

NIETZSCHE IN THE AMAZON. FOR A NOMADOLOGY BEYOND ALGORITHMIC GOVERNMENTALITY

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to read Antoinette Rouvroy's concept of algorithmic governmentality as the main subject of what Bernard Stiegler called computational nihilism. Taking one of the giants of the Web, Amazon.com, as a symptom of such a nihilism whose process has been empowered by neo-liberalism, the paper tries to elaborate a new kind of relationship between technology, environment and social ties alternative to the accelerationist perspective. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's anthropological work provides some key elements in order to elaborate this kind of new political ecology based on Amazonian perspectivism. Starting from this consideration, political ecology could be presented as a kind of nomadology, while the latter could be understood in its turn as a way of placing Nietzsche's perspectivism in the Amazon.

KEYWORDS

Algorithmic governmentality, Bernard Stiegler, nihilism, accelerationism.

During the last five years Antoinette Rouvroy has shown that a new form of governmentality has arisen, algorithmic governmentality, whose effects have been felt both on contemporaneity as such and on contemporary philosophy. In relation to contemporary French philosophy, which is Rouvroy's main theoretical reference, these effects mainly concern three key concepts: the Simondonian processes of psychic and collective individuation, and thus the social attitude of individuals, who become dividuals, that is, mere infra-personal data; the Deleuze and Guattarian Plane of Immanence, which the Internet seems to bring to reality in the worst possible way, that is, as the

immediate real; the Foucauldian regime of truth, whose transformations involve many fields of knowledge, right up to the so-called "End of Theory"¹.

Although Rouvroy makes use of more than just these concepts in her diagnosis, these three are absolutely essential in order to understand a sort of nihilism that runs through all social and theoretical fields. More precisely, we could regard the *dividual*, the immediate real and "The End of Theory" as three symptoms of what Bernard Stiegler recently called computational nihilism². Nietzschean scholars as like as Silicon Valley upstarts may well disagree with this binomium for a number of reasons, but perhaps no other expression could present so concisely and effectively both the role of philosophy and the risk that in the twenty-first century it will simply disappear. This awareness is one of the strongest qualities shared by Stiegler and Rouvroy, and hence it will form the compass of this paper, which aims to open a consideration of Rouvroy's 'algorithmic governmentality' theory as both an useful tool with which to understand the risks of Digital Society and a powerful concept with which to re-activate the Nietzschean diagnosis of social decadence and of the levelling of Thought.

FROM THE SUBJECT TO THE DIVIDUAL: THE FULFILMENT OF NIHILISM

Following Rouvroy's definition, "algorithmic governmentality" refers to a new way of governing, oriented towards anticipating, formatting and selecting the future chances and actions of individuals, through the monitoring of data and metadata from their *infra-personal* "profiles" and more generally through computerized digital devices that capture and collect this data that forms the material with which digital networks are woven. According to Rouvroy, algorithmic governance can be contrasted with neoliberal governance on the basis that the latter creates the subjects it needs for production and consumption, whereas algorithmic governmentality simply bypasses subjects, focusing instead on temporary aggregates of *infra-personal* data that are exploitable at an industrial scale.

¹ See C. Anderson, "The End of Theory: The data deluge lakes the scientific method obsolete." *Wired Magazine*. June 23, 2008. See A. Rouvroy, "The end(s) of critique: data-behaviourism vs. due-process," in Mireille Hildebrandt, & Ekatarin De Vries (eds.), *Privacy, Due Process and the Computational Turn. Philosophers of Law Meet Philosophers of Technology*, (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 147-148.

² See B. Stiegler, *La société automatique I. L'avenir du travail*, Paris, Fayard, 2015.

The algorithmic government thus contrasts with what we know about a neoliberal mode of government which produces the subjects it needs. Through the ubiquitous injunction – and its internalization by subjects - of maximization of performance (production) and enjoyment (consumption), neoliberalism produces ‘hyper-subjects’ having, as their normative horizon, the continuously reiterated project of ‘becoming themselves’, and passionately engaged in ‘self-control’, ‘self-entrepreneurship’, ‘self-evaluation’. Algorithmic governmentality does not produce any kind of subject. It affects, without addressing them, people in all situations of possible criminality, fraud, deception, consumption... which are situations where they are not requested to ‘produce’ anything, and certainly not subjectivation. Rather, algorithmic governmentality bypasses consciousness and reflexivity, and operates on the mode of alerts and reflexes. Algorithmic government affects potentialities rather than actual persons and behaviours³.

