, prior to becoming “what life and vulnerability means”?

Being-as-Nature reduced to a determination-in-the-last-instance that is the mute labor of self-preservation of the organic can contain the foundation of the ethical constitution of the self. Let us recall that in Spinoza's *Ethics* pain and pleasure appear as the names of a decreased and an increased level of "presence of life," respectively. (Spinoza 2003: IV 41) Let us recall also that according to Spinoza the pain that is suffered by others necessarily acquires presence in our personal life since it inevitably appears on the cognitive level of our existence. (Spinoza 2003: III 30p) We know of somebody's state of pain, and by knowing of it we are invaded by it. Because one cannot ever abstract oneself from one's human – or rather non-human – surroundings, because one is always already inextricably constituted by all that which participates in the overall *natura naturans*, one is always already afflicted by the pain present in the others.

This affliction initially takes place on the cognitive/mental level; however, it is almost simultaneously transmuted into a bodily sensation. This is the inevitable – and logically necessary – result of the immanence of life which represents a link of uninterrupted continuity between the bodily and the mental. (Spinoza 2003: II 13n) It is apparent that in Spinoza's *Ethics* it is the body which possesses the status of the determination in the last instance and the identity in the last instance of (individual) life: the "adequate ideas," and the active emotions that are the product of Reason, are adequate insofar as they contribute to a higher power of activity or "presence of life." The locus *par excellence* of experiencing and/or of expressing presence of life is but the body. Since the mind and the ideas are determined in the last instance by the body and represent nothing but its "modifications." (Spinoza 2003: II 13, 13p) Moreover:

Therefore the object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, and the body as it actually exists (II. xi.). Further, if there were any other object of the idea constituting the mind besides body, then, as nothing can exist from which some effect does not follow

(I.xxxvi.) there would necessarily have to be in our mind an idea, which would be the effect of that other object (II. xi.); but (I. Ax. v.) there is no such idea. Wherefore the object of our mind is the body as it exists, and nothing else. (Spinoza 2003: II 13p)

The experience/expression of an increased presence of life or “power of activity” takes place in the form of a sensation – and an achieved state – of pleasure. (Spinoza 2003: III 1, 1p, 3, 9p, 9n, 10, 56) Adequate ideas are in service of the state of an ever increased experience of pleasure (taking place through the body), whereas the latter is the expression of the increased power of activity or intensity of life. (Spinoza 2003: III 11, 11p, 11n, 15p, 20, 37p)

Expounding on these ideas, or perhaps merely reformulating statements that can be found in the text of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, I would like to propose a hypothesis about “the Organic” (as in Donna Haraway’s vocabulary) as the determination-in-the-last-instance of political responsibility. The latter will be conceived also as the kernel of the “ethical” or the origin and the immanent law of the “care of the Other.” Spinoza’s inference about the immanence of the ethical is based on his “selfish premise” that one does not wish the harm of the other simply because, by virtue of being aware of it (imagining it), one is him/herself affected by it as well. However, there is another premise from which the inference about the ethical as imbedded in the conatus of self-preservation or of preserving (in) life departs. It is the Spinozian thesis about the individual’s constitutive interrelatedness with and inextricability from the rest of the World (=Nature). The essence of the individual is but an expression of and participation in the attributes of God or Nature. Individualism in the sense of self’s radical autonomy is impossible in Spinozian context: one does not have to invent ways and reasons for the Self’s desire to reach the other, to establish a relation of care. The “care of the Other” is immanent to Life, to any individual’s life, as the Other is immanently present in the life of any individual self.

Without subscribing to the entire Spinozian “cosmology,” let us consider the possibility that life in its pre-linguistic sense of the conatus, life in its aspect of ceaseless auto-regeneration, is the origin of ethical and political responsibility. How can the pre-discursive be the origin of discursivity *par excellence* (and the political) immanently containing the laws of its constitution? What makes this heterogeneity of origin and of the identity-in-the-last instance of the political plausible? Before tackling these questions let us consider whether the pre-discursive source of the ethical can be identified as the experienced (through the body) interconnectedness with the world, or whether it can and should be determined in its last instance as something else. At this point I would like to revisit and reinvestigate Butler’s thesis about vulnerability as that “precondition of the human.”

In her pursuit of that which is the foundation of human solidarity, of the human rights, of political and ontological equality, of human equality, of the care-for-the-Other, Judith Butler raises the questions of the “precondition of the human” and of its “recognition.” (Butler 2006: 43) Evidently, in order to establish solidarity with the Other, in order to establish empathy with and political responsibility toward the “human condition” of the Other, this Other has to be recognized as “human.” The “human” is always already a discursive category since it is the product of the linguistic operation of recognition. Yet a category heterogeneous to that of discursivity is what “preconditions the human” – it is the instance of vulnerability, the experience of pain that precedes and always already evades any linguistic transposition.

Even when experienced and categorized as “mental,” “emotional” or “psychological” in its identity-in-the-last-instance pain is a bodily category. When the perplexities of the troubled, humiliated soul that has been subjected to violence are experienced as *pain*, one inevitably recognizes that an immediate transposition of the psychic experience onto the bodily plane has taken place. When the sufferings of the “soul” become painful we know this through the “body.” Pain can be recognized as pain but through the body. The dichotomy between the

two terms is highly problematic, and, therefore, the opposition between “body” and “soul” is *ad hoc*. So I will try to go beyond the falsity of this opposition and argue that it is life-in-its-last-instance, i.e., the category of the Organic, which is the bearer-in-the-last-instance of the unadulterated experience of pain and vulnerability.

