

Introduction

While this issue was in preparation, there came the sad news about the death of Jean-Luc Nancy, a great French philosopher of the 20-21th centuries. He was for many of us a teacher, a friend, and a constant interlocutor. By way of a mourning service, we start this issue with an article, by Janar Mihkelsaar, devoted to his thought.

Janar Mihkelsaar argues that at the center of Nancy's approach to the political lies the thinking of subject as that of relation. The problematic of relation is what, throughout the historical actualizations of, for example, an individual, a state, and the people as a subject, has retreated and now demands to be subjected to a retreatment. When the *arche*-teleological presuppositions that constitute subject as that which is given enter into the phase of deconstruction, subject comes to present itself as nothing but the activity of relating itself to itself. Mihkelsaar aims to respond to Nancy's call to invent "an affirmation of relation" by way of rethinking the logics of sovereignty and democracy. While sovereignty unites, posits, finitizes, and finishes the self of the people, a post-68 democracy pluralizes, infinitizes, and disfigures the identity of the people. Between sovereignty and democracy, notwithstanding their conflicting tenets, the relation is not that of reciprocal exclusion. One is rather the correlative of the other. Without the one, the other would not make any sense. Through this Janus-faced economy of the political, it becomes possible for the people to experience its own "reality" — to experience relation itself. The affirmation of relation is what gives and keeps free the voided site of the political for the infinite self-institution of the people, and is for that reason political *par excellence*.

The following articles issue continues the series of publications on the philosophy of nature and new materialist politics, which began with the first volume, *Terra, Natura, Materia* (Vol. 9. No. 1. 2020). As the theme attracted the attention of both readers and writers, we decided to publish this second volume, also dedicated to the philosophical analysis of the intersection of nature, politics, and science. Here, we give a short overview of the volume's themes by presenting the article abstracts.

Amanda Boetzkes considers the visualization of animal culls that appeared upon the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, reflects on the phenomenon of being insensible to animal cruelty, and argues that the spectacular wasting of animal life discloses the economic logic by which humanity secures itself as a sovereign species. Such a logic and its visibility are not only underpinned by a broader necropolitical paradigm but they co-constitute a primal scene that enables the liquidation of animal life to the point of extinction. Following the evolutionary biologist Rob Wallace, Boetzkes considers animal culls in relation to the phenomenon of virus dumping, a systemic perturbation of forest ecologies that causes viral pandemics, and which are always preceded by the influx of capital in agricultural markets. The article recapitulates the relationship between animal cruelty and the economy of planet wasting that subtends it and shows how the visibility of animal cruelty is predicated on a banal violence. Drawing from Hannah Arendt, Boetzkes calls for an ethics without authority, a version of the *Sensus Communis* by which we might witness cruelty from within the depths of planetary transgressions.

Jeff Diamanti addresses contemporary ecological problems and argues that climate change is not just about rising sea levels and greenhouse gases. It is also an intensive process of real-time terraforming without any obvious subject verbing the process, which is most visibly underway at the ablation zone of the earth's cryosphere. Diamanti asks whether it is reasonable to situate our understanding of ecological crisis at this new ground, and what would it mean to take anthropogenic climate change as the ground for reason amid the ecological crises careening toward the present? The essay returns to the second half of part one of Hegel's *The Science of Logic* — the culmination of the Objective Spirit — where something appears from nothing, and it does so in and as "Ground." According to Diamanti, recent conceptual basins of attraction in climate and earth sciences — namely, the feedback loop and the tipping point — intimate a return to elemental philosophy, and the dialectic of non-identity that marks Hegel's philosophy of nature interfaces with the form-matter-content triad thrumming at the culmination of the Objective Spirit.

Olga Kirillova focuses on the functioning of phlogiston — the chemical concept in the so-called economy of fire from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, in view of a shift of "pyropolitics" (politics of fire). The phlogiston concept is explored as the key substantial notion of the phlogistic chemical theory of the Enlightenment, and the epistemological metaphor of ignorance in nineteenth-century Marxist discourse. Kirillova suggests that phlogiston circulates in an

economics of fire discourse as a signifier for surplus value (in Marxist terms). “Fire as equivalent to money” in petropolitical studies becomes a means for turning petropolitics into pyropolitics with the radical metaphor of “PyroGaia” (Nigel Clark) in the Anthropocenic period.