Rouvroy argues that algorithmic governmentality does not allow for the development of subjectivation essentially because it does not consider subjects as «flesh and blood persons», that is to say as concrete agents, with deep and complex reasons for their actions. It only synchronizes and modulates preferences and profiles. Thus, «the only ‘subject’ algorithmic governmentality needs is a unique, supra-individual, constantly reconfigured ‘statistical body’ [that] carries a kind of ‘memory of the future’»⁴ in order to ensure a precise behaviour or to minimize any inconvenient expression of subjectivity. Hence we are witnessing «an algorithmic government that frames the future, [...] deprives human beings of their fundamental potency, which is their capacity to emerge as individual and collective subjects in a ‘common’ which is interstitial between the world and reality»⁵.

One can argue that just like Nietzschean reactive forces⁶, the ‘force’ of algorithmic government consists in separating subjects from their ability to do or not do certain things – and so in separating subjects from their capacities of behaving, of willing and in general of living in an active way. No one has been so clear as Deleuze in describing what is at stake with Nietzschean reactive forces:

Reactive force, even when it obeys, limits active force, imposes limitations and partial restrictions on it and is already controlled by the spirit of the negative. [Reactive forces] *separate active force from what it can do*; they take away a part or almost all of its power. [...] reactive forces do not triumph by forming a superior force but by "separating" active force. In each case this separation rests

³ A. Rouvroy, “The end(s) of critique : data-behaviourism vs. due-process,” cit., p. 153.

⁴ Ibid., p. 157.

⁵ Ibid., p. 152.

⁶ See Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 48-49, 52; *Will to power*, 200, 227, 274, 298, 347-355.

on a fiction, on a mystification or a falsification. It is the will to nothingness which develops the negative and inverted image and makes the subtraction. [...] which separates active force from what it can do and denies its difference in order to make it a reactive force.⁷

By transposing this metaphysical tendency in digital society, we can argue that rather than being an active subject, with his own desires and will, the individual shaped by algorithmic governmentality is purely adaptive to data-driven behaviour. This is so because algorithmic governmentality doesn't consider individuals as singular persons endowed with real capabilities of will and desire, but treats them as aggregates of infra-personal data, who are no longer individuals but *dividuals*.

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "dividual" describes the result of a process of digital codification of social and affective life within societies of control, by which the individuals become nothing but indexable and profileable entities⁸. The *dividual* thus amounts to a symptom, felt by individuals as a loss of individuation, whose cause, following Rouvroy, is a sort of carelessness for the subjects that algorithmic governmentality expresses through Data behaviourism. I just said "a *sort* of carelessness" because what is involved for the subjects is not *only* careless, but at the same time a stimulating activity. This double-sided aspect of algorithmic governmentality could bring the reader to wonder about the gradient of reliability contained in Rouvroy's analysis about the carelessness for subjects expressed by algorithmic governance. Indeed, although this tendency to carelessness is effectively and widely experienced, and by this involves the decadence of many theoretical and political items, it seems to be counterbalanced by another tendency: the *social* tendency, which is at work in every digital social network and is driven by a new form of capitalism investing in emotions, drives, but also creativity, knowledge and relationships, all obviously in pursuit of economic goals. But in any case, the subject still seems to be the stake of social networking. Langlois' analysis seems very clear:

The trafficking of user data is about the management of subjectivation. [...] Subjectivation takes place when we are educated, invited, forced, coerced, or convinced to try to fit within specific power formations. In the for-profit social media environment this actualization can take the form of product purchases that are recommended to us on our Gmail or Facebook account, or having to watch advertisements on YouTube before being able to watch the video of our

⁷ G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Translated by Hugh Tomlinson. London: Continuum, 2002, pp. 56-57.

⁸ See G. Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control." Translated by Martin Joughin. *October* 59 (Winter 1992), pp. 3-7.

choice. [...] However, such a classical form of consumer subjectivation is but one aspect of what is taking place on for-profit social media. Subjectivation also means fitting within the logic of social media platforms through continuous status updates, accepting recommendations, clicking on links, etc., overall, through continuous use of the platform [...]. Subjectivation takes place when we are invited and encouraged to adopt specific modes of usership – ways of expressing ourselves, ways of valuing the informational logic of the platform and its recommendation system, and ways of relating to others⁹.