Leaving aside the question about the body-soul dualism, and the dilemma of which of the two opposed terms represents the *topos* proper of pain, the instance of vulnerability and pain is still defined, by its determination in the last instance, as heterogeneous to the discursive, to language, to signification. Namely, pain – both in its actuality of being wounded and the potentiality of vulnerability – is the instance of the purely experiential, of the experiential *par excellence*. It is an event, analogous the Badiouian event. It is what happens in spite of any discourse, regardless of the Language. It is the taking-place-of-the-Real. It is the *tuché* that thrusts into the *automaton*. Thus, if vulnerability preconditions the human and provides the basis for its recognition, it needs to be said that, paradoxically, it is the kernel of the *lived* (echoing François Laruelle’s notion of *le vécu*), i.e., of the Real which serves as the foundation of the discursive operation *par excellence*, that of recognition.

Being pre-lingual, the organic or the “lived” (of pain and of its derivative, the pleasure) precedes any identity politics. Yet, it provides the basis of discursively unconditional inclusion for all subject positions (including identities) in the field of the political departing from the transcendently minimal universal, that of the organic and its experiences (*le vécu*). *Tuché* activates and gives legitimacy to the *automaton*, and it is always queer. Therefore, the political needs to be expanded not by an increased recognition inside the existing political categories but rather the other way around, by its constant queering as dictated by the trauma of the organic.

Pain is pre-discursive. It is the unadulterated lived (*le vécu*) put in Francois Laruelle's terms (Laruelle 1995: 225), or the instance of the 'evental' put in Alain Badiou's terms (Badiou 2005: 173-7), or the kernel of the Real prior to symbolization (signification) put in Lacanian terms (Lacan 1998: 53-4). In Spinozian terms, it is life at its most radical: the bodily experiences of pain and/or pleasure are the immediacy of life pulsating with intensity. Nonetheless, the bodily is not the material as opposed to the psychic (mental, rational, ideal, etc.) since there is no such opposition in Spinoza's philosophical universe. Nature is but the *expression* of the divine essence, and the attributes of *cogitatio* and *extensio* are the two chief attributes of the Being which shows itself with at least the two faces: that of Nature and that of God. Matter and idea are not two opposed categories in Spinoza. Highest category of God (or Nature) is the Being, and it is not split between matter and idea. Moreover, "matter" and "idea" are not among the categories with which Spinoza thinks the Being. The analogous pair of categories, *cogitatio* and *extensio*, constitutes a binary of attributes which neither exclude nor oppose each other, but are rather mutually complementary. Within this framework of thinking, the Body is not a "material" category or one belonging to the attribute of "extension" exclusively.

The Body is "life" in its identity in the last instance, in its radical immanence, entailing expression through both attributes equally (extension and cogitation). The mental, which is always accomplished through the emotional, is the reflection of the fundamental, defining state of one's existence –one which takes place through the body. (Spinoza 2003: V 14) The body is the location *par excellence* of pain and vulnerability, i.e., the instance of the radical identity of life. The body is the *topos* of the radical (pre- or/and meta-discursive) knowledge about a possible threat to the survival of an "I." This particular cognitive process taking place at the level of the Body in the form of an absolute state of alert is, by definition, automatically accompanied by total mobilization – again, taking place primarily through the body – toward staying-in-life, making one's own survival (as both body and soul) possible.

That instance of pre-discursiveness which is the Pain, i.e., vulnerability, participates in a formative way in *per definitionem* the discursive phenomenon of recognition. In fact, it is the condition of that “discursive category” called humanity. The thesis about vulnerability as the condition of the “human” implies the formative heterogeneity of humanity inasmuch as it is the experiential/evental instance of vulnerability which makes possible the discursive constitution of humanity. At the root of the “human” lies the organic instance of vulnerability and pain, at the root of the “human” we find the body that suffers. At the root of the Human is that which is beyond (or rather, behind) Humanity.

Drawing on the Spinozian “selfish thesis” about any individual’s compulsion toward avoiding pain including the one experienced by the others, I would say that solidarity and political responsibility toward the suffering of the others originates in our ability to identify (with) the pain (of another body). The less we can recognize the other as human, the less human he or she is, such as a child or an old helpless woman or man bordering with the animal, the more we are able to revolt against the violence brought upon him or her. The less we see a subject in control of the potentiality of violent threat against its body the more we are called upon acting toward its protection: the level of vulnerability is proportional with the absence of a masterful subject of humanity.

The less discursive competence they have the more we see them as vulnerable that we are compelled to protect. The less they are what is discursively constituted as human, the more we feel called upon acting humanely. The less they are human the more they meet human solidarity. I would claim that recognition of the Other’s humanity insofar as a discursive category is not only unnecessary for establishing solidarity but also redundant and even an obstacle to it. It is Life (=the Organic that suffers) to Life individualized through bodies that

can create and materially sustain solidarity rather than the operation of recognition and inscription into the discursive field of the “human.”

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