The article by **Niels Wilde Langballe** is dedicated to Danish poet Inger Christensen, whose poetical thinking is reconstructed in a dialogue with the speculative turn in contemporary continental philosophy. Christensen’s poetry has been interpreted philosophically in line with the Romantic tradition. However, Langballe argues that by reframing the context to present-day debates in continental metaphysics, Christensen’s position can provide the building blocks for a new hybrid model — an object-oriented philosophy of nature. First, the relation between language as a transcendental semiotic system and reality as a mind-independent realm is addressed not as a correlation between humans and world but as a companionship between two aspects of nature itself. Second, Christensen advocates a generic model of becoming where the engine is fueled by the irreducible “state of secrecy” that generates beings, forces, events on a flat ontological and political plane without ever itself being revealed.

In his piece, **Dmitry Lebedev** analyzes William Connolly’s work as a paradigmatic example of a theory that actively emphasizes the role nonhuman forces play in the social and political world and the discontinuity this emphasis brings to political theory. According to the author, Connolly underscores fragile resonances between nature and culture and productively problematizes a human-centric vision of politics, but he still insists on the continuity of his vision for democratic pluralism that this very conjuncture fundamentally puts into question. Thus, Connolly’s type of post-anthropocentric ontology remains rather inconsistently connected to explicitly political concerns. Lebedev’s article aims to clarify this connection. On the one hand, it shows how his brand of democratic politics that answers to the challenges of the Anthropocene presupposes a heightened degree of political negativism and universalism that used to be excluded from this politics. On the other, it demonstrates how discontinuities in ontology must be simultaneously thought of as discontinuities in established political theorizing and to continuously interrogate the very conjuncture that reveals the relevance of these ontological and political discontinuities.

Advocating the position of depressive realism, **Julie Reshe**, notes that while Darwin and Freud attempted to dethrone the human species from their central place in nature and history, both evolutionary theory and Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis partly preserve the idea of human exceptionalism. Thus, in view of psychoanalysis’s

negative conceptualization of humans as the most maladaptive species, and explaining this maladaptation in terms of rupture from the natural order, the concept of the death drive remains anthropocentric: the death drive tends to be seen as an exclusively human drive. However, developments in recent evolutionary biology and psychoanalytic thought suggest ways to elaborate on the concept of the death drive as not exclusively human. According to Reshe, the evolution of nature is not the embodiment of progress that results in the appearance of human species, and not the embodiment of a harmony from which humans deviate, but rather a rupture with itself. Nature as such is an embodiment of the death drive.

In dialogue with object-oriented ontology, **Bronislaw Szerszynski** makes the case for a philosophy of continuous matter that focuses not on the identity, properties, and relations of discrete, countable objects, but on the nature of extended substances, both in relation to human experience and in terms of their own “inner life.” The article explores why and under what conditions humans might perceive the world as objects or as continuous substances, and the language that humans use for talking about both of them. According to Szerszynski, approaching the world as continua requires the foregrounding of concepts that emphasize the *immanent* (internal to a region of space), the *inclusive* (with contrasting properties coexisting in the same substance), the *gradual* (manifesting differentially at different points), and the *generative* or virtual (involving the constant production of form and new gradients). Szerszynski suggests that starting philosophy from continuous matter rather than objects has wider implications for speculative thought.

In the last article of the issue, which does not refer to the general topic, **Marina Koretskaya** analyses Judith Buthler’s performative approach to the concept of the people and states that this approach allows not only to outline the borders of the model of political theology, but also to see the significance of the acts of collective bodies in public space. In this context, the figure of the victim can play a consolidating role, being a potentially affectively condensed point of the gathering of the collective body. The marginalization of the victim’s body is analyzed through the concepts of the politics of grief and ungrievable lives. Koretskaya shows that the marginalization of the victim is a multidimensional phenomenon. Not only the victim, but also the criminal can be marginalized, as well as various circumstances of catastrophic events and acts of violence. The examples taken from the Russian news of recent years illustrate how important it is to question the perception of victims by the audience of independent media.