These two alternative points of view about subjectivity and subjectivation within a digital society driven by algorithms, don't describe only the traditional ambiguity of the subject itself, the *sub-jectum* that is at the same time active and passive. This is also a description of the Foucauldian ambiguity of Power, whose relation to subjects is not repressive and yet not unproductive¹⁰. In order to understand both what is at stake within algorithmic governmentality and how and why subjectivity is still 'worked' – because I believe that a side of it is widely exploited – we need to take a line of flight from this ambiguity. Indeed we should begin to talk about individuation with respect to Rouvroy's analysis, and, in relation to the subjectivation supposedly taking place on social networks, it would be better to discuss individualization. While individuation, according to Simondon, is a never-ending process of improving that an human individual experiences in his own psychosomatic dimension that occurs only by participating in the individuation of the other – in an environment (*milieu*) that allows for this kind of collective individuation – one can argue, following Deleuze, that individualization represents the atomization of individuation and, by this, the arrest of its collective process. Furthermore, if Simondon conceived the subject as something more than the individual to the extent that the former concerns also the pre-individual environment by which the latter can join the collective¹¹, hence one can also say that individualization represents an impairment of this very subject. With respect to this situation, Simondon refers to a loss of individuation, and this could be understood as a symptom of the fulfilment of digital nihilism, insofar as, according to Stiegler, the latter constitutes «a particularization of existence

9 G. Langlois, "Social Media, or Towards a Political Economy of Psychic Life", in G. Lovink, M. Rasch (eds.), *UnlikeUs Reader*, "Social media monopolies and their alternatives", pp. 55-57.

¹⁰ See M. Foucault, "The Subject and Power", appendix to Hubert Dryfus and Paul Rabinow (eds.) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. [eds.], 1982.

¹¹ See G. Simondon, *L'individuation psychique et collective*. Paris: Aubier, 2007, p. 19.

inducing a *planetary loss of savoir-vivre*, that is, a planetary loss of individuation»¹².

In *La société automatique I*, Stiegler gives a more precise insight into the digital completion of nihilism, coupling it with the issue of the Anthropocene as the geological era resulting from the anthropisation of the world «that consists in the devaluation of all values [...] concretized as the age of planetarizing capitalism»¹³. With respect to the specific field of the digital and its relation to individuals, the completion of nihilism is directly tied to social networking while on the other hand it expresses the stakes of the different strands of individuation (psychic, collective and technological). Hence, if the relationship between these strands leads to so-called trans-individuation, that is, to the constitution of the *social meanings* that arise from a collective process itself always mediated by a technological interaction, then within *social networks* there is a counter-tendency through which individuals become atomized, thereby transforming them into dividuals, and consequently trans-individuation becomes a trans-dividuation. The effect is, then, the disintegration of individuals, generated by «totally computational capitalism», where there is no longer anything that has value, because «everything has become calculable»¹⁴ through the automatized modulation and grammatization of relationships:

Algorithmic governmentality doesn't need meanings but only those psychic and collective individuals through which and by the individuation of which it constitutes itself while dividuating them. In this sense automatic 'transindividuation' no longer produces the trans-individual but only the 'trans-dividual', through a 'dividuation' that would be the specific emergent feature of societies of hyper-control.¹⁵

The constitution of meaning is a trans-individuation that always occurs through language, and thus the effect of trans-*dividuation* should be understood as a loss of meaning caused by the short-circuiting of languages systematically effected by social networks. In this sense, although subjectivities are more and more social, they precisely lack the capacity to speak about the loss of individuation and describe its social symptoms, that is, the collective surface by which these very symptoms may be transformed through a language of critique. Hence I argue that Rouvroy is right to denounce this

¹² B. Stiegler, *The Decadence of Industrial Democracies. Miscreance and Disbelief I*. Translated by Daniel Ross, Suzanne Arnold. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011, p. 63.

¹³ B. Stiegler, *La société automatique I*, cit., p. 131.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 234.

carelessness of the subject insofar as it is firstly a carelessness for individuation that determines the loss of the latter, because what is truly at stake is the loss of individuation in a way that involves the loss of the ability to speak about the symptom, rather than the rise of new kinds of individualization, because even if these individualized subjects express themselves as subjectivities, they are literally mute about symptoms precisely as a result of the process of trans-individuation. This is the nihilism of sociality, its ground zero, in which individuals became dividuals that are nothing but monads capable of touching each other only through (touch) screens.

Furthermore, what lies behind the subtraction operated by the reactive forces of Data can be understood with another Deleuzian famous question, this time linked to Spinoza. Indeed, Rouvroy argues that before anything else, and avoiding all corporeal behaviour – in a Spinozian and Deleuzian sense: what can a body do? – algorithmic governmentality posits the behaviour of Data, that is Data behaviourism, which with its anticipative evaluations forms the answer to another question: what *could* a body do?¹⁶ This means that this kind of government «pre-occupies» the future of the individual insofar as they are driven by drives, preference or attitudes tailored from their profiles and not by their wishes, which become ever less influential on the living present, and more and more projected onto his own future by the algorithms. What is essential is the mystificatory or falsificatory value of Data behaviourism, insofar as it is described by Rouvroy as a technological ideology having the ambition of reaching the world without any kind of institutional, political or symbolic mediation. It is precisely this ambition that separates subjects from the force through which they can reach the world via their own mediation, and prevents them from criticizing what occurs in their life, and this is why we are right to consider Data behaviourism as a reactive force.

If we may go further in transposing Deleuzian «great Spinoza-Nietzsche's identity» to Digital Society, we can certainly refer to ascetic ideals, i.e. the will to nothingness realized by reactive forces «by which life *must* contradict itself, deny itself, annihilate itself»¹⁷. And it is in this way that we could see the rise of digital nihilism as a de-valuation of the living will and by this of all living values. Actually, to understand the real fulfilment of nihilism we should note a sort of paradox by which ascetic ideals realize themselves *within* this life and no longer in a life beyond. This could be read as the apotheosis or the end of meaning in *Genealogy of Morality*, in the sense that ascetic ideals are no longer transcendent: they instead become immanent and thus their promise of

¹⁶ A. Rouvroy, “The end(s) of critique : data-behaviourism vs. due-process,” cit., p. 152.

¹⁷ G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, cit., p. 145.

a future life ceases to be valid, just as has occurred with any other political or social promise going beyond the immediate real. The side effects of this immanentization seem to cause harm to the theoretical concepts issuing from the Renaissance of Nietzschean social critique and from Deleuze and Guattari's immanentist political philosophy. Hence we can in this way read the following statement by Rouvroy:

The advent of 'data behaviourism' (which is also a radical return to positivism), appears as a revenge of the plane of immanence, the advent of a body without organs where the role of the body is eclipsed or taken over by data, closing the digital upon itself through a recursive loop, and eroding the very idea of a situated point of view or perspective on the world.¹⁸

This diagnosis opens two possible lines of inquiry. The first, as developed by Rouvroy, is addressed to contemporary French philosophy and concerns a sort of ideology of immanence as the product of data behaviorism. Indeed, we can conceive such an ideology as a projector of an image of thought – immanence – digitally recombined in the age of computational capitalism. Such an ideology of immanence proves to be a symptom of digital nihilism in the sense of the annihilation of the emancipatory thought that emerged from so-called French theory, through a sort of techno-ideological reversal of the plane of immanence:

This appears just like a dream of immanence come true – something that, at first sight, but only at first sight, appears as the ultimate realization of some of the ideals inherited from the critique of the sixties and seventies: Gilbert Simondon, through the concept of trans-individual individuation, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, with the idea of the rhizome, but also Foucault who apologized a critical attitude [consisting in the art self-government]. But in fact, algorithmic governmentality is a radical forclusion of the ideals of emancipation of the sixties and seventies: the Big Data ideology is a closure of the digital upon itself, and a neutralization of the “outside”, the non-digital, and thus of the “thought of the outside” (as Deleuze would say)¹⁹.

If from Deleuze's point of view 'algorithmic governmentality' could be the manifestation of a fulfilment of control societies, according to Rouvroy and Berns such a governmentality is also the completion of an immanence divested of all revolutionary elements, where desires, affects and wishes are pre-configured by algorithms that annihilate every form of singularity.

¹⁸ A. Rouvroy, [Conference text], “Data Without (Any)Body? Algorithmic governmentality as hyper-disadjustment and the role of Law as technical organ”. General Organology Conference, Canterbury, University of Kent, November 2014.

¹⁹ A. Rouvroy, [Conference text]. *A few thoughts in preparation for the Discrimination and Big Data conference*. Bruxelles: CDCP, 2015.

Nevertheless as Berns and Rouvroy argue, it is not a matter of criticizing Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, whether with respect to immanence or with respect to accelerating the process of emancipation, but rather of showing the 'appearance of compatibility of algorithmic governmentality with these emancipatory theories'²⁰, while algorithmic governmentality tends not only to prevent any possible emancipatory practice, but even to eliminate the very idea of emancipation.

The second line of inquiry with which to confront the effects of data behaviourism could be a kind of transvaluation, or a reversal of nihilism. For this, it might be helpful to find a symptom of digital nihilism in order then to investigate that which it annihilates. In other papers I have attempted to treat the selfie as a symptom of individualisation, or of the atomization of the social caused by the reactive forces of algorithmic governmentality. In this case, and in particular in relation to immanent ascetic ideals, I propose to read Amazon.com, one of the true corporate giants of the Web, as another symptom of digital nihilism, whose process has been empowered by neoliberalism in its financial and digital form. In this sense, Amazon functions here only as a name, a metonymy indicative of a broader system designed to anticipate wishes and automate life, a system that is affecting both the market economy and the libidinal economy.

NIETZSCHE VS AMAZON.COM

The aim of this second session is to *imagine* at the age of the so called Anthropocene – i.e. the supposed new geological epoch resulting from the anthropization of the world²¹ – a sort of creative-critical renewal of both Deleuze's affirmative nihilism based on the value of difference, and Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophical engagement. In the vein of Deleuze's way of approaching questions and inventing concepts, I will attempt to describe a theoretical path that could function as a line of flight from the Anthropocene, at least insofar the latter is conceived as a moral and ethical condition of

²⁰ T. Berns, A. Rouvroy, "Gouvernementalité algorithmique et perspectives d'émancipation." *Réseaux* 177, 2012, p. 187.

²¹ See R. Monastersky, "Anthropocene: The human age", *Nature*, vol. 519, no. 7542, available online at <http://www.nature.com/news/anthropocene-the-human-age-1.17085>; D. Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Winter 2009), pp. 197-222.; F. Pearce, *With Speed and Violence: Why Scientists fear tipping points in Climate Change*. Boston, USA: Beacon Press, 2007; C. Bonneuil, J-B. Fressoz, *L'Événement Anthropocène*, Paris: Le Seuil, 2013; T. Cohen, C. Colebrook, J. Hillis Miller, *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols*, Open Humanities Press, London 2016.

thinking, a condition that is both a *Stimmung*, namely melancholia or pessimism²², and a constraint, the constraint to renounce thinking. As indicated above, such a line of flight will be produced by treating Amazon.com as a symptom of digital nihilism to reverse in a positive element of imagination for contemporary philosophy.

In order to do so I first attempt a kind of indirect deconstruction of the accelerationist interpretation that has been given of the chapter of *Anti-Oedipus* entitled ‘Civilized Capitalistic Machine’, which I will undertake by coupling together two Nietzschean fragments: the fragment quoted by Deleuze and Guattari²³ in that chapter and another fragment that Nietzsche wrote the same year, that is 1887, which argues: ‘What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism ... This future speaks even now in a hundred signs, this destiny announces itself everywhere’.²⁴

While the first Nietzschean fragment on the necessity of hastening the process of nihilism has recently been taken – via Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of accelerating the process of market deterritorialisation – as a conceptual driver of accelerationism and hence as an emancipatory political narrative²⁵, the second fragment seems to demand that the concept of acceleration undergo some readjustment, with respect both to nihilism and to capitalism.

The conjunction of the two fragments in turn leads to an illumination of the two sides of the Anthropocene, which according to Stiegler would be the best name for the Nietzschean prophecy concerning the completion of nihilism,

²² See B. Stiegler, *Dans la disruption. Comment ne pas devenir fou*, Paris, Les Liens qui Libèrent, 2016, pp. 371-445.

²³ F. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann, H.R. Hollingdale. New York: Random, 1968, p. 478: ‘The homogenizing of European man is the great process that cannot be obstructed: one should even hasten it.’, quoted in G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. New York: Penguin, 1977, pp. 239-240: “which is the revolutionary path? Is there one?—To withdraw from the world market, as Samir Amin advises Third World countries to do, in a curious revival of the fascist “economic solution”? Or might it be to go in the opposite direction? To go still further, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization? For perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to “accelerate the process,” as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet.”.

²⁴ F. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann, H.R. Hollingdale. New York: Random, 1968, p. 3.

²⁵ See A. Avanesian, R. Mackay. *#Accelerate#. The Accelerationist Reader*. London: Urbanomic, 2014.

which is today revealing its digital fulfilment²⁶: whereas global capitalism is annihilating biodiversity via pollution and the destruction of habitat – of Life as such – cognitive capitalism is annihilating cultural and psychological diversity, which is the condition of possibility of social life. In this sense, Stiegler directly ties what has been called “algorithmic governmentality” with the Anthropocene, where the latter ‘consists in the devaluation of all values [...] concretized as the age of planetarizing capitalism’²⁷.

Confronted with this entropic levelling of differences and the devaluation of all life values, the vital task should be, according to Stiegler, the “transvaluation of all values” through a new relation between *anthropos* and *techne*. This becomes necessary from the moment the latter, *techne*, put the former, *anthropos*, into question, and did so in the first place as a challenge to anthropocentrism²⁸. Such a relation, which is defined pharmacologically, should correspondingly let differences proliferate within social, technical and natural environments, rather than standardize life itself, which can lead only to its destruction. In this sense, Stiegler thinks the Anthropocene essentially as a matter of the acceleration of entropy as a consequence of human activities, and he thus evokes, or rather convokes, the Neganthropocene, as a possible age in which the relations between *anthropos*, *techne* and *geo*, should be directed towards an increase in negentropy or negative entropy, in the sense given to this term by Schrödinger (but extended by Stiegler beyond biology)²⁹.

Technics is an accentuation of negentropy. It is an agent of increased differentiation: it is “the pursuit of life by means other than life”. But it is, equally, an acceleration of entropy, not just because it is always in some way a process of the combustion and dissipation of energy, but because industrial standardization seems to be leading the contemporary Anthropocene to the possibility of a destruction of life as the burgeoning and proliferation of differences – as the biodiversity, sociodiversity (“cultural diversity”) and

²⁶ B. Stiegler, *La société automatique I*, cit., pp. 23-25.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 131.

²⁸ Ibid.: “We must think the Anthropocene with Nietzsche, as the geological era that consists in the devaluation of all values: it is in the Anthropocene, and as its vital issue, that the task of all noetic knowledge becomes the transvaluation of values. And this occurs at the moment when the noetic soul is confronted, through its own, organological putting-itself-in-question, with the completion of nihilism, which amounts to the very ordeal of our age – in an Anthropocene concretized as the age of planetarizing capitalism. It is with Nietzsche that, after the Anthropocene event, we must think the advent of the Neganthropocene, and this must be thought as the transvaluation of becoming into future”.131.

²⁹ Erwin Schrödinger, ‘What is Life?: The Physical Aspect of the Living Cell’ (1944), in *What is Life*, with *Mind and Matter* and *Autobiographical Sketches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

psychodiversity ... the question posed by the Anthropocene is how to exit the toxic period of the Anthropocene in order to enter the curative and care-ful – and in this sense economizing – epoch of the Neganthropocene.³⁰

It is not uninteresting that, according to Berardi Bifo's critique of accelerationism, Deleuze and Guattari, in their last works, confront the problem not only of entropy but also of negentropy, which appears as the horizon of their thought, at least if we conceive it, in a general way, as a local constitution of order generated by life in its struggle against entropy, that is, against disorder. Bifo is aware of the "accelerationist" instance expressed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, when in relation to the movement of the market, a movement of decoding and deterritorialisation, they affirm that the question is not to "withdraw from the process, but to go further, to 'accelerate the process,' as Nietzsche put it."³¹ Yet Bifo shows that, in *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari seem to have already deconstructed their own accelerationist stance when they claim that "[w]e require just a little order to protect us from chaos."³²

Bifo argues that this last statement by Deleuze and Guattari derives from a self-critique of their own rhetoric of desire, through which they became aware of the new processes of modulation of the brain and soul installed by neoliberalism, which aims to neutralise difference, reduce the power of critical bifurcation, and eradicate any possibility of variation, unpredictability, action and behaviour. According to Bifo, the most recent stage of capitalism consists in automatic governance, which has replaced rational government with a mere concatenation of algorithms "running at blinding speed." For this reason, "acceleration is destroying social subjectivity, as the latter is based on the rhythm of bodily desire, which cannot be accelerated beyond the point of spasm," as Guattari suggests in *Chaosmosis*. In such a context of control or hyper-control, what Bifo indicates thus amount to the side-effects of neoliberal acceleration on the living body, the soul and social life. In this way he indicates the dangers associated with acceleration in innovation and technology.

[... T]he process of autonomous subjectivation is jeopardized by chaotic acceleration, and social subjectivity is captured and subjugated by capitalist governance. [...] If we investigate acceleration from the point of view of sensibility and the desiring body, we see that chaos is the painful perception of speed, and acceleration is the chaotic factor leading to the spasm that Guattari

³⁰ B. Stiegler, *La société automatique I*, cit., p. 135.

³¹ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. New York: Penguin, 1977, p. 239.

³² G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Verso, 1994), p. 201.

speaks about in *Chaosmosis*. Acceleration is one of the features of capitalist subjugation. [I]t generates panic before finally destroying any possible form of autonomous subjectivation³³.

In such a context, what Deleuze's Nietzsche perhaps suggests is the need to engage a reversal of nihilism by re-affirming difference through becoming the quasi-cause of what happens today – as Stiegler has indicated, himself inspired by Deleuze³⁴. To become the quasi-cause of nihilism means to counter-effect its symptoms through a creative expression of meaning (conceptual, artistic, political), and what I will now attempt to do is counter-effect Amazon.com by setting Nietzsche into the landscape of the Amazon, with Amerindian cosmology and with the help of the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.

Firstly, one could treat Amazon.com as an element belonging to the immanent ascetic ideals, because the algorithmic techniques of profiling and recommendation embody the aims of framing the future of individuals by anticipating their wills, far beyond normal advertising. Secondly, it is extremely difficult to separate the work of Amazon from that of Google, or from other search engines and the vast proliferation of apps and tools dedicated to the “quantified self”, the cooperation of these technologies and enterprises being precisely the real system of which algorithm governmentality is composed. It is within this context that algorithms are “eroding the very idea of a situated point of view or perspective on the world”. Automated anticipation seems to replace the individual perspective, but just as ascetic ideals of data behaviourism are paradoxical because they are immanent, far from disciplinary technologies and media, such anticipations are differential: for each individual, the contents of the anticipation are personalised and highly variable, while the algorithm remains the same. For this reason, one can theorize the production of average individuals – which was for Nietzsche the outcome of decadence – even if the technologies of marketing and algorithmic governmentality are increasingly surgical and diversified. The calculation and computation of the self destroy what Nietzsche called the exceptions, which are also what Deleuze called singularities, and finally devalue difference as

³³ Franco Berardi Bifo, “Accelerationism Questioned from the Point of View of the Body,” *e-flux journal*, Vol. 46, June

2013 <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/accelerationism-questioned-from-the-point-of-view-of-the-body/>.

³⁴ See G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, translated by M. Lester and C. Stivale, London, Athlon Press, 1990, pp. 8, 168, 170.

such³⁵. On this basis, one could argue that the use of difference by Amazon.com is nihilistic.

NIETZSCHE IN THE AMAZON

If Western rationality, derived from the *mathesis universalis*, i.e., from calculation, is leading humankind to the end of its being in the world – which could be the deepest and *tragical* meaning of the Anthropocene –, it would seem that what we require today is a radically different reason, the thinking of which should put our anthropocentric biases into question. As Isadel Avelar argued, it may appear paradoxical, but one of the most powerful critiques of anthropocentric reason today comes from very old Amerindian narratives structured around the anthropomorphization of animals, spirits, plants, etc.³⁶. In this sense, the Anthropocene renews the relevance of what Viveiros de Castro called Amerindian perspectivism, a theory that postulates the positionality of the subject and an original state of indifferentiation between humans and animals. This means that, on the one hand, the subject position is variable and can be occupied by humans, animals, plants, the Earth, and so forth; on the other hand, and consequently, the common original condition of humans and animals is not animality, as in Western thought, but humanity itself.

This cosmology imagines a universe peopled by different types of subjective agencies, human as well as nonhuman, each endowed with the same generic type of soul, that is, the same set of cognitive and volitional capacities. The possession of a similar soul implies the possession of similar concepts, which determine that all subjects see things in the same way. In particular, individuals of the same species see each other (and each other only) as humans see themselves, that is, as beings endowed with human figure and habits, seeing their bodily and behavioral aspects in the form of human culture³⁷.

Studying Amerindian cosmologies, and in particular those that emerge from the indigenous population of the Amazon (looking at them in a deep Deleuzian way³⁸), Viveiros de Castro has succeeded in exposing Western rationality to a genuine epistemological shock: instead of multiculturalism and

³⁵ See B. Stiegler, *La société automatique I*, cit., p. 135.

³⁶ See I. Avelar, *Amerindian perspectivism and non-human rights*. «Alter/nativas», 1/2013 (<http://alternativas.osu.edu>).

³⁷ E. Viveiros de Castro, “Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation”, *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, 2004, p. 6.

³⁸ See E. Viveiros de Castro, *Métaphysiques cannibales*, Paris, PUF, 2009, chapter 4.

relativism, we find multinaturalism and radical perspectivism. Amerindian ‘perspectivist’ thought provides an alternative ontology to that of Western modern philosophy and rationality. It is well known, if not “embodied”, that West’s ‘multicultural’ ontology argues that nature is strongly one while cultures may be many. Amerindian perspectivism affirms the opposite, by thinking a spiritual unity – culture, or humanity – and a corporeal multiplicity – nature.

What changes when passing from one species of subject to another is the “objective correlative,” the referent of these concepts: what jaguars see as “manioc beer” (the proper drink of people, jaguar-type or otherwise), humans see as “blood.” Where we see a muddy salt-lick on a river bank, tapirs see their big ceremonial house, and so on. Such difference of perspective—not a plurality of views of a single world, but a single view of different worlds—cannot derive from the soul, since the latter is the common original ground of being. Rather, such difference is located in the bodily differences between species, for the body and its affections (in Spinoza’s sense, the body’s capacities to affect and be affected by other bodies) is the site and instrument of ontological differentiation and referential disjunction³⁹.

Viveiros de Castro reads each perspective as interpretation, in the Nietzschean sense: “different perspectives are essentially in relation to the vital interest of the species, as “lies” that allow for the survival and vital affirmation of any existent being. Perspectives are struggling forces, rather than “world views”⁴⁰. The reason Viveiros de Castro calls such perspectives struggling forces is that one of the big problems of Amerindian life is to avoid being captivated by a non-human perspective and thus to lose one’s own humanity in favour of another kind of humanity, another perspective. After the shock of conceiving every animal as human, what is to be retained of this in the nihilistic age of the Anthropocene and algorithmic governmentality is precisely the idea of perspectives as struggling forces of interpretation. In other words, we can reach the negativity of digital nihilism through Amerindian cosmology: here we truly see Nietzsche in the Amazon.

Given that it is extremely difficult and indeed confusing to think humanity in cosmological terms of this kind, perhaps we can benefit from another concept that could possibly both unify and maintain the differences between beings. In order to find such a concept, we can think individuation as interpretation in Nietzschean sense – and in particular for what concern the

³⁹ E. Viveiros de Castro, “Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation”, cit., p. 6.

⁴⁰ E. Viveiros de Castro, Interview published in “Amazonia Peruana”, XV, 30, 2007, p. 54.

“Will to power” as a biological and sociological concept⁴¹. The process of individuation would in this sense be what is at work in every being, whether physical, vital, psychic or collective, and even technical, if we follow Stiegler, who sees technology as involved in a kind of co-evolutionary process occurring beside and with humans⁴². What Amerindian perspectivism calls humanity is thus individuation in the sense given to this term by Simondon, which can in turn be thought in terms of Nietzsche’s concept of interpretation, that is, as the will to power.

Through such a ‘translation’ it now becomes possible to attempt a diagnosis of algorithmic governmentality and digital technology as a kind of viewpoint with respect to the world. Whereas Amerindians have jaguars, we have, for instance, apps, or a social network; and whereas they have the Amazon, we have Amazon.com. If the reactive forces of algorithms try to capture wills, wishes and individual viewpoints, then to be captured by algorithms is to be captured by another kind of individuation, one that is not “ours”, but rather technical individuation, and it is to lose one’s own individuation. This means in turn that once our individuation, that is, our psychic and collective individuation, is captured, we no longer interpret the world in an active way and we instead find ourselves interpreted by another kind of individuation. We are interpreted through the data we secrete onto the Internet: we are no longer individuals but dividuals, whose wills, wishes and perspectives are driven by algorithms, i.e. by technical individuation. In this sense, Amerindian perspectivism could also be helpful for a critique not only of western reason but of technology in general in the age of digital neoliberal nihilism. Viveiros de Castro affirms that “A point of view is pure difference”⁴³, and it is just such a difference that we are losing when we allow our individuation to be captured by algorithms and to become our “digital profile”.

The time to pursue my discourse is now at an end, and so I bid farewell to Nietzsche as he drifts down the Amazon, aboard that raft of the Medusa that Deleuze imagined in *Nomadic Thought*, carried along by the current of time along with “all the names of history”:

⁴¹ See A. Jugnon, *Nietzsche et Simondon. Le théâtre du vivant*, Paris, Dittmar, 2010, pp. 61-65.

⁴² See B. Stiegler, *Technics and Time, Volume 1. The fault of Epimetheus*. Translated by R. Beardsworth and G. Collins. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. In relation to Simondon’s individuation see B. Stiegler, ‘Temps et individuation technique, psychique, et collective dans l’oeuvre de Simondon’, *Futur Antérieur*, 19-20 (1993), <http://multitudes.samizdat.net/Temps-et-individuation-technique.html>.

⁴³ E. Viveiros de Castro, “Amazonia Peruana”, XV, 30, 2007, cit., p. 53.

We read an aphorism or a poem from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. But materially and formally, texts like that cannot be understood by the establishment or the application of a law, or by the offer of a contractual relation, or by the foundation of an institution. Perhaps the only conceivable equivalent is something like "being in the same boat." Something of Pascal turned against Pascal. We're in the same boat: a sort of lifeboat, bombs falling on every side, the lifeboat drifts toward subterranean rivers of ice, or toward rivers of fire, the Orenoco, the Amazon, everyone is pulling an oar, and we're not even supposed to like one another, we fight, we eat each other. Everyone pulling an oar is sharing, sharing something, beyond any law, any contract, any institution. Drifting, a drifting movement or "deterritorialization"⁴⁴.

Nietzsche is traversing the Rio attempting to reach the future shores of another Earth, another Earth-thought⁴⁵ and another *anthropos*, or the other of *anthropos* in the age of the Anthropocene.

⁴⁴ G. Deleuze, "Nomadic Thought", in G. Deleuze, *Desert Islands and other texts 1953-1974*, New York, Semiotext(e), p. 254.

⁴⁵ See G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, cit., p. 108: "Art and Philosophy converge at this point: the constitution of an Earth and a people that are lacking as the correlate of creation". About Deleuze and Guattari's "Geophilosophy" and "Earth-Thought" see R. Gasché, *Geophilosophy. On Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's What is Philosophy?*, Northwestern University Press, Illinois, 2014. About Geophilosophy and Amerindian thought, see E. Viveiros de Castro, *Métaphysiques Cannibales*, cit., pp. 43-61.